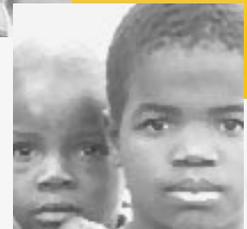


A GUIDE TO **Facing the Truth**

with **Bill Moyers**



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A GUIDE TO

Facing the Truth

with Bill Moyers

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DEAR EDUCATOR,

At first glance you might think *Facing the Truth* is just a horror story, another litany of the awful human rights violations of which there have been so many in the 20th century. It is hard to understand why people do to each other what we see in the film.

But *Facing the Truth* is not just about horror; it is also about healing. South Africa is attempting to show the world how a shattered nation can become whole again.

The basic story is familiar to you: South Africa's long history of officially sanctioned racial separation—apartheid—finally was overturned in 1994 when Nelson Mandela was elected president in the country's first truly democratic election. Part of the negotiated settlement was the appointment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to get as complete a picture as possible of the cruelties that had occurred during apartheid. "We needed to acknowledge that we had a horrendous past," said Nobel Laureate Desmond Tutu, who chaired the Commission. For two years the Commission listened as people from all over South Africa poured out their wrenching stories. "Our capacity for evil is great," Archbishop Tutu said. "We were festering. It was necessary to open the wound to pour in a balm. It will be a long process, but it will be a true healing."

When I was there filming the documentary, I saw hope in the faces of people whose stories you will hear in the film. I saw courage, wisdom, and incredible magnanimity.

We have a lot to learn from South Africa, and while this study guide is intended to provide an historical and conceptual context for using *Facing the Truth* in the classroom, my hope is that students will be encouraged to relate the South African experience to our own. During our filming I kept seeing a mirror image of America's past and our continuing struggle with the legacy of slavery, segregation, and discrimination. We can learn from South Africa that the past need not hold us hostage any longer. As you and your students watch the documentary, please think about its implications for facing the truth in our own lives, communities, and country.

Bill Moyers

PREFACE

On a recent visit to South Africa, I watched as a nation that had only recently dismantled apartheid began the process of building a democracy. Many of the South Africans I encountered during my stay were convinced that honestly facing the past was a vital step in that process. They viewed the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as a place where the history of apartheid would be revealed, acknowledged, and confronted. Even those skeptical about the Commission were involved in discussions prompted by the testimonies of victims and perpetrators.

Facing the Truth with Bill Moyers, produced by Gail Pellett and Public Affairs Television, brings to life some of those testimonies. These stories raise questions about the ways in which nations confront a history of collective violence. Are truth commissions the only way to address the past? What other efforts help a society move toward reconciliation? The stories also deepen our understanding of the consequences of racism and the challenges of transforming a country divided by racial oppression into a multiracial democracy. As a reporter recently observed:

South Africa has long played a disproportionately large role in world affairs because it has been a leading player in one of the century's most vexing problems: race. No other country has had such an extreme form of institutionalized racism as did South Africa from 1948 to 1994. So the country's efforts to come to terms with its past through the work of the Truth Commission is important not just to South Africans, but to the world.

South Africa's history raises troubling questions about the relationship between the past, present, and future. In reflecting on those connections, a Facing History student recently wrote that if we are to end racism in the United States, we must “learn about its forms, its many faces in history. In doing so, we get the knowledge we need to realize the tragic mistakes we have made, and in this way, we break the cycle.”

In the documentary, South African poet Don Mattera refers to that cycle when he describes “the chains around the mind” as “dangerous.” Breaking those chains is difficult, even painful. Teachers throughout the world approach the task with apprehension because of the unexamined—often raw—opinions they will hear before their students can begin to confront the myths and misinformation that still shape their knowledge of one another. Students are also anxious. Some fear that they may inadvertently say something that may be offensive or misunderstood.

Yet those encounters are essential to democracy. In a democracy, ideas are tested through conversation, discussion, and debate. It is a process that can only be carried out in what Judge Learned Hand once called “the spirit of liberty.” He defined it as the spirit “which is not too sure it is right,” the spirit “which seeks to understand the minds of other men and women,” and “weighs their interests alongside one's own without bias.” Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa calls that spirit *ubuntu*—the sense that my humanity is bound up in your humanity.

It is our hope that this guide will promote inquiry and discussion carried out in “the spirit of liberty” and with ubuntu.

Margot Stern Strom
Executive Director, Facing History and Ourselves

INTRODUCTION

“The past has a way of returning to you.

It doesn’t go and lie down quietly.”

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Chair
Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Facing the Truth with Bill Moyers, produced by Gail Pellett and Public Affairs Television, is an extraordinary documentary about the efforts of South Africans to deal with their past—specifically the years of apartheid. The film focuses on the stories of some of the individuals who testified before the nation’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), established in 1995 to investigate gross violations of human rights in South Africa and beyond its borders between 1960 and 1994.

About the Documentary. Over a two-year period, the TRC collected over 22,000 statements from victims and perpetrators and called more than 2,000 women, children, and men to tell their stories at public hearings. In reflecting on those stories, Archbishop Tutu told Bill Moyers, “I thought I knew the awfulness of apartheid. But you see when [apartheid] ceases to be statistics and [becomes] a real live human being . . . that devastates you.” “We all stopped in our tracks,” journalist Max du Preez recalls, “and looked back and said, What have we done?”

- How does the past shape our identity as individuals and as citizens of a nation?
- How important is truth telling?
- What price do individuals and nations pay when they deny their history, trivialize it, or distort it beyond recognition?
- How does a nation come together after acknowledging past wrongs?

These questions are central to the study not only of South African history but also of U.S. and world histories. They are also important to an understanding of government, psychology, economics, sociology, and anthropology. This guide seeks to help teachers and students explore these questions.

Using the Guide. Because of its powerful content, the documentary is most appropriate for high school and/or college students. Teachers will want to divide the video (approximately 115 minutes in length) into short segments. Some teachers may show the video over a period of days, allowing time for discussion after each showing. Others may focus on a few segments that relate directly to key curriculum concepts. This study guide supports both approaches by dividing the documentary into 11 segments of varying lengths.

The guide is divided into three sections: *PreView*, *Viewing the Documentary*, and *PostView*. *PreView* contains six readings that provide a conceptual and historical context for the documentary. The readings may be used individually or in a variety of combinations. *Viewing the Documentary* introduces the work of the TRC and then focuses on the documentary itself, segment by segment. For each segment, there is a brief overview of its content, questions and activities, and suggestions for further reading. *PostView* contains excerpts from the final report of the TRC and raises questions about the relationship between truth and reconciliation.

RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

Listed below are a few of the organizations in the United States that work with schools and teachers to promote and deepen discussions of social justice and human rights:

Facing History and Ourselves

16 Hurd Road

(617) 232-1595

Brookline, MA 02445

Web site: www.facing.org

Through a study of the Holocaust and other examples of collective violence, Facing History helps teachers and students link the past to the moral choices they face in the world today. Educators are introduced to Facing History at in-depth workshops and institutes. With offices across the nation, Facing History provides educators with access to a wide array of follow-up services.

Educators for Social Responsibility

23 Garden Street

(800) 370-2515

Cambridge, MA 02138

Web site: www.esrnational.org

Educators for Social Responsibility provides staff development, school improvement, curricular resources, and support on conflict resolution and intergroup relations.

National Conference for Community and Justice

475 Park Avenue South, 19th Floor

New York, NY 10016

(212) 545-1300

The National Conference is a human relations organization dedicated to fighting bias, bigotry, and racism in America. It provides public programs, publications, and school curriculum.

The PeaceJam Foundation

2427 West Argyle Place

(303) 455-2099

Denver, CO 80211

Web site: www.peacejam.org

The PeaceJam Foundation provides a free curriculum based on the lives of eight leading Nobel Peace Prize Laureates including Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The PeaceJam curriculum is designed for high school students and focuses on issues of racism, violence, social justice and human rights.

Teaching Tolerance

400 Washington Ave.

(334) 264-0286

Montgomery, AL 36104

Web site: www.splcenter.org

Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, produces a free semi-annual magazine and various multimedia resource materials that help educators address social issues.

A World of Difference Institute

The Anti-Defamation League

823 United Nations Plaza

(212) 885-7800

New York, NY 10017

Web site: www.adl.org

A World of Difference Institute is a national education project created by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) to combat prejudice and promote diversity.

Identity and Apartheid

READING 1

Lavendhri Pillay is a teenager in South Africa. When people ask her who she is, she replies:

“I’m South African.” Then they say, “No-no-no, but what are you?” When I was small, I was always told that my great-grandfather came from India to pick sugarcane, but my family doesn’t really have ties to India anymore. So I say, “I was born here, I’ve lived here my whole life, I don’t know anything else, so I’m South African.”

“Who are you?” is a question that we have all been asked at one time or another. And like Lavendhri Pillay, in answering, we reveal our identity. Most of us view our identity as a combination of many factors, including ties to a particular community, school, or nation. Our values and beliefs matter, as do the decisions and experiences that have shaped our lives.

From 1948 to 1994, a group of laws, collectively known as *apartheid* (literally “separateness”), shaped the way people in South Africa viewed their identity. Albie Sachs, a white activist who opposed apartheid and now serves as a judge on South Africa’s Constitutional Court, defines it as the “total control of individual human beings and communities through the law. . . . Your whole fate was determined by the color of your skin and only whites had the vote. They had the power and they could determine the fate and destiny of the rest of the population.” Phylcia Oppelt, a black reporter for the *Sunday Times* in South Africa, says of those years:

I grew up in a system of apartheid that permeated every aspect of my existence. For most of my life I was taught to expect racial slurs, to accept as a fact of existence that the rights and privileges available to whites were not available to me. I was taught to be less. For most of my 29 years, my life was preordained. My skin color dictated where I lived, which school I attended, the church where I prayed, the cinemas I entered, the public restrooms I used, the beaches I visited.

In the 1970s, a black activist named Steve Biko tried to teach young blacks that they were not less. He and others in the Black Consciousness movement inspired black South Africans to be proud of their identity. He told them, “Merely by describing yourself as black, you have started on a road towards emancipation. You have committed yourself to fight against all forces that seek to use your blackness as a stamp that marks you out as a subservient being.” He also reminded them to value their heritage. “A people without a positive history is like a vehicle without an engine. They always live in the shadow of a more successful history.”

For young Coloreds, South Africans of mixed ancestry, a society based on skin color posed special problems. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the first African to head the nation’s Anglican church, said of them. “Many times, in the same family one child has been classified white while another with a slightly darker hue has been classified Colored, with all the horrible consequences for the latter of being shut out from membership of a greatly privileged caste.” Tutu went on to tell of children who killed themselves rather than be “shut out.”

In 1994, apartheid officially ended in South Africa. That year a new government came to power, one elected by people of all races and ethnicities. The nation’s new president



Photograph by Anne Blackshaw

was Nelson Mandela, a black man. In his autobiography, he writes, “The policy of apartheid created a deep and lasting wound in my country and my people. All of us will spend many years, if not generations, recovering from that profound hurt.”

In 1996, Tim McGee, an American teacher, and Anne Blackshaw, an American community worker, photographed and interviewed 65 young South Africans about the effects of apartheid. Twelve of those interviews appear in a book called *No More Strangers Now*. A black South African—Ricardo Thando Tollie who lives with his family in Vrygrond (Free Ground) outside Cape Town—told the pair:

I've lived in a shack my whole life. It's been very difficult to grow up in a place like this because the community has nothing. People don't have proper houses, don't have toilets. When it's raining, it's leaking everywhere in our shack; you have to try and sleep in places the rain won't reach you. As kids we didn't have many toys, so we would take old car tires and push them along with sticks or make some kites with paper.

Sometimes a guy would steal a bike from somewhere else; then he would come by and offer it to us. If we had any money, we'd buy it and then we'd have to change the way it looked. That's how we got things.

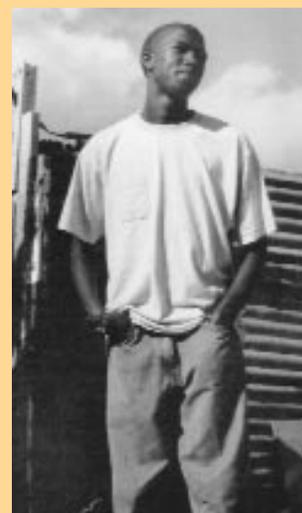
We didn't have a school in Vrygrond, so my parents sent me to a nearby school in a Colored township. In the mornings I would make a fire to heat up the iron, and sometimes the fire would make the iron dirty, so I'd end up with a black mark on my white shirt. Then I'd leave for school at half past six, walk for an hour and a half, and get to school with my hair not clean, my hair not combed.

At school I was the only black and the only kid from Vrygrond, and the kids were always putting me down. They would say, “Ha! You're living in the shacks in that kaffir [a derogatory term] place! You're poor! You live in the sewer! You can't stay with us in this school!” I didn't have a lot of friends, and in class and at break I was always by myself. I stopped saying that I stayed in Vrygrond because I was too embarrassed.

But when I was twelve, I was seeing many black people fighting against apartheid, and I began to realize, it's because of apartheid, that's why we don't have proper houses! Why must I hide the place I live in? I realized that black people came to Vrygrond because the whites wanted the blacks to work for them but then wouldn't allow us to live next to them in their white areas. So I started telling the kids at school that I lived in Vrygrond, and if they laughed, I would ask them, “Why are you laughing? I can't help it if I stay in shacks like this!”

At this age I was getting cross at apartheid and blaming the white people, because I saw that apartheid put the white man up there, the Colored in the middle, and the black man down here. I thought that maybe I could have lived like whites if they didn't treat us the way they did in apartheid. . . .

When I see whites in their big houses, I still get jealous and angry. I hope the white kids will come and see how we live in Vrygrond. They don't know there are such places in Cape Town; it's not on a map, and it will never be on TV. They need to know the troubles we still have here and need to know how their fathers and grandfathers treated our people before. They must see that most people are not free like them.



Photograph by Anne Blackshaw

Leandra Jansen van Vuuren, is an Afrikaner—a white South African of Dutch decent. Her ancestors were among the nation’s first European settlers. She, too, recalls life under apartheid.

When I was small I was told I had to stay away from black people because they were almost like animals: They were dangerous; they could kill you. I used to overhear my aunt telling my mother that blacks were going to take over our houses, kill the women and children and that the men were not allowed to leave their children and wives at home. My father had a .22 rifle, and he said, “Okay, my darling, if they come into our house, we’ll just kill them.”

My father raises chickens and pigs on our farm, and I used to go with him when he’d sell them in the black townships. I’d see black kids there, but I’d just walk away from them. . . .

To me it just seemed that blacks and whites were in different places. At school and church there were only whites; they didn’t tell us about the way blacks lived. I didn’t know what was happening to black people, that things were unfair. They taught us about all the dead Afrikaners that the blacks had killed, to be proud of the places where Afrikaners died for us, and that Afrikaners had done good things for South Africa.

So when I heard that apartheid was going away, I hated it. I thought, Why must they move near us, why must they take our land over, why must they mix with us? When I’d visit my nephew near Pretoria and we’d see black kids who had moved close, we’d chase them on bikes, and we’d yell, “Hey, why are you coming here?”

During apartheid, the government allowed a few religious schools in South Africa to admit students of all races. Lavendhri Pillay attends one of these schools. She says of the experience.

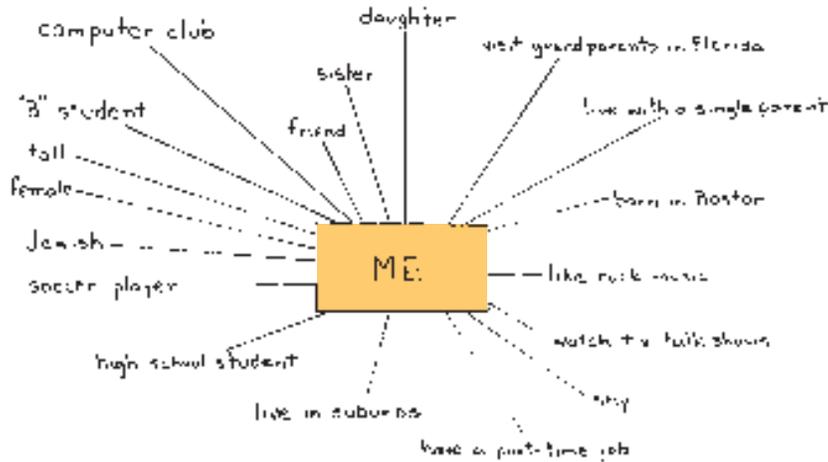
Since I was seven, I’ve gone to school at Sacred Heart, where everybody’s completely mixed. We’ve got Colored, black, British, Chinese, white, Indian, Afrikaans, everybody. So from an early age I learned to accept these different people. In our school it’s about what kind of reputation you make for yourself, what kind of person you are. . . .

I have a really big group of friends, and within that group we have the whole country. But there’s never been any weirdness between us at all. We aren’t black, white, Indian, or Colored; we’re just us. We don’t actually look at anybody’s race; it’s just, “Hey, you’re my friend, you’re a nice person. I like you.” . . .

Because we’re mixed, we’re more powerful; we get to learn from each other. If I were to be in a completely Indian community, it would always be the same things. But when I visit my friends’ homes, I see differences in their settings, and all of our families deal with things totally differently. It’s a learning experience.

I’ve also been to Soweto and Eldorado Park [a black township and a Colored one, both located near Johannesburg] many times, and I’ve been able to see what other people are actually going through. It’s good for me to see that I’m not the only person on earth and not everybody lives like me. I’ve been able to grow up with everything I need. If I didn’t see those places, I would think that everybody had normal houses and enough money to do what they wanted like I do. Then I think I’d be quite small-minded.

Each of the students featured in this reading is an individual with a unique identity. What distinguishes Lavendhri Pillay from other people? One way to look at her identity is by creating a chart like the one below. It contains the words individuals call themselves as well as the labels that society attaches to them. What words or phrases does Pillay use to define herself? What words might others use to describe her? Include both in her identity chart. Then make similar charts for Ricardo Thando Tollie and Leandra van Vuuren. How are the three charts alike? What differences seem most striking?



Create an identity chart for yourself. Compare and contrast your chart not only to the ones you made for the three South African students but also to those of your classmates. What categories are on almost every chart? Which appear on only a few? What do the charts suggest about the way society's labels influence our sense of who we are and what we may become?

Psychologist Deborah Tannen writes, "We all know we are unique individuals but we tend to see others as representatives of groups. It's a natural tendency; since we must see the world in patterns in order to make sense of it; we wouldn't be able to deal with the daily onslaught of people and objects if we couldn't predict a lot about them and feel that we know who or what they are." Although Tannen considers it "natural" to generalize, she views stereotypes as offensive. A stereotype is more than a judgment about an individual based on the characteristics of a group. Stereotyping reduces individuals to categories. Look for stereotypes in this reading. How do these stereotypes shape the way the individual sees the world? Perceives his or her choices? How can stereotypes be broken? How important is it that they be broken?

In *The House on Mango Street*, American author Sandra Cisneros describes the consequences of not knowing people who are different from us:

Those who don't know any better come into our neighborhood scared. They think we're dangerous. They think we will attack them with shiny knives. They are stupid people who are lost and got here by mistake.

But we aren't afraid. We know the guy with the crooked eye is Davey the Baby's brother, and the tall one next to him in the straw brim, that's Rosa's Eddie V. and the big one that looks like a dumb grown man, he's Fat Boy, though he's not fat anymore nor a boy.

All brown all around, we are safe. But watch us drive into a neighborhood of another color and our knees go shakity-shake and our car windows get rolled up tight and our eyes look straight. Yeah. That is how it goes and goes.

Sandra Cisneros refers to outsiders as “those who don’t know any better.” What is she suggesting about the way their lack of knowledge shapes their perceptions of us? How then does knowledge affect the way we see ourselves? What does her story suggest about the way ignorance affects the way we see others? Our behavior toward them? To what extent do the three interviews with the South African students support her views?

Ricardo Thando Tollie says that outsiders know very little about his community. How does he suggest that they learn about the place he lives? What does he know about people in other communities? How do you think he acquired his information? How do you find out about neighborhoods other than your own? What part does TV play in shaping your impressions of people you’ve never met? How else do you acquire those impressions? How do people in other neighborhoods learn about you and your friends?

Leandra van Vuuren’s ideas have begun to change. She says of those changes:

It’s strange that just by eating with someone or going to church with someone, you can begin to see them. Earlier this year, before I went to camp [with blacks], I saw shacks in the city where black people were living, and I laughed. But you know, now I’m learning more, and I see that if we had to live in that, we wouldn’t laugh, we wouldn’t think it was a joke. I used to think it was all right when I’d see stories on TV about how white policemen used to hit black people. But now I see they are also human beings, and they need a chance to live.

What do her experiences suggest about the ways people grow and change? What advice might Lavendhri Pillay give van Vuuren about getting to know people whose lives are different from her own? What advice would you give her? What experiences have helped you or your friends understand someone else’s point of view? What experiences have had the opposite effect? Interview friends and adults about experiences that have brought together people from different neighborhoods and backgrounds. What do these experiences have in common?

What do you think Steve Biko meant when he wrote, “A people without a positive history is like a vehicle without an engine.” How is one’s identity linked to the past?

Dividing Humankind

READING 2

For centuries, race determined one's place in not only South Africa but also countries around the world. When apartheid was established in 1948, it was, in Nelson Mandela's words, a "new term for an old idea." In his autobiography, he describes the way notions about race shaped his identity as a boy in South Africa during the 1920s.

I was born free—free in every way that I could know. Free to run in the fields near my mother's hut, free to swim in the clear stream that ran through my village, free to roast mealies under the stars and ride the broad backs of slow-moving bulls. As long as I obeyed my father and abided by the customs of my tribe, I was not troubled by the laws of man or God.

It was only when I began to learn that my boyhood freedom was an illusion, when I discovered as a young man that my freedom had already been taken from me, that I began to hunger for it. At first, as a student, I wanted freedom only for myself, the transitory freedoms of being able to stay out at night, read what I pleased, and go where I chose. Later, as a young man in Johannesburg, I yearned for the basic and honorable freedoms of achieving my potential, of earning my keep, of marrying and having a family—the freedom not to be obstructed in a lawful life.

But then I slowly saw that not only was I not free, but my brothers and sisters were not free. I saw that it was not just my freedom that was curtailed, but the freedom of everyone who looked like I did. That is when I joined the African National Congress, and that is when the hunger for my own freedom became the greater hunger for the freedom of my people. It was this desire for the freedom of my people to live out their lives with dignity and self-respect that animated my life, that transformed a frightened young man into a bold one, that drove a law-abiding attorney to become a criminal, that turned a family-loving husband into a man without a home, that forced a life-loving man to live like a monk. . . .

Mandela was born at a time when most people of European descent in South Africa believed that humankind was divided into separate, distinct, and unchanging races. Because they considered their own race superior to the others, their rights took precedence over everyone else's. Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd, the "architect of apartheid" and later prime minister of South Africa, expressed those ideas in his speeches:

We send this message to the outside world and say to them . . . that there is but one way of saving the white races of the world. And that is for the White and non-White in Africa each to exercise his rights within his own areas. . . .

We have been planted here, we believe, with a destiny—destiny not for the sake of the selfishness of a nation, but for the sake of the service of a nation to the world of which it forms a part, and the service of a nation to the Deity in which it believes. . . .

For many years he taught those myths about human differences in his social science courses at the University of Stellenbosch. He, like many scholars in South Africa and elsewhere, defended those myths long after scientific advances revealed that they were false. In July 1950, even as South Africans were strengthening apartheid, an international group of scientists was issuing UNESCO's first "Statement on Race." It declares: "According to present knowledge, there is no proof that the groups of mankind differ in their innate mental characteristics, whether in respect to intelligence or tempera-

ment. The scientific evidence indicates that the range of mental capacities in all ethnic groups is much the same.”

Most white South Africans ignored the statement, as did many other people of European descent. They were reluctant to believe findings that contradicted what they had been taught in school, read in newspapers and magazines, and heard preached from the pulpit. So the myths and misinformation persisted. In researching her family’s history in the 1990s, Shirlee Taylor Haizlip confronted some of those myths about race in the United States today. In *The Sweeter the Juice*, the book she wrote about her experience, Haizlip summarizes her findings:

Dr. Luigi Cavalli-Sforza tells us in *The History and Geography of Human Genes*, the first genetic atlas of the world, . . . that modern Europeans (the ancestors of America’s immigrants) have long been a mixed population whose genetic ancestry is 65 percent Asian and 35 percent African. There never has been any such thing as a “Caucasoid” gene. Nor is there such a creature as a “pure” white or black American. During recent hearings of the Senate Committee on Government Affairs on the Human Genome Diversity Project, Dr. Cavalli-Sforza and Dr. Mary-Claire King, a geneticist at the University of California at Berkeley, discussed the implications of their work. They called racism “an ancient scourge of humanity” and expressed the hope that further extensive study of world populations would help “undercut conventional notions of race and underscore the common bonds between all humans.”

Just from looking at archival records of my family, I know that every census has measured race differently. In different periods the same people in my family were listed as mulatto, black, or white. The designation could depend on the eye of the beholder or the neighborhood where they lived. In the meantime, their neighbors, their co-workers, and their communities at large saw them as either black or white, depending on who decided what. . . .

In its 1998 statement on race, the American Anthropological Association (AAA) notes:

Physical variations in the human species have no meaning except the social [meanings] that humans put on them. Today scholars in many fields argue that race as it is understood in the USA was a social mechanism invented during the 18th century to refer to those populations brought together in colonial America: the English and other European settlers, the conquered Indian peoples, and those peoples of Africa brought to provide slave labor.

The report observes that in the early 1800s slaveholders justified slavery by magnifying differences among Europeans, Africans, and American Indians and insisting that those differences were “God-given.” A number of scientists incorporated these mistaken notions about human differences into their research. Eventually these myths about race spread to other areas of the world where they “became a strategy for dividing, ranking and controlling colonized people. . . .” But racist thinking was not limited to the “colonial situation.” The report goes on to say:

In the latter part of the 19th century, [race] was employed by Europeans to rank one another and to justify social, economic, and political inequalities among their peoples. During World War II, the Nazis under Adolf Hitler enjoined the expanded ideology of race and racial differences and took them to a logical end: the extermination of 11 million people of “inferior races”. . . and other unspeakable brutalities of the Holocaust.

Race thus evolved as a world view, a body of prejudgments that distorts our ideas about human differences and group behavior. . . . Racial myths bear no relationship to the reality of human capabilities or behavior. Scientists today find that reliance on such folk beliefs about human difference in research has led to countless errors.

CONNECTIONS

Sociologist Orlando Patterson has pointed out that “nearly all social scientists, except for those on the fringes, reject the view that racial differences have any objective or scientific foundation.” If race is a social invention, a myth, why is it so central to the way many people see themselves and others?

Create an identity chart for Nelson Mandela. How did racial myths shape his identity?

Martha Minow, a professor of law, writes, “When we identify one thing as unlike the others, we are dividing the world; we use our language to exclude, to distinguish—to discriminate.” How do her comments apply to the use of “racial” categories in everyday life? How do those categories affect the way we see ourselves? The way others view us?

During apartheid, hundreds of people officially changed their race each year by applying to a special government agency. In 1985, a government official reported:

702 Colored people turned white.	Two blacks became “other Asians.”
19 whites became Colored.	One black was classified Griqua.
One Indian became white.	11 Coloreds became Chinese.
Three Chinese became white.	Three Coloreds went Malay.
50 Indians became Colored.	One Chinese became Colored.
43 Coloreds became Indians.	Eight Malays became Colored.
21 Indians became Malay.	Three blacks were classed as Malay.
30 Malays went Indian.	No blacks became white and no whites became black.
249 blacks became Colored.	
20 Coloreds became black.	

Why would the government have a procedure for changing one’s race? How does that procedure confirm Shirlee Haizlip’s research into “racial classifications”? In 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. told Americans, “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.” What does it mean to be judged by the color of one’s skin rather than the “content of one’s character”?

In her novel *Paradise*, Toni Morrison, an African American, meditates on questions of race, issues of “us” and “them.” Some readers have noticed that she never mentions the race of several women in the book. When asked why, Morrison replies that she wants readers to “believe—finally—after you know everything about these women, their interior lives, their past, their behavior—that the one piece of information you don’t know, which is, their race, may not, in fact matter. And when you do know it, what do you know?” How would you answer her question?

History, Myth, and Memory

READING 3

In the late 1600s, a few Dutch settlers built a colony in southern Africa. Over time, their descendants came to see themselves not as Europeans but as Afrikaners, literally Africans. By the time Britain took control of the colony in the early 1800s, Afrikaners had their own language and culture. They clashed with the British on many issues, including slavery, which Britain abolished in 1834.



Courtesy of DK Publishing, Inc.

Fearful of losing control over their workers, anxious to preserve their identity, and eager for freedom from British rule, hundreds of Afrikaner families packed up their belongings in the 1830s and headed into the interior of Africa on what came to be known as the Great Trek. The Afrikaners, or Boers as they were also known (from the Afrikaans word for farmers), believed that the land was theirs to take. Black Africans vehemently disagreed. As a result, the Great Trek was marked by battles and other acts of violence.

One of those battles became central to the way Afrikaners saw themselves and their neighbors. On December 16, 1838, 468 Afrikaners with their Colored and African servants and about 60 African allies attacked a vast army of Zulu warriors to avenge an earlier loss to Dingaan, the Zulu ruler who claimed land that the Afrikaners wanted. A few days before the battle, Andries Pretorius and his followers made a covenant with God. They vowed that if they defeated the Zulus, they would build a church to mark the victory and they and their descendants would always celebrate its anniversary. They

not only won the battle; they killed so many Zulu warriors that a nearby river is said to have turned red from their blood.

Over time, Pretorius's covenant became the rallying cry of Afrikaners. According to one historian, when the Boers rebelled against Britain in 1880, they renewed that covenant by piling stones, "symbolizing both the past and the future: the past because the covenant had freed them from Black domination, and the future because they saw it as a sign that they would continue fighting until they regained their independence from British imperialists." During the two wars they fought with the British in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the Covenant became a symbol of resistance. When the British detained Afrikaner women and children in concentration camps during the second Anglo-Boer War, the prisoners observed "Dingaan's Day" as an act of defiance.

December 16th remained an Afrikaner holiday long after the British took over all of South Africa. Indeed, a few years after the war, Alexander Wilmot, an English-speaking member of the Cape parliament, claimed that the battle revealed "that cruel Zulu power must be crushed, or the white man could not live in South-East Africa." By then students throughout South Africa were required to learn the history of the "Battle of Blood River" and other events associated with the Great Trek. Z. K. Matthews, a professor at a university for Africans, recalled his school days during World War I:

The European insisted that we accept his version of the past and what is more, if we wanted to get ahead educationally, even to pass examinations in the subjects as he presents it. . . . The syllabus for matriculation emphasized South African history, so with Miss Noppe [an Afrikaner] we struggled through the white man's version of the so-called Kaffir Wars, the Great Trek, the struggles for the control of Southern Africa. Indeed, we studied this history not merely in the white man's version—which was invariably loaded with bias against the non-white—but in a distinctly pro-Boer version. It was as though we were American boys compelled to study the events of 1776 in a version dictated by Englishmen, and ultra-Tory [very conservative] Englishmen at that. If it was difficult for us to accept the white man's account of his own past doings, it was utterly impossible to accept his judgments on the actions and behavior of Africans, of our own grandfathers in our own lands. Yet we had to give back in our examination papers the answers the white man expected.

In 1938, on the 100th anniversary of the Covenant, over 100,000 Afrikaners gathered on a hill overlooking the city of Pretoria for three days of ceremonies. Speaker after speaker hailed the Great Trek as "the Central Event in the History of South Africa." One claimed that "Blood River made the Afrikaner volk [people] a Covenanted volk." Another told the enthusiastic crowd that "God created the color line. . . . God has willed that we must be a separate, independent volk."

After praising the families that set out on the Great Trek for "preserving the white race," Daniel Malan, the head of the National Party, asked, "Will South Africa still be a white man's country at the end of this new century?" To him, the answer was clear. South Africa would remain a "white man's country" only if Afrikaners united. In 1948, they went to the polls and gave the Nationalists control of parliament. The new government saw the victory as a mandate for apartheid.

Blacks in South Africa could not vote, but they could and did show their opposition to apartheid by organizing strikes, taking part in marches and demonstrations, and joining anti-apartheid groups like the African National Congress (ANC) and later the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC). Much of their anger focused on the pass laws—laws that

required blacks to carry identification papers that allowed the government to not only monitor but also control their movements within the country. Zulu Chief Albert Luthuli, then head of the ANC and later the first South African to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, explained why:

Without a pass, an African . . . has no right to work, to travel, to walk up a street, even to be alone at home. . . . The fear of a loud, rude bang on the door in the middle of the night, the bitter humiliation of an undignified search, the shame of husband and wife huddled out of bed in front of their children by the police and taken off to a police cell. . . .

South Africa for the African is a vast series of displaced person camps. Individuals are shuffled around. Whole towns of thousands of people are lifted up. . . and thrown down elsewhere. Each year half a million of my people are arrested under the Pass Laws.

On March 21, 1960, the PAC called for a massive demonstration against the pass laws. In Sharpeville, a black township near Johannesburg, over 5,000 unarmed Africans marched to the police station. They expected to fill the jails for violating the pass laws. Instead, the police panicked. They opened fire, killing 69 people and injuring nearly 200 others.

In the months that followed, protests mounted. The government responded by placing hundreds of individuals and groups under house arrest for publicly criticizing apartheid. Others were held in prison without trial. People around the world expressed their outrage at these violations of human rights. When South Africa sought to retain its membership in the British Commonwealth after becoming a republic in 1961, a number of countries threatened to leave the organization if South Africa was allowed to continue its membership. Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd, who was then prime minister, withdrew the application and South Africa left the Commonwealth.

That same year, the ANC reluctantly decided to begin armed resistance to apartheid. Nelson Mandela organized the ANC's new military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (the Spear of the Nation), or MK for short. He later explained why the group's first act of sabotage took place on December 16:

We chose December 16, Dingaan's Day, for a reason. On that day, white South Africans celebrate the defeat of the great Zulu leader Dingaan at the Battle of Blood River in 1838. Dingaan, the half brother of Shaka, then ruled the most powerful African state that ever existed south of the Limpopo River. That day, the bullets of the Boers were too much for the [weapons] of the Zulu [warriors] and the water of the nearby river ran red with their blood. Afrikaners celebrate December 16 as the triumph of the Afrikaner over the African and the demonstration that God was on their side; while Africans mourned this day of the massacre of their people. We chose December 16 to show that the African had only begun to fight, and that we had righteousness—and dynamite—on our side.

CONNECTIONS

How have the events described in this reading shaped the identity of white and black South Africans? How does our own history shape our sense of who we are? Our sense of what we may become?

What is a “covenant”? What does it mean to believe that you are a part of a “covenanted people”? How did that belief affect the way many Afrikaners viewed others? How did that belief shape the way they defined citizenship in South Africa? What were the consequences of that definition?

Antjie Krog, an Afrikaner poet, writes that apartheid resulted “memories forged in a vacuum.” How does the story of Dingaan’s Day illustrate that idea? What questions does the story raise about the dangers of a history that tells only part of the story? Research events in American history that have been “forged in a vacuum.” Possibilities include the Westward Movement, slavery, and Reconstruction. Interview your teachers, parents, and grandparents to find out how these events were taught when they were in school. How are they taught today?

Why do you think the ANC chose Dingaan’s Day for their first act of sabotage? What point were they trying to make?

In 1979, the University of South Africa held a conference on “problems in the interpretations of history,” including the covenant made before the Battle of Blood River. A professor of Afrikaner history planned to discuss the difficulties in determining its exact wording. As the professor approached the podium, a gang of young men burst into the room, dumped a can of tar over his head, and then plastered him with feathers. One of the men told the startled audience that “We as young Afrikaners are tired of seeing spiritual traditions and everything that is sacred to Afrikaners desecrated.” Why do you think the young Afrikaners were so threatened by the professor’s paper? What does their response to his proposed talk suggest about the power of myth? About the dangers of an identity created from a false or incomplete memory?

Sharpeville was a turning point in the life of Beyers Naude, an Afrikaner and a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church. In the 1950s many believed he might some day become prime minister. But after Sharpeville, Naude began to question the morality of apartheid and sharply criticize the stand his church and his government took on the issue of race. In 1964, he established the Christian Institute to bring together Christians of all races to discuss apartheid. A short time later, he and the organization were banned. What questions might Sharpeville raise for a minister like Naude?

Just after the massacre at Sharpeville, Dennis Brutus, a black South African poet, reflected on its meaning:

What is important
about Sharpeville
is not that seventy died:
nor even that they were shot in the back
retreating, unarmed, defenseless

and certainly not
the heavy caliber slug
that tore through a mother’s back
and ripped into the child in her arms
killing it.

Remember Sharpeville
bullet-in-the back day

Because it epitomized oppression
and the nature of society
more clearly than anything else;
it was the classic event

Nowhere is racial dominance
more clearly defined
nowhere the will to oppress
more clearly demonstrated

what the world whispers
apartheid declares with snarling guns
the blood the rich lust after
South Africa spills in the dust

Remember Sharpeville
Remember bullet-in-the-back day

And remember the unquenchable will for freedom
Remember the dead and be glad

What is the meaning of Sharpeville for Brutus? What does the word *classic* mean? In what sense was the massacre at Sharpeville “classic”? What is it that “the world whispers” and “apartheid declares with snarling guns”? What does Brutus want readers to remember? How is his understanding of the massacre similar to Naude’s? To your own? What differences among the three points of view seem most striking?

With the end of apartheid in 1994, educators in South Africa began to rethink the way they taught events like the Battle of Blood River. *Democracy in Action*, the journal of the Institute for Democracy in South Africa, reported that authors were now being “careful not to simply present two versions of a story which could suggest that one is right and the other wrong. Pupils are encouraged to appreciate that there are many perspectives and, in emphasizing interpretation, pupils come to understand that there is not only one answer to a question.” What do you think will be the effects of these new approaches to the past? To what extent can these approaches keep events in South African history from being “forged in a vacuum”? How does this approach encourage students to make judgments about right and wrong?

TIMELINE

For centuries, black and white South Africa have viewed the past from different perspectives. Even the “facts” of history became controversial. For example, despite evidence to the contrary, many South African history books written during apartheid claimed that when whites first came to the region in the 1600s, they encountered few blacks other than nomadic tribes of “Arabic origin.”

Millennia B.C.	The ancestors of the Khoikhoi and San are living in Southern Africa.
A.D. 300	Ancestors of Bantu-speaking South Africans begin to settle in South Africa.
1652	The Dutch start a colony in Southern Africa at the Cape of Good Hope.
1658	The Dutch import slaves to the Cape from Angola and West Africa.
1806	The British defeat the Dutch and the Xhosa and other African peoples.
1834	Britain ends slavery in all British colonies, including the Cape.
1836	The Great Trek begins, as Afrikaners leave the coast to establish new settlements.
1838	Afrikaners defeat Zulu warriors led by Dingaan at the Battle of Blood River.
1852-1854	Afrikaners form two republics, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State.
1880	The first of two Anglo-Boer wars begins.
1902	The second Anglo-Boer War ends with a British victory.
1910	The Union of South Africa is formed.
1912	The South African Native National Congress is formed to fight discrimination. It is later renamed the African National Congress (ANC).
1913	Afrikaners form the National Party to preserve their identity under British rule.
1914-19	World War I
1939-45	World War II
1948	The National Party comes to power and adopts a policy of apartheid.
1960	The Sharpeville massacre; the ANC and other activist groups are banned.
1961	The ANC turns to armed resistance.
1976	Soweto uprising; riots break out in black townships across the country.
1977	P.W. Botha becomes prime minister, later president of South Africa.
1978	South African Council of Churches supports civil disobedience.
1980	New surge of protests, strikes, and boycotts.
1983	United Democratic Front is formed to oppose apartheid.
1983	A new constitution grants limited power to Coloreds and Indians but not blacks.
1984	Uprisings in black townships; the government declares a state of emergency.
1986-87	Talks begin between Afrikaners and the ANC.
1986-95	Violent conflicts take place between Zulu supporters of Inkatha and the ANC.
1990	President F. W. de Klerk legalizes anti-apartheid groups and releases Mandela.
1991	Formal multi-party talks begin.
1993	Agreement is reached on an interim constitution; a transitional government meets.
1994	South Africa hold its first democratic elections.
1995	The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is established.
1996	South Africa adopts a new constitution to take effect in 1997.
1998	The Truth and Reconciliation Commission issues its report.



P.W. Botha



F.W. de Klerk



Attending a session of the the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Democracy and Apartheid

READING 4

In reflecting on his life, Nelson Mandela writes:



I cannot pinpoint a moment when I became politicized, when I knew that I would spend my life in the liberation struggle. To be an African in South Africa means that one is politicized from the moment of one's birth, whether one acknowledges it or not. . . .

I had no epiphany, no singular revelation, no moment of truth, but a steady accumulation of a thousand slights, a thousand indignities, a thousand unremembered moments, produced in me an anger, a rebelliousness, a desire to fight the system that imprisoned my people. There was no particular day on which I said, From henceforth I will devote myself to the liberation of my people; instead, I simply found myself doing so, and could not do otherwise.

During World War II, Mandela and many other blacks had reason to be optimistic about South Africa's future. In his autobiography, he recalls:

Change was in the air in the 1940s. The Atlantic Charter of 1941, signed by [U.S. President Franklin D.] Roosevelt and [British Prime Minister Winston] Churchill, reaffirmed faith in the dignity of each human being and propagated a host of democratic principles. Some in the West saw the charter as empty promises, but not those of us in Africa. Inspired by the Atlantic Charter and the fight of the Allies against tyranny and oppression, the ANC created its own charter, called African Claims, which called for full citizenship for all Africans, the right to buy land, and the repeal of all discriminatory legislation. We hoped that the government and ordinary South Africans would see that the principles they were fighting for in Europe were the same ones we were advocating at home.

During those years, however, the Afrikaner-controlled National Party was determined to undermine those democratic principles. A pamphlet issued before the 1948 elections stated:

The fundamental guiding principle of National Party policy is preserving and safeguarding the White race. . . . Churches and missions which frustrate the policy of apartheid will not be tolerated. . . . Educational institutions and social services for blacks should be situated in the reserves, instead of the present practice of providing them in urban locations. . . . Blacks in urban locations should be regarded as migratory citizens not entitled to political or social rights equal to those of the Whites. . . . We have in mind the repatriation of as many Indians as possible. . . . No Indian immigrants are henceforth to be admitted to the country. . . . Our party will not tolerate subversive propaganda among the non-whites against the whites.

Yet even as the National Party was implementing apartheid, the dream of a democratic nation lived on. In 1955, the ANC, the South African Indian Congress, the South African Colored People's Organization, and the all-white Congress of Democrats issued leaflets asking, "If you could make the laws, what would you do? How would you set about making South Africa a happy place for all the people who live in it?"

Suggestions poured in from social clubs, church groups, women's groups, schools, unions, and hundreds of individuals. The four organizations used those ideas to draft a "Freedom Charter" that was to be approved at a "Congress of the People."

The Congress met in Kliptown, a village southwest of Johannesburg, on June 25 and 26, 1955. Although most of the 3,000 delegates were black, over 300 Indians, 200 Coloreds, and 100 whites attended the meeting. Also in attendance were dozens of police officers. The first day, they photographed delegates. On the second day, they searched the delegates and confiscated their papers before breaking up the meeting. Despite the harassment, the Freedom Charter, in Mandela's words, became "a great beacon for the liberation struggle." It guided the policies of the ANC and other anti-apartheid groups in South Africa. The preamble reads:

We the people of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know:
 That South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of the people;
 That our people have been robbed of their birthright to land, liberty and peace by a form of government founded on injustice and inequality;
 That our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities;
 That only a democratic state, based on the will of the people can secure to all their birthright, without distinction of color, race, sex, or belief;
 And therefore, we, the people of South Africa, black and white, together—equals, countrymen, and brothers—adopt this FREEDOM CHARTER. And we pledge ourselves to strive together, sparing nothing of our strength and courage, until the democratic changes here set out have been won.

The role that the police played at the Congress revealed that South Africans, regardless of race, no longer had the right to peacefully assemble in opposition to apartheid. In the years that followed, more and more restrictions would be placed on dissent. As early as 1950, the government banned the South African Communist Party, which was open to people of all races. After Sharpeville, the government also banned the ANC and the PAC. Neither could publish its ideas or be quoted in the writings of others. Its members could not meet or openly express their views. Some leaders were detained without trial. Others were banned. Nelson Mandela described what banning meant to him:

My bans extended to meetings of all kinds, not just political ones. I could not, for example, attend my son's birthday party. I was prohibited from talking to more than one person at a time. This was part of a systematic effort by the government to silence, persecute, and immobilize the leaders of those fighting apartheid. . . . Banning not only confines one physically, it imprisons one's spirit. It induces a kind of psychological claustrophobia that makes one yearn not only for freedom of movement but spiritual escape.

In 1962, the government did more than ban Mandela. He and seven other ANC leaders were charged with treason. On June 11, 1964, all eight leaders were found guilty and sentenced to life in prison. Most, including Mandela, were sent to Robben Island, a desolate prison located off the coast of Cape Town. Mandela remained there until the mid-1980s when he was transferred to Pollsmoor prison in Cape Town. Over the years, he became the focus of anti-apartheid activity in South Africa and abroad. In 1985, Prime Minister P. W. Botha offered to release him on the condition that he reject violence as a political instrument. Mandela's daughter Zindzi read his reply at a rally:

I am surprised at the conditions the government wants to impose on me. I am not a violent man. . . . It was only when all forms of resistance were no longer open to us that we turned to armed struggle.

I am not less life-loving than you are. But I cannot sell my birthright, nor am I prepared to sell the birthright of the people, to be free. I am in prison as the representative of the people and of your organization, the African National Congress, which was banned. What freedom am I being offered whilst the organization of the people remains banned? What freedom am I being offered when I may be arrested on a pass offense? What freedom am I being offered to live my life as a family with my dear wife who remains in banishment in Brandfort? What freedom am I being offered when I must ask for permission to live in an urban area? What freedom am I being offered when I need a stamp on my pass to seek work? What freedom am I being offered when my very South African citizenship is not respected?

Only free men can negotiate. Prisoners cannot enter into contracts. . . . I cannot and will not give any undertaking at a time when I and you, the people, are not free. Your freedom and mine cannot be separated. I will return.

CONNECTIONS

Nelson Mandela writes, “To be an African in South Africa means that one is politicized from the moment of one’s birth.” What is he suggesting about the relationship between racism and power?

Write a working definition of the word *democracy*. What is the relationship between democracy and freedom? Between democracy and equality? Some people define democracy as a form of government. Others see it as a process; still others as an ideal. Which view is closest to the one Mandela expresses in this reading? Which is closest to your own view?

Compare and contrast the Freedom Charter with the U.S. Declaration of Independence and the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution. What similarities do you notice? What differences seem most striking? What do the three documents add to your understanding of democracy?

Not long after the Constitution was written, a number of Americans criticized the document because it did not protect individual rights. As a result of their protests, ten amendments were added to the Constitution. They are collectively known as the Bill of Rights. Locate a copy of the Constitution and read the Bill of Rights. Find out how civil rights activists in the United States have used the Bill of Rights in their struggle for freedom and justice. What do their struggle and the one for democracy in South Africa reveal about importance of the rights listed in the document?

It has been said that all South Africans, regardless of race or ethnicity, were victims of apartheid. What is the relationship between racial discrimination and freedom? Research the ways that segregation and other forms of discrimination in the United States affected the freedom of all Americans. Share your findings with your classmates.

In a 1964 speech, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated:

In our struggle for freedom and justice in the U.S., which has also been so long and arduous, we feel a powerful sense of identification with those in the far more deadly struggle for freedom in South Africa. We know how Africans there, and their friends of other races, strove for half a century to win their freedom by non-violent methods, and we know how this non-violence was met by increasing violence from the state, increasing repression, culminating in the shootings of Sharpeville and what has happened since. . . . Even in Mississippi we can organize to register Negro voters, we can speak to the press, we can in short organize people in non-violent action. But in South Africa even the mildest form of non-violent resistance meets with years of punishment, and leaders over many years have been silenced and imprisoned.

What similarities does King see between the civil rights movements in South Africa and the United States? What difference does he stress? How important was that difference to the ANC's decision to turn to violence in 1961?

Why did Mandela refuse to leave prison after being confined for over 20 years? What is his dream for South Africa? How did that dream shape Mandela's response to Botha's offer? Why do you think he chose to give his reply to his followers rather than to the prime minister?

Mandela learned about democracy in English missionary schools and universities, but his earliest lessons were in the court of the regent of the Thembu people. He writes in his autobiography:

Everyone who wanted to speak, did so. It was democracy in its purest form. There may have been a hierarchy of importance among the speakers, but everyone was heard, chief and subject, warrior and medicine man, shopkeeper and farmer, landowner and laborer. People spoke without interruption and the meetings lasted for many hours. The foundation of self-government was that all men were free to voice their opinions and equal in their value as citizens. (Women, I am afraid, were deemed second-class citizens.) . . .

The meetings would continue until some kind of consensus was reached. They ended in unanimity or not at all. Unanimity might be an agreement to disagree, to wait for a more propitious time to propose a solution. Democracy meant all men were to be heard, and a decision was taken together as a people. Majority rule was a foreign notion. A minority was not to be crushed by the majority.

How did the democracy Mandela experienced as a child shape the attitudes and values revealed in this reading? How is it like your own view of democracy? What differences seem most striking?

Violence and Apartheid

READING 5

In 1985, Archbishop Desmond Tutu outlined the relationship between apartheid and violence in a speech at the United Nations:



South Africa is a violent country and the primary violence . . . is the violence of apartheid. . . .

. . . Peaceful resistance and protest are virtually impossible in South Africa. If you are an effective opponent of apartheid then you may be charged with high treason or you may be detained under the emergency regulations; you may be banned. A three-year-old was killed by a police rubber bullet. An eleven-year-old was assaulted by the police until he died, also only recently. Another eleven-year-old was kept in jail for nearly two months for throwing stones, kept in custody with hardened criminals before he was released. A teenager had five teeth kicked out by police recently. I saw a teenager who was tortured in detention. He is a vegetable now. He says he wishes he could die. He walks and talks like a zombie. My son was detained for fourteen days because he swore at the police. He was said to be a danger to the security of the state.

We run the gauntlet of roadblocks. I am the Bishop of Johannesburg and I am a Nobel laureate. [In 1984, Tutu received the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of his efforts to end apartheid peacefully.] My wife and daughters have been stripped to be body-searched at a roadblock. Your dignity is not just rubbed in the dust. It is trodden underfoot and spat on. Our people are being killed as if they were but flies. Is that nothing to you who pass by? What must we say that we have not said? “God, give us eloquence such that the world will hear that all we want is to be recognized for what we are—human beings created in your image.”

The 1980s were years when the government of South Africa went to extraordinary lengths to maintain white control. They were also years when nations around the world began to impose trade sanctions on South Africa to encourage the government to change its policies.

As criticisms of apartheid mounted, white South Africans offered one “reform” after another as the solution to the nation’s problems. In 1983, they created a new constitution with a parliament divided into three houses—one was to be all-white; a second reserved for Colored members; and a third set aside for representatives of Indian descent. The three houses were by no means equal. Colored and Indian lawmakers could not overrule a decision made by their white counterparts.

Only about 60 percent of those eligible to vote for Colored or Indian members of Parliament registered for the first election, and just 30 percent of them actually went to the polls. Everyone else boycotted the elections. Dr. Allan Boesak, an ordained minister in the Dutch Reformed Church, led that boycott. Classified as Colored, Boesak was outraged at the idea of a parliament that excluded the vast majority of the nation’s population. The boycott resulted in a movement that united over 500 organizations in a broad coalition against apartheid. Known as the United Democratic Front (UDF), it was supported by both Boesak and Archbishop Tutu. At the group’s first meeting, Boesak reminded members who the “enemy” really was:

We must remember that apartheid does not have the support of all the whites. There are some who have struggled with us, who have gone to jail, who have been tortured and banned. There have been whites who died in the struggle for justice. We must therefore not allow our anger over apartheid to become the basis for blind hatred of all whites. . . . Let us, even now, seek to lay the foundations for reconciliation between whites in this country by working together, praying together, struggling for justice.

Government officials insisted that blacks were not excluded under the new constitution. They couldn't vote because they were not citizens of South Africa but of "independent" rural homelands created by the government. Each of these homelands was set aside for members of a particular tribe. Archbishop Tutu described the results of this government policy in his Nobel lecture:

Over three million of God's children have been uprooted from their homes, which have been demolished, while they have been dumped in the bantustan homeland resettlement camps. I say dumped advisedly: only rubbish or things are dumped, not human beings. . . . These dumping grounds are far from where work and food can be procured easily. Children starve, suffer the often irreversible consequences of malnutrition. This happens to them not accidentally but by deliberate government policy. They starve in a land that could be the bread basket of Africa, a land that normally is a net exporter of food.

The father leaves his family in the bantustan homeland, there eking out a miserable existence, while he, if he is lucky, goes to the so-called white man's town as a migrant, to live an unnatural life in a single-sex hostel for eleven months, being prey there to drunkenness, prostitution, and worse. This migratory labor policy is declared government policy and has been condemned as a cancer in our society even by the Dutch Reformed Church—not noted for being quick to criticize the government. This cancer, eating away at the vitals of black family life, is deliberate government policy. . . .

Apartheid has spawned discriminatory education such as Bantu education, education for serfdom, ensuring that the government spends only about one-tenth on a black child per annum for education of what it spends on a white child. It is education that is decidedly separate and unequal. . . . South Africa is paying a heavy price already for this iniquitous policy, because there is a desperate shortage of skilled manpower, a direct result of the shortsighted schemes of the racist regime. . . .

Another outcome of the policy was a growing violence. In the homelands, some militant young blacks attacked anyone they suspected of aiding the police. There were also clashes between supporters of rival groups. Nowhere was the violence more intense than in Natal, where followers of the ANC clashed with the Zulu followers of Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha party, often with the encouragement of the South African government.

CONNECTIONS

According to Archbishop Tutu, what is the relationship between apartheid and violence? To what extent does "violence beget violence"?

In his autobiography, Nelson Mandela recalls a heated debate within the ANC over armed resistance. Mandela writes of the stand he took in that debate.

I said it was wrong and immoral to subject our people to armed attacks by the state without offering them some kind of alternative. I mentioned again that people on their own had taken up arms. Violence would begin whether we initiated it or not. Would it not be better to guide this violence ourselves, according to principles where we save lives by attacking symbols of oppression, and not people? If we did not take the lead now, we would soon be latecomers and followers to a movement we did not control.

Is it possible to “guide” violence? To keep it under control? What other alternatives did the ANC and other anti-apartheid groups have to an armed struggle in 1961?

In describing the struggle against apartheid, Nelson Mandela writes that despite the oppression and brutality of apartheid, he never lost hope.

I always knew that deep down in every human heart, there is mercy and generosity. No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite. Even in the grimmest times in prison, when my comrades and I were pushed to our limits, I would see a glimmer of humanity in one of the guards, perhaps just for a second, but it was enough to reassure me and keep me going.

How do people learn to hate? How can they be taught to love? Mandela suggests that he learned from the courage of men and women who “risk and give their lives for an idea.” What was that idea? And how did it shape the way Mandela viewed himself and others?



Cells used to hold political prisoners during apartheid.

Time to Talk

READING 6

As opposition to apartheid expanded, many South Africans feared a long, violent civil war. Among them was Nelson Mandela. In his autobiography, he describes a conclusion he reached in 1986:

We had been fighting against white minority rule for three-quarters of a century. We had been engaged in armed struggle for more than two decades. Many people on both sides had already died. The enemy was strong and resolute. Yet even with all their bombers and tanks, they must have sensed that they were on the wrong side of history.

It was clear to me that a military victory was a distant if not impossible dream. It simply did not make sense for both sides to lose thousands if not millions of lives in a conflict that was unnecessary. It was time to talk.

A few Afrikaners had reached similar conclusions. For example, in 1987, two National Intelligence Service (INS) officials asked Willie Esterhuysen, a philosophy professor, to spy for his country by reporting on the internal workings of the ANC. President P. W. Botha chose the professor for the mission, because he was a favorite teacher of one of Botha's daughters.

In December 1987, with the help of intermediaries, Esterhuysen met in England with Thabo Mbeki, an ANC leader living in exile. One meeting led to another and yet another. Early in their talks, the Afrikaner confessed that he was reporting their conversations to the INS. To his surprise, Mbeki was delighted. He was looking for a reliable way to send messages to the government. Gradually the two men developed a friendship. Esterhuysen later recalled their discussions:

If you ask me when my real political liberation started, it was when I realized that South Africa's future is not dependent on Afrikaners alone. At school and even university, we were made to believe that the only real leaders of the country were white, and preferably Afrikaners. Interacting with people like Mbeki made me realize that this country has a pool of leadership which is not defined by a color, the color white or the language Afrikaans.

A number of other black and white South Africans were holding similar meetings. For both sides, contact could be dangerous. In 1986, when the news leaked out that an adviser to the Cooperation and Development Ministry had met with members of the ANC, he lost his security clearance and eventually his job. Matthew Goniwe, a leader of the United Democratic Front (UDF), was murdered after meeting with a deputy minister of education.

Even as secret talks progressed, the violence continued. So did protests and demonstrations. Leaders of the UDF, including Archbishop Tutu, organized a loose coalition of groups called the Mass Democratic Movement. In August of 1989, they launched a campaign of defiance that came to a climax on the 30th, when the police arrested 170 women, including Leah Tutu, the archbishop's wife, as they marched to the British Embassy to deliver a letter to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. The growing violence culminated with the murder of 20 protestors on election day.

When Tutu learned of the deaths, he wept and then prayed. The next day, he called for yet another march. The date was set for September 13th. To ensure a peaceful demonstration, Tutu asked diplomats from twelve countries, including ambassadors from Britain, the United States, and France, to monitor the protest. Until the last minute, no one was sure how the government would respond. In the end, President F. W. de Klerk gave permission for it to take place. It was the first legal protest in a generation.

On the morning of the 13th, over 30,000 men, women, and children marched down the streets of Cape Town to show their opposition to apartheid. At the head of the procession was Archbishop Tutu, the city's newly elected white mayor and the managing director of Shell South Africa (one of Cape Town's largest companies).



On October 15th, de Klerk released from prison every ANC leader except Mandela. On February 2, 1990, the president lifted the ban on the ANC, the PAC, the South African Communist Party, and a number of other organizations. Then on February 11th, he freed Nelson Mandela. In the weeks and months that followed Mandela's release, he and other anti-apartheid leaders would bring about what Albie Sachs, a white activist, has called a "negotiated revolution."

Many South Africans, including Archbishop Tutu, were astonished at the idea of having "Mr. Nelson Mandela and his team on one side of the table and on the other side Mr. F. W. de Klerk, the State President of South Africa, and his team actually sitting across from each other and talking as if they were human beings . . . and ending up discovering that, yes, they are human beings, that even if you looked hard as you liked, none of those in the room—so Thabo Mbeki of the ANC said—none in the room had horns. And try as hard as you did to see, none of them was sitting uncomfortably because they were sitting on a tail. . . ."

In November of 1993, the two sides agreed on an interim constitution. In April of 1994, South Africans of all races went to the polls, many for the first time, to elect a new government. Nelson Mandela and the ANC won the election.

Soon after Mandela became president, the new parliament established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to investigate and record gross violations of human rights committed in South Africa and beyond its borders between 1960 and 1994. The task was to reconcile a country deeply divided by apartheid. To achieve that task the truth had to be told. Some South Africans wanted trials like the ones the Allies held in Nuremberg, Germany, after World War II. Others argued for blanket amnesty. They compromised by creating the TRC. Perpetrators who agreed to testify could receive amnesty.

Dullah Omar, South Africa's new minister of justice, emphasized that in his view the aim of the TRC was not forgiveness. "Forgiveness is a personal matter. However, bitterness can only exacerbate tensions in society. By providing victims a platform to tell their stories and know the destiny of their loved ones, one can help to achieve a nation reconciled with its past and at peace with itself."

Others involved with the TRC focused on an African concept known as *ubuntu*. Tutu has defined it as "our humaneness, caring, hospitality, our sense of connectedness, our sense that my humanity is bound up in your humanity." An American reporter, skeptical of the idea, asked Siphso Maduna, a young ANC leader in a township racked by violence, about revenge. She writes of their conversation:

He told me quietly that God had exacted revenge on his behalf. Why, I asked, were his tormentors dead already? He laughed. The “revenge” he spoke of was the ANC’s victory in the elections. . . . And that for Siphso, was the sweetest revenge of all. It was a matter of ubuntu, he said; in giving up power the white government had implicitly admitted that it was wrong. Free and fair elections were their apology for apartheid. “And if people apologize, we Africans must accept their apology,” he carefully explained, aware that this philosophy was alien to my culture. “That is ubuntu.”

Siphso knew better than anyone that whites and blacks were not the only ones in need of reconciliation. For the bitterest battles of his life had not involved white police, but black members of Inkatha [a Zulu-dominated party]. And for his role in that fighting—in which he estimates that his self-defense unit killed hundreds of Zulu hostel dwellers—Siphso himself may be expected to appear before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, or face prosecution. The commission is charged with reconciling not just apartheid belligerents, but all belligerents.

As plans for the TRC took shape, Albie Sachs, who spent 23 years in exile for his opposition to apartheid, participated in an international conference on healing and reconciliation. He told participants that shortly after his return from exile, he visited a memorial to the 26,370 women and children who died during the Anglo-Boer War.

The first thing I saw was a memorial to ballingskap, to exile, and it was meaningful to me because of my recent return to South Africa. In the pavilions there were relics of the concentration camps in which Boer women and children were detained and details about their deaths. From the prisoner of war camps in Ceylon and Bermuda there were photographs and letters written by barely literate prisoners to their families. All this brought to mind the suffering of our generation in South Africa—and it was clear to me that suffering knows no boundaries: all South African communities have known it at different times. But on one wall of the monument there was a proclamation in High Dutch, which, according to my hosts, meant something to the effect of “We won’t forgive; we won’t forget.” To them the two words were synonymous. It troubled me to find such a sentiment among this authentic collection of the suffering of a generation, and it made me wonder how much that slogan had informed South African history and how much subsequent suffering had resulted from the lack of recognition and acknowledgement of that original suffering.

We now have a chance to speak for the first time in the name of the whole South African nation and to end this cycle of suffering and revenge in which the identities of those involved alternate.



CONNECTIONS

When a TV interviewer asked newly elected President Mandela to name one of his heroes, he spoke of Kobie Coetsee, a former minister of justice and Mandela’s official jailer for nearly a decade. Why was he a hero? Mandela explained that at a time when the uprisings in the townships and government repression were at their height, “hardly any leader of the National Party was prepared to associate himself with a move that would entail the government sitting down with the ANC—a terrorist organization—to discuss any question, including that of peace.” Coetsee was among the few, Mandela told the interviewer, with “the courage, the honesty and the vision to realize that this was the only solution.” What kind of courage does it take to talk? What do those talks suggest about the way former enemies came to see one another as human?

Some people have called the transfer of power in South Africa “a miracle.” Sachs calls it a “negotiated revolution.” In his forthcoming autobiography, he explains that it was “based on meetings and yet more meetings, endless, endless meetings, above-ground, underground, in prison, on Robben Island, in exile, meetings, some boring, some interesting, all with their ‘agendas,’ and ‘matters arising’ and ‘any other business,’ meetings, meetings.” He goes on to note:

We had willed it all, worked for it, never given up, never let go of the basic ideas. Yes, we had believed—belief had been fundamental—but we had backed it up with endless hard work, and learned how to do things together, and to accommodate the fears and interests of others, and to survive the sarcasm and disbelief of those who regarded themselves as more knowledgeable than ourselves about what they called the real world, and we had just kept going on and on until at last the impossible became feasible, then real, and finally inevitable.

How would you characterize the transfer of power in South Africa? Do you think it was a revolution? What are the characteristics of a revolution? Can revolutions be negotiated at business meetings?

Define *ubuntu*. How important is it to democracy? To a society that values all of its citizens?

In reflecting on truth and reconciliation, Albie Sachs noted:

There is a vast amount of human reconstruction and reconciliation to be done that goes beyond the old “us” and “them,” the freedom fighters and the [government]. I think of those in our own ranks—. . . the betrayers and counter-betrayers—terrified, threatening, still murderous. What will happen to them? . . . Who can speak about reconciliation and reintegration where whole communities have been involved in bitter feuds and killings passed down for almost a generation now?

What happens to the collaborators working in the [homelands] some of them corrupt and wealthy? How do we relate to them as neighbors and South Africans?

There has to be a comprehensive approach to all these questions. No one is left out of truth or of the broad South African reconciliation. We should not hope to make everybody who has been a killer, an assassin, into a wonderful new human being. As far as I am concerned, it is enough to simply stop them from killing.

What is Sachs suggesting about the challenges that lie ahead for South Africans? How does he seem to define the word *reconciliation*? Is it synonymous with forgiveness? What does he see confronting the nation’s history as an alternative to revenge?

How does a nation break the cycle that Sachs describes? Write your views in your journal. After watching the documentary, reread what you wrote. What would you change? What would you add? How does what you learned apply to your community? Your country? What new questions do you have?

FACING THE TRUTH

On July 19, 1995, South Africa established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) with separate committees on human rights violations, amnesty, and reparation and rehabilitation. Its mission was based on the belief that “to achieve unity and morally acceptable reconciliation, it is necessary that the truth about gross violations of humans rights must be: established by an official investigation unit using fair procedures; fully and unreservedly acknowledged by the perpetrators; made known to the public, together with the identity of the planners, perpetrators, and victims.” Amnesty would be granted only to those who applied for it and fully disclosed their misdeeds.

In a trial, the focus is on the perpetrator. At the hearings the TRC would hold, the focus would be on the victims and their families. As Alex Bouraine, who served on the TRC, said at an international conference, “To ignore what happened to thousands of people who were victims of abuse under apartheid is to deny them their basic dignity. It is to condemn them to live as nameless victims with little or no chance to begin their lives over again.”

As you watch *Facing the Truth with Bill Moyers* and listen to some of the testimonies the TRC heard, think about the power of storytelling; the importance of confronting the truth; the value of justice; the difference between forgiving and forgetting; the meaning of courage; and the legacies of this history for other countries and for generations to come in South Africa.

1. “They came to tell their stories.”

Segment 1 provides a brief overview of the events that led to the establishment of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It also introduces the viewer to the voices of both the victims and the perpetrators.

CENTRAL QUESTION: How does a nation’s past affect its ability to move forward?

What does Archbishop Desmond Tutu mean when he says, “The past has a way returning to you. It doesn’t go and lie down quietly.” How does the past return? Why doesn’t it “lie down quietly”?

It has been said that the last battles fought in every struggle are over memory—over the way that struggle will be remembered. How important are the testimonies of the victims to that struggle over memory? How necessary is it that each, in Archbishop Tutu’s words, cease “to be a statistic” and become “a real live human being who says this, that, and the other happened”?

How important is it that victims be allowed to tell what happened to them? What do their stories reveal about the ways memory and identity are linked? Why do you think the new government of South Africa chose to broadcast their testimonies to the nation? Bystanders did not testify before the TRC. What might they have added to our understanding of what happened and why it happened? A number of sociologists believe that bystanders play a critical role in every society. “They can,” writes Professor Ervin Staub, “define the meaning of events and move others toward empathy or indifference. They can promote values and norms of caring, or by their passivity of participation in the system, they can affirm the perpetrators.” Based on the testimony you have heard so far, which role did bystanders play in South Africa?

Listening to a session of the TRC



Segment 1 runs from the opening through Max du Preez: “That was the moment we all stopped in our tracks and looked back and said, what have we done?”

Begins: 1:00:30

Ends: 1:10:23

The word *truth* is used again and again in this segment. Write a working definition of the word. A working definition is one that expands and deepens as you explore further. Begin with a dictionary definition of the word. Then add the meanings that the TRC seems to attach to the word in this segment. Also include the ways the victims and the perpetrators seem to define the word. Other key words in this segment are reconciliation and amnesty. Write a working definition of each of them as well.

Suppose the United States had organized a Truth and Reconciliation Commission after the Civil War or the forced removal of the American Indians to reservations. Whose testimony would you have liked to hear? What questions might you have asked? What effect do you think such a commission might have had on American history? If the United States created a TRC today, what might its focus be? How might it affect relations among the many individuals and groups within the nation?

As South Africans planned a truth and reconciliation commission, they met with people who had organized similar commissions in their countries. Research the work of truth commissions in Chile, Argentina, and El Salvador. What are the similarities? What differences seem most striking?

FOR FURTHER READING

The following books may be helpful in exploring the struggle for liberation in South Africa.

Mandela, Nelson. *Long Walk to Freedom*. (Little Brown, 1994, 1995)

Tutu, Desmond. *The Rainbow People of God: The Making of a Peaceful Revolution*. Edited by John Allen. (Doubleday, 1994)

Waldmeir, Patti. *Anatomy of a Miracle: The End of Apartheid and the Birth of a New South Africa*. (W.W. Norton, 1997)

Siphiwo Mtimkulu



Segment 2 runs from Bill Moyers: "For two years, Max du Preez reported. . ." through Moyers: "Only now are the secrets of the state being revealed."

Begins: 1:10:23

Ends: 1:23:16

2. "Have we sunk so low?"

Segment 2 focuses on two sets of stories. The first features Siphiwo Mtimkulu, a student activist in Port Elizabeth in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Like other activists, he was detained without a trial and tortured. When he was released from jail in 1982, he decided to sue the state for trying to kill him. He disappeared shortly after filing his lawsuit. His family did not know what happened to him until four security police officers applied for amnesty for their role in Mtimkulu's death. The second set of stories concerns the murders of four United Democratic Front activists from the town of Cradock in 1985. At the time, their deaths prompted rumors of death squads and state-sponsored murder. A government inquest in the 1980s absolved the state of responsibility. The testimony of the killers before the TRC reveals what the inquest failed to learn.

CENTRAL QUESTION: "Why did you do it?"

When one of the men who murdered the "Cradock Four" is asked, "Why did you do it?" he responds by saying, "I have asked myself that question many times." After hearing the testimony of Siphiwo Mtimkulu's killers, Bishop Tutu wonders, "Have we sunk so low?" Many psychologists and sociologists have tried to explain why the perpetrators of atrocities often treat their victims far worse than their superiors demand. Some scholars trace their behavior to racism and other beliefs that label some groups as "different," even "less than human." Others focus on opportunism, peer pressure, a strong

desire to please authority figures, or the need to conform. Based on what you know about human behavior and the testimony of Mtimkulu’s murderers and the security police officers responsible for the deaths of the “Cradock Four,” what factor or combination of factors leads to atrocities?

In the late 1960s, Philip Zimbardo, a psychologist at Stanford University chose 24 young men—“mature, emotionally stable, normal, intelligent college students”—for an experiment. He arbitrarily assigned them to be “guards” or “prisoners” in a simulated prison. He reported:

At the end of only six days we had to close down our mock prison because what we saw was frightening. It was no longer apparent to most of the subjects (or to us) where reality ended and their roles began. The majority had indeed become prisoners or guards, no longer able to clearly differentiate between role playing and self. There were dramatic changes in virtually every aspect of their behavior, thinking, and feeling. In less than a week, the experience of imprisonment undid (temporarily) a lifetime of learning; human values were suspended, self-concepts were challenged and the ugliest, most base, pathological side of human nature surfaced. We were horrified because we saw some boys (guards) treat others as if they were despicable animals, taking pleasure in cruelty, while other boys (prisoners) became servile, dehumanized robots who thought only of escape, of their own individual survival, and their mounting hatred for the guards.

Zimbardo says he “called off the experiment not because of the horror I saw out there in the prison yard but because of the horror of realizing that I could have traded places with the most brutal guard or become the weakest prisoner full of hatred at being so powerless.” How does his statement address Bishop Tutu’s question: “Have we sunk so low?”

Bill Moyers notes that “patterns were emerging” at the amnesty hearings. What were those patterns? What did they reveal about what happened? About why it happened?

It has taken 15 years for Joyce Mtimkulu to learn what happened to her son. How does she respond to the testimonies of the perpetrators? Why is it important to her to know what happened? What does she still want from her son’s killers?

The word *forgiveness* is used again and again in this segment. What does it mean to ask for forgiveness? To offer forgiveness? What does the word mean to Joyce Mtimkulu? Have the men who murdered her son asked for forgiveness or for amnesty? What is the difference between the two words?

FOR FURTHER READING

The following can be used to find out more about human behavior or dissent during apartheid.

Facing History and Ourselves, Holocaust and Human Behavior. (1995) See Chapter 5 for readings that describe research on obedience and conformity—particularly the work of Stanley Milgram.

Tutu, Desmond. *The Rainbow People of God: The Making of a Peaceful Revolution.* Edited by John Allen. (Doubleday, 1994)

Tessendorf, K.C.. *Along the Road to Soweto.* (Atheneum, 1989)

Thandi Shezi



3. "I wish to go back to collect my soul."

Segment 3 features Thandi Shezi. She is one of many women who were victims of torture, rape, and other acts of violence during apartheid. Shezi has chosen to publicly tell her story even though she may never learn the names of the policemen who raped her. She describes how she is regaining her voice through her work with a theater troupe in Johannesburg that retells some of the stories brought to the TRC.

CENTRAL QUESTION: Is healing possible after an atrocity?

Why did Thandi Shezi and a few other women agree to tell their story publicly? What does Shezi mean when she says, "I wish to collect my soul, for the real Thandi is still there at the corner. The Thandi that is talking and moving is not the real Thandi"? What is she suggesting happened to the "real Thandi"? How may speaking out help her "collect her soul"?

Many psychologists and psychiatrists stress the importance of speaking of atrocities in order to heal. Through a process of truth-telling, mourning, taking action and fighting back, and by reconnecting to others, they believe that even severely traumatized individuals can be helped. How does the interview with Thandi Shezi reflect that process? How does her story help us understand the courage it takes to speak about the "unspeakable"? About the importance of doing so?

By testifying publicly, Shezi has come to see herself not as a victim but as an actor, as someone who can educate others. In the telling, how does she transform a story about shame and humiliation into a portrait of pride and dignity, of healing and recovery?

Stories like Thandi Shezi's are fragments, parts of a person's life. They are not the whole story of her life. They are not even representative of her life. Yet because we do not know more about her, these fragments become central to the way we see her. Some wonder why anyone would reveal such powerful fragments of their life to strangers. Why do you think Shezi decided to speak despite the pain? How do her stories deepen our understanding of what happened and why it happened?

FOR FURTHER READING

A new book explores the ways various nations, including South Africa, have tried to heal after collective violence.

Minow, Martha. *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History After Genocide and Collective Violence*. (Beacon, 1998)

4. "I was doing my job."

Segment 4 features a group of mothers whose sons disappeared in 1986. Only when the police officers responsible for their deaths apply for amnesty do the mothers and the world learn what happened to the boys. The mothers travel to the site of the murders to find the remains of their children. Not only do they find nothing but leave believing that they do not yet know the "real truth." The killers defend themselves by claiming they were just doing their job.

Segment 3 runs from woman: "I was proud of the fact that I had joined..." through Thandi Shezi: "The Thandi that is talking..."

Begins: 1:23:24

Ends: 1:32:10

Mothers of the missing boys.



Segment 4 runs from singers at the Khulumani session through Cronje: "...to eliminate activists and terrorists involved in serious crimes."

Begins: 1:32:11

Ends: 1:43:32

CENTRAL QUESTION: Why is it important to hear both the stories of the victims and the perpetrators? What does each add to our understanding of not only what happened but also why it happened and what it meant?

What does Maria Ntuli mean when she says, “It’s always going to be in my heart. That open space. . . for my son”? How does the group known as Khulumani help her and others who have lost sons deal with that “open space”? To what extent is talking to one another healing? To what extent is telling one’s story publicly healing? What do they want people to know about their sons?

A young victim of violence testified at a special TRC hearing for children. While she was there, she met children from other parts of South Africa who had suffered as well. She said of the experience:

It was healing to see that other people had problems, too, some even more than mine. I also think there are many more children who have stories like mine who did not get to speak, so we call ourselves lucky that we were included in the hearings. It helped me to speak there. Usually the people who go before the TRC look hurt when they are talking, but afterward, because they have told many other people, they look relieved. This is how I felt.

The women who attend the Khulumani group session have all lost loved ones. Some were killed by the government. Others were murdered by the ANC and other liberation groups. How does coming together and sharing their stories help them?

In reflecting on the testimony of the victims and their families, poet Antjie Krog writes that she felt the need for a “second narrative”—that of the perpetrator. “There can be no story without the balance of the antagonist. The ear and the heart simply cannot hold head above a one-way flood.” What do the stories told by the perpetrators add to our understanding of what happened to the boys? What do their stories fail to reveal?

Why is knowing what happened to their sons so important to the Mamelodi mothers? Why do they insist on knowing exactly where their children are buried?

Jack Cronje claims that he was only following orders. What does he suggest would have happened to him if he refused to participate? What meaning does he attach to such words as “preventive assassination,” “eliminate,” “blanket authority”? Is Cronje responsible for what he did? Is he guilty? How are he and others using language to distance themselves from their actions? To camouflage what they did?

After the U.S. Civil War, Captain Henry Wirz, commander of the Confederate prisoner-of-war camp at Andersonville, Georgia, was convicted of cruelties that resulted in the deaths of thousands of Union prisoners. Wirz argued that he was only obeying the orders of his commander. Even though the evidence supported Wirz’s claims, he was convicted because he followed orders willingly rather than under duress. What were the judges saying about obedience as a defense for a criminal act?

South Africa is not the only country where families mourn children “who disappeared without a trace, without bodies, without a word of truth about their disappearance.” In the 1970s, about 30,000 young dissidents in Argentina disappeared under similar circumstances. In 1997, Marcelo Brodsky, created a book of photographs in memory of his brother and others who disappeared in Argentina during those years. In the text that accompanies those pictures, one writer notes:

When suffering is unlimited we run the risk of abstraction. They tell us 10,000, 15,000, 30,000, and the figures shock us. But it is the horror of the figure, not of the people. That is why the mothers of the missing, of the disappeared, tirelessly lift signs showing those faces. “Look at them,” they say. “This is what they were like. They were not numbers. They were these faces that you see. And each of these faces belonged to a person who wanted to live, and love, and struggle.” The restitution of the face will come only through the obstinacy of memory.

How do South Africans featured in the documentary try to keep their loved ones from becoming abstractions? Why do some believe that the failure to remember is a “second disappearance”?

FOR FURTHER READING

The first book looks at the “disappeared” in Argentina. The other two focus on events, values, and beliefs that led to the “hit squads.”

Brodsky, Marcelo. *Bueno Memoria, Good Memories*. (Gaglianone, E.G.S.A., 1997)
 Tessenorf, K.C. *Along the Road to Soweto*. (Atheneum, 1989)
 Thompson, Leonard. *The Political Mythology of Apartheid*. (Yale University Press, 1985)

F.W. de Klerk



Segment 5 runs from Max du Preez: “Probably 90 percent, probably more than 90 percent ...” through du Preez: “It’s closure.”

Begins: 1:43:35

Ends: 1:57:48

5. “An all out war against the Blacks.”

Segment 5 highlights the choices made by the South African government between 1984 and 1989—the years P.W. Botha was prime minister and later president. Botha refused to testify before the TRC. F.W. de Klerk did testify but denied that murder and assassination were government policy. The men who carried out the murders and the assassinations disagree. They insist that they were following orders.

CENTRAL QUESTION: Where does guilt lie—with those who give the order, those who carry it out, or those who allow it to happen? Where does responsibility lie?

In his testimony, F.W. de Klerk acknowledges that the government permitted “unconventional strategies” and “extraordinary measures.” The groups who carried out those strategies and measures were known as the “Security Police” and the “Special Forces.” How is he using language to distance itself from what happened? To camouflage it?

What do you think that de Klerk means when he says that “I stand before you neither in shame or in arrogance”? How does he stand before the TRC? What is he willing to apologize for? What is he unwilling to assume responsibility for? Why does his testimony leave members of the Security Police and the Special Forces feeling betrayed?

In reflecting on de Klerk’s testimony, Judge Richard J. Goldstone of South Africa’s Constitutional Court and former Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunals on the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, wrote:

To apologize meaningfully for apartheid, President de Klerk would have had to admit that there was no justification at all for the policy he helped implement during the whole of his political career, and which his father (also a Cabinet member) had implemented before him. He would have had to admit that it was a morally offensive policy. He did neither of those things. I do not believe that his apology sprang from his perception that apartheid was a mistake, not because it was morally offensive but because it failed and that it was well meant in the interests of all South Africans.

What is the difference between admitting a “mistake” and admitting to a “morally offensive policy”? Why did he find it easier to acknowledge the former than the latter? How important is it that he acknowledge the latter?

After World War II, the Allies brought German officials to trial in the city of Nuremberg for war crimes and “crimes against humanity.” There the judges ruled that a person who commits a crime is not automatically excused by the fact that he or she obeyed a law, a decree, or an order from a superior. Is one only excused if he or she did not have a moral choice to act differently. Did the Jack Cronje and his men have a moral choice to act differently?

How were Jack Cronje and his men able to separate their “work” from their personal life? How have their testimonies shattered that separation?

What does the word *closure* mean? What part can the perpetrators play in bringing about closure?

FOR FURTHER READING

The following books offer insights into perpetrators.

Lelyveld, Joseph. *Move Your Shadow: South Africa, Black and White*. (Times Books, 1985)

Minow, Martha. *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History After Genocide and Collective Violence*. (Beacon, 1998)

Sereny, Gitta. *Into That Darkness*. (Pan Books, 1977) An interview with the commandant of the Nazi camp at Sobibor and later Treblinka.

Tessendorf, K.C. *Along the Road to Soweto*. (Atheneum, 1989) Tutu, Desmond. *The Rainbow People of God: The Making of a Peaceful Revolution*. Edited by John Allen. (Doubleday, 1994)

Waldmeir, Patti. *Anatomy of a Miracle: The End of Apartheid and the Birth of a New South Africa*. (W.W. Norton, 1997)

6. “Is it something worth doing?”

Segment 6 contains two interviews with freedom fighters. The first is with Bongani Linda, now the director of a community theater company in Alexandra Township near Johannesburg. The plays he directs are based on true stories about victims of apartheid. Linda uses them to raise questions about the TRC, the past, and the future. The second interview is with Albie Sachs, a justice on South Africa’s Constitutional Court. He expresses optimism about the TRC and the future of South Africa.

CENTRAL QUESTION: Is confronting the past worth doing?

Both Bongani Linda and Albie Sachs were activists. What is an activist? Why do you think the government viewed activists as terrorists? Both men risked much for the liberation of South Africa. How does each define apartheid? What is each willing to forgive? What is each unwilling to forget?

Both men are asked about revenge. How do they respond? In what respects are their views similar? How do you account for differences? What does Sachs mean when he says that he kept his eyes on the prize? What is the prize? To what extent has Linda done the same?

Bongani Linda with a friend.



Segment 6 runs from actor: “Rest in peace, soldier of the nation.” through Albie Sachs: “No one can say it never happened now.”

Begins: 1:58:12

Ends: 2:10:19

How do the actors in Linda's play read the words, "Forgive them"? What is Bongani Linda trying to say through those actors about forgiveness? About the relationship between forgiving and forgetting?

The actors in Linda's play express their concerns about the TRC. What are those concerns? How do you think the audience responds to them? How might Albie Sachs respond?

FOR FURTHER READING

For generations, writers in South Africa have been expressing their anger at apartheid. The books below represent a small sampling.

Gordimer Nadine. *My Son's Story*. (Penguin Books, 1990)

Mathabane, Mark. *Kaffir Boy: The True Story of a Black Youth's Coming of Age in Apartheid South Africa*. (Penguin, 1987)

Plumpp, Sterling, ed. *Somehow We Survive: An Anthology of South African Writing*. (Thunder's Mouth Press, 1982)

Rochman, Hazel, ed. *Somehow Tenderness Survives: Stories of Southern Africa*. (Harper, 1988)



7. "Truth is not enough."

Segment 7 runs from Moyers:

"For some people the Truth Commission does not go far enough." through Nkosinati Biko:

"Sadly, the truth of what happened here is known only to the four in this room."

Begins: 2:10:20

Ends: 2:18:39

Segment 7 focuses on Steve Biko, the leader of the Black Consciousness movement, and the efforts of his family to find out who killed him in 1977. Biko's son, Nkosinati, has not only challenged the testimony of the perpetrators but also wants them brought to trial. He does not believe that they should receive amnesty.

CENTRAL QUESTION: What does it mean to take responsibility for one's actions? To be accountable for one's actions?

In the 1970s, Steven Bantu Biko was a medical student and the leader of the Black Consciousness movement. He was also the founder of the South African Students' Organization (SASO), an organization committed to building black pride, self-reliance, and self-defense. Biko was only 30 when he was killed while in police custody. He left behind a wife and two sons, one aged seven and the other three. At his funeral, Desmond Tutu, then the bishop of Lesotho, said:

God called him to be the founding father of the Black Consciousness movement, against which we have had tirades and fulminations. It is a movement [that] sought to awaken in the black person a sense of his intrinsic value and worth as a child of God, not needing to apologize for his existential condition as a black person, calling on blacks to glorify and praise God that he had created them black. Steve, with his brilliant mind that always saw to the heart of things, realized that until blacks asserted their humanity and their personhood there was not the remotest chance for reconciliation in South Africa. For true reconciliation is a deeply personal matter. It can happen only between persons who assert their own personhood and who acknowledge and respect that of the others. You don't get reconciled to your dog, do you?

What was Tutu suggesting about the meaning of the word *reconciliation*? Why did he see it as personal? To what extent are Biko's sons following their father's teachings?

What are they demanding for him? What do they want of the perpetrators?

Helen Suzman was the only member of parliament to oppose apartheid for a number of years. In her memoirs, she recalls that even though she never met Biko she decided to attend his funeral. When she and her associates tried to make their way through the crowd, a young black man stopped them. Angry, she told him, “Look here. I didn’t come all this way to fight with you. I’m Helen Suzman, and I’ve come here to pay my respects to Steve Biko.” The young man asked for proof of her identity. After she showed him a credit card, he said, “Mrs. Suzman, I beg your pardon. You may certainly go through.” Many whites believed that Biko and his followers were anti-white. How does the incident Suzman describes in her autobiography challenge that view?

Among the words that are used again and again in this segment are *absolution*, *responsibility*, and *amnesty*. What meaning do these words have in this segment? How are they related to one another? What is their relationship to truth? To justice?

Many believe that there are crimes that are not deserving of forgiveness. What might those crimes be? Do you agree with that view?

FOR FURTHER READING

These books offer insights into the life and teachings of Steve Biko.

Biko, Steve. *I Write What I Like: A Selection of His Writings*. (Bowerdean Publishing, 1978, 1996)

Mathabane, Mark. *Kaffir Boy*. (Penguin, 1987)

Suzman, Helen. *In No Uncertain Terms: A South African Memoir*. (Knopf, 1993)

Tutu, Desmond. *The Rainbow People of God: The Making of a Peaceful Revolution*. Edited by John Allen. (Doubleday, 1994)

8. “Look me in the face.”

Segment 8 centers on a dramatic moment at the hearings: the confrontation between Dawie Ackerman and the young Africans who murdered his wife in church. The “St. James Massacre” took place in 1993 in a suburb of Cape Town. It left 11 people dead and 68 injured. The killings occurred at a time when the political parties were negotiating the nation’s first free elections.

CENTRAL QUESTION: Why is it important to the victims that the perpetrators look them in the face?

Why does Ackerman insist that the young Africans who murdered his wife face him? What is he suggesting about the link between truth and forgiveness? Compare and contrast Ackerman’s response to the individuals who murdered his wife with Joyce Mtinkulu’s response to her son’s murderers (Segment 2). What similarities seem most striking?

Replay the apology Makoma gave Ackerman. What does it suggest about the barriers to reconciliation? Psychiatrist James F. Gilligan says, “I have yet to see a serious act of violence that was not provoked by the experience of feeling shamed and humiliated, disrespected and ridiculed, and that did not represent the attempt to prevent or undo this ‘loss of face’—no matter how severe the punishment, even if it includes death.”

Dawie Ackerman



Segment 8 runs from Commissioner: “Do you swear the evidence you are about to give...” through Ackerman: “How on earth are we going to be reconciled?”

Begins: 2:18:51

Ends: 2:26:52

How do Gilligan's remarks relate to Makoma's explanation of what he did and why he did it? How do Gilligan's remarks relate to violence in South Africa in general, to the legacies of apartheid in particular? What do those remarks suggest about the way people can break that chain of violence?

FOR FURTHER READING

These books offer insights into violence and the ways it can lead to further violence.

Canada, Geoffrey. *Fist, Stick, Knife, Gun: A Personal History of Violence in America*. (Beacon, 1995)

Mathabane, Mark. *Kaffir Boy*. (Penguin, 1987)

Tessendorf, K.C. *Along the Road to Soweto*. (Atheneum, 1989)

Tutu, Desmond. *The Rainbow People of God: The Making of a Peaceful Revolution*. Edited by John Allen. (Doubleday, 1994)

Waldmeir, Patti. *Anatomy of a Miracle: The End of Apartheid and the Birth of a New South Africa*. (W.W. Norton, 1997)

Mcusta Jack (left)
and Laurence du Plessis



Segment 9 runs from Bill Moyers: "What are they doing here?...." through Moyers: "That's a real change isn't it?..."

Begins: 2:26:57

Ends: 2:35:00

9. "A former enemy. . ."

Segment 9 explores the evolving relationship between Mcusta Jack, a former leader in the anti-apartheid movement and now a contractor in Port Elizabeth, and Laurence du Plessis, a former colonel in the South African Defense Force and now one of Jack's employees.

CENTRAL QUESTION: How is it possible for former enemies to put aside the past and work together?

What questions would you like to ask Mcusta Jack? Laurence du Plessis? What does their story suggest about the "new South Africa"?

Why was du Plessis ostracized? How did being ostracized lead to his current job? What does the story suggest about the power of truth? About the way reconciliation may be achieved?

How is the story of these two men different from the other stories told in the documentary? What similarities seem most striking?

FOR FURTHER READING

The following books explore some of the challenges of the new South Africa.

Tutu, Desmond. *The Rainbow People of God: The Making of a Peaceful Revolution*. Edited by John Allen. (Doubleday, 1994)

Waldmeir, Patti. *Anatomy of a Miracle: The End of Apartheid and the Birth of a New South Africa*. (W.W. Norton, 1997)

10. "We have to deal with racism."

Segment 10 features a series of conversations that focus on issues of race and class in the "new South Africa." The first is with Bongani Linda (see Segment 6); the second with Archbishop Desmond Tutu; and the third with a group of white students at the University of Stellenbosch.

CENTRAL QUESTION: What are the obstacles to reconciliation and how can they be removed?

What does Bongani Linda see as the major obstacles to reconciliation? To what extent are those obstacles a legacy of racism? A result of differences in wealth? In social class? How are Linda's views similar to those of Archbishop Tutu? To students at the University of Stellenbosch? In reflecting on the three conversations, what differences seem most striking?

In a speech to the National Assembly in May, 1998, Thabo Mbeki, the Deputy President of South Africa, stated:

South Africa is a country of two nations. One of these nations is white, relatively prosperous. . . . The second and larger nation of South Africa is black and poor. . . . The longer this situation persists . . . the more entrenched will be the conviction that the concept of nation-building is a mere mirage, and that no basis exists, or will ever exist, to enable national reconciliation to take place. I am convinced that we are faced with the danger of a mounting rage to which we must respond seriously.

What questions might Mbeki ask the university students? What might he want them to know? What would you like to ask them? What would you like them to know?

Archbishop Tutu has defined *ubuntu* as "our sense that my humanity is bound up in your humanity." How is that idea reflected in Linda's conversation with Bill Moyers? To what extent do the students accept that idea? To what extent are their attitudes a legacy of apartheid? What do you think may be the consequences of those attitudes?

FOR FURTHER READING

The following book contains interviews with young South Africans.

No More Strangers Now: Young Voices From a New South Africa, interviews by Tim McKee, photographs by Anne Blackshaw, foreword by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. (DK Ink, DK Publishing, 1998)

11. "We are responsible for the future."

Segment 11 focuses on a discussion between poet Don Mattera and students at the Randfontein Public School outside Johannesburg. Their conversation explores the promises of and opportunities in the "new South Africa."

CENTRAL QUESTION: How do we as individuals and as citizens break "chains around the mind"?

University of Stellenbosch students



Segment 10 runs from dancer on stage through girl: "Wait, stay for awhile and you'll see."

Begins: 2:35:10

Ends: 2:44:29

Don Mattera



Segment 11 runs from the marching band to end of the film.

Begins: 2:44:30

Ends: 2:54

Don Mattera tells the students that “the chains around the mind are the dangerous chains.” What are those chains? In what sense are they dangerous? To whom are they dangerous? How does Mattera define apartheid? How is it related to the “chains around the mind”? How does he think those chains can be broken? What do the essays the children read suggest about the way they can be broken?

The poem Don Mattera reads the students is one of many he has written that celebrate the beauty of South Africa. Some of the individuals he names in his poem are familiar. Others require explanation. Bram Fischer was an Afrikaner who headed South Africa’s Communist party in the 1960s. He spent much of his life in prison for opposing apartheid. Helen Joseph was a white liberal who organized black and white women against apartheid. What do all of these individuals and groups have in common?

What does Mattera mean when he says that “Sorry is not just a word; it’s a deed. It is an act”? What is he suggesting that every citizen in South Africa must do before reconciliation can take place? How do the voices heard at the end of the film support that view of reconciliation? What questions do they raise about the difficulties in achieving it?

FOR FURTHER READING

The following book contains interviews with young South Africans.

No More Strangers Now: Young Voices From a New South Africa, interviews by Tim McKee, photographs by Anne Blackshaw, foreword by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. (DK Ink, DK Publishing, 1998)

The Final Report of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission

On October 29, 1998, South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission issued its final report. The following are excerpts from that report:

Primary Finding

On the basis of the evidence available to it, the primary finding of the Commission is that:

The predominant portion of gross violations of human rights was committed by the former state through its security and law-enforcement agencies.

Moreover, the South African state in the period from the late 1970s to early 1990s became involved in activities of a criminal nature when, amongst other things, it knowingly planned, undertook, condoned and covered up the commission of unlawful acts, including the extra-judicial killing of political opponents and others, inside and outside South Africa.

In pursuit of these unlawful activities, the state acted in collusion with certain other political groupings, most notably the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). . . .

Certain members of the State Security Council (the state President, Minister of Defense, Minister of Law and Order, and heads of security forces) did foresee that the use of words such as "take out," "wipe out," "eradicate," and "eliminate" would result in the killing of political opponents.

P.W. Botha

During the period that he presided as head of state (1978-1989) according to submissions made to and findings made by the Commission, gross violations of human rights and other unlawful acts were perpetrated on a wide scale by members of the South African Defense Force, including:

The deliberate unlawful killing and attempted killing of persons opposed to the policies of the Government, within and outside South Africa.

The widespread use of torture and other forms of severe ill treatment against such persons.

The forcible abduction of such persons who were resident in neighboring countries. Covert logistical and financial assistance to organizations opposed to the ideology of the ANC.

Inkatha

The Commission finds that in 1986, the South African Defense Forces (SADF) conspired with Inkatha to provide the latter with a cover, offensive paramilitary unit (or "hit squad") to be deployed illegally against persons and organizations perceived to be opposed to both the South African Government and Inkatha. . . . The Commission finds . . . that the deployment of the paramilitary unit in KwaZulu led to gross violations of human rights, including killing, attempted killing, and severe ill treatment. The Commission finds the following people, among others, accountable for such violations: Mr. P.W. Botha, Gen. Magnus Malan, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi. . . .

The ANC

While it was ANC policy that the loss of civilian life should be “avoided,” there were instances where members of its security forces perpetrated gross violations of human rights in that the distinction between military and civilian targets was blurred in certain armed actions, such as the 1983 Church Street bombing of the South African Air Force headquarters. . . . In the course of the armed struggle, the ANC through its security forces, undertook military operations which, though intended for military or security force targets, sometimes went awry for a variety of reasons, including poor intelligence and reconnaissance. The consequences in these cases, such as the Magoo’s Bar and Durban Esplanade bombings, were gross violations of human rights in respect to the injuries to and loss of lives of civilians.

Individuals who defected to the state and became informers and/or members who became state witnesses in political trials . . . were often labeled by the ANC as collaborators and regarded as legitimate targets to be killed. The commission does not condone the legitimization of such individuals as military targets and finds that the extrajudicial killing of such individuals constituted gross violations of human rights.

The Commission finds that, in the 1980s in particular, a number of gross violations were perpetrated not by direct members of the ANC or those operating under its formal command, but by civilians who saw themselves as ANC supporters. In this regard the Commission finds that the ANC is morally and politically accountable for creating a climate in which such supporters believed their actions to be legitimate.

ANC Camps

The Commission finds that suspected “agents” were routinely subjected to torture and other forms of severe ill treatment and that there were cases of such individuals being charged and convicted by tribunals without proper regard to due process, sentenced to death and executed.

Winnie Mandela

The Commission finds that Mrs. Madikizela-Mandela was central to the establishment and formation of the Mandela United Football Club, which later developed into a private vigilante unit. . . . The Commission finds that those who opposed Mrs. Madikizela-Mandela and the Mandela United Football Club, or dissented from them, were branded as informers and killed. The Commission finds that Mrs. Madikizela-Mandela . . . is accountable, politically and morally for the gross violations of human rights committed by the Mandela United Football Club.

The Commission finds further that Mrs. Madikizela-Mandela herself was responsible for committing such gross violations of human rights.



Archbishop Desmond Tutu opening a session of the TRC.

CONNECTIONS

Many South Africans objected to all or parts of the Final Report of the TRC. As you read a few of their comments, think about the individuals you saw and heard in the documentary. With which persons would they be most likely to agree? Least likely?

The Politicians: When the TRC handed over its final report to President Nelson Mandela, a section on F. W. de Klerk was blacked out. The TRC had to do so because de Klerk was suing to have his name removed from the report. The case is expected to go to court. De Klerk has also asked the state to pay for the suit because his actions during apartheid were carried out on behalf of the state. Thabo Mbeki, president of the ANC and deputy president of South Africa, claimed the TRC was gravely mistaken in finding the ANC guilty of serious abuses. The National Party accused the commission of “failure to achieve reconciliation.” The Inkatha Freedom Party called the TRC “a circus . . . a body crippled by political bias [that] could never hope to achieve proper reconciliation.”

Albie Sachs, a judge on South Africa’s Constitutional Court: “We’ve learned to look at each other’s eyes here. Otherwise you can’t get a country. We’re not South Africa yet. We’re becoming South Africa.”

Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, a member of the TRC’s Human Rights Violations Committee:

While some victims have been unhappy about having come forward with their stories, many others feel an incredible sense of validation. For these victims, nothing was more affirming than an opportunity to break the silence about the brutality they suffered during apartheid.

The commission allowed some victims and survivors an encounter with their perpetrators in ways that would not have been possible in a court of law. Herein lies one of the commission’s successes: the requests for forgiveness made by some perpetrators and the granting of forgiveness by some victims and survivors. This is unprecedented in the history of atrocities in the 20th century.

The commission’s final and greatest success is that violence was averted and South Africa did not plunge into a spiral of revenge following the end of apartheid.



Dr. Sean Kliski, a psychiatrist in Valkenberg: “The TRC is where the reality of this country is hitting home and hitting home very hard. And that is good. But there will be no grand release—every individual will have to devise his or her own personal method of coming to terms with what has happened. . . . I think people are too impatient. I personally would be very concerned if whites could overnight integrate information that overturns their whole world view. It will take decades, generations, and people will assimilate the truths of this country, piece by piece.”

John Battersby, editor of South Africa’s Sunday Independent: “I think it will take 10 to 15 years to integrate this process. People are far too close to it now, both black and white. The real challenge here is, can you build a nation out of incredibly diverse people. The Truth Commission is key to creating this sense of commonality.”



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