

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Mpilo Tutu. Born 1931

Desmond Tutu was born in Klerksdorp, in the South African state of Transvaal. His family moved to Johannesburg when he was 12, and he attended Johannesburg Bantu High School. Although he had planned to become a doctor, his parents could not afford to send him to medical school. Tutu's father was a teacher, and Desmond went on to train as a teacher at Pretoria Bantu Normal College. He graduated from the University of South Africa in 1954.

The government of South Africa did not extend the rights of citizenship to black South Africans. The National Party had risen to power on the promise of instituting a system of *apartheid* -- complete separation of the races. All South Africans were legally assigned to an official racial group; each race was assigned to separate living areas and separate public facilities. Only white South Africans were permitted to vote in national elections. Black South Africans were only represented in the local governments of remote "tribal homelands." Interracial marriage was forbidden; blacks were legally barred from certain jobs and prohibited from forming trade unions. Passports were required for travel within the country; critics of the system could be banned from speaking in public and subjected to house arrest.

When the government ordained a deliberately inferior system of education for black students, Desmond Tutu refused to cooperate. He could no longer work as a teacher, but he was determined to do something to improve the life of his disenfranchised people. On the advice of his bishop, he began to study for the Anglican priesthood. Tutu was ordained as a priest in the Anglican Church in 1960. At the same time, the South African government began a programme of forced relocation of black Africans and Asians from newly designated "white" areas. Millions were deported to the "homelands," and only permitted to return as "guest workers."





Desmond Tutu lived in England from 1962 to 1966, where he earned a master's degree in theology at King's College London. He taught theology in South Africa for the next five years, and returned to England to serve as an assistant director of the World Council of Churches in London. In 1975 he became the first black African to serve as Dean of St. Mary's Cathedral in Johannesburg. From 1976

to 1978 he was Bishop of Lesotho. In 1978 he became the first black General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches.

This position gave Bishop Tutu a national platform to denounce the *apartheid* system as "evil and unchristian." Tutu called for equal rights for all South Africans and a system of common education. He demanded the repeal of the oppressive passport laws, and an end to forced relocation. Tutu encouraged nonviolent resistance to the *apartheid* regime, and advocated an economic boycott of the country. The government revoked his passport to prevent him from traveling and speaking abroad, but his case soon drew the attention of the world. In the face of an international public outcry the government was forced to restore his passport.

In 1984, Desmond Tutu was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace, "not only as a gesture of support to him and to the South African Council of Churches of which he is leader, but also to all individuals and groups in South Africa who, with their concern for human dignity, fraternity and democracy, incite the admiration of the world."



Two years later, Desmond Tutu was elected Archbishop of Cape Town. He was the first black African to serve in this position, which placed him at the head of the Anglican Church in South Africa, as the Archbishop of Canterbury is spiritual leader of the Church of England. International economic pressure and internal dissent forced the South African government to reform. In 1990, Nelson

Mandela of the African National Congress was released after almost 27 years in prison. The following year the government began the repeal of racially discriminatory laws.

After the country's first multi-racial elections in 1994, President Mandela appointed Archbishop Tutu to chair the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, investigating the human rights violations of the previous 34 years. As always, the Archbishop counselled forgiveness and cooperation, rather than revenge for past injustice. In 1996 he retired as Archbishop of Cape Town and was named Archbishop Emeritus. Published collections of his speeches, sermons and other writings include *Crying in the Wilderness*, *Hope and Suffering*, and *The Rainbow People of God*.