

**T U T U**

**AUTHORIZED**



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**ALLISTER SPARKS & MPHO TUTU**

**FOREWORD BY BONO**

**INTRODUCTION BY HIS HOLINESS THE FOURTEENTH DALAI LAMA**



**HarperOne**

*An Imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers*



First produced and originated in 2011 by PQ Blackwell Limited  
116 Symonds Street, Auckland 1010, New Zealand

[www.pqblackwell.com](http://www.pqblackwell.com)

Publisher: Geoff Blackwell

Editor-in-Chief: Ruth Hobday

Concept Design: Cameron Gibb

Additional Design: Dayna Stanley

Production Manager: Sarah Anderson

Image Research: Gail Behrmann

Copy-editor: Rachel Clare

Editor: Lisette du Plessis

Proofreaders: Mary Dobbyn Proofreading Services

Indexer: Sam Hill

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FIRST EDITION

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available upon request.  
ISBN 978-0-06-208799-7

11 12 13 14 15 RRD(H) 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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## FOREWORD

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Everybody is trying to figure out their way in the world, their way through the world. How do you carry yourself? How can you be humble, yet not get walked upon? How do you hold your head up but not be fearful? For most it's not easy—for me it's impossible. And in my struggle to sort it out, Archbishop Desmond Tutu—"the Arch"—has been a role model like no other.

His leadership, his bravery, and the change he has brought to the world mark him out as extraordinary. Quite unlike the rest of us. But when you meet him, what strikes you is his very humanness, his humor, his humility. All echoes of the Latin "*humus*"—earth that has reached its natural settling point. Earthiness, combined with elevation: that's some dance to pull off. To be that serious and that silly. To carry the weight of injustice, yet remain so light on his feet. To have so much faith and so little religiosity.

Surely laughter is the evidence of freedom. When the archbishop laughs, you hear and you feel his freedom. For me, he's not just a graceful man but the embodiment of this most radical and transformative of words—grace—a quality impossible to define and difficult to evoke, but we know it when we see it, and we see it in him.

All this makes me quite willing to do whatever he tells me to do; he leaves me no other choice. The last time I was slow responding to his request I was told in an e-mail that I would "not be let into heaven." The Arch plays hardball and has the Lord on his side. No wonder I consider him my boss. People ask how I got so involved in the fight against extreme poverty and why my singing voice has sometimes turned into town crier. Well, it would be nice to say that I work on behalf of the voiceless, poor, and vulnerable but, actually, I do this because the Arch asked me to. He was my wake-up call—mine and many others'. Not the shrill, ear-splitting sound of a fire alarm, but more like a church bell ringing out: a clear, beautiful note that hangs in the air and resonates in your bones.

Wake up to what, exactly? Wake up to what the world can be. A world truly at peace. And peace, from the Arch's point of view, is not the absence of war. What he seeks is a shift in the battleground—forsaking armed conflict for the longer and more ennobling struggle against complacency, against selfishness, against revenge, and other, darker aspects of human nature. To follow him in this fight is to have your life turned upside down turning the world right side up. To follow him is to join that ongoing march, the journey of equality.



## INTRODUCTION

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I remember first meeting Archbishop Desmond Tutu over two decades ago. Since then, the better I have got to know him, the greater has been my respect for him as a sincere spiritual practitioner, one who sets great store by the power of faith. There is a remarkable, frank, and mutual respect between us.

I have immense admiration for the great work he and Nelson Mandela accomplished with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The genuine reconciliation they achieved not only allowed South Africa to make a new start less burdened by the past than it might have been, but also served as a tremendous model for other communities emerging from extended periods of conflict. It was likewise the archbishop's important suggestion that spiritual leaders should visit places of conflict together to offer good counsel.

As a spiritual leader and a freedom fighter committed to nonviolence his achievements have been wonderful. Archbishop Tutu's sharp and piercing eyes reflect his realistic assessment and astute judgment whatever the situation, but I've also noticed that his nature is gently teasing. His easy-going joviality brings a pleasant atmosphere to any meeting he attends, no matter how serious the matter under discussion.

His commitment to reconciliation, not simply as a spiritual ideal but in actual practice, has been exemplary. I can only hope that, when the time comes, I too can show as much commitment and strength. When we first met, Archbishop Tutu was not much interested in the cause of Tibet, but he has since become one of our staunch supporters, for which I am grateful. He is a man of principle who has spoken up on the Tibetan people's behalf even when it meant criticizing his own government. China often likes to suggest that it is only white Americans and Europeans who criticize it for its conduct in Tibet. I cannot emphasize enough the impact of such criticism when it comes from a distinguished black African of his stature. In a similar vein, he and Václav Havel recently wrote a ringing defense of the imprisoned Chinese human rights activist and fellow Nobel laureate, Liu Xiaobo.

It gives me great pleasure to know that Archbishop Tutu's daughter, the Reverend Mpho A. Tutu, a warm and beautiful person like her father, has compiled this affectionate portrait of him. It is a fitting tribute to a great man.



## EDITOR'S NOTE

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Desmond Tutu looked out from the raised pulpit at St. Mary's Cathedral in Johannesburg unable to speak. The standing-room-only crowd of more than a thousand had gathered to hear him preach on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday. He gazed out at the congregation that he had led during the struggle to end apartheid, and the rest of us who had gathered from around the world. Three-quarters of a century of his impossibly rich life was flashing before him and it rendered him speechless. From the self-described "township urchin" to the Nobel Peace laureate, archbishop, and healer of a nation, his life had been as unimaginable as the transformation of his beloved country. And yet, he had imagined it, believed in it, and orchestrated it with a fist-pounding confidence that this is a moral universe.

The man who is known around the world for his laugh—that warm chuckle that deepens into a belly roar and concludes with a mischievous giggle—began to sob deep body-shaking sobs. The congregation spontaneously broke out into song, singing their love for him. His wife Leah, without pause, left her pew and, despite her aching, aged knees, hobbled up the stairs and into the pulpit. Tutu turned around to face her and buried his head in her chest as she wrapped her arms around him. He continued to sob, the congregation raising them both up with their song. After several minutes, he was finished. Leah stepped down out of the pulpit and Tutu turned back to the congregation, completely renewed, and proceeded to deliver a passionate and brilliant sermon on the struggle to end apartheid, and this particular congregation's role in ending that oppressive system. During those moments, we witnessed a kind of leadership for which our world is desperate: a leadership based on recognizing our shared humanity and our shared vulnerability, and on recognizing that our need for one another is not weakness but strength.

This authorized portrait, published on the occasion of Tutu's eightieth birthday, celebrates one of the great moral leaders of our time. We see the pivotal roles he played in the liberation of South Africa, both at home and abroad, as leader, liberator, and healer—roles he often played in the face of his own hesitation and uncertainty.

Tutu, as he himself has often said, was simply responding to the needs of his suffering flock while the real leaders of the struggle were in jail or in exile. Less well known is what a reluctant prophet he was. Tutu calls his

fatal flaw his “need to be loved.” As a result he is conflict-averse, which is why God had to drag him practically kicking and screaming into one of the most brutal and dehumanizing conflicts of the twentieth century, during which time he was vilified, harassed, and declared public enemy number one of the apartheid government. Only his international stature kept him safe from the bludgeoning violence of that time, and then only just barely. Again and again he was called to stop the country from falling into chaos and revolution, while at the same time becoming an ambassador for a free South Africa, endlessly traveling to convince the world to isolate and sanction the apartheid regime.

It is true that Tutu did not do it alone, nor could he have done it alone. He will be the first to tell you of our interconnectedness, of our dependence on one another, of the profound African teaching of *ubuntu*—of our being who we are only in relation to one another. Through the eyes of family, friends, colleagues, comrades, and opponents included here, Tutu’s life is refracted so luminously that it reveals as much about humanity as it does about one man.

Tutu has never aspired to sainthood, to some exalted station outside of the anguish and rapture of being human. By contrast he is perhaps the most human human I have ever met: the most extraordinary example of what is possible for each of us if we are willing to answer the call of our times and turn to one another with the laughter-filled, tear-stained eyes of the heart.

DOUG ABRAMS, EDITOR





# CHAPTER I

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## OUR REAL LEADERS ARE IN PRISON AND IN EXILE

South Africa has a way of producing exceptional individuals. It is no small miracle that in the space of a single century it has produced three such figures, in Mohandas Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, and Desmond Tutu: men assured of immortality in the history of humankind's long and still-unfinished struggle to free the wretched of the earth from the bondage of colonialism, racism, poverty, and prejudice.

It is, of course, the moral challenge presented by a culturally and racially diverse society that has been at war with itself over all those issues, more intensely than almost any other, that has fired the furnace that forged these remarkable individuals. For if you are imbued with what Hannah Arendt called the passion of compassion, you cannot remain neutral in a moral crisis—and these three exceptional individuals were certainly transfused with that passion. Nor is it misappropriation to claim Gandhi for South Africa, for it was his struggle for human rights during the twenty-one years he spent in South Africa as a young lawyer that forged him into the iconic figure he became back home in India. It was here that Gandhi developed the philosophy of *satyagraha* (nonviolent resistance), which he used so effectively on his return. As a senior Indian diplomat once put it during an official visit to South Africa: “We sent you Mohandas Gandhi, and you sent us back the mahatma”—the special honorific he was given meaning “great soul.”

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*Left:* Tutu speaks at a mass funeral in KwaThema township, near Johannesburg, July 1985. He condemns the practice of “necklacing,” a horrific method of killing suspected informers in which a tire filled with petrol is placed around the victim’s neck and set afire.

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Tutu will no doubt disclaim any such bracketing of himself with the likes of Gandhi and Mandela, for he has always insisted he was neither a politician nor a leader of the black struggle in South Africa. “Our real leaders,” he would say repeatedly in those dark days, “are in prison and in exile. The government must release them and bring them home to negotiate a new constitution.” His own role, as he saw it, was to fulfill the mandate vested in him as a pastor of the Christian Church, to combat the evil of apartheid and follow God’s intention that his people should be led out of bondage into full liberation.

The truth, though, is that Tutu was in fact an interim leader of special importance, for he filled the void caused by the absence of those in prison and exile or otherwise legally silenced at a time when South Africa was under the rule of its two most tyrannical leaders: Balthazar Johannes Vorster from the mid-1960s to the late 1970s and Pieter Willem Botha—better known by his initials, P. W., or his Afrikaans nickname, die Groot Krokodil (the Great Crocodile)—in the 1980s. Tutu was pitched into that tough role when he returned to South Africa in 1975 as dean of St. Mary’s Cathedral in Johannesburg, after serving on the staff of the World Council of Churches in Britain. Young black South Africans in particular were in a state of high tension at the time and, within a year of Tutu’s return, were to erupt into a nationwide revolt when the apartheid regime ordered that all black schools had to use Afrikaans as a parallel medium of instruction with English. The students objected: few could speak Afrikaans, but their primary objection was that they saw it as the language of the oppressor. The majority of the white-minority population were the Dutch-descended Afrikaners whose ethno-nationalist movement dominated the government that was imposing the apartheid policy.

The conflict exploded in Johannesburg’s huge black dormitory complex of Soweto on June 16, 1976, when thousands of black students decided to march to a big soccer stadium in the complex to stage a protest demonstration against the language decree. The police opened fire and, in a series of running skirmishes, killed twenty-three students by nightfall that first day. The carnage set off a chain reaction of protest demonstrations around the country, which raged on until the end of the year, leaving a death toll of more than six hundred. Thousands were injured and some thirty thousand detained, interrogated, and often tortured by the security police.

The uprising was eventually quelled but it was a turning point in the black liberation struggle. Until then it had been fought outside the country,

in Rhodesia (later to become Zimbabwe), South West Africa (later to become Namibia), and Angola but, from the Soweto uprising onward, the struggle became internal—not so much a guerrilla war, but a campaign of civil unrest aimed at rendering the black townships ungovernable.

Significant though these events were, black political leadership was shredded at the time. Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC), the main black resistance movement, had been outlawed fifteen years earlier and Mandela himself, along with the entire top leadership of the ANC, had been sentenced to life imprisonment after deciding in desperation to form an armed wing and continue the struggle underground. A breakaway movement, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), had likewise been banned and a range of lesser movements with it. The multiracial South African Communist Party (SACP) had been put out of action even earlier.

The outlawing of these movements had created a decade of silence in the black community through the sixties, with only the voices of a handful of courageous white liberals and newspapers opposing the onward march of the grand apartheid scheme and exposing the oppressive and often cruel effects of its implementation on the black population. The regime's strategy was to crush all black nationalist resistance to this plan, subsequently creating time and space for the compliant black tribal leaders it had put in place in these supposedly emergent states, known as bantustans, to establish themselves and build support bases.

But the process was interrupted as the sixties drew to a close with the emergence of the powerful Black Consciousness Movement led by a charismatic, young medical student, Stephen Bantu Biko. This movement spread like a grass fire and was animating the black youth particularly, just as Desmond Tutu and his family returned from Britain. But even its activities were circumscribed by the "banning" of its leader—banning being a particularly ingenious legal device used by the apartheid regime to neutralize political activists. It involved confining the recipient of a document signed only by the minister of justice to the small magisterial district where the victim lived, prohibiting him or her from being in the company of more than one other person at a time and from writing or publishing anything at all, and, above all, prohibiting the media or anyone else from publishing or broadcasting anything the banned person might say or write currently or had expressed at any time in the past. In other words, it was a comprehensive gag. No evidence was required, there was no trial and no appeal was possible. It was all done with the single stroke of a pen by one



*Above:* Youths burn the car of an alleged police informer following the funeral of four victims killed in the "grenade incident" in Duduza township, Transvaal, July 1985. On the morning of June 26, 1985, a group of young activists was killed by defective or booby-trapped hand grenades that had been given to them by an agent provocateur, a member of the security force, posing as an African National Congress guerrilla. *Below:* Mourners at a funeral for people shot during a consumer boycott meeting, Queenstown, Eastern Cape, November 17, 1985.



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*Above:* Armed only with a Bible, Tutu confronts South African police as they attempt to break up a demonstration in Soweto, Johannesburg, 1985. *Below:* Leah and Desmond return to South Africa from visiting Robert Runcie, archbishop of Canterbury, circa 1984. Runcie sent Tutu as his emissary to the pope in Rome as a ploy to deter the apartheid government who, via interior minister Alwyn Schabusch, had issued more threats against Tutu.

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all-powerful member of the apartheid government. Whole organizations could also be banned, as had been done with the ANC, PAC, and SACP and was to be done eventually with the Black Consciousness Movement and its affiliates as well. And to add to the ferocity of the times, Biko was himself arrested a year later for breaking his banning order and beaten to death by his interrogators in one of the most appalling acts of racist brutality and callousness in apartheid's sordid history.

It was into this black leadership vacuum that Tutu landed as he came home. There was nothing for him but to fill the gap as best he could, which he did with courage and verve for the next fifteen years until the historic day on February 2, 1990, when the Great Crocodile's successor, President Frederik Willem de Klerk, stunned the world by announcing the unbanning of all black political movements and the impending release of Nelson Mandela and all other political prisoners, so setting South Africa on the road to what many saw as a miraculous transformation.

Those fifteen years, during which Tutu was effectively the interim leader of the black liberation struggle and its primary voice at home and abroad, were among the stormiest in the history of this tempestuous land. There were other key figures in the struggle too, of course: notably the Reverend Allan Boesak, whose leadership of the mixed-race branch of the segregated Dutch Reformed Church put great moral pressure on the Afrikaner establishment; and later a united front of nearly a thousand civic bodies was formed to give organizational shape and thrust to the internal struggle. But Tutu was the principal figure throughout who gave focus to the struggle and articulated its issues most clearly. Those were also the years in which the struggle was won and apartheid finally ended. It was a passage in Tutu's life that won him international acclaim and the Nobel Peace Prize.

It was no easy role to fill. Tutu had to tread the finest of lines. He had to sound radical to maintain credibility among blacks but, in doing so, he risked being regarded as a dangerous revolutionary by the repressive white government. Even to call for "one person, one vote", the minimum necessary to retain credibility in the black community, particularly among the fired-up youth in those overheated days, was to risk criminal prosecution or one of the disabling banning orders. Universal suffrage was the most basic of all the banned ANC's demands—and the apartheid regime's battery of security laws made it a criminal offense, punishable by long imprisonment, to further any of the aims or objectives of a banned organization.

The ANC's commitment to armed struggle and the formation of its

armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), presented Tutu with an even trickier dilemma. He abhorred violence. The whole thrust of his prophetic ministry was to campaign and plead for the abandonment of apartheid so as to avoid the racial bloodbath he believed would otherwise engulf his beloved South Africa. Yet he never decried the ANC's armed struggle. Again this was necessary to retain credibility among the militant youth to whom he was trying to give leadership and guidance. But this was not just an opportunistic attempt to wriggle out of a tight corner; Tutu genuinely believed in, and was able to justify theologically, the principle of a just war in the face of intolerable oppression. "I will never tell someone to pick up a gun," he once said in an attempt to explain the ambiguity of his position, "but I will pray for the man who picks up the gun, pray that he will be less cruel than he might otherwise have been, because he is a member of the community."<sup>1</sup> It inevitably meant once again that careful though he was, he sailed close to the wind, stopping just short of inviting the capital charge of treason.

But, ironically, it was among the militant "comrades" that Tutu ran into the most vehement criticism for his position on violence. For all his intellectualizing of the legitimacy of a just war, such was his abhorrence of violence, his deep sense of the inherent sanctity of all human life, that he sometimes flung himself with reckless courage into the way of militant mobs intent on wreaking terrible revenge on individuals they regarded as police informers, sell-outs, or simply those termed "system blacks," performing jobs within the apartheid bureaucracy.

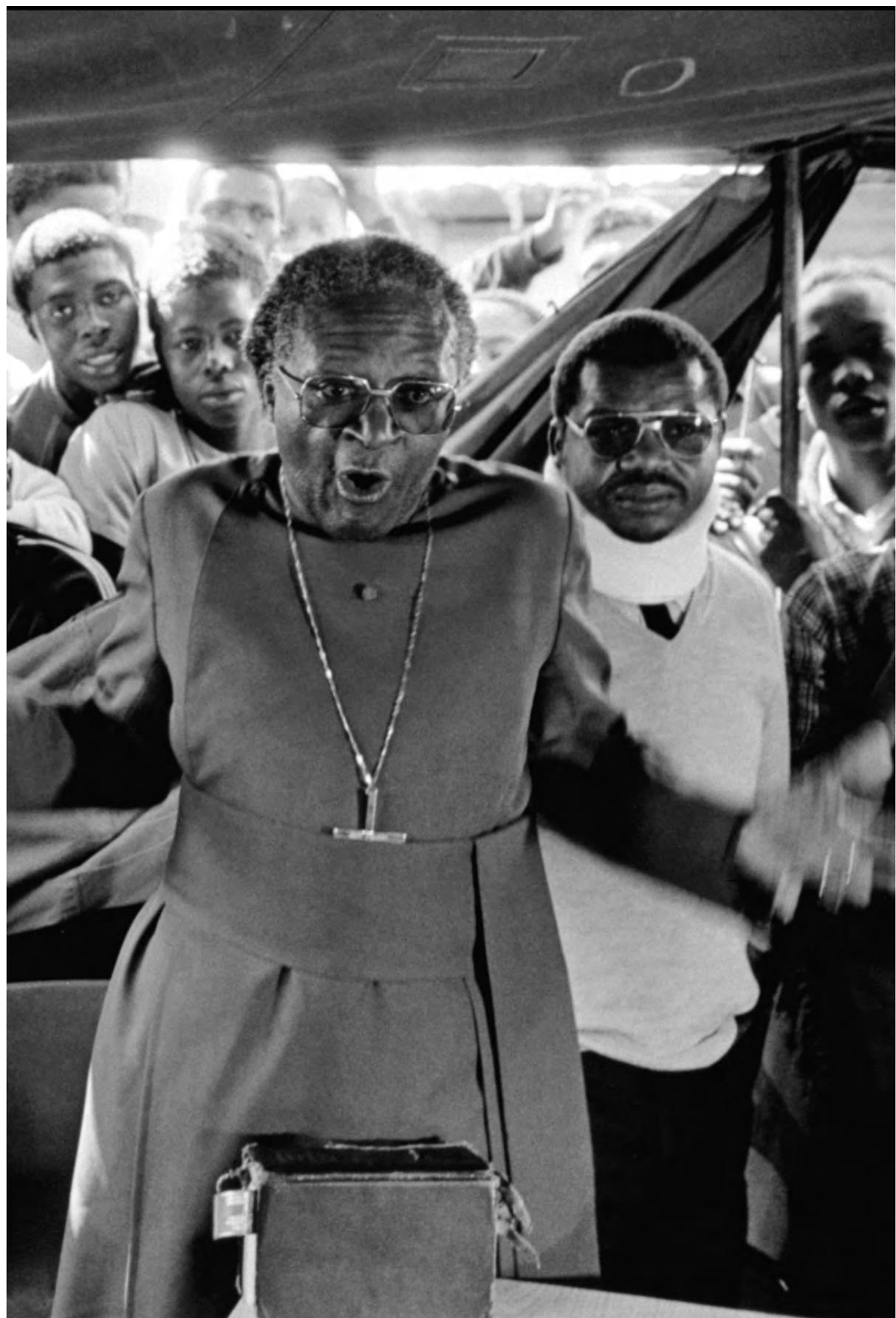
The ranks of the broad liberation movement were riddled at the time with informers, often young activists who had been captured and "turned" by the security forces—either through torture, the threat of execution, or just plain bribery—into spies for the apartheid state and informers on their erstwhile comrades. The security forces called them *askaris*; to the comrades they were *impimpis*. This fabricated word has no known linguistic derivation but seemed to resonate with the special odium of a pimp, with a prefix and suffix added. As far as the comrades were concerned, *impimpis* had to be killed, and the chosen method of execution in the adrenalized fury of those days was by a cruel method known as necklacing, which involved putting a car tire around the victim's neck, filling it with petrol, and setting it ablaze.

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*Following page:* Tutu conducts a funeral service in a makeshift tent for a schoolgirl shot by the police, East Rand, 1985.

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9 April 1985

The Hon. F.W. de Klerk  
Minister of National Education  
and Home Affairs  
P.O. Box 15  
CAPE TOWN.  
8000.

Dear Mr. Minister,

re : South African Passport

As you are no doubt aware, I travel on a South African Document for travel purposes whose validity is extended on an ad hoc application on my part.

I think the situation in which I am placed is in fact a ridiculous one. The State President announced that the matter of our citizenship was being reconsidered.

In the meantime I travel with facilities which quite preposterously describe my nationality as "undeterminable at present". When I announce this fact at meetings overseas I do not need to comment any further. It is such a blatantly ridiculous and utterly unjust situation that my overseas audiences are left aghast at the enormity of what the policy of denationalising blacks actually entails.

It is a gratuitous embarrassment to our country. I have travelled on a South African passport before and request that you reissue me with one valid for all countries and for the normal period.

I retain my known opinions about the policy of apartheid as utterly evil, unChristian and immoral which I have expressed and will continue to express here and abroad. I will continue to call for pressure to be exerted on your Government as yet not a call for disinvestment. When I am prevented from travelling, my viewpoint gains wider publicity than if I had been permitted to travel. You may recall the publicity that surrounded my not being permitted to go to New York to receive an honorary degree from Columbia University.

I therefore urge you as a matter of expediency and good sense and equity to issue me with a South African passport now. I have applied to be allowed to go to the United States of America in May to speak at our daughter's graduation. I hope to hear positively from you on both counts.

God bless you.

Yours sincerely,

.....  
Above: Letter from Tutu to F. W. de Klerk dated April 9, 1985, regarding his passport application.  
.....

On at least two occasions, Tutu, a small and quite frail man, then in his fifties, stopped the executions by plunging into the frenzied crowd and rescuing the intended victim. The first occasion was when Tutu and a colleague, Bishop Simeon Nkoane, came upon a mob attacking a man some accused of being an informer as mourners were leaving the funeral of four comrades who had been killed the previous week in what looked like security force assassinations. Yelling, "Impimpi! Impimpi!" the mob beat the man to the ground, doused him with petrol and were about to set him ablaze when Tutu reached the victim and, with Nkoane's help, pulled him away and put him in Nkoane's nearby car. When Tutu admonished the crowd, telling them theirs should be a noble and righteous struggle, they shouted back at him, "Why don't you let us deal with these dogs the way they treat us?"

The second rescue was at the funeral of a prominent civil rights lawyer, Griffiths Mxenge, who had been butchered by state assassins (led by an *askari* named Almond Nofomela) who hacked him to death with machetes, knives, and daggers late at night on a football field in Durban. Mxenge's terrible death aroused intense anger throughout the liberation movement and, again, as mourners left the makeshift platform where Tutu had delivered the funeral oration outside a tiny Eastern Cape hamlet, the cry of "Impimpi" went up from the crowd, and a group of youths pounced on a man among them. As they pummeled him to the ground, a tire appeared seemingly from nowhere. But before it could be slipped around his neck, Tutu burst through the group and flung himself across the bleeding man's prostrate body, calling to the crowd to back off. They withdrew reluctantly and, as Tutu stood up, his cassock stained with the man's blood, he called to aides to carry the man to a car and drive him away. They did so but, later that night, to Tutu's dismay, the avengers tracked down the man and completed their execution.

Tutu, appalled by the continuation of necklace killings and frustrated by his inability to stop them, threatened at one point to leave the country if the incendiary comrades did not heed him. The young radicals were unimpressed. "Let him go," a group of them declared after meeting in Soweto to discuss his threat, "then we can get on with the revolution without him restraining us."

Tutu again felt the hostility of the youths to his pleas for moderation when he addressed a huge funeral rally of some forty-five thousand in the Johannesburg township of Alexandra at the height of the violence in

February 1986. He had tried to intercede by conveying the community's grievances to the government, and had to report back that the authorities had done no more than undertake to look into their objections. The anger of the crowd was directed at him. For once his sparkling rhetoric failed to stir them. Sullen faces stared at him as he delivered his address and there were even some shouted interruptions. Afterward, a smaller group surrounded him and tried to prevent him from leaving as they bombarded him with questions about how he expected them to redress their injustices. Eventually an aide muscled his way through the crowd and pushed Tutu into a car.

The government, meanwhile, continued to accuse him of condoning violence. Yet it was Tutu's advocacy of the seemingly milder issues of economic sanctions and disinvestment that made life even more difficult for him, prompting a furious reaction in the white community and, most painfully for him, disapproval within the body of his own Anglican Church and among his white liberal supporters as well. Such eminent figures as Alan Paton, the celebrated author and leader of South Africa's Liberal Party, and Helen Suzman, who for thirteen tough years was the sole human rights voice speaking out forcefully in the all-white and overwhelmingly male Parliament in Cape Town, opposed him vigorously. "I do not understand how your Christian conscience allows you to advocate disinvestment ..." Paton wrote angrily to Tutu. "It would go against my deepest principles to advocate anything that could put a man, and especially a black man, out of a job."<sup>2</sup> But Tutu was steadfast, insisting that the vast majority of black people would willingly endure such hardships if it would bring an end to the system of apartheid under which they all lived.

Tutu triggered this surge of condemnation during a visit to Denmark when he chastised the Danes in a television interview for buying South African coal. When the interviewer asked whether a boycott would not cause black workers to lose their jobs, Tutu replied that such suffering would be temporary, while the suffering caused by apartheid looked as though it was "going to go on and on and on."<sup>3</sup>

The government went ballistic. Interior minister Alwyn Schlebusch, who was responsible for issuing passports, expressed his "disgust" and summoned Tutu to Pretoria to tell him he was guilty of economic sabotage and should retract or apologize.<sup>4</sup> Police minister Louis le Grange delivered a furious speech in Parliament, accusing Tutu of promoting disinvestment, the evasion of military service, labor unrest, and furthering the aims and objects of the ANC—all crimes under South Africa's security legislation.

President Botha denounced him as “public enemy number one” and called on church members to repudiate him.<sup>5</sup>

But Tutu remained unrepentant, arguing that economic pressure was necessary to bring about change in the country. When a group of business leaders who were members of the Anglican Church met with Tutu to remonstrate with him, he listened carefully and then—according to the Reverend Njongonkulu Ndungane, who was the church’s public relations officer at the time and later Tutu’s successor as archbishop of Cape Town—responded with a challenge of his own: “If you can tell me of an alternative nonviolent strategy that will bring an end to apartheid,” he said, “then I will abandon my commitment to sanctions and go round the world pursuing your approach until we reach our goal. But if you cannot, then I will stick with sanctions.”<sup>6</sup> According to Ndungane, the businessmen had nothing to suggest.

For several years, egged on by sustained vilification from the right-wing press and the pro-government national broadcasting service, Tutu was the subject of blind hatred in the mainstream white population. He received abusive phone calls and death threats. Crude graffiti appeared on walls. One day a group of right-wing extremists wearing crash helmets burst into his office, yelled abuse at him, and flung thirty silver coins at his desk. A special dirty tricks unit of the state security service, called the Strategic Communications (Stratcom), started a smear campaign through pamphlets and planting of whispered slanders to members of the pro-government media—culminating in a bizarre operation when Stratcom agents hung the fetus of a monkey outside Tutu’s home in an apparent attempt to make supposed superstitious township folk think he was under some kind of witchcraft spell. In fact, all it did was bemuse them.

The hate campaign reached a climax on August 31, 1988, when President Botha ordered his most ruthless special operations unit to bomb the building housing the South African Council of Churches (SACC) headquarters, called Khotso House (House of Peace), in downtown Johannesburg. The bombing, carried out at night, destroyed the multistorey building but fortunately injured no one. Moreover, Tutu had left the SACC by that time and was serving as archbishop of Cape Town, but the fact that the head of state had gone to such lengths as to personally order so dramatic an attack reflected the visceral hatred he and his government felt for Tutu and the organization he had mobilized to arouse the conscience of the world against what they bluntly called the “evil” of apartheid.



Above: Tutu is greeted by placard-holding demonstrators as he arrives at Jan Smuts International Airport (now O. R. Tambo International Airport), Johannesburg, May 19, 1988. Below: Tutu, flanked by Bishops Sigisbert Ndwandwe (left) and Simeon Nkoane (right), leads a group of white priests on a procession through the streets of Johannesburg. Both bishops worked closely with Tutu: Simeon Nkoane presided over the Duduza funeral with Tutu in July 1985, and between them they managed to save a man from the awful fate of "necklacing."

The great irony of the South African story, of course, is that the white establishment's vicious attacks on Tutu helped him retain credibility in the black community despite his moderation. Not only the youth but many adult blacks were often irritated by Tutu's calls for moderation in the polarized passions of the time, and felt he took his message of Christian forgiveness too far, but the government's malicious harassment of him and his family kept bringing them back to his side and entrenching his leadership status. Without that, Tutu might well have lost his credibility, especially after making two fruitless visits to President Botha to plead for an easing of the regime's heavy crackdown on activists during a state of emergency in the mid-1980s. He could easily have been dismissed as a sell-out and suffered the fate of Zimbabwe's Bishop Abel Muzorewa, who faded into obscurity after being drawn into a coalition with that country's despised white leader, Ian Smith. Instead, thanks to Vorster, Botha, and their thuggish security goons, Tutu was able to sustain his interim leadership and carry his nonracialism into the transition process, where its principles were embedded in the country's new constitution, and his idealistic vision of a "rainbow nation of God" became the popular slogan of the new South Africa.

Eventually the government reluctantly yielded to diplomatic pressures and reissued him a passport, which Schlebusch had seized earlier, to enable him to accept an invitation to attend the national convention of the Episcopal Church in New Orleans in September 1982. Tutu struck a chord with his American audiences, which grew with time and established him in their eyes as the authentic voice of South Africa's oppressed black masses, whose cause until then had seemed distant and somewhat abstract to Americans, since there was no leading figure to personify it in the popular imagination. Suddenly Tutu filled that gap.

His warm humanism and unique preaching style—a combination of evangelical energy and theological intellectualism delivered in plain, down-to-earth language strewn with colloquialisms and self-deprecating humor—charmed and captivated American audiences. Americans began seeing television newscasts night after night of police breaking up the mass funeral rallies in South Africa's black townships in the mid-1980s: baton-charging, tear-gassing, beating up, and shooting the young demonstrators. Tutu was there among them, looking small and vulnerable in his clerical robes. It evoked images of America's own civil rights struggle, with Bull Connor and his dogs attacking the marchers in Selma, Alabama. For many,

and especially students, Tutu began to take on the mantle of the martyred conscience of America: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Suddenly the American public was able to identify with the anti-apartheid struggle; model squatter camps sprang up on university campuses, built by impassioned students who could barely pinpoint where South Africa was on the global map but for whom the anti-apartheid struggle had become a tangible moral cause with an identifiable and very human leader. The result was a political tsunami. When President Ronald Reagan, following his passive policy of constructive engagement toward South Africa, vetoed a congressional vote to impose sanctions on the country, the legislators, responsive as always to such waves of popular passion, overrode the veto.

It was another critical moment in the liberation struggle, mobilizing international pressure to add to the intensifying internal crisis. Within a year of the veto override, forty American companies had pulled out of South Africa, with another fifty following suit in the next year. The crunch came when Chase Manhattan Bank refused to roll over short-term loans to South Africa, sparking a chain reaction as other international banks followed suit. As the rand currency plunged 35 percent overnight and the government found itself facing a financial crisis, even the Great Crocodile flinched. President Botha and his cabinet cobbled together a constitutional reform arrangement, giving the country's Indian and mixed-race "colored" communities the right to vote for representatives of their own in separate and subservient chambers of Parliament, while leaving the black African majority still with no more than their Potemkin bantustans and the merest smidgen of local government rights in the black townships of so-called "white" South Africa. It was intended as a conciliatory gesture but it elicited even greater pressure, for the activists rightly saw it as a sign of weakening resolve. Looking back, it is clear that although there was still a decade and a half to go, that was the key turning point that marked the beginning of the decline and fall of apartheid.

In the years that followed, we watched the influence of this remarkable man expand, both directly and vicariously, until it infused the entire nation. We watched the reluctant admiration that his courage evoked from even his bitterest enemies as he stood up to the extremists on both sides, spoke truth to power, and chastised the excesses of his own people. We watched in awe as he linked arms with clerics of other faiths to lead great liberation marches

of tens of thousands of people past the guns and armored vehicles of the formidable, nuclear-armed apartheid government.

An ecumenical army of theological crusaders marching as to war.  
And then to peace.

When at last that memorable day arrived, and Nelson Mandela and the other black political leaders walked out of prison and returned from exile, Desmond Tutu, true to his word, left his political leadership role, his warrior role in the liberation struggle, to become the country's principal champion of peace: the crusader for reconciliation with the people who had harassed and humiliated him and his family and his entire race for so long.

It was as chairman of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), itself perhaps the most remarkable process of a national public confessional ever undertaken, that Desmond Tutu reached the apex of his career. The TRC has its critics, but on one thing all are agreed: it was a triumph for Tutu, the consummation of his role as a Nobel laureate of peace, and his emergence as the moral conscience of the new South Africa. It also completed the transformation of his public image from Botha's "public enemy number one" into an icon of national affection.<sup>7</sup>

But Tutu's role does not end at the borders of his own country. In his years since retirement he has assumed a new and more universal importance as he has plunged into conflict areas around the globe with an urgent message to governments to follow the South African example and negotiate with groups they regard as terrorists. In his role as a member of The Elders, a group of eminent retired leaders, and through his own personal international ministry, Tutu has involved himself in the conflicts of Northern Ireland, the Middle East, Burma, Tibet, Rwanda, Darfur, Cyprus, Kenya, and Sri Lanka—always with the same message: "There can be no future without forgiveness."

Nor is it just empty rhetoric. Tutu brings to these debates not only the moral authority of his own record but an evolving, all-embracing theology: a respect for all religious faiths that acknowledges the moral and spiritual validity of each. It is an all-inclusive ecumenism that contrasts sharply with the trend toward a regressive fundamentalism in religions and cultures across the world and that lies at the heart of so many of today's conflicts.

Our turbulent priest is not just a man for all South Africa, but for all humanity.

## ALLISTER SPARKS

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At the height of the hate campaign against Tutu, a small cameo event occurred that foreshadowed the emotional instability of white South Africans that has seen them shift from the hatred of the apartheid years to a point today of near hero-worship of both Tutu and Mandela. When—after repeated ballots and in the face of strong opposition from an organized group of lay Anglicans—the elective assembly of the Johannesburg Diocese finally chose Tutu to be their new bishop, a former mayor of the city, Cecil Long, issued a press statement announcing that he, a devout Anglican all his life, was leaving the church in protest. I read the report on the front page of the *Star* newspaper with a mixture of amusement and outrage.

On impulse, I sat down at my desk and penned a brief two-sentence rejoinder, which I faxed to the editor of the *Star* saying that I, an ex-editor of one of the city's leading newspapers and a lapsed Anglican who had turned my back on the church because of the vacuous ritualism of so many of its white clergy who for years had nothing meaningful to say in the face of the great moral challenges facing the country, was going to rejoin the church now that it had elected a bishop who was prepared to speak truth to power.

The next day the paper splashed my brief statement on its front page, presenting it as a rejoinder to ex-mayor Long. I was frankly startled, then a little alarmed. "Gosh," I said to my wife, Sue, "I'll have to live up to this now." So I called some Anglican friends, who directed me to the rector of a church in the affluent suburb of Bryanston, who they assured me would make my wife and me welcome. Father Arnold Hirst did more than that: he proposed a special welcoming service for us the following Sunday morning and we planned a surprise event for the congregation.

I phoned a friend, George Mxadana, who was the leader of a wonderful Soweto choir called Imilonji KaNtu that I had heard perform on a number of occasions and greatly admired. I asked George whether he and his choir could perform at the Bryanston church next Sunday morning, and he agreed.

It was with some trepidation that Sue and I approached the lovely little stone church on the day. Congregants were trickling in to find that the thirty-odd members of the choir had already occupied pews at the back. There were a few thin-lipped faces and some quick backward glances as the suburban congregants filled the pews upfront. For many, if not all, it was probably the first time they had seen black faces in their church. It turned out to be an unusually large gathering and by the time the service started there was standing room only. Father Hirst welcomed Sue and me to the parish, then introduced the choir, which he said would sing a special hymn.

He did not name the hymn, which was indeed special: a dramatic piece of indigenous music composed by an eighteenth-century Xhosa spiritualist named Ntsikana, who was converted to Christianity but remained largely indigenous and blended Christian liturgy with African symbols and music. His triumph, which the choir was to sing here, is simply called the "Great Hymn," a powerful call-and-response praise song to God performed as an exchange between the lead singer and the choir facing each other along the full length of the aisle. George Mxadana and his choir had sung this hymn by candlelight outside the Tutus' home in Soweto when Senator Edward Kennedy had visited there during his 1984 tour of South Africa, and much later Leah Tutu was to choose it for her seventieth birthday celebration. But, to white

South African suburbia, it was a cultural jewel of their own land as distant as Outer Mongolia.

As George began the great hymn in his rich, deep baritone—bowing and making sweeping motions with his arms as he backed through the nave of the church—and the big choir responded in its exquisitely harmonized cadences, the sounds echoing off the walls of the little stone church, the effect on the congregation was electrifying. They were riveted, entranced, visibly elevated by the sheer power and spiritual impact of the “Great Hymn.”

As the music ended, the church fell silent. One generally doesn’t applaud in a church but, in any case, the congregation seemed choked still, with emotion. As the congregation began to file out, there were tears in a number of eyes. Some shook hands emotionally with George and members of the choir. Some came over to thank Sue and me, and tell us they had never heard anything so powerful and moving before.

As Sue and I looked at each other alone afterward, we realized something in our country had been touched.

*Allister Sparks is a South African journalist, author, and political commentator. He was the editor of the Rand Daily Mail from 1977 to 1981, and South African correspondent for the Washington Post, the Observer, NRC Handelsblad, and the Economist. In 1985 he was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for his reporting of racial unrest in South Africa.*

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## Ntsikana's "Great Hymn"

Ulo Thixo omkhulu, ngosezulwini;  
Ungu Wena-wena Khaka lenyaniso.  
Ungu Wena-wena Nqaba yenyano.  
Ungu Wena-wena Hlati lenyaniso.  
Ungu Wena-wen' uhlel' enyangwaneni.  
Ulo dal' ubom, wadala phezulu.  
Lo Mdal' owadala wadala izulu.  
Lo Menzi weenkwenkwezi noZilimela;  
Yabinza inkwenkwezi, isixelela.  
Lo Menzi wemfaman' uzenza ngabom?  
Lathetha ixilongo lisibizile.  
Ulongqin' izingela imiphefumlo.  
Ulohlanganis' imihlamb' eyalanayo.  
Ulomkhokeli wasikhokela thina.  
Ulengub' inkhul' esiyambatha thina.  
Ozandla Zakho zinamanxeba Wena.  
Onyawo Zakho zinamanxeba Wena.  
Ugazi Lakho limrholo yini na?  
Ugazi Lakho liphalalele thina.  
Le mali emkulu-na siyibizile?  
Lo mzi Wakhona-na siwubizile?

*Thou art the great God—the one who is in heaven.  
It is thou, thou Shield of Truth,  
it is thou, thou Tower of Truth,  
it is thou, thou Bush of Truth,  
it is thou, thou who sittest in the highest,  
thou art the creator of life,  
thou madest the regions above.  
The creator who madest the heavens also,  
the maker of stars and the Pleiades—  
the shooting stars declare it unto us.  
The maker of the blind, of thine own will didst  
    thou make them.  
The trumpet speaks—for us it calls,  
thou art the Hunter who hunts for souls.  
Thou art the Leader who goes before us,  
thou art the Great Mantle which covers us.  
Thou art he whose hands are wounded;  
thou art he whose feet are wounded;  
thou art he whose blood is a trickling stream—  
    and why?  
Thou art he whose blood was spilled for us.  
For this great price we call,  
for thine own place we call.*

