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No Future Without Forgiveness

Desmond Tutu

Contents

About the Book

Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s memoir focuses on his work as Chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but it isn’t just about that. Tutu also gives us the full colour of his varied experiences – the details of his childhood in a world of apartheid, his first opportunity to vote at the age of 62, his personal reaction to Mandela’s election, his feelings and policy decisions afterwords … And the result is a quintessentially humane account of an extraordinary life, which you cannot afford to miss.

About the Author

Desmond Tutu has played a leading part in the struggle to end apartheid in South Africa, recently as Archbishop of Cape Town, a post from which he retired in 1996. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 and, in 1995, was appointed Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by President Nelson Mandela. He has recently been lecturing on theology at Emory University in Atlanta, and is regularly invited to travel and speak to political and spiritual organizations worldwide.

NO FUTURE WITHOUT FORGIVENESS

Desmond Tutu

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To the women and the 'little people' of South Africa

‘Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it’

George Santayana

CHAPTER ONE

The turning point

27 APRIL 1994 was the day for which we had waited many long years, the day for which the struggle against apartheid had been waged, for which so many of our people had been tear-gassed, bitten by police dogs, struck with quirts and batons, tortured, banned, imprisoned, sentenced to death and driven into exile. The day had finally dawned when we would vote, when we could vote for the first time in a democratic election in the land of our birth. I had had to wait until I was sixty-two years old before I could vote, Nelson Mandela until he was seventy-six.

The air was electric with excitement, anticipation and anxiety, and with fear that those on the right wing who had promised to disrupt this day of days might succeed in their nefarious schemes. Bombs had been going off right, left and centre. There had been explosions at the International Airport in Johannesburg. Anything could happen.

As always I had got up early for my quiet time and walk before morning prayers and the Eucharist in the Archbishop's Chapel in Bishopscourt. We wanted things to be as normal as possible on this extraordinary day in the history of our beloved, but oh so sad land whose soil was soaked with the blood of so many of her children. In the lead-up to this epoch-making event, a watershed in the history of South Africa, violence had become endemic. Up

to the proverbial eleventh hour a major role-player, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), had threatened to stay out of the election, and we were all bracing ourselves for the most awful bloodletting, especially in the IFP stronghold of KwaZulu/Natal, where the rivalry between the IFP and Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) was a gory affair – the shockingly high level of political intolerance there had already cost innumerable lives. It had been brinkmanship of an appalling nature. We had held our breaths and wondered what the body count would be. Mercifully, through the mediation of a somewhat mysterious Kenyan, Chief Buthelezi was persuaded to abandon his boycott, chilling in its prospect of a likely bloodbath. The country breathed an enormous sigh of relief.

So here we were, about to carry out what was a routine political and civic act in normal countries where the concern was usually about voter apathy, not about the risk of violence and mayhem at the polls. I was excited and apprehensive. There was a tight knot of anxiety in the pit of my stomach. I prayed earnestly that morning that God would bless our land and confound the machinations of the children of darkness. There had been so many moments in the past, during the dark days of apartheid's vicious awfulness, when I had preached, 'This is God's world and God is in charge!' Sometimes, when evil seemed to be about to overwhelm goodness, I had only just been able to hold on to this article of faith. It was a kind of theological whistling in the dark and I was frequently tempted to whisper in God's ear, 'For goodness sake, why don't You make it more obvious that *You are* in charge?'

After breakfast, we drove out of Bishopscourt, the official residence of the Archbishop of Cape Town (where Nelson Mandela had spent his first night of freedom after his release on 11 February 1990), and away from the leafy up-market suburb surrounding it. I had decided that I

would cast my vote in a ghetto township. I wanted to demonstrate my solidarity with those who for so long had been disenfranchised, those living daily in the deprivation and squalor of apartheid's racially segregated ghettos. After all, I was one of them. When I became Archbishop in 1986 the Group Areas Act, which segregated residential areas racially, was still in force. It was a criminal offence for me, a Nobel laureate and now Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Anglican Church in southern Africa, to occupy Bishopscourt with my family unless I had first obtained a special permit exempting me from the provisions of the Group Areas Act. I had, however, announced after my election as Archbishop that I would not be applying for such a permit. I said I was Archbishop, would be occupying the Archbishop's official residence and that the apartheid government could act as it saw fit. No charges were ever preferred against me for contravening this obnoxious law.

I went to vote in Gugulethu, a black township with typical matchbox houses in row after monotonous row. There was a long queue already waiting. People were in good spirits, and they were going to need a great deal of patience and good humour because they were in for a long wait. My first democratic vote was a media event and many of our friends from overseas were present, acting as monitors to check whether the elections were fair and free. But they were doing a great deal more than that. They were really like midwives helping to birth this new, delicate infant – the free, democratic, non-racial, non-sexist South Africa.

The moment for which I had waited for so long came and I folded my ballot paper and cast my vote. Wow! I shouted, 'Yippee!' It was giddy stuff, like falling in love. The sky looked more blue and beautiful. I saw the people in a new light. They were beautiful, they were transfigured. I too was transfigured. It was dream-like. We were scared

someone would rouse us and we would wake up back in the nightmare that was apartheid's harsh reality.

After voting, I went outside and the people cheered and sang and danced. It was like a festival. The atmosphere was wonderful and such a vindication for all those who had borne the burden of repression, the little people whom apartheid had turned into the anonymous ones – faceless, voiceless, counting for nothing in their motherland – whose noses had been rubbed daily in the dust. They had been created in the image of God but their dignity had been callously trodden underfoot every day by apartheid's minions, and by those others who perhaps said they were opposed to apartheid but had nonetheless gone on enjoying the privileges and huge benefits that apartheid brought them – just because of an accident of birth, a biological irrelevance: the colour of their skin.

I decided to drive around a bit to see what was happening. I was appalled by what I saw. The people who had come out in droves, standing in those long lines which have now become world-famous, were so vulnerable. The police and the security forces were probably stretched, but they were hardly a conspicuous presence. It would have taken just a few crazy extremists with AK-47 rifles to create havoc. It did not happen. And virtually everywhere there was a hitch of one sort or the other. Here there were insufficient ballot papers, there not enough ink pads, elsewhere the officials had not yet turned up hours after the polls were due to have opened. And the people were quite amazing in their patience. It was a comprehensive disaster waiting to happen. And it did not happen.

It was also an amazing spectacle. People of all races were standing in the same queues, perhaps for the very first time in their lives. Professionals, domestic workers, cleaners and their madams – all were standing in those lines that were snaking their way slowly to the polling booth. And what should have been a disaster turned out to

be a blessing in disguise. Those lines produced a new and peculiarly South African status symbol. Afterwards people boasted, ‘I stood for two hours to vote’ – ‘No, I waited for four hours!’

Those long hours helped us South Africans to find one another. People shared newspapers, sandwiches, umbrellas, and the scales began to fall from their eyes. South Africans found fellow South Africans – they realised what we had been at such pains to tell them, that they shared a common humanity; that race, ethnicity, skin colour were really irrelevancies. They discovered not a Coloured, a black, an Indian, a white. No, they found a fellow human being. What a profound scientific discovery for the whites, that blacks, Coloureds (usually people of mixed race), and Indians were in fact human beings, who had the same concerns and anxieties and aspirations as they did. They wanted a decent home, a good job, a safe environment for their families, good schools for their children. Hardly any of them wanted to drive the whites into the sea. They just wanted their place in the sun.

Everywhere else elections are secular political events. Ours was more than this, much, much more. It was a veritable spiritual experience, a mountain-top experience. The black person entered the booth one person and emerged on the other side a new, transfigured one. She entered weighed down by the anguish and burden of oppression, with the memory of being treated like rubbish gnawing away at her like some corrosive acid. She reappeared knowing she was free, walking away with her head held high, shoulders set straighter and an elastic spring in her step. How do you convey that sense of freedom which tastes like sweet nectar the first time you experience it? How do you describe it to someone who was born into freedom? It is impossible, like trying to describe the colour red to a person born blind. It is a feeling that makes you want to laugh and cry, to dance with joy and yet

at the same time you fear that it is too good to be true and that it just might all evaporate. Perhaps that is how the victors felt on VE and VJ Days when the Allies roundly defeated the Nazis and the Japanese after the Second World War – people poured out on to the streets of their villages, towns and cities, hugging and kissing perfect strangers. That's how we felt.

The white person entered the voting booth burdened by the load of guilt at having enjoyed the fruits of oppression and injustice. He too emerged as somebody new, somebody transfigured, from whom a burden had been lifted, and who was now free. White people experienced that freedom was indeed indivisible. I had kept saying in the dark days of apartheid's oppression that white South Africans would never be truly free until we blacks were free as well. Many thought it was just another Tutu slogan, irresponsible as all his others had been. They were experiencing it as a reality today. I used to refer to an intriguing old film starring Sidney Poitier, *The Defiant Ones*. Two convicts, one white, the other black, escape from a chain gang manacled together. They fall into a ditch with slippery sides. One convict claws his way nearly to the top and out of the ditch but cannot make it because he is bound to his mate who has been left at the bottom in the ditch. The only way they can make it is together, clawing their way out, up and up and up and eventually over the side wall and out.

So too I would say we South Africans will survive and prevail only together, black and white bound together by circumstance and history as we strive to claw our way out of the abyss of apartheid racism, up and out, black and white together. Neither group on its own could make it. God had bound us together. In a way we are living out what Martin Luther King Jr said – 'Unless we learn to live together as brothers, we will die together as fools.'

How amazing that 27 April, that extraordinary day, ended with hardly any of the untoward things we had

feared or which others had predicted. The election was declared to be free and fair. God be praised. We were delirious with joy. We had done it. We had amazed even ourselves. On 9 May Nelson Mandela was duly elected president by the first democratically elected national assembly of the new South Africa. Afterwards we went to the Grand Parade outside Cape Town City Hall which was a sea of humanity, a crowd as big as the one that had gathered there when Nelson Mandela was released from prison.

I had the very great honour of introducing the brand-new President and his two deputies, Thabo Mbeki and F. W. de Klerk, to the waiting and impatient throng and to the world. When I led Nelson Mandela to the podium and gave him to his people the cheers were deafening.

After the election we South Africans found that the coming of democracy and freedom to our land served to open doors that had previously been slammed shut. Now the international community that had treated us as a pariah state threw open its arms to us. We were welcomed back into the Commonwealth in a deeply moving ceremony and church service in Westminster Abbey in London, when the new South African flag was carried into the sanctuary to join those of other Commonwealth lands. The sporting world, which had in most cases boycotted us, put out the red carpet of welcome. South Africans had a new kind of experience to deal with. Our country was now the flavour of the month. Whereas previously South Africans travelled abroad furtively, hiding their national identity for fear of being rebuffed, now they walked tall wearing their country’s flag on their lapels and stuck prominently on their luggage, blazoning abroad for all and sundry to know they were from South Africa, that land that had confounded all the prophets of doom by making a remarkably peaceful transition from repression and injustice to democracy and freedom.

The world probably came to a standstill on 10 May when Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as South Africa's first democratically elected President. If it did not stand still then it ought to have, because nearly all the world's leaders were milling around in Pretoria. Anyone who was anyone was there. One of the most unforgettable moments on that historic inauguration day was when South African Air Force jets flew overhead in salute to the new President, trailing smoke in the colours of the new national flag. Tears were streaming down my face. Almost as if from one throat, an ear-piercing roar broke forth from the South Africans who were there, and I think especially the black South Africans. It was as if it occurred to all of us simultaneously that these war machines that had for so long been ranged against us were now *ours* – no longer just *theirs* – that this was indeed now *our* country in the profoundest possible way.

It was a poignant moment when Nelson Mandela arrived accompanied by his elder daughter, and the various heads of the security forces, the police and the correctional services strode to his car, saluted him and then escorted him as the Head of State. Only a few years previously he had been their prisoner, and if free would have been a terrorist they would have hunted down. What a metamorphosis, what an extraordinary turnaround. He invited his white gaoler to attend his inauguration as an honoured guest, the first of many spectacular gestures he made that showed his breathtaking magnanimity and willingness to forgive. He has been a potent agent for the reconciliation he urged his compatriots to work for and which was central to the purpose of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission he appointed to deal with our country's past. This man, who had been vilified and hunted down as a dangerous fugitive and incarcerated for nearly three decades, was transformed into the embodiment of forgiveness and reconciliation, and had most of those who had hated him eating out of his hand. The prisoner become

President, and someone who was admired by the whole world in an extraordinary outpouring of adulation and hero-worship – internationally the most admired and revered head of state. South Africa has never had as many state visits as there have been since April 1994. Virtually every head of state has wanted his or her picture taken with our president.

And yet at the time we kept wondering whether it was not all going to blow up in our faces. We were scared that somewhere in another part of our country some madmen would go on the rampage and subvert the entire negotiated settlement. It did not happen. Many things went wrong. In some places this was clearly the result of a deliberate intention to sabotage the whole exercise, and yet the country managed to take everything in its stride.

The outside world saw a miracle unfolding before their eyes. They witnessed the almost-unbelievable. Instead of the horrendous bloodbath that so many had feared and predicted, here were these amazing South Africans, black and white together, crafting a relatively peaceful changeover and transfer of power.

We won a spectacular victory over injustice, oppression and evil and it is wonderful to be able to say to the international community that that spectacular victory would have been totally impossible without your help, your prayers, your commitment to our cause. On behalf of millions of my compatriots it is a great privilege to say, 'Thank you, thank you, thank you. Our victory in a real sense is your victory. Thank you.' I spoke once at Cambridge University in England and amongst other things I said, 'Now the boycott of South African goods is lifted.' After my address a middle-aged woman accosted me and said, 'Archbishop, I hear you and cerebrally I agree with you. But my parents brought me up to boycott South African goods and I have brought up my children to boycott South African goods too. So even now, when I buy South

African goods I am furtive because all of me says I am doing something wrong.' I doubt that any other cause has evoked the same passion and dedication as the anti-apartheid cause and I doubt that any other country has been prayed for by so many people so intensely and for so long as has my motherland. In a sense if a miracle was to happen anywhere then South Africa must have been the obvious candidate.

When I became Archbishop I set myself three goals for my term of office. Two had to do with the inner workings of our Anglican (Episcopalian) Church – the ordination of women to the priesthood, which our church approved in 1992 and through which our church has been wonderfully enriched and blessed; and the division of the large and sprawling Diocese of Cape Town into smaller episcopal pastoral units (in which I failed to get the Church's backing). The third goal was the liberation of all our people, black and white, and that we achieved in 1994.

So my wife Leah and I could look forward happily to my retirement in 1996. We had been wonderfully blessed in that we had seen what we could only have hoped would happen one day in our lives, to see our land and its people emancipated from the shackles of bondage to racism.

I had been involved in the struggle in a public and high-profile way from 1975 when I became Dean of Johannesburg. In 1976 I wrote a letter to the Prime Minister of the day, Mr B. J. Vorster, warning him of the growing anger of the black community. He treated my letter with disdain. A few weeks later Soweto exploded and South Africa was never to be the same again. I had been in the public arena for twenty years and now with the political processes being normalised it was time to move off centre stage. I had not reckoned with the Synod of Bishops of our Church or with our President and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

CHAPTER TWO

Nuremberg or national amnesia? A third way

UNDER APARTHEID, A small white minority had monopolised political power, which gave it access to all other kinds of power and privilege. It had maintained its tight control by vicious and immoral means. This white minority used a system of ‘pigmentocracy’ to claim that what invested human beings with worth was a particular skin colour, ethnicity and race. Since these attributes were enjoyed by only a few, the pigmentocracy was exclusive to a limited number of all human beings.

In Ancient Greece the otherwise wise and astute philosopher Aristotle was guilty of a similar delusion. He claimed that human personality was not a universal possession enjoyed by all human beings, since slaves were devoid of it. It is odd that Aristotle should have failed to note the utter absurdity of his position, which must have given great comfort to slave owners who thus could ill-treat their chattels with impunity, knowing that they were not really being cruel since their slaves were not quite as human as themselves. (Presumably freed slaves suddenly acquired humanity!) The ancients can to some extent be forgiven for believing such irrational and immoral ideas. The perpetrators of apartheid were not benighted pagans, however, and so could not plead ignorance. They were as

civilised as the Westerners they claimed to be and, what is more, they were Christians. That is what they asserted vehemently when they sought to oppose sanctions being imposed on them. They were able to convince a too readily gullible West that they were in fact the last bastion of Western Christian civilisation against the depredations of Soviet Communist expansionism. They read the Bible, they went to church – how they went to church! I recall on one occasion driving with my mother-in-law, who was a domestic worker with no more than elementary school education, past a white Dutch Reformed church. There were scores of cars outside in its parking lot. I pointed to those cars and remarked that the Afrikaners were clearly a God-fearing and certainly a churchgoing lot. My mother-in-law replied quietly, with a chuckle, 'My child, if God treated me as He is treating them, I too would be a very regular churchgoer!'

Our people were often left perplexed by this remarkable fact, that those who treated them so abominably were not heathen but claimed to be fellow Christians who read the same Bible. Thus the proponents of apartheid really had no excuse for their peculiar doctrine. The Bible they and we both read is quite categorical – what endows human beings, every single human being without exception, with infinite worth is not this or that biological or any other external attribute. No, it is the fact that each one of us has been created in the image of God. This is something intrinsic. It comes as it were with the package. It means that each one of us is a God-carrier, God's viceroy, God's representative. This is why treating anybody as if they were less than this is veritably blasphemous. It is like spitting in the face of God. That is what filled some of us with such a passionate commitment to fight for justice and freedom. We were inspired not by political motives but by our biblical faith. The Bible turned out to be the most subversive book imaginable in a situation of injustice and oppression.

We frequently tried to point out the absurdity of racism in the hope that our white compatriots would be embarrassed into dropping something so ludicrous. For instance, I would suggest that instead of skin colour we should substitute a large nose, since I possessed one. Imagine a certain university is reserved not for whites, as happened under apartheid, but for large noses only – that is the chief requirement, not academic ability. If you are afflicted with a small nose, you have to apply to the Minister of Small Nose Affairs for permission to attend the university reserved for large noses. Most audiences I told this story to would be rolling in the aisles at the stupidity and the absurdity of it all. If only the reality had been a laughing matter.

My father was headmaster of an elementary school. Although my mother, as a domestic servant, was hardly well educated, and the family income was nothing to write home about, we were shielded to some extent from the worst of the rigours of South Africa's racism in the years before apartheid as refined by the Nationalist Government. I was not particularly politically conscious and I even thought that the racist ordering of affairs was something divinely ordained. That is how things were and you had better accept it and not be too fussy. Actually, most people adjusted extraordinarily well even to the most awful circumstances. We lived in Ventersdorp, a small town to the west of Johannesburg which was later to gain notoriety as the headquarters of the neo-Nazi Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB, or Afrikaner Resistance Movement, which was formed in the late 1970s to fight against limited reforms to apartheid). I used to go from our ghetto into the white town to buy newspapers for my father. Quite frequently I would see black urchins scavenging in the dustbins of the white school and coming up with perfectly edible apples and sandwiches which the white pupils had thrown away. They preferred the picnic

lunches their mothers had prepared for them to the free lunch the government gave to white pupils (and not to blacks). It was part of the perverse nature of racism that those who did not need it and could afford their own food were provided with free school meals. Those who were often desperately in need of good food and who could not afford it were not given free school meals. This was possible only because their parents had no clout. They were invisible in the land of their birth except when they were required to do work, usually as servants. I did notice this different treatment, but I can't pretend that I was aware it was going to make an indelible impression on me. It was only much later when Dr Verwoerd introduced the deliberately inferior education for blacks known as Bantu Education, and stopped the free school meals which had been introduced in some black schools that my boyhood memories were revived. When Dr Verwoerd was asked why he had ended this fairly cheap but effective way of combating malnutrition among the poorest sections of the population, his reply was quite mind-boggling, although it was consistent with the total irrationality of racism and apartheid. He said that if you could not feed all, then you should not feed any. That surely takes the cake. Why don't we try to cure those people suffering from TB? No, we won't do it because we really must not try to treat some TB patients unless we can treat them all. It was possible to spew forth such arrant nonsense because the victims had no political leverage. They could not vote you out.

Thousands of blacks were arrested daily under the iniquitous pass law system, which severely curtailed their freedom of movement. All black people aged sixteen and over had to carry a pass. It was an offence not to have it on your person when a police officer demanded to see it – it was no good saying you had left it in the office in your jacket pocket when you went out to buy a packet of cigarettes. The system conspired to undermine your sense

of worth. Blacks did not have a right to be in the urban areas. They were there by the grace and favour of their white overlords. It is difficult to describe the daily public humiliation of having to produce your pass or else join the human crocodile of those who had fallen foul of the law and were now handcuffed together, a public spectacle, whilst the police waited to have a large enough quota to fill their troop carrier. This was called a pick-up van or a *kwela-kwela* (from the Xhosa for 'get on, get on', shouted by the police to their prey). Decent men were driven to prison with hardened criminals and then were bewildered in court the next day by the extraordinary rate at which the cases were processed: one person every two minutes, a kind of human-conveyor-belt justice. Before they could say 'Nelson Mandela' they would have been found guilty and sentenced to what for them was a very heavy fine or a prison term. This particular violation of human rights was something that nearly every black person had experienced at one time or another.

I remember so vividly accompanying my schoolteacher father to town and how sorry I felt for him when he would almost invariably be stopped. Now there was something funny. Because he was educated he qualified for what was called an 'exemption', in that the ordinary pass laws did not apply to him and he had the privilege, denied to other blacks, of being able to purchase the white man's liquor without running the risk of being arrested. But in order for the police to know that he was exempted he had to carry and produce his superior document, the exemption. Thus it did not spare him the humiliation of being stopped and asked peremptorily and rudely to produce his exemption in the street. It sickened me.

Many of our neighbours suffered the further indignity of pass raids on their homes. There was no such thing as a man's home being his castle. The police came at the most inconvenient times, in the small hours, making the most

awful noise and getting people out of their beds with scant regard for modesty: '*Kom, kom – maak oop, julle verdomde kaffers*' ('Come on – open up, you damned kaffirs'). Scantily clad mothers would stand perplexed and hurt, children would be scared and yelling, and the man would be standing feeble, emasculated, humiliated in front of his children – treated as if he were just a nonentity. He *was* a nonentity in the eyes of the law, with the minimum rights of a third-class citizen.

It was not usually the big things, the awful atrocities, that got to you. No, it was the daily pinpricks, the little discourtesies, the minute humiliations: having one's dignity trodden underfoot, not always with jackboots – though that happened too. It was the occasions such as going into a shop with my father, this dignified, educated man, and a slip of a girl behind the counter, just because she was white, addressing him, '*Ja*, boy'. I died many deaths for my father, who would often then be ingratiating and obsequious to this badly brought-up child; I knew there was very little he could do about it. If he took his custom to another shop, he would inevitably be subjected to the same treatment there. There were exceptions, but they were as rare as snow in hell. This kind of treatment demeaned our people and had a deeply corrosive effect on their dignity.

When I came to Johannesburg as Dean of Johannesburg and later as Bishop, Leah and I had to be 'endorsed' into this urban area. We had to go to the Native Commissioner's offices to have our passes stamped with the correct stamp to say we were permitted to live in Johannesburg as long as I was employed by the Church. The many black men standing in long lines would have to wait whilst the white masters chatted among themselves, read their newspapers or drank their tea. When they deigned to attend to their charges they hardly ever addressed them courteously. They would almost always shout rudely and further confuse the already bewildered country people. The black officials were

little better. Leah was permitted to be in Johannesburg as long as she was married to me. She was discriminated against at least twice over – as a black and as a woman. She had very few of even the minimal rights that black males had.

What was important in the eyes of the government was that you were black. That was the most significant fact about you, not that you were in fact a human being. Thus it was that even when I was Bishop of Johannesburg and a Nobel laureate, when we were stopped at roadblocks during states of emergency, my wife and daughters would face being body-searched by the roadside. This did not happen because I protested, so they would be marched to a nearby police station to be searched there instead. If that was the treatment they could routinely mete out to fairly prominent blacks, what were they not doing to less well-known black people, I wondered, knowing the awful answer.

In a submission quoted in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's main report, Justice Pius Langa, later Deputy President of the Constitutional Court, told of his experiences as a black person:

> My first real encounter with the legal system was as a young work-seeker in Durban . . . in 1956. It was during that period that I experienced the frustration, indignity and humiliation of being subject to certain of the provisions of the Population Registration Act, No. 30 of 1950, the Natives (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act, No. 25 of 1945 as well as other discriminatory legislation of that time . . . The immediate impact on me was severe disillusionment at the unfairness and injustice of it all. I could never understand why race should have been the determinant of where I should live and where I could work. I was never able to understand why, whilst still a teenager, I was expected to live at a men's hostel and needed a permit to stay with my parents in the township . . . In that first flush of youth, I had thought I could do anything, aspire to anything and that nothing could stop me. I was wrong. My dreams came up against the harsh apartheid realities. The insensitive, demeaning and often hostile environment it had created around me proved to have been crafted too well; it was designed to discourage those who, like me, sought to improve their circumstances and those of their communities . . .

> The pass laws and influx control regulations were, for me, the focal point of the comprehensive network of laws and regulations which dominated my early working life . . . I was merely one of tens of thousands who peopled those seemingly interminable queues at the end of which, in general, bad-tempered clerks and officials might reward one with some endorsement or other in the 'dompas' [a colloquial reference to the 'pass']. The whole process of the influx control offices was painful and degrading and particular aspects of it inflicted deep humiliation on the tens of thousands who were on the receiving end of these regulations. As a seventeen-year-old, I remember having to avert my eyes from the nakedness of grown men in a futile attempt to salvage some dignity for them in those queues where we had to expose ourselves to facilitate the degrading examination. To anyone who failed to find work during the currency of their permits, loomed the very real threat of being declared 'an idle and undesirable Bantu' by the Commissioner's court and being subject to be sent to a farm colony. Scores of people were processed through those courts and sentenced on charges such as failing to produce a reference book on demand . . .
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> It was one thing, however, having the overtly discriminatory and repressive laws on the statute book. Their ugliness was exacerbated to a large degree by the crude, cruel and unfeeling way in which many of the officials, black and white, put them into operation. There was a culture of hostility and intimidation against those who came to be processed or for assistance. The face presented by authority, in general, was of a war against people who were unenfranchised, and human dignity was the main casualty.

The apartheid government began engaging in an orgy of racist legislation as soon as they came to power in 1948. They demolished many black townships and uprooted many settled communities, depositing God's children in poverty-stricken Bantustan homeland resettlement camps, really no better than dumping grounds. You don't dump people, you dump things. Yet that is what they did to those created in God's image whose crime was to be black. They treated us as if we were things. We had a struggle song, '*Senzenina? – Isono sethu bubumnyama*' ('What have we done? – Our sin is that we are black'). The Nationalists developed the separation of the races to a fine art – we were segregated residentially, at school, at play, at work. We were not allowed to marry across racial lines – sexual intercourse between the races was taboo. Mixed marriages were taboo.

Job reservation prohibited blacks from doing certain jobs which were the preserve of whites – and today they cry ‘foul’ at affirmative action.

Three-and-a-half million people were forcibly removed in a heartless piece of social engineering that attempted to unscramble the racial omelette that was South Africa. Those are the bare statistics, but it was flesh-and-blood people who were the pawns in these forced removal schemes. Leah and I were married in a Roman Catholic church in Munsieville, a black township on the West Rand nineteen kilometres west of Johannesburg. That church was razed to the ground along with many residential buildings because Munsieville was doomed to be demolished. It was that aberration, a black spot in what should have been a lily-white area. Munsieville was reprieved only by the intervention of Leon Wessels, the Nationalist MP for Krugersdorp, who later apologised handsomely for apartheid. He was to become Deputy Chair of the Constituent Assembly that gave us our wonderful constitution. But other places were not so fortunate. I lived or studied in at least five places – Sophiatown, for instance – that were not spared. A certain man worked as a gardener in Johannesburg and had built himself a nice home in one of the villages. One day it was announced that his home village was to be demolished and the community moved elsewhere. The gardener asked for one favour, which was granted him. He wanted to demolish the house which he had built so painstakingly over the years himself. The following morning he was found hanging from a tree. He had committed suicide. He could not take it any longer.

In Cape Town there was a vibrant, cosmopolitan part of the city called District Six, which nestled at the foot of Table Mountain. It was a lively, multiracial community with a diversity of Christians, Muslims and Jews who lived with one another amicably with hardly any incidents of racism. Then the Nationalists came along and through the quaintly

named Department of Community Development decreed in the name of racial harmony that District Six should die. And so the Coloureds and Africans were moved miles away from the city centre where they worked, from spacious homes to matchbox houses clustered together claustrophobically in yet another ghetto township. Soon after becoming Archbishop I visited Bonteheuwel, one of apartheid's spawns. Inside one of the minute dwellings of the township was one of our parishioners, an old man who had been moved from District Six in 1960. It was now 1986. He had not unpacked the cartons and boxes into which he had stuffed his possessions. The boxes littered the very modest accommodation. When I asked why the boxes were there, unopened, he replied that he was waiting to return home to District Six. The three-and-a-half million consisted of people such as these. He later died of a broken heart, his boxes still unopened.

Somebody produced a musical called *District Six*, which described the vibrancy of this suburb in Cape Town and how it finally succumbed to apartheid's madness. One of my staff, who had lived in District Six as a child, returned after attending a performance and told us that he had wept with nostalgia. His own mother in her old age used to say she wanted to go home, meaning to return to her house in District Six. Stephen Naidoo had come from Durban with his merchant father, his mother and sister. His father had prospered and built a nice house in Retreat, close to Cape Town. Stephen became my counterpart as Roman Catholic Archbishop of Cape Town. I told him what my staffer had said and he asked what I thought he had done when he went to see the same show – he too had broken down. Community Development had decreed that their section of Retreat was white so the Naidoos would have to move. His father had died and his widowed mother pleaded with the authorities to let them remain in their house, but to no avail. So they found a one-roomed apartment they shared