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‘The Arch’ – our moral beacon

Desmond Mpilo Tutu

1931 - 2021

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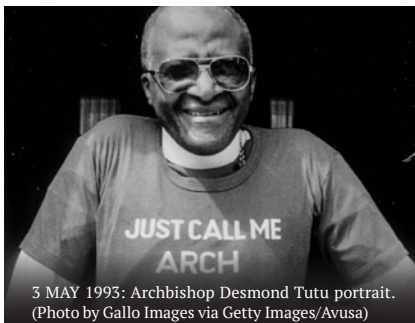


Tutu's passing must remind South Africa of its morality

For a nation bereft of confidence in its future, sleepwalking its way into crisis after crisis after more than a decade of economic stagnation, tales of grand scale corruption that reached the country's highest office and two years of a global pandemic that has claimed more than 90 000 South African lives so far, the passing of Desmond Tutu, so often referred to as the country's "moral conscience", comes as quite a blow.

For a nation bereft of confidence in its future, sleepwalking its way into crisis after crisis, the passing of Desmond Tutu, so often referred to as our "moral conscience", must awaken us to who we are.

His passing, like that of his friend and one-time neighbour [Nelson Mandela](#) at the ripe old age of 90 and after almost 10 years of retirement from public life, raises questions about the experiment of this new South Africa that he famously christened as the "Rainbow Nation", to the chagrin of some members of our commentariat. Ever since his return to the country from his theological studies in London in 1975 – a year before the liberation struggle would grab international headlines the following June – Tutu's name was joined to the hip with the battle to end apartheid. He, along with [Winnie Madikizela-Mandela](#), were among the few untouchables at a time when the apartheid state was at its most heinous, defying Pretoria with their calls for an end to the system. He called on the moral consciousness of the oppressor, using his high position in the Anglican church for the



betterment of his fellow African man. Years later, he would use his prominence to battle for the rights of women within his church, pushing for the ordination of women as priests. Mandela's appointment of Tutu as the chair of the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) was a masterstroke.

His was a life of activism on behalf of the oppressed. In the final years of his life, the deterioration and the drift of the governing ANC did not escape his criticism, much like the National Party of PW Botha. His passing should not be mourned as a loss of our "moral conscience," but a reminder that we do have it. That everyone of us, including those in positions of power, know that we can and must do better as a nation and as a people. After all, he called upon it often in times where we were spiralling into the worst versions of ourselves. Our compass does exist, it may be muddied by years of confidence-sapping events in our political theatre and in the world of economics, but we will need our tears to clear it as we forge a nation.

A birth, a name and a life

Author: John Allen

“Even if he was wrong, my mother used to take his side”, Gloria said. Desmond returned his mother’s love and regarded her as the single greatest influence on his life:

I resemble her in many ways. She was stumpy, and she had a big nose like mine. And I hope that I resemble her in another respect: [she] . . . was very, very gentle and compassionate and caring, always taking the side of whoever was having the worst of an argument She was also quite incredible about wanting to share She never cooked just enough for the family. She always imagined that there was going to be somebody [else] who came and for whom she must dish up Even when we didn’t have a great deal she would want to share even that little bit that we had.”

If Matse Tutu’s compassion for the underdog goes partway toward explaining the stands

her son later took as a spiritual leader and campaigner for human rights, one element of his father’s behavior may explain the depth of his anger when he saw unprovoked and unmerited suffering.

[...] Desmond Tutu was fond of his father, enjoyed Zachariah’s sense of humor, and was impressed by his commitment to education and his skill as a conductor of school choirs. During South Africa’s transition to democracy, he frequently quoted one of his father’s aphorisms: “Don’t raise your voice. Improve your argument.” And the young Desmond “fumed inside”, as he put it, to hear a white shop assistant, “a slip of a child”, call his father “boy”. But in one respect he neither admired nor had sympathy for Zachariah:

He drank often.



I would say that it was excessive. . . . It wasn't something that happened every day, but when it happened it was awful. . . . He was a brilliant teacher but maybe he could have been even better had he not drunk as much as he used to. . . . Sometimes he beat up my mother. "I really got very, very angry and wanted to take him on. I couldn't, I was small. . . . I don't know whether I wasn't close to hating him for how he sometimes treated my mother."

Still, Zacharia's drinking did not prevent him from providing for his family: "We were poor, but we never starved," said Gloria. Zachariah fished in a nearby stream to supplement the family's food and earned extra money by taking photographs at local weddings, often being paid with eggs, chickens, or piglets.

[...] His experiences with whites were mixed; looking back as an adult, he found it remarkable that he could lay out a newspaper on the side-walk of a street in Ventersdorp and read, undisturbed, while white pedestrians stepped around him.

He also had his first experience of how South African society was ordered:

"Once I saw black children scavenging in the dustbins of the white school for sandwiches which the children had thrown away after their break. [...] I just thought life was organised in such a way that white people lived in the nice part, you lived in the township, and that was how God organised it."

An excerpt from the Rabble-Rouser for Peace: The Authorized Biography of Desmond Tutu by John Allen.



The editorial staff of the Normalife, a publication produced by the students of the Pretoria Bantu Normal College, left to right, Isaac Sibanyoni, unknown person, Desmond Tutu and Rev. Stanley Mogoba, back. (Photo by Gallo Images via Getty Images/Sunday Times)

Tutu flexed his political muscle without fear or favour

Author: Richard Calland

Courage, independence, integrity, and humour. Many people would agree that those were Archbishop Desmond Tutu's defining human qualities and values. But what was his political influence and impact?

When in late 2005 [Evo Morales](#) was elected as the first indigenous president of Bolivia, [the Club of Madrid](#) – self-styled as “the largest forum of democratic former presidents and prime ministers” – hastily arranged a world tour for Morales, including a visit to South Africa, since it was considered that Morales faced something akin to South Africa's 1994 “historical moment”.

[The Institute for a Democratic South Africa](#) was asked to make the arrangements, since it was not an official visit because Morales was yet to be inaugurated, and in turn I was asked to accompany Morales as I had

met him on a couple of occasions in Bolivia when working with the Carter Center on transparency reforms.

The ailing Nelson Mandela was top of the list for people to Morales to meet with, unsurprisingly. But second on the list was Tutu – regarded as a greater priority than others who Morales met with, such as then-president Thabo Mbeki, former constitutional assembly chair Cyril Ramaphosa, and National Party leaders and negotiators such as FW De Klerk and Roelf Meyer.

The archbishop had an extraordinary ability to cut through the bullshit and with unerring accuracy hit the bullseye of the politics of the issue

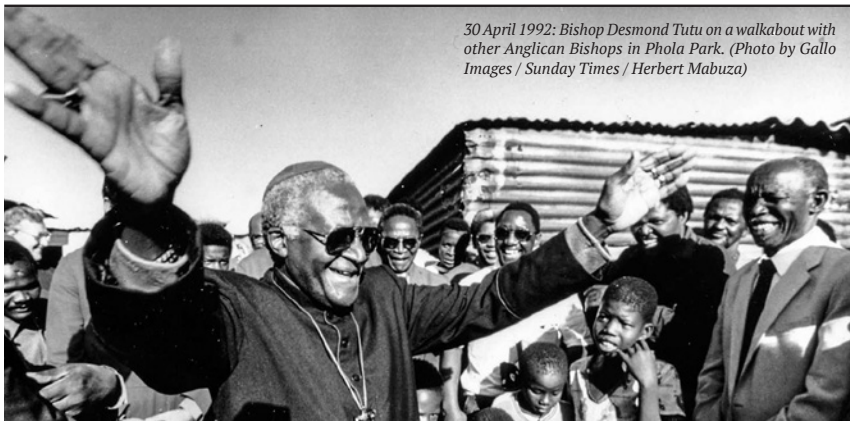
This demonstrates Tutu's global standing and reputation. The Club of Madrid knew that Tutu could provide a clear political message to the young, firebrand Bolivian.

Tutu did not let them down.

Morales had launched into a long monologue. The interpreter was whispering rapidly into Tutu's ear. Then, suddenly, Tutu said “Stop!”. Everyone went quiet. “I have heard enough”, he added, turning to Morales and seizing his arm tightly.

The then incoming president of Bolivia, Evo Morales, meets with Archbishop Desmond Tutu in Cape Town. AFP PHOTO/Pieter Bauermeister (Photo by STR/AFP via Getty Images)





30 April 1992: Bishop Desmond Tutu on a walkabout with other Anglican Bishops in Phola Park. (Photo by Gallo Images / Sunday Times / Herbert Mabuza)

“Señor Morales, I can now understand why the people of Bolivia have chosen you to lead them.” Then, in a moment of exquisite political theatre, he leaned closer to Morales and, squeezing his arm visibly tighter, added: “And I know you will not let them down, will you?”

And that was that. Morales got the message: “Don’t mess this up.”

As a piece of statecraft it was brilliant. But only because of who had delivered it. Very few people, if any, have the moral authority — as well as the chutzpah — to deliver such a message in such a way.

This was a prime example of Tutu’s extraordinary ability to cut through the bullshit and with unerring accuracy hit the bullseye of the politics of the issue. He did it with apartheid — standing up to its myriad cruelties and exposing its petty absurdities and brutal indignities. He issued a warning to the ANC, as the liberation movement slowly slipped off of the straight and narrow. He saw through former president Jacob Zuma and called out his bullshit.

He confronted homophobes and sexist men as much as he did racists. And he challenged

Zionist extremism and rebuked the illegal violence of the Israeli state in its oppression of Palestinian rights.

That he could cause all of these powerful forces such discomfort, that they hit back at him because they feared him, and because he pricked their consciences so pointedly, was his political muscle — as evidenced, again, by the response to his death from the radical economic transformation gangsters and faux revolutionaries on social media and by Zionist attack dog Harvard law professor, [Alan Dershowitz](#), who in a TV interview earlier this week, claimed that Tutu “encouraged others to have similar views and because he was so influential, he became the most influential anti-Semite of our time”.

This is the point about Tutu. Powerful apologists of human rights abuses feared Tutu as much as anything because of his standing and global reach.

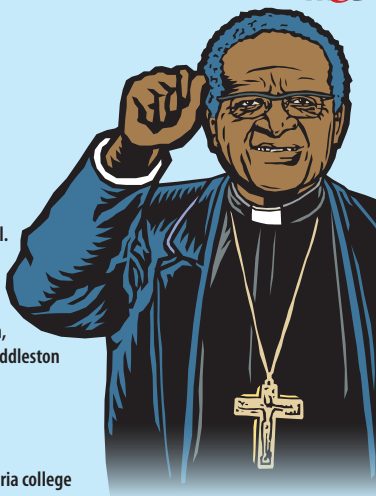
In as much as any single human voice can be ethically “unimpeachable”, Tutu’s was. This was his political influence. And this is why he will be missed. “Speaking truth to power” is one of the great modern clichés. Tutu made it matter.

Path of a hero

Archbishop Emeritus

Desmond Tutu

1931 to 2021



- **1931:** Desmond Mpilo Tutu is born on 7 October in Klerksdorp, Transvaal. His father is a school principal and his mother is a domestic worker
- **1943:** Previously Methodist, the Tutu family joins the Anglican Church
- **1945:** Tutu begins his secondary education at a school near Sophiatown, Johannesburg, where he meets anti-apartheid activist Father Trevor Huddleston

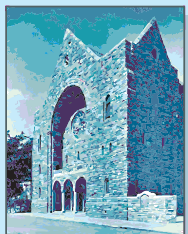
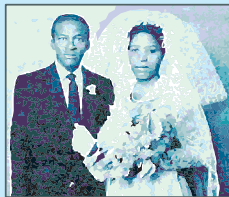


Trevor
Huddleston

- **1950:** Tutu matriculates and is accepted by the Witwatersrand Medical School, but is unable to get a bursary
- **1954:** He gains a teaching diploma from a Pretoria college
- **1955:** Tutu marries Nomalizo Leah Shenxane and in the same year graduates from Unisa with a BA degree. He works as a high school teacher for three years and begins to study theology
- **1960:** He is ordained as an Anglican deacon at St. Mary's Cathedral in Johannesburg

- **1961:** Tutu is ordained as an Anglican priest
- **1962:** He continues his theological studies at King's College in London, England, graduating with a master's degree in theology
- **1966:** He returns to South Africa and teaches at a seminary and at the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland

Desmond and
Leah Tutu on their
wedding day,
2 July 1955

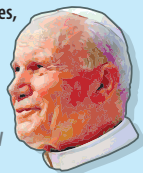


St Mary's Cathedral

- **1972:** Tutu returns to England as Africa director for the Theological Education Fund in London
- **1975:** He returns to South Africa and becomes Anglican dean of Johannesburg and rector of St Mary's Cathedral in Johannesburg
- **1976:** At the time of the Soweto riots Tutu plays a role in the Soweto Parents Crisis Committee. Shortly after the riots he is consecrated as a bishop and accepts a position in Lesotho
- **1978:** Appointed general secretary of the South African Council of Churches, he becomes a significant thorn in the side of the apartheid regime
- **1983:** He becomes patron of the United Democratic Front. In the same year he has an audience with Pope John Paul II at the Vatican
- **1984:** Tutu meets Senator Edward Kennedy in the US and invites him to visit South Africa in 1985. In December 1984 Tutu is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize

- **1985:** Installed as Bishop of Johannesburg
- **1986:** Ordained as Archbishop of Cape Town, he is the most senior Anglican cleric in South Africa
- **1995:** Appointed as chairperson of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)
- **1996:** Tutu retires as Archbishop of Cape Town and is later designated as Archbishop Emeritus. He continues to work for the TRC
- **2021:** Tutu dies in Cape Town on 26 December

Pope John Paul II



Nobel Peace Prize medal



Rest in peace, our ancestor of conscience

Author: Sello Hatang

Moseka phofu ya gaabo ga a swelentswe (You never give up on fighting for what is rightfully yours.)

Whenever I think of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, this Setswana idiom comes to mind. Arch was one person who, to the end of his life at 90, was willing to sacrifice everything for what he believed was rightfully his. Freedom for his people. Freedom from want. Freedom from the pain of oppression. Freedom from being discriminated against. Freedom for a people to determine their own destiny and have an international policy

A complex man who loved laughing, family and standing up for what was right no matter against whom

that does not sacrifice their independence. Freedom from pollution and litter. Freedom to be childlike and not be too serious about life. Freedom to associate. Freedom to claim your right to speak truth to power. Ultimately, we need freedom in order to be human. Go ba batho. Go nna le botho.

The Arch knew how to speak truth to power, even when it got him into trouble with friends. It was he who soon after the advent of a democratic era pushed his friend Nelson Mandela on the question of corruption. It was he who demanded a wealth tax and more effective strategies for redistributing wealth. It was he who insisted that the liberation movements should account for

their own human rights abuses. It was he who presented the 2004 Nelson Mandela Annual Lecture, using the platform to critique a government which was failing to shift long patterns of poverty and inequality significantly, which was normalising poor governance, and which was discarding too many people. That lecture provoked a vicious attack on Arch by a number of ANC leaders. The vulgarity of that moment is still with some of us. Respect when engaging an elder was put on the back burner and for a moment young people felt they could insult Arch as they pleased. Our country still has to do some reckoning for what transpired during that time.

Another wave of insult was directed at the Arch after the passing of Mama Winnie Madikizela-Mandela. During the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the Arch had put a lot of pressure on her to acknowledge wrongdoing during the struggles against apartheid.



Archbishop Desmond Tutu and his wife, Nomalizo, near their home in Soweto in the 1980s.

Though there was a lot of bad feeling about this at that time that did not stop him from the moral cultural imperative of paying his respect to her no matter what would be said or done to him. I had the opportunity to take Arch to Mama Winnie's home in Soweto. In the car, I asked him what he thought about what was being said. I saw the pain in his eyes as he shrugged his shoulders and didn't respond beyond that. He braved his reception at the house. I hope he and Mama Winnie get a moment on the other side to reconcile.

The Arch's legacy is a complex one. We do it a disservice when we portray it in reductionist terms. Yes, he did speak of a 'rainbow nation', but he also insisted on a just society built on pro-poor imperatives. Many still blame him for the failure of the TRC to achieve its objectives even in the face of the wide-ranging recommendations for reckoning with the past; its call for reparations and the setting up of centres of memory around the country; for the systematic prosecution of perpetrators who failed to get amnesty; and for the transformation of institutions across all sectors. What is forgotten is that these recommendations, with one or two exceptions, were never implemented by the government. I remember once watching a documentary with the Arch in Cape Town and someone had dropped a cashew nut on the floor. He gently turned to a few of us who were close and said South Africans have made littering an Olympic sport. This reminded me how we long started normalising littering under the guise of job creation. Today, I look back at how a bad habit started in small ways, was tolerated until it led to massive environmental degradation, but no jobs. For the Arch, keeping our country clean was an inseparable part of the project of liberation.

Madiba and Arch enjoyed a good joke and liked poking fun at each other. We all remember the story Arch told us of the time he tried to give Madiba some fashion advice as a friend. He tried to dissuade him from wearing his Madiba shirts, which Arch thought were not appropriate for someone in a presidential position. Madiba responded by pointing out how ironic it was to be getting advice on fashion from a man who wears a dress.

The Arch had a great sense of humour as it is well known. I remember some years ago my colleague Verne Harris and I returned a gifted bible to Arch after it was discovered in Madiba's gift collection during routine processing. When we told Arch about it he asked that we drop it off with him at the St George's Cathedral coffee shop after one of his morning prayers. We didn't know that Arch had something up his sleeve.

When we gave the bible to him, with many people around us, he waited for an ideal moment to remind us that our boss had gone to prison for his political activism. Then he said loudly:

“Now he should be arrested for stealing my bible!”

We all laughed. I was very tempted to report the matter to Madiba, just to get his response. Alas I never did!



Anti-apartheid activists including Winnie Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, march with a crowd, waving posters and banners calling for the release of Nelson Mandela. Mosiua Terror Lekota is to the left of Winnie Mandela and Trevor Manuel can be seen behind her.

One of the lessons I'm still learning from both the Arch and his wife Mama Leah is to always try to be present to my family, particularly for key moments such as birthdays. One day in conversation with Mama Leah, I just mentioned in passing that I had missed my wife Thembi's birthday. She wasn't pleased to hear that and reported the matter to Arch who then said I must make sure Thembi flies down to Cape Town for her birthday. He mentioned that I wasn't needed since I had more important things to do. As you can imagine, I invited myself to all those lunches. Thank you for adopting Thembi and I as your children.

One of my most special interactions with Arch was when I got seconded to the TRC to assist with the archive. Reconciliation and forgiveness are still very elusive in South Africa today. As Arch once said:

Forgiving and being reconciled to our enemies or our loved ones are not about pretending that things are other than they are. It is not about patting one another on the back and turning a blind eye to the wrong. True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the hurt, the truth."

Our woundedness and the extent to which we are haunted by ghosts as a nation will keep hounding us for as long as we do not complete the process, and make it victim-centred. The passing of Arch presents us with an opportunity as a country to reflect on our woundedness and find a path towards securing accountability from those who inflicted those wounds with the hope of ultimately securing justice and building a just society. As Madiba once said: "the time for healing of the wounds has come. The moment to bridge the chasm that divides us has come. The time to build is upon us." We must also centre accountability. Otherwise, it will feel like victims are asked to keep giving endlessly.

It's in our hands to help build a more reconciled and a more healed country in honour of Archbishop Tutu, our beloved Arch. My deepest condolences to Mama Leah, her and the Arch's children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, friends and wider South Africa. A part of us is gone with you, Arch. With your loss we have gained an ancestor of conscience and truth telling.

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Good journalism is worth paying for

Archbishop Desmond Tutu shows off his Nobel peace prize citation and medal in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1984



Tutu with the Reverend Beyers Naude, the Dutch Reformed minister who became an outspoken opponent of the apartheid regime.



Archbishop Tutu speaks at the funeral of four young activists in Duduza, Gauteng, on 10 July 1985. The young men were killed by booby-trapped grenades handed to them by a police informer.





Tutu takes a moment to compose himself after listening to gruesome testimony at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which he chaired.

Desmond Tutu, Dean of Johannesburg, with his mother-in-law, Mrs. Johanna Shenxane, left, and his wife, Mrs. Leah Tutu, in Kagiso township, Krugersdorp, in the 1970s. (Photo by Gallo Images via Getty Images/Africamera)



Desmond Tutu, celebrates the news of Nelson Mandela's release from prison in 1990 with his wife, Nomalizo Leah Shenxane, and son, Trevor.

A moment to reflect and reconcile with South Africa's past and future

Authors: Emsie Ferreira & Lizeka Tandwa

Those who remember Archbishop Desmond Tutu from their days as activists in the struggle against apartheid reflected that his inalienable message of love and redemption extended to all sides of any moral divide and beyond South Africa's borders.

"We lived with a prophet among us," [Reverend Frank Chikane](#) said of Tutu, who died aged 90 on 26 December. "For him it was not about black and white, it was about justice, about God's justice."

Chikane, a former presidency director general under Thabo Mbeki, recalled how Tutu prevented his arrest by apartheid police when he emerged from underground in the 1980s at Tutu's home in Orlando, Soweto. "He stood between me and the police and said: 'You can't arrest him in my house.' And so they left because they could not do much about it. I am pleased that I lived during this time, when we had people like him," Chikane said.

"Even during the time of the liberation struggle there were people who did not understand him because some of them thought for him to be with them, he must carry arms together with them ... they didn't understand the different roles people had to play, that there are those who need to be



in the trenches, there are those who need to speak out, there are those who need to facilitate negotiations."

Tutu not only [spoke uncomfortable truths](#) in the democratic era, when he believed the former liberation movement was losing its way, but during the armed struggle.



A statue of Archbishop Desmond Tutu (centre) is seen on the wake of his death on 26 December at the Waterfront in Cape Town.

When the Anglican Church refused to renounce apartheid Tutu, who became the first black bishop of Johannesburg in 1985, spoke out, eventually leading others to do the same. In the new democracy he vowed to pray for the downfall of the ruling ANC if it did not correct its missteps.

Chikane said Tutu's message was always one of forgiveness and understanding, even long before he headed the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

"And angry people will find that [message] very difficult," he said, noting that Tutu, like Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Govan Mbeki, belonged to a generation which understood the need to "choose engagement over destruction, self-destruction, or enduring bitterness".

Chikane bemoaned the recent years of corruption and people who use their position to enrich themselves at the expense of the poor: "This is not the quality of [society Mandela or Desmond](#) would have struggled for. I think the passing away of the archbishop will be a moment of reflection for this nation."

A moral colossus

Political analyst [Aubrey Matshiqi](#), who grew

up in Tutu's parish in Soweto and later joined the ANC's armed wing Umkhonto weSizwe, recalled the huge influence the diminutive cleric had on him and other young activists in the mid-1980s.

Remember, this was a small man, so if you were part of a march and you were not one of those at the front, you would not see him because everyone towered above him ... But he was a giant and a colossus in terms of his moral courage."

Tutu also loomed large in Matshiqi's decision to join the armed struggle: "Even though I was going to use violence against the apartheid government, I knew morally I was making the right choice because that choice put me on the same side as people like Archbishop Tutu," he said, adding that it was perhaps a source of frustration for young activists that Tutu would not condone violent resistance.

"I think that is why we were upset with him; we were upset precisely because we recognised that when it comes to [moral courage he was a colossus](#) and we needed his blessing."

Tutu filled a political vacuum at a time many liberation movement leaders were in prison, in exile or, in the case of Steve Biko, dead.

“He steps up to play that role, very importantly in a non-partisan way, so he stands above the ideological divisions, to speak truth in a non-partisan way,” Matshiqi said.

A lesson Matshiqi absorbed from how Tutu lived his life was that redemption was not reserved only for those on one's side, but included the oppressor. Therefore Tutu was able to speak out against the oppression of not just South Africans, but the people of Tibet, Palestine and others and “at the same time speak to the hearts of those who are doing the oppression”.

Matshiqi said he hoped South Africans would reflect that the struggle to forge a better nation was wider than ruminations about the failures of the ruling party [which Tutu spoke about](#).

“What makes me sad about the passing of Archbishop Tutu is because it reminds us that he passes on at a time when we must reflect about what we have become — and that is much bigger than what the ANC has become,” he said.

Humour and timing

In Tutu's last moments, Public Works Minister [Patricia de Lille](#) was with his family bidding farewell. She paid tribute to a man who was opposed to racism and all other forms of discrimination and injustice, whose greatest assets included humour and a great sense of timing: “He had an extraordinary ability to defuse tension, contain anger and remind people of their human essence. He used humour to convey important messages and he had a particularly contagious laugh.”

Family spokesperson Mamphela Ramphele spoke of Tutu's many ailments including polio and TB and later prostate cancer for more than two decades. But “all you heard from him was the chuckle, the joy, that deep sense of gratitude”.

“As we mourn the passing of this great man, we would really like for South Africa and the world to focus on the teaching moments of this man's life,” she said. Ramphele said the greatest tribute South Africans could pay Tutu would be to mark the day of his death as the start to a journey of healing.



A view of the Wall of Remembrance at St. Georges Cathedral, set up to honour the passing of South African anti-apartheid icon Archbishop Desmond Tutu, in Cape Town on December 28, 2021. (Photo by Rodger Bosch / AFP)

A 'powerful pilgrim on earth' remembered

Author: Eunice Stoltz

In South Africa, he was affectionately known by many as the “the Arch”. Diminutive in body size, he had an enormous global stature because of his advocacy for justice and equality, with some referring to him as a “moral giant”, “human rights leader” and “powerful pilgrim on earth”.

Here are some of the tributes to [Archbishop Desmond Tutu](#) who died on Sunday 26 December.

Tibetan spiritual leader the [Dalai Lama](#)

“Respected elder spiritual brother and good friend.

“Archbishop Desmond Tutu was entirely dedicated to serving his brothers and sisters for the greater common good. He was a true humanitarian and a committed advocate of human rights. His work for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was

[Graça Machel](#), the widow of former South African president Nelson Mandela

“My loyal friend and my spiritual leader. (The) guiding light that brought Madiba and I together in our formal union. He encouraged us to respect and perform the rituals of marriage our society demands. I am forever and deeply grateful to him for his wise counsel and loving support.”



Former US president Barack Obama

“Archbishop Desmond Tutu was a mentor, a friend, and a moral compass for me and so many others. A universal spirit, Archbishop Tutu was grounded in the struggle for liberation and justice in his own country, but also concerned with injustice everywhere.

He never lost his impish sense of humour and willingness to find humanity in his adversaries, and Michelle and I will miss him dearly.”

The world commemorates the Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu

an inspiration for others around the world.”

The Elders, an independent group of global leaders, of which Tutu was a member.

“(An) implacable and tenacious opponent of apartheid ... A devout and compassionate Christian, his faith in, and espousal of, the fundamental goodness of people helped his country cope with the often difficult transition to a multi-racial democracy.”

Among the tributes, Tutu's detractors question the TRC again

Author: Emsie Ferreira



[Archbishop Desmond Tutu liked to joke](#) that at the end of his life he found himself consigned, somewhat implausibly, not to heaven but to hell.

The punchline went that two weeks later, the devil knocked at the Pearly Gates and begged for political asylum because he was causing “so much trouble”. It was, of course, a bit of coquetry, spoken snug in the knowledge that his place in history and heaven was secured by relentless, righteous trouble-making against the apartheid regime, at times his own Anglican Church, and later successive ANC administrations.

The antipathy between himself and Jacob Zuma's government became hostility in 2011 when he said he would pray for its downfall after it [refused the Dalai Lama](#) a visa and led to the unseemly spat over his attendance of former president Nelson Mandela's funeral in Qunu two years later. Tutu [announced he would not go](#) because he had not been invited, then [changed his mind](#) after the government tersely said he was welcome to come if he wished. History has treated the incident as a bygone but not so

the controversy over his handling of [Winnie Madikizela-Mandela's testimony](#) to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in 1997. Over nine days, in a stuffy venue in Mayfair, the commission had probed the violent excesses in Soweto in the late 1980s of the Mandela United Football Club, which served as her personal bodyguards and in the words of former United Democratic Front secretary Murphy Morobe had engendered “moral repugnance” among fellow struggle leaders.

Those who accuse Tutu of forcing a culture of forgetting on a traumatised people are themselves arguably ignoring the true drift of the work he did at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, confusing his genial image with its grim findings

Those present at the hearings included the families of teenage activists who had disappeared and the mother [of Moeketsi “Stompie” Sepei](#), who was murdered by the club's nominal coach, Jerry Richardson, later revealed to be a police informer.

After listening to Madikizela-Mandela dismiss testimony implicating her in turn as ludicrous, ridiculous and fabrications, Tutu leant forward across the table and implored her to concede that something went wrong.

“You are a great person and you do not know how your greatness would be enhanced if you said ‘sorry, things went wrong for me,’” he said.

“I speak to you as someone who loves you very, very deeply, who loves your family very deeply. There are people who want to embrace you. There are many who want to do so, if you were able to say ‘something went wrong’... and say, ‘I’m sorry, I’m sorry, for my part in what went wrong’.”

He drew a grudging apology from Nelson Mandela’s former wife, one she appeared to retract years later in a [documentary made by Pascal Lamche](#), where she termed Tutu “a cretin”, adding that she had never forgiven him for compelling her to apologise as if she were responsible for apartheid.

At the hearings, there was awkwardness, even bitterness when Tutu sought to initiate a rapprochement between Madikizela-Mandela and the parents of murdered teenagers. Joyce Sepei embraced her, but the mother of [Lolo Sono](#) rejected the gesture.

“I think nothing about the TRC session,” Caroline Sono said. “Nothing has been done. There’s no justice in this land. Stompie’s being found, Asvat’s been buried, Kuki Zwane was found and buried... where is my son?”

The Missing Persons Task Team, established at the recommendation of the TRC, finally found Sono’s body in 2013.

Those who sat through many hearings, recall that what happened in Mayfair was rare. There were very few instances where victims were asked whether they forgave perpetrators, and an apology was not one of the four legal criteria for amnesty.

But beyond the controversy over Mandela-Madikizela’s appearance is a lingering contention that the commission contrived reconciliation at the expense of justice and an ongoing debate about its legacy. To Tutu’s detractors, the TRC was an exercise in

forgiving and forgetting, foisted on victims for the sake of an impossible notion of national healing.

The reproaches raised this week amid the tributes arguably rewrite history in their way, forgetting that violence continued to destabilise corners of the country and that the commission’s resources went on uncovering the worst atrocities of the regime.

Tutu had as little control over the acceptance of his recommendations, including the payment of reparations, as Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo will have once he delivers his report on state capture.

Tutu acknowledged the anger at this nonetheless, repeatedly saying it could not but be felt by those who lived in poverty while white privilege continued as before.

“I don’t know why these people don’t just say: ‘To hell with peace, To hell with Tutu and the truth commission,’” he remarked in 2003.

A researcher at the commission at the time said this week it bordered on revisionism to think that its main focus was reconciliation and to do so was to confuse its mandate with Tutu’s sensibility.

“We didn’t do a thing about reconciliation, there wasn’t a single activity planned for that, there was no budget in the TRC’s work for it,” they said.

“That reading is largely a reading of the character of Tutu, but it is not actually the work of the TRC. If you look at the work of the TRC it is about truth-seeking, and it is just a conflation of a particular media image of Tutu.”

A legacy of love and speaking truth to power

Author: John G Clarke

Archbishop [Desmond Mpilo Tutu](#) exemplified the prophetic vocation of “speaking truth to power”, but he also spoke truth about power. He did so by living the power of truth.

He taught us that power ultimately has no defence against truth. All it can do is go on the attack. He had to endure many.

For more than 40 years “the Arch” has probably been the single most influential person in shaping my vocation as a social worker, a Christian peace activist and someone who also tries to speak truth to, and about, power.

Tutu's influence on South Africa has been immense, offering hope for a brighter future while never shirking the responsibility of doing what is needed to achieve it

Our bond was formed at the start of the “Free Mandela” campaign in April 1980, in a packed students union hall at the University of Natal when I was still a student.

“In five to 10 years we will have a black president,” Tutu said in April 1980. Pointing to [Zindzi Mandela](#) who was sharing a platform with him, he added “and, I believe that person is going to be that lady's father”.

This prediction earned Tutu regard as something of an oracle. However, recalling the rest of what he said that day, I believe it is more correct to describe him as a prophet. It is not his prediction but his prophecy that has made him such a remarkable person.

He said: “What the white community still has in its power to do is to decide whether that president is going to end up there through a process of reasoned negotiation and discussion at a conference table or whether he will have to do so after bitter fighting and bloodshed.



Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu (Photo by David Turnley/Corbis/VCG via Getty Images)

“I think we have a very good chance of pulling off the first alternative. And we need [Nelson Mandela](#) because he represents all our genuine leaders, in prison and exile. So to call for his release is really to say, ‘please let us sit down, black and white, and work out our common future, so that we can move into this new South Africa which will be filled with justice, peace, love, righteousness, compassion and caring’.”

Tutu had earlier entered the stage amid rising tensions, fanned by Zimbabwean students in the upper reaches who hurled racial insults to the crowd below. I retell the full events in this [article](#), but he had already endured being stuck in a lift due to a suspicious power cut and had to use a megaphone to be heard.

He said: “You fellows up there. I just want to tell you ... We ... love ... you ...”

The moment he uttered those disarming words of love, the hall was bathed in light. Tutu dispensed with the megaphone to continue with his portentous speech. There were many more occasions where Tutu’s intervention and mediation made the difference. He was characteristically very

modest whenever asked to explain how he managed such situations. “There was an amazing number of people praying in the situation which released spiritual forces that carried things forward. I was the visible aspect but there was a lot more happening behind the scenes of people praying fervently,” Tutu once said. I knew the Arch to be a truth-teller rather than a soothsayer. He was not a talisman providing the media with idle amusement for a superstitious public. He was a true prophet.

He inspired hope, notwithstanding the discomfort his words evoked among those already corrupted by power and privilege. The verse from scripture that sums up Tutu’s life and ministry for me is from the prophet Micah.

“This, and only this, is what the Lord asks of you:

Act justly, love tenderly,

And walk humbly with your God”.
(Micah 6:8)

This is an abridged and edited extract of an article first published on [John GI Clarke’s Medium account](#) and republished here with his permission.



Tutu and the Mail & Guardian over the years



A laugh between friends: Archbishop Desmond Tutu (right) with his good friend the Dalai Lama, who wrote the introduction to Tutu's *The Authorized Portrait*. Photo: Robert Sobotta

Tutu's voice vital for humanity

His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama talks about Archbishop Desmond Tutu in this edited extract from *Tutu's Authorized Portrait* (PQ Blackwell) by Allister Sparks and Mpho A. Biography with interviews and more than 200 images

When I first met him a few years ago in Washington, DC, he told me that once he got the Nobel Peace Prize, he would visit me in South Africa. I was really confirmed. I also felt I made some sort of impact. Meeting different people because a little bit easier. And those people who invited me not as a Dalai Lama but as a Nobel Peace Prize laureate. I had more and more meetings and I became very clear that he's, firstly, a very, very spiritually minded person. He follows God, in his own way, very sincerely. When we are together talking with an audience, he emphasizes faith. I usually do not put emphasis on faith. I usually more emphasis on secular ethics. Whether we are believers or non-believers, we should be warmed-hearted persons. Warm-heartedness

... offered us lots of help. He is always playful, always joyful, always teasing. He is such a nice person. On one occasion, I think in America, a few Nobel laureates were moving from one place to another. In the hall we walked in a procession. I always push him ahead because he is the older spiritual leader. He was behind him. I pretended to choke him. He turned back. "Dalai Lama, I will inform the police that I need protection!" We are always teasing each other. In any meeting of the Nobel laureates he always brings a very joyful atmosphere. Of course he can be very serious. But generally, whenever he joins, the atmosphere completely changes like an easy-going, open, wonderful person. When I have met religious practitioners we find more or less the same qualities in them. They are using different methods or practices, they are of different religious traditions, but they exhibit more or less the same quality. People like Mother Teresa and Babu Tera himself and many others, through their own Christian faith, really transformed their lives. Their lives were more meaningful. They were more compassionate. They were more relationship-oriented. They were more responsible.

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conclusive — but they were damning all the same

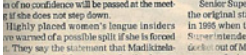
South Africa the laughing stock of the world and instead of showing her the door, her deputy [Ntuzo Madisa-Radzi] is fired. At the same time it seems odd to suspend Vusi Pikoli while retaining the police commissioner, Jackie Seleke, in his position. Those questions need to be asked and we need to debate those things," he said. Tutu said he hoped the ANC's congress would "reappraise that for which the ANC stands". "One of the things which has attracted so many different people from the country and from around the world to the ANC has always been its altruistic nature and establishing freedom for those so in need of it. We need to reappraise the essence of this organization, which I think means that criticism and debate are part of its essence," Tutu said. Commenting on Mbeki's leadership, which has been characterized by his defensive attitude to any criticism, Tutu said: "Criticism and debate have always been the heartbeat of democracy. We have to learn to celebrate the diversity among ourselves again. When people are critical and have different political persuasions, their participation shouldn't be questioned. Apartheid was initiated to this and we should never repeat this," he warned. He criticized the ANC for spending resources on name changes, calling them "trivial". "Why is the ANC spending so much time and effort changing names? Nobody would argue changing the name of Kafferkrans because it's offensive to its young women. We're changing names and making out as though we're honoring all the people of our struggle while, in effect, those honoured all come from the same political camp? "If you ask a woman living in a shanty town what her priorities are, she's definitely not going to say changing the names of places or streets — she wants a decent house and services. There are far better things in which we have to invest energy and resources. Changing names is not a priority and the ANC today is pretending it is," he said. Asked if the rainbow nation had lost its sense of history, Tutu said: "We're a vibrant society — look at the rugby World Cup and what extraordinary things we've done in that time. I saw black women wearing rugby clothes. I didn't even know that black women watched rugby! We're still an incredible bunch of people. We're fantastic and we can't be said to have lost anything. We're obviously not going right. But in my opinion there is a vibrancy here. It has been stirred by a fire that always come back!"



Neither Zuma, nor Zuma, nor Zuma, nor Zuma

'South Africans need an inspirational leader like Madiba, who makes them feel as though they matter'

Pearlie Jordaan
Neither President Thabo Mbeki nor ANC deputy president Jacob Zuma is suitable candidate to lead the party. So said Archbishop Desmond Tutu this week. The country needs an inspirational leader to take the reins of the ANC. "The nation is in distress and needs a political leader who cares for them and makes them feel as though they matter. The political leaders can't 'chase the people'," he said in an interview with the *Mail & Guardian*. "There are other candidates — why are we concentrating on those two only [Zuma and Mbeki]? Remember that I speak as a non-ANC member and I can't be prescriptive, but I have a deep sense of mission," he said. "We don't seem to be talking about questions of difference between the two leaders. It's merely a question of personality and how much attraction the one candidate has over the other." Mbeki laureate and anti-apartheid struggle hero Tutu warned against Mbeki starting on as leader of the ANC, but also warned against a Zuma leadership. "The nature of the possible criminal prosecution that continues to hang over his head. It's so easy to start a pattern where people are permanently in their positions of power — it's all about African illness where somebody becomes a president in his life. But at the same time, it's so easy to start a pattern where our next leader may face corruption charges. We're very worried about these issues," Tutu said.



South Africans need an inspirational leader like Madiba, who makes them feel as though they matter'

We're very worried: Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Photo: David Harrison

repute-tide: Winnie Madikizela-Mandela. OTTOGRAFE DARRIEL RAP

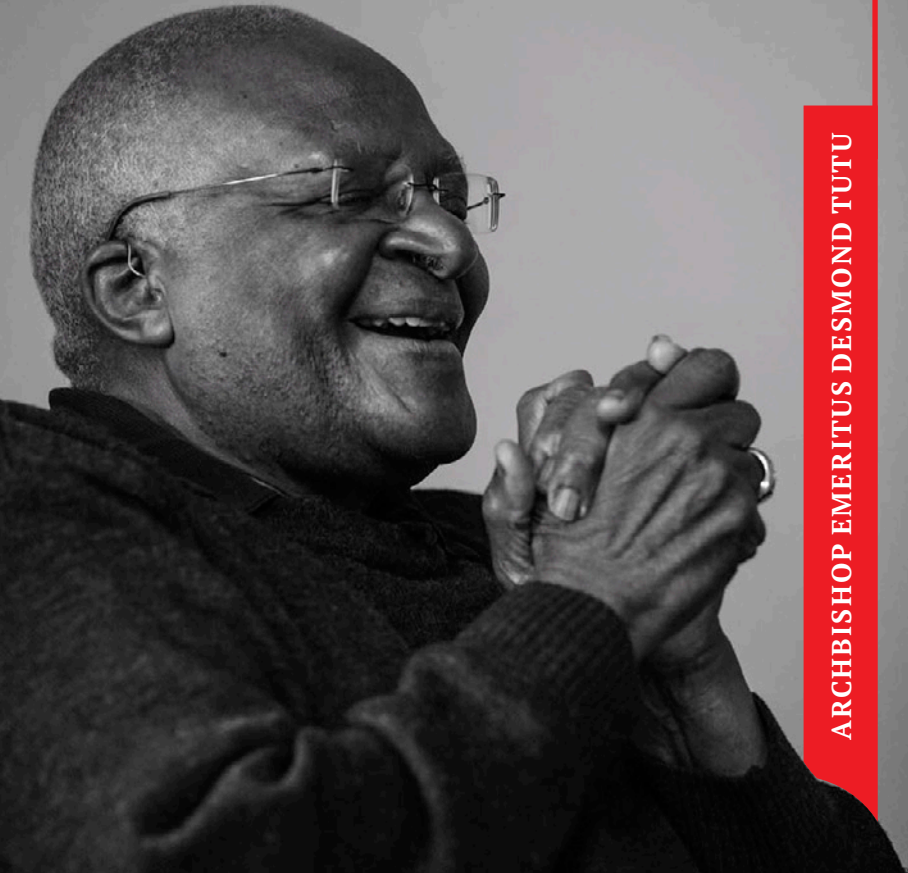
Rest, some are hoping she might voluntarily withdraw herself from the race for deputy president. Others have suggested that a motion of no confidence will be passed at the meeting if she does not step down. Highly placed women's league insiders are warned of a possible split if she is forced to step down. They say the statement that Madikizela is out of the running for the deputy presidency stemmed from the league's national file and not from its meetings. They add that many senior members of the league heard of her removal from the nomination list from radio and newspaper reports. A statement, issued by the league's executive member, Mavis Mnyakayika Mantsi, does not appear to have been canvassed widely.

State evidence

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Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu was a giant of history. His joyful chuckle and wide smile coupled with his deep passion to fight injustices, will be forever ingrained in our collective memory while his wisdom will continue to guide us. A great teacher, he taught us over and over again the imperative of standing for unity, truth and justice. He was our moral compass and the legacy he leaves behind will continue to guide us for generations to come. The AfroCentric Group joins the millions of people around the world who are paying tribute to the Arch and as we do so, we commit ourselves to ensuring that his legacy finds expression in our efforts to improve access to quality healthcare.

Rest in peace, Arch



ARCHBISHOP EMERITUS DESMOND TUTU