Peace Backstory

"My humanity is bound up in yours for we can only be human together."
-Desmond Tutu

In his role as General Secretary Tutu became an outspoken critic of apartheid in South Africa and brought awareness of the struggle to the world stage. Tutu insisted on the use of non-violent resistance by black South Africans. He risked being jailed after calling for a boycott of municipal elections. He also urged the international community to use economic sanctions against the apartheid government. That government responded by canceling Tutu's passport.

Tutu's work was recognized with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984; two years later he was elected Archbishop of Cape Town in 1986 and held that office until his retirement ten years later. Since the official end of apartheid in the early 1990's he has become a mediator in the transition toward democracy. Tutu has also chaired the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which was set up by former President Nelson Mandela to investigate human rights violations during apartheid.

In 2007 Tutu was awarded the Gandhi Peace Prize in India. He has also been given some 40 honorary doctorate degrees from universities around the world. At 76, he continues to teach and travel the globe and has become a champion for international human rights. He has also worked to heighten awareness about the global AIDS epidemic.

His message is one of compassion, forgiveness and peace that may be best summed up in a moment captured in a Johannesburg suburb in the height of apartheid violence: "Do not hate," he said, "let us choose the peaceful way to freedom."

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