

Desmond Tutu

born *October 7, 1931*
died *December 26, 2021*



Desmond Mpilo Tutu was a South African theologian and Anglican cleric. He is best known for his anti-apartheid activism and civil rights advocacy, as well as for being the first Black Archbishop of Cape Town.

Tutu started out as an English teacher and Sunday School teacher. In 1953, the National Party passed the Bantu Education Act to further apartheid and racial segregation. Tutu opposed this, leaving teaching to become an Anglican priest. He was ordained in 1960 and earned only 2/3 of the income of his white colleagues.

After earning his Master of Theology in 1966 from the University of London, Tutu returned to South Africa and served as a cleric, inviting female students to join, which was unusual at the time, and giving anti-apartheid sermons. He began to explore Black theology and wrote academic papers fusing concepts of Black theology with African theology. He joined the Black Consciousness movement and spoke at the funeral of Steve Bitko, an activist killed in police custody.

Although personally committed to non-violent activism, Tutu spoke up in support of armed liberation groups and called out hypocrisy from those condemning them. He petitioned for Nelson Mandela to be released from prison, staged marches, and was arrested. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984, the second South African to do so.

Tutu became the first Black Archbishop of Cape Town in 1986 and retired in 1996. After apartheid ended, he focused on activism for women's rights and gay rights in the Anglican community.