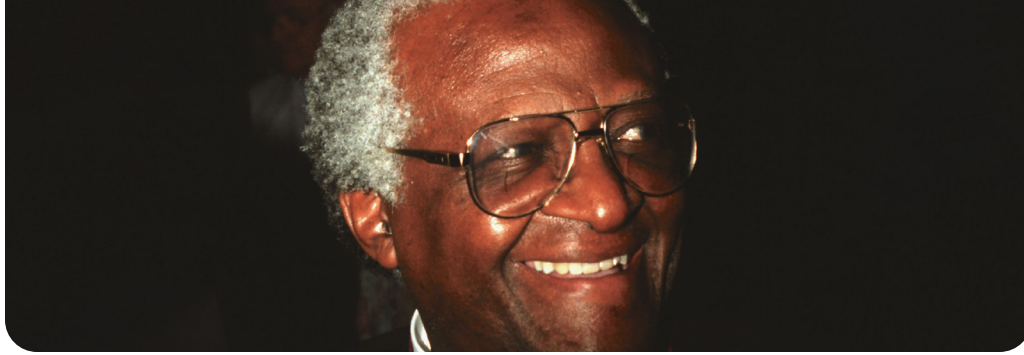


# Desmond Tutu

 **beanstack originals**



# Desmond Tutu

*Before Desmond Tutu became one of the world's most famous activists, he was a teacher.*



Desmond Tutu was a well-known activist. He fought for equal treatment for Black people in South Africa. Today, he is known for helping to end apartheid. But Tutu wasn't just an activist—he was also a teacher.

## *Early Life*

Desmond Tutu was born in Klerksdorp, South Africa, in 1931. When Tutu was born, Black people in South Africa did not have equal rights. Europeans had started oppressing Africans centuries earlier. In 1652, Dutch traders from the Netherlands arrived in southern Africa. Even though people were already living there, the Dutch claimed the land for themselves as a colony, or a region under the control of a foreign power. Soldiers killed many different African peoples living there, and enslaved many others.

In 1795, the British captured the colony. However, things did not improve for the Indigenous, or native, African peoples. The British continued to enslave people, and to wage battles against Indigenous nations. By the time Tutu was born, slavery was illegal. But South Africa was still controlled by Britain, and life was still very unjust for Black Africans. They did not have the same opportunities as the white descendants of the Dutch and British. Black Africans were often treated very badly because of the color of their skin.



## Desmond Tutu



When Tutu was a teenager, things got even worse. In 1948, the government introduced something called apartheid. Apartheid was a policy that made it legal to discriminate against people who were not white. This meant that people, and the government itself, could treat others unfairly and even cruelly, all on the basis of their race. Apartheid also restricted Black citizens' voting rights, work opportunities, living places, travel, and much more.

Tutu grew up as the son of a teacher. He wanted to learn to be a doctor. However, his family suffered under apartheid, and could not afford to send him to medical school. In 1955, Tutu followed in his father's footsteps and became a high school teacher. But this was just the start of a long journey.



*Desmond Tutu, seen in his purple bishop's outfit, became an activist and spoke to millions of people.*  
Peter Rhys Williams/Shutterstock.com

### Breaking Barriers

Over the next few years as a teacher, Tutu became frustrated with the inequality he saw around him—and especially in South Africa's education system. Schools for Black students were given less money and resources than those for white students. This held Black students back for their entire lives. To protest the state of education for Black students, Tutu quit teaching. Instead, he turned to religion.



## Desmond Tutu



In 1961, Tutu became an Anglican priest. He also became a different sort of teacher and taught theology, the study of religion. Then, in 1975, he became the first Black person appointed as the dean of St. Mary's Cathedral in Johannesburg. Tutu began to use his position to speak out against apartheid. In 1961, South Africa had become an independent country. It was no longer controlled by Britain, but the government still continued apartheid. Black people still did not have equal rights.

Many people started to pay attention to this. In fact, thanks to Tutu, people across the world began to take notice. Tutu encouraged people to protest against apartheid. He also encouraged them not to use violence, but to protest peacefully. In 1984, Tutu was awarded an international prize known as the Nobel Peace Prize.

But Tutu didn't stop there. In 1985, he continued to break barriers by becoming the first Black Anglican bishop in Johannesburg. The next year, he became the first Black archbishop in Cape Town. And in 1990, when South Africa began to take its first steps toward ending apartheid, Tutu helped the country transition to democracy. Apartheid officially ended in 1994.

### DID YOU KNOW?

**There are many different cultural and ethnic groups in South Africa. Some of the people who live there are the Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, and Tswana.**

### FUN FACT

**Tutu became an honorary doctor at universities around the world.**

### Legacy

In 1994, South Africa elected its first president: another activist, Nelson Mandela. Mandela wasn't just the first president.

He was the first Black person to lead the country of South Africa. In 1995, Mandela appointed Tutu to an official position on a committee to uphold human rights.



## Desmond Tutu



Tutu retired in 1996, but he continued to promote diversity and equal rights. He passed away at the age of 90 in 2021. Even so, his work continues to inspire people around the world.