

ARDENT

**RESISTANCE
AND SOLIDARITY
AGAINST
APARTHEID**



Made possible with

**Heritage
Fund**

An education resource pack
Created by Zita Holbourne and Tracy Ryan

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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

In April/May 2023, Ardent Theatre Company produced the play STRIKE! by Tracy Ryan and directed by Kirsty Patrick Ward at the Southwark Playhouse Borough in London.

STRIKE! is based on the extraordinary true story when a group of shop workers in Dublin went on strike during the 80s to protest against apartheid in South Africa. They thought the strike would only last 2 weeks. It went on for 2 years and 9 months and led to Ireland being the first western country to ban the importation of South African produce.

Thanks to a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Ardent was able to create an education programme inspired by the themes of the play that included a series of workshops in secondary schools and FE Colleges led by Tracy Ryan and poet/activist Zita Holbourne.

This education pack has been written by Tracy and Zita based on their workshop and aims to complement Ardent's online resource Activism in the 80s.

WHO IS IT FOR?

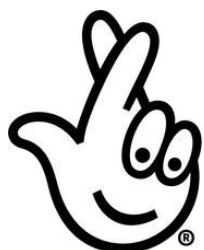
We believe this resource will be of most use to students at Secondary Schools and FE Colleges level studying Drama or History, as well as contributing to schemes of work around Citizenship and Social Sciences.

ABOUT ARDENT THEATRE COMPANY

Ardent Theatre Company was set up to make theatre a space where no one feels like an outsider. We produce newly commissioned plays or an existing text with a contemporary relevance and deliver events, workshops, and online content to cater for those who feel they are excluded from the positive enrichment theatre can bring, both on stage and in the audience.

www.ardenttheatre.co.uk

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ABOUT TRACY RYAN

Tracy Ryan, PhD, is a writer, director and theatre practitioner. She is second-generation Irish and working-class.

Tracy has worked as a socially engaged theatre practitioner in Ireland, England, and America. She is a founder member of award-winning Studio 3 Arts in East London. She has received a special commendation for her work in the Arts Education Program at the San Jose Office of Cultural Affairs, California and as a director, the Irish Times Theatre Award for Best Ensemble.

Tracy's PhD research, 'The Artist as Activist in Contemporary Theatre,' explored past theatres of the left for strategies to create contemporary plays and performances. The study mainly focuses on recent political and economic crises in Ireland, including the Anti-austerity movement, the campaign against water charges, and the Right-to-repeal campaigns. Through working with community and campaign groups, the findings provided tools for practitioners to create contemporary activist performances using theatre to play out and test radical hope in challenging times.

ABOUT ZITA HOLBOURNE

Zita Holbourne is a multi-award winning a trade union leader, community activist, human rights and equality campaigner and multi- disciplinary artist and writer of Caribbean mixed heritage.

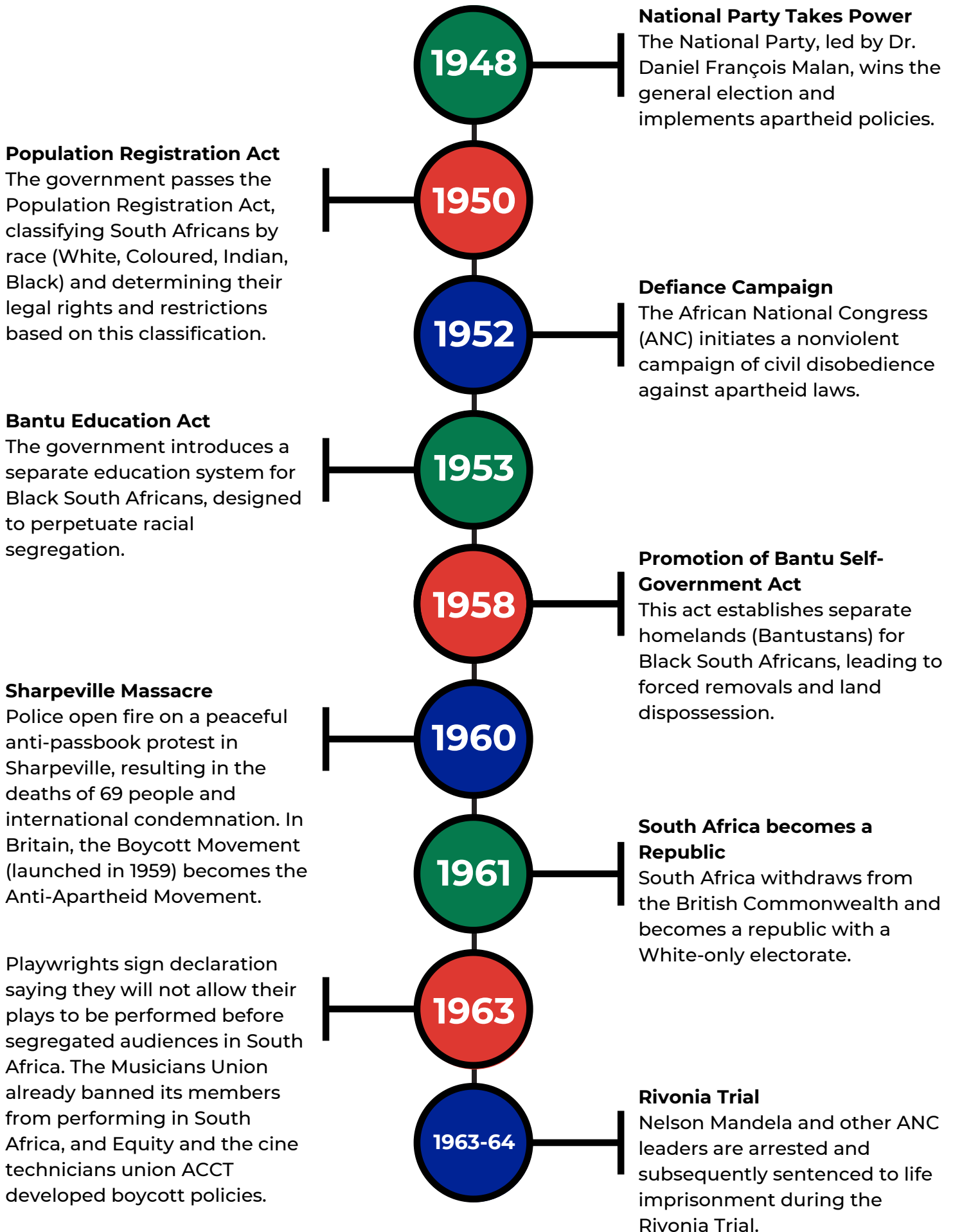
Her creative practice includes work as a visual artist, performance poet, writer, vocalist and educator / workshop facilitator.

She is the joint National Chair of the Artists' Union England and former National Vice President of the Public and Commercial Services Union. She is the co-founder and National Chair of Black Activists Rising Against Cuts (BARAC) UK, a trustee of Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA), the successor organisation to the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM).

She is a socially engaged artist and her creative practice has a focus on equality, freedom, justice and rights.



APARTHEID TIMELINE



APARTHEID TIMELINE CONTINUED

Soweto Uprising

Black students in Soweto protest the compulsory use of Afrikaans in schools, leading to a violent government crackdown when young protesters are shot by police. Protests spread throughout South Africa and hundreds of students leave the country: many join the ANC.

Tricameral Parliament

The government introduces a new constitution, creating separate legislatures for White, Coloured, and Indian South Africans, but still excluding Black Africans.

Chase Manhattan Bank decides not to roll over its loans to South Africa, precipitating a South African government announcement of a moratorium on the repayment of its foreign debts. In the following year Barclays Bank and other British and US companies pull out of South Africa.

F.W. de Klerk becomes South Africa's president and begins a process of reform, including the lifting of the ban on the ANC and other anti-apartheid organizations.

1969-70

Tour of Britain by Springbok rugby team is disrupted, and Springbok cricket tour planned for summer 1970 is cancelled. From now on South Africa is excluded from virtually all major international sports competitions.

1976

UN Security Council imposes a mandatory arms ban on South Africa. This follows a long-running international campaign to boycott arms sales and military and nuclear collaboration with South Africa. Precipitated by the murder of Steve Biko in detention and the banning of black consciousness organisations and the Christian Institute.

1977

1984

South African townships erupt in protests against rent rises. The apartheid government reacts by sending troops into the townships, detaining hundreds of people and imposing a State of Emergency in 1985. The townships become ungovernable.

1984

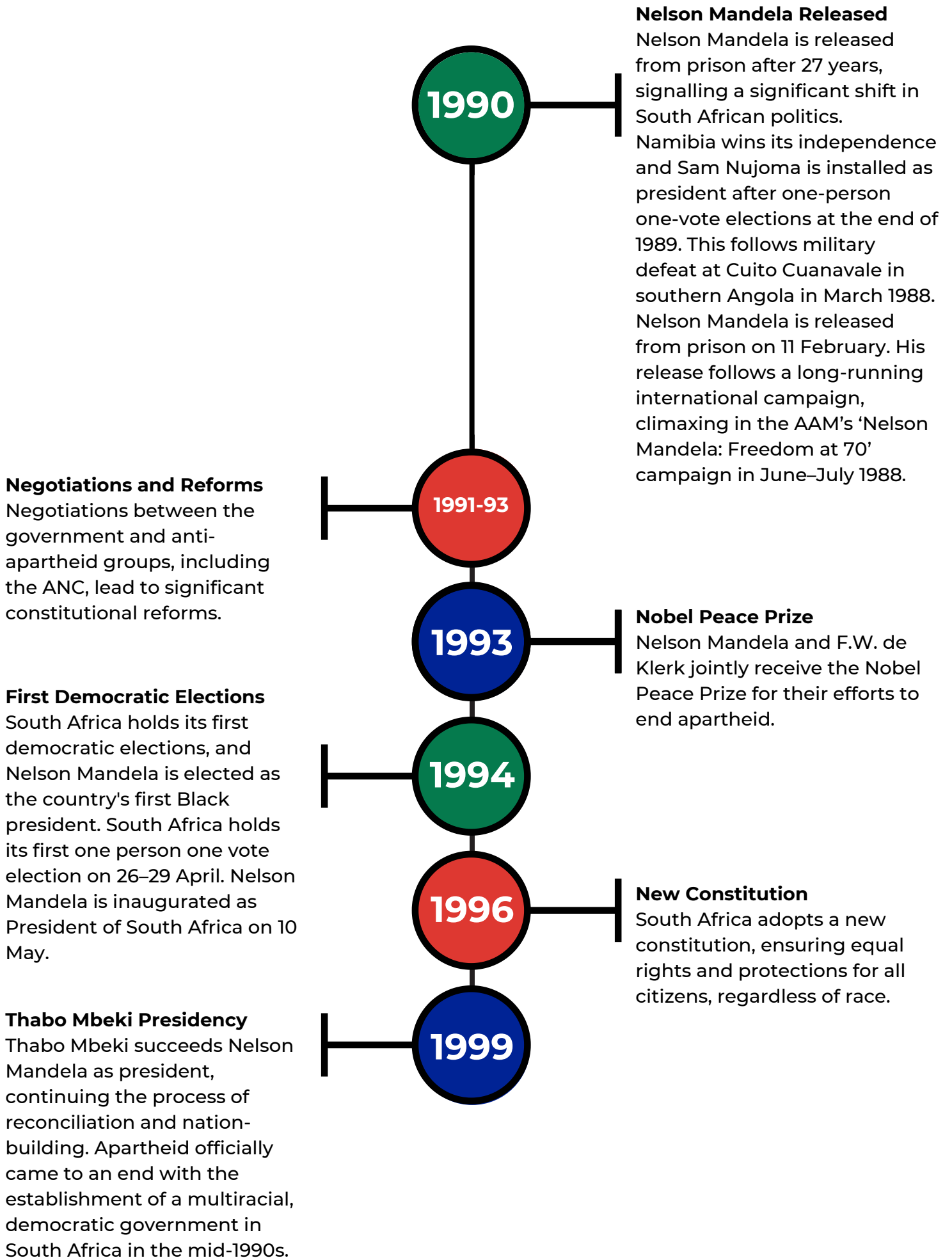
1985

1986

International Sanctions
The international community imposes economic sanctions on South Africa to pressure the government to end apartheid.

1989

APARTHEID TIMELINE CONTINUED



SECTION 1

Introduction from striker Karen Gearon

Dunnes Stores Anti-apartheid Strike, Henry Street, Dublin. 1984-1987

Liz Deasy, Michelle Gavin, Mary Manning, Vonnie Munroe, Alma Russell, Tommy Davis, Sandra Griffin, Theresa Mooney, Cathryn O'Reilly & Karen Gearon

The Dunnes Stores Anti-Apartheid Strike started in July 1984 when shop steward, Karen Gearon, received an instruction from her trade union, IDATU, stating that at their AGM, a decision was made that members should not handle South African produce due to the apartheid system.

Karen informed the rest of the union members in Dunnes Stores, and together they went around the shop to find out what stock was from South Africa - it was mainly oranges, grapefruit, and Del Monte tinned fruit. Karen informed management that the workers would no longer handle the produce. For 2 days staff were allowed not to handle the goods. On the 3rd day the staff was told by management that if they continue to refuse to handle the goods they could be in trouble and then on Thursday 19th July 1984, Mary Manning, a member of the union, was suspended for following the union instruction. It was then that Karen called on other members to stand in solidarity with their fellow union member, and that was the first day of the Strike. In the end, there were 10 women and 1 man, all aged between 17 and 23.

The Strikers were told by their union official, Brendan Archbold, that this strike would not go on for very long, maybe 2 weeks – little did they know!!! At the time, the strikers didn't know much about apartheid and as time went on they started to learn a lot more. A man called Nimrod Sejake, who was a black South African asylum seeker living in Dublin, came and joined the strikers. Nimrod was a teacher who had to escape South Africa because he was against apartheid, which was a system that determined your future because of the colour of your skin.

As the strike went on, the strikers learnt a lot about what was happening in South Africa. They were told about Nelson Mandela and how black people were being treated, being imprisoned, forced to live in shanti towns, not being able to sit on the same bench as a white person, not allowed to buy a house or land, and by law black and white people were not allowed to marry. Black people who stood up against apartheid were put into prison and a lot of people were killed.

The strikers from Dunnes Stores in Dublin felt very strongly about what was happening and from then on, they would never handle South African goods. The Strikers said that the worst that could happen to them was they lost their jobs. People in South Africa were losing their lives and South Africa was the only country in the world that had these laws.

The strike continued and didn't seem to be getting any further. Dunnes wouldn't allow the workers not to handle the goods, the government weren't doing anything, but the media was supporting them.

In December 1984, South African Bishop Desmond Tutu was given the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in South Africa. When he was on his way to Oslo to collect his award, he asked to meet the strikers in London. Karen and Mary went over to meet with him. He praised the other strikers and called on the Irish Government and the international community to support them and introduce a boycott of South Africa so that the laws can be changed, and black people can have the same rights as white people. Bishop Tutu also asked the Strikers to come to South Africa to bear witness to the terrible system of Apartheid.

The strikers accepted the invitation to South Africa by Bishop Tutu for the first anniversary of the strike on the 19th July 1985, but they didn't have the money. When they were working, they were paid £90 a week but because they were on strike they only got £21 a week, and it would cost £8,000 to go to South Africa. Their union IDATU gave £1000 towards the trip to South Africa. It was suggested that a bucket collection would be done around the pubs in Dublin. The Strikers and their supporters did the collection, and the people of Dublin gave them over £7000 in just one night so they could go to South Africa and bear witness to the horrendous system of Apartheid.

Their union official Brendan Archbold and 8 of the strikers went to South Africa which was a 12-hour flight. When they arrived in the airport in Johannesburg, they were surrounded by 32 soldiers with machine guns. They were held in a room for 8 hours and eventually sent home on the same plane that they had arrived. Karen said that it was very frightening and that they weren't sure if they were even going to get back home. When the soldiers brought them back to the plane, and as Karen boarded, she turned back and put her fist in the air and shouted that they would be back when South Africa was free.

When they arrived home, they were greeted like heroes. Every paper and television all over the world told the story of how the Dunnes Stores Strikers had been thrown out of South Africa. Even Nelson Mandela who had been imprisoned by the South African government had now heard of the Dunnes Stores Strikers.

Because of the actions of the South African regime's treatment of the Strikers, more and more people in Ireland and around the world knew more about what was happening to black people in South Africa. Karen & Michelle, on behalf of the strikers, were invited to address the United Nations in New York to tell the story of the Dunnes Stores Strikers in Oct 1985.

The Irish Government were now being forced to look at why Ireland was bringing South African goods in the country when the black people were asking for a boycott so they could get equal rights. Karen and the strikers kept the pressure up and in 1986 the Irish Government agreed to boycott South African goods which was a direct result of the Dunnes Stores Anti-Apartheid Strike by 10 young women and 1 young man.

7 of the strikers returned to work in April 1987 when all the South African goods had been removed. Ireland was the first country in the western world to introduce a boycott. 3 of the strikers emigrated and 12 months after they returned to work, Karen was dismissed from Dunnes. She won her case but remained blacklisted for many years after.

Nelson Mandela was released from prison in 1990 and on his world tour he came to Ireland first where he met Karen and the rest of the strikers and presented them with his medal of bravery and said that the Dunnes strike gave him hope. Free elections took place in South Africa in 1994 and Nelson Mandela was elected president.

When Nelson Mandela passed away it was Karen and the Dunnes Stores Strikers that went to his funeral along with President Higgins to represent the Irish people.

The Dunnes Stores Strikers are part of Irish history with a plaque dedicated to them in Henry Street, Dublin. Karen has said, "Their action proves that anything is possible, change is possible, it just starts with one."

So, the Dunnes Stores Strikers - 10 women and 1 man - forced the Irish Government to change Irish policy and were part of the struggle for freedom in South Africa.

Written by Karen Gearon



31.10.1986. Dublin, Ireland. Dunnes Stores strikers. L to R, (back row) Brendan Barron, Liz Deasy, Tommy Davis. L to R (front row) Mary Manning, Karen Gearon, Alma Russell,, Sandra Griffen, Therese Mooney, Michelle Gavin, Vonnie Monroe and Cathryn O'Reilly. ©Photo by Derek Speirs (Image use subject to licence - credit photo Derek Speirs)

STRIKE! SYNOPSIS

STRIKE!, a play written by Tracy Ryan, tells the story of a group of young working-class workers in Dublin who refused to handle South African goods in opposition to the apartheid regime in that country. The Strikers, who worked at Dunnes Stores on Henry Street, went on strike on Thursday, 19 July 1984. Following a Union directive, Mary Manning refused to check out two South African outspan grapefruits through her till. Mary was suspended, and her colleagues followed her out on strike. The strike lasted for almost three years, much longer than anyone anticipated but brought about the banning of South African goods in Ireland.

IRELAND DURING THE STRIKE

At the time, Ireland was a very different country, still dominated by the Catholic Church, with thousands emigrating and one in ten unemployed. Dunnes was one of Ireland's leading retailers then and still is now.

The strike demonstrated the power of collective action, which was growing worldwide through the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement (IAAM) and the Anti-Apartheid Movement in England. The action that sought and successfully challenged the brutal system of apartheid in South Africa included boycotting. The play focuses on the Henry Street Strikers' action, but Brendan Barron would also come out in late October 1985, refusing to handle South African goods in Dunnes Stores, Crumlin, South Dublin.



27.4.1985.Dublin, Ireland. Dunnes Stores Strike mass picket with supporters.

©Photo by Derek Speirs (Image use subject to licence - credit photo Derek Speirs)

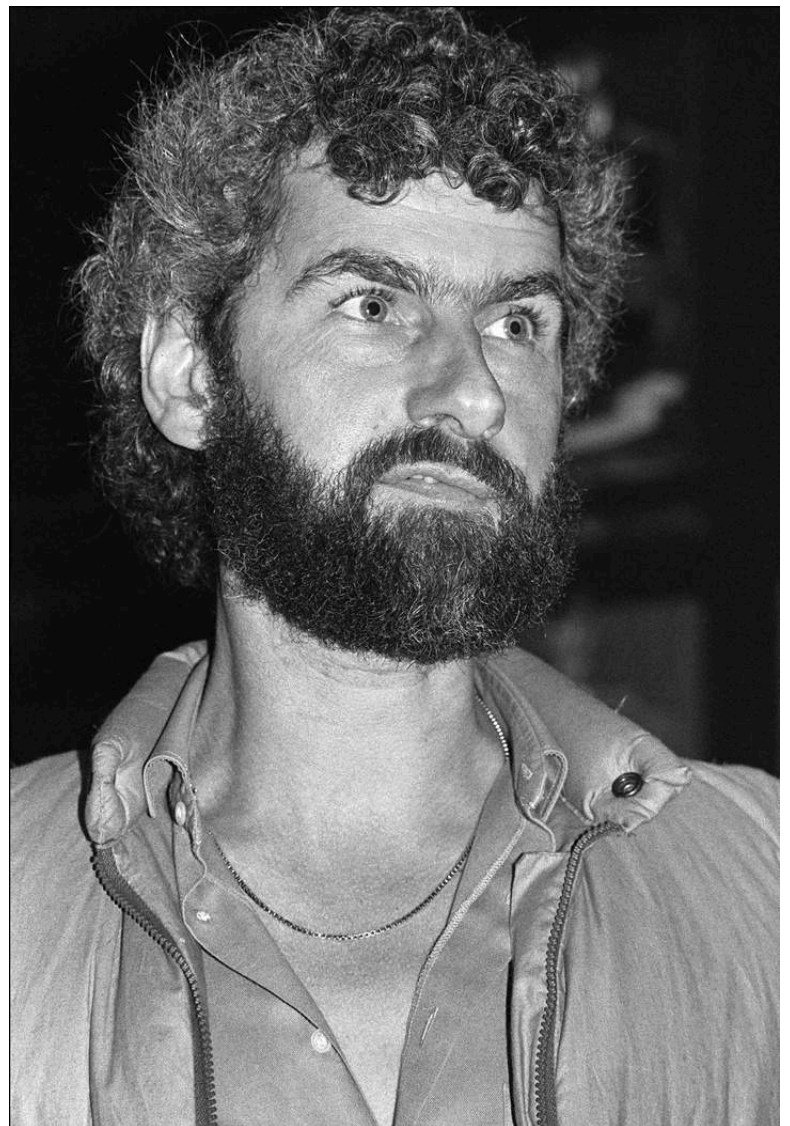
ON THE LINE

The Strikers met many South Africans in exile, including Nimrod Sejake, a Union Organiser, who was in exile in Ireland and was active in the freedom movement in his country. Nimrod was arrested in the 1956 Treason Trial, along with Nelson Mandela and 156 others, and charged with treason. He went into exile in the early 1960s and did not return to South Africa until 1991. Nimrod became a strong ally of the strike and a close friend of the Strikers. This relationship, along with their IDATU Union Organiser, Brendan Archbold and others they met on the line, is at the heart of the story.

When the Strikers began their action, they knew little about life in South Africa. But through meeting those who visited the picket they learnt about the harsh realities of apartheid. Indeed the Strikers met with many South Africans who would inspire and influence their action, such as Desmond Tutu, Marius Schoon and Zola Zembe,



8.11.1985. Dublin, Ireland. Dunnes Stores picket line, Henry Street. Here Nimrod Sejake who provided important support to the strikers. ©Photo by Derek Speirs (Image use subject to licence - credit photo Derek Speirs)



8.9.1984. Dublin, Ireland. Brendan Archbold at the Irish Anti Apartheid Movement AGM in the Mansion House. ©Photo by Derek Speirs (Image use subject to licence - credit photo Derek Speirs)

IMPACT OF THE STRIKE

Ireland was the first Western country to ban goods from South Africa in 1987, and the strike was the most prolonged industrial action in Irish Union history.

Despite their successful action, the Strikers found it challenging to return to work. Mary emigrated to Australia soon after. Liz did not return to Dunnes and found it difficult to find employment for a long time. The others who returned to their positions in Dunnes faced a hostile atmosphere and eventually left the company. Shop steward Karen Gearon was sacked but would win her case against her employer for unfair dismissal in 1988.

In 1990, Nelson Mandela visited Ireland and awarded the Strikers a gold medal for their action against apartheid.

When Mandela passed away in 2013, the Irish people called for the Strikers to go to Mandela's funeral as representatives of Ireland. While they were in South Africa, they would finally meet Nimrod's family.



1.7.1990. Dublin, Ireland. Dunnes Stores striker, Cathryn O'Reilly accompanied by some of the other Dunnes Stores strikers (pictures here L to R), Sandra Griffen, Liz Deasy and Theresa Mooney, presents Nelson Mandela with artwork by Irish Artist Robert Ballagh, at the Berkeley Ct. Hotel. This was on the occasion of the 1st visit of Nelson Mandela to Ireland following his release from prison in South Africa. ©Photo by Derek Speirs
(Image use subject to licence - credit photo Derek Speirs)

BACKGROUND TO THE PRODUCTION

Tracy Ryan learned about the Dunnes Stores Anti-apartheid strike while listening to the radio in Ireland. She was surprised that nobody had written a play about their story and began to research what had happened. Her first point of contact was Union Organiser Brendan Archbold, who was hugely supportive, sharing his memories and archive from the strike (newspaper clippings, photographs, letters) with Tracy. He also introduced her to the Strikers, whom she spoke to and began to write the play *Strike!* Over the years the Strikers continued their contribution and support as the play developed with Ardent Theatre Company. Tracy feels it is an honour to tell their story of inspirational solidarity.

Strike! was first staged in Dublin in 2010 and produced by Helen Ryan to an excellent response. However, it was not until 2015 that Ardent began their journey with the play. They offered dramaturgical support with Shelley Troupe and Andrew Muir, followed by workshops and readings, which developed the play text, leading to a total production at Southwark Playhouse Borough in 2023.



Production photos from Ardent Theatre Company's production of *STRIKE!* by Tracy Ryan at Southwark Playhouse Borough. Directed by Kirsty Patrick Ward. Designer Libby Watson. Lighting Designer Jamie Platt. ©Photos Mark Douet

EXERCISE 1

STRIKE! Scene 3 (12 characters)

In this scene, the Strikers leave Dunnes after Mary is suspended. They head to their IDATU Union Office to talk to their Union Representative, Brendan Archbold. We hear the Strikers decide to go on strike, the pay conditions they now face, the first boycott in Ireland in 1880, boycotting South Africa and what happens on a picket line.

Read the scene together and consider these questions:

- Are any of the characters unsure about staying out, and why?
- What is the impact of the cut in pay for them?
- What do you know about the history of boycotting? Can you think of any past and present boycotts you have heard of and their effect?
- Have you been on or seen a picket line?
- Would you follow Mary out, and why?

LINKS TO USEFUL RESOURCES

[CLICK HERE](#)

Download Scene 3 of STRIKE! © Tracy Ryan

[CLICK HERE](#)

Ardent's resource on apartheid in South Africa

[CLICK HERE](#)

Ardent's Activism in the 80s podcasts

[CLICK HERE](#)

Articles written by Nimrod Sejake

[CLICK HERE](#)

Dr Shelley Troupe's History of Ireland blog Part I

[CLICK HERE](#)

Dr Shelley Troupe's History of Ireland blog Part II

[CLICK HERE](#)

Dr Shelley Troupe's History of Ireland blog Part III

[CLICK HERE](#)

RTÉ Archives about the Dunnes Stores strike

POEM BY © ZITA HOLBOURNE

Tribute to Nelson Mandela; Now You Are Free

This poem was written for and performed at the vigil for Nelson Mandela held in Trafalgar Square the day after he died and performed at the official UK Memorial Service for Nelson Mandela hosted by the South African High Commission and held at St Martin's in the Field, Trafalgar Square, London.

It's been a long walk to freedom but now you are free
Through your quest for freedom, you helped others to see
That forgiveness not retribution could bring about healing
You brought hope and love, truly believing

That peace could become a reality
If we all joined as one in unity
You never wavered, standing proud and tall
A positive inspirational role model to us all

It was a long walk to freedom but now you are free
As we celebrate your life, we reflect on how it could be
That one man could leave such a huge legacy
To heal not just South Africa but globally

The world is a better place for your love and your passion
You have truly left an everlasting impression
On all the lives you made better or touched
Because of you we learned to have faith and trust

In the ability to overcome and build a better place
Where we are judged on merit not on race
The long walk to freedom for so many is not done
But with the strength you give to us we will carry on

Enriched by the knowledge you imparted on us all
Motivated by your spirit, we shall not fall
Your passing has left a huge gap and sorrow in our hearts
But the best way we can celebrate your life is to impart

The knowledge and humanity we were blessed to receive
By your presence in our lifetimes, helping us to believe
With truth and understanding you showed us the way
So, we honour you now on this momentous day

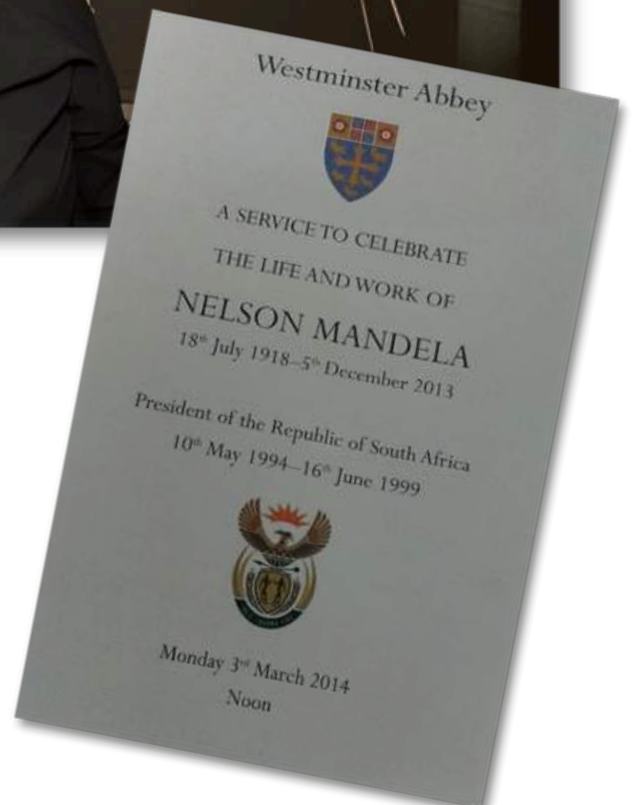
Pay tribute to the man, the father
The activist, the leader
The revolutionary
Teaching humanity
Preaching equality
Truly extraordinary

Dearest Tata Nelson Mandela we salute you
Rest peacefully; we will see your dream through

EXERCISE 2

Write a poem / spoken word piece about a person who you admire who has taken action to make the world a better place – this could be someone well known, a family member or someone in your community.

Think about what they have done and achieved, the impact on others and the person they were and include these elements in the poem you write.



Poem and photographs
© Zita Holbourne

SECTION 2

Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) and Action for South Africa (ACTSA)

ZITA'S STORY ABOUT SOUTH AFRICA APARTHEID

Zita was part of the boycott campaign and supported the Anti-Apartheid Movement as a student in the 1980s. During her teens she visited apartheid South Africa due to her family being in Lesotho and experienced and witnessed firsthand the impacts of apartheid. She used this experience to campaign against apartheid, raising awareness back in the UK and becoming involved in campaigns to organise boycotts of South African goods and services as a student at art school.

She subsequently became an elected member of the National Executive Council and Advisory Body of Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA), the successor organisation to the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

Zita became aware of apartheid in South Africa through her parents who supported the boycott campaign. She was raised to know never to purchase South African goods and watched her mother first hand, when shopping for groceries, make firm requests for items that were not South African. When she was a small girl she learned about boycotting first hand as her mother argued with a shopkeeper, demanding that he remove items from the shop that were from South Africa and informing him about apartheid and how he, an Asian man, would be treated if he were living in South Africa and threatening to boycott the shop and call upon the local community to do the same, unless he removed the items. She stood her ground, refused to leave the shop and the shopkeeper removed the items. Be it on a small scale, this was a successful boycott of South African goods and parallels can be drawn with the Dunnes strike, boycotting South African goods, as their aims were the same, to stop a shop stocking South African goods and both demonstrated solidarity. The boycott campaign was successful because people around the world took similar actions, and it was their collective actions that were impactful.

Another experience Zita had at a very young age, was when a friend of her parents returned to the UK after working on a cruise ship which had docked in South Africa. Initially he and a group of workers on the ship had decided to stay onboard for the few days it was docked as an act of opposition to the South African apartheid regime but after a couple of nights they became bored and decided to go and take a look for themselves.

They found a local bus stop and it began to pour with rain heavily, a bus came and stopped and there was a black driver who told them that he could not let them on board even though they begged, in order to get out of the pouring rain, because it was more than his life was worth to do so. This was repeated with other buses. At this time people were categorised as Black, Coloured, Asian and White. The group who was all white, decided that there was no way they were going to travel on an apartheid white only bus, and they returned to the ship. On listening to this story being told, it dawned upon Zita, who was just primary school age, that if she were in South Africa, she would be categorised differently to both her mother and her father who were black and white respectively and this would mean that she could not be with either of them. As a small child, even though she had already experienced racism in the UK, this filled her with horror and had a lasting impact on her but she could not have realised at that time, just how much an impact apartheid South Africa would have on her life.

At the start of the 1980s, during the apartheid era, Zita's father lived and worked in Lesotho, a landlocked country, surrounded by South Africa. Her first experience of apartheid South Africa was when she travelled to Lesotho, she was a teenager and travelling alone and had to change planes in Johannesburg in South Africa. She had been reassured that apartheid was not allowed in international airports in South Africa and on that basis she would be safe. However, when she arrived, the gate for planes to Lesotho had been placed not in the international departure lounge but with a domestic status and there was apartheid with different seating and toilets but only separated into black and white. Zita was not prepared for this situation and there were no mobile phones then, so she had no means of consulting her family and no support. It was a distressing situation as there was a gap of several hours before her plane to Lesotho departed. She sat in the area allocated to black people.

One day, her father had to travel across the border to purchase goods and though not required to go with him, Zita decided she wanted to see and experience firsthand, what life was like in South Africa. They travelled to Bloemfontein and Zita witnessed the horrific conditions there for black people, was subjected to racist attitudes towards her and after encountering hostilities at a local restaurant, she refused to eat in South Africa and rather wait until she got home to Lesotho as she and her father would only be able to eat at separate establishments. Whilst her own experience was unpleasant; she was fully aware that it was nothing compared with the lived experience for black people every day and throughout their lives.

[CLICK HERE](#)

AAM Archives - Zita shares her memories

Back in Lesotho the situation was not safe or stable for people there either as it was a route that people took to flee South Africa, some came through Lesotho in order to fly out of the region all together and others settled in Lesotho. While Zita was there, the post office in the capital city, Maseru, was bombed by the South African government because it was located close to the area where most exiles lived.

Zita was there during the period of the Lesotho massacres of 1982 to 1985.



Facebook page archive of Maseru raids 1982-1985

The impact of those experiences were deep and Zita used them to illustrate and inform anyone and everyone she could to join the boycott movement and a few years later as a student at art school, played a role in coordinating actions and protests outside stores such as Sainsbury and Barclays Banks and organising campaigns to get students to boycott a local greengrocers who refused to stop selling South African products and to get students to change their students accounts from the local branch of Barclays Bank to a different bank.

Those events informed her path as an equality and human rights campaigner and led to a lifetime of work fighting for the rights of black and brown people in South African and beyond, including racism and injustice in the UK.

EXERCISE 3

How has struggle shaped your own story or your family's – for example because of racism, xenophobia, the legacies of colonialism

EXAMPLES:

- If you have family elders who migrated to the UK, you could speak to them about their early experiences and any barriers they faced.
- You could look at recent history, for example the Windrush Scandal and the treatment of the Windrush Generation over the past decade or so, facing detention and deportations and their fight for compensation and justice.
- Use a prompt – Zita's passport in the image below helped to bring back memories of that period and the things she experienced and to tell her story. If you are writing about a family member, they may have documents, photos, or an item from their home country.



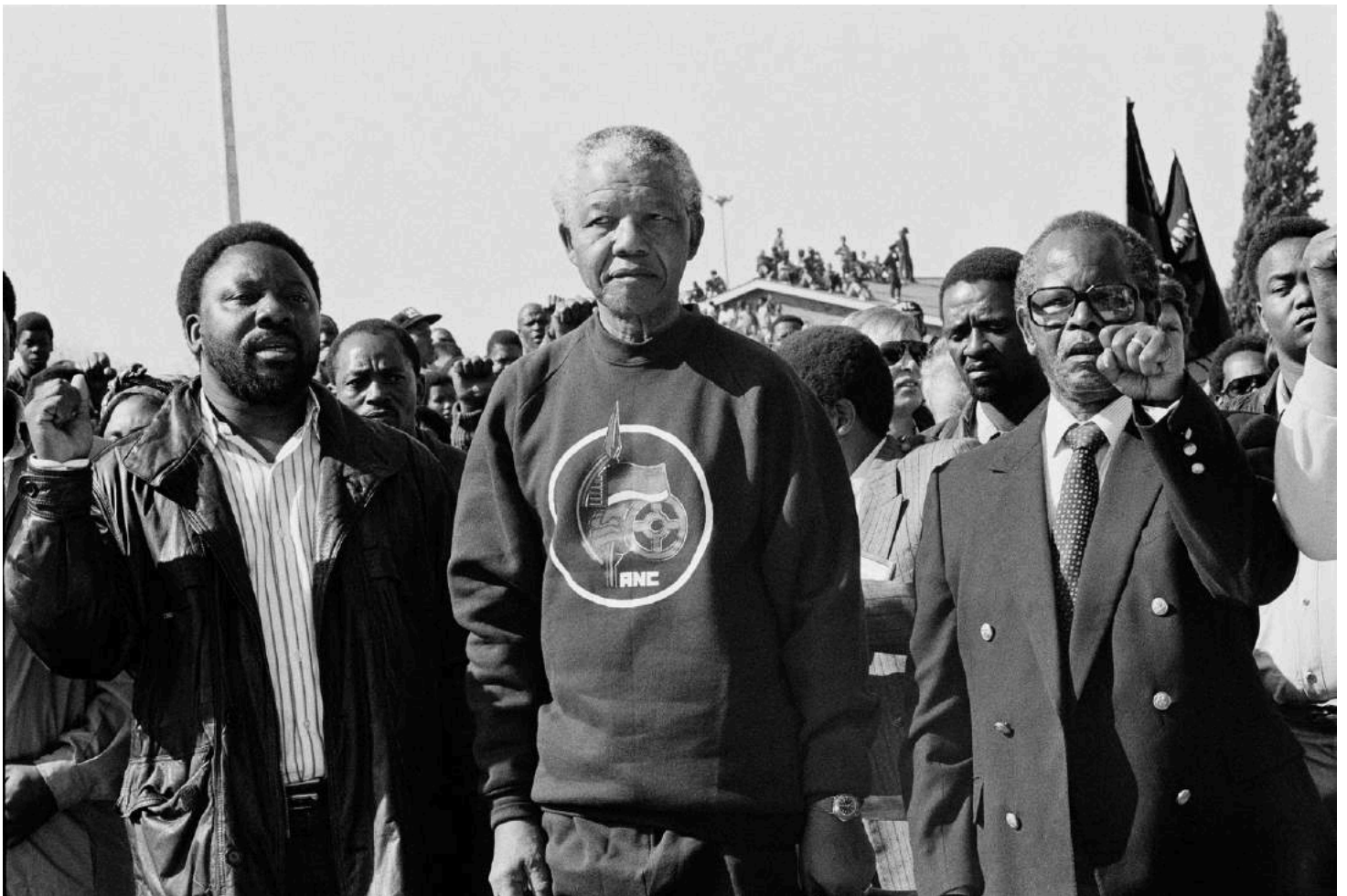
Zita's passport from 1983 and stamps crossing the border

SECTION 3

Activism and Campaigning

STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The liberation of South Africa and the dismantling of the brutal apartheid system only happened because of the persistent resistance of Black and Asian South Africans who would inspire the world to stand in solidarity with South Africa's liberation movement. The African National Congress (ANC) was created in 1912 and was the principal resistance point against apartheid. Initially, after 1948, the ANC sought legal forms of protest in South Africa, moving to nonviolent direct action in the early 1950s. Later, they advocated violent resistance, and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) was founded in 1959.



Cyril Ramaphosa, Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo | ©Photo: Sue Kramer

In the 1940s, the ANC Youth League was revived under the presidency of Albert Luthuli along with a young Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Oliver Tambo. Combining forces with the South African Indian Congress in 1952, a defiance campaign was organised where thousands of volunteers defied the apartheid laws, courting arrest and burning passbooks.

In 1955, the Congress of the People Conference in Kliptown, attended by three thousand delegates, created and adopted the Freedom Charter that called for a democratic, non-racialist state and the nationalisation of primary industry. Police raided the conference, and 156 arrests were made, including Nimrod Sejake and Nelson Mandela. Those arrested were charged with treason, and the Prohibition of Political Interference Act (1968) was passed. It banned further gatherings, forming non-racial political parties and funding for groups from outside South Africa.

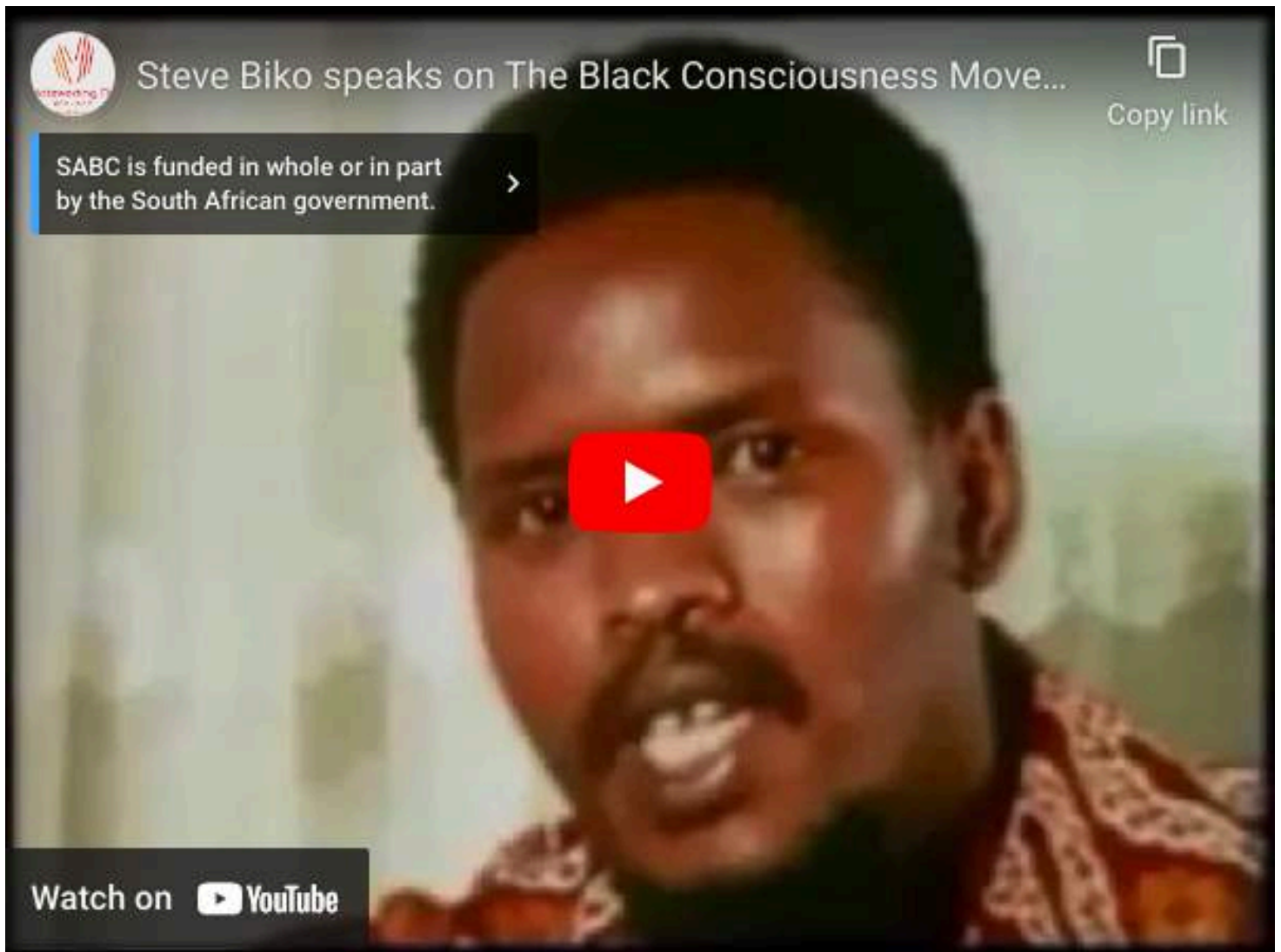


The Congress of the People meet at the Kliptown football ground with 3,000 delegates, 26 June 1955. From South African History Online, www.sahistory.org.za

The Pan-African Congress was established in 1959. Robert Sobukwe led it after he and other black comrades broke away from the ANC to fight for Black Liberation. Following a fresh anti-pass campaign organised by the PAC, thousands of black people presented themselves to be arrested at police stations for not carrying their passbooks. On March 21 at Sharpeville police station, the police fired on the unarmed crowd, killing sixty-nine people, including ten children and wounding 180 people as they tried to run away. The Sharpeville Massacre caused outrage across South Africa and the world. Strikes, protests and marches spread throughout South Africa, resulting in an armed response from the Government. The ANC and PAC were outlawed, and 11,000 were arrested under emergency regulations.

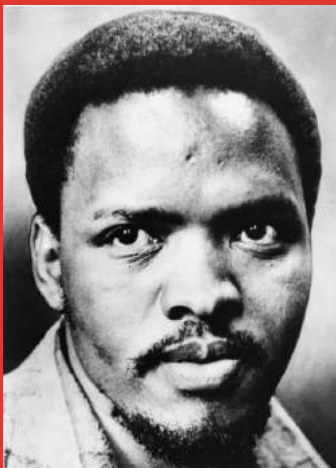
The outcome of Sharpeville and the belief that apartheid could not be overcome by peaceful means alone saw the creation of armed sections of the PAC, 'Poqo', and a military wing of the ANC 'Umkhonto we Sizwe' (Spear of the Nation). However, by 1964, leaders of both the ANC and PAC, including Mandela, Sisulu and Sobukwe, were imprisoned on Robben Island.

In 1972, the Black Peoples Convention (BPC), formed by Steve Biko and other black students of the South African Students' Organisation (SASO), ushered in the influential Black Consciousness Movement of South Africa, instigating social, cultural, and political activism in the country. It encouraged the youth to form new community and political organisations that had a political impact. The South African Government brutally murdered Biko, an influential leader, on September 12, 1977, aged thirty.



[CLICK HERE](#)

Watch video on YouTube



Bantu Stephen Biko died in 1977 having spent most of his life as a South African anti-apartheid activist. He led a grassroots anti-apartheid movement called the Black Consciousness Movement in the late 1960s and 1970s based on African nationalist and socialist ideas. While at university, he joined the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). He was furious that NUSAS and other anti-apartheid organizations were dominated by white liberals, not the black people affected by apartheid.

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Ardent's Apartheid resource

©Photo: CSU Archives / Everett Collection

In January and February 1973, several strikes, beginning in Durban's Coronation Brick and Tile Factory, spread to other factories, corporations and transport workers, demanding better pay and working conditions. Thousands downed tools and threatened a general strike in South Africa. The Government mostly met their demands. Between 1973 and 1985, Unionism grew, leading to the formation in 1979 of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in 1985. The Union Movement would become a significant force in ending apartheid.



1973 Durban Strikes. Durban's Coronation Brick and Tile Factory Strikers.
From South African History Online, www.sahistory.org.za

On June 16, 1976, almost 25 years after the creation of the Freedom Charter and the meeting of the People's Congress, 20,000 Soweto schoolchildren took to the streets in protest over a government order that Afrikaans was to be used as the main language at all black secondary schools. Inspired by Biko and the BCM, they chanted for the release of Mandela and Sisulu. The Soweto Uprising was met with police brutality, murdering hundreds of students and causing outrage in South Africa and worldwide, escalating protest and resistance.

The South African Council of Churches, under the guidance of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, supported civil disobedience as a response to racist laws. The church's ban in 1977 did not deter Tutu from advocating for African freedom and calling for international sanctions against South Africa. Other religious leaders also played their part in challenging the official view of the Dutch Reformed Church.

On 1983, the United Democratic Front (UDF) was formed to continue the anti-apartheid struggle. The coalition of nearly six hundred churches, civic associations, trade unions, women's groups, student organisations, community groups, and sports clubs joined forces to fight oppression. Between 1984 and 1986, a strong movement emerged as workers, students, and other groups overcame differences and united in widespread rebellion against the state's heavy oppression.

Oliver Tambo, who would be in exile for forty years from the mid-1960s, coordinated the ANC's international offices and led a diplomatic campaign against apartheid, working with governments, political parties, churches, trade unions, and NGOs. The efforts led to the UN declaration of apartheid as a crime against humanity and grants from the World Council of Churches to African liberation movements. Scandinavian governments and solidarity movements-imposed people's sanctions on South Africa, driving the apartheid regime to bankruptcy. These actions, combined with sports and cultural boycotts, would prove damaging to the South African apartheid government.

"We greatly welcome the decision of the General Assembly to designate the year 1982 as the International Year of Mobilisation for Sanctions against South Africa. I would therefore like to salute the coalescence that we find between 1982, the International Year of Mobilisation for Sanctions against South Africa, and 1982, the Year of Unity in Action being in commemoration of the seventieth anniversary of the formation of the ANC. In this sense, 1982 is the meeting-point between the liberation struggle of a people over a continuous period of 70 years, and a concerted effort by the United Nations directed at the same goal throughout the latter half of that period. The year 1982 unites in action the fighting masses in South Africa with the opponents of racism, apartheid and colonialism the world over."

**Oliver Tambo, United Nations,
Special Committee against Apartheid, January 12, 1982**



©Photo: United Archives / Sven Simon



South Africa | African National Congress | Oliver Tambo ...



Watch on  YouTube

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Watch video on YouTube

Oliver Tambo (who died in 1993) co-founded the ANC Youth League in 1944 with Nelson Mandela. Later, he went on to create the first black legal firm in 1952 in partnership with Nelson Mandela. He then became vice president of the ANC in 1958. However, following the Sharpeville Massacre (1960), the South African government effectively banned the ANC. To establish the group's overseas headquarters, Tambo relocated to Lusaka, after leaving South Africa where he was in exile for 30 years. He was formally named president of the ANC in 1969.

[CLICK HERE](#)

Ardent's Apartheid resource

ROLE OF ACTIVIST MOVEMENTS IN THE UK

Activists in the UK played a key role in forming the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) and calling for global boycotts, but the idea of boycotting came from South Africa. The role of activists in the UK who organised as part of the AAM was to bring solidarity and take action to support the resistance against apartheid by those directly impacted in South Africa. Those involved included South African exiles, trade unionists, political, community and student activists and churches.

They organised protests, demonstrations, marches and rallies as well as boycott campaigning. When Nelson Mandela was convicted on 11th June 1964 there was a fear that he would be served the death sentence so supporters organised a three day vigil outside South Africa House in Trafalgar Square, London to keep up international solidarity and send a message that the trial was being watched and it was a relief and seen as a victory when Mandela and other comrades received a life sentence.

Prior to this, the Boycott Movement was founded in 1959 in London by a group of South African exiles and their supporters. It gained support from students, trade unions, and from the Labour and Communist parties. Following the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960, it became the Anti-Apartheid Movement. The Soweto student uprising in 1976 and the growth of independent trade unions in South Africa, signalled a new wave of resistance. A boycott month was held in March 1960 with thousands of ordinary people refusing to purchase South African products.



March from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square 28 February 1960 (©AAM Archive)

Forward to Freedom tells the story of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement and its campaigns to support the people of South Africa in their fight against apartheid. The AAM also campaigned for freedom for Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Angola, and against South Africa's attacks on its neighbours.

In 1970 the Conservative government announced the lifting of Britain's partial arms embargo against South Africa. The AAM led protests that ensured no major armaments were supplied and in 1977 set up the World Campaign against Military and Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa.

Barclays Bank became a main target for AAM, putting pressure on British companies to pull out of South Africa and other organisations like universities, trade unions and churches were targeted to sell any South African holdings they had.

Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA) was established in 1994 as the successor organisation to the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM). This followed South Africa's first democratic election and Nelson Mandela became the first democratically elected President of South Africa. By 1994 the goals of the AAM had been achieved and it had grown from a small organisation to become the largest international solidarity organisation the UK has ever seen. The AAM consulted widely on whether it should simply disband. The clear response from members, affiliates and especially key partners and contacts in southern Africa was no. While a great victory had been won there were major challenges ahead and the region called for renewed not diminished solidarity. The context had changed, and the challenge now was not being against a political system which was racist but for supporting Southern Africa build a region based on rights and reducing poverty and inequality.

In 1980 the AAM made a new call for the release of Nelson Mandela. Led by Glasgow, nine councils granted him the freedom of their cities. Hundreds of buildings, streets and gardens were named in his honour. In 1988 the AAM launched its biggest ever initiative 'Nelson Mandela: Freedom at 70'. A capacity concert at Wembley Stadium was broadcast worldwide and 250,000 people gathered in Hyde Park to hear Archbishop Desmond Tutu demand Mandela's release.

In 1990 Nelson Mandela was finally released from prison, signalling a new era for South Africa. When there was no longer a need for the AAM, he gave his blessing for the successor organisation to the AAM to be created, Action for Southern Africa.

ACTSA is a campaigning and education charity working in solidarity with regional civil society for social and economic justice and human rights across Southern Africa.

This online resource includes posters, images, memoirs, videos and podcasts and was coordinated by the Anti-Apartheid Movement Archives.

[CLICK HERE](#)

[Anti-Apartheid Movement Archives](#)

[CLICK HERE](#)

[Action for Southern Africa \(ACTSA\)](#)

ROLE OF ACTIVISTS IN IRELAND: IRISH ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT

The Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement was established in 1964 by Kader Asmal, a member of the ANC and a law lecturer at Trinity College, Dublin. (Asmal had initially been in exile in London, where he was also the founder member of the AAM.) The IAAM aimed to create a permanent and inclusive movement that represented all sections of Irish society and was non-partisan and non-sectarian.

The Movement carried out various activities, such as education, targeted campaigns, representations to the Irish Government, and boycotts. The IAAM used different methods to raise awareness and protest against apartheid in South Africa, including education on apartheid, mass leafleting, boycotting goods along with academic and sports boycotts. All these actions played a crucial role in galvanising people nationwide to take action. One notable example is the all-white South African rugby tour in 1969-1970, which sparked widespread protests and activism.

IAAM attracted many prominent political, artistic, academic, and trade union members across Ireland, including Mary Robinson, who continued to sponsor the IAAM after her election in 1990 as the first female President of Ireland. There was a shared experience between Ireland and South Africa in terms of fighting imperialism and foreign domination, a relationship mentioned by Mandela when he addressed the Dáil Éireann a few months after his release from prison after 27 years.



15.6.1985. Dublin, Ireland. IAAM (Irish Anti Apartheid Movement) march in support of the Dunnes Stores strikers. ©Photo by Derek Speirs
(Image use subject to licence - credit photo Derek Speirs)

"We know that your desire that the disenfranchised of our country should be heard in this House and throughout Ireland derives from your determination, born of your experience, that our people should, like yourselves, be free to govern themselves and to determine their destiny. The warm feeling that envelops us as we stand here is therefore but the affinity which belongs to peoples who have suffered in common and who are tied together by unbreakable bonds of friendship and solidarity."
(Mandela, 1990)

Although Asmal initially supported the Dunnes Store Anti-apartheid strike, he later expressed that it had continued for too long. However, other members of the IAAM, most notably Tony French, remained long-term supporters of the strike. The strike's impact reflected a considerable growth of local IAAM groups across the country: in 1984, there were two anti-apartheid groups, but by the end of the strike in 1987, there were thirty-six groups nationwide.

After apartheid ended, the IAAM established the Ireland South Africa Association to continue supporting South Africa. Asmal returned to South Africa in 1990, becoming a post-apartheid South African government and cabinet member.

[CLICK HERE](#)

The activities of the IAAM

[CLICK HERE](#)

Irish Opposition to South Africa by Kadar Adsmal (1971)

[CLICK HERE](#)

RTÉ Archives - Protests at South African visit (1970)

[CLICK HERE](#)

RTÉ Archives - IAAM 50 Years Old (1978)

[CLICK HERE](#)

Address by Nelson Mandela to Dáil Éireann 2 July 1990

ROLE OF TRADE UNIONS

Initially trade unions were slow to come onboard and support the AAM and it was down to rank and file activists in unions and a small number of sympathetic unions to try and influence and mobilise the trade union movement and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) who were influenced by their counterpart in South Africa the Trade Union Council of South Africa which was white led. It took until 1981 for the TUC to change its policy and call for sanctions.

As independent trade unions grew in South Africa during the 1970s AAM were able to work with and British Unions support these unions, including lobbying British companies who exploited black workers in South Africa. They also provided solidarity with South African trade unions by providing resources such as training and finance.

Trade unions played a key role in the AAM from the 1980s and by the nineties over 40 British trade unions were involved.

It was through this practical solidarity and trade union policy to boycott South African goods that the union representing workers at Dunnes called upon its members to take action.

[CLICK HERE](#)

AAM Archives on Trade Unions Against Apartheid

ROLE OF TRADE UNIONS IN IRELAND

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) had supported the IAAM since its inception and provided access to the Labour Movement. Its branches also coordinated a letter-writer network led by Louise Asmal for the International Defence and Aid Fund. The IDAF was banned in South Africa, so volunteers wrote to the dependants of political prisoners, sending them money as private gifts directly. Brendan Archbold was a long-time member of the IAAM before the strike.

During the 1981 Annual Congress, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) advocated for its members and connected unions to boycott and not handle South African goods. However, it was not until the Spring of 1984, when the IDATU adopted a formal anti-apartheid resolution, that action was taken. While Roches, Quinsworth, and other supermarkets allowed staff not to handle goods, Dunnes did not, so when workers in Henry Street refused, they were suspended. The Strikers received support from their Union and were joined on the picket by other unions and Trade Unionists from Ireland and England, including Arthur Scargill and the National Union of Mineworkers.

EXERCISE 4

How did activism and campaigning impact - how effective was it for those in the struggle and those who gave solidarity?

Using the information above and resources in the links discuss the actions taken by those in South Africa for liberation and those elsewhere in the world and consider how effective they were, what was most successful and how impactful global solidarity through boycotting, sanctions and protest were.

HOW TO RUN A CAMPAIGN - MOBILISE, ORGANISE, AGITATE:

All that is needed to start a campaign, as was the case with the AAM, is for a small group of people who are passionate and care about a cause or issue to come together and start to develop a plan of action.

The next step is to decide the **who**, **what** and **when** of the campaign.

Who are you targeting to make a change, who is impacted, who could / should be involved, what do you want as an outcome, what steps are needed to make this a reality, what are the key timings and dates for actions such as demos and if you are trying to prevent something - like a new law or policy, what is the schedule for that and what are the key dates when you need to take action by.

It is important that those directly and most impacted by the issue have a voice in the campaign – so for example if it was something that impacted on mostly young black and brown people, they should be the people at the forefront.

If you are planning an action, be it signing of a petition, writing letters to MPs, a protest march for example, then mobilising of people is needed so think about how to reach people, how you engage them, and involve them in large numbers. Different things or aspects of the campaign might work better for different people.

To organise effectively, people running the campaign, need roles, responsibilities. You might want to do a skills audit and allocate tasks to individuals that play to their strength. You can pool your collective knowledge and skills to make the best use of them.

What resources do you need – people, leaflets, placards, posters, a petition, a social media page, a hashtag, spokespersons, designers / artists, writers.

Then put your plan into action, take note of what worked well, what could have worked better and review on an ongoing basis.

SECTION 4

How creativity played a part in campaigning both through creating and boycotting

The arts have always played a part in campaigning for freedoms, equality and justice, from posters, placards and banners to films and plays made about historic struggles, from poems documenting events to freedom songs.

But where apartheid South Africa was concerned, there were the slogans, posters, freedom songs and concerts that were used to campaign and raise awareness but also the boycotting of South Africa by sports teams and performing artists.

Visual arts - e.g. posters, badges, leaflets

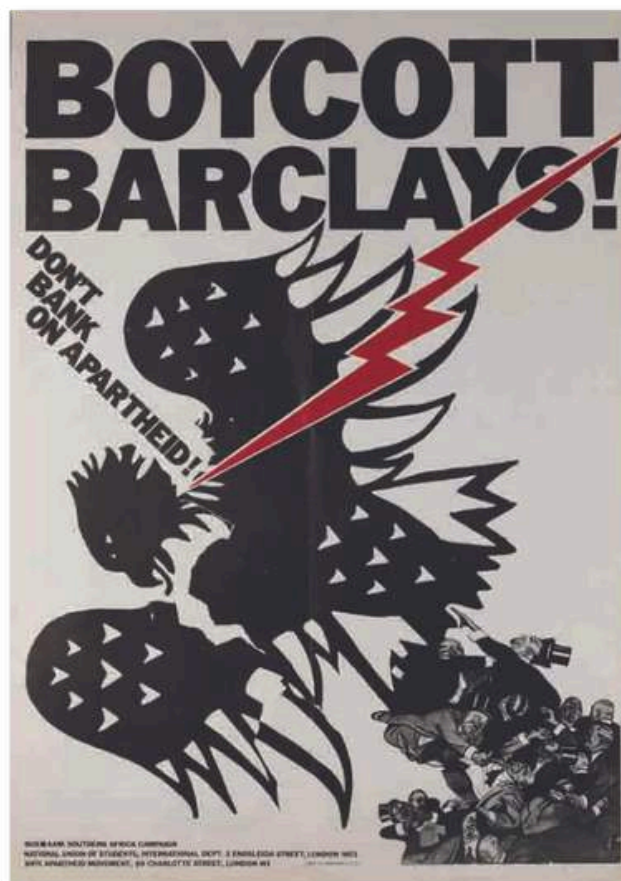
Posters were an important and powerful way of promoting the boycott campaign and spreading wider awareness.

The consumer boycott was maintained for 35 years and was central to the campaign against apartheid. Even if you felt unable to go to meetings and protests, anyone could play a part by refusing to purchase South African goods such as Cape fruit or tinned pilchards.

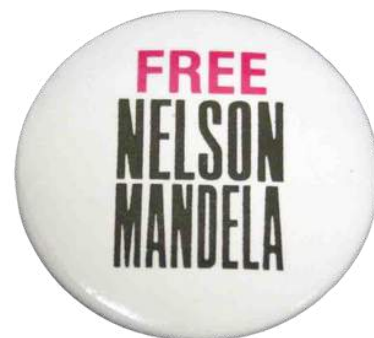


In addition, there was the Disinvestment Campaign which campaigned and called upon British companies with subsidiaries in South Africa to withdraw and calling on organisations and individuals with shares in these companies to sell them. One of the main targets was Barclays Bank, which is referred to in Zita's story of organising a student boycott of the bank.

The campaign against Barclays lasted 16 years and students were at the forefront, as Barclays has a targeted advertising campaign to encourage students to open up 'special' student accounts with them. Student unions at universities and colleges led and coordinated these campaigns. In 1986 Barclays eventually withdrew from South Africa.



Badges were another form of visual art used to campaign and an easy way of people giving solidarity and carrying a message about an aspect of the campaign everywhere they went.



In 1969–70, the AAM and Stop the Seventy Tour organised demonstrations and direct action at every match played by the Springbok rugby team on its 23-game tour of Britain. Faced with widespread disruption, the following summer's cricket tour was cancelled.

In 1971 the South African Springbok rugby tour of Australia was greeted by mass protests and students disrupted the first two games played. Trade Union activists, members of the union for building workers, tried to saw down the goalposts and the Queensland provincial government declared a State of Emergency because of protests. As a result, the tour was called off.



Supporters block the Springbok rugby team 20 December 1969
(©AAM Archive, Bodleian Library)

The AAM campaigned in Britain for support for South African black workers and solidarity with the call for trade union recognition for independent trade unions. Also, a black section of the AAM was formed in the UK bringing together black activists campaigning against apartheid but also taking inspiration and empowerment from black people in South Africa to campaign against the racism they faced in the UK.

[CLICK HERE](#)

AAM Archives badges

[CLICK HERE](#)

AAM Archives campaigns

MUSIC

Songs of resistance were a way to stay strong, feel connected to others in the struggle and speak out and spread the word about what was happening. They also gave people hope and drew on determination of those impacted to keep working towards a better future. But songs in solidarity with black people in South Africa also came from artists around the world.

One of the most well-known songs in the UK to raise awareness, was the song 'Nelson Mandela', also commonly known as 'Free Nelson Mandela' written by Jerry Dammers and performed by The Specials released in 1984, it reached number 9 in the UK charts and had Caron Wheeler, who went on to front Soul to Soul. It was a freedom song calling for the release of Nelson Mandela from prison following 21 years of imprisonment.

[CLICK HERE](#)

[The Specials - Nelson Mandela \(Official Music Video\)](#)

In the USA, Stevie Wonder wrote It's Wrong in 1985 about apartheid and when he hired South African artists to record the song with him, his music was banned in South Africa.

Singing collectively has always played a role in resistance against oppression and provides a form of collective care as well as spreading the message about what is happening and its impact to a wider audience.

Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika – God Bless Africa - written in 1987 by Enoch Sontonga, became an anthem for the anti-apartheid movement and subsequently parts of it came to be included in the South African national anthem. During the apartheid era you could hear it sung at the start and end of political rallies and events, both in South Africa and around the world.

[CLICK HERE](#)

[Ladysmith Black Mambazo - Nkosi Sikelela \(Live 1989\)](#)

Miriam Makeba was a South African singer, songwriter, actress and activist, known as Mama Africa. She had a part in the Anti-Apartheid film, Come Back Africa and she wrote and performed songs against apartheid including Soweto Blues.

[CLICK HERE](#)

[Mariam Makeba - Soweto Blues \(Live in Concert\)](#)

More information about South Africa freedom songs can be accessed here:

[CLICK HERE](#)

[Anti-Apartheid Legacy Freedom Songs](#)

AIN'T GOING TO PLAY SUN CITY ARTISTS AGAINST APARTHEID

In 1985, activist and performer Steven Van Zandt and record producer Arthur Baker founded Artist Against Apartheid, producing the song and album "Sun City". It brought together a diverse group of fifty artists to perform the music, including Hugh Masekela, Miles Davis, Gil Scott Heron, Darlene Love, Marvin Gaye, Grandmaster Mellie Mell, Run DMC, Bonnie Raitt, and Bono. Bono would bring in the Dunnes Stores Strikers to Windmill Studios in Dublin to record part of the backing vocals for the song.

All the artists involved also vowed to boycott performing concerts at Sun City. Sun City Resort and Casino was opened in 1979 and was part of an international boycott by performers; however, well-known bands and singers, including the Beach Boys, Millie Jackson, Liza Minelli, Frank Sinatra, Rod Stewart and Queen, ignored the boycott.

Although the single was banned by several radio stations in the USA, the album and single raised the profile of the boycott worldwide and raised millions for anti-apartheid projects.

[CLICK HERE](#)

Artists United Against Apartheid - Sun City



"Little Steven" Van Zandt, who organized the anti-apartheid "Sun City" recording, joins a press conference in Atlanta, Thursday, Dec. 19, 1985 with Mrs. Coretta Scott King, left, and Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young, right. (©AP Photo/Charles Kelly)

THEATRE

PLAYS, TELLING STORIES, POETRY

Artists played a crucial role in the fight against apartheid, using music, poetry, Theatre, and dance to gather international support. The African National Congress used the slogan 'culture is a weapon of struggle' to highlight the power of art in their anti-apartheid movements.

Although Theatre in South Africa was segregated, there were theatres and companies who were providing space to reflect the realities of life under apartheid to integrated audiences, including the Market Theatre and the Space Theatre and companies such as Theatre Council of Natal (TECON), and Medu Art Ensemble amongst others.

The Market Theatre in Johannesburg and The Space in Cape Town were seen as 'theatres of struggle' challenging apartheid in the plays they produced and working with black actors. Actor and writer John Kani, who worked at the Market Theatre and created work with playwright Athol Fugard, would tour internationally with several of their banned productions.

He remembers "... many times when we had to fight to keep performances open. Theatre was one of the first places where black and white people were in the same physical situation, responding to one experience together. Some plays almost became political rallies. The responses to them were so immediate and visceral, and sometimes affected their outlook to South African life considerably."

[CLICK HERE](#)

SA Hstory Online - Market Theatre

[CLICK HERE](#)

RSC - Theatre and Apartheid

[CLICK HERE](#)

The Space: 'A Theatre of Survival in a Time of Turmoil'

[CLICK HERE](#)

SA Hstory Online - The Space Theatre

THEATRE COUNCIL OF NATAL (TECON)

For the students who formed the Theatre Council of Natal (TECON) in 1970, the inspiration for their work was the Black Consciousness Movement, and therefore, they reinterpreted texts or workshopped and improvised plays that would reflect their lives. They used Theatre as a tool to show Black South Africans' life challenges and inspire hope to rise up. They would also incorporate an Afro-centric approach to Theatre, celebrating the pride of African culture and psychological liberation. They toured townships and saw Theatre as a revolutionary voice to contribute to dismantling apartheid.

[CLICK HERE](#)

Black Theatre an Expression of Black Consciousness

MEDU ART ENSEMBLE

"What does true political consciousness mean to the artist in my country? We need to clearly popularize and give dignity to the just thoughts and deeds of the people. With our brushes and paints we shall need to visualize the beauty of the country we would like our people to live in." **Thamsanqa Mnyele**

In 1979, the Medu Art Ensemble was formed in Gaborone, Botswana. The Ensemble, formed of cultural workers exiled after the Soweto Rising, would contribute to the struggle against apartheid.

Medu means "roots" in the Sepedi language, and the collective worked with cultural workers in South Africa, Botswana citizens and other countries. Medu worked as a collective, calling themselves "cultural workers" rather than artists to promote a more functional attitude to creating work, simply people doing their work. Whether music, photography, graphic and visual arts, theatre or writing production, the work aimed to enhance solidarity, examine the injustices of the apartheid state, and promote black consciousness. Members included musician Hugh Masekela, visual artist Thamsanqa Mnyele and poet Mongane Wally Serote, amongst others, including Marius Schoon, who would significantly impact the Dunnes Stores Strikers when he met them in 1984. They connected with international anti-colonial and revolutionary art, including the work of German theatre-maker Bertolt Brecht, Vietnamese resistance poetry, the Mexican mural painters and Chile's muralists who spoke truth to power.

"Our art should speak to the immediate community, to the people who brought us up, who speak to us, who are living through what has made us as we are. The arts should build self-awareness and self-image, link our people's experiences, create new understandings of our lives, and pass on these understandings. From this should come a vision of how to take our community and our people forward." **MEDU**

Medu hosted the 1982 Gaborone Culture and Resistance Festival, bringing together hundreds of participants to explore and focus on politically directed artwork and resistance art in the community.

On 14 June 1985, the South African military targeted Medu members in Botswana in a cross-border raid. They killed 14 people, and members fled, and the Ensemble closed overnight.

[CLICK HERE](#)

SA History Online - Medu Art Ensemble

[CLICK HERE](#)

SA History Online - Culture and Resistance Conference

[CLICK HERE](#)

SA History Online - Art and Resistance under Apartheid

ANC THEATRE COMPANIES

Mayibuye Cultural Ensemble used agitprop, poetry and freedom songs to raise awareness within the movement and worldwide, highlighting the injustices of the apartheid system and advocating for national liberation.

Amandla Cultural Ensembles, made up of ANC exiles, toured the world, promoting international awareness against apartheid and the brutality of the apartheid government.

Many artists, theatre companies and playwrights refused to go or have their work produced in the country, including Irish playwrights Sean O'Casey and Samuel Beckett, who had historically not allowed their plays to be performed in South Africa. In 1948 a declaration was signed by 48 British and American playwrights. It prohibited their work from being performed in front of segregated audiences.

This was echoed by the Actors Union Equity's pledge, promoted by actor Vanessa Redgrave, to not perform in front of segregated audiences. These and other actions were part of the worldwide Cultural Boycott against apartheid, with many artists refusing to perform in South Africa.

[CLICK HERE](#)

AAM Archives - Playwrights Against Apartheid

[CLICK HERE](#)

AAM Archives - Cultural boycott



RSC Actors against Apartheid, Stratford upon Avon © John Harris/reportdigital.co.uk

EXERCISE 5

Create one or more of the following:

- poem
- poster
- still image
- drama piece

which could be used to campaign against contemporary forms of racism, apartheid and/or other forms of discrimination.

Identify an issue/concern you are passionate about and think about how you could use creativity to make a stand against, offer solidarity or raise awareness.

This could be a performance piece, prose/poetry, or a poster/badge.

Think about the message you want to share, how you can best connect with the audience you are trying to reach and what you can do to make your piece stand out.



This poster for Ardent Theatre Company's production of STRIKE! by Tracy Ryan was designed by © Sean Longmore.

The original photo is of the Dunnes Stores workers on strike outside Dunnes on Henry Street, Dublin.

L to R. Sandra Griffen, Alma Bonnie, Karen Gearon, Mary Manning with anti apartheid activist Nimrod Sejake and Tommy Davis. 25/5/1985

Photo: Eamonn Farrell/© RollingNews.ie

SECTION 5

Careers in the creative arts

CASE STUDY: MIRIAM TLALI, (1933 – 2017)



"To the Philistines, the banners of books, the critics.... We black South African writers (who are faced with the task of conscientizing our people and ourselves are writing for those whom we know are the relevant audience. We are not going to write in order to qualify into your definition of what you describe as 'true art'.... Our duty is to write for our people and about them."

Miriam Tlali, 1988, Committee Against Censorship, Amsterdam.

Image by © Adrian Steirn, courtesy of 21 ICONS.

Miriam Tlali, (1933 – 2017) a novelist, an internationally acclaimed playwright and author of short stories and essayist, was influenced by the Black Consciousness Movement and used her work to confront apartheid. She was born in Johannesburg and lived in Soweto. She was unable to study Literature due to the discriminatory university admissions policy in apartheid SA. When she finally went to study at Pius XII University (now the University of Lesotho), she had to leave early due to financial difficulties. She took a job as a bookkeeper but continued to write.

She was the first black South African woman to be published in English with her 1975 novel *Muriel at Metropolitan/ Between Two Worlds*, exploring the demeaning conditions for African women workers during apartheid. Many of her books were banned due to their critique of apartheid, including *Amandla*, based on the Soweto Rising in 1976. She was routinely harassed, beaten and arrested by the Security Forces and took to burying her manuscripts in her garden in her beloved Soweto in case her home was raided, and her work confiscated.

Nevertheless, she would travel the world speaking against apartheid. She was a founder of the publishing house Skotaville and co-founder of the literary journal Staffrider. She was also a member of the National Coalition of Women and an intersectional feminist.



[CLICK HERE](#)

To watch 21 Icons: Miriam Tlali - Short film on YouTube

[CLICK HERE](#)

SA History Online - Miriam Tlali

21 ICONS OVERVIEW

21 Icons is a visual celebration of remarkable individuals who have shaped their world for the better. Inspired by Nelson Mandela, it tells the stories of people who have continued his legacy – whose lives have made the world a better place.

It is an editorial content format that uses photographic portraits, short films, and behind-the-scenes photography to shine a light on exceptional people who have attained success at the highest level, and in doing so, have had a significant positive impact on the world around them.

Conceived by Adrian Steirn, the world-renowned photographer and filmmaker whose portraits define the project, 21 Icons shares an intimate and unguarded glimpse into the lives of people whose standing and accomplishments often place them out of reach to the rest of the world.

[CLICK HERE](#)

21 Icons South Africa website

TRACY AND ZITA

Both Tracy and Zita use their creativity to speak out against injustice, as a tool for campaigning and sharing inspirational stories. We would encourage everyone to consider using their creative skills as a tool for change.

Launching a career in the creative industries can feel overwhelming, only a lucky few get the big breaks at a young age. Careers in the sector usually require, not just talent, but determination, perseverance, nurturing and growing your talent all the time, having excellent communication skills and being business savvy as often you will be working on a freelance basis so have to manage your career like a business. You might also need to apply for funding streams to realise your dream, collaborate with others and constantly step into new and unfamiliar environments.

But do not be put off, there is a lot of support, advice and people willing to help. Joining an after-school club, local youth or community centre focused on the arts and practicing over and over again at home can help to develop your talent. Do reach out to those already doing what you do, through social media, post show talks, open mic events, writers forums, poetry open mic events and local art groups can give you the opportunity to network with others, open doors to collaboration opportunities and a chance to platform your talent.

Social media, if accessed safely and with support of parents and guardians, can be a platform to showcase your work, build your network and test out new work on audiences.

Creatives are needed, arts are an important part of all our lives, they provide relaxation and leisure but as illustrated in this resource, they also play a key role in challenging the wrongs of the world and striving for a better world for everyone to live in.

TRADE UNIONS REPRESENTING WORKERS IN THE CREATIVE ARTS / ENTERTAINMENT SECTORS:

<https://www.artistsunionengland.org.uk/>

<https://musiciansunion.org.uk/>

<https://www.equity.org.uk/>

<https://bectu.org.uk/>

<https://writersguild.org.uk/>

<https://www.praxisunion.ie/>

<https://irishequity.ie/>

<https://script.ie/>

EXERCISE 6

TELLING YOUR STORY

How can you make your story resonate with an audience through creativity?

Think about the message you want to convey, who your audience is, what will resonate with them and how you can connect creatively.

Make a list of the movies, books, poems, plays, songs, paintings that are amongst your favourite and which you connect with.

Discuss in groups why you like them, what makes them special for you – for example lyrics, the emotions they evoke, the passions they are delivered with, how they express the message.

Think about how you can apply these things to your own story.

CONCLUSION

It is hoped that this educational resource pack will make fundamental links between activism and arts. How creativity can be used to bring about positive change, advocate for rights, stand up for equality and human rights. The importance of telling our stories, documenting and archiving them and how historic and contemporary stories of struggle, resistance, perseverance and determination can inspire others to stand up and speak out. Crucially, the power of international solidarity and how, even if you are thousands of miles away from those you are giving solidarity to, small not just big actions can make a difference collectively and be a powerful way of standing together. We should never underestimate the importance of the arts to demonstrate solidarity, be a voice, raise awareness, or simply to tell an interesting story that deserves to be shared with the world.

QUICK LINKS

SECTION 1

Download Scene 3 of STRIKE!

Ardent's resource on apartheid in South Africa

Ardent's Activism in the 80s podcasts

Articles written by Nimrod Sejake

Dr Shelley Troupe's History of Ireland blog Part I

Dr Shelley Troupe's History of Ireland blog Part II

Dr Shelley Troupe's History of Ireland blog Part III

RTÉ Archives about the Dunnes Stores strike

<https://tinyurl.com/Strike-scene3>

<https://tinyurl.com/ardent-apartheid>

<http://tinyurl.com/activism-podcasts>

<http://tinyurl.com/sejake-articles>

<http://tinyurl.com/Ireland-blog1>

<http://tinyurl.com/Ireland-blog2>

<http://tinyurl.com/Ireland-blog3>

<http://tinyurl.com/RTE-strike>

SECTION 2

AAM Archives - Zita shares her memories

Facebook page archive of Maseru raids 1982-1985

<http://tinyurl.com/AAM-zita>

<http://tinyurl.com/Facebook-maseru>

SECTION 3

Steve Biko - YouTube

Ardent's resource on apartheid - Steve Biko

Oliver Tambo - YouTube

Ardent's resource on apartheid - Oliver Tambo

Anti-Apartheid Movement Archives

Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA)

The activities of the IAAM

Irish Opposition to South Africa by Kadar Adsmal (1971)

RTÉ Archives - Protests at South African visit (1970)

RTÉ Archives - IAAM 50 Years Old (1978)

Address by Nelson Mandela to Dáil Éireann 2 July 1990

AAM Archives on Trade Unions Against Apartheid

<http://tinyurl.com/biko-youtube>

<https://tinyurl.com/ardent-apartheid>

<http://tinyurl.com/tambo-youtube>

<https://tinyurl.com/ardent-apartheid>

<https://www.aamarchives.org/>

<https://actsa.org>

<http://tinyurl.com/african-IAAM>

<http://tinyurl.com/SAH-irish>

<http://tinyurl.com/RTE-protests>

<http://tinyurl.com/RTE-IAAM>

<http://tinyurl.com/times-mandela>

<http://tinyurl.com/AAM-unions>

SECTION 4

AAM Archives badges	http://tinyurl.com/AAM-badges
AAM Archives campaigns	http://tinyurl.com/AAM-campaigns
The Specials - Nelson Mandela (Official Music Video)	http://tinyurl.com/specials-youtube
Ladysmith Black Mambazo - Nkosi Sikelela (Live 1989)	http://tinyurl.com/mambazo-youtube
Mariam Makeba - Soweto Blues (Live in Concert)	http://tinyurl.com/makeba-youtube
Anti-Apartheid Legacy Freedom Songs	http://tinyurl.com/AAL-songs
Artists United Against Apartheid - Sun City	http://tinyurl.com/suncity-youtube
SA History Online - Market Theatre	http://tinyurl.com/SAH-markettheatre
RSC - Theatre and Apartheid	http://tinyurl.com/RSC-apartheid
The Space: 'A Theatre of Survival in a Time of Turmoil'	https://thespacetheatre.com
SA History Online - The Space Theatre	http://tinyurl.com/SAH-spacetheatre
Black Theatre an Expression of Black Consciousness	http://tinyurl.com/SAH-blacktheatre
SA History Online - Medu Art Ensemble	http://tinyurl.com/SAH-medu
SA History Online - Culture and Resistance Conference	http://tinyurl.com/SAH-culture
SA History Online - Art and Resistance under Apartheid	http://tinyurl.com/SAH-art
AAM Archives - Playwrights Against Apartheid	http://tinyurl.com/AAM-playwright
AAM Archives - Cultural boycott	http://tinyurl.com/AAM-culture

SECTION 5

21 Icons: Miriam Tlali - Short film	http://tinyurl.com/miriam-youtube
SA History Online - Miriam Tlali	http://tinyurl.com/SAH-miriam
21 Icons South Africa website	https://21icons.com/

OTHER

South African History Online	https://www.sahistory.org.za/
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CREDITS

WRITTEN AND CREATED BY

Zita Holbourne and Tracy Ryan

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Derek Speirs

Mark Douet

Zita Holbourne

South African History Online

Sue Kramer

CSU Archives / Everett Collection

United Archives / Sven Simon

AAM Archive, Bodleian Library

AA Archives Committee

AP Photo/Charles Kelly

John Harris/reportdigital.co.uk

Eamonn Farrell/[©RollingNews.ie](http://RollingNews.ie)

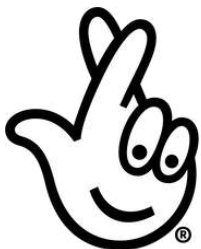
Miriam Tlali Image by Adrian Steirn, courtesy of 21 ICONS

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