

ARCHBISHOP DESMOND MPIOLO TUTU: THE GLOBAL ICON FOR LIBERATION, JUSTICE, PEACE AND DEVOTION TO THE PLANET.

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“No faith contains the whole truth about God. And certainly, Christians don’t have a corner on God. All of us belong to God.” — Desmond Tutu.

Archbishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu had a profound influence on a young political activist like me since the 70’s. I remember his ardent political activism for political equality and socio-economic justice. I recall his spiritual and moral authority in our country. After the apartheid police’s brutal torture and murder of Steve Biko while in prison in 1977, I remember him presiding over the burial. As the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 and Chairman of the post-apartheid South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, our nation will forever remember him for his public agitation, civil disobedience, skillful eloquence and a consistent moral example to us all.

The legacy of “the Arch”, as Archbishop Tutu was fondly known as, extended beyond his immense contribution to the liberation of black South Africans from the bondage of white domination and exploitation. He was a champion of the renowned philosophical construct of Africa of Ubuntu / Botho, perhaps best articulated by his Kenyan theological colleague, John Mbiti: *“I am because we are, and because we are, therefore I am.”* Despite being deeply rooted in Christian theology, he was tolerant and accepting of all theological beliefs, including those within African Cosmology, as well as his strong connections with religious leaders of other faiths, most noticeably his well-known-friendship with the 14th Dalai Lama.

The life of this son of the soil was fashioned by the struggles that were fought by his forebears, efforts to rise up and defeat the oppression of colonialism and apartheid policies. By the time Desmond was born to Zachariah and Aletta Tutu in 1931, Europeans had already achieved their violent of Southern Africa along racial lines. Black people had long been labelled second class citizens and dispossessed of their land and its resources. Desmond Tutu was raised in an oppressed society where the ancient beauty and harmony of African societies was sorely threatened. Young Desmond’s dreams of being a doctor proved impossible, and he refused the option of becoming a teacher because of the appalling policy of Bantu Education. After a deeply impactful meeting with the British priest, Father Trevor Huddleston, he chose to pursue his studies in theology.

In the mid 1970 ’s, while still a young priest, Desmond Tutu resolved to struggle against the apartheid system, asserting: “I want to declare categorically that I believe apartheid to be evil and immoral and therefore, unchristian.” His unwavering stance against injustice was evident when he remained critical

of errors of the new South African government even after the struggle against apartheid proved victorious, as well as his criticism of injustices all around the world.

The Arch was indeed a man of integrity, a spiritual elder, an iconic moral giant and a role model for the world.