Lesson Plan: The Battle to End Apartheid

FILM: This lesson plan is for use with the film Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela. This 86-minute film features the lives of twelve black South African exiles that left their home in 1960 to pursue educational opportunities, to tell the world about the brutality of the apartheid system and to raise support for the fledgling African National Congress and its leader Nelson Mandela. While the film is partly a personal journey by the stepson of one of the “disciples,” it also documents the history of one of modern Africa’s most significant political movements.

P.O.V. documentaries can be taped off-the-air and used for educational purposes for up to one year from the initial broadcast. In addition, P.O.V. offers a lending library of DVD’s and VHS tapes that you can borrow anytime during the school year — FOR FREE!

OBJECTIVES:
In this lesson, students will:

- Observe historical photographs that illustrate apartheid and make inferences based on the contents of the images.
- Watch two video clips that illustrate what life was like for blacks living with apartheid in South Africa.
- Discuss strategies that people might use to communicate discontent to their government and call for reform.

GRADE LEVEL: 6-12

SUBJECT AREAS: Social Studies, World History, Civics

MATERIALS:

- Method (varies by school) of displaying for students color photographs from an online collection.
- Map showing the location of South Africa.
- Method (varies by school) of showing the class video clips from the P.O.V. Web site for Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela, or have a copy of the film and a VHS/DVD player and monitor.

ESTIMATED TIME NEEDED: 1-2 class periods

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In 1910, the Constitution for The Union of South Africa reserved political power for whites. Afterwards, increasingly restrictive and discriminatory laws were passed, including those that limited the rights of blacks to own land, move about freely, perform certain jobs and earn the same wages as white workers. In 1948, “apartheid” (literally “apartness” in Afrikaans and Dutch) was officially established. General education for blacks was eliminated, and many blacks were forced to move to “approved” townships.
Transportation and public facilities were segregated, and blacks had limited access to electricity, plumbing, hospitals and other needs.

To combat such racism, leaders like Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, and Oliver Tambo in the African National Congress promoted African nationalism (i.e., the notion that Africans could only be freed by their own efforts) and resistance strategies, including strikes, boycotts, civil disobedience and union organizing. The South African government responded to every attempt to oppose the system of apartheid with increased repression and violence. When the police responded to peaceful protests at Sharpeville in 1960 with shootings, the resistance movements made the decision to take up arms in the struggle. Around this same time, the “Twelve Disciples” featured in this film left South Africa and headed for Dar Es Salaam. In 1963, Nelson Mandela was arrested and given a life sentence.

Violent and non-violent protests escalated throughout the 70s and 80s in response to worsening conditions for blacks. These efforts helped to mount international pressure on the South African government to bring about reform. In 1990, the last apartheid president, F.W. de Klerk, lifted the ban on liberation movements, most notably the African National Congress, released ANC leader Nelson Mandela from prison and began negotiations for a new political system. In 1994, South Africa conducted its first-ever “one-person-one-vote” election. After winning more than 60% of the 22 million ballots cast, Nelson Mandela was elected President. His ANC party still controls the South African government.

For additional background on apartheid, South African history and the ANC, please see the Resources section.

ACTIVITY:

1. Display the image of a segregated beach in South Africa from the United Nations’ Historical Images of Apartheid in South Africa collection (www.un.org/av/photo/subjects/apartheid.htm). Ask students to study the photograph for two minutes. Have them form an overall impression of the photograph and then examine details of the image. Based on their observations, what can students infer from this photograph? What questions does it raise in their minds? Have students record their ideas.

2. Repeat the exercise with the U.N. photograph of the black South African showing his passbook. Then, discuss student observations, inferences and questions. Collect student responses, and then clarify what each photograph shows.

3. Show students where South Africa is on a map. Explain that like the United States, South Africa used to have a system of institutionalized racial discrimination. This system in South Africa was called, “apartheid,” which literally means “apartness” in Afrikaans, a language spoken there.

4. Tell students that you are going to play an approximately three-minute video clip that shows a man called “Percy” recalling what it was like to live under apartheid in the South African city of Bloemfontein. (Clip 1 begins at 12:46 with Percy’s picture as a young man, and he says, “Bloemfontein then was a divided city…”
The clip ends at 15:22 after he says, “…or else you will be buried” and the video fades to white.

5. After the clip, ask students how they might have felt living in the conditions shown in the film. Discuss their reactions and find out if students would have done anything to resist such treatment.

6. As a class, list various strategies that people can use to communicate discontent to their government, such as civil disobedience, protest music or art, writing letters to public officials, gathering signatures on petitions, picketing, marching, boycotts, sit-ins, strikes, inviting interventions or pressures by foreign countries, rioting, bombing, taking hostages, staging a coup, etc. Ask students to suggest which resistance strategy or strategies they think would have been most effective in the fight to end apartheid. Students should defend their answers.

7. Explain that a leading group that fought against apartheid was the African National Congress, or ANC. Then, show them a clip that re-enacts the memory of a man named “Lee” who recalls what happened when the ANC organized a non-violent protest in 1952. (Clip 2 begins at 6:22 showing a black and white photograph of men holding a sign that includes the text, “Afrika, Afrika.” The narration begins, “Lee used to tell the story…” and ends at 7:39 with “…how they were beaten and tortured for weeks.”) 

8. Tell students that the South African government responded to every attempt to oppose the system of apartheid with increased repression and violence, so resistance movements made the decision to take up arms in the struggle. After years of both violent and non-violent protests against worsening conditions for blacks, as well as pressure from the international community, the South African government finally ended apartheid and reformed its political system. Since 1994, the ANC has controlled the South African government.

9. Ask students to individually identify a national, state or local problem that they could try to change. Have students each explain the problem they’ve selected in writing and then create an action plan that describes what specific steps they’ll take to resolve it.

ASSESSMENT:
- Give students credit for completing the photograph analysis exercises.
- Assign points for participation in class discussion.
- Collect and evaluate student action plans. Consider giving extra credit to students who follow through on their action plans and achieve their goals.

WORKSHEETS / HANDOUTS:
For use with the extension outlined below: Brief Biographies of the Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela (PDF file)
EXTENSIONS & ADAPTATIONS:

- How did the fight to end apartheid compare to the civil rights movement in the United States? Introduce this topic with photographs from the Library of Congress’ Voices of Civil Rights exhibit (www.loc.gov/exhibits/civilrights/cr-exhibit.html) and the United Nations’ Historical Images of Apartheid in South Africa collection (www.un.org/av/photo/subjects/apartheid.htm). Have students conduct additional research and then write essays that compare and contrast these two struggles.

- Based on information in the film and the handout, Brief Biographies of the Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela (PDF file), create a map to track the global movements of each disciple during his lifetime. Use a different color pencil for each disciple. Discuss what may have motivated each move to a different place.

- Play and examine the lyrics of songs like “Gimme Hope Jo’Anna” by Eddie Grant or “Free Nelson Mandela” by The Specials. What messages do they have about apartheid and the government oppression that used to exist in South Africa? Why do students think such songs were written and released?

- Tap the history of resistance in South Africa to explore the role of activists. Have students read, An Activist’s Life (www.pbs.org/pov/pov2006/twelvedisciples/special_gallery.html) which describes the work of “Lee,” the main “disciple” featured in the film. Based on their reading and their knowledge of other activists, ask students to describe the characteristics and values of an activist. What makes people willing to sacrifice their own needs, sometimes even their own lives, for the greater good? According to the film, how did activism shape the lives of Lee and his family?

- Identify nations currently struggling to establish themselves as democracies. What lessons can these countries learn from the history of South Africa? Then, research the specific challenges faced by the ANC as they try to live up to their democratic and non-racialist ideals. Brainstorm ways that the South African government might meet those challenges. Consider whether any items on your list could be applied to your own community to improve race relations.

RESOURCES:

The Library of Congress: Country Studies: South Africa
http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/zatoc.html#za0027
This online reference volume is a thorough resource on the history and conditions of South Africa. Click on “Segregation, 1910-48,” “Apartheid, 1948-76,” “Government in Crisis, 1978-89” and “Dismantling Apartheid, 1990-94” to learn more about the history of apartheid.
A brief summary of the history of the African National Congress can be found on this page, from the online encyclopedia MSN Encarta.

STANDARDS:

Behavioral Studies
Standard 4: Understands conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among individuals, groups, and institutions.
   Level IV, Benchmark 1: Understands that conflict between people or groups may arise from competition over ideas, resources, power, and/or status.

Civics
Standard 28: Understands how participation in civic and political life can help citizens attain individual and public goals.
   Level IV, Benchmark 3. Knows the many ways citizens can participate in the political process at local, state, and national levels, and understands the usefulness of other forms of political participation in influencing public policy.

World History
Standard 43: Understands how post-World War II reconstruction occurred, new international power relations took shape, and colonial empires broke up.
   Level III, Benchmark 5: Understands political conditions in Africa after World War II.
   Level IV, Benchmark 5: Understands reasons for the shift in governments in Africa and how Africans responded.

Standard 44: Understands the search for community, stability, and peace in an interdependent world.

Language Arts
Standard 9: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.
   Level IV, Benchmark 2: Uses a variety of criteria (e.g., clarity, accuracy, effectiveness, bias, relevance of facts) to evaluate informational media (e.g., web sites, documentaries, news programs)

Source: “Content Knowledge” (www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp) by McRel (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning)