

World Cup 2010: Essential reading and viewing

The following books and films, reviewed by ACTSA are recommended reading for anyone who wants to know more about South Africa's history and some of the key characters involved in the struggle for its liberation.

Books

Long walk to freedom: Nelson Mandela

This popular biography of the world's most admired living political leader portrays his life long struggle against apartheid and the amazing role he played in leading South Africa to freedom. The book focuses on his traditional Xhosa upbringing, takes the reader through his years in education and as a practicing lawyer and his rising up the ranks of the ANC. As well as sharing the struggles of the apartheid era and his strength to overcome the system, Nelson Mandela's resilience during his imprisonment is captured with the amazing dignified tone that has become synonymous with this great political figure.

Naught for your comfort: Trevor Huddleston

This book, first published in 1956, describes Father Trevor Huddleston's experiences of the apartheid regime in the 40's and early 50's whilst he was an Anglican missionary in Johannesburg. It particularly looks at the removal of black residents from Sophia Town. Naught for your comfort had an immense impact when it was first published, opening the eyes of thousands to the evils of the apartheid regime. The book is a profound and challenging read, dealing with the subjects of morality, religion, race and international responsibility. Trevor Huddleston was the founding president of ACTSA.

Diamonds, gold and war: Martin Meredith

This historical, well researched and fascinating account of the colonial history of South Africa and Rhodesia shows how the rich material resources of South Africa shaped the tumultuous road to the contemporary nation. It may be of particular interest to those wanting to know more about the colonial power plays between the Afrikaners and the British that lead to apartheid. The book focuses in particular on the role of the power hungry Cecil Rhodes in shaping the country.

More than just a game: Chuck Korr and Marvin Close

Many know of Robben Island as the prison where Nelson Mandela and many other leaders in the struggle against apartheid spent years in the most appalling conditions. However, few know of the amazing role that football contributed on the island, providing hope as well as helping prisoners organise against their oppressors. More than just a game tells the story of how the Makana Football Association was run by prisoners, against all the odds, in strict adherence to FIFA rules and the role it played in bringing prisoners together in the face of adversity. An essential World Cup read.

Rabble-rouser for peace, the authorised biography of Desmond Tutu: John Allen

Rabble-rouser for peace is a look at Tutu's fascinating life, as a campaigner against apartheid, an advocate of peaceful protest, archbishop and family man. John Allen, a journalist and friend of the archbishop provides an endearing look into this great man's life. The book is well researched and includes contributions from Tutu's family.

Films

Jump the Gun

An ironic look at contemporary South African society, seen through the eyes of a group hanging out in Johannesburg's underbelly. Drama, South Africa, 1997 - 244 min

Tsotsi (Oscar for the best foreign language film 2006)

Tsotsi (thug) is the perfect name for this violent, cold-hearted young gang leader whose turf is the townships outside Johannesburg where he leads his friends in vicious robberies and worse. One night, he shoots a young woman and jacks her car. Little does he know that the baby he later discovers in the back seat will change his life forever. Based on Athol Fugard's novel, Tsotsi is shot with an urgent energy and music soundtrack that recalls films like City of God. In Tsotsitaal, Afrikaans, English with English Subtitles. South Africa, United Kingdom, 2005 - 94 mins

Have you heard from Johannesburg? The bottom line

Tells the story of the economic boycott and disinvestment in South Africa. It looks specifically at how grass-roots movements worked to cut the South African government off from their financial allies in the West. Using some fantastic archive footage, the film charts the history of the boycott and disinvestment campaign culminating in a number of major companies withdrawing from South Africa during the 1980s. It includes footage of the famous boycotts of Shell and Barclays Bank. The film includes interviews with many of the key activists in the Anti Apartheid Movement in Britain as well as senior figures in banks and gives an interesting insight into how effective the economic isolation of South Africa was. This film premiered at the London Film Festival in 2009. USA, 2009, 89 minutes

Fair Play

Fair Play, also part of the 'Have you heard from Johannesburg?' series, tells the story of the international boycott of apartheid sport and how it led to the barring of many of South Africa's teams from world competitions for decades. It looks at the campaign against apartheid sport in a number of countries with a strong focus on the Olympics as well as rugby. The international boycott against apartheid sports teams helped bring South Africa's human rights crisis to the world's attention and sever white South Africans' cultural ties to the West. Fair Play includes not only those who took part in the boycott but those who opposed it both in South Africa and in the West. Clarity Films, 2010

Mapantsula

The first anti-apartheid feature film by, for and about black South Africans, Mapantsula follows Panic's transformation from irresponsible and violent loner to someone compelled to take a stand. Shot in and around Soweto, it was originally banned in South Africa. In English, Zulu, Sotho, Afrikaans with English Subtitles South Africa, 1988 - 104 mins

A Dry White Season

A prominent white school teacher living in South Africa and accepting the apartheid system, finds his life shattered when his black gardener is killed after trying to investigate his son's death. He hires a lawyer to help him expose the injustices of the government. Starring Donald Sutherland is based on an anti-apartheid novel by Andre Brink. Academy Award Nominations: Best Supporting Actor-Marlon Brando. South Africa, 1989, 107 minutes

Cry the beloved country

The third film adaptation of Alan Paton's novel. Father Stephen Kumalo lives in a small South African town, detached from the Apartheid-related hardships of the larger cities. But when he receives a letter indicating that his sister is in trouble, Father Kumalo journeys to Johannesburg. Once there, his eyes are opened to the violence, poverty, and hardships that his fellow countrymen must suffer. After an arduous search, Kumalo finds his sibling and later his estranged son, only to find that both are engaged in illegal activities just to stay alive. Furthermore, Kumalo's son has killed a white man. Father Kumalo realizes that he faces an uphill battle if he is going to keep his reunited family together.

Both Sidney Poitier and Richard Harris versions are recommended
South Africa, 1995, 120 minutes

Cry Freedom

This film describes Donald Woods' extraordinary experiences from his first meeting with Biko in 1975 to his dramatic flight into Lesotho less than three years later. In so doing, the film confirms with sympathy and a deal of emotional clout what we all knew - that Biko was a truly great man, that apartheid and the regime enforcing it were inhumane, and that love must overcome hatred. Cleverly, it does all that while beating to the pace of a thriller, reaching fever pitch after Biko's demise when Woods, hounded by a gnashing John Thaw (playing Minister Of Police, James Kruger), attempts to uncover the brutal truth of his friends

South Africa, 1987, 158 minutes

End Game

A thrilling political drama about the 1985 talks which helped pave the way for the negotiations which brought an end to apartheid. Influential Afrikaner, Professor Esterhuyse sits down face to face with representatives of the ANC, led by future President Thabo Mbeki in the unusual setting of a Somerset Country House. The secret talks are led by Michael Young, a British businessman employed by a mining company, keen to see stability in a country many thought was on the verge of civil war. Channel 4, 2009