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# Sources of Information about South Africa and Namibia

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In order to inform our concern and action as Christians, we must learn to read and listen critically, not only to the Word of God, but also to reports of political and economic developments in the global community. For most of us, our main sources for news are television and the newspaper.

In the countries of South Africa and Namibia, most press releases and media coverage either originate from, or must be approved by the South African government. When we read or hear such coverage, we are hearing **only** what that government wants us to hear. For example, Namibians fighting against the illegal occupation of their country by South Africa are most often termed "communist guerillas" or "terrorists" instead of "freedom fighters" or "patriots". Another example: In Zimbabwe, the election of 1979, now recognized as unfair and illegal, was first heralded as an unprecedented peaceful transition to majority rule. Until the true facts were brought to light this error was projected by most of the world's media.

How, then, are we to trust what we read and hear when it seems that most media and political leaders are willing to accept governmental reports as factual and accurate descriptions? All too often, decisions in Washington are based on such one-sided and erroneous information, or are influenced by the lobby of powerful persons and groups with economic interests in South Africa. The South African government spends millions of dollars each year to spread its propaganda in this country. Where, then, can we turn? What can we believe? How can we decide?

As a starter, we can develop a critical eye. For example, if a newspaper article brings: "Dateline, Pretoria" or "South African sources in Johannesburg today report. . ." we know the reader is getting the point of view that the government wants heard. Even though it is extremely dangerous to voice them, other points of view are being heard from South Africa and Namibia. The result is often censure, banning, deportation or imprisonment for persons who dare to speak out. Mail, telephone conversations, even worship services are "monitored", but still the word gets through. We need to seek out and listen to the voices of these modern day prophets, martyrs and Word-bearers. But where can we find them?

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## ORGANIZATIONS

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A number of church groups and private organizations collect and distribute information about southern Africa. Among the most dependable are:

1. Ralston Deffenbaugh  
Lutheran World Ministries  
3650 Park Avenue South  
New York, NY 10010  
(212) 532-6350
2. Bill Johnston  
Episcopal Churchpeople for a  
Free Southern Africa  
339 Lafayette Street  
New York, NY 10012  
(212) 477-0066
3. National Namibia Concerns  
860 Emerson  
Denver, CO 80218  
(303) 830-2774 or 832-3229
4. Dateline Namibia  
DMNA Lutheran Church  
in America  
231 Madison Avenue  
New York, NY 10016  
(212) 696-6700
5. American Friends Service Committee  
Jerry Herman/South Africa Program  
1501 Cherry Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
(215) 241-7169
6. Washington Office on Africa  
110 Maryland Ave. N.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20002  
(202) 546-7961
7. Africa News  
P.O. Box 3851  
Durham, NC 27702  
(919) 286-0747
8. The Africa Fund/American  
Committee on Africa  
198 Broadway  
New York, NY 10038  
(212) 962-1210
9. International Defense and Aid Fund  
P.O. Box 17  
Cambridge, MA 02138  
(617) 491-8343
10. Lutheran Human Relations  
Assoc. of America  
2703 N. Sherman Blvd.  
Milwaukee, WI 53210  
(414) 871-7300

# MULTI-MEDIA RESOURCES

Often pictures or films convey the message of life under apartheid in a powerful and impressive manner. New resources are being produced each year. We recommend:

- Cry For Freedom**, 1981, color, 21 minutes. This film is concerned about justice and human rights from a Christian perspective. It describes the torture and harassment of church members, and the church itself, by the South Africa army which continues its illegal occupation of Namibia in spite of the weight of world opinion. Produced by the Lutheran Church in America, it challenges us to answer the Namibian cry for freedom. Also available in VHS cassette.
- Last Grave at Dimbaza**, 1974, color 47 minutes. Although it is an old film, this is perhaps still the best single introduction to apartheid. Shot secretly inside South Africa, it reviews the full range of racial policies: the pass system, military force, segregation and inequalities in industry, housing, medical services, and education. It pays special attention to the destructive effects of the apartheid system on family life.
- Namibians in Exile**, 1983, 37 minutes, color video. This film, produced by the Holland Committee on Southern Africa, shows life in Namibian refugee camps in Angola. It illustrates how SWAPO attempts to meet the needs for food, housing, education and religious services for 90,000 Namibians. We see these people building for the future, training themselves and their children to assume leadership roles in a free Namibia.
- You Have Struck a Rock**, 1981, color, 28 minutes. This is the story of the resistance of South African women to the extension of the "pass laws". Until 1952, only black men were required to carry the passes; when the laws were changed to require women to carry passes, the women refused. For nearly ten years they resisted, while the government responded with harsher laws, violence and imprisonment. Only in 1962, with the Sharpville Massacre, the banning of political organizations, and the imprisonment of most of the leaders, was the government able to impose the pass system on women.
- Crossroads/South Africa**, color 50 minutes. This film provides an excellent historical background for the tragic events of May, 1986. Crossroads is an illegal squatters city, made up of families of black workers who refuse to be separated from their husbands. Instead, they built a community (20,000 when this film was made—perhaps 120,000 persons by 1986), complete with their own schools, community organizations, and a sense of pride and common purpose. For ten years the South Africa government tried to destroy Crossroads and forcibly relocate the people. In May, 1986, government sponsored violence in Crossroads and the surrounding areas led to the burning of the homes of 60,000 people. The government immediately moved in with bulldozers to destroy the remnants of Crossroads. Because of restrictions on press coverage, we will not have films of the destruction of Crossroads. This film perhaps stands as a memorial to the courageous spirit of the people of Crossroads.
- Six Days in Soweto**, 1978, color, 55 minutes. This film looks at the conditions that led unarmed Soweto school kids into confrontation with the guns, dogs, and tanks of the South African government—a protest that meant death for hundreds of young people. This uprising against slave-labor conditions and inadequate education marked, in June, 1976, a turning point in South African history.
- South Africa Belongs To Us**, 1980, color, either 35 minutes or 60 minutes. An intimate portrait of the lives of five typical women, *South Africa Belongs To Us* provides the first in-depth look at the economic and emotional burden borne by black women in South Africa. This film highlights the destructive impact of apartheid on women and family life.
- The Devil's Circle**, 1983, video cassette (VHS), 25 minutes. Filmed clandestinely in Namibia by a team of journalists and photographers from British television, this film is a sobering expose of the routine use of torture by the South African controlled police and army.
- Impressions: Namibia**, 1984, 35 minutes, color video. Produced by Barbara Fullerton, funded by the World Mission Task Force of the Ohio District (ALC), this is a report from an ALC Mission Observer team which visited South Africa and Namibia in October, 1984. The visit included conversations with representatives from government, church and SWAPO in Namibia. This video report, utilizing slides taken on the trip, provides an excellent discussion starter for congregations.
- Torture of a South African Pastor**, 1984, 24 minutes, color, video or film. This resource, produced by John Evenson for the Lutheran World Federation, is the first-hand account of the torture of Pastor T. Simon Farisani, a dean of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa. Farisani tells his story with a remarkable lack of bitterness, yet with a determination that the enormity of the violence of apartheid be made known to the outside world. The interview with Regina Farisani helps us imagine the fear and uncertainty of daily life under apartheid.
- Free Namibia!** 1978, color, 27 minutes. This film provides an overview of the impact of South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia. Under South Africa's rule, the black population has been relegated to arid "homelands" where they can find neither food nor work. Average life expectancy for blacks is 31 years; half of their children die before the age of five. This film captures the rituals of the affluent white settler society, some frighteningly reminiscent of those of the Nazis. This film exposes the multinational corporations as they work around the clock to extract Namibia's rich reserves of copper, diamonds and uranium—in direct defiance of United Nations restrictions.
- Witness to Apartheid**, 1986, 52 minutes, color, film or video, allows us to enter the townships and see for ourselves the violence of the South African system. It is an unforgettable film which allows you to meet the school children who face daily the whips and teargas and guns of the security forces.
- Namibia: Tell the World**, 1986, 52 minutes, color video. This new film shows how the Namibian people are working for their independence. In the face of increasingly brutal oppression, they continue to march, to demonstrate, to pray, and to struggle toward a free Namibia. Lutheran pastor, Zephaniah Kameeta, and other church leaders play a courageous part in the struggle of the people.
- Namibia: Africa's Last Colony**, 1984, 55 minutes, color video. Produced by the BBC, this video gives both historical perspective and a vivid description of the terror under which the Namibian people currently live. Nora Chase of the Council of Churches in Namibia is the narrator for this comprehensive look at the Namibian situation.

**Nelson and Winnie Mandela**, 58 minutes, film or video. This is a powerful film about the lives of two of South Africa's most courageous heroes. In many ways the film is Winnie's story, as she develops from a young social worker to a figure of strength and inspiration for women everywhere.

**Abaphuciwe—the Dispossessed**, 1980, color, 40 minutes. Abaphuciwe is a Zulu word meaning "those who have been taken by force." They are the Dispossessed—the millions of African people who have been heeded onto "bantustans"—hopelessly overcrowded and impoverished rural areas which serve as reservoirs for cheap labor, or dumping grounds for the old, the sick, the women and the children.

**The Discarded People**, 1981, color, 30 minutes. The South African government claims that the bantustans are independent states which will be the source of development for black South Africa. **The Discarded People** exposes the falsehood of this claim, and shows that the "reserves" are merely dumping grounds for black people. Filmed secretly in the Ciskei bantustan, the film depicts the disastrous results of the forced resettlement of black people to the barren, overpopulated, disease-ridden "homelands".

**South Africa: The White Laager**, 1980, color, 58 minutes. This is a powerful film dealing with the historical background of the Boer people of South Africa. Apartheid cannot be understood without a study of those who invented it—the white Afrikaners. Believing that they are divinely ordained to retain their racial purity, this white tribe has turned South Africa into an armed camp—a laager—prepared to defy the rest of the world.

**Generations of Resistance**, 52 minutes, color. The history of South Africa has been a mythology created by whites to support their own dominance. "Generations" begins the enormous task of uncovering a black history of South Africa. Combining interviews and rare historical footage, this film is a story of continuing resistance to white oppression.

**Namibia: A Case Study in Colonialism**, 1975, color, 20 minutes. This film reviews the period of German conquest and African resistance that led to the near elimination of the Herero, Nama, and Ovambo peoples. Excellent use of old photographs helps tell the story of early German oppression. The film explains how Namibia became a United Nations Trust Territory under South African occupation, and traces the development of contemporary Namibian resistance under the leadership of SWAPO.

These films may be rented through:

**National Namibia Concerns**  
860 Emerson  
Denver, CO 80218  
(303) 830-2774

**California Newsreel**  
630 Natoma Street  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
(415) 621-6196

**Namibia Concerns**  
Wartburg Seminary  
333 Wartburg Place  
Dubuque, IA 52001  
(319) 589-0326

Many of these films are available through the synod/district resource centers for the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America. Check local availability first!

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## BOOKS

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Many excellent books and pamphlets give background information on the situation in southern Africa. Others, written by South Africans and Namibians, bear witness to the suffering and to the courage of our sisters and brothers as they struggle for freedom and justice.

**Apartheid: The Facts**, produced by ID&A, 1983. A comprehensive handbook on the current situation in South Africa, covering the historical background, repression, economic factors, education, press, churches, prisons, security forces, the liberation movements.

**Namibia: The Facts**, produced by ID&A, 1980. A compilation of facts about life in Namibia under the illegal occupation of South Africa.

**Apartheid: South African Naziism**, by Rev. Sipo Mzimela, 1983. An expose of the striking similarities between the policies of South Africa and those of Nazi Germany, including a comparison of the role of the churches and the response of church people under both regimes.

**Walking on Thorns**, by Allan Boesak, 1984. The recurring theme of the seven sermons included in this book is that of Christian obedience, unafraid, uncompromising, and rooted in biblical faith.

**Why, O Lord**, by Zephaniah Kameeta, 1986. This book of psalms and sermons is born out of the suffering of apartheid, and the longing for liberation. Kameeta, one of the most courageous of Namibia's religious leaders, writes from the perspective of biblical faith which provides both the mandate and the courage to confront the structures of oppression.

**Namibia in the 1980s**, by the Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR) and the British Council of Churches, 1986. This book summarises the history of Namibia's exploitation and traces the development of SWAPO. Originally published in 1981, this updated version discusses the failure to implement UN Resolution 435, the current "interim government" and the role of the international community.

**This is Namibia: A Pictorial Introduction**, 1985. International Defense and Aid. Aimed specifically at school students or those with little knowledge of the situation, this book briefly describes the history and the current status of the Namibian struggle for independence.

**Hope and Suffering**, by Desmond Tutu, 1983. Nobel Peace Prize winner, Archbishop Desmond Tutu writes of his certain hope that liberation will come to South Africa, but reminds us that freedom and justice cannot be attained without anguish and suffering.

**Crying in the Wilderness**, by Bishop Desmond Tutu, 1982. An impressive collection of sermons, articles and press statements by Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa. In Tutu's writings, one sees the true situation in South Africa—not through the eyes of bitterness and despair, but through the eyes of one who "has a passion for peace and reconciliation as being the expression of Christian love", according to Bishop Trevor Huddleston.

**Apartheid is a Heresy**, edited by DeGruchy and Villa-Vicencio, 1983. The 1982 decision of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to declare apartheid a sin, and theological justification of it a heresy "means that apartheid is taken from its political framework and placed in the center of the life of the church," says Allan Boesak, South African theologian. Series of nine essays on this issue challenge church members to decide for or against the Gospel of Christ's reconciliation.

**Women Under Apartheid**, produced by ID&A, 1980. Shows the integral part that women play in the struggle for the liberation of South Africa.

**Children Under Apartheid**, produced by ID&A, 1980. A book which reveals the effects of apartheid on children.

**Nelson Mandela: The Struggle is My Life**, produced by ID&A, 1978. A collection of writings and speeches by this leader of the African National Congress, who is currently serving a life sentence for his role in the freedom struggle.

**You Have Struck a Rock: Women and Political Repression in South Africa**, produced by ID&A, 1980. Salutes the courage and determination of the women of South Africa as they struggle for freedom.

**This is Apartheid**, by International Defense and Aid Fund, 1978. Contains more than fifty photographs which reveal the brutality of apartheid.

**For Their Triumphs and For Their Tears**, by Hilda Bernstein, 1978. Shows how women have suffered from the cruelties imposed by the apartheid system—and how they have resisted.

**I Write What I Like**, by Aelred Stubbs, 1978. A collection of the writings of Steve Biko, leader of the Black Consciousness Movement, who was murdered while in police custody.

**Black Women Under Apartheid**, by ALCW, 1982. A resource booklet for an adult study/program/worship. Also contains resource listings and further study action suggestions.

**Apartheid: Statements and Actions of the ALC on South Africa and Namibia**, 1981.

**To Honour Women's Day**, 1981. Profiles of 30 leading women in the Southern African and Namibian liberation movements, published in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the women's pass law protests.

**A Dwelling Place of Our Own: The Story of the Namibian Nation**, by Randolph Vigne, 1975. The stirring account of the struggle of the people of Namibia for their freedom. Comprehensive, with an excellent introduction.

**Namibia: The Crisis in U.S. Policy Toward Southern Africa**, produced by TransAfrica and a coalition of church, labor, and private organizations, 1983. Comprehensive report on the negotiations surrounding implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 435, and the failure of the western nations to compel South Africa to comply.

**Battlefront Namibia**, by John Ya-Otto, 1981. John Ya-Otto tells his personal story of involvement in the fight against South African domination of his country.

**Portable Photo Exhibits** powerfully portray the struggle in poster size collections for display and study. Available for purchase from International Defense and Aid or American Committee on Africa. Available for loan from Namibia Concerns, Wartburg Seminary. (a) Southern Africa: The Imprisoned Society (b) Women Under Apartheid (c) Children Under Apartheid (d) Namibia in Struggle

Most of the books listed above are available through:

**National Namibia Concerns**

860 Emerson  
Denver, CO 80218  
(303) 830-2774

**American Committee on Africa**

198 Broadway  
New York, NY 10038  
(212) 962-1210

**International Defense and Aid Fund**

P.O. Box 17  
Cambridge, MA 02138  
(617) 491-8343

**Namibia Concerns**

333 Wartburg Place  
Dubuque, IA 52001  
(319) 589-0326

**THE AFRICA HOTLINE** is a telephone information service operated by the Washington Office on Africa, a church related lobbying group. Open 24 hours a day, the Hotline provides weekly updates on legislation dealing with southern Africa, and provides the names of key legislators to contact. (202) 546-0408.

This resource prepared in 1986 by National Namibia Concerns,  
860 Emerson, Denver, CO 80218. Price \$10.00 per 100 copies plus \$3.00 for postage and handling.  
To order extra copies of *Sources of Information*, please send check or money order to:  
National Namibia Concerns