



P.O.V.

Season 19

Discussion Guide

# Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela

A Film by Thomas Allen Harris



[www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov)



## Letter from the Filmmaker

New York, N.Y., 2006

### Dear Viewer,

#### *Bloemfontein*

I arrived in Bloemfontein, South Africa, on January 14, 2002, for the funeral of my stepfather, Benjamin Pule Leinaeng (Lee). It was my first time to Bloemfontein, a place I had grown up hearing about. Lee and I had a tumultuous relationship. For me, this 31-hour trip from San Diego to Bloemfontein was more of an obligation — to support my mother and say goodbye to Lee.

What I experienced was not at all what I had expected. I felt as if I had come home. Everywhere I went, people greeted me as Lee's eldest son and referred to him as my father. In Lee's home town, the concept of stepfather was an alien one. I painfully realized that I had come home too late to share it with the man who raised me. I was there to say goodbye to a father. Keeping myself behind my video camera was the only thing to hold back the unanticipated devastation of mourning.

During the six days of funeral services, testimonies and visits from friends and family, I learned more about Lee and how he had left South Africa with eleven other African National Congress colleagues to help build the ANC in exile. They were known as the "twelve who left Bloemfontein." Listening to the story of their exodus and exile, I was struck by the courage of these young men who left their close knit families to venture out into the unknown. It was a story I had heard before — as a child I used to listen as Lee shared reminiscences of home, the early years of the ANC's struggle to overturn Apartheid, how they left as a group and ended up in Tanzania. But it was different now, hearing with adult ears the familiar stories, only now more expanded, with new details and deeper insights, from the men with whom he had left.

#### *The Bronx*

Growing up in the United States in the 1970's, I was aware of the media portrayal of the ANC as a communist-terrorist organization. It was many years before the name "Nelson Mandela" would become the global face of resistance to a brutal regime. Regarded as political agitators, Lee and my mother would jokingly warn me that our telephone was most likely tapped. Lee's mission to liberate South



*Thomas Allen Harris, Director of  
"Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela."*  
Photo courtesy of Chimpanzee Productions, Inc.



## Letter from the Filmmaker

Africa seemed like an insurmountable challenge. As a child, I was torn. Each night I would pray to become invisible and fly to South Africa to fight the evil racists. Looking at a photograph of Lee and the eleven other men with whom he left South Africa, I imagined them to be Nelson Mandela's twelve disciples. At the same time, I could not bring myself to trust Lee. My biological father had been emotionally and physically abusive and after he and my mother divorced, he abandoned my younger brother and me. I promised myself never to let another man hurt me the way my father had. Throughout my adolescent years, I rebelled against Lee, finding fault with his foreign customs, his bouts of depression and his drinking.

### *Bloemfontein*

As Lee's comrades shared with me their own personal struggles with alienation, depression and homesickness during their 30-year exile, I gained an appreciation for the strength and stamina of these men and felt tremendous remorse for rejecting Lee as my father. I wanted to reconnect with him by way of the men who were bonded to him through a common political, historical and emotional journey.

It was only in the process of making this film that I realized just how much I was his son. He had come to the USA in 1967 to study journalism and become a political television journalist and thereby fulfill his mission to broadcast the message of the ANC to the world. I began my career as a television journalist producing public-affairs programs on public television and from there went on to produce several personal documentary features — all of which used super-8mm film that Lee shot of our family during my childhood in the Bronx and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. This film is a labor of love, an attempt to reach beyond the realm of death, to claim a father that I had wanted but had rejected in life.



*Thomas Allen Harris with his Family in the Bronx, NY (circa, 1977).*

Photo courtesy of Chimpanzee Productions, Inc.

### **Thomas Allen Harris**

Filmmaker, *Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela*



**Table of Contents**

**Credits, Acknowledgements**

**5** Introduction  
**6** Potential Partners  
**6** Key Issues  
**6** Event Ideas  
**7** Using this Guide  
**7** Planning an Event  
**8** Facilitating a Discussion  
**8** Finding a Facilitator  
**8** Preparing Yourself  
**9** Preparing the Group  
**10** Background Information  
**10** Timeline of Key Events in South Africa  
**13** The Twelve Disciples  
**16** Other People Featured in  
*Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela*  
**17** General Discussion Questions  
**18** Discussion Prompts  
**21** Taking Action  
**22** Resources  
**24** How to Buy the Film

**Writer**

Faith Rogow, PhD  
*Insighters Educational Consulting*

**Guide Producers**

Eliza Licht  
*Senior Manager, Community Engagement and Education, P.O.V.*

Shabnam Ahamed  
*Outreach and Development Assistant, P.O.V.*

Irene Villaseñor  
*Youth Views Manager, P.O.V.*

Jessica Lee  
*Intern, Community Engagement and Education, P.O.V.*

Content Reviewer: Cari Ladd

Design: Rafael Jiménez

Copy Editor: Kris Wilton

**Thanks to those who reviewed this guide:**

Thomas Allen Harris  
*Filmmaker, **Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela***

Woo Jung Cho  
*Producer, **Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela***

Rudean Leinaeng  
*Producer, **Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela***



## Introduction



In the wake of his stepfather's death, filmmaker Thomas Allen Harris embarks on a journey of reconciliation with the man who raised him as a son but whom he could never call father. The resulting feature-length (90-minute) documentary, ***Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela***, explores that autobiographical journey with emotion and insight.

Adding to the complexity of Harris' story is the fact that his stepfather, Benjamin Pule Leinaeng (Lee), was a part of the African National Congress' fledgling exile branch. The ANC was the political party at the forefront of the effort to dismantle apartheid in South Africa. So, as Harris recounts his personal story, he is also documenting the history of one of modern Africa's most significant political movements.

*The Twelve Disciples burn their passbooks, 1960, Bloemfontein, South Africa (Dramatic recreation). Photo courtesy of Chimpanzee Productions, Inc.*

Harris' stepfather was one of a small group of young men who went into exile in order to attract worldwide attention to the brutality that was South African apartheid. The media that Leinaeng created informs the film as Harris reaches behind the headlines to tell the stories of the everyday people whose work was so vital to the success of more familiar leaders like Nelson Mandela. We see their triumphs along with the prices they paid. In the process, ***Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela*** provides an opportunity for viewers to consider more deeply what it means to value freedom and build a democracy.



## Potential Partners

## Key Issues

*Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela* is well suited for use in a variety of settings and is especially recommended for use with:

- **Your local PBS station**
- **Groups that have discussed previous PBS and P.O.V. films relating to political resistance, social justice or parent/child relationships, including *No More Tears Sister*, *The Brooklyn Connection* and *Hardwood*.**
- **Groups focused on any of the issues listed to the right**
- **Legislators**
- **High school students**
- **Faith-based organizations and institutions**
- **Civic groups**
- **Academic departments and student groups at colleges, universities, community colleges and high schools**
- **Community organizations with a mission to promote education and learning, such as P.O.V.'s national partners Elderhostel Learning in Retirement Centers, members of the Listen Up! Youth Media Network or your local library.**

*Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela* is an excellent tool for outreach because it is both personal and political, current and historical. The film will be of special interest to people interested in the issues or topics below:

- **Africa**
- **African National Congress**
- **Apartheid**
- **Armed resistance**
- **Civil rights**
- **Family relationships**
- **Fathers and sons**
- **History**
- **Human rights**
- **Cultural identity**
- **Immigration**
- **Pan-African movement**
- **Political science**
- **Race**
- **Reconciliation**
- **Refugee issues**
- **Revolution**
- **Social justice**
- **South Africa**

## Event Ideas

Use a screening of *Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela* to:

- **Host an event where families can come together and discuss their histories and backgrounds.**
- **Kick off a teach-in about South Africa or celebrate the anniversary of Nelson Mandela's inauguration as South Africa's first democratically elected president.**
- **Convene a panel to discuss what people who are currently struggling to establish democracies can learn from the South African experience.**
- **Create a forum in which children of political activists can speak about their experience and where community members can offer support to the families of their activist leaders.**
- **Celebrate South African culture by learning more about traditional foods, clothing, celebrations, etc.**



## Using this Guide

**This guide is designed to help you use *Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela* as the centerpiece of a community event. It contains suggestions for organizing an event as well as ideas for how to help participants think more deeply about the issues in the film. The discussion questions are designed for a very wide range of audiences. Rather than attempt to address them all, choose one or two that best meet the needs and interests of your group.**

### Planning an Event

In addition to showcasing documentary film as an art form, screenings of P.O.V. films can be used to present information, get people interested in taking action on an issue, provide opportunities for people from different groups or perspectives to exchange views, or create space for reflection. Using the questions below as a planning checklist will help ensure a high-quality, high-impact event.

- **Have you defined your goals?** Set realistic goals with your partners. Will you host a single event or engage in an ongoing project? Being clear about your goals will make it easier to structure the event, target publicity and evaluate results.
- **Does the way you are planning to structure the event fit your goals?** Do you need an outside facilitator, translator or sign language interpreter? If your goal is to share information, are there local experts on the topic who should be present? How large an audience do you want? (Large groups are appropriate for information exchanges. Small groups allow for more intensive dialogue.)
- **Have you arranged to involve all stakeholders?** It is especially important that people be allowed to speak for themselves. If your group is planning to take action that affects people other than those present, how will you give voice to those not in the room?
- **Is the event being held in a space where all participants will feel equally comfortable?** Is it wheelchair accessible? Is it in a part of town that's easy to reach by various kinds of transportation? If you are bringing together different constituencies, is it neutral territory? Does the physical configuration allow for the kind of discussion you hope to have?
- **Will the set-up of the room help you meet your goals?** Is it comfortable? If you intend to have a discussion, can people see one another? Are there spaces to use for small breakout groups? Can everyone easily see and hear the film?
- **Have you scheduled time to plan for action?** Planning next steps can help people leave the room feeling energized and optimistic, even if the discussion has been difficult. Action steps are especially important for people who already have a good deal of experience talking about the issues on the table. For those who are new to the issues, just engaging in public discussion serves as an action step.



## Using this Guide

### Facilitating a Discussion

**Controversial topics often make for excellent discussions. By their nature, those same topics can also give rise to deep emotions and strongly held beliefs. As a facilitator, you can create an atmosphere where people feel safe, encouraged and respected, making it more likely that they will be willing to share their ideas openly and honestly. Here's how:**

### Preparing Yourself

**Identify your own hot-button issues.** View the film before your event and give yourself time to reflect so you aren't dealing with raw emotions at the same time that you are trying to facilitate a discussion.

**Be knowledgeable.** You don't need to be an expert on South Africa to lead an event, but knowing the basics can help you keep a discussion on track and gently correct misstatements of fact. In addition to the Background Information section below, you may want to take a look at the suggested Web sites and books in the Resources section on p.22.

**Be clear about your role.** You may find yourself taking on several roles for an event, including host, organizer or even projectionist. If you are also planning to serve as facilitator, be sure that you can focus on that responsibility and avoid distractions during the discussion. Keep in mind that being a facilitator is not the same as being a teacher. A teacher's job is to convey specific information. In contrast, a facilitator remains neutral, helping move the discussion along without imposing his or her views on the dialogue.

**Know your group.** Issues can play out very differently for different groups of people. Is your group new to the issue or have they dealt with it before? Factors like geography, age, race, religion and socioeconomic class can all have an impact on comfort levels, speaking styles and prior knowledge. Take care not to assume that all members of a particular group share the same point of view. If you are bringing together different segments of your community, we strongly recommend hiring an experienced facilitator.

### Who Should Facilitate?

You may or may not be the best person to facilitate, especially if you have multiple responsibilities for your event. If you are particularly invested in a topic, it might be wise to ask someone more neutral to guide the dialogue.

If you need to find someone else to facilitate, some university professors, human resource professionals, clergy and youth leaders may be specially trained in facilitation skills. In addition to these local resources, groups such as the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ) and the National Association for Community Mediation (NAFCM) may be able to provide or help you locate skilled facilitators. Be sure that your facilitator receives a copy of this guide well in advance of your event.



## Using this Guide

### Preparing the Group

**Consider how well group members know one another.** If you are bringing together people who have never met, you may want to devote some time at the beginning of the event for introductions.

**Agree to ground rules around language.** Involve the group in establishing some basic rules to ensure respect and aid clarity. Typically such rules include prohibiting yelling and the use of slurs and asking people to speak in the first person (“I think....”) rather than generalizing for others (“Everyone knows that...”).

**Ensure that everyone has an opportunity to be heard.** Be clear about how people will take turns or indicate that they want to speak. Plan a strategy for preventing one or two people from dominating the discussion. If the group is large, are there plans to break into small groups or partners, or should attendance be limited?

**Talk about the difference between dialogue and debate.** In a debate, participants try to convince others that they are right. In a dialogue, participants try to understand one another and expand their thinking by sharing viewpoints and listening actively. Remind people that they are engaged in a dialogue. This will be especially important in preventing a discussion from dissolving into a repetitive, rhetorical, political or religious debate.

**Encourage active listening.** Ask the group to think of the event as being about listening as well as discussing. Participants can be encouraged to listen for things that challenge as well as reinforce their own ideas. You may also consider asking people to practice formal “active listening,” where participants listen without interrupting the speaker, then re-phrase what was said to confirm that they have heard it correctly.

**Remind participants that everyone sees through the lens of his or her own experience.** Who we are influences how we interpret what we see. Everyone in the group may have a different view about the content and meaning of the film they have just seen, and all of them may be accurate. It can help people to understand one another’s perspectives if people identify the evidence on which they base their opinions as well as sharing their views.

**Take care of yourself and group members.** If the intensity level rises, pause to let everyone take a deep breath. You might also consider providing a safe space to “vent,” perhaps with a partner or in a small group of familiar faces. If you anticipate that your topic may upset people, be prepared to refer them to local support agencies or have local professionals present. Think carefully about what you ask people to share publicly, and explain things like confidentiality and whether or not press will be present.



## Background Information



### Timeline of Key Events in South Africa

**1910** – The Union of South Africa is formed after Dutch settlers are defeated by the British in the Boer War (1899–1902). The Constitution reserves political power for whites. The freedom of blacks is restricted by Pass laws and the Land Act.

**1912** – The African National Congress (ANC) is founded. The organization’s initial strategy is to engage in persuasion and diplomacy. In the following decade they would occasionally endorse strikes, but it would be several decades before the party adopts more radical tactics.

**1921** – The Communist Party is founded in South Africa as the first political party that is not racially based. Throughout the 1920s, increasingly restrictive laws are passed, preventing blacks from holding certain kinds of jobs and institutionalizing

the policy of paying blacks lower wages than white workers.

**1944** – The ANC Youth League is formed, led by young men like Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Oliver Tambo. They espouse African nationalism (including the notion that Africans could only be freed by their own efforts) and resistance strategies, such as strikes, boycotts, civil disobedience and union organizing.

**1948** – Apartheid is officially established. Elimination of general education for blacks and forced removal to “approved” townships follows.

*Old photo of protesters*

Photo courtesy of Chimpanzee Productions, Inc.



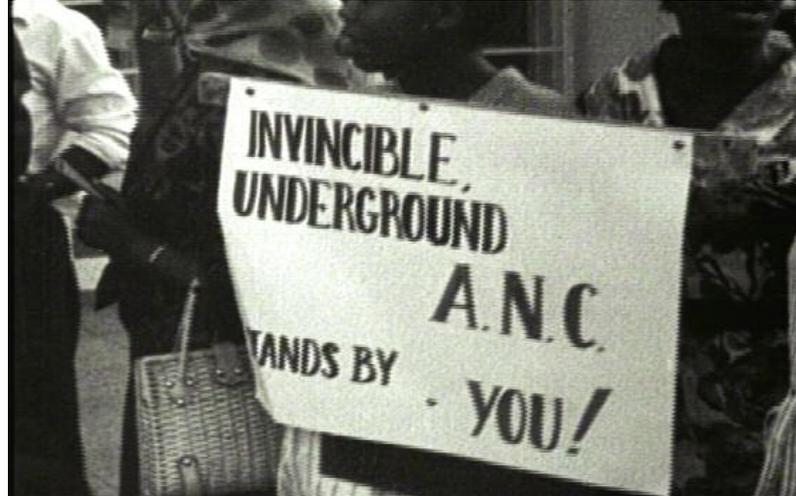
## Background Information

**1950** – The government bans communism.

**1950s** – The Defiance Campaign brings together many black and colored organizations in a coordinated campaign of civil disobedience.

**1959** – The opposition movement splits between those who advocate for black supremacy (Pan Africanist Congress) and those, like the ANC, who envision a non-racialist future.

**1960** – In what would come to be called the Sharpeville Massacre, police open fire on a group of peaceful black protestors, killing dozens. The government blamed the PAC and ANC for organizing the protest and officially ban them. Six months after Sharpeville, the “Twelve Disciples” leave the country for Dar es Salaam.



*Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 1961*

Photo courtesy of Chimpanzee Productions, Inc.



*Sharpeville killings, March 1960*

Photo courtesy of Chimpanzee Productions, Inc.

**1961** – The ANC officially takes up arms against the South African government, forming the Umkhonto we Sizwe (Zulu for “Spear of the Nation”), better known as MK.

**1963** – Nelson Mandela is arrested. Violent and nonviolent protests would escalate throughout the 1970s in response to worsening conditions for blacks.



*Oliver Tambo*

Photo courtesy of Chimpanzee Productions, Inc.



## Background Information



*Release Mandela commercial*  
Photo courtesy of Chimpanzee Productions, Inc.

**1990** – The last apartheid president, F.W. de Klerk, lifts the ban on liberation movements, most notably the African National Congress, releases ANC leader Nelson Mandela from prison and reluctantly begins negotiations for a new political system.

**1994** – South Africa conducts its first-ever one-person-one-vote election. Winning more than 60% of the 22 million ballots cast, Nelson Mandela is elected president. His ANC party still controls the South African government.

**1995** – Mandela appoints Nobel Peace Prize winner Bishop Desmond Tutu to head a “Truth and Reconciliation” Commission to help heal the wounds of apartheid. The commission’s work gives voice to victims, documents atrocities

and assigns responsibility while making way for offers of amnesty.

**1999** – Thabo Mbeki assumes the presidency when Mandela steps down. The Mbeki government continues to face significant challenges navigating between ANC’s original nonracialist vision and its desire to provide blacks and coloreds with the benefits so long denied to them. [Note: The term “Colored” was one of the official racial categories used by the South African government during apartheid — the term denotes a person of mixed race. Coloreds were also subject to South Africa’s apartheid laws; they worked together with blacks and Asians to dismantle the system and fight for freedom.]



## Background Information



*Archival photo of The Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela.  
Photo courtesy of Chimpanzee Productions, Inc.*

### The Twelve Disciples

**Billy Mokhonoana (Marakas)** was the head of the ANC Youth League. After the Sharpeville Massacre, Mokhonoana burned his pass, went underground and was the first to leave the country. He organized safe passage for the rest to follow. Mokhonoana died in London in 1962 under mysterious circumstances, reportedly while riding his motorcycle.

**Selebano Mathlape (Thlaps)** went from Tanganyika (modern-day Tanzania) to study economics in Yugoslavia, East Germany and England. He worked in Holland, where he started the Economic Research Training for Post-Apartheid South Africa Institute. Until he passed away in 2005, he was chair of the Free State Development Corporation and political advisor to the Premier of the Free State.

**Moses Medupe (Dups)** went from Tanganyika to Yugoslavia, where he studied economics. As director of the ANC Staff Furniture project, he produced and sold furniture to raise funds for the ANC. In 1992 he returned to Bloemfontein, where he was deputy director of public works in the provincial government. He passed away in early 2006.

**Benjamin Pule Leinaeng (Lee)** was the filmmaker's stepfather. From Tanganyika, Leinaeng was sent to East Germany to study journalism for one year, then returned to Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, where he worked in the publicity department of the ANC. He became a founding member and the editor of *Spotlight*, a weekly ANC bulletin, and *SA Freedom News*. In 1967 he went to the United States on a scholarship to study at Lincoln University



## Background Information

and then Temple University. He received a master's degree from New York University in 1976. In New York City he helped establish the ANC Mission at the United Nations, served as chairperson of the ANC chapter in New York State and later became acting chairperson of the regional political committee of the ANC in the U.S. Leinaeng was a staff member of the UN's Anti-Apartheid Unit, for which he translated and broadcast anti-apartheid programs in Tswana, his native language, to the front-line states in Southern Africa. He returned to Bloemfontein to live in 1995 and went into the construction business with his brother. Leinaeng died in January 2000.

**Joseph Shuping Coopage (Coaps)** ended up spending most of his life in the United States. From Tanganyika he left to attend college in Germany and later at Lincoln University and Temple University in the United States. He worked for many years at the ANC Mission at the UN, traveling around the United States giving speeches and raising awareness of the anti-apartheid struggle. He died in Philadelphia in 1995. His body was flown back to Bloemfontein to be buried.

**Theodore Motobi (Motobi)** went from Tanganyika to Cuba for military training and to study economics. He returned to Africa and worked for MK, the military wing of the ANC, as chief of logistics in Zambia. He contracted tuberculosis and died in Angola in 1980.

**Dr. Pule Matjoa (Pule)** worked in the Ministry of Communications in Tanganyika and then went to Cuba for military training. In Cuba he became a dentist. In 1972 he returned to Dar es Salaam, where he was medical officer in the ANC camps for six years. Then he went to Lesotho, where he joined the Ministry of Health as chief dentist for the entire country, while also serving on the ANC's Security Council. He returned to South Africa in 1992 and worked for the Ministry of Health until he retired in 2005. He still has a small private practice.

**General Percy Mokonopi (Percy)** is the only living disciple who never returned to or visited Bloemfontein. From Tanganyika, he went to Cuba for military training and education, but soon after he arrived, he left Cuba to work with ANC's military wing in Africa. He was the ANC representative in Angola and later served



*Lee's dormroom at Lincoln University*  
Photo courtesy of Chimpanzee Productions, Inc.

on the Helsinki World Peace Council. He returned to South Africa in 1992, settling in Pretoria and becoming general of the South African police forces after independence. His family excommunicated him after he "skipped" the country. After the director's interview with him in 2002, he went missing and is presumed dead.

**Mathew Mokgele (Beans)** went from Tanganyika to Cuba for military training. After seeing his boxing talent, the Cubans began training him for the Olympics. Following an injury, he returned to East Africa, where he joined the military wing of the ANC. He returned to Bloemfontein in 1991 and lives in the house in which he was raised.

**Peter Swartz (Peter)** was the only Colored of the group and an active member of the ANC in the Colored community of Bloemfontein. [Note: The term "Colored" was one of the official racial categories used by the South African government during apartheid — the term denotes a person of mixed race. Colored were also subject to South Africa's apartheid laws; they worked together with blacks and Asians to dismantle the system and fight for freedom). Peter made two aborted attempts to leave South Africa before joining the Twelve, but had been arrested and sent back. For this reason he was well known to the South



## Background Information



*Disciples in US*

Photo courtesy of Chimpanzee Productions, Inc.

African authorities. The third time he left, he met up with the Twelve en route to Dar es Salaam, where he attended Kivukoni College, and then went to the United Kingdom, where he studied at the London School of Economics. He disappeared in London in 1965, never to be seen or heard from again. In response to persistent police harassment, his family in Bloemfontein destroyed all of his personal items, including photographs.

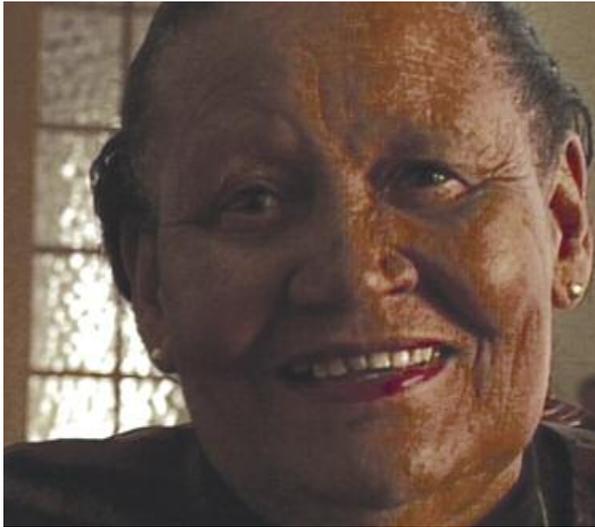
**Bethuel Setai (Setai)** went from Tanganyika to the United States in 1962 to attend Lincoln University. He later received a Ph.D. in economics from Columbia University and helped set up an ANC office in New York City. He taught at the University of California Santa Cruz, and at Lincoln University. In 1991 he returned to South Africa and now works as a consultant to the South African government.

**Mochubela Seekoe (Wesi)** went from Tanganyika to Cuba for military and academic training, by way of Khartoum, Sudan, where he met and spent a week with Nelson Mandela (as did the others who went to Cuba). He joined MK (the military wing of the ANC) and was ANC representative in Dar es Salaam until 1971, when he was sent to the USSR to study chemistry. He stayed in Russia for 10 years to get his Ph.D. In 1980 he went to Lusaka and then in 1983 went to the southern African country of Lesotho on diplomatic missions for the ANC. In 1989 he came to St. Louis to teach and do research and in 1998, he returned to South Africa. Until 2005 he was the South African ambassador to Russia.



## Background Information

### Other People Featured in *Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela*



**Isabella Winkie Direko** was the group's teacher when they went into exile. Born in the Free State, she started her career as a secondary school teacher at Bantu High School and, after many years of distinguished service, became the principal, serving from 1985 to 1994. In 1994, she was appointed by the new ANC government to be a Member of Parliament. In June 1999, she was selected to be the premier of the Free State Province and served in that post until April 2004, when she returned to serve in Parliament.



**Rudean Leinaeng** is a former chemistry professor at Bronx Community College of the City University of New York and the mother of the filmmaker. In the mid-seventies, she traveled to Dar es Salaam, along with her two young sons, Thomas and Lyle, and taught science there for two years. In 1976 she married Benjamin Pule Leinaeng, an ANC activist in exile, and became active in the ongoing anti-apartheid struggle. Leinaeng also worked with Women for Racial and Economic Equality, a multi-racial, working-class organization, in their campaigns for human and women's rights, racial justice and peace. She now lives in Bloemfontein and the Bronx, New York. *Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela* is the first film that she has produced.

Photos courtesy of Chimpanzee Productions, Inc.

© American Documentary, Inc.



## General Discussion Questions

Immediately after the film, you may want to give people a few quiet moments to reflect on what they have seen. If the mood seems tense, you might want to pose a general question and give people some time to themselves to jot down or think about their answers before opening the discussion.

Unless you think participants are so uncomfortable that they can't engage until they have had a break, don't encourage people to leave the room between the film and the discussion. If you save your break for an appropriate moment during the discussion, you won't lose the feeling of the film as you begin your dialogue.

One way to get a discussion going is to pose a general question, such as:

- **If you could ask anyone in the film a single question, who would you ask and what would you ask them?**
- **Did anything in this film surprise you? If so, what? Why was it surprising?**
- **What insights, inspiration or new knowledge did you gain from this film?**
- **Two months from now, what do you think you will remember from this film and why?**



*"Boycott Potatoes"*

Photo courtesy of Chimpanzee Productions, Inc.



## Discussion Prompts

### Political Journeys

- If you were facing the kind of future that these young men faced under apartheid, what would you do? Would you be willing to make the same sacrifices that they did? Why or why not?
- Thlaphs says, "The young people must always remember that there is no today without yesterday. And there is no tomorrow without today." What do you think young South Africans can learn from the lives of the "disciples"? What did you learn?
- In your view, are the "disciples" heroes? Why or why not?
- Several of the disciples received military training in Cuba and many ANC members had associations with South Africa's communist party. Do you think such ties hurt or hindered their cause?
- The disciples and other members of the ANC viewed themselves and were seen by many others as freedom fighters. What is your idea of a freedom fighter? Can fighting for freedom ever go to an extreme? How are these men similar to or different from freedom fighters and terrorists today?
- ANC leader Oliver Tambo said, "What we want in South Africa is that our humanity should be acknowledged, so that those who are ruling in that country should pay some respect to the concept of human dignity." How would you define what constitutes "human dignity"? Who in your community lives with dignity? What might you do to ensure that everyone lives with dignity?
- Lee studied and worked in the media. Why was that work important to the ANC? Why do you think it took more than two decades after the official imposition of apartheid for the American press to cover South Africa?



*"End Apartheid Executions!" sign*  
Photo courtesy of Chimpanzee Productions, Inc.

- Lee says of his initial experience in the United States, "In America it's a very covert racism, in South Africa it's overt." What do you think he meant by "covert racism"? How would you describe racism in the United States? What do you do in response to the types of racism that you see?
- What connections, parallels and differences do you see between the U.S. civil rights struggle and the South African anti-apartheid struggle? What about intersections with independence struggles in other nations in Africa or elsewhere?
- The intention of the ANC was to be non-racialist or to make race irrelevant, not to substitute discrimination against whites for discrimination against blacks. What are the obstacles to achieving that goal? What might government, civic groups, religious groups or schools do to help the formerly disenfranchised overcome their anger? How could they reverse the economic and social gains garnered from years of privilege and discrimination without it feeling like they are taking away from whites to give to blacks?



## Discussion Prompts



- The film depicts the disciples as being filled with youthful idealism. Given the circumstances in which they lived, what were the sources of that idealism? Where do you see idealism today? Would you label yourself as idealistic? What role does idealism play in social-justice movements?

### Personal Journeys

- How do you interpret the meaning of the word “disciples” in the film’s title?
- Setai describes his desire to return to South Africa by saying, “You feel a thirst that even water cannot quench. And I am sure that if you are caught alone, you have a groan that has no sound.” Describe the places to which you feel deeply attached. How would you describe the attachment? What creates those attachments?

*Archival photo of The Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela.*  
Photo courtesy of Chimpanzee Productions, Inc.

- The boys who left Bloemfontein ended up being gone for more than thirty years. What did being in exile cost them in terms of spirit, health and well-being?
- Eventually, seven of the original group returned. What lessons do their experiences offer in terms of retaining long-distance ties to community and culture? How is cultural identity maintained once you are away from your homeland?
- As a child, what did Harris need from a father figure that he did not get from his stepfather? What role did Lee’s political work and experiences play in the kind of father he was? How do political leaders balance parenting with politics?



## Discussion Prompts



*Lee and Rudean in traditional dress*

Photo courtesy of Chimpanzee Productions, Inc.

- Lee says that “once you have been a political animal it is hard for you to forget that you have to do certain things that are necessary for you to do to enhance the struggle...most of our lives have been guided by political atmosphere at home.” His wife, Rudean, observes, “my personal life, my political life, my social life, was all involved in terms of the struggle.” What does it look like when people make the political personal? How are your political beliefs reflected or expressed in your day-to-day life?
- Many of the “disciples” sought to pursue higher education and used scholarship opportunities as a means to make their way from one country to another. How did education enhance their contribution to the ANC? How does education factor into political struggles?

- The filmmaker says, “Every time you cross a border, there is something you lose and something you gain.” What do you think he means?
- From what you see in the film, what did the filmmaker learn from his journey to understand Lee’s life? What did you learn from his insights?



## Taking Action



*March against Apartheid*

Photo courtesy of Chimpanzee Productions, Inc.

- Study and report on South Africa as a model for other nations struggling to establish themselves as democracies. Identify 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 help improve race relations.
- Using the United Nation's Declaration of Human Rights (available at <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>) as a yardstick, compare South Africa's track record on human rights since 1994 with the track record of the United States. Find human rights organizations in your community and consider how you might support their work.
- Investigate current U.S. and World Bank policy on South Africa. How do current policies aid or hinder South Africa's

attempt to fulfill the vision of the twelve disciples? Share your vision of what the policies should be in a letter to your elected representatives or leaders at the World Bank.

- Hold a "get out the vote" event at which guests who lived under apartheid talk about what it was like to vote for the first time and what the right to vote means to them. In addition, you could cosponsor a voter-registration day.
- Study the work of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Determine which of their methods could help heal wounds in your community. Pull together a coalition to implement the relevant procedures.



## Resources

### WEBSITES

#### The film

**P.O.V.'s *Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela* Web site**  
[www.pbs.org/pov/twelvedisciples](http://www.pbs.org/pov/twelvedisciples)

The *Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela* companion Web site offers a behind-the-scenes look at the making of the film, links to articles, Web sites and downloadable discussion guides and lesson plans, streaming video of the trailer and ample opportunities for viewers to “talk back” and talk to each other about the film, and the following special features:

#### TIMELINE

##### AN ACTIVIST'S LIFE

Benjamin Pule “Lee” Leinaeng dedicated his life to becoming a broadcast journalist in the service of South African liberation. View a timeline of major milestones in Lee’s life and apartheid in South Africa. (includes expandable images and audio mp3s).

#### PRODUCTION JOURNAL

##### CREATING A HYBRID FILM

Dramatic re-enactments were used in *Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela* to close gaps where documentary footage was missing. The result was a hybrid film of drama and documentary. Thomas Allen Harris talks about the production process for the recreated scenes.

### What’s Your P.O.V.?

*P.O.V.’s online Talking Back Tapestry is a colorful, interactive representation of your feelings about **Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela**. Listen to other P.O.V. viewers talk about the film and add your thoughts by calling 1-800-688-4768. [www.pbs.org/pov/talkingback.html](http://www.pbs.org/pov/talkingback.html)*

#### SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY ONLINE

[www.sahistory.org.za](http://www.sahistory.org.za)

A foundation-funded project of South Africa’s Department of Education, this Web site includes detailed historical chronologies, a history of the ANC, lesson plans and much more.

#### AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

[www.anc.org.za](http://www.anc.org.za)

The official Web site of the African National Congress (ANC) provides a rich collection of historical documents as well as links to current South African government, news and political sites.

#### BBC NEWS: COUNTRY PROFILE: SOUTH AFRICA

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country\\_profiles/1071886.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1071886.stm)

The BBC provides general encyclopedia-type information about South Africa, including helpful links to major South African media outlets.

#### NPR: SOUTH AFRICA, 10 YEARS LATER

[www.npr.org/news/specials/mandela/](http://www.npr.org/news/specials/mandela/)

This NPR site, developed to mark the 10-year anniversary of South African’s democracy, includes an audio history of Nelson Mandela’s life and work, as well as links to a wide variety of documents and commentary.



## Resources



*President Julius Nyerere and Oliver Tambo*  
Photo courtesy of Chimpanzee Productions, Inc.

### **PBS: THE ONLINE NEWSHOUR**

[www.pbs.org/newshour](http://www.pbs.org/newshour)

Doing a search for "South Africa" on the Web site of PBS's *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* will provide links to more than a decade worth of news stories on the country.

### **SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT**

[www.gov.za](http://www.gov.za)

The official Web site of the South African government includes a wide range of information about the country and its people.

### **SOUTH AFRICA'S TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION**

[www.info.gov.za/otherdocs/2003/trc/foreword.pdf](http://www.info.gov.za/otherdocs/2003/trc/foreword.pdf)

This downloadable file contains the official report of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.



## How to Buy the Film

To purchase a copy of *Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela*, for home use, please contact: Chimpanzee Productions  
 Email: [info@chimpanzeeproductions.com](mailto:info@chimpanzeeproductions.com) · Web: [www.chimpanzeeproductions.com](http://www.chimpanzeeproductions.com)

To purchase a copy for educational or institutional use, contact: California Newsreel  
 Phone: 1 (877) 811-7495 · Web: [www.newsreel.org](http://www.newsreel.org)



Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and entering its 19th season on PBS, the award-

winning P.O.V. series is the longest-running series on television to feature the work of America's best contemporary-issue independent filmmakers. Airing Tuesdays at 10 p.m., June through October, with primetime specials during the year, P.O.V. has brought over 250 award-winning documentaries to millions nationwide, and now has a Webby Award-winning online series, *P.O.V.'s Borders*. Since 1988, P.O.V. has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent nonfiction media to build new communities in conversation about today's most pressing social issues. More information about P.O.V is available online at [www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov).

### P.O.V. Community Engagement and Education

P.O.V. provides Discussion Guides for all films as well as curriculum-based P.O.V. Lesson Plans for select films to promote the use of independent media among varied constituencies. Available free online, these originally produced materials ensure the ongoing use of P.O.V.'s documentaries with educators, community workers, opinion leaders and general audiences nationally. P.O.V. also works closely with local public-television stations to partner with local museums, libraries, schools and community-based organizations to raise awareness of the issues in P.O.V.'s films.

Front cover photo:

*The Twelve Disciples in Dar-Es-Salaam, circa 1962.*

Photo courtesy of Chimpanzee Productions, Inc.

Front cover corner photo:

*Nelson Mandela speaking at Yankee Stadium, 1990.*

Photo courtesy of Chimpanzee Productions, Inc.

Main pages corner photo:

*Lee as a TV producer/journalist.*

Photo courtesy of Chimpanzee Productions, Inc.

### P.O.V. Interactive

[www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov)

P.O.V.'s award-winning Web department produces our Web-only showcase for interactive storytelling, *P.O.V.'s Borders*. It also produces a Web site for every P.O.V. presentation, extending the life of P.O.V. films through community-based and educational applications, focusing on involving viewers in activities, information and feedback on the issues. In addition, [www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov) houses our unique Talking Back feature, filmmaker interviews and viewer resources, and information on the P.O.V. archives as well as myriad special sites for previous P.O.V. broadcasts.

P.O.V. is a project of American Documentary, Inc. Major funding for P.O.V. is provided by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, the Ford Foundation, PBS and public television viewers. Funding for P.O.V.'s Community Engagement activities and the Diverse Voices Project is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. P.O.V. is presented by a consortium of public television stations, including KCET/Los Angeles, WGBH/Boston and WNET/New York. Cara Mertes is executive director of American Documentary | P.O.V.

### American Documentary, Inc.

[www.americandocumentary.org](http://www.americandocumentary.org)

American Documentary, Inc. (AmDoc) is a multimedia company dedicated to creating, identifying and presenting contemporary stories that express opinions and perspectives rarely featured in mainstream media outlets. AmDoc is a catalyst for public culture, developing collaborative strategic engagement activities around socially relevant content on television, on-line and in community settings. These activities are designed to trigger action, from dialogue and feedback to educational opportunities and community participation.



**A Great Nation  
Deserves Great Art**

