



## Goodbye Bafana Educational Resource

### Important areas covered:

- South African society after the Second World War.
- Political beliefs of the National Party.
- Making the apartheid state, 1948-1958.
- Apartheid in action in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s.



### South Africa - 1968

*Twenty-five million black people are ruled by a minority of four million white people under the brutal Apartheid regime of the Nationalist Party Government. Black people have no vote, no land rights, no rights to freedom of movement, to own a business, to housing or education. Determined to retain power, whites ban all black opposition organisations, forcing their leaders into exile or imprisoning them for life on Robben Island.*

James Gregory, a typical white Afrikaner because of his beliefs, regards blacks as sub-human. Having grown up on a farm in the Transkei, he learned to speak Xhosa at an early age. This makes him an ideal choice to become the warder in charge of Mandela and his comrades on Robben Island. After all, Gregory speaks their language and can spy on them. However, the plan backfires. Through Mandela's influence, Gregory's allegiance gradually shifts from the racist government to the struggle for a free South Africa.

Goodbye Bafana tracks the unlikely but profound relationship between these two men. Through their unique friendship, we witness not only Gregory's growing awareness of man's inhumanity to man, but South Africa's evolution from Apartheid to a vibrant democracy.

The story, which documents how Mandela became the most inspirational political figure of the modern world, poses the questions: Who is the prisoner? And who sets whom free?

### Interview with Billie August, Director of Goodbye Bafana.

#### **Can you tell us a little about the story of Goodbye Bafana? What does it tell us about today?**

Our main character, James Gregory, arrives on Robben Island in the late sixties. He's a simple man with no education, who just wants to be the perfect warder. He's an ardent supporter of the Apartheid system, and believes that Blacks should be second-class citizens. He gets a job in the censorship office because he speaks Xhosa, (the native language) and subsequently comes into daily contact with Mandela. He sees Mandela as the worst terrorist in the world, but because Mandela is so bright and charismatic, James slowly starts to develop some interest in him and his ideas of a free and democratic South Africa.

Half way through the story, the system decides to send James away from Robben Island and to Cape Town. But having developed this very unique relationship, Mandela demands James Gregory be put in charge of him again, and as Mandela is moved around to various different prisons, James goes with him. Our story ends in 1990, when Mandela is released. By then they have spent more than two decades together! The extraordinary thing is that James really does change his fundamental beliefs because of his relationship with Mandela. He becomes living proof of Mandela's ideas about our essential goodness and the human capacity for self-transformation.



It's an important story, not only for South Africa -- it demonstrates the importance of reconciliation for the entire world. I believe that now that there's even more conflict than ever, reconciliation is the only way we can survive.

**The film spans almost two decades. What did you know about Mandela in the 60s, 70s, and 80s?**

I think very few people were aware of Mandela in the 60s, but of course during the late 70s and 80s when there was the great campaign to free Mandela, people became aware and he became the world symbol for a free and democratic South Africa. It amazes me that after 27 years behind bars he still was able to say, 'For this country to survive, we have to forgive each other, we have to understand each other. Reconciliation is the most important thing.' If it hadn't been for him, there would have been civil war in South Africa.



**Questions**

1. From watching the film, can you describe the treatment of black South Africans in the 1960s and 1970s?
2. We saw James Gregory talking to his family about the prisoners at the beginning of the film. What was the attitude of his family towards black people? Is this attitude representative of other white families at this time?
3. James Gregory hid his children when the prisoners walked past, as they were not allowed to see children. What does this tell us about the treatment of prisoners and people's views on them?
4. Mandela asked Gregory if he had read the Freedom Charter after he referred to it as 'Extermination of the whites'. Why had many white people never read the Freedom Charter?
5. In what ways were the lives of Africans changed by the policy of Apartheid in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s?
6. Why did opposition to Apartheid grow during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s in South Africa?
7. What can you learn from the film about the National Party's policy of Apartheid?
8. The Apartheid was opposed by many people in South Africa and in Britain. In the film, how did members of the National Party react to international pressure to release Mandela?
9. How did Gregory and his family's view of Mandela change during the course of the film? Why was this?
10. How useful is the Goodbye Bafana to understand the effects that the Apartheid had upon South Africans?