



# The Power of One

by Bryce Courtenay

## Reading Schedule:

Chapters 1-3	pages 3-51	Due: Thurs., 30 June
Chapters 4-6	pages 52-101	Due: Thurs., 7 July
Chapters 7-10	pages 102-206	Due: Thurs., 14 July
Chapters 11-15 (end of Book 1)	pages 207-320	Due: Thurs., 21 July
Chapters 16 -22 (end of Book 2)	pages 323-457	Due: Thurs., 28 July
Chapters 23 - end	pages 461-513	Due: Thurs., 4 August

**Assignments:** For each of the six assigned reading sections, you will be asked to type and upload your written responses (save them as an .rtf file) to the weekly drop boxes set up for you on our Angel site. You will also be asked to develop your responses into weekly blog posts. For both types of responses you will focus on the questions, connections, and interpretations that the reading raised for you. This online component is not only a place for you to interact with the text and start to develop your interpretations, but it is also a space to collaborate with your classmates, helping all of us better understand the intricacies of the text.

## The Power of One

### Study Guide

#### Context :

Much of *The Power of One* is based on Bryce Courtenay's own life. Courtenay was born in 1933 in South Africa. He was raised amidst black South Africans in an isolated homestead in the Lebombo Mountains. At five years of age, he was sent to a boarding school, which was a mixture between a reform school and an orphans' home. Here he learned how to box in order to survive. He then moved to Barberton in the North Eastern part of South Africa and met a German music teacher called Doc, who was perpetually drunk. Courtenay and Doc spent much time wandering in the African bush together. Courtenay attended a prestigious private high school, and then studied journalism at an English university. He was banned from returning to South Africa since he had initiated a weekend school for black people at his high school. He fell in love with an Australian woman, Benita, while studying in England and he followed her to Sydney, where they were married. They now have three sons and two grandsons. Courtenay began to write at the age of fifty-five, after a long and highly successful career in advertising. *The Power of One*, published in 1989, was the first of his many best-selling novels. He has written two other novels about South Africa-the sequel to *The Power of One*, called *Tandia*, and a short novel called *The Night Country*. He has written three novels set in Australia-*The Potato Factory*, *Jessica*, and *April Fool's Day*. *April Fool's Day* is a tribute to his son Damon, who died of Haemophilia. Courtenay has even written a book set in Russia, *The Family Frying Pan*. His latest novel, *Smoky Joe's Café* is soon to be in bookstores.

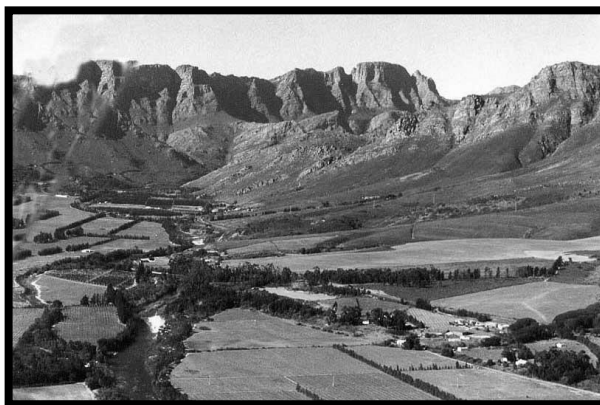
The political background of *The Power of One* is unmistakably World War II and the beginning of the apartheid era in South Africa. Although the term 'apartheid' was only coined in 1948, white supremacy existed on a wide scale in South Africa long before. The first half of the 1900s was characterized by the segregation of different racial and socio-economic groups. The wealthy, technologically sophisticated British South Africans and the less well-off Afrikaner farmers or "boers" were separated; and the various black tribes of South Africa and all whites in positions of power were

also kept apart. Conflict had existed between the British and the Afrikaners since the time of the Anglo-Boer War, which was fought between 1899 and 1902. An army of 500,000 British fought against a clan of 87,000 Boers. Although the Boers won some of the earlier battles, they ultimately lost to the British, who created the world's first concentration camps, in which 26,000 Boers died. Fourteen thousand black people died in separate camps formed by the British. The resultant hatred between the Boers and the British grew into a political split in 1914: the Afrikaner Nationalists formed their own party called the National Party (NP) while the British continued to lead the ruling South Africa Party (SAP).



During World War I, the NP supported Germany, while the SAP supported the Allies. This increased tensions. Economic instability caused by the Great Depression in 1934 compelled the two parties to reunite as the United Party (UP), but by the late 1930s (when *The Power of One* begins) Afrikaner Nationalism was awakening again. D.F. Malan formed the Purified National Party, which was closely linked to the ex-

parliamentary, radical group called the Oxwagon Guard. The Oxwagon Guard shared Hitler's Nazi beliefs in racial purity. Although the SAP initiated some racist laws before the 1930s (such as the Land Act of 1913, which forbade black people from buying land outside of specific areas, and the Urban Areas Act of 1923, which prevented black people from living in towns where they were not needed by whites), it was D.F. Malan's National Party that began to escalate the racist laws. During the war, however, cheap black labor was in demand in the cities, and the laws were less strenuous. In the 1948 government elections, Jan Smuts and his United Party lost and D.F. Malan and the Nationalists seized power. D.F. Malan began to institutionalize his brainchild called 'apartheid' ('apartness' in Afrikaans), which was advertised as a way of helping each South African race to develop independently. This was merely a front for a brutal and sinister regime which gave whites complete dominion over South Africa, and forced black people (who made up 87 percent of the population) to live in a mere 13 percent of the land. During the 1950s, a number of laws set the apartheid system in motion. In 1950, the Group Areas Act made it illegal for whites and blacks to live together in residential areas. The pass laws introduced a nine o' clock curfew for black South Africans, and forced them to carry passes with them at all times. Lack of a pass could justify arrest. It was only towards the end of the 1980s, due to the efforts of F.W. de Klerk and Nelson Mandela that apartheid began to be dismantled. The Nationalists essentially dominated the country for fifty years, treating not only its black citizens, but also its Indian and "colored" citizens with extreme violence and brutality.



More information can be found at: [www.brycecournenay.com](http://www.brycecournenay.com)

# Apartheid in South Africa

Apartheid and the People of South Africa		
	Blacks	Whites
Population	19 million	4.5 million
Land Allocation	13 percent	87 percent
Share of National Income	< 20 percent	75 percent
Ratio of average earnings	1	14
Minimum taxable income	360 rands	750 rands
Doctors/population	1/44,000	1/400
Infant mortality rate	20% (urban) 40% (rural)	2.7%
Annual expenditure on education per pupil	\$45	\$696
Teacher/pupil ratio	1/60	1/22

Figure 1: Disproportionate Treatment circa 1978. Source: [Leo80]

Translated from Afrikaans, apartheid means 'apartness'. The term is used to describe the legalized racist policy of the National Party (NP) between 1948 and (officially) 1994. Its roots can be found in South Africa's earlier policies of segregation. Apartheid went further than segregation in formally regulating racial classification, relations, and divisions. It saw black people as backward and uncivilized, and needed to be kept apart from white people. The only relationship that black people were allowed to have with white people was one in which they served them. Black people were discriminated against in almost every sphere of life. Racist laws dictated where and how they could live, travel, work, go to school, marry and socialize.

The basic philosophy of apartheid was simple. Although South Africa was a unitary state, the Nationalists argued that the people did not constitute a single nation but was made up of four race groups, namely white, black, Coloured and Indian. These races were further divided into 13 'nations'. White people comprised English and Afrikaans language groups. The black population was divided into 10 ethnic groups. This made the white race the largest one in the country. The NP justified the racism as necessary, supporting its view with evidence of conflicts between races and cultures around the world. It justified the discrimination using Christian theology and racist theories of white superiority and black inferiority.

## How Did Apartheid Affect Peoples' Lives?

Apartheid law was divided into two main groups, namely *petty* apartheid and *grand* apartheid. The first petty laws aimed to regulate everyday life in racist ways, to create a racially divided and unequal way of life for South Africans. Examples of petty apartheid laws are the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act 55 of 1949, which made marriages between whites and people of other races illegal. The Immorality Amendment Act 21 of 1950 went even further to forbid sex between a white and a black, Indian or Coloured person.

Grand apartheid separated races on a large scale, by forcing people to live in different places according to their race. This required race classification and was achieved through the Population Registration Act 30 of 1950. According to this law, all South Africans had to be classified as white, black, Coloured (mixed race) or Indian, and their race was then recorded in their identity passes. Official teams or Boards were set up to decide the fate of those people whose race was considered uncertain. This caused much heartache especially for Coloured people whose unique mixed race features often led to families being split up after members were assigned different to races. Every year, people were reclassified racially. In 1984, for example:

- 518 Coloured people were defined as White
- 2 whites were called Chinese
- 1 white was reclassified Indian
- 1 white became Coloured
- 89 Coloured people became African



Interestingly the word 'African' was never used by the authorities. The problem was it translated back in the Boer language into the word *Afrikaner*, which was the very name the white Dutch descendants called themselves. Africans were referred to by white officialdom as black or Bantu.

The second element of grand apartheid was the Group Areas Act 21 of 1950. Until then, different races coexisted in most towns. This Act ended racially mixed residential areas. It defined where people had to live and work and each race was allocated its own area. People had no choice but to move, and this Act provided the base for forced removals in later years.

## Apartheid and Education

The Bantu Education Act of 1953 created a separate educational system for black students under the management of the Department of 'Bantu' Education. According to H.F Verwoerd, who was the Education Minister at the time, the purpose of 'Bantu' Education was to prepare African people for a subordinate role under white minority rule. According to a report in the Afrikaans newspaper *Die Burger*, Verwoerd had the following to say on equality in 1953:



*"When I have control of 'Native' education, I will reform it so that the "Natives" will be taught from childhood to realize that equality with Europeans is not for them."* (H F Verwoerd South African Prime Minister from 1958-1966)



An anti-Bantu education protest, 1955.  
(Photograph by Drum Photographer © RAHA)

## Pass laws

The movement of black people was severely limited. Black people could only stay in 'white' South Africa if they possessed documents proving they had permission to do so. Indian people were barred from being in the Orange Free State province. The laws restricting the movement of people were known as 'Pass Laws'.

The first pass laws were introduced in 1760 when slaves in the Cape were made to carry them. The Urban Areas Consolidation Act of 1945 together with the Natives (Abolition of Passes and Coordination of Documents) Act of 1952 were key legislation. The Urban Areas Act outlined requirements for African people to 'qualify' to live 'legally' in urban areas in White South Africa. In order to do so they had to have Section 10 rights. These rights were based on whether:

- a. The person had been born there and resided there continuously since birth;
- b. The person had worked continuously for ten years in any prescribed area for any employer; or lived continuously in any such area for a period not less than 10 years;
- c. The person was the wife, unmarried daughter, or son under 18 years of age of an African falling into classes (a) or (b), and ordinarily resided with him, and initially entered the area lawfully; or
- d. The person had been granted a permit to remain by a labor bureau.



An example of a passbook.  
(Source: <http://www.ms-starship.com/journal/jan01/27.htm>)

## Divide and Rule. The Role of the Bantustans or Homelands

When the NP came into power in 1948, its aim was to achieve a white supremacist Christian National State and to enforce racial segregation. The key elements of enforcing racial segregation were:

- The classification of the population into African, Coloured, Indian and white racial groups;
- Strict racial segregation in the urban areas;
- Restricted African urbanization;
- A tightly controlled and more restricted system of migrant labor;
- A stronger emphasis on tribalism and traditionalism in African administration than in the past; and
- A drastic strengthening of security legislation and control.

These ideas were to form the foundation on which the 'Homelands' policy was developed. Territorial segregation was not new. There existed the 'reserves' that had been created under the British administration in the 19th century. But under H.F. Verwoerd's rule, land was seen as a way to control the increasing movement of black people into the city. Black people could work in the cities but were to live in their own separate areas. The plan was to create 10 national states out of these homelands.

## **Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 and the Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959**

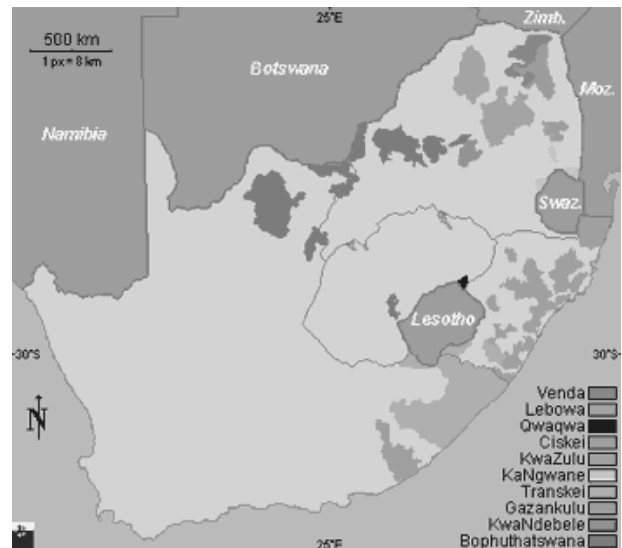
The Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 was the first piece of legislation introduced to support the government's policy of separate development with respect to the 'Bantustans'. It made provision for the establishment of Tribal, Regional and Territorial Authorities in the 'reserves'. Tribal Authorities were set up and positions were given to Chiefs and Headman who became responsible for the allocation of land, the welfare and pension system and the development of money that trickled down to their areas. However, uncooperative traditional leaders were faced with harsh penalties and were often deposed, as was the case with Chief Albert Luthuli when he was dismissed from his position as Chief when he refused to resign from the African National Congress.

The Bantu Self-Government Act entrenched the government's policy of separate development as it provided the political and geographic shape of South Africa. This map saw South Africa as a white center with a cluster of black states along its borders. The principle of ethnicity became established in law. This law paved the way for the government to forcibly remove blacks from their long-time homes and forced them to resettle in assigned areas. The introduction to the Act read:

*"The bantu people of the Union of South Africa do not constitute a homogenous people but form separate national units on the basis of language and culture."*

Instead the government broke down the assigning of people to specific areas based on their tribal/culture heritage and language:

Kwa Zulu	Zulu speaking and Nguni people
Lebowa	Northern Sotho speaking and Pedi
Gazankulu	Si Tsonga speaking "Shangaan"
Qwaqwa	South Sotho speaking "Ba Shoesoe"
KaNgwane	Swati speaking and Nguni people
Kwa Ndebele	Ndebele speaking and Pedi
Transkei	Xhosa speaking
Bophuthatswana	Tswana speaking
Venda	Tshi Venda speaking
Ciskei	Xhosa speaking



The government justified its policy on the grounds that South Africa was made up of different 'nations':

*"The government's policy is, therefore, not a policy of discrimination on the grounds of race or colour, but a policy of differentiation on the ground of nationhood, of different nations, granting to each self-determination within the borders of their homelands - hence this policy of separate development" (Chairperson of the Bantu Affairs Commission, 1968).*