



News Release

January 31, 2011
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Continue the Struggle for a Just World, Naomi Tutu Tells Century

Civil rights activist Naomi Tutu, daughter of South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu, told a Century College audience on Jan. 26 that thoughtful people must continue the struggle for a just world.

“Martin Luther King said that in the best of us there is the possibility of evil, and in the worse of us there is the possibility of good,” said Tutu. “That is the reality, and it means we must continue to struggle for a just world.”

Tutu, the program coordinator for the Race Relations Institute at Fisk University, was this year’s Martin Luther King series guest speaker at Century.

Tutu said the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which her father chaired in South Africa, gained worldwide attention for its approach to justice. Perpetrators of horrific human rights violations were invited to testify and request amnesty from both civil and criminal prosecution.

“As we listened to the testimony, we were struck by the waste of human potential,” said Tutu. “The energy that has gone into teaching white South Africans to hate and to fear is just amazing. If we had taken that energy and spent it on teaching one another to listen to each others’ stories, fears and hopes for ourselves, our community and our country, how much better off would we be.”

Some of the worst stories heard by the commission centered on the actions of a South African police official named Eugene de Kock. Dubbed “Prime Evil” by the media, de Kock was convicted of dozens of murders of people who opposed apartheid.

“The TRC forced de Kock to face the fact that there were really two Eugene de Kocks,” said Tutu. “One was the devoted family man and husband, and the other was a torturer who felt fine going into homes and murdering whole families.” The book *A Human Being Died That Night* by Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela tells the story of de Kock and his actions.

Tutu said many victims who testified were not seeking a monetary award. Instead, they asked the commission to help the community by building schools, playgrounds, clinics and community centers.

“It was not about enriching themselves,” said Tutu. “It was about building a country. I learned that there is greatness available in the human spirit.”

Tutu said as a result of the commission’s work, South Africans learned who they were as a country – both those who had been tortured and those who tortured. “Reconciliation,” she said, “was about facing fully who we were as South Africans. To move forward, we have to be willing to admit the truth of our story, the whole truth.”

Tutu observed that Americans are fearful about the topics of race and racism. “If we do not have discussion, these issues cannot be dealt with,” she said. “America has a story in which race has a role. If we want to build a better America, we can’t do that by not talking about the things that separate and divide us. We must be willing to say, ‘I know what racism is and I want to be a part of ending it.’ A

country is not as great as it can be until all people are equal. I want to be a part of people working for that greatness, that equality, that beloved community. But we have to be willing to speak our truth and tell our story.”

In addition to students, faculty, staff and community members, the audience at Century included a group of elementary students who have formed a Peace Club at Cowern Elementary School in North St. Paul. The students are studying the life and work of Desmond Tutu.

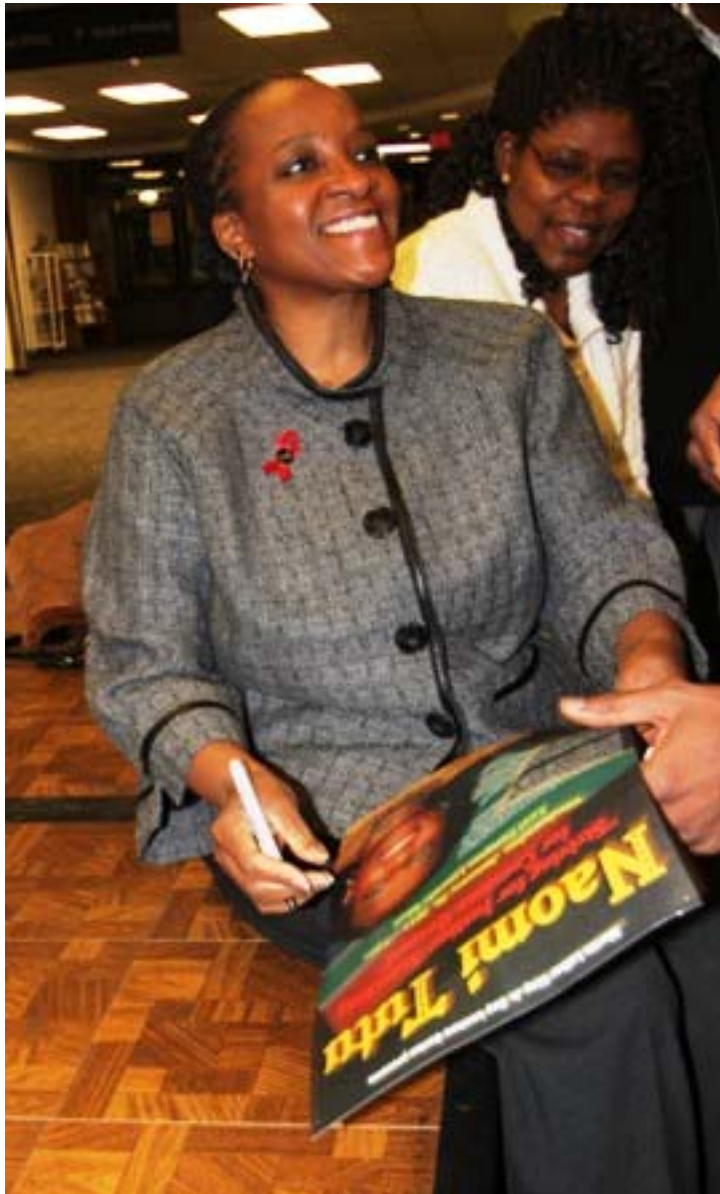


Photo: Naomi Tutu