

Viewing Guide for *Amandla: A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony*

Amandla (a word that means "power" in the Xhosa language of South Africa) is a documentary film about the role that music and performers played in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. It chronicles the activities and careers, as well as the songs and music, of South Africans protesting apartheid between the coming to power in 1948 of the Nationalist Party and the 1994 elections when Nelson Mandela was chosen president of a majority-ruled South Africa.

The 1948 elections in South Africa, at a time when no blacks were allowed to vote, brought in the Nationalist Party. The Nationalists were associated with descendants of Dutch (or Boer) settlers who had begun arriving in the area of Cape Town as early as the 1650s. The governing ideology of the Nationalists was *apartheid*, a word that means separate development in Afrikaans, the language of the Boers. Apartheid was a system of racial separation and segregation that argued that races should not mix but should develop their areas separately. Over time, it became more and more oppressive, forcing black South Africans (more than 3/4 of the population) into something like 13% of the land area and leaving them virtually no political rights elsewhere in the country. Apartheid ultimately followed its own "logic" to decree that the areas dubbed "homelands" would be independent nations. Black South Africans, and some members of the other South African racial groups -- whites, coloreds and Asians -- consistently fought against the system.

Things to Watch

Amandla operates on two levels simultaneously: it is political history, as it reviews the various phases of struggle over the years, and it is music history, as it shows you the succession of musical styles popular in South Africa in the second half of the 20th century.

You may want to think about what the film shows in a variety of ways. You can think about how the South African situation parallels – and is different from – the process of struggle for civil rights in the US. You may want to think about your own experience of different musical styles and how what you hear in the film parallels – and is different from – your own knowledge of musical change.

As always, you should be thinking about what makes the film effective. How are mixes of performance tapes, interviews, and other documentary records used?

Enjoy! You're going to like this one!