

Cry beloved country-
selflessness



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Many people in the 1900's, turned a blind eye at the laws that were unjust. Whether in South Africa, Canada or a fictional tale, time has shown that history has not always been so pleasant. Although, there are certain individuals in the past 100 years that have made a significant difference throughout history, starting with just a small voice. When this voice grew louder, people stopped and listened to what they had to say, gaining consciousness in society, companions in life and the ability to fight for what is right. This can all be achieved simply by an act of selflessness.

Selflessness, being an act of a person who thinks of others before thinking of themselves. A sacrifice, which may mean a life long battle, that could save dozens, hundreds or thousands of people's grief, unhappiness or life. It is in a novel, written by Alan Paton, that a woman asks a man, " For what else are we born? " (227, Paton) In *Cry the Beloved Country*, Paton expresses the universal idea that the purpose of existence is to help one's fellow man. There are some people in today's society that divert their eyes at the sight of a crisis, fictional or non-fictional.

In the world of *Cry The Beloved Country* the big and bright Johannesburg is where some of these diverted eyes lay. Paton describes the busy, traffic-filled city, to the reader, as a close-minded, selfish environment where ignorance is on the prowl. A story is told to Kumalo, the main character who is a parson, where a woman's "... son [was] killed in the street... by... [stepping off]... the curb... [and] the great lorry crushed the life out of [the] son" (Paton 42). This describes the city of Johannesburg to have very little conscience of the society within itself.

Unlike in the city of Johannesburg, an aboriginal woman named Mary Two-Axed Earley did not turn a blind eye to the aboriginal women within her society. Mary, who lived along the time of 1911 to 1996, lost her aboriginal status when she married a Caucasian man in 1967. (New Federation) This loss, and the loss of those women around her, gave her the strength, according to a CBC radio show, becoming the founder of Indian Rights for Indian Women, and convinced Parliament to amend the Indian Act, after 20 years.

This selfless act was to change the law within the Indian Act and allow aboriginal women and their children to keep their status if they chose to marry a non-aboriginal man. In achieving this goal of hers, many became aware of her voice and she received the Governor General's Award in Commemoration of the Persons Case. She was recognized for her "... tireless efforts to ensure rights for native Indian women [were] equal to those of native Indian men" (Brown). Mary's lifelong fight for justice, was a selfless act which gave her, and many other, their Indian status back and the right to be laid down to rest on the reserve in where she grew up.

Mary was the first to regain her status at the age of 73. (CBC) This selflessness on Mary's part made her society aware of others abused rights and demonstrated that everyone should be equal. Along with the realization of equality, selflessness can draw people in, resulting in lifelong friendship or companionship. In the story of Cry The Beloved Country Paton introduces a character named Msimangu, who joins Kumalo in the search for his son. This partnership begins with just two fellow parson, one helping the other find there way around Johannesburg and the small surrounding towns.

This partnership eventually develops into a friendship after Msimangu said harsh words to Kumalo out of anger, saying that he was, "... ashamed to walk with [Kumalo]" (101, Paton). Later down the page, Msimangu apologized for his hurtful words and promises to follow Kumalo in whatever he thinks is right. This path Msimangu and Kumalo begin to follow furthers their friendship and the reader begins to realize Kumalo's selflessness. Kumalo, after discovering that his son has a girlfriend, who is with child, stops everything he is doing, and helps the girl who is in need.

He does not think twice of his decision, which proves the very definition of selflessness described earlier. Msimangu witnesses this remarkable and envious trait portrayed by Kumalo, and leads their companionship into a lifelong friendship. Similar to this example in the book, there was a situation from the past 10 years that demonstrates the gaining of companionship through unselfish behaviour. In 1990, F. W. De Klerk, who was the president of South Africa, released Nelson Mandela, after being in prison for 27 years, revoking most of the apartheid laws.

Nelson Mandela, or Rolihlahla Dalibhunga Mandela, who was born in 1918 in a village named Qunu, fought in South Africa for the abolishment of the apartheid and the ability for everyone to have equal rights and freedom. According to James Ryan, before Mandela went to jail for making an anti-apartheid movement called the African National Congress, which eventually was banned, and leaving the country illegally, Mandela " married [a] social worker [named] Winnie Madikizela in 1958... [who] took a more active role in the politics of the ANC".

After being released from prison, Mandela found that his wife, who agreed with civil violence, did not believe in what he believed. When reaching the age of eighty, Mandela remarried Graca Machel, and stepped down as president. Mandela showed his selflessness to the world and to his current wife by fighting throughout his life, including serving 27 years in a South African prison. If it was not for Mandela's spirit and determination throughout his life in helping correct the rights for those whose were being mistreated, he would have never had discovered the true nature of Winnie, or found his current wife, Graca.

It was due to his selflessness in fighting for what was right that gained him a companionship for the rest of his life. When fighting for what is right in the world, others tend become inspired and follow for what they believe. In the novel, Cry The Beloved Country Kumalo fights for what he believes is right all through the 36 chapters, and inspires another through his actions. Msimangu, a character described in the previous paragraph, doubts his role as a parson, but with the determination and selfless acts Kumalo demonstrates to Msimangu, he promises to continue his journey in search of Kumalo's son, Absalom.

Through Kumalo's selfless act and the inspiration given to Msimangu, he has given his friend the ability to continue to fight for what he believes in. He also gave Kumalo his money at the end of the novel. He learned this selfless act in helping others from Kumalo, his devoted, lifelong friend. Alike this previous situation in this novel, Nelson Mandela proves his selflessness in two significant way in showing others to continue fighting for what the believe is right.

First, when Mandela went to prison, he began to study law and he then became a teacher to the fellow inmates at the Robben Island prison, resulting in that both blacks and whites heard his anti-apartheid message. Secondly, as his message from prison reached the outside world, people began to speak out, resulting in the release of Mandela and the revoking of the apartheid. Before Mandela was arrested, the message he went on record saying was that, “ during [his] lifetime [he has] dedicated [himself] to the struggle of the African people. He has] fought against white domination, and [has] fought against black domination. [He has] cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which [he] hope[s] to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which [he is] prepared to die” (Nelson Mandela Foundation). Mandela motivated many people with this speech, along with his movements in prison, which has helped people see that they can fight for what they believe in and fight for what is right, just like he did, selflessly, his entire life.

As Paton expresses the universal idea that the purpose of existence is to help one's fellow man, Kumalo's selflessness can be compared, similarly and differently to significant people in the past 100 years. As Mary Two-Axed Earley demonstrates, by raising awareness of aboriginal women in her society, her case is largely different from the ignorance of Johannesburg and the people within the city. While Johannesburg allowed a young boy to be killed in the street while turning a blind eye, Mary opened her society's eyes to the fact that aboriginal women were not being treated equally to aboriginal men.

She rose understanding in her situation, while no one rose understanding for the little boy in Johannesburg. Nelson Mandela, on the other hand, similarly compared the society of South Africa in, Cry The Beloved Country to his present day in South Africa. He, with his unselfish behaviour, gained a lifelong companion, who believed in what he believed, and inspired people to believe and fight for what they thought was right. These two people, in relation to Kumalo, took the world far away from the time of the apartheid and discrimination, and has taught many the valuable trait of selflessness.