

SUN CITY

ARTISTS UNITED AGAINST APARTHEID

A TEACHING GUIDE by William Bigelow

Introduction

"Sun City"—the song, the video, the book—will excite students and motivate them to learn more about South Africa.

The refrain of "I ain't gonna play Sun City" is a simple one, but the issues raised in the song and video are not. The lyrics—"phoney homelands," "constructive engagement," "separation of families"—assume some student familiarity with the system of apartheid. While this guide offers many teaching ideas for "Sun City," it does not attempt to provide a comprehensive look at the

3. Preview the "Sun City" video and the tape of the "Sun City" album.

Goals/Objectives

1. Students will consider the role music and musicians can play in helping to create social change.
2. Students will be introduced visually to a variety of issues about racism and injustice in South Africa.
3. Following the example of the artists in "Sun City," students will evaluate ways they, too, can take responsibility for

apartheid structures. For that, teachers should use **Strangers in Their Own Country: A Curriculum Guide on South Africa**.*

It is recommended that this curriculum be taught before students view the "Sun City" video. However, the video can be used effectively as an opening lesson, a way of generating student questions: Why is it so bad to play Sun City? What is "quiet diplomacy"? What are "phoney homelands" and who separates families?

Whichever way you choose to use the tape, it is sure to prove stimulating.

*Available from Africa World Press, Inc.

making needed change.

Materials Needed:

1. Video tape of "Sun City," tape of the album, "Sun City."
2. Student copies of "Sun City" lyrics (see p. 11, **Sun City**).
3. Student Handout #1: **Musicians Speak Out: "Sun City."**
4. Student Handout #2: **"A lot of people going in the same direction . . ."**

Teacher Preparation:

1. Read "Sun City: The Glitter of Apartheid" (pp. 8-10 in **Sun City**) and Lesson #4: "The 'Homelands': Point/Counterpoint" (p. 8 and pp. 44-46 in **Strangers in Their Own Country**.)
2. Students may ask about the various performers in the video. See **Sun City**, pp. 91-95.

Procedure:

1. Briefly introduce the "Sun City" video. Explain that Sun City is located in the nominally independent homeland of Bophuthatswana, whose supposed sovereignty is recognized only by South Africa. Add

information from "Sun City: The Glitter of Apartheid." You might suggest that while watching the video students jot down as many images of Sun City and South Africa as they can. Also ask them to list questions that the video leaves unanswered.

2. Distribute copies of "Sun City" lyrics.

3. Begin the video. Stop the tape as the song "Sun City" ends. Some questions that the video raises include:

—What does the song say is wrong in South Africa?

● **"Relocation to phoney homelands":** Since 1960 an estimated 3.5 million people have been forcibly removed from the 87 percent of South Africa considered "white" territory to generally barren Black "homelands" making up 13 percent of the country. These homelands are "phoney" because nothing less than the whole country is home for Blacks.

● **"Separation of families":** The result of this resettlement to areas which provide no work is that great numbers of people—largely men—re-enter "white" South Africa to seek employment as miners, or workers in other industries. By law, families cannot accompany the men.

● **"Twenty-three million can't vote because they're black":** All people in South Africa are classified by race. South African Blacks have absolutely no voting rights nor elective power to eliminate the apartheid system.

● **"Constructive engagement" or "quiet diplomacy"** is the official policy of the U.S. government towards South Africa. Since this policy was announced in 1981, there have been numerous South African government attempts at cosmetic reform but absolutely no movement to dismantle apartheid. In almost every respect—standard of living, unemployment rate, quality of education and health care, government repression—conditions for Blacks have worsened.

—According to the song, why are conditions so oppressive in South Africa?

—Bonnie Raitt sings, "It's time to accept our responsibility." What is our "responsibility"? Who does "our" refer to? What does the song imply about the U.S. government's role in South Africa?

—The verse, "Why are we always on the wrong side?" implies that there is something systematically wrong with U.S. foreign policy. What other world conflicts could the songwriter be describing? Do you believe that the foreign policy decisions of the United States are consistently wrong? If so, what would account for this?

—"Freedom is a privilege, nobody rides for free," is one of the most intriguing lines in the song. What does this mean? Who does it suggest is responsible for creating freedom? Can we rely on our government

—any government—to insure freedom?

—The song insists that "We're stabbing our brothers and sisters in the back" in South Africa. Who is the "we" in this verse? Could there be more than one "we"? (Musicians who perform in Sun City? Our government? People who see the injustices in South Africa but refuse to act?)

—To call people in South Africa "our brothers and sisters" suggests that we have some connection with the people there. What is that connection? Why should we care?

—How do the images in the video (funerals, tear gas attacks, beatings) reinforce the message of the lyrics?

—Much of the video was shot in the street. What was the significance of this technique? What feelings did the producers of the video want to communicate?

—What images of white South Africans does the video present?

—What is the connection between the wealth of the whites and the poverty and repression of the blacks?

—Why would the South African government want to "buy" American and British musicians to perform in South Africa?

—Why would the government be especially anxious for the performers to play in Sun City, located in the so-called independent homeland of Bophuthatswana?

—Why would the South African government make a special effort to lure Black performers to Sun City?

—At one point the song states, "There's only one thing we can do": not play Sun City. What effect might this boycott of Sun City have on ending apartheid? What other actions will likely be needed here to help end apartheid?

—How does the video show that racial injustice exists in more places than just South Africa?

4. Resume the video. Again, encourage students to list questions that occur to them as they watch.

5. At the completion of the video distribute Student Handout #1: **Musicians Speak Out: "Sun City."** Use the performers' quotes from the video as a basis for the discussion. The following questions should be of help:

—Duke Bootee calls apartheid "slavery." What are the similarities between apartheid and slavery? What are the differences? (How did slaveowners benefit economically from slavery? Who benefits from apartheid and how?) Think about what Dumisani Kumalo had to say in the video: "As a South African born in South Africa, I am denied the right of free movement; I am not allowed to be outside of my home area for more than 72 hours without government permission; as a Black South African it means that I have to carry a pass; as a Black South African I am not allowed to get married to someone from another city; as a Black South African I cannot vote;



Musicians Speak Out: "Sun City"

"Apartheid is something we call it because we don't want to call it slavery. But it's slavery; we should call it what it is. Slavery is slavery."

Duke Bootee
(rapper/songwriter)

"I know everybody goes through hard times and money, the mighty dollar, usually speaks louder than anything. But I think there comes a time when the dollar should not be the total object of what you're trying to do."

Darlene Love
(singer)

"When you start putting money and material things before life, something is really wrong with you. You're sick and you need to check out your mind."

Afrika Bambaataa
(rapper/founder of Zulu Nation)

"I've had records sell a lot and I've made money off of my music. . . and I'm sure Steve (Van Zandt) feels the same way. His Springsteen album he co-produced sold a million, eight million, ten million. But I don't think he could ever feel as good as the feeling you get from making a record like this."

Arthur Baker
(producer)

"You always wonder: What can you do as being one individual? Being one individual and being a part of this has made me feel very, very wonderful. I can make a statement along with all the other musicians."

Clarence Clemons
(saxophone, Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band)

"I've never really been involved in any political thing at all but this I think needs a lot of attention so I was willing to do it."

David Ruffin
(singer, formerly with The Temptations)

"I think racism is a disease of the spirit, and it's time for artists to take a stand, to help make others aware of what's going on and what needs to be changed. Traditionally, music has been used for escape, and I think it's about time we started using music to confront as well."

Ruben Blades
(singer)

"Music can be very vacuous at times and it's good when music and the artists who create it are willing to get involved in the painful side of life and bring some help there."

Nona Hendryx
(singer, formerly with LaBelle)

"Sun City has become a symbol of a society that is very oppressive and denies rights to the majority of its citizens. So it's a symbol of that society's right to entertain itself in any way that it wants and to basically buy us off—to buy off world opinion."

Jackson Browne
(singer/songwriter)

"I think the West—America and Britain—should impose sanctions. . . I suppose the only sanction that a rock performer can impose is to say, 'Listen, we're not going to come and play until you do things right.'"

Pete Townshend
(songwriter, former guitarist, The Who)

"When we look at another country and see what's going on—because what's happening down there is so out-in-front—. . . I think it's a good moment for us to take a look at the racism and prejudice that still exists in our own backyard. Obviously not just point the finger at someplace else but investigate our own racial problems."

Bruce Springsteen
(singer/songwriter)

"... Our music is based on Black heritage and that has now (been) absorbed and generated a huge income for white people. So it's about time that some of us paid some homage to our sources."

Peter Gabriel
(singer/songwriter, formerly with Genesis)



as a Black South African I cannot own land. So, you know from the cradle to the grave if you are Black in South Africa you need government permission to exist."

—Is it only musicians who have the "sickness" Afrika Bambaataa talks about? Do you know people like this? What do you imagine made them "sick"? Is it a "disease" with a cure?

—Some people would argue against Jackson Browne. They might say, "What could it hurt to have a few musicians playing in Sun City? How could a little music contribute to 'oppression' and 'denying rights to citizens'?" How would you respond?

—Daryl Hall remembers being offered \$2 million dollars to play Sun City before Hall and Oates became really successful. How could some musicians justify accepting that offer? Would you have taken the money?

—Do you think that the musicians who appeared on the "Sun City" record took a risk? If you were a successful and popular musician, what would make you hesitate before deciding to participate in the "Sun City" project?

—Look at the David Ruffin quote: What makes someone who has never been political decide finally to get involved in trying to bring about change?

—What experiences may have contributed to Herbie Hancock's involvement in the "Sun City" project? Do you get any hints why some of the other artists took part? Think about the Malopoets, Little Steven, Miles Davis or Peter Gabriel (see his quote on Student Handout #1).

—How did the "Sun City" project make Clarence Clemons feel powerful and that he could make a difference in South Africa?

—Do you agree with Ruben Blades that music these days should be used not merely to escape, but to "confront"? If you agree, why is this important?

—Some people say that it's not possible for music to be both "political" and "artistic." Do you agree? Give examples to support or oppose this statement.

—Lots of white performers appear in the "Sun City" video. Why is South Africa not just a "Black" issue? Why should whites care about what is happening there?

—In what ways was the making of the "Sun City" record itself a powerful argument against South Africa's apartheid system?

—Little Steven insists that "Sun City" is not a "charity" record. If the main point of the project was not to raise money, then what did Little Steven and the other participants hope to accomplish?

—Winnie Mandela's statement about sanctions at the end of the video is in direct violation of South African law. (See Student Handout #8, p. 47 in **Strangers in Their Own Country**.) What does she hope sanctions will accomplish? Why is she willing to risk imprisonment to make this plea?

6. Explain that, just as the artists in "Sun City" are helping to change the situation in South Africa, so are students beginning to do what they can to end apartheid.

Distribute copies of Student Handout #2: "**A lot of people going in the same direction. . .**" Go over the assignment with students. Emphasize that you expect them to come up with the kind of detail and specifics required to actually implement their plans. (Indeed, they may want to act on their ideas.) Also remind them of what Bruce Springsteen said—that any efforts to change South Africa should also aim at changing the United States. Encourage students to be original. The suggestions that are listed are meant merely to stimulate ideas.

Dividing students into small groups to complete the project will encourage fuller participation from every member of the class. Allow enough time for a thorough job.

Note: This assignment does not require students to want to be active in ending apartheid. Taking on roles as student activists is, however, a way to understand why and how people become involved in social change.

7. Have each group make an oral presentation to the class. Encourage questions, comments, criticism and praise from other students.



Additional Teaching Ideas:

1. Ask students to imagine they are musicians deciding whether or not to participate in the "Sun City" project. Have them invent their own quotes to add to, or disagree with, the comments included in **Musicians Speak Out: "Sun City."**
2. Have students write their own songs or rap/poems about apartheid. Individuals or small groups might sing or recite each line as in the "Sun City" song/video. The performances might be video-taped.

"A lot of people going in the same direction . . ."

"I wanted that feeling like we're going somewhere. This is not something that stands still. And that we're motivating people—the record motivates people. . . . We start small, one person, two people, and we end up with a lot of people going in the same direction; and that's how political change is made."

Little Steven



You are a group of students who want to help end South Africa's system of apartheid. You are also concerned with ending racism and injustice in the United States. As Bruce Springsteen urges in "Sun City," it's important to "not just point the finger at someplace else but (to) investigate our own racial problems." You are faced with a number of choices about how best to contribute to these changes.

Here is a list of activities being worked on by different student groups around the country. Use these ideas to develop an original plan which has a good chance of contributing to the abolition of apartheid in South Africa as well as to justice at home. You will make a presentation to the class on your proposal(s).

- Maryland high school students are researching the origin of gold used in senior class rings, making certain that South Africa is not the source.
- Students in Seattle have helped produce radio shows to educate other students and the larger community about apartheid in South Africa. Students in other cities have produced video tapes for closed circuit and cable television.
- Students at colleges and universities have done research to determine whether their schools have investments in companies that do business in South Africa. They've discovered that many schools have large investments in corporations heavily involved in South Africa. Students have fasted, picketed, staged sit-ins in administrative offices, and lobbied college trustees demanding that their schools stop supporting apartheid and sell this stock.
- Students in New York City presented plays about South Africa at their own and others' schools. Some students performed "raps" on South Africa.
- Students—from the elementary level through university—have written letters to the U.S. government, U.S. corporations, and the South African government and have sent letters of support to people working for change in South Africa.



- High school students in Massachusetts have formed a Students Against Apartheid organization. Through demonstrations they stopped a local coin dealer from selling the South African gold Krugerrand. These students are currently attempting to educate their school and community about South Africa.
- Students in Oregon convinced the drama department at their school to stage a play critical of apartheid and to present an assembly for all the social studies classes.
- Students in various cities have joined community anti-apartheid organizations to work on a number of boycotts and other anti-apartheid projects.* Students have also organized call-ins to local radio stations requesting them to play "Sun City."
- Many public school and college teachers have retirement monies invested in corporations which do business in South Africa. Students have discussed ways of supporting their teachers' efforts to get their funds out of these corporations.

*Shell Oil is the target of an international boycott. It has large investments in South Africa which strengthen the white-ruled economy.



Your Presentation

1. Describe **in detail** how you would put your plan into practice in your school or community. Consider:
 - From which individuals or groups will you try to get support?
 - What arguments will you use to convince students, teachers and others that racism and apartheid are their problems too? Why should they want to become involved?
 - Who will probably **not** support your efforts?
 - What problems might you have with your plan?
 - How will you overcome these problems?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your plan?
3. Explain clearly what effect you believe your plan will have on ending apartheid in South Africa.
4. How will your plan not just "point the finger at someplace else" but also deal with racial and social problems here?

"SUN CITY"
words and music by Little Steven
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We're rockers and rappers united and strong (Run-DMC)
We're here to talk about South Africa, we don't like what's going on (Melle Mel & Duke Bootee)
It's time for some justice, it's time for the truth (Afrika Bambaataa & Kurtis Blow)
We've realized there's only one thing we can do (Big Youth & all rappers)
I ain't gonna play Sun City
Relocation to phoney homelands (David Ruffin)
Separation of families I can't understand (Pat Benatar)
23 million can't vote because they're black (Eddie Kendrick)
We're stabbing our brothers and sisters in the back (Bruce Springsteen)
I ain't gonna play Sun City
Our government tells us we're doing all we can (George Clinton)
Constructive engagement is Ronald Reagan's plan (Joey Ramone)
Meanwhile people are dying and giving up hope (Jimmy Cliff & Daryl Hall)
This quiet diplomacy ain't nothing but a joke (Darlene Love)
I ain't gonna play Sun City
It's time to accept our responsibility (Bonnie Raitt)
Freedom is a privilege, nobody rides for free (Ruben Blades & John Oates)
Look around the world baby it can't be denied (Lou Reed)
Why are we always on the wrong side (Bobby Womack)
I ain't gonna play Sun City
Bophuthatswana is far away (Run-DMC)
But we know it's in South Africa no matter what they say (Kurtis Blow & Afrika Bambaataa)
You can't buy me, I don't care what you pay (Duke Bootee, Melle Mel & Afrika Bambaataa)
Don't ask me Sun City because I ain't gonna play (Linton Kwesi Johnson & all rappers)
I ain't gonna play Sun City
Relocation to phoney homelands (Jackson Browne & Bob Dylan)
Separation of families I can't understand (Peter Garrett)
23 million can't vote because they're black (Nona Hendryx & Kashif)
We're stabbing our brothers and sisters in the back (Bono)

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