

## **S. Africa & Truth and Reconciliation Commission**

### **1) The Nature of Apartheid**

Originated 1948 when Afrikaners took control of S. Africa from British S. Africans who'd practiced more genteel racism

3 racial classifications:

white

black

colored/mixed race

Separate living areas, pass restrictions on mobility

Marriage restricted to within races

Blacks denied vote

Bizarre cases of people whose lives turned upside down when their race classification changed (Geoff Bowker and Leigh Star, Sorting Things Out).

### **2) 1989/1990**

**De Klerk** initiated process to end apartheid and save S. Africa from civil war

Released **Nelson Mandela**, ANC leader, from Robben Island jail

Elections

To deal with abuses, set in place Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC):

Led by Archbishop Desmond **Tutu** – moral authority

Subtext of christian forgiveness

Black as well as white supplicants

Mixed adjudicators

Almost 8,000 applications

Must have been political crime

Must be full disclosure & remorse

Anything less → jail time

Victims of crime in audience

Psychodrama in special ritual context

Power of confession to change people & create new public narratives

Michael **Ignatieff**: “now no one can say anymore that it never happened.”

### 3) **Alternatives**

Hague Tribunal & Nuremberg Trials after WWII

Nuremberg followed by executions

Rwanda – traditional courts & restorative rather than retributive justice

Czechoslovakia: law banning from office those who abused power under communists

Israel: hunt down perpetrators of holocaust & bring to justice (See **Hannah Arendt**, Eichmann in Jerusalem).