

Our Time To Choose

A Comic Story about Voting

Chapter 1

Our Time to Choose is a 6-part story about voting in South Africa's first democratic election. In this election, all South Africans, 18 years and older, will be able to vote. Your vote will help to shape the future of our country. But, in order to make informed choices, we need to understand what this election is about, and how the voting process works.

Our Time to Choose is about a rural community that decides to find out more about the election and sends two delegates, Thembi and Tshepo, to a voter education workshop in a nearby city. The knowledge they gain is then shared with the whole community.

The story explores common issues that face many South Africans who will be voting for the first time. The story offers you, the reader, a chance to share in the election process as our characters question, discuss and learn more about democracy and voting.

In this first chapter of our story, we join the rural village community as they discuss the forthcoming election. They realise that they need more information about the election. Our main characters, Thembi and Tshepo, approach Father Amos from the local church for help.

We hope that you enjoy the story.



Matla Trust

Our Time to Choose was commissioned by Matla Trust on behalf of the Independent Forum for Electoral Education (IFEE). IFEE represents a wide range of independent non-governmental and non-partisan organisations whose main aim is to educate us about this election.

Our Time to Choose was researched and developed by The Storyteller Group.

The research phase involved the participation of individuals and organisations throughout rural and urban South Africa: community-based and development organisations, civics, churches, educational and other organisations involved in democracy and voter education.

Copies of this story are available to organisations in 9 languages. For more info contact IFEE on (011) 836 8061.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS



Thembi
Leader of Unity
sewing co-operative



Tshepo
A student in Standard 9
at the local school



Father Amos
A minister of
the local church



Ma Thabo
The head of
Progress stokvel
and an influential
community member



Karl, Chris & Bongli
Voter education workshop facilitators.

CHAPTER
1

One afternoon in a village somewhere in South Africa.

Oh, my back is killing me. I hope the rains come this year. If they don't, our children will go hungry.

I believe the rains will come, ma.

I've also got hope but it's not the rains I'm waiting for. They say there is going to be an election.

Don't tell me about elections, my boy. They're just dirty tricks!

He introduced us to a somebody and said: "Vote for this man and your lives will improve."

Ghal! The only thing that changed was the chief got a big car.

I remember when our chief first called us to a voter meeting.

We were so hopeful. Everybody voted for that man.

And now we call the chief "Chief Promises." And no one bothers to vote anymore.

Except the pensioners. They are afraid they won't get their pensions.

The election I am talking about will really make a difference. It is not just another homeland election.

This election is for everyone in South Africa.

You are dreaming, mfanal!

No, ma, this is the new South Africa!

New South Africa? It looks like the same old South Africa to me.

No, baba, things are changing. Today you can be a member of the ANC or the PAC and they won't put you in jail.

I was very hopeful when the mouths of those organisations were opened. But nothing has changed - the whites are still in power.

And look what happened after they unbanned those political organisations. You youth started turning against your elders and boycotting your schools.

I don't want anything to do with an election - it will just cause more trouble.

Now we are all fighting each other.

I don't think the vote will change anything.

I can't believe you people are saying these things! We have been suffering for so long under the white Government.

At least we have won the chance to vote for our own government. Do you want to throw that chance away?



Tshepo is right! We need to vote for leaders who know how we have suffered. Leaders who will listen to our cries.



We need jobs, water and better education.



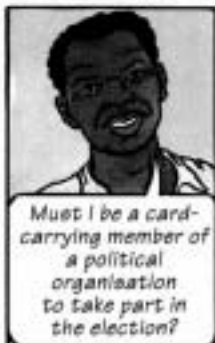
We have dreamed of a better life for so long. Everyone must vote in this election!



Ngwanaka, tell me more about this election. When is it going to take place?



Will we be voting at the Tribal Authorities?



Must I be a card-carrying member of a political organisation to take part in the election?



I don't know...



You are asking a boy who has never voted before about an election!

Mkhulu, I have voted before! In my school we voted for the SRC by putting up our hands.



Do you mean that all people in South Africa are going to put up their hands?

What about those people who don't have hands?



Lieten, Tshepo, we must invite someone to come and tell us about this election.



Who will come here? Our leaders never bother to come and speak to us.

We in the rural areas are always left in the dark.

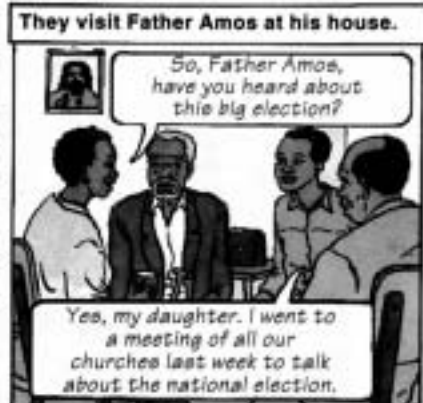


LATER.

They're right! Nobody cares about us in the rural areas.



Hey! Let's go and see Father Amos. Maybe he can help us.

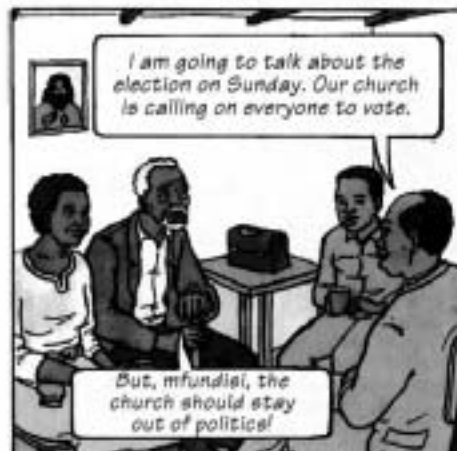


They visit Father Amos at his house.



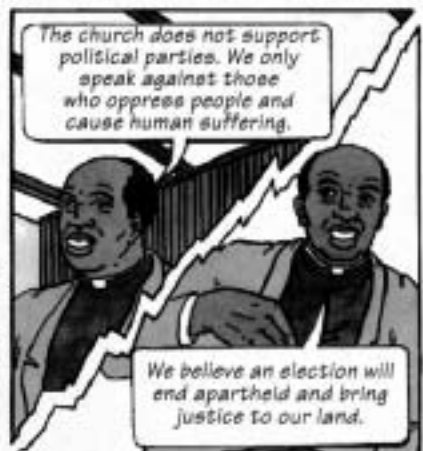
So, Father Amos, have you heard about this big election?

Yes, my daughter. I went to a meeting of all our churches last week to talk about the national election.



I am going to talk about the election on Sunday. Our church is calling on everyone to vote.

But, mfundisi, the church should stay out of politics!



The church does not support political parties. We only speak against those who oppress people and cause human suffering.

We believe an election will end apartheid and bring justice to our land.



Father, people in the community need to learn how to vote. Can you teach them?

My daughter, I have never voted before.



But I will try to find out more information about voting for you.

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Chapter 2

This is the second episode of Our Time to Choose, a 6-part story about ordinary people preparing themselves to vote in South Africa's first democratic election.

In the story so far, we joined the community of a rural village as they discussed the forthcoming election. The main characters in our story, Thembi and Tshepo, came to realise that their community needed more information about the election. They approached Father Amos from the local church for help. Father Amos agreed to find out more information for them. Our Time to Choose aims to

provide first-time voters, of 18 years and older, with information about the voting process. The story explores the common issues that many South Africans are facing as we approach the election. It offers you, the reader, a chance to share in the election process with our characters as they question, discuss and learn more about democracy and voting.

In this chapter of the story, we follow Thembi and Tsepo as they make preparations, with the help of the community, to go to a voter education workshop in a nearby city.



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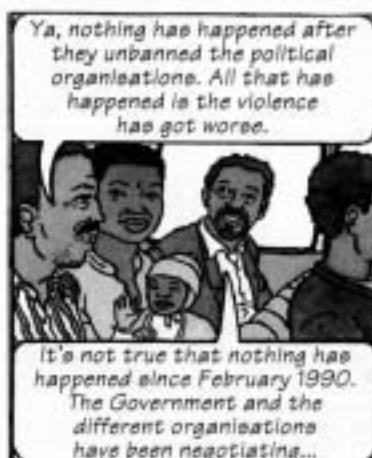
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Who is calling this election - the Government? I think it's just another one of De Klerk's tricks!

No, mfana, the election was decided at the negotiations.

Elections ... negotiations ... these things have nothing to do with me.

Siel, I think maybe you and I can negotiate...

Be serious, brother. This is no joke.

This election is a victory for all those who fought for democracy. It means we will have our freedom!

And we will have peace at last.

Ai, it will be a great thing to feel free and safe in our own country!

Ya, a democratic government will put an end to these senseless killings. The new government and the police will track down the killers.

Gha! But what about now? We will not even be safe to vote in these elections.

Yes, that is something I also worry about...

People are too quick to fight with each other when they disagree.

But it's the police and the army that I'm worried about!

The police and the army will be monitored by the TEC. They will have to protect everyone on election day.

What is this TEC?

TEC stands for Transitional Executive Council. It is made up of people from all the parties in negotiations.

The TEC will have the power to change government decisions before elections.

What about radio and TV? Everyone knows the SABC favours the Nationalist party.

Don't worry. There will be an Independent Media Commission to check that the SABC is fair to all parties.

Yes. And the newspaper said that S'umo will be acting in a TV programme about voting!

Yes. And the newspaper said that S'umo will be acting in a TV programme about voting!

Hmmm. Maybe I must find out more about voting.

Let's build a better world!

Things are really starting to happen.