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Many characters and events in the movie *Cry Freedom* were based on reality. Stephen Biko, Donald Woods, and certain events that occurred during Apartheid are examples of such reality. *Cry Freedom* tells the story of these two men who lived in South Africa in the 1970's. At that time there was Apartheid, which had begun in 1948. Apartheid ("apartness" in Dutch) was a system of racial segregation in which white people were supposedly superior to blacks (Africans) and colored people (Asians and others who weren't white). The population of South Africa was only 10% white, but more than 80% of the land was considered theirs (*The Zimbabwe Factor*. <http://dSPACE.dial.pipex.com/icpubs/ab/june00/abcs0601.htm> .) There were other problems as well, such as the fact that people of different races had to live in special designated areas, and the fact that blacks were required to carry passes to walk through white areas in their own country. Some people, like Stephen Biko and Donald Woods, battled against this unjust situation.

Stephen Biko was one of the main characters of *Cry Freedom*. He was "one of the few who can save South Africa" (Richard Attenborough, *Cry Freedom*), according to Dr. Mamphela Ramphele, a black female doctor who was Biko's friend in real life and in the movie. Biko was the leader of South Africa's Black Consciousness movement and fought to end Apartheid, even after he was banned in 1973. The ban was supposed to keep him in King William's Town, his hometown, but that didn't prevent him from going to Cape Town to continue his struggle for black equality. In the movie he gave a speech at a soccer game, giving encouragement to the large crowd composed of mainly black people by telling them that one day they would not be considered inferior. This specific soccer game speech did not really occur, but it was common

for black leaders, such as Nelson Mandela, to give speeches at such gatherings. Just like in the movie, Stephen Biko went to court on May 3, 1976. That was his first public appearance since he had been banned, where he testified for nine black students. More importantly that was where he spoke to the court about black consciousness (the idea of unifying blacks and making them no longer feel inferior). Biko did not have a very long life. On his way back from Cape Town, the police used the excuse of him being a terrorist and arrested him, even though he hadn't really committed any crime. He was imprisoned on August 18, 1977, and was kept naked and handcuffed in his cell. A few weeks later he was examined by a doctor, who found that he had bruises and obvious brain damage caused by severe blows to his head and body. The police finally agreed to take him to a prison with better medical care, but they threw him in the back of a truck and left him there, alone, for the entire trip. On September 12, 1977, Stephen Biko died of brain damage. The police lied to the people by saying that he had died of a hunger strike. When a doctor performed an autopsy and found the real cause of death, anger spread throughout South Africa. All of this information about Biko's death was included in the movie, and all of it was, sadly, historically true. Donald Woods, Biko's friend, did not die in such a horrible way because he was able to flee South Africa as soon as he and his family were in danger.

Donald Woods was another main character in the movie *Cry Freedom*. He became acquainted with Biko after being begged by Dr. Ramphela to meet him. Woods was a white, liberal journalist who was the editor for the *Daily Dispatch*. He was married to Wendy Woods and he had five children, just like in the movie. He lived in a beautiful house in South Africa, but his life began to change the day he met Biko, when Woods decided to help him. The two became friends, as shown in the movie *Cry Freedom*, and Woods joined Biko in his fight against Apartheid by hiring two black people to work for the *Daily Dispatch*. When Biko died, Woods

wrote articles about the police's lies, and was eventually banned, just like Biko, on October 19, 1977. He couldn't work because he wasn't allowed to leave his house. When his daughter got a T-shirt in the mail with a picture of Biko on it that was covered with acid, Woods knew it was unsafe for him and his family to remain in South Africa. As he couldn't work he also couldn't publish a book about Biko, so he decided to escape. He dyed his hair black, disguised himself as a priest, and swam across the Telle River. Just like in the movie, Woods crossed into Lesotho by riding in a post office truck driven by a man named "Moses". As Woods could never reveal the true identities of the two friends who helped him escape (for their safety), these specific characters' names were fictional in *Cry Freedom* ( *How Biko's Death Changed Donald Woods' Life Forever*. <http://www.suntimes.co.za/2001/08/26/insight/in01.htm>). Woods was later joined by his family, and the seven of them flew to London, where Woods was finally able to publish his book *Biko*. Donald Woods died of cancer on August 19, 2001, after spending many years trying to end Apartheid and its terrible events, which are described below.

Most of the events in the movie *Cry Freedom* were almost exact re-creations of what had truly happened in South Africa in the 1970's. There was Apartheid in South Africa since 1948, causing many revolts, such as the Soweto Uprising. It all began in 1652, when the Dutch, also called Boers or Afrikaanders, arrived in South Africa for the first time. In the movie, that was explained to Woods by Kruger, the minister of police. The movie began with a violent scene that was in fact the Crossroads Squatters Camp raid. On November 24, 1975, the white police raided the illegal settlement, killing and injuring many black people who had been living in poverty. Near the end of *Cry Freedom*, there was another violent and bloody scene based on reality, the Soweto Uprising. On June 16, 1976, students demonstrated to stop the teaching of most of their subjects in Afrikaans, the language of the Afrikaanders who had come to South Africa in 1652. At

first the very happy and excited group composed of many students walked through the streets, holding signs. They soon arrived at an area where there were white policemen waiting for them. The police ordered them to disperse, but they didn't listen, so tear gas was thrown into the crowd. Soon after that, the police started firing at the crowd. The students then finally dispersed, but it was too late, for approximately 700 were killed and 4000 injured. Just like they did for Biko's death, the police tried to cover up the number killed, so 700 is just an estimate.

Most of the movie *Cry Freedom* was nonfictional. A few scenes from the movie, such as Stephen Biko's speech at the soccer game, didn't really occur, but these scenes were still based on historical events that did happen in South Africa (there were speeches by black leaders at soccer games, just not specifically by Biko). The movie *Cry Freedom* relates to Black History Month because it talks about the blacks' struggle for freedom, their fight against Apartheid. Black History Month was created by Dr. Carter G. Wilson, who noticed that black history was absent from most history books because it was considered unimportant. Today it is celebrated during the month of February to show people all over the world the true value of black history. *Cry Freedom* showed me how violent the white police were in South Africa, especially during the Soweto Uprising and Crossroads Squatters Camp raid. They killed without mercy, probably believing that blacks were inferior and making the blacks believe so as well. When they killed leaders like Stephen Biko, they covered up the truth and claimed the leaders had died on their own, without the police harming them at all. They knew that the truth would provoke some revolts, so they just lied about it. Of course, that was the view of the director Richard Attenborough, so maybe it wasn't that violent after all. Today Stephen Biko and Donald Woods are remembered as people who helped fight Apartheid.

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