

# RECONCILIATION MONTH

“United in Action Against Racism, Gender Based Violence and Other Intolerances”

“We must therefore act together as a united people, for national reconciliation, for nation building, for the birth of a new world We must therefore act together as a united people, for national reconciliation, for nation building, for the birth of a new world”

Nelson Mandela



**iziko**  
museums of  
South Africa

## BACKGROUND TO SOUTH AFRICA'S RECONCILIATION

**Day of Reconciliation**, also called **Day of the Vow**, **Day of the Covenant**, or **Dingane's Day**, public holiday observed in South Africa on December 16. The holiday originally commemorated the victory of the Voortrekkers (southern Africans of Dutch, German, or Huguenot descent who made the Great Trek) over the Zulus at the Battle of Blood River in 1838. Before the battle, the Voortrekkers had taken a vow that, if they succeeded in defeating the Zulus, they would build a church and observe the day as a religious holiday. The observance became known as Dingane's Day (after the Zulu king Dingane), and in 1910 the day was established as a public holiday.

In 1952 the ruling National Party passed the Public Holidays Act, which changed the holiday's name to Day of the Covenant (later changed in 1980 to Day of the Vow) and formally declared the day a religious holiday. As a result, activities such as sports events and theatre performances were banned. The Day of Reconciliation is observed on Wednesday, December 16, 2020 in South Africa.

The day gained additional significance in 1961, when the military wing of the African National Congress, Umkhonto we Sizwe ("Spear of the Nation"), chose the date to begin an armed conflict against the ruling government's policy of apartheid. After the first democratically elected government was established in South Africa in 1994, the holiday was officially renamed the Day of Reconciliation. The holiday is now meant to foster a sense of national unity and racial harmony.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Day-of-Reconciliation>

## Recorded fatalities during the Battle of Blood River also known as the Battle of Ncome on 16 December 1838



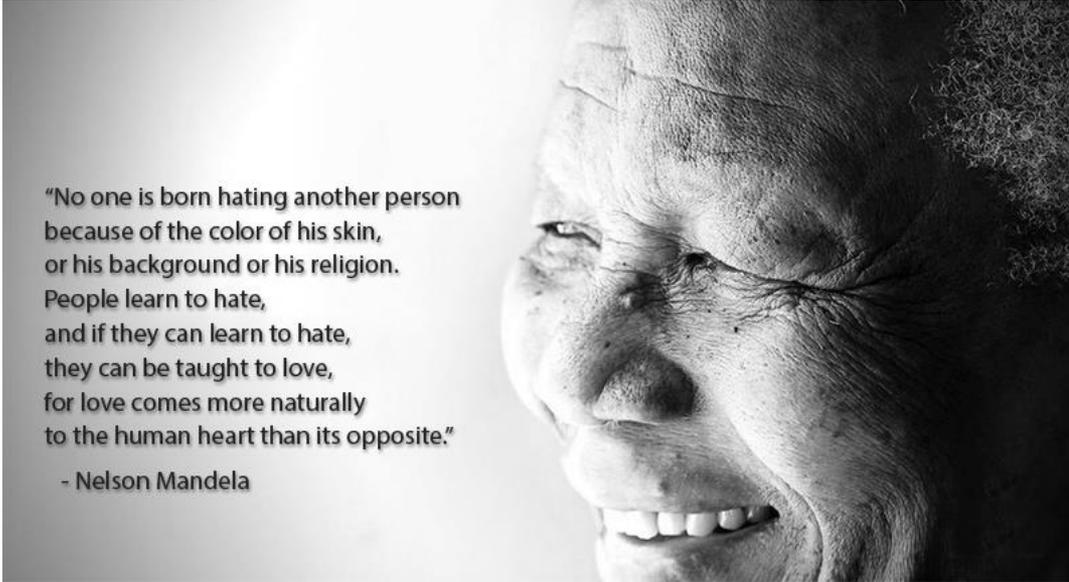
Approximately 3,000 of King Dingane's army died during the battle of blood river

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Natal-historical-province-South-Africa#ref274358>

Approximately 534 Voortrekkers were killed in what became known as the Bloukraans and Weenen massacre – named after the Dutch term for “weeping”.

<https://www.thesouthafrican.com/opinion/day-of-reconciliation-battle-of-blood-river/>

## **“NO ONE IS BORN HATING ANOTHER PERSON...”**



“No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background or his religion. People learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”

- Nelson Mandela

Mandela’s quote above together with the Preamble of our Constitution which states that: We the people of South Africa; Recognize the injustices of our past; Honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land; Respect those who have worked to develop our country; and Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity” is a reminder to all of us that we should strengthen relations with fellow South Africans and those who reside in other countries and strive to build a future where we all live together in harmony.

## Launch of the 2020 Reconciliation Month & Theme

On Wednesday, 02 December 2020; The Sport, Arts and Culture Minister, Mr. Nathi Mthethwa launched the Reconciliation Month in Athlone, under the theme, **“United against racism and Gender Based Violence and other intolerances”**.

### *Part of the programme of this launch included among other things:*

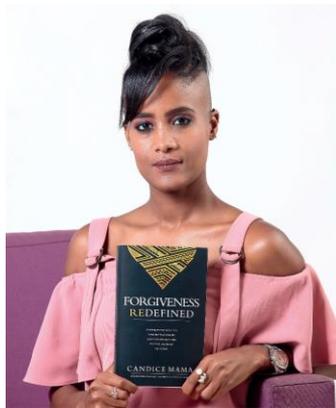
- Outline of calendar of the Reconciliation Month activities by the Minister & his Department.
- A 5km Walk against Racism and Gender Based Violence from Athlone’s Joseph Stone Auditorium to Trojan Horse and back.
- A Dialogue on Racism, Reconciliation and GBV which was a platform where panelists engaged and deliberated on issues of racism, GBV and other social ills within the Athlone community, and the country.
- The nation also observed 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children campaign.

## THE MEANING OF RECONCILIATION & FORGIVENESS

“Reconciliation means working together to correct the legacy of past injustice”  
Nelson Mandela

“How I forgave the man who murdered my father” – Candice Mama

“At the age of 23, there I was with my family ready to finally meet the man who took away not only my father, but so many others. I was surprised at how I froze and allowed my mother to lead the line of questioning until I became present again”



“Many people held onto that dream of a utopian society, expecting that it would seamlessly unfold. However, it is up to the nation to equip its people with the capacity and tools to confront the past. Then it is up to the individuals to take those tools and move forward”

## HOW TO CELEBRATE RECONCILIATION DAY?

1. Create awareness about the significance of Reconciliation as a tool to build the nation.
2. Educate yourself about the meaning of Reconciliation day.
3. Engage in activities that will foster social cohesion and reconciliation while observing all the COVID-19 regulations.
4. Visit a heritage site, Iziko Museums of South Africa will be open on this public holiday (16 December) and entrance is free.
5. Violence against women has been recognised as a global epidemic, men must have conversations with their sons and must take action to end Gender-Based Violence.
6. Strive for equality for everyone and speak out against all forms of violence.
7. Raise South Africa's national flag high to foster, promote and entrench national consciousness, social cohesion, nation building and patriotism
8. Join the conversation on social media platforms using the hashtags #ReconciliationMonth2020 #ReconciliationDay2020 #UniteAgainstAllIntolerances

## RECOMMENDED AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIAL TO WATCH

1. Long Night's Journey into Day (2000):  
<https://vimeo.com/ondemand/longnightsjourneyintoday>
2. Invictus (2009)  
[https://www.imdb.com/video/vi1889666329?playlistId=tt1057500&ref\\_=tt\\_ov\\_vi](https://www.imdb.com/video/vi1889666329?playlistId=tt1057500&ref_=tt_ov_vi)
3. Cry the Beloved Country (1995):  
<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6fui2c>
4. Reconciliation: Mandela's Miracle (2010):  
[https://www.imdb.com/video/vi2658572569?playlistId=tt1664818&ref\\_=tt\\_ov\\_vi](https://www.imdb.com/video/vi2658572569?playlistId=tt1664818&ref_=tt_ov_vi)
5. The Forgiven (2018):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hlsQMp4o5j0>
6. A Human Being Died that Night: A South African Story:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E1-01dPT1bk>
7. Nelson Mandela: an 'Icon of Reconciliation and Forgiveness':  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnplyHzHukc>

## Key Call to Action:

“We challenge South Africans to confront their preconceived ideas about race and racism”

<https://www.gov.za/ReconciliationMonth2020>

## References

1. The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, Natal: Historical Province, South Africa <https://www.britannica.com/place/Natal-historical-province-South-Africa#ref274358> (accessed 3 December 2020)
2. Luke Daniel, **Reconciliation Day: Revisiting the Battle of Blood River** <https://www.thesouthafrican.com/opinion/day-of-reconciliation-battle-of-blood-river/> (accessed 3 December 2020)
3. <https://www.nelsonmandela.org> (accessed 4 December 2020)
4. <https://www.gov.za/documents/constitution-republic-south-africa-1996-preamble> (accessed 4 December 2020)
5. <http://www.dac.gov.za/content/minister-mthethwa-launch-reconciliation-month-through-racism-and-gender-based-violence-and> (accessed 4 December 2020)
6. Candice Mama, How I forgave the Man who murdered my father, <https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/candice-mama-south-africa-forgiveness-reconciliation> (accessed 4 December 2020)
7. Reconciliation Month, <https://www.gov.za/ReconciliationMonth2020> (accessed 4 December 2020)