

## **Diversity Literacy Week 8 – Race**

### **Group Assignment 3 – A Dry White Season (1989)**

“In *A Dry White Season*, Donald Sutherland portrays the character of Ben Du Toit, a South African school teacher. The story takes place in 1976, around the Soweto Riots. The story begins when a gardener at Ben's school, a black man named Gordon, seeks his help while investigating the death of his son during the Riots. Like many South African whites, Ben refuses to get involved in the racial divides that have been tearing the country apart, thinking that Gordon's claims against the white minority government are unfounded. Things change when Ben sees firsthand the brutality by his own race against blacks, particularly when he sees the dead body of Gordon at the morgue not long after being tortured at the hands of the secret, corrupt government police. Gordon's wife, Emily, is also killed later, and also under suspicious circumstances.”

Extract from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A\\_Dry\\_White\\_Season](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Dry_White_Season)

**Please read the questions below before the film starts. Think about the questions as you watch the film and then as a group discuss the Group Assignment questions at the end and together formulate an answer. This is an academic piece, proper referencing required.**

**Clip 1:** The film opens with scenes depicting scenes from South Africa 1976 [00:00 – 25:50]

**Clip 2:** Gordon Ngubane is dead. Ben du Toit having seen his body, and realizing he was tortured, takes the matter to court. The court case is a farce and du Toit seeing this starts to realise how naïve he has been. A picture of him and Emily Ngubane outside the courthouse appears in a local newspaper and his wife is unhappy. [1:03:35 – 1:07:15]

**Clip 3:** Ben du Toit has taken up the Ngubane case. Along with Stanley Makhaya and Melanie Bruwer he starts gathering evidence against Cpt Stoltz. His employer and family are becoming increasingly irritated with him. [1:20:34 – 1:43:05]

**While watching the movie reflect on Ben Du Toit’s character and political position in the context of the below quote:**

“My ignorance should not be an excuse for having participated in the ideological and theological legitimization of the apartheid security state. For my part in it: I would like to ask for forgiveness to all those who have suffered.” - George Meyer Place, Kempton Park, Submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

1. In light of the above quote, discuss and critique the character, Ben Du Toit’s political position before he sees the dead body of Gordon.
2. Reflect on the consequences of Ben du Toit’s decision to resist.



### Group Assignment 3 (1500 words)

- How does “ignorance” such as Ben Du Toit’s, serve to entrench white power?
- In what ways is this type of “ignorance” in your groups played out today? What might be some of the consequences of you deciding to challenge this ‘ignorance’?