



# A Brief History of Apartheid in South Africa



South Africa is a country blessed with an abundance of natural resources including fertile farmlands and unique mineral resources. South African mines are world leaders in the production of diamonds and gold as well as strategic metals such as platinum. The climate is mild, reportedly resembling the Byron Bay area weather..

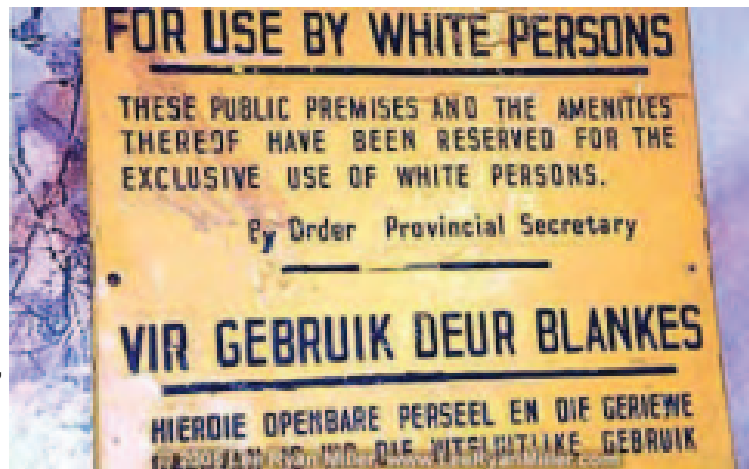


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South Africa was colonized by the English and Dutch in the seventeenth century. English domination of the Dutch descendants (known as Boers or Afrikaners) resulted in the Dutch establishing the new colonies of Orange Free State and Transvaal. The discovery of

diamonds in these lands around 1900 resulted in an English invasion which sparked the Boer War. Following independence from England, an uneasy power-sharing between the two groups held sway until the 1940s, when the Afrikaner National Party was able to gain a strong majority. Strategists in the National Party invented apartheid as a means to cement their control over the economic and social system. Initially, the aim of the apartheid was to maintain white domination while extending racial separation. Starting in the '60s, a plan of "Grand Apartheid" was executed, emphasizing territorial separation and police repression.

With the enactment of apartheid laws in 1948, racial discrimination was institutionalized. Race laws touched every aspect of social life, including a prohibition of marriage between non-whites and whites, and the sanctioning of "white-only" jobs. In 1950, the Population Registration Act required that all South Africans are racially



classified into one of three categories: white, black (African), or coloured (of mixed descent). The coloured category included major subgroups of Indians and Asians. Classification into these categories was based on appearance, social acceptance, and descent. For example, a white person was defined as "in appearance obviously a white person or generally accepted as a white person." A person could not be considered white if one of his or her parents were non-white. The determination that a person was "obviously white" would take into account "his habits, education, and speech and deportment and demeanor."

A black person would be accepted as a member of an African tribe or race, and a colored person is one that is not black or white. The Department of Home Affairs (a government bureau) was responsible for the classification of the citizenry. Non-compliance with the race laws was dealt with harshly. All blacks were required to carry "pass books" containing fingerprints, photos, and information on access to non-black areas.

In 1951, the Bantu Authorities Act established a basis for ethnic government in African reserves, known as "homelands." These homelands were independent states to which each African was assigned by the government according to the record of origin (which was frequently inaccurate). All political rights, including voting, held by an African were restricted to the designated homeland. The idea was that they would be citizens of the homeland, losing their citizenship in South Africa and any right of involvement with the South African Parliament which held complete hegemony (= complete control) over the homelands.



From 1976 to 1981, four of these homelands were created, denationalizing nine million South Africans. The homeland administrations refused the nominal independence, maintaining pressure for political rights within the country as a whole. Nevertheless, Africans living in the homelands needed passports to enter South Africa: aliens in their own country.

In 1953, the Public Safety Act and the Criminal Law Amendment Act were passed, which empowered the government to declare stringent states of emergency and increased penalties for protesting against or supporting the repeal of a law. The penalties included fines, imprisonment, and whippings.

In 1960, a large group of blacks in Sharpeville refused to carry their passes; the government declared a state of emergency. The emergency lasted for 156 days, leaving 69 people dead and 187 people wounded.



Wielding the Public Safety Act and the Criminal Law Amendment Act, the white regime had no intention of changing the unjust laws of apartheid. The penalties imposed on political protest, even non-violent protest, were severe. During the states of emergency which continued intermittently (= on again off again) until 1989, anyone could be detained without a hearing by a low-level police official for up to six months. Thousands of individuals died in custody, frequently after gruesome acts of torture. Those who were tried were sentenced to death, banished, or imprisoned for life, like **Nelson Mandela**.



The apartheid policy was highly effective in achieving its goal of preferential treatment for whites, as is demonstrated by the statistics in Figure 1 on the following page.

<b>Apartheid and the People of South Africa</b>		
	<i>Blacks</i>	<i>Whites</i>
Population	19 million	4.5 million
Land Allocation	13 percent	87 percent
Share of National Income	< 20 percent	75 percent
Ratio of average earnings	1	14
Minimum taxable income	360 rands	750 rands
Doctors/population	1/44,000	1/400
Infant mortality rate	20% (urban) 40% (rural)	2.7%
Annual expenditure on education per pupil	\$45	\$696
Teacher/pupil ratio	1/60	1/22

Figure 1: Disproportionate Treatment circa 1978. Source: [Lco80]

## The History of Apartheid - Questions and Answers to Seriously Keep in Mind

1. Who colonized the South African people? When?
2. Which discovery sparked a war between Dutch settlers (Boers/Afrikaners) and the invading English?
3. What was the initial aim (goal) of apartheid?
4. When was apartheid first enacted?
5. Describe two race laws that were enacted after apartheid was institutionalized.
6. Describe the three classifications of South African citizens.
7. What were "homelands?" Who were placed in them? Why?
8. When were States of Emergency used? What was the result in 1960?
9. Up until 1989 (nearing the end of apartheid), what happened to those who protested the apartheid system?
10. What are some statistics that demonstrate preferential treatment of whites in South Africa during apartheid?
11. What do you think happened to the apartheid system?

## Inside Out

# Nelson Mandela

On 10<sup>th</sup> May 1994, Nelson Mandela became the first black president of South Africa. Mandela's political party, the African National Congress (ANC), had just won the country's first-ever democratic elections. The minority white population had held power for the previous 300 years, and from 1948 to the early 1990s the country had lived under a system of *apartheid* (meaning "separateness" in Afrikaans, one of the languages spoken in South Africa) which forced blacks and whites to live in separate areas, study in separate schools, and use separate public services (everything from hospitals to public transport).

Mandela, who called *apartheid* a "human disaster", wanted the different races to live together as equals in South Africa. After the 1994 elections, he said: "Never, never again will this beautiful land experience the oppression of one by another". Mandela knew a lot about oppression because in 1964 the government had sentenced him to life in prison for his political work in the ANC, which at the time was an illegal organization.

During his trial in the city of Pretoria, Mandela told the court that he hoped South Africa would one day become "a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities".

The world did not forget about Mandela while he was in prison: many governments and other organizations put pressure on the South African government to set him free and end *apartheid*. Finally, in 1990, the government released Mandela from prison and began to talk to the ANC about creating a democracy for the country. Mandela was president of South Africa until 1999 when he decided to retire from political life. He is still very busy, however: even at the age of 87 he travels around the world to meet important politicians and give speeches. He is one of the most admired public figures in the world, and people always want to hear what he has to say.