

Apartheid: the resistance assignment

[History](#)



“ At least I can count on you to protect me if the violence comes, can’t I, Cephas? ” The White Johannesburg housewife, unnerved by stories of nearby riots, looked up from the newspaper at her longtime servant. “ Ma’am,” he replied slowly, “ you’re the first one I’m going to shoot. “(Apartheid’s Rebels). Apartheid, which by definition means “ apartness”, is a period in South African history in which the official policy was legal separation of whites and non-whites involving political, legal, and economic discrimination.

This paper will discuss the beginning of apartheid rule in South Africa, the internal resistance that apartheid was met with, and the dismantling of apartheid. Introducing apartheid to South Africa led to the repression and the eventual uprising of Africans fighting against the government, using any means necessary to complete their goal of racial equality. The system of apartheid is a result of colonial rule entrenched from the time European settlers came to Africa to exploit its natural resources. Aside from the mineral resources such as gold, diamonds, and ivory.

Most importantly, Africa offered the commodity of black slaves to be sold and deported to the highest bidder regardless of country. British and French rule were the prominent players in the beginning. White Europeans came to Africa and were granted the most fertile, agriculturally efficient land. These lands were taken away from their native African owners and given away without any kind of compensation. The lands that these Europeans were given became known as settler colonies and this tradition for many years.

In 1948, the Afrikaner nationalist government came into power and strengthened the Apartheid System which would stand for nearly fifty more

years. As the gulf of racial segregation widened, Africans would have to endure “ forced removals” which entailed being moved to specific areas for non-whites known as “ homelands. ” The most famous example of a homeland would be when thousands of Africans were moved from Johannesburg to Soweto, which is an acronym for South Western Township.

This segregated area would later play a key role in the anti-apartheid movement(Wikipedia). Discrimination occurred at two levels, there was Grand Apartheid, which established separate homelands and areas, and ‘ Petty Apartheid’ which segregated everyday places. The Separate Amenities Act of 1953, included a clause stating that separate facilities no longer had to be ‘ substantially equal’, so allowing the government to provide better facilities to whites(Cape Town). The National

Party introduced a number of legislative acts, the most prominent are Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act 55 which disallowed any marriage between a white person and a person of color, The Immorality Act 21 of 1950 which forbade of any immoral act between a white person and an African, Indian, or colored person. According to the Apartheid Handbook, the public facilities that were most affected by segregation was “ Among others, post offices and government buildings, including police stations, were either totally segregated or had partitions erected in them so that whites could served on one side and blacks on the other.

Liquor outlets had to be segregated. Civic halls, libraries, parks, theatres, cinemas, hotels, restaurants, cafes, and clubs were normally barred to blacks if situated in “ white” areas. Sports amenities and beaches were also

reserved for the use of one racial group(46). Most of the aforementioned segregated areas were put into effect by the Group Areas Act. The population was classified into four groups: Black, White, Indian, and Colored. (These terms are capitalized to denote their legal definitions in South African law). The Colored group included people of mixed Bantu, Khoisan, and European descent (Wikipedia).

Police would brutally assault Africans without cause or provocation(Wikipedia). Africans resented the white European settlers who had swooped in and stole their land. Eventually, there were poorly led efforts to fight apartheid but it was loosely organized and never resulted in anything worthwhile. These uprisings were met with more police brutality and government involvement in strengthening racial segregation between whites and non-whites. Eventually a pass system was introduced by the government to allow coloreds into white-only areas to work and in certain cases live in these restricted areas.

Each non-white was to always have their pass with them at all times, the cards contained information regarding their home address and the employment status of the individual. These passes earned the nickname dompas, which means “ dumb pass” in Afrikaans(Wikipedia). The strongest form of opposition came in the organization known as the African National Congress (ANC), which was formerly known as the South African Natives National Conference formed in 1912 to fight for the rights of Africans and oppose the British and Afrikaner power(Apartheid’s Rebels).

Now, with the ANC being strengthened within by its Youth League movement, which would become known as the ANCYL, they would finally openly resist government repression and organize uprisings to fight for racial equality in South Africa. A prominent leader in the ANCYL was Nelson Mandela, who would later become a symbol of civil change decades later. In 1949, the ANC made a change from the strictly constitutional protest of the past to peaceful yet unlawful demonstrations. To facilitate this, the ANC launched the Defiance Campaign of 1950. This campaign was the beginning of a mass movement of resistance to apartheid.

The government attempted to stop the campaign through the banning of its leaders and the passing of laws. Although this was a non-violent demonstration, demonstrators decided to hold a bonfire and burn their passes as a symbol that they will not tolerate repression any longer. Despite resistance by the government, the campaign experienced significant gains, leading to the formation of other organizations such as the South African Colored People's Organization (SACPO) and the Congress of Democrats (COD), an organization opposing white Democrats. The government reacted by arresting the leaders of the movement, notably Nelson Mandela, Dr.

Moroka, Walter Sisulu. These new organizations, along with the South African Congress of Trade (SACTU), formed the Congress Alliance. This congress consisted of representatives of the people of South Africa who submitted the people's demands to the government. A document dubbed the Freedom Charter, which contained these demands, was adopted on June 26, 1955.

The charter read " We, the people of South Africa... declare for all our country and the world to know that South Africa belongs to all who live in it,

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black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of the people”(Apartheid’s Rebels, 7).

The government claimed it was a Communist document and arrested the leaders of the Congress Alliance(Opposition and Resistance). The trial in which the nineteen leaders pleaded their case was dubbed the Rivonia Trial, a suburb of Johannesburg. The official charges were 221 acts of sabotage designed to overthrow the apartheid system(Wikipedia). The trial was meant to discredit the ANC and try to send a message to all those who were protesting. The men whose involvement was marginal at best received lighter sentences, but the men including Mandela were sentenced to life imprisonment.

Consequently, during the 1960s a range of measures was introduced to provide for the further tightening of influx control (which include Bantu Laws Amendment Act of 1964 and the Bantu Labor Act of 1964). These and other measures froze the construction of housing for urban Africans, provided for the repatriation of redundant and surplus labor to the Bantustans, and facilitated the removal of leasehold and property rights and the reduction of expenditure on urban services(State, Resistance and Change...).

With the arrests of the ANC party leaders, many followers were forced into organizing events underground to avoid any police or government involvement. The event that brought Apartheid to the world was known as the Sharpeville Massacre. World leaders from around the world could be heard fighting for the rights of all Africans. Che Guevera, while at the United Nations in 1964 speaking about Fidel Castro had this to say about apartheid:

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“ We speak out to put the world on guard against what is happening in South Africa. The brutal policy of apartheid is applied before the eyes of the nations of the world.

The peoples of Africa are compelled to endure the fact that on the African continent the superiority of one race over another remains official policy, and that in the name of this racial superiority murder is committed with impunity”(Che Reader). Can the United Nations do nothing to stop this? The ANC planned to lead a peaceful demonstration against pass laws, but the Pan African Congress (PAC), a group comprised of former ANC members who felt that their means would never result in anything chose to hold a campaign of their own just a few days earlier.

An estimated 5, 000 to 7, 000 protestors convened on a police station to willfully (and peacefully) surrender their pass books. The police fired upon the unarmed protestors eventually killing sixty seven people. In 1998, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) found that the police actions constituted “ gross human rights violations in that excessive force was unnecessarily used to stop a gathering of unarmed people(Truth and Reconciliation...). Panic swept South Africa’s white community as riots spread rapidly through the nation’s black townships.

Thirty thousand blacks marched on Cape Town, prompting a tottering government to declare a state of emergency and attempt to restore order by detaining thousands of activists(Apartheid’s Rebels, 12). This event led to the banning of both the ANC and PAC organizations, most leaders were either imprisoned or exiled to other African nations who were now

independent. An old friend of Mandela, Oliver Tambo who had been exiled was organizing actions among the underground and keeping the resistance afloat. The actions taken by police in Sharpeville were enough to convince the ANC that peaceful demonstrations were not being effective and that armed struggle. The ANC was in a difficult position and after much deliberation arrived at a conclusion. Since the outlets for peaceful protest had been banned, violent forms of political protest were inevitable. In 1961, feeling they had been left with no other choice, the ANC took up arms against the South African government. The Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) organization was formed to carry out acts of sabotage by attacking strategic buildings of significance to the white government.

In a span of 18 months, MK carried out 200 acts of sabotage. The government threatened to take strong action, but the morale of the black population was only strengthened (Opposition and Resistance). Years would pass while both the ANC and PAC regrouped carefully in order to avoid detection from law enforcement. In 1969, the ANC began structuring itself into an organization with a streamlined hierarchical structure. The party decided instead of an armed struggle to return to the idea of methodically building a sturdy infrastructure of resistance (Apartheid's Rebels).

In the early 1970s, Steve Biko, was instituting a whole movement on focusing on black political revival through psychological emancipation, it did not believe in civil disobedience and armed struggle as a means of reawakening black pride. Quote, " We are not going to get into an armed struggle... We'll leave it to the PAC and ANC" (Apartheid's Rebels, 24).

Despite the efforts of the ANC, the apartheid system continued to grow
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stronger and exert more control over the people's lives. In the 1970's, increasing prices made it more difficult to survive on small incomes. Strikes broke out and workers walked away from jobs demanding higher wages.

Fed up with the situation, student anger exploded June 16th, 1976 in the town of Soweto. More than 10, 000 students engaged in peaceful protest against coercive use of Afrikaans (a native language) at schools. Feeling threatened, police unjustifiably opened fire on the students (Opposition and Resistance). The end result of this demonstration ended with more than 500 fatalities and thousands more wounded (" Soweto Uprising", Wikipedia). During 1976 a total of 128 people were killed and over 400 injured in Cape Town's urban violence, drawing both national and international attention to the situation.

Some academics, welfare groups, businessmen and newspapers took a concerned stance on the authorities' repression and violence and called for more cross-racial contact, political rights and citizenship for blacks (Opposition and Resistance). Steve Biko would be apprehended by law enforcement and later executed while in custody. In parallel to student protests, labor unions started protest action in 1973 and 1974. After 1976 unions and workers are considered to have played an important role in the struggle against apartheid, filling the gap left by the banning of political parties.

In 1979 black trade unions were legalized and could engage in collective bargaining, although strikes were still illegal. ANC training camps popped up throughout nearby countries to train military strategy and weapons training

to fight the apartheid system. The United Nations started to impose sanctions on South Africa and following the violent protests of 1976, the government was pressured to adopt a policy that combined repression and reform. The decision to impose Afrikaans as the language of education was reversed, and instead government announced the provision of free education, textbooks and larger salaries for teachers.

B. J. Vorster, the prime minister, agreed that African participation was needed in township government. In 1978, P. W. Botha became prime minister and proceeded with the apartheid blueprint of ‘homelands’ and influx control, but promised reform and a new constitution. As domestic and international pressure increased, Botha relaxed aspects of ‘petty apartheid’ such as the strict segregation of sport, thereby hoping to avoid international sanctions (Opposition and Resistance). In the 1980’s, the fight for liberation rose to new heights.

Thousands of youth joined the MK, white governmental reform was rejected, and community organizations began to emerge. One of the largest organizations formed was the Congress of South Africa Students (COSAS) which branched throughout South Africa. Continual protest by workers led to the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in 1986. As resistance to apartheid continued to grow, a state of emergency was declared in some parts of South Africa in July of 1985. It lasted for six months and eventually led to the declaration of a national state of emergency in June of 1986.

This national state of emergency continued through 1990. The two years following the 1986 National State of Emergency brought tight control over the media, the recruitment of township policemen ('kitskonstabels') and sponsorship of conservative vigilantes. Nonetheless, the effects of international pressure, a dwindling economy and the government's lack of legitimacy meant that a critical point had been reached in national politics. The anti-apartheid movements in the United States and Europe were gaining support for boycotts against South Africa, for the withdrawal of U. S. arms from South Africa and for the release of Mandela. South Africa was becoming an outlaw in the world community of nations. Investing in South Africa by Americans and others was coming to an end and an active policy of disinvestment ensued. In 1989, Botha suffered a stroke and was succeeded by F. W. de Klerk. F. W. de Klerk became the president of South Africa in 1989. Instead of supporting apartheid, which was expected, he proclaimed "white domination will have to disappear. Otherwise there will never be peace in South Africa." In 1990, Nelson Mandela was released from jail, and he quickly gained supporters.

His continual determination to end apartheid strengthened the movement even more. As a result, the government repealed the last laws supporting apartheid in 1991, allowing democracy to be ushered into the country slowly but surely. In 1993, de Klerk and Mandela shared the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts in bringing peace to South Africa. In 1994 the first free multiracial elections were held. Millions of new voters chose from The Afrikaner National Party, the black supremacist Inkatha Freedom Party, and the

moderate ANC. The ANC received the most votes (nearly 60%) and Nelson Mandela was elected President by the new Parliament.

Apartheid was over(The End of Apartheid). The Government of National Unity was established, its cabinet made up of twelve ANC representatives, six from the NP, and three from the IFP. Thabo Mbeki and Frederik Willem de Klerk were made deputy presidents(Wikipedia, " South Africa..."). The pace of economic growth has doubled since the end of apartheid and inflation has been brought down to low and predictable levels. The studies here suggest that these favorable trends reflect disciplined macroeconomic policies, diversification of the economy's productive base, and an opening up of the economy to foreign trade.

In the process, the delivery of basic social services has been greatly improved and important gains in welfare have been achieved. Concerted action has also been undertaken to address the incidence of HIV/AIDS, which has taken such a heavy social and economic toll. High growth, however, has yet to be accompanied by a significant expansion in job opportunities; policymakers need to continue to focus on upgrading job skills and reducing labor costs if substantive inroads are to be made in lowering unemployment and alleviating poverty(IMF).

Present day South Africa is a nation with growing pains. Years of suffering and government repression has led to a huge amount of uneducated population which has led to high unemployment and similar poverty levels as well. There have been reports of corruption within the government and issues with power grid problems(New York Times) Rich and poor, black, white

and mixed race: their complaints may differ, but the discontent is shared. Polls show a pervasive distrust of government, political parties and the police(New York Times).

Although apartheid ended nearly 15 years ago, there is still a racial divide... not within confined areas like the old days but wealth seems to be the major factor in the divide among today's post-apartheid South Africa. To conclude, I chose the subject of apartheid because even though I was vaguely aware of what apartheid meant, I knew that as a business student it is important to be aware of other cultures as the economy and business world becomes more globalized. After researching the subject, I feel that South Africans are one of the most remarkable people in the world.

Despite the repeated government repression, the people never relented. As they were slowly being removed from their lands in the days of early British and French exploration, through the colonial period, the resistance, and finally to the day that the first democratic election took place nearly two hundred years later, the uprising would not stop and they would make their voice heard. Of course, they relied on outside socioeconomic factors in helping influence the South African government, but the educated elite would end up using the Western tactics that European immigrants used on their ancestors years before.

Before this class, I would associate South Africa with the AIDS epidemic and poverty, and to be honest highly uneducated. After this class, I've come away with a deep respect for the people of Africa and I feel that the greatest country in the world, the United States could definitely learn a few things

about what it means to be a patriot. Bibliography “ Apartheid. ” The Free Dictionary. No date. 14 June 2009. . Bearak, Barry. “ Post-Apartheid South Africa Enters Anxious Era. ” The New York Times. 5 Oct. 2008. 16 June 2009. . Bickford Smith V. , E. van Heyningham and N. Worden. “ Petty Apartheid” Apartheid. 2008. 13 June 2009. Colonialism is Doomed: Address to the United Nations. 11 Dec. 1964. The Che Reader: Ocean Press, 2005. Davis, Stephen A. Apartheid’s Rebels. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987. “ Education Inequality in South Africa” HistoryWiz. 2008. 10 June 2009. . Fatton, Jr. , Robert. Black Consciousness in South Africa. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986. Frankel, Phillip H. , Pines, Noah, and Swilling, Mark. State, Resistance and Change in South America. New York: Meuthen, 1988. Nowak, Michael, and Luca Antonio Ricci. Post Apartheid: The First 10 Years. Washington, D. C. : International Monetary Fund, 2005.

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