

# The global exponent of the african race struggles: the apartheid

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Apartheid means separateness, or apartness, in the Afrikaans language. Such a simple, unassuming word...until you realize the real-world effect that word has had on humanity. Racial discrimination, inequality, and oppression are a small part of the evil that causes men to classify other men as different, or less than. There is a lesson to be learned from studying apartheid and that lesson is that it comes in many forms and is called by many names, but that abuse of power exists today and it permeates all areas of the globe. How many more great atrocities will humanity have to face before we embrace our differences and treat all men and women as our own brothers and sisters?

The pre-cursor to apartheid legislation, in South Africa, dates back to the 1850s. At that time legislation was written dividing masters and servants, skilled and unskilled workers. Members of the master and skilled classes were generally white and benefitted from the laws. Servants and unskilled workers were generally non-white and were exposed to great oppression under these laws. Examples; the Masters and Servants Acts of 1856 and 1904, making it illegal for unskilled workers to strike, and the Black Land Act of 1913 (through 1991) preventing non-whites from owning land outside of the designated reserves which was about 7% of all the land in South Africa.

Apartheid became an official national policy, for South Africa, when the National Party gained power in 1948, and remained in effect for nearly 50 years. It's important to remember that whites made up only 20% of the population during that time. About 70% of the population was black, around 2% Asians (mostly from India), and about 8% were of mixed race, classified as coloreds. While racial discrimination was not new in South Africa, the <https://assignbuster.com/the-global-exponent-of-the-african-race-struggles-the-apartheid/>

legislation surrounding apartheid legalized the human rights violations enacted against the non-whites of that nation. Since the unification of South Africa in 1910, the white minority had been pursuing segregation. The National Party (comprised of descendants of Dutch settlers, living in groups known as the Boer Republics) began enforcing policies of racial segregation in which non-white South Africans were forced to live in separate areas, go to separate, inferior schools, and use separate public facilities such as separate parks, public transportation, and beaches. Non-whites were forced to carry identification when traveling within the country and were subject to brutality and arrest if found not in compliance. Marriage between people of different races was strictly forbidden and even illegal.

An organization called the African National Congress responded to the apartheid laws with civil disobedience, boycotts, and strikes. This organization began what they called the Defiance Campaign and their leader was Nelson Mandela. Mandela worked as a mostly peaceful activist against racial inequality for nearly 20 years before he went on to co-found a militant organization and was eventually arrested for conspiracy against the government and sentenced to life in prison.

The policies of South Africa came under international scrutiny in 1960, when the Prime Minister of Britain at the time, Harold Macmillan, spoke against apartheid at his famous Wind of Change speech in Cape Town, South Africa. A few short weeks later the Sharpeville Massacre occurred, in which the South African Police fired into a crowd of protesters, killing 69 people. This brought further scrutiny on an international level. It became clear that the

powerful white minority would resort to violent behavior to stifle opposition to the racial inequality. Although, western nations began to view apartheid as a danger to peace between the nations and viewed the system for what it was, systematic violations of human-rights, western nations were relatively slow to react.

The General Assembly of the United Nations began formal discussions, regarding South Africa and apartheid, in 1966. The National Party responded by doubling down on their efforts and further suppressed the non-white majority. Many actions were presented with regard to economic sanctions and ejecting South Africa from the United Nations. Sadly, major trade associates, like the United States, France, and Britain voted against these proposed actions, wary of financial losses. Furthermore, and not surprisingly, the United States did not speak out against South Africa's policies of racial segregation. After all, we had our own similar policies at the time, Jim Crow laws. The United States attempted to maintain a close relationship with the powerful, white rulers of South Africa and didn't show much concern for the non-white population. Ronald Reagan even considered the African National Congress " a terrorist organization." Mandela even remained on a U. S. terrorism watch list as late as 2008. (Washington Post)

The United Nations General Assembly formally denounced apartheid in 1973, a mandatory arms embargo was imposed by the United Nations Security Council in 1976, and the United States and the United Kingdom eventually imposed economic sanction on South Africa in 1985. These embargos and sanctions created enough financial pressure from the international

community that the National Party abolished some of the work-related laws and the ban on interracial marriage. The international community found this to be too little, too late and was influential in a change of power. F. W. de Klerk became the State President in 1989 and reformed the National Party into the, newly named, New National Party. De Klerk was influential in the release, from prison after 27 years, of Nelson Mandela and together they brokered the end of apartheid. This alliance and their efforts would earn both men the Nobel Peace Prize. South Africa held its first multiracial parliamentary elections on April 26, 1994. 22 million South Africans cast ballots and an overwhelming majority voted Nelson Mandela and his African National Congress party to lead the country. He chose de Klerk as his first deputy.

The flag of post-apartheid South Africa symbolizes unity. It is comprised of the red, white, and blue colors of the Boer Republics, and the yellow, black, and green colors from the African National Congress. Mandela worked hard to improve race relations, discouraged non-whites from retaliating against that white minority, and proclaimed the country “ a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world.” Mandela credits churches as playing a decisive role in dismantling apartheid. He says that church leaders of various faiths donated money to the African National Congress and continually pressured the U. S. government to instill sanctions against South Africa.

Apartheid was only able to exist while South Africa was itself segregated from the world stage. As life continues to remind us, evil cannot exist in the light. Once the world truly understood the consequences of apartheid on the

actual humans on which these laws were imposed, humanity could no longer tolerate it. Hegemonic and coercive power can only serve the powerful while the populace allows it. Eventually the oppressed will rise and demand their human rights. Current politicians, globally, would do well to remember this. Divisiveness, as a tool, will only work for so long before the populace realizes that they are more alike than they are different and look to the powerful to place blame.