

How is the history of south africa best understood?



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Various scholars have tried defining the history of South Africa using different perspectives, including the radical, liberalism, and imperialism approach. The liberalists who are viewed to have held minimal political power asserted that the segregation that existed during that period was as a result of the superiority of the whites and inferiority of the blacks. The radicals, on contrast, base the history of South Africa in the gaps that existed between the different social classes. The contemporary history of South Africa evolves around racial segregation in apartheid ruled and anti-apartheid social organizations, and the transition of most of the rural African population from pastoralist-cultivators to the present subsistence rural population. The subsistence type of farming forced most of the rural-based Africans to work in the white industries and farms for their wages because their meager earnings could not sustain their survival. The reasons behind the transition include diminutions of the land initially owned by Africans by annexation and conquest, the establishment of reserves and deteriorating them into overcrowded and overstocked rural ghettos, and turning the role of the peasants to providing migratory labor. It is undebatable that racism was and remains to be an integral aspect of the South African societal structure. The Afrikaner nationalist traditions are characterized by encoded series of prejudice and paternalism. This paper explores the history of South Africa using the liberalism lens.

Apartheid rule in South Africa cannot be well elaborated without the inferring on the biological theories of superiority. For doctrinal and pragmatic reasons, the dominant cultural essentialism language is crude racialism that is closely associated with social Darwinism. Notions of hierarchy, exclusivity, and the

white superiority over the Africans have existed for an extended period as either less or more conscious habits of mind. To analyze the theoretical racism that was experienced in South Africa, it is crucial to understand how the different racial theories make part of the white supremacy ideology. In the apartheid case, the ideology of racism is traced back to the existing notions of human differences. The formation of the Afrikaner nationalism is dated to the end of the Boer war with the primary goal of challenging the British imperialism. However, the movement was slow in addressing the widening gap between white and black South Africans directly. Regardless of the movement's strong resistance to the enacted administrative regulations regarding the segregation policies of Smuts and Hertzog, Malan and his descendants flunked to come up with a complete alternative segregationist policy resulting to the passing of the Native Bills in the year 1936. The situation further worsened following the Second World War when the movement was entirely locked out of political power, which made them subject to radical ideologies.

The roots of apartheid have been associated with the developments of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) in the 19th century especially after the Cape committee's approval of split church gatherings resulting in the conception of a segregated mission church in 1881. Scholars assert that such developments were a great sign of racial awareness even in the ordinary church showing how racial segregation was becoming a consistent principle. Various Christian-nationalists offer a different perspective on the racial discrimination that existed in South Africa. For instance, Koot Vorster argues that the difference in color should not only be viewed using the outer skin

only but also the manifestation of the inward physical, radical and psychological difference, therefore cannot be isolated. According to Vorster, it is indubitable that people from different races vary in intelligence, and as a result of the spiritual and physical irreconcilabilities, it could be more distressful if they interacted freely. This argument was supported by another advocate from the same faith and argued that culture and race are inherently connected, and color dissimilarity is more complicated than the outward view of the skin color.

The unfavorable apartheid rule resulted in the formation of the anti-apartheid movement, which remains to be the most instrumental social movement after the Second World War. This movement comprised of unions, solidarity organizations, churches, student, youth, and women's organizations. The focus of this movement has not been documented, but they fought against the global tradition of racial equality that had already taken roots in South Africa. The anti-apartheid association was also concerned with and received their strength from the emerging issues and strengthening aspects such as democratization and the rights of human beings in the global political setting in the post-war period. The anti-apartheid movement started in the earlier 1960s. At first, the social campaign aimed at offering legal support to people who had been prosecuted for going against the set apartheid rules and provide support to the apartheid prisoners' families. The extensive anti-apartheid campaign was in effect in 1959 as the South African anti-apartheid unions mobilized people to the transnational boycott of goods from South Africa. This led to the anti-colonial Committee of African Organizations holding a meeting in London

with the speakers being Julius Nyerere of Tanganyika Africa National Union, and Father Trevor Huddleston. Some of the achievements of the conference included the formation of the Independent Boycott Movement, which was changed to Anti-Apartheid Movement in 1960, which comprised of South African Exiles as the majority and some British Supporters.

The Anti-Apartheid movement held messy protests in various countries while ending the demand of their respective governments to put the apartheid law to an end. The global mobilization by this movement prompted the UN General Assembly to pass a resolution which they referred to as public opinion of the world. This assembly declared that the racial discrimination policies that were exercised using the apartheid law in South Africa were violating the principles and standards of Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Some of the crucial factors that enabled the South African Apartheid rule to attain its influence globally include the cold war context. Even though the African states had shown some division, especially during the Cold War, they declared unity in matters of advocating against racial equality as well decolonization through the formation of the Organisation of African Unity in 1963.

The history of South Africa can also be described in terms of the emergence and decline of the peasantry. The precolonial-history of South Africa evolved at the rural population working as pastoralist-cultivation. This economic activity has been associated with the abundance in land as well as the available land for all. This was followed by a transition to subsistence farming, and being unable to sustain themselves entirely from their produce. The Africans were forced to work in the white industries and farms. The <https://assignbuster.com/how-is-the-history-of-south-africa-best-understood/>

whites acquired the land through the creation of reserves for the rural African population, grabbing land forcefully through annexation and conquest as well as controlling all the factors of labor and use Africans as their source of migratory labor. The liberal argument to the emergence of the peasantry in South Africa is that the inherent weakness of the African economy, as well as the failure to improve their agricultural methods, made them lag in the market economy. Therefore, the challenges Africans faced in the subsistence economy to a broader extent was because they lacked technology know-how as well as their reluctance to neglect their native life. The racial segregation came into play whereby coercive and discriminatory means were used by wielders of political and economic power, in this case, the whites, to disadvantage the rural African population. Besides, the deterioration in the farming output of the South African resulted in greater dependence on the whites for wages resulted in the capitalist nature as well as the wide gap in terms of income between the Africans and the whites.

Conclusively, the history of South Africa can be defined using various perspectives, including radicalism and liberalism. However, from the discussion, the history of South Africa can be explained in three phases, including the age of apartheid rule, peasantry era, and the formation of the anti-apartheid social movements. Racial disparities are evident in all these eras but more rampant and apparent during the apartheid rule. The existence of peasantry has been debated that to some extent, it was a result of the ignorance of Africans, and some assert that it was because the whites controlled the economic and political powers. Those advocating for racial segregation argued that race was beyond external skin color to encompass

psychological and spiritual intelligence. The liberalist argument best explains the history of South Africa because to some extent; it forms the foundation for the radical argument.

The timeline was significant in the completion of my final paper in various ways. First, it gave me an overview of the major themes that I was to build on my final paper including the apartheid laws, the formation of the anti-apartheid movements and their contribution to the end of apartheid, as well as the factors behind peasantry in the rural African population. The timeline was also crucial in building my review as I was able to consider the most important aspects that form the basis of the history of South Africa, for instance, the origin of racial segregation and arguments for and against it as well as the efforts in the development of the anti-apartheid movements. Finally, the timeline was essential in my selection of the most critical events and people that shaped the history of South Africa.

Bibliography

- Ballard, Richard, Adam Habib, Imraan Valodia, and Elke Zuern. "Globalization, marginalization, and contemporary social movements in South Africa." *African Affairs*, 104, no. 417, (2005): 615-634.
- Beck, Roger B., 2014. *The history of South Africa*. Santa Barbara: Greenwood.
- Bundy, Colin. 1972. "The emergence and decline of a South African peasantry." *African Affairs: The Journal of the Royal African Society*. 71 (285): 369-388.

- Davidson, Basil. *Modern Africa: A social and political history* . Routledge, 2014.
- Dubow, Saul. 1992. *Afrikaner nationalism, apartheid, and the conceptualization of "race."* . Journal of African History, Vol. 33 (1992).
- Dubow, Saul. 2014. *Racial segregation and the origins of apartheid in South Africa, 191936* . Palgrave Macmillan.
- Massey, Douglas S., Nancy A. Denton, and James Anderson Foster. 2018. *American apartheid: segregation and the making of the underclass* .
- Sonneborn, Liz. 2010. *The end of apartheid in South Africa* . New York: Chelsea House.
- Thörn, Håkan. 2006. *Anti-apartheid and the emergence of a global civil society* . Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire [England]: Palgrave Macmillan.