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## South Africa and Apartheid

South Africa is the southernmost country in Africa. More European settlers came to South Africa than to anywhere else on the continent. European colonization in South Africa led to the oppression of Africans. Many fair-skinned Europeans believed dark-skinned Africans were less than human, or simply inferior humans to themselves. This belief system is called **racism**, which is the belief that one type of ethnicity is better than another. There is no scientific basis to the idea that human beings are divided into “races,” but this idea has been common for the past 150 years. The rise of slavery is one explanation for the rise of the false concept that people belong to different “races.”



In the 17th century, the Dutch were the first Europeans to settle in South Africa. Fighting among European nations for power in South Africa grew in the 19th century. Gold and diamonds were discovered in the region. The British and Dutch fought for control of these valuable resources. South Africans tried to fight the Europeans, but had no success.

By the early 20th century, the British military gained control of South Africa. South Africans were not allowed to vote under British rule. This decision was the beginning of apartheid.

### Apartheid

Apartheid means “separateness” in Afrikaans, the language of the descendants of the Dutch settlers (or Afrikaners). Laws created to enforce segregation of people by race were called “apartheid” in South Africa. Apartheid allowed many Europeans to grow wealthy and powerful while millions of South Africans suffered. Apartheid dominated when the National Party came to power. It was part of South African law until 1993. Apartheid began when other parts of the world were becoming more critical of racism and segregation. The civil rights movement in America happened during the time of African apartheid.

During apartheid, South Africans were legally classified by the color of their skin, which was how the Dutch-controlled government understood race. The racial classifications were: white, black, Asian, and colored (mixed race). The majority of South Africans were classified as black. People of different races had to use separate services and buildings. They had separate schools, hospitals, beaches, and libraries. People of different races could not share drinking fountains or restrooms. The services and buildings for whites were much better than those for everyone else. During apartheid, white people in South Africa lived in conditions that were better than those found anywhere else in Africa.



Blacks suffered the most during apartheid, even though they were in the majority of the population. The Dutch-controlled government even took their citizenship away. They were forced to move to homelands and could not vote. **Homelands** were poor, crowded areas far away from cities. Homelands often did not have water or electricity. Even though these areas were named “homelands,” most black South Africans had never actually lived there before.

Black South Africans could only leave their homeland if they were going to work for a white person. To be allowed to come and go, black residents of homelands had to have passes. Black South Africans had to carry passes at all times. Traveling without a pass could result in going to jail.

In order to protest their poor treatment, black South Africans formed groups like the **African National Congress (ANC)**. The ANC was founded in 1912. The goal of the ANC was to bring people of all races together and to fight for rights and freedoms. In 1944, *Nelson Mandela* founded the **ANC Youth League**. The purpose of the ANC Youth League was to bring a new generation to the fight against racism and apartheid. During the 1950s and 1960s, groups like the ANC received support from many groups and nations outside South Africa. In many parts of



the world, apartheid was viewed as racist and unjust. In 1973, the United Nations defined apartheid as a crime against humanity. A **crime against humanity** is an international law term that refers to large-scale violence.

### **Nelson Mandela and Frederik Willem de Klerk**

*Nelson Mandela* was an anti-apartheid activist. For many years, Mandela protested nonviolently against apartheid. Then, Mandela became leader of the ANC's armed wing in 1961. Police arrested Mandela on August 5, 1962. He was imprisoned for 27 years.



While in prison, Mandela continued to fight against apartheid. In a 1964 court appearance, he said:

*During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. / have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.*



*F. W. de Klerk*, president of South Africa, granted the release of Nelson Mandela from prison in 1990. De Klerk also ended the laws against the ANC. De Klerk agreed to end apartheid and spoke for a multi-racial, democratic South Africa. In 1994, Nelson Mandela was the first president to be elected democratically in South Africa. He was also South Africa's first black president.

### **Respond:**

1. What did the Europeans believe about the Africans?
2. What was discovered in the region of South Africa?
3. What nation gained control of South Africa by the 20<sup>th</sup> century?
4. What does Apartheid mean?
5. What are Homelands?
6. How could black Africans leave the Homeland?
7. What is the ANC?
8. In 1973 what did the United Nations define Apartheid as?
9. Who is Nelson Mandela?
10. How did he fight against Apartheid?
11. What happened to him in 1962?
12. Who was F.W. de Klerk?
13. What did he do for Nelson Mandela?
14. How did he help the cause of ending Apartheid?
15. What happened in 1994?