APARTHEID TIMELINE

International

1900: Several European countries divide 90% of the African continent into colonies. The area that later becomes South Africa is colonized first by the Netherlands and later by Great Britain.

1961: South Africa becomes an independent country separate from Great Britain.

1974: The United Nations expels South Africa from the U.N. because of its practice of apartheid. South Africa was a founding member of the United Nations, and the expulsion of the country from the United Nations is a way for other member countries to express their disapproval with the system of apartheid. As a result of this expulsion, South Africa's input into world matters is greatly reduced.

1985: Great Britain and the United States impose economic sanctions on South Africa because of the practice of apartheid. In addition to prohibiting air travel to South Africa, the sanctions stop the trade of goods to and from the country.

1993: Nelson Mandela and President de Klerk are jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their work in ending apartheid.

Political

1950: The Population Registration Act classifies all South Africans by race into four categories: Bantu (Black Africans), which comprises about 68% of the population; Coloured (mixed race), which comprises about 9% of the population; Asian (Indian and Pakistani), which comprises about 3% of the population; and White, which comprises about 19% of the population.

1959: Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act created 10 Bantu homelands, called Bantustans (bän-tü'-stäns). Every Black South African is given citizenship in a Bantustan. The government forcibly removes Black South Africans from areas designated as White and sells their land to White farmers. From 1961 to 1994, approximately 3.5 million people are removed from their land and homes.

1994: For the first time in the country's history, non-whites vote in national elections. Nelson Mandela becomes president of South Africa. The United States and Great Britain lift sanctions against South Africa, and South Africa is invited back to the United Nations.

1912: The African National Congress (ANC), a political party, is established with the main goal of gaining voting rights for non-white people in South Africa.

1948: The system of apartheid, which segregates South Africans based on race, is legally established. Non-white South Africans are forced to live in separate areas from Whites and to use separate public facilities. Contact between the two groups is limited. At the time of apartheid, approximately 80% of the population is considered as non-white.

1960: Disagreement between members of the ANC results in division and the creation of the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), another political party. The PAC holds a demonstration in Sharpeville that results in the deaths of 69 people at the hands of police. As a result, the ANC and PAC are banned from representation in the government.

1989: F.W. de Klerk becomes President of South Africa. He commits to working toward an end to apartheid. He releases many ANC activists from prison.

1991: Nelson Mandela becomes president of the ANC. President de Klerk dismantles apartheid laws.

Social

1990: President de Klerk unbans the ANC from participating in government, which signals the start of multiracial negotiations on the system of apartheid. After 27 years, Nelson Mandela is released from prison by President de Klerk. Nelson Mandela had continued to advocate for an end to apartheid from his jail cell and became an important leader in South Africa during his imprisonment.

1952: Anti-apartheid activist Nelson Mandela opens a law firm with Oliver Tambo. They are the only Black lawyers in South Africa and provide free or low cost legal counsel to many Black people. While it is not illegal for Black South Africans to become lawyers, educational opportunities for non-white people are limited because of lack of educational funding in non-white schools.

1964: Nelson Mandela and eight others are sentenced to life in prison for attempting to overthrow the South African government.

1976: Police kill more than 600 people, mostly students, during the Soweto Uprising. The protests center around the government's requirement that Black students be taught in Afrikaans, which was seen as the "language of the oppressor" by Black South Africans as it is the language spoken by White South Africans.

1900   1910   1920   1930   1940   1950   1960   1970   1980   1990   2000

PEACE, DEMOCRACY, AND FREEDOM FOR ALL

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