



## **Apartheid - How South Africa Ended Decades of Racial Rule**

For decades, black South Africans faced repression in the form of apartheid, a system of racial segregation. It took years of protest and resistance, from within South Africa and from the international community, to finally topple the system of apartheid

**0:00**

*Illustration of a stadium with the date June 11, 1988; three graphic figures onstage in front of a large crowd; a person's hands playing a guitar surrounded by multiple pairs of white cartoon eyes; portraits of pop singers; birthday cake and balloons with 70 on them; graphic of Mandela behind prison bars; images of tense scenes between police officers and protesters.*

On June 11th, 1988, thousands crowded into London's Wembley Stadium for an evening of live music. TV reporters from around the world were on scene, broadcasting to 67 countries. An estimated 600 million viewers tuned in to watch the star-studded lineup, which featured icons like Whitney Houston, Stevie Wonder, and Sting. This was no ordinary concert. Artists were performing to mark the 70th birthday of Nelson Mandela, a South African activist who had been in prison for more than two decades. His crime, organizing against apartheid, the system of racial segregation that ruled his home country. A system that would soon be toppled, after decades of global activism.

Starting in the early 20th century, South Africa was governed by a white minority known as Afrikaaners, descendants of the Dutch colonists, who began arriving in the 1600s.

**0:57**

*A white spool of thread next to a larger black spool with loose white strings around them; illustration of a skyline with white buildings of varying heights overlaid are '1948' 'Apartheid' and a portrait of D.F. Malan, South African Prime Minister; icons for equality, segregation, and the Power to the People fist; illustrations of the historical flag of South Africa.*

To exert control over the majority population, Afrikaaners instituted a racial hierarchy that limited the rights of black South Africans. This discrimination escalated when the far-right national party rose to power in 1948 on an agenda called apartheid, the Afrikaans word for separateness.

Under apartheid, interracial marriage was outlawed, segregation was mandated, and any form of protest was a punishable offense. But as South Africa grew increasingly unequal, much of the rest of the world was breaking free from centuries of oppression.

**1:36**

*Various black and white photos mass crowds in celebration; old colonial flag of Nigeria; portraits of James Wilson, Colonial Governor General of Nigeria and D.F. Malan, South African Prime Minister; silhouettes of a crowd protesting with signs; illustration of several figures with raised fists and a sign reading 'Pass Laws Create Slavery'.*

World War II weakened Europe's colonial powers and gave rise to new ideas about self-determination and human rights, fueling independence movements around the globe.

In Nigeria, activists saw clear parallels between their British colonial rulers and the apartheid government. Like South Africa, colonial Nigeria was governed by a white minority that enforced segregation and denied political rights to the majority population. Though these injustices manifested in different ways, they were all part of the same oppressive system. As a result, Nigerians came to see decolonization as intrinsically linked to the fight against apartheid. In 1960, after decades of struggle, Nigeria became an independent nation. That same year, sixty-nine South African activists were killed by police during a protest against pass laws, which restricted black people from entering designated white areas.

**2:34**

*Flag of the African National Congress (ANC); illustration of a white clock tower building sinking into dark ground with a red sky in the background; artistic map highlighting Tanzania, Zambia, Botswana, and South Africa.*

After this violent conflict known as the Sharpeville Massacre, Nigeria became an important financial backer of the African National Congress, or ANC, a South African political party working to dismantle apartheid. With the help of these donations, ANC leaders organized strikes, demonstrations, and boycotts of white-owned businesses. They also used the funds to finance their paramilitary wing, which carried out attacks on public facilities and military installations. Many of these fighters received their training in the frontline states, a coalition of neighboring African countries, including Botswana, Zambia, and Tanzania, that offered shelter and military support to the ANC.



### 3:16

*Graphic of the world map zooming into the UK which is highlighted in red; handshake between a white and black hand; video clip of an anti-apartheid protest; red doors with icons of the Commonwealth emblem, Olympics rings, and a graduation cap; clenched fist striking a surface causing it to shatter; illustrations of two figures surrounded by sharp white broken shapes, and five figures behind vertical bars.*

### 4:16

*Three officers in hats and mustaches smoking cigarettes, above a timeline marking 1976; graphic images of newspaper covers the Soweto Massacre, the words 'Don't Buy' are stamped on the covers; a crowd protesting in front of city buildings two of which have red flags with the prohibition symbol.*

### 4:58

*Graphic of the White House; black and white photos of students protesting; illustration of a protest showing a white building on a hill with three figures below holding signs; black and white photos of students in makeshift shanties.*

### 5:42

*Graphics of a cargo ship sailing on water, tangled white lines, people watching numerous televisions broadcasting the tribute to Mandela, silhouette of a crowd protesting, pencils next to sheets with squiggly lines, Mandela waving from a podium, hands inserting ballots into voting boxes, numerous voting ballots in a pile, newspaper covers, two figures surrounded by sharp white broken shapes.*

Meanwhile, a continent away, another resistance movement was growing. Once the colonial ruler of South Africa, the United Kingdom had remained the country's largest trading partner and foreign investor. When South African exiles arrived in London, seeking refuge, they partnered with students, trade unionists, and leftist political parties to stymie this economic relationship. But what began as a consumer boycott of South African goods, expanded dramatically after the Sharpeville Massacre.

Through protest and political campaigns, the UK's anti-apartheid movement successfully petitioned to have South Africa forced out of the British Commonwealth, their athletes barred from the Olympics, and their scholars excluded from the academic community. Still, the South African government was unrelenting. As international backlash grew, they cracked down even harder on anti-apartheid protesters, imprisoning thousands and banning black political parties like the ANC.

The brutality came to a head in 1976, when police in Soweto shot and killed 176 students during a protest against the enforced use of Afrikaans in school. The Soweto Massacre incited outrage around the world. Many countries imposed sanctions that made it illegal to invest in South Africa or import their products. In what was widely known as the Mandela Tax, all civil servants in Nigeria gave up to 2% of their salaries to fund the South African resistance. The UK's anti-apartheid movement worked with exiled ANC leaders to spread awareness through marches, rallies, boycotts, and music.

In the United States, where the recent civil rights movement had defeated the Jim Crow regime, students at historically black colleges and universities became leaders in the fight against apartheid. They staged protests, held teachings, and raised money for the ANC. Students at other schools quickly followed suit, on campus lawns across the country, students built shanty towns designed to reflect the conditions of Bantustans, the poor, overcrowded territories where black South Africans were forced to live. They also demanded that their institutions divest from companies doing business in South Africa, hoping to weaken the economy and force an end to apartheid. And it worked, eventually.

Trade embargos and divestment campaigns sent the South African economy into a tailspin. While events like Nelson Mandela's 70th birthday tribute in 1988 galvanized support for the anti-apartheid movement, by 1990, the civil unrest, global isolation, and financial turmoil were overwhelming, and South African leaders were forced to acknowledge that a segregated society was no longer tenable. They started working with the ANC leaders, many newly released from prison, to repeal apartheid laws and draft a new constitution.

In 1994, just six years after the concert that made him a household name, Nelson Mandela was voted president in South Africa's first multi-racial elections. Through internal resistance and international pressure, a racist regime was destroyed for good, and a radical transformation began.