**The issue of Apartheid in South Africa**

*(for the purpose of debate, please refrain from speaking about anything post 1990, the year Nelson Mandela is released)*

Dating back from the 1650s, South Africa was a nation which was consistently controlled by colonies from the Dutch to the British. With the native Africans who had their land stolen, white settlers and many South Asians who came from the British Empire this mix of cultures and lands cultivated into multiple different, and separate, races and nationalities. It was not until the 1909 South Africa Union Bill which united the four colonies of the Cape, Natal, Orange Free State, and Transvaal. However, it also included the exclusion of the native Africans from all aspects of life.

The attitudes of the white settlers were extremely hostile and promoted policies such as white supremacy up until the 1990s. Although forms of segregation occurred in places before, it was not until the 1948 election where it became serious. The Afrikaner National Party won

the vote using slogans such as ‘Apartheid’, which is the Afrikaans word for ‘apartness.’ Their main goal was to segregate the white population from the non-whites, whilst also dividing the non-white majority into their tribal and ethnic groups. Only 2 years later did they ban miscegenation (interracial marriage) as well as dividing races up into places in society.

Apartheid laws are detrimental to non-whites way of life. Most of the land in South Africa became reserved for the white population and the black population was forced to live in ‘homelands’; if they needed to travel into a white ‘zone’ for work, a permit was needed to do so. Hospitals, public transport, and public facilities were all separated, with the white facilities being better funded as the government was ultimately on their side. Whilst the black population could have some form of governmental control in their ‘homelands’, non-whites weren’t allowed to take part in national government, creating a country which was governed by a white majority until Nelson Mandela took power in the 90s. The ANP had tried to weaken any political power that the non-white people had – through creating a segregation system which split not only by race but by other ethic groupings, it was harder for non-white people to unify thus giving more power to the white minority.

Though there is resistance to the apartheid, they are usually shut down very quickly with violence from the authorities. The resistance has come through from groups such as the ANC (African National Congress) and the PAC (Pan Africanist Congress), with its ties from Nelson Mandela, founder of the Umkhonto we Sizwe branch of the organisation. The most famous example of resistance is the Sharpeville massacre of 1960 whereby police killed and injured 250 black people. The aim was to pressure the government into abolishing apartheid laws, and this demonstration was a place to give up their passes (reference books) and ‘invite’ arrest. However, it led to 69 blacks being killed, more than 180 wounded, and 50 women and children being included. With more resistance, led to more militant action from the authorities and eventually leaders being incarcerated and often executed, 134 political leaders were killed throughout this time. Some like Nelson Mandelson are facing sentences up to 27 years, with his release in 1990.

**The end of Apartheid (for reference):**

South Africa began to reverse Apartheid legislation in 1994 with the introduction of the new constitution – the election of the same year was the first election in which the non-white population was finally allowed to vote. The election produced a result which better reflected the population as the government created had a non-white majority coalition, with a black president at its forefront. Apartheid had come to an end in terms of the law yet in terms of the social and economic problems it left behind, South Africa is still trying to recover and make amends with the communities shut out from everyday life.

**Points to consider:**

* Is it fair for former colonial powers to be ‘punished’ due to their lasting impact on South African affairs even if they were involved hundreds of years ago?
* The UN banned sale of arms to South Africa in this period and declared that Apartheid was unacceptable – do you believe this is really enough from an organisation such as the UN? Is the UN really a multinational body or is it just acting on behalf of the former colonialist founders?
* Should South Africa be facing sanctions for the apartheid?
* Is there an effective way of ending the apartheid?

**Useful links:**

* <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/history-apartheid-south-africa>
* <https://www.history.com/topics/africa/apartheid>
* <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/struggle-against-apartheid-lessons-todays-world>
* <https://antiapartheidlegacy.org.uk/heritage-arts-culture/history/apartheid-a-short-history/>