

THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

The African National Congress (ANC)¹ was the very first liberation movement that was founded on January 8th, 1912, to unite the African people under one banner and help defend all their rights and freedom. It was formed in response to the establishment of the South African Union that entrenched the rule of the white minority. The ANC was South Africa's ruling party that was supported by the tripartite alliance, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party. (SACP) (Joel Netshitenzhe, 2007)

The group is defined as a "disciplined force of the left."² Hilary Rose, (2004) This group or committee was a mixed amalgamation of middle- class people consisting of John Dube, who was its first president, Sol Plaatje, who was an author and poet, and Pixley ka Isaka Seme in collaboration with other tribal chiefs and various organizations of the church in addition to many highly educated Black professionals.

The sole aim of the ANC was their undivided commitment to non-violence, liberal principles and multiracialism. The women who were initiated into this

¹ ANC – The African National Congress was the first liberation movement of South Africa that was founded on January 8th in 1912 and was committed to fight for the freedom of the African people through the principles of non- violence, liberation and multiracialism.

² Hilary Rose, (2004) Building the Academic Boycott in Britain. Resisting Israeli Apartheid: Strategies and Principles, An International Conference on Palestine, London. www.flwi.ugent.be/cie/Palestina/palestina174.htm

group were only admitted as affiliate members during the year 1931 but were later on admitted as full members by the year 1943.

The turning point in the formation of an energetic new generation came in the form of people like Nelson Mandela³ Tom Lodge. (2006) and Oliver Tambo, who in 1943, founded the ANC Youth League.⁴ (online publication, Volume 5 No 6: 15 - 28 October 2008.) This group dedicated themselves to this cause by lending full support to a radical programme of action, in fighting for the rights of the Blacks by using non-violent tactics against the supremacy and exploitation of the Whites. By the year 1947, the ANC broadened its base by becoming allies with both the Natal Indian Congress and the Transvaal Indian Congress gaining better strength to oppose the ruling government. The action campaign which was started was then adopted by the ANC which in the 1950's served as the foundation of the Defiance Campaign.

The following decade found the ANC established a Congress Alliance which included the 'White Congress of Democrats', the 'Indian Congress', and the 'Colored People's Congress.' Later on in the year 1955, the Freedom Charter which served once again to reaffirm their commitment to nationalism, proclaimed

³ Nelson Mandela –Nelson Mandela, the first African politician to acquire a world following, remains in the 21st century an iconic figure. And as Lodge shows, Mandela's huge international appeal is a compelling and unusual cocktail of the sacred and the secular, of traditional African values and global media savvy, and of human vulnerability interwoven with the grand narrative of liberation throughout the story of this exceptional life. (Tom Lodge. (2006) A Critical Life. Oxford University Press. Pgs. 304)

⁴ ANC Youth League – The formation of the ANC Youth League led to the turning point of a radical action programme that involved dedicated people fighting with unswerving passion for the rights of the Blacks by using tactics of non- violence. www.anc.org.za/youth

'that South Africa belongs to all who live in it'. This phrase had set fuel to fire and provoked a militant Africanist minority to establish the Pan- African Congress in 1959.

However, by 1960, after the Sharpeville shootings⁵ (From "Notes and Documents", No. 8/76, March 1976) had taken place, both the movements got banned due to the government massacres that followed. Following this, the ANC laid the foundation for a clandestine or secret military wing called 'Umkhonto We Sizwe'⁶ (MK) (Spear of the Nation) (Leaflet issued by the Command of Umkhonto we Sizwe, 16th December 1961) But in 1963 – 64, most of its leaders were arrested and imprisoned and the phase ended by the ANC going into exile.

For the next decade or so the ANC remained in abeyance right until the Soweto student uprising which took place in 1976, when scores of young activists had moved abroad from South Africa to enroll themselves in the ANC training camps. Once again with increasing pressure, because of the regime in Pretoria, the ANC became the target of opposition. Therefore during 1984 – 86, this movement benefitted from the uprising and widespread unrest which finally

⁵ Sharpeville shootings – The Sharpeville Massacre involved the massacre of African patriots on 21st March, 1960 which held great significance in the battle against apartheid. (From "Notes and Documents", No. 8/76, March 1976) www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/misc/sharp1le.html

⁶ Umkhonto We Sizwe' – means "Spear of the Nation" and was a clandestine Military Wing established by the ANC following the Government massacres. It is an independent body established by the Africans and included South Africans that came from different races. (Leaflet issued by the Command of Umkhonto we Sizwe, 16th December 1961) www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/manifesto-mk.html

led to the establishment of a new constitution based on racial views but which had no provision for the African majority representation.

In 1989, when under F.W. de Klerk,⁷ (The Nobel Foundation, 1993) there was a change in leadership, it paved the way for the release of Nelson Mandela from prison. It also led to the initiation of talks about the enfranchisement of the African majority regarding the new dispensation in politics and also to the African political organizations being unbanned. It was agreed that they would dispense with the armed struggle and engage in talks with both government and other necessary parties.

By the year 1992, there was an amicable 'record of understanding between the ANC and the ruling government, which was followed by the first ever elections followed with a resounding victory of over 60% votes in the ANC elections that were held in April 1994 and the reinstatement of South Africa's President Nelson Mandela. Next in succession was Thabo Mbeki⁸ (ANC, 50th National Congress, 1997) who followed Mandela as the ANC leader in 1997 and who became its president in 1999. (Ian Campbell, Political Dictionary: ANC) In

⁷ F.W. de Klerk – was a Nobel Peace Prize winner along with Nelson Mandela in 1993 “for their work for the peaceful termination of the apartheid regime, and for laying the foundations for a new democratic South Africa”(Copyright © The Nobel Foundation)
www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1993/index.html

⁸ Thaboo Mbeki – was an independent thinker, who succeeded Nelson Mandela as the leader of the ANC in 1997 when he was elected as President of the ANC (1997 – 2008) www.anc.org.za/people/mbeki.html

the history's most contentious party leadership battles, Jacob Zuma was elected to become the ANC's president in 2007 following Mbeki. (BBC News, 2008)

Apartheid

Apartheid⁹ (Political Dictionary) dates back to the period of colonization from where it took root and was brought into force by the National Party Government of South Africa during the years 1948 and 1990. Apartheid was a legal system put into place that involved racial segregation enforced by the government. Following the general elections of 1948 (South African History Online, 2008) the National Party set into motion its Apartheid program by making a lot of changes by expanding the existing policies and practices and infusing them into a system of white domination and racism which was rampant at that time.

According to Apartheid legislation, the inhabitants were segregated into different racial groups such as white, black, colored, Asian or Indian. With regard to citizenship, the Blacks of South Africa were stripped of their citizenship forcing them to legally become citizens of any one of the ten self-governing Bantustans.

⁹ Apartheid – was a legal system that helped to put an end to racial segregation that had been enforced by the Government. It was dismantled between 1990 and 1993. Apartheid, is a social and political policy of racial segregation and discrimination enforced by white minority governments in South Africa from 1948 to 1994. The term apartheid (from the Afrikaans word for "apartness") was coined in the 1930s and used as a political slogan of the National Party in the early 1940s (www.answers.com/topic/apartheid)

After a series of debates and negotiations, Apartheid was dismantled from 1990 to 1993 which finally culminated into the elections of 1994, and was the first to take place in South Africa with universal suffrage.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa

"... a commission is a necessary exercise to enable South Africans to come to terms with their past on a morally accepted basis and to advance the cause of reconciliation."

Mr Dullah Omar,¹⁰ former Minister of Justice

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of South Africa was established by the Government of National Unity to put an end to all that happened during the apartheid. During this period of turmoil and conflict life was miserable for the Africans due to violence and the atrocious abuse of human rights.

On October 29th, 1999, the report of the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)¹¹ was posthumously presented to President Nelson Mandela. The whole period which made contemporary history began in that fateful year of 1960, with the disaster at Sharpsville and came to a close with great celebration at

¹⁰ Mr. Dullah Omar, who was the former minister of justice quoted these words when speaking of the Truth and Reconciliation Council of South Africa. He was formerly a lawyer who defended all those who suffered under the racist laws of apartheid.

www.boston.com/news/globe/obituaries/articles/2004/03/14/...?mode=PF

¹¹ TRC – was the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission was a report that was prepared about the struggle of freedom for the Blacks as well as the laws that were framed for the democracy and was presented to South Africa's first President, Nelson Mandela. The TRC is based upon the "Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, No. 34 of 1995) (www.doj.gov.za/tr)

the grand inauguration of the first democratically-elected President of the Republic of South Africa – Nelson Mandela.

The rich legacy of South African history with both its fortunate and unfortunate occurrences continues to be handed down with pride from generation to generation. The most controversial point or so to say, the bone of contention that remains is how best the people of South Africa are going to deal or cope with their history.

Mandate of the TRC

The TRC mandate is made up of three committees –

- The Amnesty Committee.
- Reparation and Rehabilitation (R&R) Committee.
- Human Rights Violations (HRV) Committee.

The Amnesty Committee- (AC)¹²

The Amnesty Committee's primary function is to accept the applications of the people and consider them for amnesty in accordance to the provisions made in the Act. Any offence that was associated with the reigning politics and that had occurred between March 1st 1960 and December 6th 1993 were

¹² The Amnesty Committee – The primary function of the Committee was to accept applications for amnesty from the people who were charged with different offences related to politics. This committee took a decision not to reveal the names of the informers who worked for the government. (Issued by the ANC) www.anc.org.za/ancedocs/pr/1997/pr0303.html

accepted. The meaning of being granted amnesty for a certain act meant that the accused perpetrator was free from any prosecution for any particular act.

Reparation and Rehabilitation (R&R) Committee.¹³

The R&R Committee was empowered by the Act to render support to the victims through the Truth Commission process by restoring their dignity. They also had the work of drawing up formulations for rehabilitating and healing the suffering survivors in addition to all their families and communities. Their general function was to ensure a happy and healthy co-existence among the people.

Human Rights Violations (HRV) Committee.¹⁴

The main function of the Human rights Committee was to make investigations into various human rights abuses that occurred between 1960 and 1994 through statements given to the TRC. The investigation included the victims identity, their whereabouts, the extent and the nature of the harm done to them through deliberate plotting by the state, individual, a group or any other organization. When any human rights violations victims are

¹³ Reparation and Rehabilitation (R&R) Committee had the duty of providing full support to the victims of the apartheid and restoring their duty through rehabilitation in all areas for not only the victims but the family and community as a whole. www.doj.gov.za/trc

¹⁴ Human Rights Violations Committee's main duty was to make an identification of the victims of the apartheid, examine the nature and extent of suffering and once identified to refer them to the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee. Truth and Reconciliation Commission, www.doj.gov.za/trc

identified, they are duly passed onto to the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee.

Preparation of the TRC Report

The key unique feature of the South African Commission is its nature of transparency because it has taken place in the full glare of publicity. The material is quite exhaustive but invaluable not only to scholars but also to scholars and journalists around the world. This report had to fulfill the dual responsibility of providing space to the victims to share their traumatic stories and at the same time had to recognize the rights of people and the right implementation of the laws. This weighing of the pros and cons as also the contradictions that go with it have helped to bring out the truth of the past in a much clearer light.

In referring to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a Dutch visitor quoted the words of Emily Dickinson¹⁵ that said - "the truth must dazzle gradually ... or all the world would be blind". The painful experiences of the people of South Africa have led them to believe that there can never be any healing without truth. The main idea of this commission is to give hope that would pave the path for National unity by embracing both truth and reconciliation.

¹⁵ Emily Dickinson – was a renowned poet who lived for the most part of her life in isolation due to her illness. Most of her poems were greatly influenced by her Puritan upbringing and also by some of the greatest Metaphysical poets of 17th century England. www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/155

In the struggle for justice, since neither the State nor the Liberation Movements defeated each other, there was no question of any side enforcing a victor's justice and in such a scenario the people of South Africa would never have experienced the peaceful transition that gradually graduated from repression to democracy. In fact, if it had not been for a miracle in the form of a negotiated settlement, it would have experienced a virtual bloodbath as predicted by many nations around the world.

Therefore instead of adopting an attitude of blanket amnesty, the people opted for a full disclosure of the truth. In so doing, everyone clearly knew who ordered for the bomb attack on Church Street, who was responsible for the massacre in St. James Church, or what happened to Steve Biko and others. The Commission was also successful in exhuming the bodies of fifty activists who had been abducted, killed and later buried secretly. It also laid bare the lies and deception that took place during the heart of the Apartheid, especially the story of a former minister of Law and Order called Mr. Adriaan Vlok,¹⁶ who had unashamedly put the blame of the Khotso House bombing on Shirley Gunn.

Criticisms regarding the Commission

¹⁶ Mr. Adriaan Vlok – was a former minister of law and order who lied unashamedly in public by putting the blame of the Khotso House bombing on Shirley Gunn who was detained with her infant son, but who was humble enough to have apologized in his amnesty application. Volk's Act of Contrition www.sacc.org.za/news06/vlokapol.html

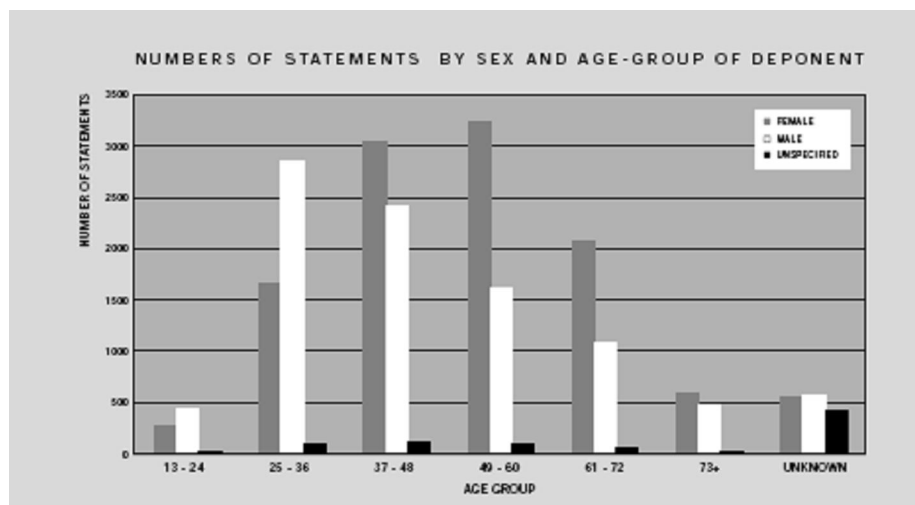
The Commission was received with a lot of criticism and brickbats. All and sundry were willing to take up cudgels in protest painting the Commission as a sort of witch hunt and claiming that they were more in favor of the ANC. The ultimate motive was to discredit the Commission and its report. The people who came with an application to own up to the crime they had done, had to do so in public and public disclosure meant public shaming.

The Commission was also heavily criticized for being filled with what they called “struggle” types of people who were from the pro- ANC, SACP or PAC and also for being too conciliatory and accommodative towards Mr. PW Botha accusing them of handling him with kid gloves. Fingers again were pointed towards them when they granted blanket amnesty to thirty – seven ANC leaders even though the decision to grant amnesty was given by three important judges who could never be accused of having been ANC lackeys.

In addition to the above, the Commission was accused of refusing to hold hearings in public of the gross violations that occurred in the camps of the ANC in Angola. They were also accused of having allowed people like Dr Wouter Basson Madikizela-Mandela and Mr. PW Botha, to “get away with murder”. Many were also not happy about the fact that the Amnesty Committee dealt amnesty only to certain perpetrators like those who were responsible for Amy Biehl’s murder or the killings at St. James’ Church.

Reconciliation

Though the vast majority of people believed that reconciliation was quite possible, there were still others who believed that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission made the people more upset and race relations were more difficult to handle. All those who were perpetrators through torture, deception, murder and death squads, had to be brought to book in order that reconciliation could be brought about by exposing the truth and reality of things.



The above table highlights the applications or statements given during the reconciliation process by segregating them according to the age and sex of the people.

Legislation during the Apartheid

Some of the key legislative enactments that were introduced during the apartheid were –

- **Population Registration Act:**

This Act served to classify each and every South African individual into one of the four racial categories making it the bedrock or foundation of the apartheid state.

Describing the human devastation that took place when this Act was implemented, President Nelson Mandela wrote: We have triumphed in the effort to implant hope in the breasts of the millions of our people. We enter into a covenant that we shall build the society in which all South Africans both black and white will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity – a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world.”¹⁷ (Nelson Mandela) Commenting on the senselessness of this Act, John Dugard (1972) states – “No words can capture the misery and human suffering caused by this legislative scheme, which sometimes results in divisions of families owing to the different racial classification of members of the same family.”

- **Group Areas Act**

By this Act, the whole country was demarcated or divided into zones based on the occupations of different racial groups. This Act too led to whole sale destruction of homes and communities. In terms of human suffering there were huge losses to life and property.

17 Nelson Mandela, Long Walk to Freedom, Macdonald Purnell: Randburg, 1994. www.writespirit.net/authors/nelson_mandela/long_walk_to_freedom

12 John Dugard, ‘The Legal Framework of Apartheid’ in N. J. Rhodie (ed.) The Legal Framework of Apartheid, Johannesburg, McGraw Hill, 1972, vol. 1 chap. 2, pg. 83.

- **Bantu Education Act:**

The apartheid system was more or less an extension of the so called Nazi racial method that did not neglect education but referred to them as “Bantu Education”, “Colored Education’ and “Indian Education”. This Act paved the way and laid the foundation for not only a separate but also an inferior system of education for the African people. This racist approach served to segregate the Black people further, by stopping subsidies given to Mission Schools, thereby creating a servant class. They were forced to enroll into the State School System or quit. According to the legacy of this thoughtless legislation, unemployment was rampant because they were forced into an economy where they were poorly equipped. In 1976 this system was shattered to pieces due to the issue of the medium of instruction. The Department of Bantu Education suddenly passed an order that forced all the black schools to teach Afrikaans instead of the English language, thereby depriving all the black students the pleasure of learning a world language.

The 1949 Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act and 1950 Immorality Amendment Act:

There was widespread prohibition for inter- racial marriages and any sexual contact across color lines. The Immorality Act brought with it public humiliation and harassment together with untold human suffering by destroying both family bonds and marriages. The other Acts of legislation were the ‘Suppression of

Communism Act of 1950', the 'Separate Amenities Act of 1953, and the 'Extension of the University Education Act of 1959'.

The Effects of Apartheid Legislation:

Leo Kuper comments on the first 12 years of the National Party calling it "a white counter – revolution."¹⁸ It is also referred to as the Mau- Mau factor, which portrayed the fear of what exactly African independence represented to the wider section of the white minority. This legislation from the 1950's and for the following 30 years is also considered to be an awesome social engineering project that tore asunder the South African social fabric that encompassed both the rural and the urban societies.

The deplorable conditions of the blacks and a handful of poor whites have bitter memories that are impossible to erase. These people were shunted about like pawns on a chess- board due to the racist implications of the architects of apartheid. Entire communities such as villages in the rural and urban suburbs, schools, churches, other traditional communities and people were just erased. The violation of human rights unfolded as the state and other operatives went on a rampage of abductions and murders while assaulting the dignity of scores of South Africans.

¹⁸ Leo Kuper, 'African Nationalism in South Africa', 1910-1964 in Leonard Thompson and Monica Wilson (Eds.) Oxford History of South Africa: vol. ii, South Africa 1870-1966. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Thus the abuse of human rights as eloquently portrayed in the Mandate Chapter read –

“for nearly half a century ... the warp and weft of their experience ... defining their privilege and their disadvantage, their poverty and their wealth, their public and private lives and their very identity ... the system itself was evil, inhumane and degrading ... amongst its many crimes, perhaps its greatest was the power to humiliate, to denigrate and to remove the self-confidence, self-esteem and dignity of its millions of victims.”

Thus Apartheid for millions of South Africans was a grim reality, though only about 21,300 individuals had filed applications for the violations of human rights. A major section of South Africans faced increased poverty due to expulsions and forced removals into rural ghettos, forceful migrations and seizure of their homes, gutting and bulldozing. They were literally thrown into what was called “National States” with great injustice making them powerless without any jobs, communities or any experience. As Solomon Plaatje comments on the bad impact of the Act on the people of Africa – “For to crown all our calamities, South Africa has by law ceased to be the home of any of her native children whose skins are dyed with a hue that does not conform with the regulation hue ... Is it to be thought that God is using the South African Parliament to hound us out of our ancestral homes in order to quicken our pace heavenwards?”¹⁹

¹⁹ Solomon Plaatje – is an observer who passed comments on the adverse effects of the Act on the African people. (Gross Human Rights Violations in Political & Historical Perspective, volume 1, Chap. 2.)

The torturous acts and killings that were reported were solely due to the resistance of their bitter experience of their daily life during the days of the apartheid. The rights of these people were trampled upon just because they dared to ask for a decent education, or were trying to save their homes from being bull-dozed or asking for a medium of instruction in a language other than Afrikaans.

Apartheid it is said redrew the troubled map of South Africa. It is rather disconcerting to see that the country's wealth, its parks, cities, beaches and even mines had become part and parcel of white South Africa. Only large expanses of barren land, which was just a meager 13% (vol. 1. chap.4 pg. 61) was divided into a series of homelands where the African people were forced to stay. Other able-bodied men were driven to earn a living in the cities as migrant laborers. The Apartheid Government sought to segregate the African people according to ethnicity, just as the legislation had created the divide between the African, Indian, white and also the colored.

The magic formula that was made use of was "separate development". All the public amenities and buildings in South Africa were segregated and at times even duplicated according to the race they belong to. The best of everything was always retained for the white group, while the African, Indian and other colored children were kept out of the parks in the city. Even the trains, buses, beaches and parks were all segregated according to the apartheid racial divisions. Places

like banks, hotels, stores, shops, places of worship and cinemas were all segregated and had their own set of rules.

Apartheid never spared even the private life of the African people - Who knew or didn't know you, the people you worked or consorted with and their relationships depended upon them remaining only within their group as marriages and sexual relationships were strictly prohibited across color-lines. On the entertainment front too restrictions were there through curfew, and prohibition was initiated on the serving of liquor to African people.

The Bantu System of Education

Apartheid's most iniquitous acts were the division of educational facilities in addition to creating of the Bantu System of Education²⁰ which was quite infamous. Mission schools that provided education for African children were forced to close down and as a result many generations of African children were exposed to poor quality of teaching which was much inferior to the education received by their white counterparts.

²⁰ Bantau System of Education: Bantau Education Act of 1953 was a South African law which codified several aspects of the apartheid system. The primary provision was to enforce separation of the different races into separate educational institutions. (Dumping Grounds, Christian Institute: Johannesburg, Second Edition, circa 1970. Volume 1, Chapter 4, The Mandate Pg. 61)

In the words of the “architect” of apartheid, Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd²¹, stated that, “The school must equip the Bantu to meet the demands which the economic life will impose on him ... What is the use of teaching a Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice? ... Education must train and teach people in accordance with their opportunities in life ... “

In lieu of meting out separate education facilities, large groups of people were shifted out of their homes and from various other trading areas and located on the fringe of the city. The Indian as well as colored individuals fell a victim to these restrictions and were given separate amenities, education and many such restrictions that encompassed them like prisoners.

Trusteeship

The Whites in South Africa assumed the post of Trustee so as to civilize the people of the country. This Trusteeship²² is in fact used as a tool by the Whites to consolidate their position and rule over the Blacks. Under the guise of ‘trusteeship’, government policy was to confine the African majority to reserves that could not support them, thus ensuring the continuation of a cheap, compliant

²¹ Verwoerd Hendrik (Frensch) (1901 – 1966) was the Prime Minister between 1958 – 1966 and was the chief promoter of the legislation for apartheid (segregation by race) In 1960 he banned the African National Congress and in 1961 removed South Africa from the Commonwealth. In 1966 he got assassinated. (Quoted in Illustrated History of South Africa: the Real Story, Readers Digest: Cape Town, 1988.) www.thehistorychannel.co.uk/site/encyclopedia/article_show/

²² Trusteeship - Under the guise of ‘trusteeship’, government policy was to confine the African majority to reserves that could not support them, thus ensuring the continuation of a cheap, compliant labor force.

labor force. It was a bluff to mislead the Blacks and suppress any feeling of Nationalism in them.

The legislation passed by the Whites called the Act of Union, established legally that the man of color could be dominated by them. Followed by this Act was the 1936 Land Act which did not give the Africans the right to hold land. The rural populace moved to urban centers where they were exploited as a cheap reserve of handy skilled labor. All this was done with the aim to civilize them.

The Color Bar Act of 1926 legislated the banning of Blacks from skilled trades, thereby effectively closing all avenues for their supposed civilization. The Urban Areas Act passed by the Trustees in 1923 imposed a lot of control on the Africans. In spite of emasculating the community, the Trustees were not satisfied and they passed the Native Administration Act in 1927, which established the Whites as the Supreme Chief of The African people. It allowed only three White men to represent eight million people, whereas the two million Whites were represented by 147 representatives.

The 1937 Native Laws Amendment Act was instrumental in closing any loopholes that could lead a colored person to full citizenship. The Non-White Africans demanded rights to free citizenship in South Africa. They also made efforts to civilize themselves as demanded by the Whites but were saddled with oppression. Even though they were conquered by the Whites it did not stop them from dreaming of having freedom and fulfilling their duty towards the advancement of humanity. The South African Blacks shed their blood to further

the cause of the European Whites but within their own nation they have remained in bondage. The Blacks of South Africa are waging a war against the persecution of their brethren and have committed themselves to the principle of freedom for all.

The Youth League of ANC

The Manifesto of the Youth League was drafted in the year 1944 during the month of March. It was issued by the Provisional Committee of the ANC Youth League²³. Nelson Mandela participated in the drafting of the manifesto and he was also the founder member of the Youth League. The preamble stated that Africanism should be promoted. To occupy their rightful place in the world Africans should struggle and bring about progress, national liberation and development. To this end, the African youth ought to be united, trained, consolidated and disciplined. This was essential as the future leaders would be recruited from the Youth League. A resolution to this effect was passed by the African National Congress when they held a conference at Bloemfontein in 1943. The ANC laid the foundation for the Congress Youth League and took responsibility for it.

Statement of Policy

South Africa's progress to nationhood was hampered as it faced many complex problems arising out of the contact between the Black and White races.

²³ The Youth League of ANC – The Youth League of the ANC were an enthusiastic crop of youngsters who helped to fasten the pace of the struggle for freedom. They were a strong group that were not prepared to accept democratic processes that did not favor them. (Volume 5 No 6: 15 - 28 October 2008)

Conflicting living conditions and the different outlook on life arose out of such a contact. The superior military and organizational skill of the White race, led them to take over the land and invest them with the authority in order to discriminate with the black race. This led to the deprivation of freedom and security of the Africans who were subsequently oppressed and dominated by the White man. The Africans having been defeated in the battlefield refused to submit to the dominance of the White race.

Furthermore the concept of civilization was regarded as a common heritage of all mankind by the Africans who wanted to make their contribution to society as any other White person. The Africans also wanted to fulfill their duties towards their country and enjoy all the rights and privileges which put them on equal footing with any other racial group of South Africa. The White man regarded it his prerogative, to dominate and oppress the colored people. This has led to a feeling of animosity among the Blacks who refused to take the harshness of this domination and be suppressed. The outlook of the Whites was that the entire Universe was a host of individual entity who were in constant conflict so as to hasten the final destruction of the Universe. The Africans on the other hand, believed that the entire Universe was united towards a common goal of harmony and social responsibility.

This divergence was further complicated by the fact that the Whites were at a seemingly higher plane of achievement in so far as civilization was concerned. The White man took it upon himself to civilize the Africans thereby

making him an eternal minor. The Africans on the other hand wanted to develop themselves along the 'lines of his own choosing' developed by the Natives' Representative Council. The Whites were so well organized that two million of them were able to lord over eight million Africans. They occupy 87% of all the land leaving the vast majority to subsist on the remaining 13%. They segregated the Africans from all spheres of life and relegated them to positions of inferiority and into the category of a servant class.

Violations of Human rights

All through the difficult years of apartheid, evil was rampant and people acted without conscience. Human rights were grossly violated to the core and there was nothing much anyone could do about it and so thereby these problems had to be dealt with by the Commission. But it is a note of importance to understand that the system itself was corrupt, inhuman and evil which did not flinch to degrade the millions of people who came to it for solace. The citizens were not respected but in fact were treated as second and third class citizens. Segregation was rampant and in the picture above you could see that even public conveniences were separate for the Blacks, colored and Asians.



One of the worst crimes of the Commission was to humiliate people to the lowest degree because they had power on their side. Millions of people fell victim to this degradation as their dignity and self confidence were crushed or removed. To make this point clear, we quote Mtutuzeli Matshoba words as he expressed himself – ‘For neither am I a man in the eyes of the law, nor am I a man in the eyes of my fellow man.’²⁴

The ANC today

For nearly a century now the ANC has been at the helm fighting against exploitation and struggling for the liberation of its people. All through its 86 years of existence, it has endeavored to leave no stone unturned with the sole aim of

²⁴ Mtutuzeli Matshoba, quoted these words in “Call Me Not a Man”, Ravan Press, 1979, page 18.)

achieving the unity and integrity it so much desired. The 1909 clarion call made by Seme on the liberty and unity of the Africans still ring loud and clear that says – ‘The ANC shall continue to strive for the unity of its membership and also of our people to attain the objectives of a united, democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous South Africa.’

In the 96 years long history of its formation and existence, the ANC has experienced major setbacks by way of disagreements, debates and even breakaways due to the great demand for bringing about changes in its rules and policies. For the last 60 years, especially after the Second World War, there was a major radical clamor for efficient leadership in the ANC in order to live up to the new and changed political landscape which included both local as well as international parties. The ANC was greatly inspired by the Indian Independence and gained an impetus to work harder to gain their liberation.

The leaders of the Youth League Congress like Nelson Mandela, Lembede, Tambo Majombozi, and Sisulu, worked hard even while demanding a radical change through mass mobilization and mass action by the population of South Africa, in opposition to the present state or condition of political activities that had been going on. These leaders were steadfast in their vision as they strived to make these dreams come true through petitions, representations and deputations to the reigning masters of the apartheid regime. The result was the culmination of the watershed ANC National Conference in 1949 that adopted a Program of Action and got rid of the existing conservative leadership. Some of its

leaders supported Dr. Xuma and broke away from the ANC and formed a new group called the African Minded Group headed by Selope Tema.

Gradually in the 1950's, the ANC emerged as a successful group by organizing a National strike which was followed by the Defense Campaign in 1952. They were a committed group whose vision became clearer as their principles were put into action. In 1955 they adopted the Freedom Charter whose Preamble proudly proclaimed - "South Africa belongs to all who live in it, Black and White". This act reinforced unity among the African population and created the much needed turning point they were all looking for. Many in the ANC disputed this saying that South Africa belonged exclusively to the Africans. This course of action led to the formation of the Pan Africanist Congress which took place in 1959.

In 1969 after what is called the Morogoro Conference, there emerged a Group of Eight who objected to the different tactics and strategies displayed by the ANC in addition to its enrolling of Non- Africans in the party and this led to many of them being expelled from the ANC.

From 1994 onwards the ANC effected major strides which included -

- The greatest economic growth took place.
- Significant reduction of poverty due to state- led distribution program. (12 million receiving social grants ; 2.6 million RDP housing for 13 million people)
- Improved water and sanitation facilities

In spite of achieving so much, still unemployment and poverty seems to run rampant and people continued to suffer a lot. About 3 million hectares of land remain fallow in the former Bantustan area, while migration from the rural areas to the urban areas keeps escalating. The shortcomings of the last 14 years has led the ANC to make a serious examination of the existing state of affairs and make an investigation into the areas such as unemployment, development of the rural areas and also food production. The ANC was heavily criticized for its watershed Polokwane Conference because they were slow in delivering or making major improvements in the country.

The NDR²⁵ in South Africa consists or stands for 3 words – ‘N’ for National, ‘D’ for Democratic and ‘R’ for Revolution. The question arises whether the NDR is outdated and whether the National project has been a success. Therefore the onus lay on the ANC to make this come true. Examining the ‘D’ for democracy, the questions that arise are whether the people are benefiting from democracy, are they being educated as in a democratic country and are they enjoying both their rights and duties as well. Have the people applied themselves to the tenets of democracy and the constitution? As for ‘R’ Revolution, the process of bringing about these changes took place over a long period of time and only evolved gradually over time.

²⁵ NDR – National Democratic Revolution expresses the working class people’s objective interests on a broad platform. It also includes other classes of people that are dominated by the white majority and includes the black petition bourgeoisie and also the emergent black bourgeoisie. www.cosatu.org.za/aboutcos.htm

So we cannot call it revolutionary but evolutionary. Therefore the need of the hour is to make more intense efforts in order to establish a good and efficient democracy. The need of the hour also is that we have to pursue our goals to attain a National Democratic Revolution. The common language of the three words NDR speaks for a radical and urgent change that calls for the unity of all the people to make this a reality in the future.

The ANC's historical success into the future largely depends on working in tandem with all the alliance partners that include SACP²⁶, COSATU²⁷ and SANCO²⁸ on a revolutionary and democratic platform. "It is an imperative, now to confront what may inevitably be a suicidal political era for civil society in general, and Sanco in particular." (Mlungisi Hlongwane, President of Sanco, Sanco 2nd National Conference, Johannesburg, 1997, quoted in Umrabulo 7, 1999)

²⁶ SACP – is a group of dedicated people that are a part of the alliance and strive for the elimination of national domination. (Joe Slovo, 1988. *The South African Working Class and the National Democratic Revolution. (Published by the South African Communist Party)*)

²⁷ COSATU – Congress of South African Trade Unions was launched in 1985, four years following the unity talks among the unions that were opposed to apartheid and committed to bringing about a democratic South Africa. www.cosatu.org.za/aboutcos.htm

²⁸ SANCO – Also one of the partners in the alliance. Referring to SANCO, the President of SANCO, Mlungisi Hongwane quoted the above sentence at the SANCO, 2nd National Conference, Johannesburg, 1997, in Umrabulo 7, 1999) [www.nu.ac.za/ccs/files/Zuern SANCO Research Report.pdf](http://www.nu.ac.za/ccs/files/Zuern%20SANCO%20Research%20Report.pdf)

My views on the issue of Apartheid

In my opinion, the apartheid was more of a barbaric system of government under which millions of Africans suffered miserably. According to me, the fight against all the atrocities meted out to the innocent Africans was a saga most unique in world history. The indomitable and incomparable courage of all the leaders of the ANC and the TRC is highly commendable and praiseworthy in their relentless fight against one of the worst stains on society – racial discrimination.

The solidarity shown as well as evoked from all the nations around the world, was able to cut across the great barriers of ideological differences of both race and creed and unite to bring about the freedom, peace and harmony which burned in the hearts of every African person. Though these people are still striving to bury the ghosts of the ancient past with all its mistrust and struggle, yet on one hand they are trying hard to forge ahead with a wider vision for a better change in the future.

According to me, I feel, that it was the selfless struggle in the crusade of fighting against segregation and racial discrimination, of our heroic leaders in the ANC, TRC, Youth League and all the other institutions that contributed towards putting an end to this monstrous atrocity, that the people of Africa are enjoying better freedom today. Though racial discrimination has not been totally wiped out from the face of the Earth, yet people all over the world have

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a much more broader outlook in life and enjoy better tolerance between different races.

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