

# Apartheid in South Africa

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South Africa was colonized by the English and Dutch in the seventeenth century. English domination of the Dutch descendants (known as Boers or Afrikaners) resulted in the Dutch establishing the new colonies of Orange Free State and Transvaal. The discovery of diamonds in these lands around 1900 resulted in an English invasion which sparked the Boer War. Following independence from England, an uneasy power-sharing between the two groups held sway until the 1940's, when the Afrikaner National Party was able to gain a strong majority. Strategists in the National Party invented apartheid as a means to cement their control over the economic and social system. Initially, aim of the apartheid was to maintain white domination while extending racial separation. Starting in the 60's, a plan of "Grand Apartheid" was executed, emphasizing territorial separation and police repression.

With the enactment of apartheid laws in 1948, racial discrimination was institutionalized. Race laws touched every aspect of social life, including a prohibition of marriage between non-whites and whites, and the sanctioning of "white-only" jobs. In 1950, the Population Registration Act required that all South Africans be racially classified into one of three categories: white, black (African), or coloured (of mixed decent). The coloured category included major subgroups of Indians and Asians. Classification into these categories was based on appearance, social acceptance, and descent. For example, a white person was defined as "in appearance obviously a white person or generally accepted as a white person." A person could not be considered white if one of his or her parents were non-white. The determination that a person was "obviously white" would take into account "his habits, education, and speech and deportment and demeanour." A black person would be of or accepted as a member of an African tribe or race, and a coloured person is one that is not black or white. The Department of Home Affairs (a government bureau) was responsible for the classification of the citizenry. Non-compliance with the race laws were dealt with harshly. All blacks were required to carry "pass books" containing fingerprints, photo and information on access to non-black areas.