

# The Struggle to End Apartheid



The apartheid system that prevailed in South Africa from 1948 to 1994 was one of the worst examples of racism and discrimination in modern history. Under it, the white minority exercised complete political power and economic privilege at the expense of the non-white majority who had no rights and suffered great hardship. Despite efforts of the white-minority South African government to justify apartheid as a system that was beneficial to all races, both domestic opposition and international condemnation of it grew. Canadian governments played a major role in the expulsion of South Africa from the Commonwealth because of its racial policies in 1961 and also lent support to the imposition of economic sanctions in the 1980s. Ordinary Canadians pressured the government to take an even stronger stand against apartheid. Diplomacy and sanctions were very important, but the concerted opposition of ordinary South Africans, both whites and non-whites, helped lead to apartheid's eventual end.

In small groups, research one of the following issues:

- The role of diplomacy in the defeat of apartheid (national and multi-national initiatives, focusing on Canada's involvement in them).
- the role of economic sanctions in the defeat of apartheid (their effectiveness and/or drawbacks, which countries supported and/or opposed them, Canada's participation, involvement of Canadian companies in trade with South Africa).
- the role of public pressure in the defeat of apartheid (groups formed in Canada, tactics they adopted, impact on government policies and/or public opinion).
- South Africa's attempts to justify apartheid in Canada (role of government spokespersons, comparisons to aboriginal conditions on reserves, effectiveness of this campaign).

Using the information you gather, prepare a discussion and a brief handout to analyze and evaluate the role of diplomacy, economic sanctions, and public pressure in ending apartheid in South Africa. To accompany your presentation to a round-table group of peers, prepare a photo album of significant figures who played a role in the aspect of the apartheid struggle that you researched. Write a short caption to explain the importance of each person included.

Start your research in the CBC Archives Canada - Fight Against Apartheid section and expand it to include any other resources you find useful.

Discuss the following question: "Besides the struggle of South Africans themselves to end apartheid, which international factor, diplomacy, economic sanctions, or public pressure, did most to achieve the goal of ending that unjust system of racial discrimination?"

Combine all of your "photo album" pages into one book. Discuss a title for the album. Reflect on why "putting a face" to apartheid can make a big difference to their understanding of it. Consider the cumulative action of these individuals and comment on the power of the following statement: "A number of individuals can be singled out as playing major leadership roles in this struggle, but the support they received from tens of thousands of South African citizens dedicated to ending injustice and establishing a multiracial society was key in the eventual defeat of apartheid."