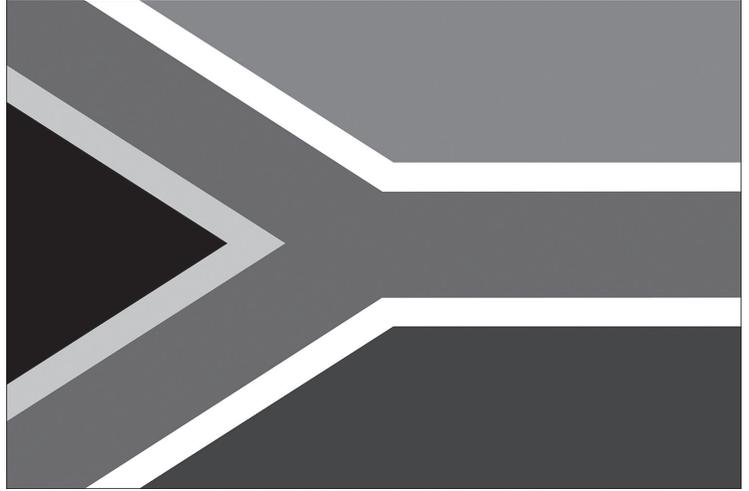


History of South Africa

People have inhabited southern Africa for thousands of years. Members of the Khoisan language groups are the oldest surviving inhabitants of the land, but only a few are left in South Africa today — and they are located in the western sections. Most of today's black South Africans belong to the Bantu language group, which migrated south from central Africa, settling in the Transvaal region sometime before AD 100. The Nguni, ancestors of the Zulu and Xhosa, occupied most of the eastern coast by 1500.



The Portugese were the first Europeans to reach the Cape of Good Hope, arriving in 1488. However, permanent white settlement did not begin until 1652 when the Dutch East India Company established a provisioning station on the Cape. In subsequent decades, French Huguenot refugees, the Dutch, and Germans began to settle in the Cape. Collectively, they form the Afrikaner segment of today's population. The establishment of these settlements had far-reaching social and political effects on the groups already settled in the area, leading to upheaval in these societies and the subjugation of their people.

By 1779, European settlements extended throughout the southern part of the Cape and east toward the Great Fish River. It was here that Dutch authorities and the Xhosa fought the first frontier war. The British gained control of the Cape of Good Hope at the end of the 18th century. Subsequent British settlement and rule marked the beginning of a long conflict between the Afrikaners and the English.

Beginning in 1836, partly to escape British rule and cultural hegemony and partly out of resentment at the recent abolition of slavery, many Afrikaner farmers (Boers) undertook a northern migration that became known as the "Great Trek." This movement brought them



into contact and conflict with African groups in the area, the most formidable of which were the Zulus. Under their powerful leader, Shaka (1787-1828), the Zulus conquered most of the territory between the Drakensberg Mountains and the sea (now KwaZulu-Natal).

In 1828, Shaka was assassinated and replaced by his half-brother Dingane. In 1838, Dingane was defeated and deported by the Voortrekkers (people of the Great Trek) at the battle of Blood River. The Zulus, nonetheless, remained a potent force, defeating the British in the historic battle of Isandhlwana before themselves being finally conquered in 1879.

In 1852 and 1854, the independent Boer Republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State were created. Relations between the republics and the British Government were strained. The discovery of diamonds at Kimberley in 1870 and the discovery of large gold deposits in the Witwatersrand region of the Transvaal in 1886 caused an influx of European (mainly British) immigration and investment. Many blacks also moved into the area to work in the mines. The construction by mine owners of hostels to house and control their workers set patterns that later extended throughout the region.

Boer reactions to this influx and British political intrigues led to the Anglo-Boer Wars of 1880-81 and 1899-1902. British forces prevailed in the conflict, and the republics were incorporated into the British Empire. In May 1910, the two republics and the British colonies of the Cape and Natal formed the Union of South Africa, a self-governing dominion of the British Empire. The Union's constitution kept all political power in the hands of whites.

In 1912, the South Africa Native National Congress was founded in Bloemfontein and eventually became known as the African National Congress (ANC). Its goals were the elimination of restrictions based on color and the enfranchisement of and parliamentary representation for blacks. Despite these efforts the government continued to pass laws limiting the rights and freedoms of blacks.

In 1948, the National Party (NP) won the all-white elections and began passing legislation codifying and enforcing an even stricter policy of white domination and racial separation known as "apartheid" (separateness). In the early 1960s, following a protest in Sharpeville in which 69 protesters were killed by police and 180 injured, the ANC and Pan-African Congress (PAC) were banned. Nelson Mandela and many other anti-apartheid leaders were convicted and imprisoned on charges of treason.

The ANC and PAC were forced underground and fought apartheid through guerrilla warfare and sabotage. In May 1961, South Africa relinquished its dominion status and declared itself a republic. It withdrew from the Commonwealth in part because of international protests against apartheid. In 1984, a new constitution came into effect in which whites allowed coloreds and Asians a limited role in the national government and control over their own affairs in certain areas. Ultimately, however, all power remained in white hands. Blacks remained effectively disenfranchised.

Popular uprisings in black and colored townships in 1976 and 1985 helped to convince some NP members of the need for change. Secret discussions between those members and Nelson Mandela began in 1986. In February 1990, State President



Anti-apartheid poster



South Africa's president FW de Klerk poses with Nelson Mandela in Cape Town's government residence on February 9 1990, two days before Mandela's release from jail. (AFP_

F.W. de Klerk, who had come to power in September 1989, announced the unbanning of the ANC, the PAC, and all other anti-apartheid groups. Two weeks later, Nelson Mandela was released from prison.

In 1991, the Group Areas Act, Land Acts, and the Population Registration Act--the last of the so-called "pillars of apartheid" were abolished. A long series of negotiations ensued, resulting in a new constitution promulgated into law in December 1993. The country's first nonracial elections were held on April 26-29, 1994, resulting in the installation of Nelson Mandela as president on May 10, 1994.

During Nelson Mandela's 5-year term as President of South Africa, the government committed itself to reforming the country. The ANC-led government focused on social issues that were neglected during the apartheid era such as unemployment, housing shortages, and crime. Mandela's administration began to reintroduce South Africa into the global economy by implementing a market-driven economic plan (GEAR). In order to heal the wounds created by apartheid, the government created the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) under the leadership of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. During the first term of the ANC's post-apartheid rule, President Mandela concentrated on national reconciliation, trying to forge a single South African identity and sense of purpose among a diverse and splintered populace, riven by years of

conflict. The lack of political violence after 1994 is testament to the abilities of Mandela to achieve this difficult goal. Nelson Mandela stepped down as President of the ANC at the party's national congress in December 1997, when Thabo Mbeki assumed the mantle of leadership. Mbeki won the presidency of South Africa after national elections in 1999, when the ANC won just shy of a two-thirds majority in parliament. President Mbeki shifted the focus of government from reconciliation to transformation, particularly on the economic front. With political transformation and the foundation of a strong democratic system in place after two free and fair national elections, the ANC recognized the need to begin to focus on bringing economic power to the black majority in South Africa, as well as political power. In this progress has come somewhat more slowly.



Nelson Mandela and his wife, Winnie, walk in Paarl after his release from the Victor Verster prison on 11 February 1990. (AFP)