

Timeline of Resistance to Apartheid

1912

The **African National Congress (ANC)**, a nonviolent, political organization, forms, joining South Africans opposed to white domination.

1955



3,000 antiapartheid South Africans of all races publish the **Freedom Charter**, which proclaims that South Africa belongs to all who live in it and calls for wealth to be redistributed equally among blacks and whites.

1960

69 people are shot to death at **Sharpeville** township after South African police attack a nonviolent, anti-pass law demonstration. Afterward, some ANC members reconsider their commitment to nonviolent protest.



1961



Albert Luthuli, president of the ANC, wins the Nobel Peace Prize for his leadership of nonviolent protest against apartheid.

1963

The **Organization of African Unity (OAU)** begins to use economic and diplomatic pressure to weaken the South African government and arouse international opposition to apartheid.

1964



The government sentences Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, and other leaders of **Umkonto we Sizwe** (Spear of the Nation), the military wing of ANC, to life imprisonment for antigovernment violence.

1976

In **Soweto** township, thousands of students peacefully protest the use of the Afrikaans language in schools. The South African police respond by attacking the students, killing more than 700 people.



1977



Steven Biko, leader of the Black Consciousness movement (which emphasized positive black self-image and action), dies in prison after being brutally beaten by South African police.

1984

Desmond Tutu, an Anglican Archbishop, wins the Nobel Peace Prize for his leadership as a spokesperson for nonviolent Christian opposition to apartheid.



1980s

The **international community** increases economic and political pressure on the South African government. Antiapartheid protests in the United States and Europe force banks and businesses to divest (withdraw investments) from South Africa.

1994



In South Africa's first ever all-race elections, **Nelson Mandela**, released from prison in 1990, is elected South Africa's first post-apartheid president. His election marked the end of apartheid as an official segregationist system in South Africa.

The End of Apartheid



Many South Africans resisted apartheid through civil disobedience, strikes, boycotts, nonviolent demonstrations, armed struggle, and calling on the international community to divest (withdraw investments) from South Africa. After decades of this resistance, the South African government extended some rights to the black population of South Africa in the 1980s. But in 1986, the government decided that the antiapartheid movement was threatening all-white rule and cracked down on resistance. During the state of emergency (1986–1989), the government used mass arrests, torture, and rigged trials to crush opposition. More than 20,000 people were arrested during this period. Despite the harshness of the state of emergency, resistance increased, and many members of the apartheid government believed that some change was inevitable.



Faced with increased resistance at home and increased pressure from abroad, in 1989 the South African government began to discuss change with the leaders of the antiapartheid movement. In 1990 the government legalized the African National Congress (ANC), South Africa's largest antiapartheid party. The government released the party's leaders from prison, and in 1991 negotiations between the government and antiapartheid leaders began. Pictured here are F. W. de Klerk, the South African president, and Nelson Mandela, leader of the ANC. President de Klerk initiated talks between the two parties by releasing Mandela, who had been in prison almost 30 years. Mandela's international fame as a leader of antiapartheid resistance helped focus worldwide attention on South Africa's peace talks.



The culmination of resistance to apartheid occurred when the South African government agreed to hold all-party elections in 1994. The elections began on April 27, 1994, and lasted five days. Many voters traveled for more than a day to the polls, and some waited in line for more than 24 hours to vote for the first time in their lives. In a historic election, the ANC won 63% of the 20 million votes cast. This was just less than the two-thirds majority needed by the ANC to be able to write a new constitution by themselves. Instead, the ANC and other South African parties agreed to write a new constitution together by May 1996. An alliance of parties, led by the ANC with Mandela as president, planned to rule South Africa in the interim. Despite the overthrow of apartheid in South Africa, the country still suffered from economic inequality. In 1996, the majority of money, property, and high-level jobs were in the hands of the white minority. The most important and difficult task facing South Africa's new government was to create greater economic equality while maintaining the support of white South Africans.