

Lesson 5
The Legacy of Apartheid: Land Issues in South Africa



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Introduction: The legacy of Apartheid on local people is directly reflected in the “land laws” that were implemented for several decades by the South African government. This lesson focuses on the history of land inequalities in South Africa and the political, economic, social and psychological effects of that inequality on millions of South Africans. In this lesson students come to understand the consequences of those land laws and the challenges they continue to pose even in the post-Apartheid era.

Objectives: At the completion of this lesson, the students will be able to:

1. Analyze the political, economic, social, and historical legacy of apartheid land laws on past and present South Africans.
2. Discuss the consequences of ethnic discrimination and develop strategies for solving political, economic, and social divisions that have resulted from national conflicts or government policy.
3. Interpret the current state of land issues in South Africa, discuss the challenges the post-Apartheid government faces, and assess future goals/efforts to reduce inequities in South Africa.
4. Compare and contrast the development of “homelands” in various nations (e.g., Native American reservation systems) using South African townships as a case study to guide their analysis. (if completing extension activity)

Suggested Grade Levels: 10-12

Time: Four to five 50-minute class periods

Suggested Subjects: Contemporary World Problems, Economics, World Geography, International Relations, and Sociology

Materials:

- ◆ Overhead/Board
- ◆ Overhead Notes
- ◆ Selected Resources/Internet Technology
- ◆ Newspaper Articles
- ◆ Construction Paper/Poster board
- ◆ Pens/Colored Pencils

Instructional Procedures:

1. Choose one of the following two activities to introduce the concept of land displacement in Apartheid Era South Africa. These introductory activities provide students with a purpose for discussing the effects of land laws in South Africa and a perspective on the topic.

A. *This activity is designed to provide students with some perspective/empathy for those South Africans impacted by land displacement policies.* Present the following scenario: “Imagine that you and your family have been evicted from your home and that you have been given one day to pack up your most treasured items and permanently leave for a resettlement camp. What would you bring? What would be most important to you and your family? Think about essential, as well as, personal items.” Please respond in writing to this scenario with specific examples. Consider not only what you would pack but also how you would feel about this “ultimatum.”

B. *This activity is designed to assess students’ prior knowledge of important issues in South Africa.* What do you think of when you hear the word “South Africa?” Generate a list of economic, political, social, historical, and/or cultural items that you believe reflect South Africa. Allow students time to write and then ask for students to volunteer their responses. You may want to record these items on the board or overhead to see the broad spectrum of student ideas. Encourage students to categorize their responses as being economic, political, social, historical and/or cultural. Provide time for students to compare their ideas with a partner. After these mini-discussions, as a large group, have students provide an example from their lists with a brief explanation. Write down ideas on the board or overhead.

2. Make an overhead transparency of the “Background/Overhead Notes”. Use those notes to provide each student with an overview of land and resettlement issues that existed in South Africa during apartheid. Encourage questions and discussion.

3. Have students complete one of the following two activities:

A. Organize students into small groups of three or four and have them conduct research on a specific element of the previous overview/discussion that focuses on the political, economic, social, historical, cultural consequences of the legacy of land laws in South Africa. Instruct students to consult at least three sources and take notes. Also ask them to include a visual aid (overhead or poster board) that summarizes the key issues, questions, and reflections related to their topic.

Possible topics:

- ◆ Job opportunities in the townships
- ◆ Educational opportunities in the townships,
- ◆ The social effects of resettlement/loss of land
- ◆ Crime
- ◆ Squatter camps
- ◆ Townships: Soweto, Cape Flats....Langa, Guguletu, Nyanga, and Khayelitsha
- ◆ District Six
- ◆ Land reform programs/issues/land laws
- ◆ Access to basic amenities (water, electricity, telephones, health care)
- ◆ Daily life
- ◆ Historical developments of apartheid
- ◆ Aspects of culture within the township

Instruct each group to give a 5-10 minute presentation to the class titled “What I didn’t know about [their specific topic] in South Africa.” Ask for questions following each small group presentation.

B. Have students research articles on land issues from South African newspapers. Here are a few websites to get them started: www.southafricannews.com, www.capetimes.com, and www.sundaytimes.co.za. After students have found and read 5-7 articles, have students work in pairs and develop a “web” or chart that schematically shows the economic, political, historical, social, and cultural legacies of land laws and former apartheid practices. Consider organizing students into “issue” groups and have each issue group focus on one particular type of legacy.

Getting Going:

The Economic Legacy: Displaced populations, lack of steady employment, lack of adequate housing, homelessness, lack of access to technology and training for growth and development, transportation issues, poverty/poor standard of living.

The Political Legacy: Disputed land claims, divisions between farmers/homeless populations, lack of government solutions.

The Social Legacy: Lack of adequate health care, sanitation, clean water, education issues with lack of permanent residence, quality of life, spread of disease in the squatter camps, lack of access to technology, informal settlements, hygiene issues.

The Historical Legacy: Land laws, effects of apartheid/Group Areas Act, restrictions on land settlement, consequences of discrimination.

The Cultural Legacy: Dehumanizing effects of apartheid brought people together to protect cultural values and identity.

After discussion and completion of their “webs,” have the class come together as a large group and discuss/chart their responses on the board. This activity reinforces the continuing importance of land issues in South Africa.

4. As a large group, bring closure to this discussion by writing down (on the board or overhead) the five major themes that have been generated by the teacher and students regarding the economic, political, social, historical, and cultural legacy of land policies in South Africa.

Sample Themes:

- A. Land laws initiated by the Apartheid Era regime resulted in widespread discrimination.
- B. People of color were forced to live in crowded, unhealthy, and unstable environments, as they were moved to townships or homelands. Issues of unsafe environments (crime, sanitation, over-population) continue to this day in parts of South Africa.
- C. Apartheid Land laws resulted in large economic disparities between different racial groups in South Africa. These economic effects continue today as many South Africans are unemployed, lack skills for jobs, and have a very poor standard of living.
- D. Apartheid policies created unequal access to adequate health care, educational opportunities, participation in the political process, and other basic civil rights.
- E. Apartheid laws dehumanized people, yet the oppressed were able to keep their cultural values and identities. This has given people the power to work towards better economic, social, and political opportunities in post-apartheid South Africa.

5. Next, discuss what the current government can do to alleviate these problems?
6. After studying land issues in South Africa, have students (individually or in pairs) design a CD cover and write at least one lyrical song that reflects their understanding of the topic (economic, political, social, cultural, and historical legacies of land laws/resettlement in South Africa, past and present issues). Students' CD covers should visually reflect some aspect of the topic and they should include a title. The back of their CD should include 6 song titles along with the lyrics (based on class activities, etc.) for one of the songs. For extra credit students could present (sing) their song.

Assessment: Students may be assessed for completion/participation in the brainstorming activity. Also, rubrics could be developed to assess either of the small group research/presentation activities.

Extensions:

1. Have students put themselves into the role of an individual who was or is affected by land law issues in South Africa and write the song from their perspective.
2. Challenge students to study land laws/issues and resettlement in a global context by examining the experiences of other groups throughout the world. A national/local connection could be the study of Native Americans and the effects of reservations from an economic, political, cultural/social, and historical point of view. Students could also apply what they have learned to compare and contrast land laws/issues and resettlement in South Africa with land law/issues and resettlement of Native Americans in the United States.
3. On the overhead, have students discuss the following questions: Why do we have borders? What purpose do they serve? What kinds of images come to mind when you think about the concept of borders? What economic, social, political, and cultural issues are prevalent around borders? We usually think of international borders, but are there other borders that exist within nations and communities? Examples? After student reflection and large group discussion, bring up the case of "townships" in South Africa as "borders" within a country that have distinct economic, social, cultural, psychological, political and political characteristics.

Bibliography:

Fortune, Linda, *The House in The Street: Childhood Memories of District Six*, Kwela Books, Cape Town, South Africa, 1996.

Johannes, Calvin, *The History of The Black Townships and Squatter Camps of Cape Town*, Southern Tip Tours, 19 Japonika Street, Belhar, Cape Town, South Africa (27 21 952 7578/ e-mail: stt@global.co.za/ web site: www.southerntours.co.za).

Rive, Richard, *Buckingham Palace, District Six*, David Philip Publishers, Claremont, South Africa, 1996 (educational edition).

Background/Overhead Notes

I. Apartheid Era Land Laws:

- A. Native Urban Areas Act (1923): Restricted the movement of Africans in urban areas and empowered local authorities to set aside segregated areas for formal housing.
- B. Group Areas Act (June 1950): This legislation was the catalyst for the segregating communities in South Africa. The Group Areas Act relegated the black population to a minor percentage of the nation's land. This law also affected "colored" populations, who were forcibly removed from areas declared "white-only." (Examples):
 - 1. District Six- Cape Town (Feb. 1966): Originally a community of freed slaves, merchants, artisans, laborers, and immigrants, District Six was declared a white-only area and 60,000 people were forcibly removed to a barren outpost known as the Cape Flats. Their houses were razed to the ground by bulldozers. The first to be "resettled," however, were Africans, who were forcibly removed in 1901. Buildings were bulldozed and only the mosques and churches remained.
 - 2. Soweto (Outside Johannesburg): Conglomeration of townships or segregated areas that were established as a residence for people of color. Originally developed during the 1940's to house black workers for the region's gold mines. Soweto became a growing township during the period of racial segregation (1948-1990's). The government created townships to remove people of color from living close to whites in urban areas of the city.
 - 3. Squatter Camps: Developed outside the cities as a form of informal housing. The term "squating" refers worldwide to all forms of informal housing and is officially reserved for the illegal occupation of land and construction of makeshift dwellings. The term informal settlement is reserved for legalized shack settlements. Reasons for squatter camps: Management policies of Apartheid government, rapid urbanization, widespread poverty, unemployment and underemployment, and severe housing shortages.
 - 4. Major Black Townships in Cape Town: Langa, Guguletu, and Nyanga, and Khayelitsha (see curriculum guide for more information on background and history).
- C. Enactment of Pass Laws (1952): Require blacks to carry passbooks so that the government can regulate travel throughout the country.
- D. Homelands: Refers to ten regions designated by the South African government as semi-autonomous regions for black populations. Transkei becomes the first established homeland in 1976. The ten homelands eventually make up about 13% of the country.
- E. The Effects of Apartheid Land Laws: These are some of the effects of land laws that resulted in segregation of colored populations and problems that continue to exist for some communities in the post-Apartheid era.

1. Lack of economic opportunities/unemployment
2. Spread of disease/lack of adequate health care
3. Lack of equal educational opportunities/crowded schools
4. Problems with Crime/Gangs
5. Dehumanization of colored populations
6. Sanitation problems: clean/running water
7. Poverty
8. Pollution problems
9. Many people lack other basic amenities (electricity, telephones, etc)
10. Political power/participation
11. Access to technology