

Classroom Connections: From Music to Madiba: A History of U.S. Relations with South Africa



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Background for Teachers

From 1948 to the early 1990s, South Africa used an institutional policy of segregation known as apartheid to marginalize the nonwhite population. Though whites were a minority group in South Africa, apartheid allowed them to exert control over the government, economy, and society. Apartheid faced opposition from the global community including the United Nations especially in the 1970s and 1980s. Social movements within South Africa intensified during this time as well, even as prominent black leaders like Nelson Mandela were imprisoned.

The United States government shifted its stance on South Africa throughout the 20th century. During much of the Cold War, the U.S. prioritized maintaining friendly alliances with anticommunist regimes over the fight for global equality. In competing with the Soviet Union, the U.S. also relied upon valuable minerals exported by the segregationist South African government. There were clear racial elements to U.S. policy as well, as many politicians were in favor of a continuation of domestic Jim Crow era laws promoting a segregated society.

This lesson, and the corresponding BackStory episode, focus on the evolving history of relations between the U.S. and South Africa. Though the U.S. and South Africa have different histories, they shared racial and political upheaval throughout the 20th century. Examining the U.S. response to South Africa allows students to explore the complicated issues that shaped foreign policy during the Cold War era.

Procedures

1. Guiding Question:
 - a. Ask students to write down an initial response to this question:
 - i. What influenced U.S. foreign policy toward South Africa during apartheid?
 - b. As the lesson progresses, ask students to revisit this question.
2. Classroom Connections: Listen to Backstory
 - a. Have students listen to the Backstory episode on the history of U.S. relations with South Africa. This can be also be assigned before class. Have students focus on the following comprehension questions for each segment:
 - i. The Lesser of Two Evils
 1. What was apartheid?
 2. What type of relationship did the U.S. government have with South Africa in the 1950s?
 3. Why did the U.S. support several racially unjust governments during the Cold War?
 - ii. Forging Connections
 1. What similarities exist between the experience of African Americans under Jim Crow and black South Africans under apartheid? What differences existed between these two groups?
 2. What role did American Civil Rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X play in the fight for equality in South Africa?
 - iii. Communism and the Color Line
 1. Why did the U.S. Congress pass economic sanctions against South Africa in 1986?
 2. How do perceptions of Nelson Mandela change within the U.S. government at the conclusion of the Cold War?
 - iv. Liner Notes
 1. What role did radio stations play in supporting apartheid in South Africa?
 2. What is the significance of Paul Simon’s “Graceland”?
3. Document Analysis
 - a. Pass out the document set and graphic organizer to students. The documents focus on the changes in U.S. foreign policy with South Africa during the Cold War era.
 - b. Have students review each document individually or in small groups.
 - c. For each document, students should fill out the following information in the graphic organizer:
 - i. Historic Context: What is the context of the document? What was happening in history around the time it was created? How does this impact what it says?
 - ii. Intended Audience: For whom was the document created? How does this impact what it says?
 - iii. Point-of-View: Who created the document? What is their perspective? How does this impact what the document says?
 - iv. Purpose: Why was the document created? How does this impact what it says?
 - d. After groups have been given enough time to craft their arguments, participate in a class discussion to summarize key themes and learning points.
4. Return to the Guiding Question
 - a. To conclude the lesson, have students revisit the initial guiding question. Ask students to reflect on how their opinions have shifted based on new information. Encourage students to write down one key takeaway from the lesson.

Standards

AP US History Themes:

Theme 5: Politics and Power

Theme 6: America and the World

Theme 8: Social Structures

C3 Framework:

Change, Continuity, and Context

D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts

D2.His.2.9-12. Analyze change and continuity in historical eras

D2.His.3.9-12. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.

Perspectives

D2.His.5.9-12. Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people's perspectives.

D2.His.6.9-12. Analyze the ways in which the perspectives of those writing history shaped the history that they produced.

Historical Sources and Evidence

D2.His.11.9-12. Critique the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.

D2.His.12.9-12. Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to pursue further inquiry and investigate additional sources.

Causation and Argument

D2.His.14.9-12. Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past.

D2.His.16.9-12. Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.

Document Analysis: Graphic Organizer

Source	Historic Context	Intended Audience	Point-of-View	Purpose
Doc A: Letter from Martin Luther King Jr.				
Doc B: Internal Memo to the State Department				
Doc C: Remarks from President Johnson				
Doc D: Policy Paper by the National Security Council				
Doc E: Statistics on Mineral Production and Reserves				
Doc F: Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986				

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Part I: Guiding Question

Consider this question throughout the lesson.

1. What influenced U.S. foreign policy toward South Africa during apartheid?

Part II: *Backstory - From Music to Madiba*

As you listen to the Backstory episode, answer the following questions for each segment.

1. The Lesser of Two Evils
 - a. What was apartheid?
 - b. What type of relationship did the U.S. government have with South Africa in the 1950s?
 - c. Why did the U.S. support several racially unjust governments during the Cold War?

2. Forging Connections
 - a. What similarities exist between the experience of African Americans under Jim Crow and black South Africans under apartheid? What differences existed between these two groups?
 - b. What role did American Civil Rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X play in the fight for equality in South Africa?

3. Communism and the Color Line
 - a. Why did the U.S. Congress pass economic sanctions against South Africa in 1986?
 - b. How do perceptions of Nelson Mandela change within the U.S. government at the conclusion of the Cold War?

4. Liner Notes
 - a. What role did radio stations play in supporting apartheid in South Africa?
 - b. What is the significance of Paul Simon's "Graceland"?

Part III: Document-Based Question

Directions: Using the information from the podcast and the documents below, formulate an argument in response to the following prompt:

- How did political, social, and economic self-interest shape U.S. foreign policy toward South Africa during the second half of the 20th century?

In your response you should:

- Craft a thesis statement that takes a stand on the question above
- Structure a response that follows a clear format and uses logical argumentation
- Contextualize your response in your knowledge of US History
- Use at least four of the documents
- Use the graphic organizer to outline your thinking

Document A

The President
The White House

We are grateful that our state department has protested the mass killings of our South African brothers and we are pleased that the U.N. Security Council will meet March 29th to consider that outrage. We urge that before March 29th our government issue a statement placing the administration firmly on the side of negroes in the southern states in their present struggle for their constitutional rights, since they are subjected to intimidation, threats and violence when they claim these rights.

Furthermore, voting laws are useless to southern negroes who fear for their lives and for the safety of their families if they try to register and vote. Such a statement from the administration would strengthen the position of our delegation before the nations of the world.

South Africans cannot hope for help from a government committed to "apartheid"; nor can we hope for help from local and state governments committed to "white supremacy."

Africans are turning to the un for moral support and encouragement; must we?

Letter from Martin Luther King Jr. and other Civil Rights leaders to Dwight Eisenhower
March 26, 1960

Document B

Our policy problem is how best to influence South Africa's internal policies in a constructive direction while maintaining correct and mutually advantageous relations. We do not intend to desist from criticism of South Africa's racial policies, both because we consider those policies dangerous and short-sighted, and because we regard it essential for our overall policy in Africa to remain in step with wider African opinion. Our basic approach, therefore, is to distinguish between non-cooperation in matters directly or indirectly related to South Africa's apartheid policy, and cooperation in other important fields.

Internal memo to the State Department from the U.S. Embassy in South Africa

1962

Document C

As your charter and as our Declaration of Independence set forth, we believe that governments must derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. This is the core of political freedom and the first principle of nation-building. In the past 15 years, belief in self-determination has fired the swift momentum of Africa toward full participation in the community of nations. It has been a truly remarkable era in which more than 30 nations have emerged from colonialism to independence.

The road has not been traveled without difficulty. Its end is not even yet in sight. There have been ups and downs—and of course there will be more. But as one of our distinguished ambassadors has pointed out, "What matters most about new nations is not that they have growing pains but that they are in fact growing."

There is in Africa today an increasing awareness that government must represent the true will of its citizens. Across the continent the majority of people prefer self-government with peril to subservience with serenity. This makes all the more repugnant the narrow-minded, outmoded policy which in some parts of Africa permits the few to rule at the expense of the many.

The United States has learned from lamentable personal experience that domination of one race by another leads to waste and to injustice. Just as we are determined to remove the remnants of inequality from our midst, we are also with you—heart and soul—as you try to do the same.

We believe, as you do, that denial of a whole people's rights to shape their national future is morally wrong. We also know that it is politically and socially costly. A nation in the 20th century cannot expect to achieve order and sustain growth unless it moves—not just steadily but rapidly—in the direction of full political rights for all of its peoples.

It has taken us time to learn this lesson. But having learned it, we must not forget it. The Government of the United States cannot, therefore, condone the perpetuation of racial or political injustice anywhere in the world. We shall continue to provide our full share of assistance to refugees from social and political oppression.

As a basic part of our national tradition we support self-determination and an orderly transition to majority rule in every quarter of the globe. These principles have guided our American policy from India to the Philippines, from Vietnam to Pakistan. They guide our policy today toward Rhodesia. We are giving every encouragement and support to the efforts of the United Kingdom and the United Nations to restore legitimate government in Rhodesia. Only when this is accomplished can steps be taken to open the full power and responsibility of nationhood to all the people of Rhodesia—not just 6 percent of them.

The disruptive effects of current sanctions fall heavily upon Zambia, adding a difficult burden to that young republic's efforts to strengthen its national life. I have informed President Kenneth Kaunda that we will work with him in trying to meet the economic pressures to which his country is being subjected.

The foreign policy of the United States is rooted in its life at home. We will not permit human rights to be restricted in our own country. And we will not support policies abroad which are based on the rule of minorities or the discredited notion that men are unequal before the law.

We will not live by a double standard—professing abroad what we do not practice at home, or venerating at home what we ignore abroad.

Excerpt from Remarks by President Lyndon B. Johnson on U.S.-Africa Policy

May 26th, 1966

Document D

In weighing the range of U.S. interests in southern Africa, there is basic consensus within the U.S. Government:

1. Although the U.S. has various interests in the region, it has none which could be classified as vital security interests.
2. Our political interests in the region are important because the racial policies of the white states have become a major international issue. Therefore, because other countries have made it so, our foreign policy must take into account the domestic policies of the white regimes. Most non-white nations in the world in varying degrees would tend to judge conspicuous U.S. cooperation with the white regimes as condoning their racial policies.
3. The racial problems of southern Africa probably will grow more acute over time, perhaps leading to violent internal upheavals and greater involvement of the communist powers. Though these developments may be years or even decades ahead, U.S. policy should take account now of the risks to our interests and possible involvement over this uncertain future...

Premise

The whites are here to stay and the only way that constructive change can come about is through them. There is no hope for the blacks to gain the political rights they seek through violence, which will only lead to chaos and increased opportunities for the communists. We can, by selective relaxation of our stance toward the white regimes, encourage some modification of their current racial and colonial policies and through more substantial economic assistance to the black states (a total of about \$5 million annually in technical assistance to the black states) help to draw the two groups together and exert some influence on both for peaceful change. Our tangible interests form a basis for our contacts in the region, and these can be maintained at an acceptable political cost.

General Posture

We would maintain public opposition to racial repression but relax political isolation and economic restrictions on the white states. We would begin by modest indications of this relaxation, broadening the scope of our relations and contacts gradually and to some degree in response to tangible—albeit small and gradual—moderation of white policies. Without openly taking a position undermining the U.K. and the UN on Rhodesia, we would be more flexible in our attitude toward the Smith regime. We would take present Portuguese policies as suggesting further changes in the Portuguese Territories. At the same time we would take diplomatic steps to convince the black states of the area that their current liberation and majority rule aspirations in the south are not attainable by violence and that their only hope for a peaceful and prosperous future lies in closer relations with white-dominated states. We would emphasize our belief that closer relations will help to bring change in the white states. We would give increased and more flexible economic aid to black states of the area to focus their attention on their internal development and to give them a motive to cooperate in reducing tensions. We would encourage economic assistance from South Africa to the developing black nations.

Excerpts from a policy paper by the National Security Council Interdepartmental Group for Africa

December 9, 1969

Document E

Percentage Share of Mineral Reserves by Country in 1979

Mineral	United States	South Africa	Soviet Union
<u>Chromium</u>			
Production	0.00	33.0	24.5
Reserves	0.00	66.4	2.90
<u>Manganese</u>			
Production	0.00	20.9	45.8
Reserves	0.00	37.2	50.7
<u>Platinum Group</u>			
Production	0.10	47.5	47.5
Reserves	0.10	73.2	25.1
<u>Vanadium</u>			
Production	17.6	42.3	27.9
Reserves	0.70	49.4	45.9

Statistics on Mineral Production and Reserves

U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Mines. *Mineral Commodity Summaries*. 1980

Document F

TITLE I—POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES WITH RESPECT TO ENDING APARTHEID

SECTION 101: POLICY TOWARD THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA

(a) United States policy toward the Government of South Africa shall be designed to bring about reforms in that system of government that will lead to the establishment of a nonracial democracy.

(b) The United States will work toward this goal by encouraging the Government of South Africa to—

(1) repeal the present state of emergency and respect the principle of equal justice under law for citizens of all races;

(2) release Nelson Mandela, Govan Mbeki, Walter Sisulu, black trade union leaders, and all political prisoners;

(3) permit the free exercise by South Africans of all races of the right to form political parties, express political opinions, and otherwise participate in the political process;

(4) establish a timetable for the elimination of apartheid laws;

(5) negotiate with representatives of all racial groups in South Africa the future political system in South Africa; and

(6) end military and paramilitary activities aimed at neighboring states.

Excerpt from Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986

Enacted on October 2, 1986 after a Congressional override of Ronald Reagan's veto