

Cry Freedom Essay

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World History, Period 6

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February 28, 2003

Apartheid is racial segregation, which was mainly focused in South Africa. It is a highly controversial issue. Apartheid was highly enforced in the later 1800's in Africa. This was a very unfortunate era for the black Africans. An educated black activist named Stephen Biko protested against apartheid in Africa. He studied Medicine in Natal University and started many of the Black student organizations in Africa. People would always gather to protest against their limitations and human rights. Because he protested so much, he was banned from the outside world and could not talk with more than one person in his room. He constantly violated his banning area, which created more restrictions on his rights. His fellow Africans praised him very much and they will always remember him in their hearts because they know that he is the one who set them free. Stephen Biko's views on Apartheid were perverted based on the white's power over his people and their freedom ("Biko, Stephen (Bantu) (1946-77), <http://userwww.sfsu.edu/~rsauzier/Biko.html>).

Apartheid started back when the British discovered that there were diamonds in Africa so they decided to invade the country and started a war with the Afrikaaners. This is known as the Boer War. Even though the victory in war granted Africa its freedom from England, it left two racial groups to fight over the land. Apartheid was primarily started so the Afrikaaner Party could maintain control of social and economic conditions. It turned out that the whites started apartheid to maintain **their** control over social and economic conditions while keeping the races separate. "Grand Apartheid" was executed in the 1960's. Apartheid laws began to take over specific aspects of the Africans' lives ("History of Apartheid in South Africa", <http://www-cs-students.stanford.edu/~cale/cs201/apartheid.hist.html>). To other blacks who witnessed

the hard work of Biko and to those who learn about his courage and strength, he is known as a “ man who came to symbolize suffering and oppression”

(<http://www.mndaily.com/daily/1998/05/08/news/biko/>). Biko himself thought he simply let his people know there was a window of opportunities waiting for them and this was not the life to live. To Biko, like any other leader who is loyal to his people, he could not stand to bear the pain of watching his people suffer while the whites of his country live in luxurious homes with black maids. That was what disappointed him the most.

An upsetting event portrayed in the movie *Cry Freedom* and described in periodicals and newspapers is the 1975 attack in Crossroads. Crossroads was an illegal township near the airport in South Africa. The Africans were ordered to leave their working places in the white people’s farms and to live in Crossroads. The Africans managed to make homes and a community out of bushes and shacks. It “was considered a temporary camp by the authorities in 1975” (“Apartheid Shanty Towns in Cape Towns, Crossroads,” http://www.capetown.at/heritage/history/apart_influx_shanty_art.htm#cross). In 1975, the government, because of sanitation issues in the illegal township, made an eviction order. This implies the 1975 attack in Crossroads shown in the movie. This attack obviously could have been avoided if the people had followed through with the eviction order. However, Men’s and Women’s committees were formed to fight and protest against this order and others like this. Here is a direct example of Biko’s judgment and handling of the situation could have been better, but because of his commitment to his people and never giving up, he felt that anything the government did was wrong and everything he was doing was right. Biko could have considered that the government made this eviction order for the safety and health of the Africans as opposed to just trying to eradicate the

black Africans from their land. Because of this close-mindedness, many innocent people died because they just wanted to live in peace.

As well as the Crossroads attack in 1975, a year later on June 16, 1976, a dreadful attack was placed on the “30,000 students who took to the streets of Soweto protesting a government edict that all classes were to be taught in Afrikaans – the language of the white minority” (“Inside Africa: Soweto Uprising Remembered,” <http://www.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/africa/06/15/inside.africa/>”). The Soweto Uprising can be simply rephrased as the battle of whites versus blacks or the battle of the races. “By day's end, officially, there were 23 dead. Locals say it was more like 200. Hundreds were injured as the protest spread throughout the country, eventually ending the attempt to impose Afrikaans on black school children and opening a wider door to ending apartheid” (“Inside Africa: Soweto Uprising Remembered,” <http://www.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/africa/06/15/inside.africa/>”). The white people wanted the blacks off the white land, and the blacks wanted to live in peace with freedom and liberty. Neither race was willing to compromise. As a result, they left so many innocent people dead and without justice served to their slayers. This incident appears in *Cry Freedom* with excellent portrayal of the real thing. By showing those so courageous to lead the hundreds of people march towards freedom killed, and the murder of the innocent children, it gives a feeling of sadness, sympathy, and sorrow for those who had to go through such suffering. (“Inside Africa: Soweto Uprising Remembered” <http://www.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/africa/06/15/inside.africa/>). Unfortunately, Biko was held in jail for trying to escape his banning area, while the thousands of students protested against their school changes. Unfortunately, Biko’s words were not there to

help, comfort, and guide his people while protesting. Sadly enough, the officers thought that Biko had everything to do with this Soweto Uprising so they beat him in the head, causing extreme brain damage. He died a little bit after the barbaric beating on September 12, 1977. Biko passed away because of his harsh conditions. He was only 31 years old when he died but still made a lifetime of impacts on hundreds of thousands of people all around the world.

From all of the suffering and sadness that the black people went through and from all the bold and courageous leaders who sacrificed their lives for the goodness of their people, there finally came freedom for the blacks just like any other human being. All of these appalling events like the Boer War, Crossroads Attack, and the Soweto Uprising created a stronger unity for the black people to stand together through their hardships. Now, being an exclusive time to educate ourselves with black history and cultures, we can see how all of these events narrow down to one main concept: *Cry Freedom* demonstrated how the Africans fought for their rights and freedoms as a nation and a people who are no less than any other nation. Looking back on all black history and learning about all of their hardships has made me realize their strength to stand together and stand strong. To them, this was their time to fight for their rights and freedom of speech and doings. To me, this was their time to fight for their rights to live and to live humane lives. *Cry Freedom* has taught me so much about black history. However, I know that issues like apartheid are not even half of what they have gone through and sometimes going through even now. Now is only the beginning of my quest to learn more.

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