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INTRODUCTION

South Africa is a nation plagued by a history of institutional racism and structural inequality which relegated approximately 80 per cent of its population to live under the inhumane laws of apartheid. When the dismantling of the apartheid system began in 1990, the world celebrated the emergence of a new, truly democratic regime for the citizens of this country. The first democratic elections in 1994, which brought to power Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC), ushered in a new era of hope for equality and social justice to become a reality for people of all racial backgrounds. The "rainbow nation" has made notable progress even while severely burdened by the inheritance of a crippled state, massive economic inequity and political upheaval.

Over 40 years of extreme oppression and inhumanity took its toll on both the people and the land of this country, leaving concentrated pockets of urban wealth encompassed by overpopulated, squalid townships and vast, poverty-stricken rural areas. While the apartheid regime struggled to maintain power and stability during the 1980's the majority of South African people, led by exiled political figures and their counterparts, worked to organize and unite a mass-based movement to demand democratic reform. Under increasingly repressive conditions, organs of civil society, specifically trade unions, local civic councils, and underground political parties, covertly met and organized intermittent national campaigns of defiance and stay-aways to increase pressure for reform. Trade unions became the key vehicles through which the majority's rights, education, and economic interests were fought for in collaboration with the noble aspirations of many South Africans to establish a non-racial democracy.

It is abundantly clear that the collaboration, cooperation and tactical efforts of the labour movement were primarily responsible for the relatively peaceful means by which democracy was achieved. In the current era of globalization a renewed focus has emerged regarding the potential capabilities of civil society to substantially impact and alter the events that shape a nation. With the intensified integration of the international community there is a need for greater collaboration, compromise and unity to address issues which confront the global citizenry and to ensure a space for the activities of civil society to occur. The destruction of the apartheid system in South Africa provides a valuable example of how 'amandla ngwethu', or the power of the people, can bring about revolutionary change in the national development of a country. However, civil society in South Africa faces a new set of challenges in the 21st century in a continuing struggle to make democracy and equality a reality for all citizens.

EXAMINING APARTHEID

Soon after the formal establishment of apartheid in 1948 the National Party government passed legislation strictly limiting freedom of movement, occupational choice and educational