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Was the life of the average black South African actually better under apartheid?

So I lived in South Africa during apartheid and I could see the injustice and suppression with my own Two eyes. I honestly thought South Africa would power through and become a real example to Africa. They had the perfect opportunity to do more business with the rest of Africa and to some degree they have but they could have capitalized on the growth will good partnerships.

The world gifted them with a cricket world cup , football world cup, rugby world cup and many more enticing events to bolster the tourism industry and of course attract investment and this would have contributed to a better South Africa for all.

Although I totally disagree with how the people were treated in many regards I do believe many people actually had a better life. The current governments mismanagement of funds and greed has damaged the country to the point that it will be very hard to return and if so they might find themselves owned by Russia or China. I often wonder if the harsh treatment of the people resulted in current leaders with no vision or creativity.

So here are some of the positive aspects of apartheid I thought I would highlight.

Once again I do not condone it but this is a platform they could have built off.

In 1972, South African Blacks owned 360,000 vehicles. (More than all the black African states together)

The monthly income of Blacks per capita in 1988 was R352 per month in South Africa – Malawi and Mozambique were less than R20 per month.

In 1988 south African native people could undergo a complicated heart valve surgery for just more than \$ 1 while Black Americans had to pay \$ 15,000. In a Pretoria hospital between 2,000 and 3,000 of these surgeries were done per year.

In 1970, South African Native workers earned R1,751 million, or 25.5% of the total wage fees in South Africa and increased to R17,238 million in 1984 (1,000% growth) and 32.3% of total wages in South Africa.

In the 1986/1987 financial year, Whites paid R9,000 million and Blacks R171 million tax. Indians paid R257 million and Coloreds paid R315 million on tax.

Between 1962 and 1972 the United Nations paid \$ 298 million to underdeveloped countries compared to South Africa that spent \$558 million on the development of its South African Native areas.

The budget amount for native education increased every year from 1970 to almost 30% more than any other Government Department.

From 1955 to 1984 the number of Black scholars increased from 35,000 to 1,096,000. In 1988 71% of the adult Black population could read and write versus 47% in Kenya, 38% in Egypt and 34% in Nigeria. On average during the year 15 new classrooms per working day were built for Black scholars.

In 1985 there were 42,000 Black students enrolled at South African universities.

There were 5 Black universities and 28 higher education institutions funded by the Government.

Soweto with its population of 1.2 million, had 5 modern stadiums versus Pretoria with its 600,000 Whites who had three. Soweto had 365 schools versus Pretoria 229.

In Soweto in 1978, there were 115 football fields, three rugby fields, 4 athletic tracks, 11 cricket fields, two golf courses, 47 tennis courts, 7 swimming pools, 5 bowling halls, 81 basketball fields, 39 children playgrounds and countless community halls, cinemas and clubhouses.

In Soweto in 1978, there were 300 churches, 365 schools, 2 technicons, 8 clinics, 63 kindergartens, 11 post offices and its own fruit and vegetable market.

The White Government built a huge hospital Baragwanath 3,000 beds in Soweto. One of the largest and most modern hospitals in the world. This set a platform for international students to quickly up-skill on real life scenarios.

Its 23 operating theaters were equipped with the best equipment money can buy.

Here Blacks were treated at a nominal cost of R2 -\$4 US Dollars (for an unlimited period). In 1982, no fewer than 898 heart surgeries were done here.

Next to the Baragwantha Hospital is the St. John-eye clinic, famous for the treatment of glaucoma, previous fix retinas, traumatic eye injuries and rare tropical diseases.

There were over 2,300 registered firms, 1,000 taxi operators and 50,000 car owners in Soweto.

Dr. Kenneth Walker, a Canadian physician, visited Soweto and made the following observations:

He saw several houses worth more than R100 000 with various BMW's at the door. Only 2% of homes were shacks with neat buildings with lawns. If he had to choose between the decaying apartments in New York, Detroit or Chicago than he would rather stay in Soweto.

He'd rather be very ill in Soweto as in some Canadian cities. At that time

He reported the city had more schools, churches, cars, taxis, and sports fields than any other independent African state.

In 1978, the South African Government built a highly modern hospital MEDUNSA on the border of the independent state of Bophuthatswana at a cost of R70 million on 35 hectares. In this "city" they had living and sleeping facilities for male and female students.

Native doctors, dentists, veterinarians and para-medical staff were trained. It was the only specialized university of its kind in Africa and one of the few in the world financed by the advantaged White taxpayers exclusively to benefit South African natives. Almost all students who mainly came from the national homelands costs were taken care of by the Government.

The practical training took place in the nearby Garankuwa Hospital farm where the whole range of human ailments were covered.

Garankuwa had the facilities for kidney transplants, isotopes units with specialized laboratories where 200 doctors were trained practically every year.

South Africa provided training for the airline personnel of Swaziland, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zaire and the Comores.

In 1979, when the train traffic to the Malawian capital Lilongwe was interrupted by rebels, South Africa sent transport aircrafts with fuel drums to keep their economy going.

In 1986, 80,000 Black businessmen from Africa visited Cape Town to finalize business deals.

South Africa provided the grain needs of its neighboring countries and wider. In 1980, Zambia received 250 000 tons of maize, Mozambique 150,000 tons maize and 50 000 tons of wheat, Kenya 128,000 tons maize and Zimbabwe 100 000 tons. Other countries that also received South African grain were Angola, Ivory Coast, Malawi, Mauritius, Tanzania and Zaire.

At least 12 countries of Africa, according to the “Argus African News Service” were so dependent on South Africa grain that a total ban on imports and exports would have destroyed them economically.

About half of Lesotho’s male population worked in South Africa, about 146,000 in 1983, and earned R280,6 million which was about half of Lesotho’s treasury.

In the 1982/83 financial year South Africa budgeted R434 million for assistance to the independent neighboring states.

South Africa produced more electrical energy than Italy, as much crude steel as France, more wheat than Canada, more wool than the United States, more wine than Greece and more fish than Great Britain.

South African trains ran on more rail lines than in West Germany, carried more passengers than Switzerland, had better punctuality record than Austria and exported car parts to 100 countries.

South African mines bore down to the depth of 3,480 meters and holds the record for the deepest vertical shaft at 2,498m deep into the hardest rock in the world.

They were accused by the world that it was a Police state:

In South Africa had 1.4 officers for every 1,000 people whilst the world had the following: United Kingdom 2.2, New York 4.3, and Moscow 10 per 1000. In South Africa there were 16,292 White Policemen versus 19 177 Non-White.

They were accused of killing their political offenders:

In 1979-1980 there were no deaths in South African prisons. In the previous 10 years 37 died versus 274 in the same period in Wales and England.

They were accused that they paid starvation wages:

In 1974, the average monthly income of black workers in South Africa were \$ 127 versus the \$ 140 in the US, the richest country in the world.

They were accused that they locked up thousands of political prisoners:

In 1983, 127 such prisoners were confined in South Africa and 11 whose movements were limited. A further 32 were under house arrest.

SO it depends on what lens this is viewed through , In terms of wealth distribution I think these days the average South African has many more opportunities but they cannot capitalize on them because of government corruption.