

## REGIONAL CONFLICTS

**Viewpoints**

In 1948, the white South African government formalized the system of apartheid. The first excerpt below is from an official document of the South African government. The second excerpt is from a newsletter written by Stephen Biko, a political activist and founder of the Black South African Students' Organization (SASO). ♦ *As you read the excerpts, pay attention to the language used by the proponents and opponents of apartheid. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions that follow.*

### **Abolishing Apartheid From "Progress Through Separate Development"**

It is of paramount importance to know that the real issues in South Africa are the existence of different nations and different nationalisms, confused coincidentally with race and color. The objectives of the policy are not old-styled segregation or white supremacy but separate freedoms and territorial separation. It is not based on notions of racial inferiority and superiority; it merely accepts and respects the fact that peoples and nations are different. . . .

. . . [T]here are in South Africa not one, but a number of Bantu nations each occupying its own territory and distinguished one from the other by language differences and general cultural characteristics. . . .

There had also grown up in the white homeland of South Africa a white South African nation. . . . They are no longer settlers, they are a nation with a language, with a South African culture. . . . [T]hey have a distinct identity of their own as a nation. . . . [E]ach Bantu nation similarly has its own distinct identity and way of life . . . which they too wish to preserve. . . .

South Africans find it difficult to understand why either the black man or the white man in South Africa should be urged to reject his own identity in favor of another. . . .

Source: "Progress Through Separate Development," by the Information Service of South Africa (1973).

### **From "We Blacks" by Stephen Biko**

I have lived all my conscious life in the framework of institutionalised separate development [apartheid]. My friendships, my love, my education, my thinking and every other facet of my life have been carved and shaped within the context of separate development. In stages during my life I have managed to outgrow some of the things the system taught me. . . .

Apartheid—both petty and grand—is obviously evil. Nothing can justify the arrogant assumption that a clique of foreigners has the right to decide on the lives of a majority. Hence even carried out faithfully and fairly the policy of apartheid would merit condemnation and vigorous opposition from the indigenous peoples as well as those who see the problem in its correct perspective. The fact that apartheid has been tied up with white supremacy, capitalist exploitation, and deliberate oppression makes the problem much more complex. Material want is bad enough, but coupled with spiritual poverty it kills. . . .

It is probably necessary at this stage to warn all and sundry about the limits of endurance of the human mind. This is particularly necessary in the case of the African people. Ground for a revolution is always fertile in the presence of absolute destitution. . . .

Source: *I Write What I Like*, by Steve Biko (Bowerdean Publishing, 1978, 1996).

### **Questions to Think About**

1. What does the South African government claim is the central reason for apartheid?
2. What is the experience of apartheid according to Stephen Biko?
3. **Compare Points of View** Compare the points of view presented in the two excerpts. Which one do you think is more persuasive? Why?