

## SA se Top 20 gebeure van die 20e eeu SA's Top 20 of the 20th century

In March participants in two electronic discussion groups on South African history were asked to give their listings of South Africa's Top 20 events in the twentieth century.

Die volgende bydraes van deelnemers aan die gespreksgroepe H-SAFRICA@H-NET.MSU.EDU en sophias@iafrica.com gee 'n interessante indruk van die wyse waarop historici tans besig is om by nabetraging 'n betekenisvolle eeu te oorpeins.

A special thanks to the editors of the two discussion groups for opening up a channel for communication so that we could receive the information.

Red./Ed.

### **Elize van Eeden**

Ek aanvaar dat die drie kategorieë saam nie meer as twintig moet oorskry nie. My top twintig, wat na my oordeel sigbare invloed op die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing gehad het, is die volgende:

Politieke gebeure:

- \* Vrede van Vereeniging(1902)
- \* Satyagraha (1906)
- \* Eerste nasionale Konstitusie vir S.A.(1909)
- \* Eerste Nasionale Konvensie vir ander kleurgroepe (1909)
- \* Uniewording (1910)
- \* Kleurslagboomwette (1911;1926)
- \* 1948- Apartheidswetgewing
- \* Sharpeville (1960) en die Swart Bewussynsbeweging wat gevolg het
- \* 1984- Konstitusionele aanpassings en vernuwing
- \* Ontbanning van politieke organisasies van ander Kleurgroepe (1990)
- \* Vrylating van Mnr. Nelson Mandela (1990)
- \* Eerste demokratiese verkiesing van Suid-Afrika (1994)
- \* Waarheids- en Versoeningskommissieverhoor (1994-)

Ekonomiese gebeure

- \* Industrialisering van Suid-Afrika na 1914
- \* Randse Staking (1922)
- \* Bemerkingswetgewing rakende prysbeheer (1937)
- \* Blanke Ekonomiese Volkskongresse (1939;1950)
- \* 1986-internasionale boikot en veral die CAAA van die VSA teen SA

Sosiale gebeure

\* 1918-Spaanse Griep Epidemie

\* Die verstedelikingproses van alle groepe sedert die beeëndiging van die Oorlog tussen Suid-Afrika en Brittanjé in 1902 ('n bietjie moeilik om dié fase af te ten, aangesien die geordende voorsiening van behuising tans ook 'n uitloper van verstedeliking is.)

NS. Ek sou graag nog die ontdekking van verdere ryk goudneerslae sedert die laat-twintigerjare iewers wou invoeg, maar...ek het, helaas, reeds 20 bereik!

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**Derek Charles Catsam**

I am responding to your recent request for the Top 20 political events in twentieth century South Africa. I have annotated them as is appropriate.

Top Twenty Political Events in Twentieth Century South African History:

1. CODESA/Government of National Unity/Constitution: Building For obvious reasons, the transition from a white supremacist apartheid government to a multiracial inclusive democracy stands as one of the great events in world twentieth century history, not just in South African history.
2. 1948 National Party victory: Obviously, the reason the miracle of 1994 is so vital is the entrenched nature of the regime against which they fought, as symbolized best by the victory of the Nats in the 1948 elections.
3. Sharpeville Massacre: 21 March, 1960 Revealed to the world the extent to which the state would go to protect the apartheid system of rule. Led to the banning of the ANC and PAC, which in turn shifted the dynamics of protest politics for nearly three decades.
4. Soweto Uprising, 1976-1977: Marked the return of the upsurge of popular protest and began a struggle that would continue for more than a decade. Forged a new generation of young, radical black leaders.
5. Vaal Uprising, 1984: Emerging putatively in response to the implementation of the Tricameral parliament, the Vaal uprising soon became a wave of national protests against the economic, social, and political bankruptcy of the apartheid system and its government.
6. States of Emergency, 1985-1990: The imposition of the States of Emergency in July 1985 and again in June 1986 marked the last gasp of the apartheid security state to Maintain its hold. Where the first State of Emergency only proved partially if at all effective, the second, more comprehensive declaration would crush resistance to a greater degree.

7. The release of Nelson Mandela, 11 February 1990: As much a symbolic act as anything else, this was nonetheless a symbolic act with profound power. Mandela quickly became the most famous, revered, and respected leader in all of Africa, and paved the way to his election to the presidency in April 1994.
8. Native Land Act of 1913, Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923, and Group Areas Act of 1950: These three pillars of apartheid would serve officially to segregate the black masses onto tiny areas of land, and would serve as the main mechanisms for black, coloured, and Asian economic and social inequality for the majority of the century. These acts established the Bantustan and townships, as well as dictated the inequitable distribution of land and labor in South Africa.
9. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 1995-1999: Support or oppose it, the TRC has been a major factor in the transition to a post-apartheid South Africa. Headed by Bishop Desmond Tutu, the TRC undertook the seemingly impossible task of uncovering apartheid era atrocities, making decisions on amnesty for those who committed "gross human rights violations" and allowed the voiceless finally to be heard. The TRC has been fraught with controversy since its inception, but it is clear that we now know more about South Africa than ever would have been possible without the TRC or something like it.
10. The formation of the ANC, January 1912: Although hardly the sole voice of black protest in this century, the ANC has proven to be the largest and most effective such organization, and as such holds a special place in the history of protest movements.  
P.W. Botha's "Rubicon Speech," 15 August 1985: In this speech to the Natal Congress of the National Party, Botha was expected to announce major reform in the apartheid system, a "crossing of the rubicon." Instead the world saw that Botha had no intention of enacting fundamental reform. This led directly to massive divestment from South Africa, the pulling out of the major banks, led by Chase Manhattan, and the U.S. Congress's passage of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act over the veto of Republican President Ronald Reagan.
12. Rivonia Trial, 1963-1964: The leaders of the Umkhonto we Sizwe High Command at Lilliesfield farm in Pretoria, along with Nelson Mandela, who had already been in jail, stood trial for high treason. The "Rivonia Eight" were instead found guilty of sabotage and given life sentences. Mandela gave his famous "speech from the dock" in which he stated his willingness to die for the "ideals of a free and democratic society." His courage and leadership would serve as an ideal for black protesters for the next three decades.
13. Formation of the ANC Youth League, 1944: Frustrated by the moderation of their elders, a group of young, militant ANC members

formed the Youth League. Among the leaders of the Youth League were Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu, and Nelson Mandela, as well as the first Youth League president, Anton Lembede. The League would push the ANC toward a more radical program throughout the 1940s and 1950s, and would help to forge the generation of leaders who took control of the anti-apartheid struggle from the 1960s onward.

14. Labor Strike of 1946: More than 60,000 African Mineworkers Union strikers in 19 mines went on strike in 1946 to protest pay and work conditions. Although the rebellion was crushed by police, it also revealed to both the ANC and the Unions the power of mass action protest, and strengthened the relationship between the ANC and trade unions.
15. World War II: As with most of the rest of the world, the second World War had tremendous effects on South Africa. Not the least of these was to rigidify the schism between whites, and especially between Afrikaners who saw the South African support of England to be traitorous. This would lead almost directly to the defeat of Smuts in the 1948 election.
16. The emergence of the "Third Force," 1980s: With recent revelations of the TRC it is clear that the extent and nature of security force activities in the 1980s was far greater than most observers could fathom. The 'third force' is best summarized as a catchall for a series of semi-autonomous security force operations and organizations that operated to undermine anti-apartheid activism and destroy resistance through programs ranging from intimidation, disappearances, torture, and fomenting so-called "black-on-black" violence in the townships. Included in the catchall "third force" designation were organizations such as Vlakplaas, Koevoet, the "Hammer Unit" and innumerable other covert organizations whose purpose was to destabilize both the opposition and in the 1990s the transition to non-racial democracy.
17. Black Consciousness: The emergence of Black Consciousness came as a response to an increasingly vocal segment of the black population that believed that non-racialism was tantamount to selling out to and perpetuating existing power structures. Emerging in the late 1960s with Steve Biko as its most visible proponent, Black Consciousness was an attempt to organize blacks to address their own problems and to overcome legacies of white liberal paternalism.  
Langa Massacre, 21 March 1985: On the twenty fifth anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre police opened fire on an unarmed crowd of people in the Uitenhage township of Langa. The black crowd was headed to a funeral service in KwaNobuhle, ten kilometers distant. Authorities had banned the funeral, but most of the crowd, which travelled on foot, did not know of the banning until confronted by the police. When the firing ceased, between 20 and 43 were dead, dozens

wounded. Served further to polarize the apartheid state and the masses, and served as yet another catalyst for massive resistance to the state and its policies.

19. Verwoerd assassinated, 1966: Verwoerd is widely considered to be the prime architect of the apartheid system. His assassination at the hands of Parliamentary messenger Dmitri Tsafendas marks the only assassination of a South African Prime Minister or President.
20. Union of South Africa, 31 May 1910: United the four South African colonies under one constitutional government. Eight years after the signing of the Treaty of Vereeniging, the British colonists gave remarkably free range to the Afrikaners, including the perpetuation of the color bar then in place in the Transvaal and Free State.

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### **Wessel Visser**

Ek merk interessantheidshalwe op dat niemand sover nog Republiekwording in 1961 as 'n Top 20-gebeurtenis voorgestel het nie. Sou dit dalk beskou kan word as 'n polities minder korrekte (ongemaklike) gebeurtenis vir 'n nuwe Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis, wat te nou met die apartheidsregering verbind kan word ?  
Ek gooi maar net 'n klip in die bos!

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### **Johan de Villiers**

Hiermee die aanbevole top gebeure van die twintigste eeu soos versoek deur jou vir die gespreksgroep.

1. Vrede van Vereeniging
2. Unie-ording
3. Stigting van die ANC
4. Die Rebellie
5. Besetting van Duits-SWA
6. Slag van Delvillebos
7. Ondertekening Vrede Versailles en stigterslid Volkerebond
8. Die Pakt-oorwinning 1924
9. Afrikaans amptelike taal
10. Westminster-statuut bevestig Balfour-verklaring

11. Uitbreek Tweede Wêreldoorlog - parlementêre krisis
12. Slag van El Alamein
13. Nasionale Party-oorwinning 1948
14. Vryheidsmanifes, Kliptown
15. Sharpeville-tragedie
16. Republiekwording 1961
17. 1976 Opstande
18. Chris Barnard hartoorplanting
19. Slag van Cuito Cuanavale
20. Nobelprys Mandela / De Klerk vir Nuwe Suid-Afrika 1994

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### **Bernie Ley**

Ter toeligtig net die volgende: Die politieke lysie is myns insiens redelik volledig. Die ander twee, te wete die sosiale en ekonomiese lysies, is minder so. My rede daarvoor is dat sedert Uniewording of eintlik sedert volkstigting, die drie terreine onlosmaaklik inmekaar geweef is. In teenstelling met die ander lande was die politiek en die ekonomie in Suid-Afrika eintlik onder een vaandel bedryf en ook wat daaruit voortgespruit het.

Politiek:

1. Uniewording
2. Fusilering van Jopie Fourie
3. Mynwerkerstakinge aan die Rand 1922
4. SWA-mandaat 1919
5. Land Act 1913
6. Depressie 1930-3
7. Die debakel om die Smelters 1934-6
8. Stigting van die ANC 1908
9. Wêreldoorlog II (1939-45)
10. Suid-Afrika se aandeel in die totstandkoming van die VN (1946)
11. Die oorwinning van die NP (1948)
12. Die verbanning van die Kommunistiese party (1953)
13. Wetgewing m.b.t. Bantoeonderwys (vanaf vroeë 1950's)
14. Sharpeville (1960)
15. SA se onttrekking aan die Statebond (1960)
16. Republiekwording (1961)
17. Sluipmoord op Verwoerd (1966)
18. Die stakings van 1973
19. Die dood van Steve Biko
20. Die Soweto-opstande (1976)

21. Die staatsgreep in Portugal (1973)
22. Bewindsaanvaarding van PW Botha (1978)
23. Township-opstande in 1985
24. SWA-onafhanklikheid (1992)
25. Vrylating van Nelson Mandela (1990)

**Ekonomies:**

1. Stigting van SAS en Hawens (1913)
2. Stigting van Anglo American (1917)
3. Yskor (1927)
4. Eskom
5. Ontwikkeling van die SA Motorindustrie ná 1945
6. Depressie van 1933
7. Stigting van die Rupert-groep
8. Sanlam en Ou Mutual (1930's)
9. Sasol (1940's)
10. Stigting van Krygkor (1960's)
11. Die Wiehahn-kommissie
12. Die styging van die goudprys in vroeg tagtigs
13. Vroue-bemagtiging (1920's)
14. Swart bemagtiging (Vanaf 1994)
15. Lesotho-hooglandprojek (Vanaf 1980's)
16. Ontbinding van die talle beheerrade (Vanaf 1994)
17. Grondeise (Vanaf 1994)

**Sosiaal:**

1. CNO-skole (ná 1902)
2. Eerste rugbytoets 1906
3. Kriekettoets 1908
4. Die aanvaarding van die SA vlag (1927-8)
5. Stigting van die FAK (1929)
6. Afrikaans kry amptelike status (1928-9)
7. Stigting van Afrikaner Broederbond (1918)
8. Vertaling van die Bybel in Afrikaans (1932)
9. Die Ossewa-trek van 1938
10. Inwyding van die Voortrekkermonument (1949)
11. Ossewa-Brandwag/Torchkommando (Ondersk. 30's en 50's)
12. Inwyding van Setlaars-monument
13. Onthulling van Taalmonument
14. Terugkeer na internasionale sport (1990's)

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