

Immigration from Africa - 1

Towards the end of the 19th century, a mass invasion by European nations took place across the African continent. It became known as the 'Scramble for Africa'. Only a small part of the whole continent escaped colonisation. This meant that most of the vast land was governed by white Europeans who took control of all the natural resources it had to offer.

The Europeans saw all Africans as the same people, without considering their ethnic, religious or political cultures. As colonial boundaries were drawn, different groups of people were joined together and governed by the colonial power.

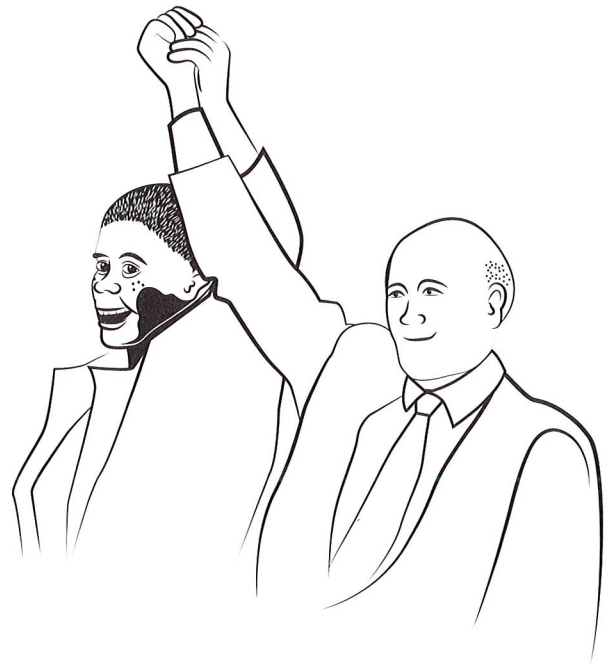
When the colonies gained their independence from the European nations, the newly independent countries were a mix of different groups. Tension between the groups has led to civil wars in many countries as each group strives to be the dominant force.

In the 1960s, the Special Commonwealth African Assistance Plan was established. This allowed students from African nations to study overseas in other countries. Most of those who studied in Australia came from Ghana or Nigeria in West Africa. When they finished studying, over 70% of the students remained in Australia because of political unrest in their own countries.

Since the 1980s, people from several nations across Africa have come to Australia as civil war refugees under the Humanitarian migration program. The countries include Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Sudan.

In 1948, apartheid laws were enforced in South Africa by the white minority government. People were separated by their colour. The black people were treated very badly while the white people had all the advantages. Many white people disagreed with apartheid and didn't want to live with it, so they chose to emigrate. Some came to Australia.

In 1994, white minority rule ended in South Africa and Nelson Mandela was elected the country's first black president. The effect of such a huge change in society



was a politically unstable country, prone to violence. After years of white minority rule, thousands of white people felt they would be safer if they left their African homes.

The same thing had happened in Zimbabwe when Canaan Banana was elected president. Many white farmers lost their land and businesses and chose to come to Australia. There had been no apartheid in Zimbabwe, but the majority black one-party government wanted the black people to be in total control.

Africa is a continent of many nations with a variety of cultures and traditions. In the last half-century, thousands of people have chosen or been forced to leave their African homes and start again in a new country. Whatever their reasons, their presence in Australia has enriched its multicultural flavour.