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***THE IMPACT OF APARTHEID ON BORN
FREE GENERATION.***

The term Apartheid is an Afrikaans word that means apartness, it is derived from the term apart (meaning separate) and the suffix (heid) which is equivalent to the word (hood) in English, this indicates a state or a condition, in a nutshell the word apartheid refers to the state of separation in South Africa in terms of race. Born free generation refers to those South African citizens that were born post 1994 when apartheid laws were abolished. Even though this generation has been brought up in a democratic society that has equal rights, the legacy of apartheid is still persistent and is affecting their lives in many ways, born frees are with no doubt living in the cracks of apartheid. This essay will focus on discussing the detrimental effects of apartheid on the born free generation with reference to various studies conducted by various scholars. There will be proof from a range of socio scientific studies about the consequences apartheid has had on the born-free generation. We'll also look closely at the many impacts, including trauma, education, and economic inequality.

Even though born frees were exempt from the harsh system and racial segregation, it is undeniable that the end of apartheid and the arrival of democracy marked a turning point in South African history. These young South Africans are still dealing with the legacy of the system they were never a part of. We speak about political freedom and equality in South Africa, the question is, are the born frees enjoying this era we call democracy?

The economic gap is one of the most harmful consequences of apartheid for born frees. Due to restricted work opportunities and income inequality, born frees face a significant degree of economic disparity. A research by Oyedemi and Choung conducted in 2020 titled *digital inequality and youth unemployment* states that there was an official unemployment rate of 29% and the expanded unemployment rate of 38.5%, by looking at the statistics, it can be concluded that the country is experiencing one of the highest levels of unemployment in the world. We speak of freedom and democracy, a question that we need to ask ourselves is that how are the born frees free without being employed and experiencing such levels of economic inequality? There are obvious contributors to economic disparities. Studies show that on the large scale or macro level, the low demand of labour is influenced by the low economic growth which was caused by the segregation during the apartheid regime. The word born frees is a political symbolism that gives people an impression that they are free while they are not, they are experiencing economic strains and living in poverty. With all these being said, it can be concluded that born frees are experiencing or have inherited the effects of apartheid.

Is it of paramount importance to focus on the educational system of South Africa during apartheid and post 1994 to see the differences. Because of the racial segregation that accompanied unequal resource distribution to black schools during apartheid, youth never received a quality education. It is evident in the history of South Africa that the youth became activists that rebelled against Bantu education with a goal to improve the education of a black child. To a certain extent, access to education post 1994 has increased, policies that enable born frees to have quality education were introduced, however the effects of apartheid when it comes to education has made it almost impossible for born frees to equally compete on a equal footing with their peers from affluent, historically white areas.

It is fundamental to note that schools in historically black areas were underfunded, with no infrastructure that were necessary to provide a high-quality education. Policies speak of quality education, but in rural areas there are still born frees who are using pit toilets, there are learners who do not have access to educational resources, the learning environment they are in is not conducive for effective teaching and learning, this has a very huge impact on their dignity especially in a country where is it said that they are free, and given the name "born free". Born frees have limited access to higher education, yet we have the free education for all, these policies actually favor certain people and negatively affect some. If one cannot access higher education because of financial incapacity, how is that equality? Is the born free generation really enjoying the freedom that their brothers and sisters fought for?

Due to Apartheid, there is a direct correlation between the lack of quality education and economic inequities. Although born frees today have significant higher access to education compared to apartheid, research shows that approximately half of every school beginner cohort at first grade exit at the end of secondary education level. The reason for this can be because of economic disparities that they are facing. The high level of dropout can lead to the youth of the country becoming unemployed. According to a study that was conducted by Oyedemi & Choung in 2020, Job opportunities for those who do not complete secondary school are very dreary, the study proved that almost 60% of youth aged 15-24 with less than matric qualification are unemployed. The majority of born frees experience disadvantages in the corporate or professional world as a result of all these negative effects; consequently, the cycle of poverty and inequality that their parents experienced during apartheid will continue to be perpetuated and persistent in the new South Africa. It is clear from examining all of the available data that unequal access to education influenced both apartheid and post-apartheid society.

Although social integration is important for overall functioning of the society, it remains a huge obstacle for the born free generation. It was agreed upon after Apartheid that a united and reconciled nation must be created; although South Africa has made progress towards this goal, the nation is still plagued by its historical differences. According to professor Nadine Du Toit of Stellenbosch University and her fellow scholars in the study titled Born Free? Born free for what?... They state that majority feel that relations have either stayed the same or degenerated since the Country's political conversion in 1994. Even though legal segregation has ceased, there are still numerous racially separated areas in South Africa. Some universities and schools still uphold the apartheid era's practices. This study by Du Toit provided evidence regarding this matter, it showed that in the town of Stellenbosch there are many inequalities in the marked differences of where young people live, the schools they go to, their parent's income groupings, language and race. Furthermore, poor youth do not have access to activities such as sports. The study further showed that white respondents in the town of Stellenbosch concurred that SA has a high level of inequality, black and coloured respondents agreed with the fact that the bequest of Apartheid and spatial inequalities and social divisions are still evident and they are being replicated. These divisions in many parts of South Africa are making it hard for born frees to participate in social integration, how are they going to build a non-segregated and inclusive society if these inequalities are persistent? Is there any direction that born frees are moving toward if such stereotypes and prejudices are still being reinforced like this? Instead of bringing the citizens into correspondence with one another, the system is dividing our society.

According to Cultural trauma theory by Jeffrey C Alexander, the born free generation may have inherited the trauma that was suffered by their forebears during apartheid, they have inherited the trauma and psychological burdens of apartheid from their parents and grandparents who experienced this brutality that was inflicted by the system pre-1994. We call the trauma that is being experienced by born frees Transgenerational trauma. According to Crankshaw and Dwarika, they define TGT as a term that is used to describe the unresolved trauma that was inherited from previous generations. Born frees are imprisoned by the memory of apartheid, something they were never a part of, in a nation like South Africa that still struggles with its legacy. Because apartheid films and stories can be painful, they are subjected to the pressures of the past, which may have long-lasting biological effects that affect mental health throughout life. In one of the studies that was reviewed to provide evidence in this essay, researchers found that there is grief and silence among people who experienced the injustices of the past. Furthermore, they discovered that first generation victims of apartheid are silent about the atrocities committed against them because they are trying to protect the next generation. This is the misconception because the new generation are anyway

getting information about the traumatic experiences from documentaries and from historians, as result of this, born frees have tried many times to fight against the injustices that are still persistent in SA by forming movements. One of these common movements is FEES MUST FALL.

In conclusion, the impact of apartheid on the born free generation is multifaceted and complex. While they were not direct victims of this oppressive system, its legacy continues to shape their lives in various ways. As South Africa continues to grapple with the consequences of apartheid, it is crucial to address the socio-economic inequalities, educational disparities, and psychological scars that still affect the born free generation. Only through addressing this issues can a truly equitable and just society be created for all South Africans.