During the 20th century, African nations gained independence from their colonial rulers. Many independent nations in Africa are now struggling to form democratic governments.

**Moving Toward Independence**

Colonial rule in Africa disrupted social systems and governments, and robbed Africa of resources. Many Africans objected, but they did not have enough power to act. During the 1920s and 1930s, colonial rulers sent a few Africans to attend universities in Europe and the United States. These educated young people started to dream of independence. Nationalism grew strong.
Journey to Freedom

European nations wanted to keep their colonies for their valuable resources although they were expensive to maintain. Many Europeans believed that Africans were unable to govern themselves. This attitude is an example of **racism**, the unfounded belief that one race is inferior to another race.

**Pan-African Congresses**

Educated Africans believed they could govern themselves. African men had fought for the European Allies during World War I, and thousands had died. Ex-soldiers wanted self-rule. Pan-Africanism, an idea that people of African descent around the world should work together for their freedom, attracted more supporters. In 1919, the first Pan-African Congress was organized. Africans again fought in World War II. After this war, many felt that they now deserved independence.

At the fifth Pan–African Congress in 1945, there were 90 delegates; 26 were from all over Africa. Several were men who would become the political leaders of their countries, including Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya.
New African Countries

Between 1951 and 1980, most of the colonies in Africa south of the Sahara gained independence. For some countries, the path to nationhood was smooth. For others, it was not. Nigeria and South Africa had different experiences in achieving independence.

Nigeria: Diversity Brings Division

Before Nigeria gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1960, it had experienced a well-organized government, rich resources, and a strong economy under British rule. It was hoped that Nigeria’s diversity—its many different cultures and viewpoints—would be a source of strength. Many Nigerians are Muslim, while others are Christian or follow traditional African religions. Nigerians speak more than 400 languages. However, instead of being a source of strength, this diversity caused problems.

Riots and War  The slave trade and colonial rule had created hostility between the ethnic groups in Nigeria. Many Nigerian politicians focused on their ethnic group and not the whole country. Some leaders stole money and gave or took bribes.

THINKING CRITICALLY

1. **Comparing**  How is the American holiday Thanksgiving similar to the Yam Festival?

2. **Making Inferences**  Why do you think a priest is involved with the Yam Festival in Ghana?
In 1966, deadly riots broke out, and many people were killed. The next year, people in the eastern part of Nigeria announced the formation of a separate country, Biafra. After three years of civil war between Biafran Nigerians and the Nigerian army, Biafra was defeated and rejoined Nigeria. Since then, military leaders have primarily ruled Nigeria.

**Independence of South Africa**

The United Kingdom gave South Africa independence in 1910. This action did not bring freedom to most South Africans. Only white South Africans could vote, and many laws were passed to restrict nonwhites.

In 1948, an official policy of racial segregation known as **apartheid** (uh·PAHRT·HYT) was adopted. Apartheid strictly separated people by color. Many people resisted apartheid. Protesters held marches, went on strike, and sometimes became violent. Although many protesters were jailed or killed, they did make progress. In 1991, apartheid ended. In 1994, for the first time, all South African adults could vote.

**Terms & Names**

1. Identify: (a) racism (b) diversity (c) apartheid

**Taking Notes**

2. Use a Venn diagram like this one to list the similarities and differences between the processes of independence for Nigeria and for South Africa.

**Main Ideas**

3. (a) What factors strengthened the movement among Africans for independence?
   (b) How did Nigeria’s diversity create problems after the country gained independence?
   (c) How did opportunities for South African citizens to participate in and influence the political process change in the 1990s?

**Critical Thinking**

4. Hypothesizing

   Do you think possessing African colonies helped or hurt the economies of European countries?

**Think About**

- the cost of running a colony
- Africa’s resources

**Activity**

Design a logo or write a motto for a modern-day Pan-African Congress. Remember to represent African peoples around the world.