Europe first became interested in Africa while they were engaged in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. This trade lasted from the 1500s until the middle 1800s. The major European countries had ended the slave trade by the early 1800s.

Image Above: Transatlantic slave trade route (the trade triangle) which generally followed a triangular route. Colonists in the Americas also made direct African slaving voyages which did not follow the triangular route.
Competition for power drove Europeans to move into the African continent in the 1800s looking for colonies and raw materials. Belgians took control of the Congo. Britain, France, and Germany fought over control of the Sudan and Egypt.
Europeans in the 19th century saw colonies as a measure of national power and a key part of the system known as **imperialism**. A strong country was supposed to have colonies to provide raw materials and markets to increase its wealth and importance in the world.

*Above image:* King Leopold II of Belgium depicted as a rubbery snake in the *Congo Punch Cartoon*
LIFE AS PART OF A COLONY

Some European powers like the British used indirect rule. They appointed local chiefs to be their enforcers, to collect taxes, run the businesses the British wanted, and put down any trouble that began to emerge. Africans were lured into jobs with promises of wealth, power, and influence.

The map above shows British rule in Africa from the Cape to Cairo.
The French forced those they had conquered to give up their own customs, and adopt French ways and to assimilate, or completely absorb, French culture. Many people in African colonies controlled by France began speaking French and several applied for and were granted French citizenship.
Even so, independence came at a high cost. When European countries established their African colonies, they paid little attention to the traditional loyalties and kinship groups of the people they were ruling. Boundaries between colonies were decided according to colonial practice rather than what made sense in terms of the different groups who lived in the areas being divided.

The image above is of a Hutu, Tutsi and a Twa, tribes who may have been affected by colonial partitioning.
The Dutch descendants set up two states in South Africa, Transvaal and Orange Free State. In the early 1900s, these states were eventually merged with British South Africa to form the **Union of South Africa**, a state that by this time had discovered vast deposits of gold and diamonds. Because native Africans were considered second-class citizens in the Union of South Africa, they formed the **African National Congress (ANC)** to work for equal treatment of the nonwhite population.
South Africa set up a strict system of separation of the races, the apartheid system. The African National Congress worked for many years to end this system, eventually getting the international community to help by imposing embargoes on the Union of South Africa.
An embargo meant that countries refused to trade with South Africa until they changed their discriminatory policies. By 1985, pressure from the embargo and continuing resistance led by the African National Congress and the Pan-African Congress forced the South African government to begin making changes.
Apartheid began to come apart, and in 1994 South Africa held its first multiracial elections and chose Nelson Mandela as the country’s first black president.
KENYA

Kenya became independent of British rule in 1964, under the leadership of Joseph Kenyatta, a leader of the Kenyan African National Union (KNAU). While Kenya was glad to be free of British rule, the government of Joseph Kenyatta was not open or free.

NIGERIA

Nigeria gained independence from Britain in 1960, and most people expected the new state to be stable and calm. Within a few months, however, war broke out between the Christian south and the Muslim north. The religious war left many thousands dead or injured. The country tried to reorganize as 12 different regions, even the oil-rich province in the eastern part of the country declared itself to be the Independent State of Biafra.

Image above: Abubakar Tafawas Balewa who was made prime minister in 1960
In 1990, South African President F.W. de Klerk agreed to allow the African National Congress to operate as a legal political party and he released Nelson Mandela after he served 27 years in prison. President de Klerk also began to repeal the apartheid laws.
The Pan-African movement began as a reaction to the terrible experiences of colonial rule and the desire for people of African descent, no matter where they lived in the world, to think of Africa as a homeland. The first people to support the idea of Pan-Africans were Africans who were living in other parts of the world.