

Death Camps

“Four gruesome death camps where Black people were dumped and killed from the 1900s”

“Before the 20th century had even started, scores of black people all over the world, from Cuba to South Africa were being rounded off and forced to work and live in fenced areas and encampments where they were controlled by a small group of guard forces.

Known as concentration camps or death camps, these areas were established usually by executive decree or military order for political opponents, political prisoners and minority groups who are confined for reasons of state security, exploitation, or punishment.

People placed in such camps had no benefit of fair trial and guards could beat them, starve them or even kill them without being called to account. Others passed away due to the horrific living conditions in the camp caused mainly by polluted water supplies, lack of food, and infectious diseases.

The following are five of such appalling concentration camps that European colonialists created for black people right from the 1900s:

Shark Island Concentration Camp in Luderitz Bay in Namibia

In 1884, Germans invaded what is now present-day Namibia in Southern Africa to obstruct the British who were planning to expand their territories into Namibia. The Herero and Nama tribes were the

two indigenous people of Namibia who owned the lands and were prosperous cattlemen and farmers. Before the German invasion, they lived in sophisticated and well developed social settings, but between 1884 and 1903, they helplessly watched on as the Germans took over the lands and properties, killed their labour force and shipped them away into slavery. In January 1904, the outraged Herero and Nama tribesmen were armed with local weapons and rifles and attacked the Germans. But the German army was no match for them and the Germans won the battle, killing about 30,000 Hereros and 10,000 Namas.

In 1905, the Germans officially created the Shark Island Concentration Camp in Luderitz Bay where they dumped captives and the remains of the dead locals in the early 1900s. The island is located along the coast and had very harsh and cold weather conditions which were not favourable for habitation. The captives were left to their fate. Many of them died of hunger, cold or disease that was from the rot of the dead bodies. Prisoners and captives that survived were used as forced labour to construct the Otavi railway until they died. Women and children were raped and forced to remove flesh from the heads of the dead and clean them before they were shipped off to Germany for research in several institutions.

Mau Mau uprising and concentration camps

In Kenya, the Mau Mau was a major nationalist revolutionary movement that originally sought to reclaim land that the British settlers had taken away from them in the 1950s. The group would eventually contribute to Kenya's independence. The Mau Mau

uprising had begun in 1952 when a group of locals, mainly members of the Kikuyu tribe, organized resistance, which led to the killing of white settlers. The British declared a state of emergency following violent clashes that ensued between the white settlers and locals. During the Mau Mau revolt, a lot of atrocities were reported, including murder, torture, slavery and unlawful detention. The British established about twenty-one big concentration camps and other smaller ones, where the locals, including Mau Mau suspects, were imprisoned and tortured. The infamous Hola massacre is one of these instances where eleven people were clubbed to death and a greater number suffered permanent injury, according to an article by the *Medium*. People were beaten and forced to work in the camps while bottles were pushed into the anus and vaginas of people.

Tarrafal Camp

Also known as the "Camp of the Slow Death", the Tarrafal camp was built by Portuguese dictator Antonio de Oliveira Salazar in 1933. Based on Santiago Island, the camp housed political prisoners and Africans rebelling against colonial rule in Cape Verde, Angola, and Guinea-Bissau, who were held here until Cape Verde won its independence in 1975, according to an article by *World Monuments Watch*. The camp, which contains a complex of prison cells, administrative facilities, and a small railway for the transport of supplies and fuel, has since been used as a military base, a refugee camp, a storage facility, and a school, the *World Monuments Watch* article added. In 2009, the Cape Verdean minister of Culture, Manuel Veigas, said the Tarrafal Concentration Camp should be transformed

into a scientific study centre and a forum of culture for the African Portuguese Speaking Peoples. He believed that this was the only way to honour all those who suffered years of pain imposed by colonialism.

Anglo-Boer War concentration camps, South Africa

The Anglo-Boer War (11 October 1899 – 31 May 1902) was fought between the British Empire and two Boer states, the South African Republic (Republic of Transvaal) and the Orange Free State, over the Empire's influence in South Africa. During the war, Boer women, children and men unfit for military service were rounded up and placed in concentration camps by the British forces.

"The first two of these camps (refugee camps) were established to house the families of burghers who had surrendered voluntarily, but very soon, with families of combatant burgers driven forcibly into camps established all over the country, the camps ceased to be refugee camps and became concentration camps. The abhorrent conditions in these camps caused the death of 4 177 women, 22 074 children under sixteen and 1 676 men, mainly those too old to be on commando," writes *South African History Online*. Most of the blacks in these camps were forced to work – either by growing crops for the troops or digging trenches. Others also worked as miners."

Source: Face 2 Face Africa

Link:

<https://face2faceafrica.com/article/four-gruesome-european-death-camps-where-black-people-were-dumped-and-killed-from-the-1900s/5>