

# SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL SYMBOLS

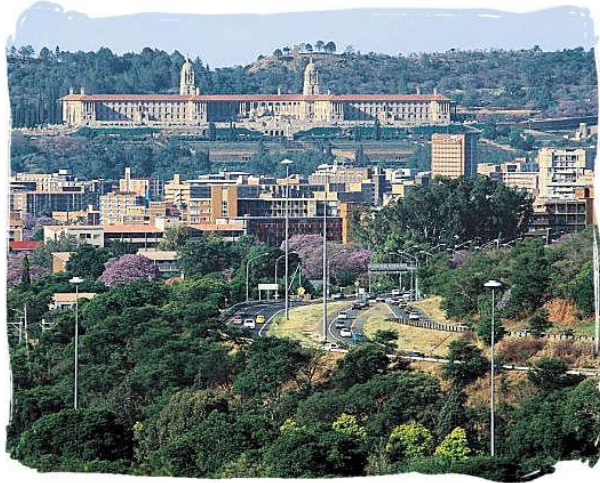


The number one national symbol of the new South Africa  
Source: African National Congress - National symbols of South Africa

## Introduction

1994 is the year that marks the birth of a new South Africa, the birth of the Rainbow nation. This is a mix of many cultures making a new start on the road of true democracy. It was the year of far-reaching and often fundamental changes.

It was also the year of a brand-new constitution, designed to heal the wounds of former separation and injustice and unite all South Africans into a new nationhood.



Union buildings in Pretoria, official seat of the South African government, also housing the office of the President of South Africa

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After the 1994 elections, South Africa's national identity changed a lot. Instead of having four provinces and a few homelands, there were now nine provinces. The national symbols changed with a new anthem, flag, coat of arms, national awards.

And even some of the national sporting teams were renamed. Public holidays also changed after 1994. Some of the old holidays were left out, and new ones were added.

## National Flag

The national flag of the Republic of South Africa was adopted on Freedom Day, 27 April 1994, and first flown on 10 May 1994, the day Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as president.

The central design of the flag, beginning at the flag-pole in a V form and flowing into a single horizontal band to the outer edge of the fly, can be interpreted as the convergence of diverse elements within South African society, taking the road ahead in unity.

In the emerging new South Africa, the change of its national symbols and emblems was a highly emotional issue. What flag should flap above the inauguration of the country's first black President?

What anthem can whites and blacks possibly sing with shared enthusiasm after centuries of hostility?

What coat of arms will grace the buttons on the tunics of the new, post-apartheid army? Not everything changed. Symbols like the national bird, tree, flower and animal have remained.

***“The South African flag is a potent symbol of unity and progress”.***

These words were written by Cyril Ramaphosa, one of the chief negotiators in the transformation from apartheid to democracy, in his foreword to the “Flying with Pride - 2004 Heritage calendar”

*“It was difficult to imagine, back then in the days of negotiations, that this assortment of shapes and colours we had before us would become such a central part of defining and identifying a new nation.*

*As South Africans daily work to build a better society, they are surrounded in many forms and countless manifestations by a flag which recognises and celebrates the unity and diversity of the country's people.*

*Few would have imagined, almost a decade ago, that this collection of colourful shapes could become such a potent symbol of unity and progress.... But then fewer still would have thought that a country torn apart by decades of racial oppression could transform itself into a beacon of democracy and hope.”*



About the colours of the South African flag and flying the South Africa Flag

One of the most important national Symbols that had to change with South Africa's transformation to true democracy was of course its national flag. Today, instantly recognizable to South Africans everywhere, the new South African national flag is a potent symbol of unity and progress and the only six-coloured national flag in the world.

The National Symbols Commission received more than 7 000 designs. However none of them elicited enthusiastic support. A final design was adopted on 15 March 1994 - derived from a design developed by South Africa's former State Herald, Fred Brownell. The proclamation of the new national flag was published on 20 April 1994 and the flag was first used on 27 April 1994.

The central design of the flag, beginning at the flag post in a 'V' form and flowing into a single horizontal band to the outer edge of the fly, can be interpreted as the convergence of diverse cultures within South African society, taking the road ahead in unity. The theme of convergence and unity ties in with the motto " Unity is Strength" of the South African National Coat of Arms.

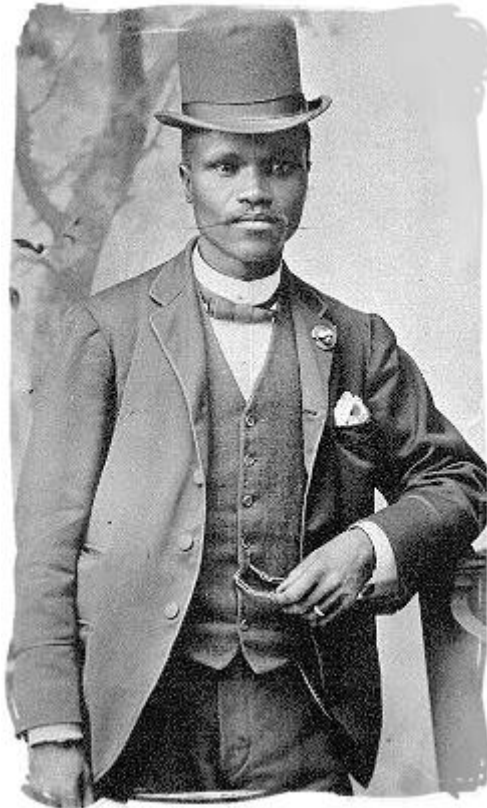
The design and colours are a synopsis of principal elements of the country's flag history. Individual colours, or colour combinations represent different meanings for different people and therefore no universal symbolism should be attached to any of the colours.



Flying the Flag of South Africa  
Colours of the South African Flag

When the flag is displayed vertically against a wall, the red band should be to the left of the viewer with the hoist or the cord seam at the top. When it is displayed horizontally, the hoist should be to the left of the viewer and the red band at the top. When the flag is displayed next to or behind the speaker at a meeting, it must be placed to the speaker's right. When it is placed elsewhere in the meeting place, it should be to the right of the audience.

## National Anthem



Enoch Sontonga, co-composer of South Africa' s new national anthem  
National symbols of South Africa

South Africa's national anthem is a combined version of *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* (*Lord, bless Africa* in English) and *Die Stem van Suid-Afrika* (*The Call of South Africa* in English).

The words of *Die Stem* were written by CJ Langenhoven in 1918, and the music composed by the Reverend M.L. de Villiers in 1921. *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* was composed in 1897 by Enoch Sontonga, a Methodist mission school teacher.

### **The original "Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika",...**

The first stanza and chorus is the part that was composed by Enoch Sontonga in the Xhosa language, the other 7 stanzas were later added by the poet Samuel Mqhayi, also in Xhosa. A Sesotho version was published by Moses Mphahlele in 1942.

### First Stanza and chorus by Enoch Sontonga

*Nkosi, sikelel' iAfrika;  
Malupakam'upondo lwayo;  
Yiva imitandazo yetu*

*Lord, bless Africa;  
May her horn rise high up;  
Hear Thou our prayers*

*Yihla Moya, Yihla Moya,  
Yihla Moya Oyingcwele*

*Descend, O Spirit,  
Descend, O Holy Spirit.*

### The other 7 stanzas by Moses Mphahlele

<p>Sikelela iNkosi zetu; Zimkumbule umDali wazo; Zimoyike zezimhlonele, Azisikelele.</p>	<p>Bless our chiefs May they remember their Creator. Fear Him and revere Him, That He may bless them.</p>
<p>Sikelel' amadod' esizwe, Sikelela kwa nomlisela Ulitwal'ilizwe ngomonde, Uwusikelele.</p>	<p>Bless the public men, Bless also the youth That they may carry the land with patience and that Thou may bless them.</p>
<p>Sikelel'amakosikazi; Nawo onk'amanenekazi; Pakamisa wonk'umtinjana Uwusikelele.</p>	<p>Bless the wives And also all young women; Lift up all the young girls And bless them.</p>
<p>Sikelela abafundisi Bemvaba zonke zelizizwe; Ubatwese ngoMoya Wako Ubasikelele.</p>	<p>Bless the ministers of all the churches of this land; Endue them with Thy Spirit And bless them.</p>
<p>Sikelel'ulimo nemfuyo; Gxota zonk'indlala nezifo; Zalisa ilizwe ngempilo Ulisikelele</p>	<p>Bless agriculture and stock raising Banish all famine and diseases; Fill the land with good health And bless it.</p>
<p>Sikelel'amalinge etu Awomanyano nokuzaka, Awemfundo nemvisiswano Uwasikelele.</p>	<p>Bless our efforts of union and self-uplift, Of education and mutual understanding And bless them</p>
<p>Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika; Cima bonk' ubugwenxa bayo Nezigqito, nezono zayo Uyisikelele.</p>	<p>Lord, bless Africa Blot out all its wickedness And its transgressions and sins, And bless it.</p>

In 1994 the South African government under Nelson Mandela adopted both, *The Call of South Africa* (or "*Die Stem*") and "*Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*" as the national anthems of South Africa. Sung in Xhosa, Zulu, English and Afrikaans, they shared equal recognition.

In 1997 the two anthems were merged into one national anthem carrying the name of "*Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*". The lyrics employ the five most popular of South Africa's eleven official languages - Xhosa (first stanza, first two lines), Zulu (first stanza, last two lines), Sesotho (second stanza), Afrikaans (third stanza) and English (final stanza).

## South Africa's official National Anthem: Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika"

Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika Maluphakanyisw' uphondo lwayo, Yizwa imithandazo yethu, Nkosi sikelela, thina lusapho lwayo.	Xhosa  Zulu
Morena boloka setjhaba sa heso, O fedise dintwa la matshwenyeho, O se boloke, O se boloke setjhaba sa heso, Setjhaba sa South Afrika - South Afrika.	Sotho
Uit die blou van onse hemel, Uit die diepte van ons see, Oor ons ewige gebergtes, Waar die kranse antwoord gee,	Afrikaans
Sounds the call to come together, And united we shall stand, Let us live and strive for freedom, In South Africa our land.	English

**Translated in English, the South African National Anthem reads as follows;**

Lord, bless Africa,  
May her spirit rise high up.  
Hear thou our prayers,  
Lord bless us.

Lord, bless Africa,  
Banish wars and strife.  
Lord, bless our nation,  
Of South Africa.

Ringling out from our blue heavens,  
From our deep seas breaking round,  
Over everlasting mountains,  
Where the echoing crags resound.

Sounds the call to come together,  
And united we shall stand,  
Let us live and strive for freedom,  
In South Africa our land.

## National Coat of Arms

A national Coat of Arms, or state emblem, is the highest visual symbol of the State. The Coat of Arms is also a central part of the Great Seal, traditionally considered to be the highest emblem of the State. Absolute authority is given to every document with an impression of the Great Seal on it.

This means that it has been approved by the President of South Africa. South Africa's Coat of Arms was launched on Freedom Day, 27 April 2000. The change reflected the Government's aim to highlight the democratic change in South Africa and a new sense of patriotism.



South Africa's national coat of arms

National symbols of South Africa

## The new South African Coat of Arms was launched on Freedom Day, 27 April 2000.

A national Coat of Arms, or state emblem, is the highest visual symbol of a country. In South Africa the Coat of arms is also a central part of the Great seal, the country's supreme emblem of sovereignty, representing the authority of the Head of State.

Traditionally, a national coat of arms consists of elements and symbols that are a representative of a country's culture and its people. Examples are flora and fauna, cultural symbols or artefacts, natural phenomena or a motto, to name but a few. South Africa's new Coat of Arms highlights its change to true democracy and a new sense of patriotism.

But a Coat of Arms is more than just a visual reflection of a country's different aspects. It carries much greater significance when it becomes the mission statement of that country, a graphic illustration of its hopes and aspirations. This more abstract symbolism is to be found in the design and symbolism of the new Coat of Arms of South Africa.



A focal point of the coat of arms is the indigenous secretary bird with its uplifted wings, crowned with an image of the rising sun. The sun symbolises a life-giving force, and represents the flight of darkness and the triumph of discovery, knowledge and understanding of things that have been hidden. It also illuminates the new life that is coming into being.



The Secretary Bird appears on the South African Coat of Arms

An indigenous South African flower, the Protea, is placed below the bird. It represents beauty, the aesthetic harmony of the different cultures, and South Africa flowering as a nation. The ears of wheat symbolise the fertility of the land, while the tusks of the African elephant, depicted in pairs to represent men and women, also represent wisdom, steadfastness and strength.

Its upper part is a shield imaginatively represented by the Protea. Contained within the shield are some of the earliest representations of humanity. Those depicted were the very first inhabitants of the land, namely the Khoisan people. These figures are derived from images on the Linton Stone, a world-famous example of South African rock art.

The motto on the coat of arms, "***!ke e:xarra//ke***", written in the Khoisan language of the /Xam people, means "***diverse people unite***" or "***people who are different joining together***".

## National Animal and Plant symbols

The South African national symbols include three animals and two plants, the Springbok, the Blue Crane, the Galjoen, the King Protea, and the Yellowwood Tree

The country's national animal is the Springbok, which also gives its name to the South African rugby team, fondly (and sometimes not so fondly) known as the Boks. The Springbok (*Antidorcas marsupialis*) gets its common name from its characteristic jumping display, "pronk" in Afrikaans. The animal stands 75cm high and weighs about 40kg.



National animal of South Africa, the Springbok

National symbols of South Africa

The most well known one is the jumping Springbok antelope, worldwide renown as the emblem of the South African national rugby team and many other South African sports, institutions, products etc...

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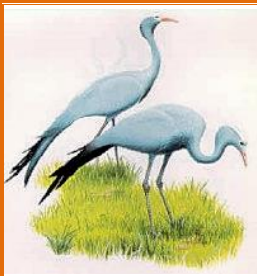
### The Springbok

The country's national animal is the Springbok, which also gives its name to the South African rugby team, fondly (and sometimes not so fondly) known as the Boks. The Springbok (*Antidorcas marsupialis*) gets its common name from its characteristic jumping display, "pronk" in Afrikaans. The animal stands 75cm high and weighs about 40kg.



The Springbok antelope

## The Blue Crane



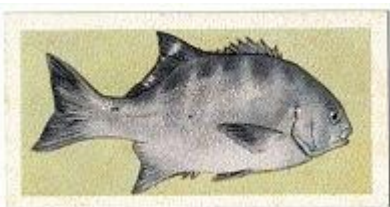
The national bird of South Africa is the Blue Crane (*Anthropoides paradisia*), the distribution of which is almost entirely restricted to the country. Standing about a meter tall, the bird is a light blue-grey, with a long neck supporting a rather bulbous head, long legs and elegant wing plumes which sweep to the ground.



The Blue Crane

National Symbols of South Africa

## The Galjoen,...



South Africa's national fish is the Galjoen (*Coracinus capensis*), which is only found along the South African coast. It keeps to mostly shallow water, often found in rough surf and sometimes right next to the shore, and is known to every angler as a game fighter. Near rocks, the colour of the galjoen is almost completely black, while in sandy areas the colour is silver-bronze.



The Galjoen

South African National Symbols, National Symbols of South Africa

## The King Protea,...



The giant or King Protea (*Protea cynaroides*) is widely distributed in the south-western and southern areas of the Western Cape, from the Cedarberg up to just east of Grahamstown. South Africa's national flower is the largest of the proteas, which make up an important part of the unique Cape Floral Region, a major global biodiversity hotspot and a Unesco World Heritage site. The Proteas also give their name to South Africa's national cricket team.



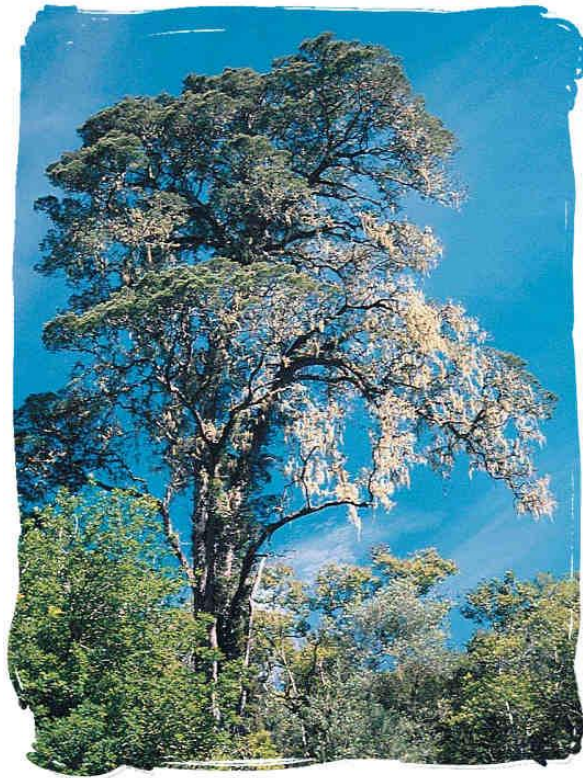
The King Protea

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## The Yellowwood Tree



The Yellowwood family of trees is ancient, having grown in this part of Africa for thousands of years. The real Yellowwood (*Podocarpus latifolius*), South Africa's national tree, is found from Table Mountain, along the southern and eastern Cape coast, in the ravines of the Drakensberg up to the Soutpansberg and the Blouberg in Limpopo.



The Yellow-Wood tree

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