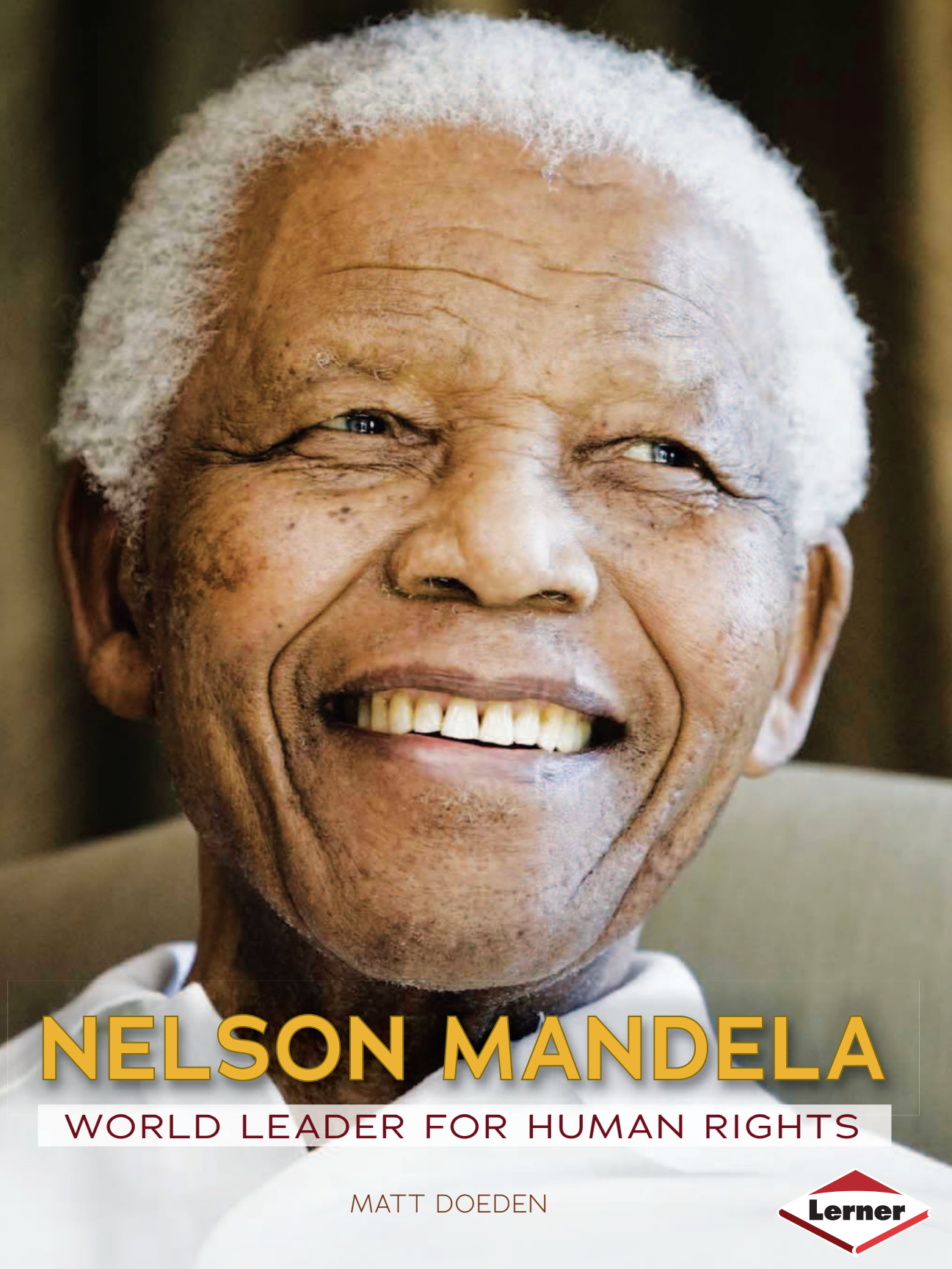


NELSON MANDELA

WORLD LEADER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

MATT DOEDEN

Lerner

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Nelson Mandela



Nelson Mandela

World Leader for Human Rights

Matt Doeden

Lerner Publications Company • Minneapolis

For Nicholas and Katelyn

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Contents

Old World, New World 10
Becoming a Man 14
The African National Congress 18
Enemy of the State 22
Capture and Trial 26
Life in Prison 29
From Prisoner to President 32
Mandela's Presidency 36
Mandela's Legacy 39

Important Dates 42
Source Notes 44
Selected Bibliography 46
Further Reading 47
Index 48



Nelson Mandela was an icon in the fight to end apartheid in South Africa.

Dressed neatly in a suit and a tie, forty-six-year-old Nelson Mandela stood before a court. It was 1964, and Mandela and seven other men were on trial, accused of trying to sabotage South Africa's government through violent means.

When he was on trial for different crimes two years before, Mandela had surprised almost everyone by wearing animal skins into the courtroom. His traditional dress was his way of showing that as a black man in a white court, he had no chance of a fair trial. But this time, Mandela donned his more familiar suit and tie. He did not want anything to stand in the way of his message.

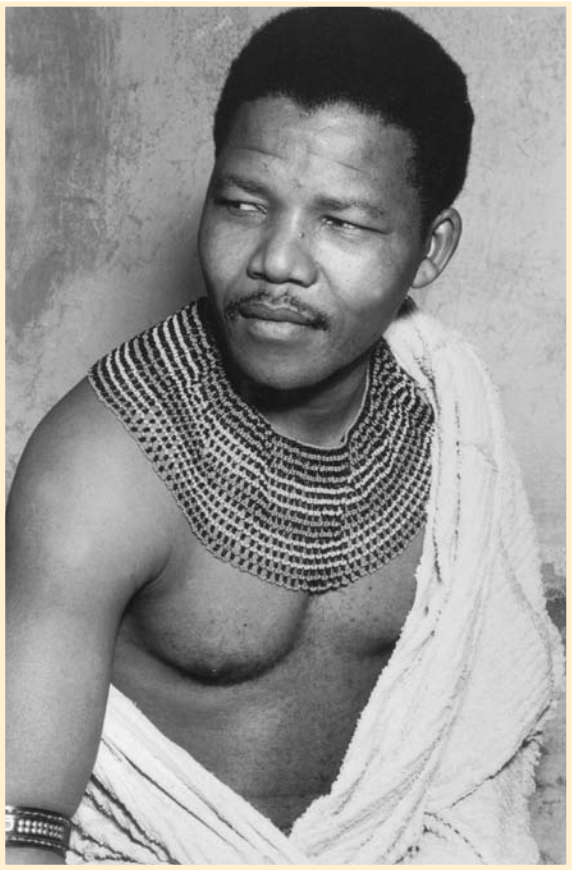
Mandela looked out at the courtroom. A group of white onlookers sat before him. His black supporters, forced to sit apart from the whites, were off to the side. He addressed the court, sharing his vision for South Africa:

During my lifetime, I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunity. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.

Mandela was leading the fight for the rights of blacks in South Africa. Despite the fact that most of its citizens were black, the nation was governed by whites. Blacks were treated as second-class citizens and denied equal treatment, wealth, and opportunity. Mandela had made it his life's mission to change that.

For almost four hours, Mandela stood before the court and spoke in his own defense. But the contents of his speech stretched far beyond the facts of the criminal trial. He took the opportunity to put South Africa's government on trial. He spoke with passion about the need for equality and the struggle of South Africa's blacks. He questioned what basis whites had to govern the nation exclusively. And he proclaimed his intention to fight the racism and inequality that was so widespread.

Mandela was no stranger to the courtroom. He was trained as a lawyer and had stood trial for treason once before. And so he knew very well that his life was at stake. In South Africa, sabotage was considered a capital offense, punishable by death.



Here Mandela dons the traditional dress of the Thembu people, as he did when he was tried for treason in 1962.

Yet Mandela did not back down. He proudly declared his guilt. “I do not deny that I planned sabotage,” he said. “I did not plan it in a spirit of recklessness nor because I have any love of violence. I planned it as a result of a calm and sober assessment of the political situation that had arisen after many years of tyranny, exploitation, and oppression of my people by the whites.”

Mandela’s admission left judge Quartus de Wet little choice. Mandela was found guilty. But de Wet understood

that giving Mandela the death penalty could incite outrage both within South Africa and abroad. Instead, de Wet sentenced Mandela—a husband and father—to life in prison.

If South Africa's white leaders hoped that the sentence would silence Mandela, they were badly mistaken. His fight was just beginning.

Old World, New World

Mandela was born on July 18, 1918, in the village of Mvezo, South Africa. His father, Henry Mandela, named the baby boy Rolihlahla, which means "troublemaker" in the Xhosa language. Mandela was born into a noble family of the Thembu, one of several Xhosa-speaking peoples. His great-grandfather had once been king of the Thembu.

Henry Mandela was a Thembu chief. He had four wives and thirteen children. At that time, it was common for Thembu men to have more than one wife. Rolihlahla and his sisters lived with their mother, Nosekeni Fanny, in the village of Qunu. Their home was simple. They lived in small mud huts with grass roofs. The family slept on mats on the floor. Henry often visited, and young Rolihlahla admired his father.

As a child, Rolihlahla had little knowledge of the outside world. Whites ruled South Africa, but he met very few white people in Qunu. He spent his time tending



Mandela grew up in the village of Qunu, South Africa.

cattle and playing with other boys in the village. Mandela later recalled simple pleasures, such as swimming in the area's natural pools and having playful stick fights with other village children. Once, in front of all of his friends, Rolihlahla fell off a donkey into a thorny bush. He was so embarrassed. He vowed that he would never embarrass anyone else that way, even his enemies.

Christian missionaries also lived in Qunu. They were there to spread their religion among Africa's native people. One way they did so was through schools. Henry Mandela befriended some of the missionaries,



Rolihlahla was given the name Nelson when he first began school.

who noted that seven-year-old Rolihlahla was a bright boy. They suggested that he go to school, and Henry agreed. Rolihlahla became the first person in his family to get a formal education. He later recalled going to school dressed in a pair of his father's pants, cut to fit him and tied with a string to hold them up. "I must have been a comical sight," Mandela later wrote. "But I have never owned a suit I was prouder to wear than my father's cut-off pants."

On the first day of school, one of the teachers gave all the students English names. Rolihlahla's was Nelson. He liked the name, and it stuck.

Two years later, Nelson's life changed again when his father died of tuberculosis. Shortly after, his mother told Nelson that he could no longer stay in Qunu. He had to pack his belongings that night. The next day, he and his mother walked west to the village of Mqhekezweni. It was the home of Chief Jongintaba,

ruler of the Thembu. Jongintaba had been friends with Henry Mandela and had agreed to raise young Nelson as his own. His mother knew he would have a much better life there than she could provide and left him. And so Mqhekezweni, which Mandela called the Great Place, became Mandela's home.

It was a new life for Mandela. He continued his studies in the village's one-room schoolhouse, where he learned English, history, geography, and more. He did chores. He shared a room with the chief's only son, Justice, and the two became like brothers. Meanwhile, Mandela learned more about Western ways. He began to dress in Western styles and went to a Christian church. It was a drastic change in lifestyle, but Mandela thrived in his new surroundings.

While at the Great Place, Mandela got a chance to watch Chief Jongintaba rule. The chief was a thoughtful ruler. He tended to listen carefully



Chief Jongintaba (*right*) became Mandela's guardian after his father passed away.

to all sides of an argument before reaching a decision. Mandela came to admire and respect the man. The lessons he learned watching the chief stayed with him the rest of his life.

Becoming a Man

As he grew up, Mandela came to understand that South Africa was filled with racism. White settlers called Afrikaners ruled the nation. Blacks were considered second-class citizens. They were not allowed to vote in elections. They could not live in some areas that were set aside for whites only. And they needed special passes to travel freely in their own country.

Few blacks had the money to get a formal education. But Chief Jongintaba wanted Mandela to be an adviser to the Thembu king. That meant more education. But first Mandela had to officially enter manhood. So at the age of sixteen, he, Justice, and other Thembu boys went through a traditional ritual. They learned more about Thembu ways and even had to kill a pig. The ritual ended with a ceremony to welcome the boys into manhood. A Thembu chief spoke to them. He told them that they were slaves in their own country and that whites were to blame. Mandela was shocked to hear him speak in such a way. But over time, he began to understand. “He had planted a seed [in my mind],” Mandela later wrote. “And though I let that seed lie dormant for a long season, it eventually began to grow.”

Mandela left the Great Place to live at his new school, Clarkebury Boarding Institute in nearby Engcobo. There, he studied, worked, and made friends. Mandela was a bright and popular student and a good athlete. He enjoyed running, boxing, and other sports. One of his jobs was keeping up the gardens. He enjoyed the work and developed a lifelong love of gardening.

Two years later, Mandela moved on to Healdtown, a Christian college in Fort Beaufort, which Jongintaba's son, Justice, also attended. The school was very centered on Western culture and traditions. Many of the teachers spoke about how Western ways were superior to African ways. But Mandela was not convinced. He began to question why minority white settlers ruled the people who had lived in South Africa for generations.



Mandela was a good athlete and took up boxing as a young man.

After four years at Healdtown, Mandela continued his education at the University of Fort Hare, which was South Africa's first university for blacks. In 1940 Mandela got his first taste of political activism there. Students were unhappy with the low quality of food served at the college and with the lack of any real power possessed by the Student Representative Council. Most of the students, including Mandela, refused to vote in a student government election as a protest. But a small group of students who did cast their votes elected Mandela and five other students to the council. Siding with the students who had boycotted the election, Mandela refused the position.



Mandela attended the University of Fort Hare until he was expelled for supporting a student election boycott.

The school expelled him, and Mandela ended up leaving without getting a degree. It was an early glimpse of the way Mandela was willing to sacrifice what he wanted in the name of a cause.

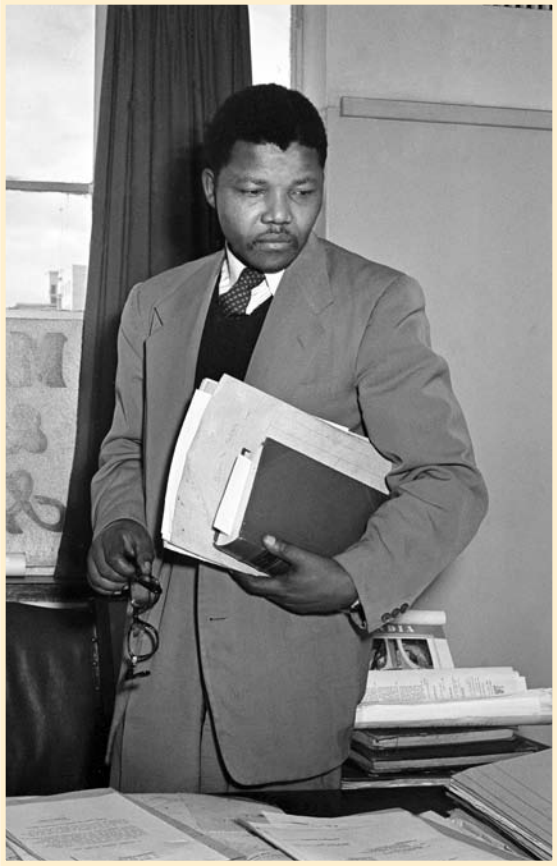
In early 1941, Mandela and Justice returned home to Mqhekezweni. They were shocked to learn that Chief Jongintaba had arranged marriages for both of them. It was a common practice among the Thembu. But the two young men hated the idea and decided to run away. They fled to Johannesburg, South Africa's largest city.

Life in Johannesburg was far different. Other than the friendship of Justice, Mandela was truly on his own. The men got jobs with a mining company. But they were fired when the boss learned that they were runaways.

One of Mandela's cousins introduced him to Walter Sisulu. Sisulu was a political activist with the African National Congress (ANC). This organization fought for rights for blacks in South Africa. Sisulu was impressed with the twenty-three-year-old Mandela. He helped him get a job with a white law



Walter Sisulu was a political activist and became a longtime friend of Mandela.



Mandela was hired at a white law firm, which was very uncommon for a black man.

firm, Witkin, Sidelsky, and Eidelman. It was a huge stroke of luck for Mandela. Few white law firms would have hired a black man. But one of the lawyers took a liking to Mandela. He even gave Mandela a suit to wear to work.

Meanwhile, Mandela continued to take college classes by mail through the University of South Africa. He worked during the day and studied at night. In 1942 he finally earned his bachelor's degree. And he had a new direction in life. Mandela wanted to be a lawyer.

The African National Congress

In 1943 Mandela enrolled at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg to study law. Around the

same time, he joined the ANC. Mandela was no longer content to be treated as a second-class citizen. He wanted to join the front lines of the civil rights movement in South Africa.

The ANC favored peaceful forms of protest. Its ideas stretched back to Mohandas Gandhi, a lawyer from India who had lived in South Africa for many years and fought for the rights of Indians and other minorities. Gandhi had taught South Africans about the idea of civil disobedience. This is the refusal to follow unjust laws. The ANC adopted this style, with hopes to change minds and earn equal rights for all South Africans.



In its early years, members of the African National Congress (ANC) performed peacful protests of apartheid.

Soon, Mandela and some of the ANC's other young members grew impatient with this approach. In 1944 they formed the ANC Youth League. The two groups shared a common goal. But the Youth League formed, in part, to challenge the ANC's leadership. The young men felt that the ANC was too conservative. They wanted the group to take a more aggressive approach.

"African nationalism was our battle cry," Mandela later wrote, "and our creed was the creation of one nation out of many tribes, the overthrow of white supremacy, and the establishment of a truly democratic form of government."

Through the ANC, Mandela met Evelyn Mase. Mase, a nursing student, was also an ANC activist. The two married in 1944. They celebrated the birth of a son, Madiba Thembekile, in 1945. Evelyn gave birth to a daughter, Makaziwe, two years later. But tragedy struck the young family. The baby girl was not healthy, and she died at the age of nine months. The couple later had another son, Makgatho, and a daughter, also named Makaziwe.

In 1948 the Afrikaner Party, later called the National Party, came into power. The whites-only political party quickly installed a new system called apartheid, which means "apartness." Apartheid was a system of formal laws that separated blacks from whites. Blacks and whites could not marry or even attend school together. Blacks were not even allowed to enter whites-only areas.

South Africa had long been a racist nation. But the new laws shocked Mandela and others. The ANC had to respond. Mandela, by now one of the organization's leaders, believed

Apartheid

From 1948 until 1990, the National Party ruled South Africa. The party introduced and enforced apartheid—the official separation of races in South Africa. Under the law, South Africans were placed into three groups: white, black, and colored (mixed race). Later, a fourth group, Indians, was added.

Under the law, the three nonwhite groups were not allowed into whites-only areas. Some were forced to leave their homes because the neighborhoods were set aside for whites. Blacks were forced into city slums or moved out of cities altogether. They were denied voting rights. They could not even travel freely in their own country. Laws made getting a higher education extremely difficult. Some people resisted these unfair laws. But the National Party leaders dealt with protesters harshly.

that the ANC could force the government to change the laws. He helped to organize workers' strikes and boycotts. At this point, he and the ANC did not support violent means of protest, both for ethical and practical reasons. They knew that the government was much more powerful than they were and would crush any violent uprising.

One protest Mandela helped organize was the Defiance Campaign. Mandela traveled around South Africa encouraging blacks to break unfair laws. In 1952 he and about eight thousand other blacks were arrested for going



Signs like the one on this entrance were common in South Africa during aparthaid.

into whites-only areas. Yet the government refused to back down. Instead, the government issued a banning order on Mandela. He was forbidden to go to ANC meetings or to leave Johannesburg.

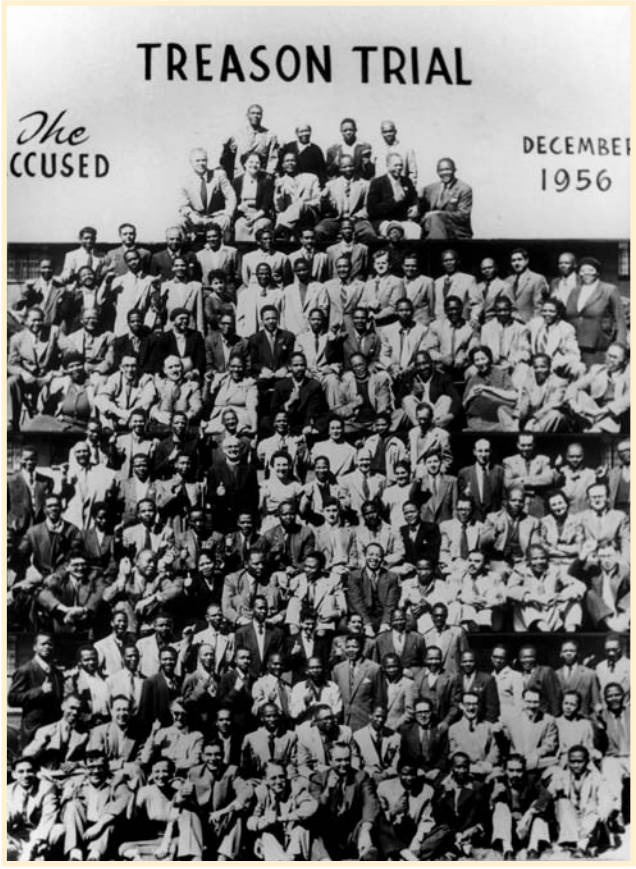
But Mandela was not about to give up. He was prepared to do whatever it took to win equality for all South Africans, even if it cost him his life. "You can see that there's no easy walk to freedom," he told the ANC. "Many of us will have to pass through the valley of the shadow of death again and again before we reach the mountain tops of our desires."

Enemy of the State

In 1954 the ANC passed out thousands of leaflets to black South Africans. They asked the people how they wanted to be treated by their government. The ANC and

several other organizations used this information to create a Freedom Charter. The Freedom Charter outlined the people's goals, including equal rights for all, a democratically elected government representing all people, and economic fairness for all. The charter also helped the organizations band together in their fight. Together, they were called the Congress Alliance.

The South African government saw the Congress Alliance as a threat. So in 1956, the government had Mandela and 155 other activists arrested. They were accused of planning to overthrow the government and charged with treason. They were eventually found not guilty.



Mandela and 155 fellow activists were arrested on treason charges after creating the Freedom Charter.

It was a difficult time for Mandela and hard on his relationship with his wife. She left him in 1956, and the couple divorced. Two years later, Mandela married a social worker, Nomzamo Winifred Madikizela, who he called Winnie. Winnie gave birth to two daughters: Zenani in 1959 and Zindzi in 1960.

Meanwhile, tensions between blacks and whites were escalating. Blacks were mounting more protests, and these were sometimes met with violence from white police. The most famous incident came in Sharpeville. Police opened fire on protesters, killing sixty-nine people and injuring



Police shot protesters of apartheid in Sharpeville, killing sixty-nine people and injuring hundreds more.

hundreds of others. The violence shocked people around the world. It spurred riots and protests around the country. But the South African government was not deterred. The government declared a national state of emergency and banned the ANC. Mandela and other ANC leaders were arrested without charges, along with thousands of other people known to be antiapartheid. Mandela spent five months in prison.

After being released from prison in 1961, Mandela was determined to continue the fight. But he knew he could not do that if he was arrested again. So he went into hiding. He grew a beard and wore disguises. He traveled around South Africa, never staying long in one place. He narrowly escaped capture time after time. His daring, bold actions inspired those around him.

During his travels, Mandela met with other ANC leaders to discuss a new strategy. The nonviolent approach had failed. Mandela was ready to step up the fight. He formed a new organization, Umkhonto we Sizwe, meaning "Spear of the Nation." It was a military organization. Mandela was preparing to openly—and violently—defy the South African government. "I had no choice but to become an outlaw," he later wrote. "But when a man is denied the right to live the life he believes in, he has no choice."

In December 1961, Umkhonto we Sizwe announced a new phase in the fight for equality. The organization began a campaign of bombing power stations, military bases, and communications equipment. Mandela stressed

that the bombings should target property, not people. Mandela had already been a wanted man. The South African government would stop at nothing to silence him.

Capture and Trial

In 1962 Mandela left South Africa in secret. He attended the Pan-African Freedom Movement for East, Central and Southern Africa meeting in Ethiopia. From there, he traveled to other African nations and eventually to London, England, to help raise support for the struggle of black South Africans.

Shortly after his return to South Africa, the game of cat and mouse came to an end. On August 5, 1962, police captured Mandela. He was pulled over while disguised as a paid driver. Rumors swirled that some of Mandela's allies may have tipped off the police to his whereabouts. But nothing was ever proven, and Mandela later rejected the idea. He blamed himself for being careless.

Mandela spent the night in jail, uncertain what his future held. The next day, he was charged with leaving the country illegally. Crowds gathered as he was led from the courtroom. Hundreds of his supporters shouted their encouragement. "Amandla! Ngawethu!' they shouted. The words meant "The power is ours!"

Mandela was sentenced to five years in prison. While he was there, the police discovered evidence linking Mandela and several others to the bombings. With this

new evidence, the police charged the men with sabotage. In 1963 they went on trial.

The Rivonia Trial, as it became known, stretched on into 1964. On April 20, Mandela gave his famous four-hour speech in his defense. He discussed the rights of Africans everywhere, his own motivations, and his hopes for all South Africans. He admitted to his role in the protests and declared himself ready to die for what he believed.

Mandela fully expected to receive a death sentence, since the apartheid government had a track record of dealing harshly with its opposition. But the trial had captured the world's attention. Even the United Nations Security Council was urging


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RIVONIA

THE BIG PROTESTS

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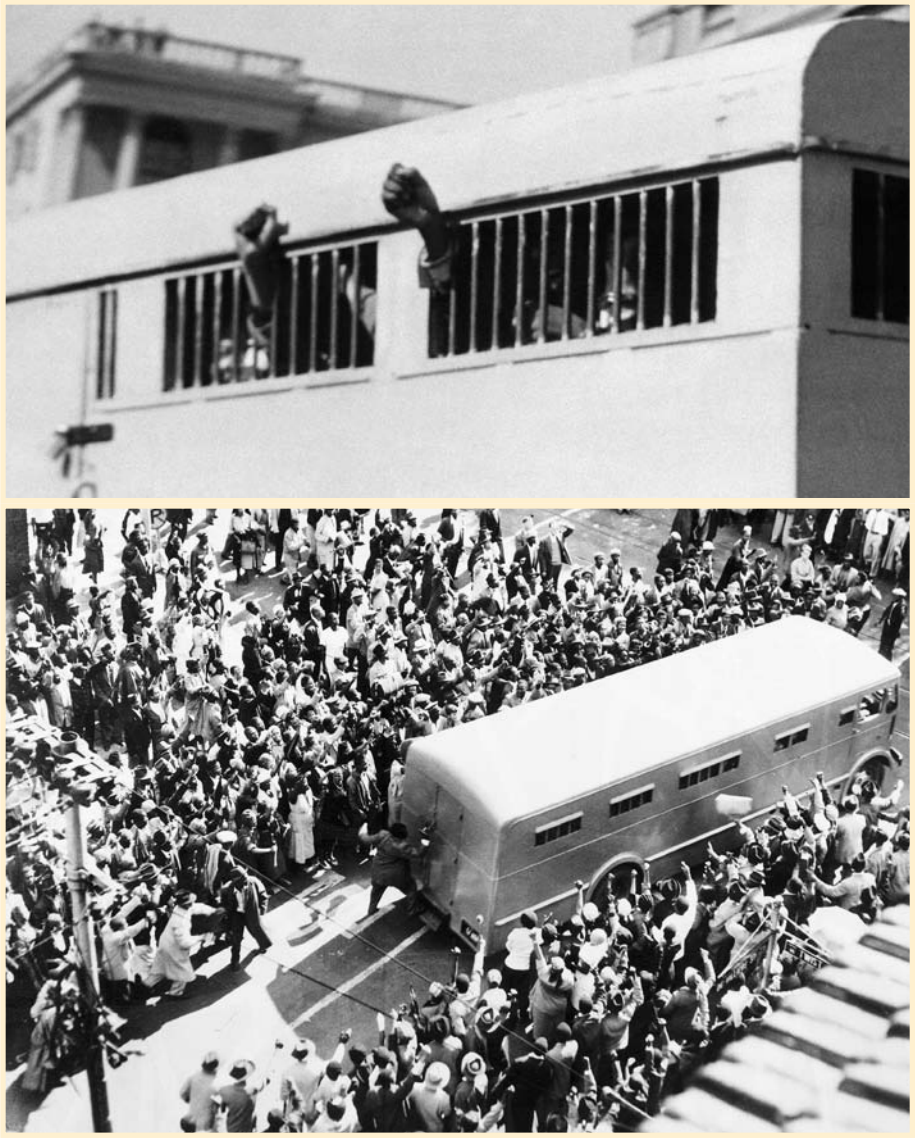
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This front page of South Africa's *Post* newspaper captures the events of the Rivonia Trial.



Top: Mandela and another man found guilty in the Rivonia Trial raise their fists in defiance
Bottom: Those convicted in the Rivonia Trial are transported to prison through a crowd of antiapartheid supporters.

South Africa to free its political prisoners. Judge Quartus de Wet did not go that far, but he did spare their lives. With a life prison sentence, Nelson and his comrades would have the opportunity to continue their fight from behind bars.

Life in Prison

Mandela did not spend the rest of his life in prison, but he did spend twenty-seven years there. First, he and six of his comrades were sent to Robben Island. Life there was brutal. Political prisoners such as Mandela were considered category D prisoners, the lowest class. Category D prisoners had the worst cells. Mandela's was just eight feet by seven feet, with a bed of straw to lie on. There were no showers or baths. Instead, the prisoners washed in buckets of cold seawater. The category D prisoners also ate the worst food and had the fewest privileges. The ANC prisoners were held in their own special maximum-security unit, kept apart from the other prisoners. It was in many ways a prison inside a prison.

"We were face to face with the realization that our life would be . . . grim," Mandela later wrote about his time in prison. "Prison life is about routine, each day like the one before, each week like the one before it, so that the months and the years blend into each other."

The prisoners were forced to do hard labor. They broke rocks in the prison yard or went to dig at a nearby



Mandela spent his early years in prison in an eight-foot-by-seven-foot cell.

limestone quarry, where the glare from the hot sun permanently damaged Mandela's eyes. He was rarely allowed visits from Winnie or his children. He wasn't allowed to go to the funerals of his mother, who died in 1968, or his son Thembekile who died in a car crash in 1969. But Mandela never stopped fighting. In time, he won more rights for himself and his fellow prisoners. They were eventually allowed to study and talk together.

Mandela was determined not to waste his time. He learned all he could. He studied the religion of Islam and even learned to speak Afrikaans, one of the main languages of South Africa's whites. Mandela united his fellow prisoners by setting up lectures and debates. He was keeping his mind sharp.

In 1975 Mandela began writing about his life. He wanted to tell the world his story and the story of

apartheid in South Africa. Mandela had to get another prisoner, who was being released, to sneak the manuscript out of the prison. The ex-prisoner smuggled the manuscript to London, where it was later published.

The antiapartheid struggle continued without Mandela. New leaders stood up, including Steve Biko, who was beaten to death by South African police in 1977. Still, South Africans had not forgotten about Mandela. In 1980

Steve Biko

Nelson Mandela is by far the most famous opponent of apartheid in South Africa's history. The next most famous may be Steve Biko.

Biko was born on December 18, 1946. He was a bright and dedicated student. But he was frustrated by how apartheid laws made it difficult for blacks to become educated. And so he vowed to fight the system. Biko started and led the South African Students' Organization (SASO). Through SASO, Biko promoted an idea called Black Consciousness. Its goal was to build a sense of common culture among South Africa's blacks. And Biko called for fellow students to stand up against the unjust system.

South Africa's National Party leaders saw Biko as a threat. The party banned him from teaching or making speeches. But Biko continued to lead a new movement against apartheid. In 1977 Biko was arrested. The police beat and tortured the thirty-year-old Biko until he slipped into a coma. He never recovered. Biko died on September 12, 1977, from brain injuries. His brutal death brought new international attention to the plight of black South Africans.

several civil rights organizations started the Free Mandela campaign. The campaign helped gather international support for the release of Mandela and drew attention to the plight of black South Africans.

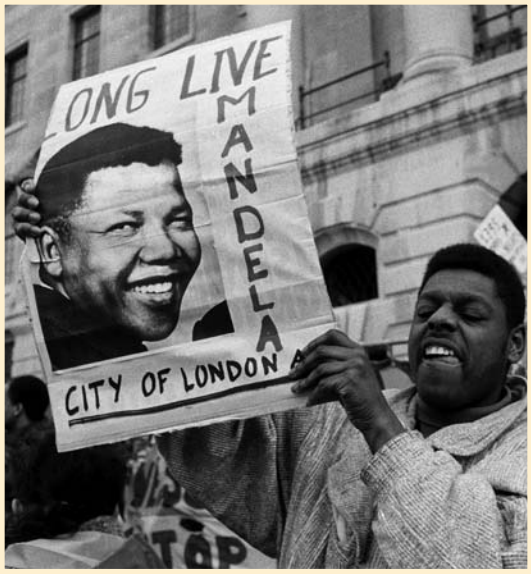
South Africa was not ready to release Mandela. But in 1982, they transferred him to Pollsmoor Prison. The conditions there were much better. Mandela had his own bed and bathroom. In 1988 Mandela was sick with tuberculosis. The damp conditions at Pollsmoor were making his condition worse. So he was moved to Victor Verster Prison, where he was allowed to stay in a house and to receive visitors.

From Prisoner to President

In 1989 F. W. de Klerk became South Africa's president. He knew that conditions in South Africa were changing. The nation was under great pressure both from within and internationally to end apartheid. So de Klerk began preparing to do just that.

After taking office, de Klerk declared that it was time for a change. He quickly ended the ban on the ANC and released the country's political prisoners. On February 11, 1990, Mandela became a free man for the first time in twenty-seven years. Mandela walked out of his prison, hand in hand with his wife Winnie, as onlookers and supporters around the world celebrated. Mandela spoke to those gathered, and TV stations everywhere broadcast his words.





Left: Mandela raises his fist as he is released from prison, accompanied by his wife, Winnie.
Right: A crowd in London celebrates the day Mandela is freed from prison.

"Our march to freedom is irreversible," he said. "We must not allow fear to stand in our way. . . . I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

It was not all good news for Mandela, though. While he was in prison, Winnie had become one of the nation's most famous activists. She had been accused of having ordered terrible things done to people who opposed her, including

kidnappings and murder. At first, Nelson stood by his wife. But she was convicted of the kidnapping charge in 1991, and the couple separated in 1992. Winnie continued to have legal problems in the years that followed.

Despite the troubles with his personal life, Mandela never stopped working for equality. Over the next several years, Mandela and de Klerk worked together to form a new government and a new constitution. Mandela and de Klerk jointly received a Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 for their efforts.



Mandela and F. W. de Klerk receive the Nobel Peace Prize for their antiapartheid efforts.



Black South Africans vote for the first time since they were given equal rights.

Mandela insisted on a system where the majority ruled. In 1993 South Africa adopted a new constitution that gave equal rights to all South Africans. And then in 1994, South Africa held its first truly free and democratic election. South Africa's blacks voted in force, and they sent one very strong message. Most considered Mandela a hero, and they wanted him as their leader. The ANC won more than half the seats to South Africa's national assembly. That meant that as the ANC's party leader, the seventy-five-year-old Mandela would become president. He was sworn into office on May 10, 1994. By his side stood de Klerk, the new second deputy president.

"We have triumphed in the effort to implant hope in



Mandela does a dance as he gets up onstage to accept his presidency, becoming the first black president of South Africa.

the breasts of the millions of our people," Mandela said in his speech. "We shall build the society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity, a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world."

Mandela's Presidency

Mandela stepped into a difficult situation as president. The nation's economy was in bad shape. Poverty was widespread, especially among blacks. Decades of apartheid

had left South Africans filled with hatred and distrust of one another. The first thing Mandela did was try to build unity. He included whites among some of his closest advisers. Mandela worked hard to win over whites. But progress was slow.

In 1995 South Africa hosted the Rugby World Cup. Rugby had always been considered a sport for whites. Many black South Africans actively rooted against the national team, the Springboks. But Mandela encouraged them to support the team. He hoped that blacks and whites could unite through the sport.

Mandela proudly wore the Springboks' colors, green and white, to the games. And when the team won the championship in a surprising and dramatic fashion, Mandela was there to hand them the trophy. Tens of thousands of white rugby fans stood on their feet and cheered



Mandela hands the Rugby World Cup trophy to the South African rugby captain.

their president. It was a sight many would have thought impossible even a decade before. Many credit Mandela with finally winning over South Africa's whites, once and for all, in that moment.

Mandela's divorce from Winnie was finalized in 1996. But soon he had a new love in his life: Graca Machel, the widow of the former president of Mozambique. At first, Graca was not sure that she wanted a romance with Mandela. They remained close friends. But the friendship soon grew into love. They were married in 1998, on Mandela's eightieth birthday.

"We were both very, very lonely," Graca explained. "I'd sworn I wouldn't get married again, but [Mandela] surprised me. It took a very special person to make me change my mind."

Mandela's presidency included many successes. He peacefully brought South Africa into a true democracy—something that had once seemed impossible. He made giant strides in building unity between blacks and whites, and greatly improved South Africa's international image.

But his presidency was far from perfect. Some accused Mandela of being too slow to respond to the AIDS crisis, which hit South Africa in the 1990s. Others claimed he gave up too much to whites, who still hold much of South Africa's wealth. And still others accused him of setting up a one-party system of government in South Africa. Critics think the ANC became too powerful because of the way Mandela set up the new government.

Mandela's Legacy

In 1999 Mandela stepped down as president. He and Graca retired to Qunu. Mandela enjoyed spending time with his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. He also remained active politically. He fought for children's rights and met with world leaders. And he worked to raise awareness of the AIDS problem that gripped much of Africa.

Mandela began to struggle with his health in 2011. He was hospitalized several times with lung infections. In June 2013, a severe infection left him in a coma. Many feared he would never come out of it. But Mandela surprised everyone one last time and returned home in September.

Three months later, on December 5, 2013, Nelson Mandela died in his home, surrounded by his family. He was ninety-five years old.



Leaders from around the world attended Mandela's memorial service in South Africa.



People across the globe mourned the loss of Mandela.

South African president Jacob Zuma announced a ten-day period of mourning for the legend. Leaders from around the world came to South Africa to say good-bye. Mandela was finally laid to rest on December 15.

Nelson Mandela was born into a world where blacks were considered inferior to whites. They had little money, power, or chance to improve their lot in life. The world he left behind was vastly different. Blacks and whites were equals, working together to build a better South Africa. Through his determination and sacrifice, Mandela helped to make that happen. And while doing so, he inspired millions, both in South Africa and around the world.

"Nelson Mandela reminds us that it always seems impossible until it is done," US president Barack Obama said at Mandela's memorial service in 2013. "South Africa shows us that is true. South Africa shows us we can change. We can choose to live in a world defined not by our differences, but by our common hopes. We can choose a world defined not by conflict, but by peace and justice and opportunity. We will never see the likes of Nelson Mandela again."

IMPORTANT DATES

1918	Rolihlahla Mandela is born on July 18 in Mvezo, South Africa.
1940	Nelson Mandela is expelled from the University of Fort Hare for refusing to accept a student government position.
1944	He cofounds the ANC Youth league and marries Evelyn Mase.
1952	He helps to organize the Defiance Campaign and is arrested during it.
1961	He goes into hiding as he organizes the military organization Umkhonto we Sizwe.
1964	He is found guilty of sabotage and sentenced to life in prison.
1975	While in prison, Mandela writes his memoirs.
1990	He is released from prison on February 11. Apartheid officially ends.

1994	He is sworn into office as South Africa's first black president.
1999	He steps down from the presidency after one term.
2013	At the age of ninety-five, Nelson Mandela dies on December 5. He is buried ten days later.

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South Africa History Online
http://www.sahistory.org.za
Learn more about the history of South Africa, from the time before European settlers to the modern day.

Time for Kids—Nelson Mandela: 1918–2013
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Time for Kids offers a look at Nelson Mandela's life through a short biography and slide show.

INDEX

African National Congress (ANC), 17, 18–22, 25, 29, 32, 35, 38
Afrikaners, 14, 20
apartheid laws, 19, 20–37
arrests, 21, 23, 25

Biko, Steve, 31

Clarkebury Boarding Institute, 15
Congress Alliance, 23

Defiance Campaign, 21–22
de Klerk, F. W., 32, 34–35
democracy, 8, 20, 23, 33, 35, 38
de Wet, Quartus, 9–10, 29

equality, the fight for, 8, 19, 22–23, 25, 33–35

Freedom Charter, 23
Free Mandela campaign, 32

Gandhi, Mohandas, 19

Healdtown, 15

Jongintaba (chief), 12–17
Jongintaba, Justice, 13–17

London, 26, 31

Machel, Graca, 38–39
Madikizela, Nomzamo Winifred (Winnie), 24, 30, 32–34, 38
Mandela, Henry, 10–13
Mandela, Madiba Thembekile, 20
Mandela, Makaziwe, 20
Mandela, Zenani, 24
Mandela, Zindzi, 24
Mase, Evelyn, 20
Mqhekezweni (the Great Place), 13–15

National Party, 20–21, 31
Nobel Peace Prize, 34

Obama, Barack, 41

Pan-African Freedom Movement, 26
Pollsmoor Prison, 32

Qunu, 10–12, 39

racism, 8, 14
Rivonia Trial, 27
Robben Island, 29
Rugby World Cup, 37

Sharpeville, 24–25
Sisulu, Walter, 17

Thembu, 10, 13, 14, 17

Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), 25–26

Zuma, Jacob, 41

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On December 5, 2013, former South African President Nelson Mandela passed away at the age of 95. People around the world mourned the death of this human rights activist. Thousands of South Africans waited hours to walk past his casket to pay their respects, and world leaders and celebrities attended his funeral, including Pope Francis, several US presidents, and Bono.

Mandela was born in 1918 in South Africa. While in law school, he joined the African National Congress. The ANC spoke out against South Africa's apartheid laws, which allowed separate treatment of people based on skin color. He began his activism in the 1940s and was arrested many times before he received a life sentence in 1964. After spending more than 25 years in jail, Mandela was released in 1990 and soon after partnered with South African President F. W. de Klerk to help end apartheid. They won the Nobel Peace Prize together in 1993. The next year, Mandela became the first African president of South Africa. After his term as president, he continued his work as a human rights advocate until he retired in 2004. After a long illness, he died in 2013. He will be remembered for his leadership for years to come.

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