

Nelson Mandela

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, born July 18, 1918

After 27 years in prison, Mandela negotiated the dismantling of the apartheid regime in South Africa and became the first black president of the country.

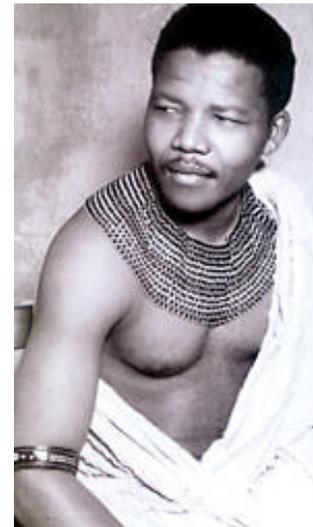
Mandela retired as president in 1999 and went on to become an advocate for a variety of social and human rights organisations.



Political Activity

As a young student, Mandela became involved in political opposition to the white minority government's denial of political, social and economic rights to South Africa's black majority.

In 1942, at the age of 24, Mandela joined the African National Congress (ANC). After the 1948 election victory of the Afrikaner-dominated National Party with its apartheid policy of racial segregation, Mandela was prominent in the ANC's 1952 Defiance campaign and the 1955 Congress of the People, whose adoption of the Freedom Charter provided the fundamental program of the anti-apartheid cause.



Spear of the Nation

While initially committed to non-violent mass struggle, Mandela became the leader of ANC's armed wing, umkhonto we sizwe (Spear of the Nation, MK), in 1961.

He co-ordinated a sabotage campaign against military and government targets, and made plans for a guerilla war if sabotage failed to end apartheid. A few decades later, MK did indeed wage a guerilla war against the regime.

Nelson also raised funds for MK abroad and arranged for paramilitary training, visiting various African governments.



Arrest and imprisonment

On August 5, 1962, Nelson was arrested after living on the run for seventeen months and was imprisoned in the Johannesburg Fort. On October 25, 1962, Mandela was sentenced to five years in prison.



While Mandela was still in prison, police arrested prominent ANC leaders on July 11, 1963. Mandela was brought in and was with the others found guilty of sabotage and treason, but all escaped the gallows and were sentenced to life imprisonment in June 1964.





"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us.
We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant,
gorgeous, talented and fabulous?

Actually, who are you not to be?
You are a child of God.
Your playing small doesn't serve the world.

There's nothing enlightened about shrinking
so that other people won't feel insecure around you.

We are born to make manifest
the glory of God that is within us.
It's not just in some of us, it's in everyone.

And as we let our own light shine,
we unconsciously give other people
permission to do the same.

As we are liberated from our own fear,
our presence automatically liberates others."

-Nelson Mandela

Free Nelson Madela!

During his 27 years in prison, Mandela became increasingly associated with opposition to apartheid. The slogan "Free Nelson Mandela" became a rallying cry for all anti-apartheid campaigners around the world, and Mandelas statement from the court dock in the Rivona Trial are classical in the history of the resistance to apartheid.

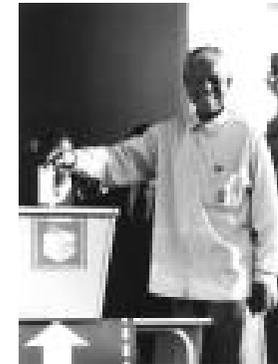


"I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if it needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

Nelson Mandela Freed

Refusing an offer of conditional release in return for renouncing armed struggle in February 1985, Mandela remained in prison until February 1990 when sustained ANC campaigning and international pressure led to his release.

State President F.W. de Klerk ordered his release and the ending of the ban on the ANC. Mandela and De Klerk shared the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993.



Presidency of South Africa

South Africa's first democratic elections in which full enfranchisement was granted were held on April 27, 1994. The ANC won the majority in the election, and Mandela, as leader of the ANC, was inaugurated as the country's first black State President.

As President (May 1994 – June 1999) Mandela presided over the transition from minority rule and apartheid, winning international respect for his advocacy of national and international reconciliation.



Public undertakings

After his retirement as president in 1999, Mandela went on to become an advocate for a variety of social and human rights organisations.

Although officially retired from public life, Mandela still makes occasional appearances in support of the fight against AIDS, poverty reduction and for educational organizations that hold his ideals strongly of international understanding and peace.



Orders and decorations

Having received more than a hundred awards over four decades, Mandela is a celebrated elder statesman who continues to voice his opinion on topical issues.

- Nobel Peace Prize (1993)
- Honorary Companion of the Order of Canada
- Order of St John
- Presidential Medal of Freedom
- Lenin Peace Prize (1962)
- Bharat Ratna (1990)
- Order of Merit (1995)
- Freedom of the City of Johannesburg (2004)

