



“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world ”

NELSON MANDELA

1918 - 2013



Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was born to Nongaphi Nosekeni and Henry Gadla Mandela on 18 July 1918, in Mvezo, near Mthatha in the then Transkei (now Eastern Cape). His father was the key counsellor/adviser to the Thembu royal house.

After his father's death in 1927, the young Mandela became the ward of Chief Jongintaba Dalindyebo, the acting regent of the Thembu nation.

In 1939, he enrolled for a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree at the University of Fort Hare, where he met Oliver Tambo. He was elected as a member of the Students' Representative Council but was suspended along with Tambo for joining in a protest boycott.

Mandela met Walter Sisulu in 1941 in Johannesburg and in 1942 he completed his BA degree through the University of South Africa. He joined the African National Congress (ANC) in 1943 while studying law at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Mandela met Evelyn Nomathamsanqa Mase in 1945. They had four children: Thembikile (1946), Makaziwe (1947), who died at nine months, Makgatho (1951) and Makaziwe (1954). The couple divorced in 1958.

He was instrumental in the formation of the radical ANC Youth League (ANCYL) in 1944 and was elected the league's National Secretary in 1948 and its President in 1952.

He became National Volunteer-in-Chief, travelling around the country organising resistance against discriminatory legislation.

As a qualified lawyer, he opened South Africa's first black law firm in central Johannesburg in December 1952, together with Tambo.



He was a key player in the ANC's Campaign for the Defiance of Unjust Laws in 1952.

During the whole of the 1950s, Mandela was a victim of various forms of repression. He was banned, arrested and imprisoned.

In June 1958 he married Nomzamo Winnie Madikizela. They had two children, Zenani (1958) and Zindiswa (1960). In April 1992 they were separated and finally divorced in 1996.

Together with other leaders of the ANC, he formed

five years in November 1962. While serving his sentence, he was charged, in the Rivonia trial, with sabotage and sentenced to life imprisonment. He was transferred to Robben Island in May 1963.

While he was in jail his mother and son died, his wife was banned and subjected to continuous arrest and harassment, and the liberation movement was reduced to isolated groups of activists.

Mandela rejected offers made by his jailers to be released on condition that he renounced violence. "Prisoners cannot enter into contracts. Only free men can negotiate," he said. He served a total



the armed wing of the liberation movement, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), and became its commander-in-chief.

In 1962, Mandela left the country as 'David Motsamayi' and travelled abroad for several months.

On his return he was arrested for leaving the country illegally and for incitement to strike. He conducted his own defence. He was convicted and jailed for

of 27 years in prison for his conviction to oppose apartheid and its injustices.

Released on 11 February 1990, Mandela was inaugurated as the first democratically elected President of South Africa on 10 May 1994 following the country's first democratic elections on 27 April. In his inauguration speech he said:

"We understand it still that there is no easy road to

Nelson Mandela

freedom. We know it well that none of us acting alone can achieve success. We must therefore act together as a united people, for national reconciliation, for nation building, for the birth of a new world. Let there be justice for all. Let there be peace for all. Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all. Let each know that for each the body, the mind and the soul have been freed to fulfil themselves. Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another and suffer the indignity of being the skunk of the world. Let freedom reign.”

In 1993, Mandela and then President FW de Klerk were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize “for their work for the peaceful termination of the apartheid regime, and for laying the foundations for a new democratic South Africa”.

On 18 July 1998, Mandela married Graça Machel.

This world icon worked tirelessly even after the achievement of democracy in South Africa to continue improving lives. Shortly before his 86th birthday in June 2004, Mandela officially retired from public life. Even as he retired from politics, his attention shifted to social issues such as HIV and AIDS and the wellbeing of the nation's children.

In November 2009, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly declared, 18 July Nelson Mandela International Day, to honour his birthday. This is the first time that the UN has designated a day dedicated to a person.

As a testimony to his sharp political intellect, wisdom and unrelenting commitment to make the world a better place, Mandela formed the prestigious group called The Elders – an independent group of eminent global leaders who offer their collective influence and experience to support peace building, help address major causes of human suffering and promote the shared interests of humanity.

He died on 5 December 2013 after a long illness.



“I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.”

