

(Name)

(Instructors' name)

(Course)

(Date)

## **Nelson Mandela's Iconic stature**

### Primer

Imagine growing up in a country in which drinking out of an undesignated water fountain potentially lands you a jail term; where two neighbors might share the same job but owing to skin color one is paid in a year, what the other made in a week. Sounds like the tale of a movie, but for Nelson Mandela, this was tacit reality. Nelson Mandela is one of the world's most respected icons. For a multiplicity of reasons, he is a prodigious hero. He is a persona from whom all of us can accrue lessons. Mandela encountered close to everything in his nine decades, from experiences of torture to flourishing as president of his beloved country. He retired in 1999, but continued traversing the world and vouching for many great causes. Nelson Mandela passed on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2013. The paper herein discusses the life and political struggles of Nelson Mandela.

Nelson was born into a South Africa divisive along white and black racial lines. His first insight on the diabolical apartheid system was during the course of his studies to become a lawyer. This catapulted his devout involvement in the African National Congress's mandate (ANC); a corpus he later led (Carlin 22). The South African government strived to curtail Mandela from spreading campaigns of equality for blacks and an outright facet of national unity. His proclivity landed him twenty-seven years in prison. Mandela is renowned as an icon around

the world, due to the freedom struggle in South Africa. Other icons, politicians and the populace at large campaigned for his freedom and course towards the obviating of apartheid. His release from prison in 1998 was met with titanic acclaim and reception from the world. Mandela's undying hope, Adour, and fortitude won him the hearts of millions. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1993, and was elected the primal black president (Carlin 39). I consider Mandela an icon due to his vision that created a united South Africa, his struggle for the liberation, his modesty, and delegation in leadership as well as fortitude in the bid towards espousing a better society. Today, Mandela is still hard at work espousing capacity on global conundrums and altercations.

### Early Life

Mandela hailed from Cape Province, South Africa. At age seven, Nelson Mandela became his family's first member to attend school. He attended Clarke bury institute and learnt about the western culture. Mandela completed his junior certificate in two years, away from the normal three. He went to Wesleyan college in fort Beaufort in 1937. After his matriculation, he studied for a Bachelor of Arts at the Fort Hare University, where he was acquainted with Oliver Tambo, a life-long associate (Brown 14).

At the closure of his first year in college, Mandela was involved in a student's representative council boycott against the university policies, and was rusticated from fort Hare. Mandela moved to Johannesburg and found work as a clerk at a law firm. He completed his degree at the University of South Africa while working, through correspondence. Afterwards, he began the pursuit of his law studies at the University of Witwatersrand, living in the township of Alexandria (Brown 19).

### Political Engagement

Following the victory of the Afrikaner-dominated National party that supported the racial segregation policy of apartheid in the 1948 election, Mandela assumed an active part in politics. He was a prominent leader in African National Congress's defiance campaign of 1952 and the Congress of the People in 1965, which adopted the Freedom Charter the Freedom Charter that formed the apartheid cause's fundamental basis. Mandela and his associate lawyer Oliver Tambo operated the Mandela and Tambo law firm, availing gratuitous counsel, and services at subsidized costs to a plethora of blacks who did not have legal representation (Boehmer 21).

#### Armed anti-apartheid proclivity

In 1961, Nelson Mandela assumed leadership of ANC's armed wing alluded to as Umkhonto We Sizwe (the Spear of the Nation), of which he was a co-founder. He functioned to coordinate sabotage campaigns directed at government and military targets, and orchestrated plans for guerrilla war, in the event of failure of the sabotage to end the apartheid system. Mandela raised funds for the armed wing abroad and consequently pulled strings for the group's paramilitary training (Haselhorst 40). Mandela led plans to expunge symbolic places of apartheid such as pas offices, government offices, and native magistrate courts, in such a manner that would be devoid of tragedy.

Mandela's description of a move to armed struggle was that of a last resort. He was convinced through unprecedented years of oppression from the state, that non-violence protests directed at apartheid could bear minuscule progress. Mandela sent a government-warning letter to the newspapers in June 1961, citing that the government's failure to meet their demands would translate to a sabotage campaign by the Armed Wing. He demanded a governmental acceptance for calls on a National Constitution Convention (Brown 37). The government did not meet these

categorical demands. Consequently, the armed wing led by Mandela began a bombing campaign directed at government targets, with the campaign's first action being the bombing of a sub-station electricity facility. Over the proceeding eighteen months, the Armed Wing was accountable for a dozen sabotage and bombing acts in Durban, Port Elizabeth, and Johannesburg. The government of South Africa alleged that more sabotage acts had been procured, and the accused parties would be charged for 193 counts. In the 1980s, Mandela's armed wing organization embattled the government in guerilla warfare that caused many civilian casualties (Tomaselli 33). After his ascension to presidency, Mandela cited that ANC's struggle against apartheid carried some human rights violations, directing criticism to party members who tried to erase statements highlighting this fact from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

#### Arrest and Trial

Nelson Mandela was arrested and tried on August 5 1962, after a life on the run for seventeen months. He was imprisoned for five years at the fort of Johannesburg, following a charge of leading a worker strike in 1961, and illegally leaving the country. In July 1963, Mandela and prominent ANC leaders were subjected to the Rivonia trial, charged with capital crimes of sabotage, tantamount to treason. Mandela stated in the trial his dedication to the struggle of the African people, his fight against facets of black domination and white domination, and his vision of an ideal, free, and democratic society with equality. He was found guilty and imprisoned in June 1964. Amnesty International however viewed Mandela as a political prisoner and campaigned against the impious conditions of his imprisonment (Kramer 51).

#### Imprisonment

Mandela served eighteen years of his twenty-seven years in prison at Robben Island. His reputation as an iconic black leader in South Africa grew in prison. He was subjected to hard

labor and segregation by race, where the blacks were accorded the fewest rations. Mandela through correspondence, took studies with The University of London via its external program, and was awarded a Bachelor of Laws degree (Peez 39). Mandela and other ANC activists were transferred from Robben Island to Pollsmoor prison to avert an influence of young black activists in the Robben Island prison. In 1985, Mandela was offered freedom by the president on terms of unconditional rejection of violence as a weapon of politics. He spurned the offer, citing the need for freedom of the organization of his people. He was moved to Victor Verster prison where he served the rest of his sentence.

### Emancipation

President Fredrik William granted Mandela release from prison in February 1990. He declared his commitment to reconciliation and peace with South Africa's white minority, making it implicit that ANC's armed struggle had not ended against the violence of apartheid. He garnered for a conducive, negotiated settlement, focusing on according the black majority peace and the voting right in the national and local elections (Bentley 43). Mandela was elected head of ANC after it was accorded autonomy. He procured negotiations for equal rights of all South African races, to ensure a united society (Bentley 50).

### Presidency of South Africa and Associated Acclaims

South Africa's first multi-racial election in April 1994 sent Mandela to presidential office under the ANC party. Mandela presided over South Africa's transition from minority rule and apartheid. He accrued international stature and respect for his functional advocacy for reconciliation at national and international dimensions, uniting the blacks and whites in team spirit. Mandela made an array of progressive reforms. He introduced free healthcare for children

under than six years and accorded pregnant women access to health facilities (Haselhorst 71). He launched a program for reconstruction and development that invested in primal social services like healthcare and housing. Mandela introduced parity grants for disability and child maintenance as well as old age pensions, previously set at different levels in racial groups. The 1994 Land Restitution Act enabled individuals who previously lost property owing to the Natives Land Act to reclaim their land (Boehmer 61). Child support grants were introduced to alleviate child poverty. He implored a Skills Development Act that established mechanisms for financing and nurturing development of skills at the workplace.

Mandela instituted a labor relations act that prompted democracy at the workplace and a Basic Conditions at the Workplace Act in 1997, that augmented mechanisms for right-enforcement to all workers. He was instrumental in development initiatives of numerous clinic constructions, two million connections of electricity, three million connections to water access, and the inception of compulsory schooling for African children (Bentley 88).

Mandela launched an act against illegal eviction and land occupation that protected against eviction without a court order. He pursuant to that extended the Security of Tenure Act in 1997, which looked to accord security of tenure to vulnerable individuals who occupied land outside urban areas (Kramer 77). He established a National Development Agency that afforded funds to corporate social organizations in a bid to bridge the poor communities' development needs. He was also prominent in the amendment of occupational injury and disease compensation to grant workers full compensation, and restitution to aggrieved family members.

In the International divide, President Mandela took to help resolve a long dispute Gaddafi's Libya against Britain and the US, over the indictment of Libyan natives who sabotaged a Pan Am flight. He offered South Africa as a neutral trial ground, negotiating with

Gaddafi over the handover of the accused. In 1999, Mandela was in strong opposition of NATO's intervention of Kosovo. In 2003, he criticized the foreign policy of administration over the United Nation's lack of involvement in the decision to start the war in Iraq. He also criticized Mugabe's cling to power in Zimbabwe (Bentley 111).

Pursuant to his retirement, Mandela was engaged in the fight against HIV/AIDS, making considerable contributions to the International AIDS conference. Mandela supported varied causes through the Mandela Children's Fund. The Mandela Foundation via its center for memory and dialogue espouses the development of a just society in line with the values, visions, and works of Nelson Mandela.

Works Cited

- Brown, Laaren, and Lenny Hort. *Nelson Mandela*. New York: DK Pub., 2006. Print.
- Kramer, Ann. *Nelson Mandela*. Austin: Raintree Steck-Vaughn Publishers, 2003. Print.
- Boehmer, Elleke. *Nelson Mandela: a brief insight*. New York: Sterling, 2008. Print.
- Haselhorst, Antoinette. *Reflections on Nelson Mandela: icon of peace*. London: Reynolds & Hearn, 2010. Print.
- Preez, Max. *The rough guide to Nelson Mandela*. London: Rough Guides, 2011. Print.
- Tomaselli, Keyan G., and David H. T. Scott. *Cultural icons*. Walnut Creek, Calif.: Left Coast Press, 2009. Print.
- Bentley, Kristina A., and Roger Southall. *An African peace process: Mandela, South Africa, and Burundi*. Cape Town, South Africa: HSRC Press, 2005. Print.
- Carlin, John. *Playing the enemy: Nelson Mandela and the game that made a nation*. New York: Penguin Press, 2008. Print.