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Nelson Mandela!

Long Walk To Freedom:
Celebrating Nelson Mandela’s Life And Legacy

By Ralph Heibutzki, Spirit Correspondent

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His name is synonymous with the causes of peace, freedom and civil rights – and the democratic ideals of “one person one vote” that he sacrificed most of his life to achieve. Early in his life, however, Nelson Mandela – who turns 95 on July 18, 2013 – became accustomed to defying improbable odds. As he notes in his autobiography, Long Walk To Freedom, it only takes a single person’s action to inspire others: “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.”

For those who followed Mandela’s cause, nothing seemed more improbable in 1964, when he began serving a life sentence, on sabotage and treason charges, at Robben Island, off South Africa’s coast – where he would spend 18 of his next 27 years as the world’s most famous prisoner. The South African government would spend a great deal of time and energy in trying to play him down as a figure of liberation, imposing measures that ranged from the physical banishment of his second wife, Nomzamo “Winnie” Madikizela, to a ban against publishing any current photographs, or quoting his words, in its newspapers, and any popular media.

At the time that Mandela entered the prison gates, South Africa’s system of apartheid – a term coined in the Afrikaans language that literally means, “the state of being apart” – seemed likely to extend for generations. Few observers doubted the government’s desire to maintain apartheid, which it backed with a brutal security apparatus, forced removals and the denial of basic freedoms – including the right to vote and assemble freely. However, the international momentum that secured Mandela’s 1990 release would result in greater things – in him becoming the first black South African to be elected as president in a fully representative, multi-racial election. During his tenure, Mandela would lead his country from international pariah, to one that became focused on dismantling its legacy of apartheid, and promoting a future based around the ideal of reconciliation, as he observed: “As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn’t leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I’d still be in prison.” With that ideal in mind, the Benton Spirit now takes a brief look at Mandela’s life and legacy, through words, quotations and images.

More on MANDELA, pages 4 and 5
Nelson Mandela: A Brief Biography

A Xhosa born to the Thembu royal family, Mandela attended Fort Hare University and the University of Witwatersrand, where he studied law. Living in Johannesburg, he became involved in anti-colonial politics, joining the ANC and becoming a founding member of its Youth League. After the Afrikaner nationalists of the National Party came to power in 1948 and began implementing the policy of apartheid, he rose to prominence in the African National Congress's (ANC) anti-apartheid movement. He was elected President of the ANC's Transvaal Branch and oversaw the 1955 Congress of the People. Working as a lawyer, he was repeatedly arrested for sedition activities and, with the ANC leadership, was prosecuted in the Treason Trial from 1956 to 1961 but was found not guilty.

Although initially committed to non-violent protest, in association with the South African Communist Party, Mandela co-founded the militant Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) in 1961, leading a bombing campaign against government targets. As Mandela would later explain: “When a man is denied the right to live the life he believes in, he has no choice but to become an outlaw.” In 1962 he was arrested, convicted of sabotage and conspiracy to overthrow the government, and sentenced to life imprisonment in the Rivonia Trial.

Mandela served 27 years in prison, first on Robben Island, and later in Pollsmoor Prison and Victor Verster Prison. An international campaign lobbied for his release, which was granted in 1990 amid escalating civil strife. Becoming ANC President, Mandela published his autobiography and led negotiations with President F.W. de Klerk to abolish apartheid and establish multiracial elections in 1994, in which he led the ANC to victory. He was elected President and formed a Government of National Unity in an attempt to defuse ethnic tensions. As President, he established a new constitution and initiated the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate past human rights abuses. Continuing the former government's liberal economic policy, his administration introduced measures to encourage land reform, combat poverty and expand healthcare services.

Internationally, he acted as mediator between Libya and the United Kingdom in the Pan Am Flight 103 bombing trial, and he declined to run for a second term, and was succeeded by his deputy Thabo Mbeki, subsequently becoming an elder statesman, focusing on charitable work in combating poverty and HIV/AIDS through the Nelson Mandela Foundation.

Right-wing critics denounced Mandela, controversial for much of his life, as a terrorist and communist sympathiser. He has nevertheless received international acclaim for his anti-colonial and anti-apartheid stand, having received over 250 awards, including the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize, the US Presidential Medal of Freedom and the Soviet Order of Lenin. He is held in deep respect within South Africa, where he is often referred to by his Xhosa clan name of Madiba, or as “Tata” meaning Father; he is often described as “the father of the nation”.

Timeline: Nelson Mandela

A few key moments in the life and times of Nelson Mandela, by Jennie Wood

1918: July 18. Rolihlahla Dalibungu Mandela is born into the Mabida clan to Gadla Henry Mphakanyiswa (father) and Nosekeni Fanny (mother). Mandela’s tribal name is Rolihlahlam which means troublemaker. He’s given an English name, Nelson, later on by a teacher.

1919: Mandela’s father loses his land and money. The order comes from a white magistrate.

1927: Mandela’s father dies. Jongintaba Dalindyebo, chief of the Thembu clan, becomes his guardian. Mandela’s education is a priority of Jongintaba Dalindyebo.

1937: Mandela moves to Healdtown and attends the Wesleyan College in Fort Beaufort, Eastern Cape. He works toward a B.A. at Fort Hare University, in Alice, Eastern Cape. While there, he meets Oliver Tambo, his lifelong friend.

1939: Mandela is asked to leave Fort Hare after he participates in the Students’ Representative Council boycott against university policies. To avoid an arranged marriage, he moves to Johannesburg. In Johannesburg, he witnesses apartheid which forbids the black population to own land, travel, or vote. He completes his B.A. at the University of South Africa through a correspondence course.

1943: Mandela joins the African National Congress (ANC).

1944: With Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu, Mandela forms a Youth League branch of the ANC. He marries Evelyn Ntoko Mase (first wife). The marriage ends in 1957. They have three children.

1948: Apartheid spreads across the country when the South African government, led by the National Party, increases the laws including creating separate lands for black groups throughout the country.

1960: Police kills 69 protestors who are participating in a peaceful demonstration in what becomes known as the Sharpeville Massacre. The ANC is banned after the incident. Mandela goes into hiding and, while in hiding, he forms an underground military group.

1961: During the All-In African Conference, Mandela is named the leader of an Umkhonto guerrilla movement and issues a call to arms.

1962: Aug. 5. After being in hiding for 17 months, Mandela is arrested. He is convicted of sabotage and conspiracy. Oct. 25. He is sentenced to five years in prison, but escapes and goes on the run.

1964: June 12. Mandela is captured, accused and convicted of treason and sabotage. At the age of 46, he is sentenced to life in prison. He is sent to Robben Island - held for 18 years.

1965: Rhodesia gains its independence. Whites are the only group represented in the new government.

1968: Mandela’s mother dies. His oldest son is killed in a car accident. He is not allowed to attend either of the funerals.

1974: The United Nations expels South Africa from various international bodies.

1976: More than 600 students are killed in protests at Sharpeville and Soweto.

1977: The leader of the Soweto and Sharpeville protests, Steve Biko, is killed while under arrest.

1980: Zimbabwe gains its independence. While in exile, Oliver Tambo begins an international campaign for the release of Mandela.

1986: South Africa sanctions increase, costing the country millions of dollars.

1988: Amnesty is granted for all dissidents.

1990: Feb. 11. After 27 years, Nelson Mandela is released from prison. The ban on the ANC is lifted by President F.W. de Klerk.

1991: Mandela is named president of the African National Congress (ANC). South African athletes are allowed to compete in the Olympic Games.

1993: Mandela, along with President de Klerk, is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

1994: April 26. Black South Africans are allowed to vote for the first time in elections. Mandela runs for president. In the national assembly, the ANC wins 252 of the 400 seats.

May. Mandela is inaugurated as South Africa’s first black president. He names de Klerk deputy president and forms the racially mixed Government of National Unity.

1995: South Africa hosts and wins the Rugby World Cup. In what is seen as a huge moment in the reconciliation between black and white South Africans.

1998: On his 80th birthday, he marries Graca Machel. Machel is the widow of Samora Machel, the former president of Mozambique.

1999: Mandela turns the presidency over to Thabo Mbeki, the ANC’s 1999 presidential nominee.

2001: He becomes mediator in Burundi’s civil war. Mandela is diagnosed with prostate cancer and seeks treatment, including radiation. Canada makes him an honorary citizen.

2003: He comes out publicly against the foreign policies of George W. Bush’s administration. He publicly supports the 4664AIDS campaign, a fundraising initiative named for his prison number.

2004: June. Mandela announces his retirement from public life. He is 85.

2007: July 23. He is given the freedom of the city by Johannesburg, the city’s highest honor.

2013: June. After being hospitalized a few times in recent years, Mandela is admitted to the hospital in serious condition due to a lung infection.

July 18. Mandela’s 95th Birthday
A Message from the Wilce L. Cooke Foundation


The above are only a few of the words I think of when I think of Nelson Mandela -- One of My Heroes. To me, he is the Ambassador of the World. His life is history in its fullest form. July 18 marks his 95th birthday and I ask all of you to join me and the Wilce L. Cooke Foundation as we “Make every day a MANDELA Day!”

I was blessed to serve the great city of Benton Harbor, Michigan as mayor on three different occasions, which were during struggling times or to rebuild the city and move it forward. For over 40 years, I have served people in the emergency room of the area’s major hospital. The key word is SERVE. Helping others is more than a title. It is my ministry. That is why I am asking you to join us, starting with Nelson Mandela’s 95th birthday on July 18, 2013. May we all be inspired to take action to help change Benton Harbor, other communities, and the world for the better. In doing so we will build a global movement for good. Ultimately it seeks to empower communities everywhere. “Take Action; Inspire Change; Make Every Day a Mandela Day.” Individuals and organizations are free to participate in Mandela Day as they wish, but are encouraged to adhere to the ethical framework of “service to one’s fellow human.”

Below is a list of ways to SERVE from Nelson Mandela’s “Make Every Day a MANDELA Day” website. God bless.

--Wilce L. Cooke

MAKE EVERY DAY A MANDELA DAY

Make The Change: Become a Mandela Day Changemaker

Change was the gift given to all South Africans by Nelson Mandela. Now it’s YOUR turn. In the spirit of Madiba and his vision to spread justice and freedom for all, this is your chance to step up to the plate and become a part of a continuous global movement for good. By becoming a Mandela Day Changemaker, you can show that actions speak louder than words by giving a little of your time to make a change that’s close to your heart.

Share your Mandela Day Deed

Honor the life and legacy of Nelson Mandela by making your “Mandela deed” part of history. Visit the Mandela Day Activities to pledge your support and let us know how you plan to commemorate the day. Then document your act of kindness on Mandela Day and share it with the world. You can send your feedback, pictures and experiences to nmf@nelsonmandela.org.

Spread The Word

Mandela Day is a celebration of our collective power to do good and make an imprint on the world. You can add to the initiative’s momentum by telling as many people as possible about it. Use your own network of friends, media connections, corporations and organizations to get involved and make a difference.

65 WAYS TO CHANGE THE WORLD

1. Make a new friend. Get to know someone from a different cultural background. Only through mutual understanding can we rid our communities of intolerance and xenophobia.
2. Read to someone who can’t. Visit a local home for the blind and open up a new world for someone else.
3. Fix the potholes in your street or neighborhood.
4. Help out at the local animal shelter. Dogs without homes still need a walk and a bit of love.
5. Find out from your local library if it has a story hour and offer to read.
6. Offer to take an elderly neighbor who can’t drive to do their shopping/chores.
7. Organize a litter cleanup day in your area.
8. Get a group of people to each knit a square and make a blanket for someone in need.
9. Volunteer!
10. Donate your skills! If you’re a builder, help build or improve someone’s home.
11. Help someone to get his/her business off the ground.
12. Build a website for someone who needs one, or for a cause you think needs the support.
13. Help someone get a job. Put together and print a resume for them, or help them with their interview skills.
14. Let your lawyer, do some pro bono work for a worthwhile cause or person.
15. Write to your area council member about a problem in the area that requires attention.
16. Sponsor a group of learners to go to the theatre/zoo.
17. Promote Local Health And Welfare
18. Get in touch with your local HIV organizations and find out how you can help.
19. Help out at your local hospital, as staff members often need as much support as the patients.
20. Many ill people have no one to speak to. Take a little time to have a chat and bring some sunshine into their lives.
21. Talk about HIV.
22. Get tested for HIV and encourage your partner to do so too.
23. Take a bag full of toys to a local hospital that has a children’s ward.
24. Take younger members of your family for a walk in the park.
25. Donate some medical supplies to a local community clinic.
26. Take someone you know, who can’t afford it, to get their eyes tested or their teeth checked.
27. Bake something for another.
28. Start a community garden to encourage healthy eating in your community.
29. Donate a wheelchair or guide dog to someone in need.
30. Create a food parcel and give it to someone in need.
31. Become An Educator
32. Offer to help out at your local school.
33. Mentor a school or student.
34. Coach one of the extramural activities the school offers. You can also volunteer to coach an extramural activity the school doesn’t offer.
35. Offer to provide tutoring in a school subject you are good at.
36. Donate your old computer.
37. Fix up a classroom by replacing broken windows, doors and light bulbs.
38. Donate art supplies.
39. Teach an adult literacy class.
40. Paint classrooms/school buildings.
41. Donate your old textbooks, or any other good books, to a school library.
42. Organize a bake sale, car wash or garage sale for charity.
43. Go to the poorest of the poor, shoes can be a luxury. Don’t hoard them if you don’t wear them. Pass them on!
44. Put together food parcels for a needy family.
45. Organize a bake sale, car wash or garage sale for charity.
46. To the poorest of the poor, shoes can be a luxury. Don’t hoard them if you don’t wear them. Pass them on!
47. Volunteer at your local soup kitchen.
48. Care For The Youth
49. Help at a local children’s home or orphanage.
50. Help the kids with their studies.
51. Organize a friendly game of soccer, or sponsor the kids to watch a game at the local stadium.
52. Coach a sports team.
53. Donate sporting equipment to a children’s shelter.
54. Donate educational toys and books to a children’s home.
55. Paint, or repair, infrastructure at an orphanage or youth centre.
56. Mentor someone. Make time to listen to what the kids have to say and give them good advice.
57. Treasure The Elderly
58. If you play an instrument, visit your local old-age home and spend an hour playing for the residents and staff.
59. Help maintain the sports fields.

Take Action; Inspire Change; Make Every Day a Mandela Day. Serenade The World

Visit the Mandela Day Activities website. It is my ministry.

Helping others is more than a title. It is my ministry.

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--Wilce L. Cooke

Explore Your Environment

1. If there are no recycling centres in your area, petition your area councillor to provide one.
2. Donate indigenous trees to beautify neighbourhoods in poorer areas.
3. Collect old newspapers from a school/community center/hospital and take them to a recycling center.
4. Identify open manhole covers or drains in your area and report to the local authorities.
5. Organize company/school organisation that you work with to switch off all unnecessary lights/power supplies at night and on weekends.
6. Engage with people who listen and see if you can convince them of the value of clean surroundings.
7. Organize to clean up your local park, river, beach, street, town square or sports grounds with a few friends. Our children deserve to grow up in a clean and healthy environment.

www.bentonspiritnews.com
May We All Have a Little MANDELA in Us
by Princella Tobias, Founding Publisher and Dr. Desmond Murray

Do not judge me by my successes, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again. --Nelson Mandela

From being in prison (pictured on the right) to winning a Nobel Peace Prize (pictured on the left), Mandela teaches us to NEVER GIVE UP and ALWAYS GET UP--regardless of the circumstances.

We hope you enjoy the following quotes of Nelson Mandela:

- “Any man or institution that tries to rob me of my dignity will lose.”
- “In countries where innocent people are dying, the leaders are following their blood rather than their brains.”
- “I was not a messiah, but an ordinary man who became a leader because of extraordinary circumstances.”
- “Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies.”
- “There is no passion to be found playing small - in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living.”
- “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”
- “It is better to lead from behind and to put others in front, especially when you celebrate victory when nice things occur. You take the front line when there is danger. Then people will appreciate your leadership.”
- “We must use time wisely and forever realize that the time is always ripe to do right.”
- “There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.”
- “If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.”
- “You will achieve more in this world through acts of mercy than you will through acts of retribution.”
- “It always seems impossible until it’s done.”
- “When a man is denied the right to live the life he believes in, he has no choice but to become an outlaw.”
- “We can change the world and make it a better place. It is in your hands to make a difference.”

“For to be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.”
by Nelson Mandela

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