

Nelson Mandela

“I hate race discrimination most intensely and in all its manifestations. I have fought it all during my life; I fight it now, and will do so until the end of my days.”

—Nelson Mandela

Nelson Mandela was born on **July 18, 1918, in Mveso, Transkei, South Africa**. Originally called as Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela and had a nickname Madiba, Black Pimpernel. Becoming actively involved in the anti-apartheid movement in his 20s, Mandela joined the **African National Congress in 1942**. In **1993**, Mandela and South African President **F.W. de Klerk** were jointly awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize** for their efforts to dismantle the country's apartheid system. In **1994**, Mandela was inaugurated as South Africa's **first black president**. In **2009**, Mandela's birthday (July 18) was declared "**Mandela Day**" to promote global peace and celebrate the South African leader's legacy. Mandela died at his home in **Johannesburg on December 5, 2013**, at age 95.

Nelson Mandela was incarcerated on **Robben Island** for 18 of his **27** years in prison. During this time, he contracted tuberculosis and, as a black political prisoner, received the lowest level of treatment from prison workers. However, while incarcerated, Mandela was able to earn a Bachelor of Law degree through a **University of London** correspondence program. Mandela was married three times, beginning with **Evelyn Ntoko Mase, Winnie Madikizela, Graca Machel**.

In 1982, Mandela and other ANC leaders were moved to **Pollsmoor Prison**, allegedly to enable contact between them and the South African government.

In 1994, Mandela published an autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, much of which he had secretly written while in prison. The following year, he was awarded the Order of Merit.

Through his Reconstruction and Development Plan, the South African government funded the creation of jobs, housing and basic health care. In 1996, Mandela signed into law a new constitution for the nation, establishing a strong central government based on majority rule, and guaranteeing both the rights of minorities and the freedom of expression.

By the 1999 general election, Nelson Mandela had retired from active politics. He continued to maintain a busy schedule, however, raising money to build schools and clinics in South Africa's rural heartland through his foundation, and serving as a mediator in **Burundi's civil war**. He also published a number of books on his life and struggles, among them *No Easy Walk to Freedom*; *Nelson Mandela: The Struggle is my Life*; and *Nelson Mandela's Favorite African Folktales*.

Mandela was diagnosed and treated for prostate cancer in 2001. In June 2004, at the age of 85, he announced his formal retirement from public life and returned to his native village of **Qunu**.

On July 18, 2007, Mandela convened a group of world leaders, aiming to work both publicly and privately to find solutions to problems around the globe, the group was aptly named "**The Elders**."

Mandela remained committed to the fight against AIDS—a disease that killed Mandela's son, Makgatho, in 2005.

Nelson Mandela made his **last public appearance** at the final match of the **World Cup** in South Africa in 2010.

A statement on the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory's website reads: "Mr. Mandela gave 67 years of his life fighting for the rights of humanity. All we are asking is that everyone gives 67 minutes of their time, whether it's supporting your chosen charity or serving your local community."

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