

Mandela, South Africa's beloved statesman, dies at 95

By Associated Press, adapted by Newsela staff on 12.06.13

Word Count **744**



Nelson Mandela and his wife, Winnie, walk hand-in-hand with their raised clenched fists upon Mandela's release from Victor Verster prison, near Cape Town, South Africa, on Feb. 11, 1990. Photo: AP Photo/Greg English, File

JOHANNESBURG — Nelson Mandela was one of the world's most beloved leaders and a hero of the 20th century. He died on Thursday at age 95.

Mandela was best known as a freedom fighter. He led the struggle to end segregation in South Africa. Blacks and other non-white South Africans were forced to live separately and with fewer rights under a system of segregation. It was called apartheid.

Mandela's fight cost him 27 years in prison. But he won. Apartheid ended and Mandela became South Africa's first black president.

Apartheid was a brutal system. It cut the nation in two. But Mandela helped it to heal. He built bridges of peace between blacks and whites by showing forgiveness. He even had lunch with the government lawyer who sent him to jail.

"Our Greatest Son"

South African President Jacob Zuma made the announcement of his death late on Thursday. "We've lost our greatest son," he said.

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was born July 18, 1918. His father was a tribal chief. He grew up at a time when nearly all of Africa was ruled by Europeans.

Mandela attended Christian schools. After that, he entered a university for black students in 1938. He was expelled two years later for taking part in a protest.

Mandela first showed signs of leadership in 1944. He helped form the African National Congress (ANC) Youth League. The ANC played a large role in the fight against apartheid.

In 1952, he urged others to not follow apartheid laws. Such laws segregated schools. They forbid people of different races from marrying. They also said where people of certain races could live or work. The government struck back at him. They forbid him from going to gatherings. They also didn't allow him to leave Johannesburg.

He was arrested in 1962 for leaving the country without permission and for getting other blacks to protest. His punishment was five years in prison doing hard labor.

A year later, police found a secret ANC hideout. They discovered plans for an attack. Mandela and seven others were sentenced to life in prison.

Messages Sent From Prison

While Mandela was in prison, it was forbidden to talk about him. No one could show his photo in any public way. But Mandela was still able to sneak out messages to help others fight against apartheid.

From the late 1960s, more countries began to shun South Africa. The rest of the world began to reject its racist system. It was kicked out of the United Nations. It was banned from the Olympics. In 1973 the government offered to release Mandela if he agreed to stay in his home region. He refused. In 1982 he and other top ANC prisoners were moved to a mainland prison. Three years later, Mandela was again offered freedom. Again, he refused. He would only agree if apartheid ended.

As time passed, more and more people around the world found out about apartheid. By age 70, Mandela was world famous. Through mental toughness, he was able to turn down offers of freedom from his jailers.

In 1989, F.W. de Klerk became president. De Klerk was a white South African. He realized that the white-only rule of South Africa was coming to an end.

On Feb. 11, 1990, Mandela walked out of prison. He was a free man. Blacks across the country erupted in joy. Many whites also celebrated.

From Freedom Fighter To Nation Healer

Mandela took charge of the ANC. He and de Klerk won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993. In 1994 he easily won the presidential election. It was the first time all South Africans were allowed to vote.

Since apartheid ended, South Africa has elected three presidents. They have always been elected peacefully. The country has set an example for the rest of Africa. Democracy is still new and easily broken on the continent.

Mandela helped set up the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Commission allowed people who broke human rights laws to admit their crimes publicly. In return, they would receive a lighter punishment. It helped heal the nation. Other countries facing similar problems copied South Africa's example.

More and more, Mandela turned over his duties to Deputy President Thabo Mbeki. When Mandela's term ended, Mbeki became president in 1999. Mandela decided not to run for another term. Rarely do African presidents give up power.

"I must step down while there are one or two people who admire me," Mandela joked at the time.

Quiz

- 1 What is the main idea of the article?
- (A) Mandela played a major role in abolishing apartheid in South Africa.
 - (B) Mandela became more determined and stronger after his time in prison.
 - (C) Mandela's death closes the final chapter in South Africa's struggle for freedom.
 - (D) Mandela became the first black president, signifying the end of white rule in South Africa.

- 2 Which of the following sentences from the article is LEAST relevant to its main idea?
- (A) He led the struggle to end segregation in South Africa.
 - (B) Apartheid ended and Mandela became South Africa's first black president.
 - (C) He built bridges of peace between blacks and whites by showing forgiveness.
 - (D) Since apartheid ended, South Africa has elected three presidents.

- 3 Read the sentence from the article.

"I must step down while there are one or two people who admire me," Mandela joked at the time.

What does the above statement tell us about Mandela?

- (A) No one admires Mandela, because he was too extreme in his rule.
 - (B) He wasn't power hungry and wanted to give others a chance to govern.
 - (C) Mandela failed to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor, so he resigned.
 - (D) He succeeded in abolishing apartheid, but failed to form a good democratic government.
- 4 What motivated Mandela to lead the fight against white-only rule?
- (A) He was forbidden by the government from going to gatherings.
 - (B) He wanted to end the separation between the blacks and the whites.
 - (C) He grew up at a time when nearly all of Africa was ruled by Europeans.
 - (D) He was expelled from the university for black students for taking part in a protest.