Madiba Moments

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela: A photographic tribute

An electronic book from Brand South Africa
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A photographic tribute

Photograph: Eli Weinberg
RIM–UWC–Mayibuye Archives

Produced by Brand South Africa
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A father’s sorrow: Nelson Mandela grieves the death of his second son Makgatho, who died of AIDS in 2005. He also calls on families to talk openly about those close to them who die of AIDS.

Photograph: AP-Picturenet
The name Nelson Mandela is synonymous with the universal struggle for human rights, freedom and democracy. He will go down in history as one of the world’s great statesmen, not only for the impact his leadership had on the lives of South Africans, but because he inspired people across the globe to fight for their own rights.

Even as a young man, he showed his mettle by his refusal to compromise his principles under pressure, and by his willingness to make great personal sacrifices.

He spent almost a third of his life in prison, but even behind bars he could never be ignored, remaining a political force to be reckoned with.

During the four difficult years that followed his release from prison, it was his extraordinary skill at reaching out to his political enemies that brought the country back from anarchy, violence and hatred.

Even in his last years, having left public office, he continued to be an inspiring advocate for peace and social justice around the world, and – following the death of his own son – a determined campaigner for AIDS awareness.

This e-book, a compilation of photographs, mementos and quotes, is Brand South Africa’s tribute to the life of a man who, more than anyone else, can be said to have saved South Africa.

Chichi Maponya, Chairperson, Brand South Africa
I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. I felt fear myself more times than I can remember, but I hid it behind a mask of boldness. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.

From Mandela’s 1994 autobiography: Long Walk to Freedom
Published by Little Brown and Co
Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was born on 18 July 1918 in Mvezo in the Eastern Cape province, the son of a chief of the Tembu clan of the Xhosa nation. At the age of seven he was enrolled in the local missionary school, where he was given the name “Nelson” by a Methodist teacher who found his African name difficult to pronounce. That name, Rolihlahla, means “troublemaker”.

When Mandela was still a small boy, his father, a proud and stubborn man, fell into a dispute with a local magistrate whose summons he had ignored. He was stripped of his chieftainship, his land and his cattle. Facing penury, he sent Mandela and his mother to stay with her family in the small village of Qunu.

In 1927, when Mandela was nine, his father died, and the boy became the ward of the Thembu regent, Jongintaba Dalindyebo. He was to be groomed to assume high office but, influenced by the cases that came before the chief’s court, decided to become a lawyer.

In 1939, after he had matriculated from school, Mandela enrolled at the University College of Fort Hare for a bachelor of arts degree. But the following year, after being suspended from college for joining in a protest boycott and fleeing an arranged marriage, he moved to South Africa’s principal city, Johannesburg.
The village of Qunu, not much changed from the days when Mandela spent his childhood here. This is the house he stayed in, the property of Thembu Paramount Chief Jongintaba Dalindyebo, who took in the boy and his mother after Mandela’s father, also a chief, was deprived of his property following a dispute with a magistrate. Mandela’s father had four wives; his mother Noqaphi Nosekeni was the third wife.
An idyllic rural childhood

My mother presided over three huts at Qunu which, as I remember, were always filled with the babies and children of my relations. In fact, I hardly recall any occasion as a child when I was alone...

Of my mother’s three huts, one was used for cooking, one for sleeping, and one for storage. In the hut in which we slept, there was no furniture in the Western sense. We slept on mats and sat on the ground. I did not discover pillows until I went to Mqhekezweni.

My mother cooked food in a three-legged iron pot over an open fire in the centre of the hut or outside. Everything we ate we grew and made ourselves...

From an early age, I spent most of my free time in the veld playing and fighting with the other boys of the village. A boy who remained at home tied to his mother’s apron strings was regarded as a sissy.

At night, I shared my food and blanket with these same boys. I was no more than five when I became a herd-boy, looking after sheep and calves in the fields. I discovered the almost mystical attachment that the Xhosa have for cattle, not only as a source of food and wealth, but as a blessing from God and a source of happiness.

It was in the fields that I learned how to knock birds out of the sky with a slingshot, to gather wild honey and fruits and edible roots, to drink warm, sweet milk straight from the udder of a cow, to swim in the clear, cold streams, and to catch fish with twine and sharpened bits of wire.

*From Mandela’s autobiography: Long Walk to Freedom*
There are no photographs of Mandela as a child. But these young Xhosa boys are dressed in blankets similar to the kind he would have worn. In his biography he remarks that the women and children wore blankets dyed with red ochre, not western clothes.
University of Fort Hare

Wesley House, a Methodist hostel where Mandela stayed during his student days at Fort Hare in the Eastern Cape from 1941. Mandela was not yet political, and was considered something of a dandy. He was friendly with Kaizer Matanzima, later to become prime minister of the Transkei and a bitter political rival.

Photograph: ANC archives, Fort Hare
The young Nelson Mandela’s signature on Methodist Church membership cards. Throughout his life Mandela emphasised the importance of religion to him. He told a Methodist Church congress in Durban in 1998: “Religious organisations also played a key role in exposing apartheid for what it was – a fraud and a heresy. It was encouraging to hear of the God who did not tolerate oppression, but who stood with the oppressed.”

Photographs: ANC Archive, Fort Hare
1942: Mandela enters politics

Arriving in Alexandra township in the north of the city, the young Mandela found work as a guard at one of Johannesburg’s many gold mines, and later as an articled clerk at a law firm.

He completed his degree by correspondence at the University of South Africa, and began to study law at the University of the Witwatersrand.

In 1942 Mandela entered politics by joining the African National Congress (ANC), South Africa’s major liberation movement and today the country’s ruling party. It was during this time that he and a small group of mainly young members of the ANC embarked on a mission to transform the party into a mass movement.

In 1944 he, Anton Lembede and Mandela’s lifelong friends and comrades Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu founded the ANC Youth League (ANCYL). That year he also married his first wife, Evelyn Mase. They had four children: sons Thembekile and Makgatho, and two daughters named Makaziwe (the first died as a baby). But Mandela, increasingly involved in politics, proved an absent husband and his marriage to the apolitical Evelyn, a devout Jehovah’s Witness, was not to last.

In 1947 Mandela was elected president of theANCYL. He was soon to confront his first challenge: In 1948, the National Party was voted into government by a white electorate on the platform of apartheid.
Central Johannesburg in the nineteen forties, as a young Nelson Mandela would have seen it when he first arrived in the city.

Photograph: Museum Africa
A smooth young man about town

In some of the earliest photographs of Mandela, he is already a young man about town, best known for his impeccable dress sense. At right, he stands on the porch of photographer Eli Weinberg’s house.
Mandela with his oldest son Madiba “Thembi” Thembekile, born in 1946 to Mandela’s first wife Evelyn, with whom the boy spent most of his life. Mandela’s increasing involvement in politics meant he was frequently absent from home, leading Thembi to reportedly ask his mother: “Where does Daddy live?”

Photograph: Eli Weinberg RIM-UWC-Mayibuye Archives
Which African does not burn with indignation when thousands of our people are sent to jail every month under the cruel pass laws? Why should we continue carrying these badges of slavery? We must refuse. We must use it to send this government to the grave ... The entire resources of the Black people must be mobilised to withdraw all co-operation with the Nationalist government.

Excerpt from The Struggle Is My Life, issued by Mandela in June 1961 as he prepares to go underground
1942: Mandela enters politics

In 1949, a year after the introduction of apartheid, the ANC – until then moderate and cautious – adopted a Programme of Action inspired in particular by the increasingly militant Youth League led by Mandela, which advocated the weapons of boycott, strike, civil disobedience and non-cooperation with authority.

The programme aimed at the attainment of full citizenship and direct parliamentary representation for all South Africans. In policy documents co-written by Mandela, the ANCYL paid special attention to the redistribution of the land, trade union rights, free and compulsory education for all children, and mass education for adults.

During the follow-up Campaign for Defiance of Unjust Laws in 1952, Mandela was elected the ANC’s national volunteer-in-chief and travelled the country organising resistance to discriminatory laws. He was charged and brought to trial for his role in the campaign and given a suspended prison sentence. In recognition of his contribution to the defiance campaign, Mandela was elected president of both the Youth League and the Transvaal region of the ANC at the end of 1952. He subsequently became the deputy president of the ANC.
1952: Defiance Campaign

Door-to-door canvassing for political support during the nineteen fifties. Here the activists are urging black workers to vote for delegates to the Congress of the People which drew up the Freedom Charter, which became the ANC’s core statement of principles.

Long queues of men outside the Native Labour Bureau, applying for the ‘passes’ that would allow them to seek work in Johannesburg. The pass laws, designed to control black migration to urban areas, were perhaps the most hated of all the apartheid regulations.

Both photographs: Eli Weinberg / RIM-UWC-Mayibuye Archives
The campaign freed me from any lingering sense of doubt or inferiority I might have felt; it liberated me from the feeling of being overwhelmed by the power and seeming invincibility of the white man and his institutions. But now the white man had felt the power of my punches and I could walk upright like a man, and look everyone in the eye with the dignity that comes from not having succumbed to oppression and fear. I had come of age as a freedom fighter.

From Long Walk to Freedom
Mandela becomes an attorney

Soon after the Defiance Campaign, Mandela passed his attorney’s admission examination and was admitted to the profession. In 1952 he and Oliver Tambo opened a law firm in Chancellor House, Johannesburg (shown at right).

Tambo, the chairperson of the ANC at the time of his death in April 1993, wrote of their practice:

“To reach our desks each morning Nelson and I ran the gauntlet of patient queues of people overflowing from the chairs in the waiting room into the corridors … Our buff office files carried thousands of these stories and if, when we started our law partnership, we had not been rebels against apartheid, our experiences in our offices would have remedied the deficiency.

We had risen to professional status in our community, but every case in court, every visit to the prisons to interview clients, reminded us of the humiliation and suffering burning into our people.”

Photograph: Jurgen Schadeberg
A showman in the courtroom

Mandela thrived on the racial tension in court, determined to show that blacks did not have to buckle to white pressure. He relished submitting police witnesses to relentless cross-examination and taking issue with hostile magistrates...

Hearing of a Mandela court case, township residents would fill the public gallery, applauding loudly on occasion, to the fury of court officials. Mandela’s showmanship in court duly became part of his reputation.

He was fond of telling the story of his defence of an African servant accused of stealing clothes belonging to her ‘madam’. Beginning his cross-examination of the ‘madam’, Mandela walked over to a table where the stolen clothes were on display, studied them and then, with the tip of his pencil, picked up a pair of panties. Turning slowly to the witness box, he asked, ‘Madam, are these ... yours?’ Too embarrassed to admit they were, she replied, ‘No.’ The case was dismissed.

From: Nelson Mandela, A Biography.
To go to prison because of your own convictions, and to be prepared to suffer for what you believe in, is something worthwhile. It is an achievement for a man to do his duty on earth irrespective of the consequences.

From an interview with Scott Macleod, Time magazine.
Soweto 26 February 1990
The 1950s turned out to be a time of strife and tribulation for Mandela – he was banned, arrested and imprisoned. His personal life was also in some turmoil, as he divorced Evelyn to marry Winnie Madikizela.

He was also one of the accused in the historic Treason Trial that ended in 1961, with the state dropping all charges.

In 1960 police opened fire on a group of protesters in the township of Sharpeville, killing 69 people. The reaction was immediate, with demonstrations, protest marches, strikes and riots across South Africa.

On March 30 1960, the government declared a state of emergency, detaining more than 18 000 people, and banning the ANC and other liberation movements. With the banning, the ANC leadership went underground and Mandela was forced to live away from his family. He was a master of disguise and managed to evade the police, a feat which earned him the nickname in the media as the Black Pimpernel.

The banning also forced the ANC to move from nonviolent to violent means of opposing apartheid. Umkhonto we Sizwe, the movement’s armed wing, was formed in 1961, with Mandela as commander-in-chief.

After travelling abroad for several months, he was arrested in 1962 on his return to South Africa for unlawfully exiting the country and for incitement to strike. Convicted, he was sentenced to five years on Robben Island, the notorious political prison off the coast near Cape Town.
19 December 1956: A huge crowd swarms against the gates of Drill Hall in Johannesburg on the first day of the preliminary hearings into what will become a mammoth five year Treason Trial involving 150 defendants.

Photograph: Museum Africa
A broad grin as charges are dropped – for now

A delighted Nelson Mandela and trade union and communist leader Moses Kotane leave court in Pretoria after treason charges are dropped in 1958. The elation is not to last: new charges are issued against 30 of the original 150 accused, and Mandela finds himself once again back in court. But after five years on trial, no-one is found guilty when the case ends in 1961.

Photograph: Jurgen Schadeberg
During a lunch break in the Treason Trial, Nelson Mandela chats to friends and fellow accused Joe Slovo and his wife Ruth First.

Photograph: Eli Weinberg
RIM-UWC-Mayibuye Archives
A champ takes on a champion

During the long months of the Treason Trial, Nelson Mandela meets up with local boxing champion Jerry Moloi for a few rounds of sparring to relieve the tension and to keep fit. Here they are on the roof of the Rand Daily Mail building.

Photograph: Bob Gosani / Africa Media Online
Mandela meets with a beauty

We had a call from Nelson asking us to go to the station and pick up a Miss Madikizela. We thought nothing of that request. We thought it must be a relative or somebody whom we have to pick up. At the station we met this absolutely vivacious, beautiful, young woman...

Winnie spent a week or two weeks with us. One day I found her perusing through some photographs which she took out of the handbag, and they were the photographs of Nelson in various postures and poses. Then I realised that something was cooking between her and Nelson...

“Moses Kotane made a terrible statement when Nelson introduced him to Winnie at the fort where the treason trial was going on, and he said that ‘Well, such beauty intimidates a revolutionary, does not suit a revolutionary.’

Nelson thought that very amusing, and turned round and Winnie hadn’t heard. So he turned round and he repeated that to Winnie, to tease her. Winnie was furious and said to him that she didn’t appreciate Nelson’s sense of humour on that score.

You see, Winnie always wanted to be understood and accepted beyond her physical appearance. She wanted to be accepted for herself. She was a very strong personality all along...

Fatima Meer, Mandela’s friend and official biographer, interviewed on the Frontline, USA documentary The Long Walk of Nelson Mandela
Winnie and Nelson before their 1958 wedding ceremony, photographed at the home of Michael and Barbara Harmel. Back row: Mandela’s favourite sister Mabel, two unidentified bridesmaids, Ray Harmel and Winnie’s sister Nancy. Front: Michael Harmel, Winnie and Nelson, Ruth Mompati (Mandela’s secretary), Toni Bernstein and Barbara Harmel.

Photograph: Eli Weinberg / RIM-UWC-Mayibuye Archives
Burning his pass after Sharpeville

In February 1960, nationwide demonstrations against the pass laws, organised by the rival Pan-Africanist Congress, lead to a massacre at Sharpeville which draws international condemnation.

Caught on the back foot, the ANC leadership decides to show solidarity by burning their own passes. Mandela is first to start the process by burning his pass in public.

This photograph by old friend Eli Weinberg, was taken outside the Mandela home in Orlando West.

Photograph: Eli Weinberg
RIM–UWC–Mayibuye Archives
In March 1961, one year after the Sharpeville massacre, over a thousand delegates attend an All-in-Africa Conference in Pietermaritzburg. Mandela, whose banning order has just expired, makes an unexpected appearance and his speech is greeted with huge enthusiasm. Denis Goldberg, later to be jailed for 23 years, remarked that it was the sheer romanticism of Mandela's life on the run that made him a leader, the one others pinned their hopes on.

Photograph: BAHA/Africs Media Online
For my own part I have made my choice. 
I will not leave South Africa, nor will I surrender. 
Only through hardship, sacrifice and militant action 
can freedom be won. The struggle is my life. 
I will continue fighting for freedom until the end of my days.

Excerpt from The Struggle Is My Life, issued by Nelson Mandela 
in June 1961 as he prepares to go underground
A letter from underground

I am informed that a warrant for my arrest has been issued, and that the police are looking for me ... I will not give myself up to a Government I do not recognise. Any serious politician will realize that under present day conditions in the country, to seek for cheap martyrdom by handing myself to the police is naive and criminal ...

I have chosen this course which is more difficult and which entails more risk and hardship than sitting in gaol. I have had to separate myself from my dear wife and children, from my mother and sisters to live as an outlaw in my own land.

I have had to close my business, to abandon my profession, and live in poverty, as many of my people are doing ... I shall fight the Government side by side with you, inch by inch, and mile by mile, until victory is won.

What are you going to do? Will you come along with us, or are you going to co-operate with the Government in its efforts to suppress the claims and aspirations of your own people? Are you going to remain silent and neutral in a matter of life and death to my people, to our people?

June 1961. Letter sent to South African newspapers by the fugitive Mandela, as a call to the South African people
A last meeting with Oliver Tambo

In 1962, Mandela embarks on an illegal trip through Africa, initially to attend a conference in Ethiopia that will lead to the founding of the Organisation of African Unity.

He also visits London, where exiled activist Mary Benson introduces him to sympathetic and influential liberals.

Here Mandela meets up in Addis Ababa with his old partner Oliver Tambo, who has been sent abroad to set up an ANC in exile. This is the last time they will meet for another three decades.

Photograph: RIM-UWC-Mayibuye Archives
Mandela also visits Morocco, one of a number of countries he flies to on his way back from London, trying to raise money. In Morocco he meets with members of the Algerian National Front, fighting a bitter war against France. His diary records that he spent several days with them.

Photograph: RIM-UWC-Mayibuye Archives
Mandela hides out in the tiny Berea flat of Communist Party organiser and journalist Wolfie Kodesh. Eli Weinberg is asked to take photographs to prove that Mandela is still alive. Some photographs show him in military fatigues, but these have been lost. Here, Mandela is wearing a candlewick spread snatched from the Kodesh bed, and a necklace bought from a local shop. Years later he will cause a stir by appearing in court in actual traditional dress.

Photograph: Eli Weinberg
RIM-UWC-Mayibuye Archives
Mandela on the run

Nicknamed the Black Pimpernel, Mandela continues to elude police for two years, spending much of the time disguised as a chauffeur.

In August 1962 he is betrayed and captured near Howick in the Natal Midlands. One theory is that he was betrayed by an informer with CIA links at a party Mandela attended.

He is sentenced to five years in prison. But his problems are only beginning ...
Three decades as a prisoner

While serving a five year sentence on Robben Island, Mandela was charged again, this time together with almost the entire underground leadership of the ANC, who had been arrested at a smallholding in Rivonia, outside Johannesburg, belonging to architect Arthur Goldreich.

Charged with sabotage in the infamous Rivonia Trial, Mandela was sentenced to life imprisonment. He was considered fortunate not to have been hanged.

Mandela spent 27 years in jail. The first 18 years were spent on Robben Island, where he carried out hard labour in a lime quarry. As a D-group prisoner, the lowest classification, he was allowed only one visitor and one letter every six months.

While in prison Mandela studied by correspondence with the University of London, earning a Bachelor of Laws degree. In 1984 he was transferred to Pollsmoor Prison in Cape Town, and in December of that year he was separated from his Rivonia prison-mates and moved again, to Victor Verster Prison near Paarl in the Western Cape.

Over the years that Mandela was in prison, South Africa slowly descended into near-chaos, with almost constant unrest inside the country, armed insurgency from without, and steadily increasing international pressure from the international community to end apartheid.

On 2 February 1990 the country’s National Party president, FW de Klerk, made a remarkable announcement: a negotiated settlement would end apartheid, liberation movements would be unbanned, and political prisoners released – including Nelson Mandela.

Nine days later Mandela walked out of Victor Verster prison, his wife Winnie on his arm and his fist raised in the liberation movement salute.
The underground wing does not last long. Police swoop on a smallholding in Rivonia, north of Johannesburg, and arrest almost the entire underground leadership, which has operated out of the farm from October 1961 until July 1963. Mandela himself had lived at the farm, pretending to be a gardener and driver named David Motsamayi (meaning “the walker”).
The passport that implicated Mandela

Mandela is in prison during the Rivonia raid, but police find plenty of evidence of his presence on the farm, including this passport in the name of David Motsamayi.

“Nothing illustrated more the amateurism of Mandela’s revolutionaries than that one year after his arrest on relatively minor charges they should be caught in a hide-out they knew to be unsafe in possession of useless documents that implicated him in offences that could have led to his death by hanging.”

“A friendly warder, just as the case was starting, asked me the question, ‘Mandela, what do you think the judge is going to do?’

I said ‘Ag man, they’re going to hang us’.

I thought he would say ‘Ag, they’ll never do that’ but he stopped, became serious and took his eyes away from me and said, ‘You’re quite right, they are going to hang you’.”

From a conversation with Richard Stengel, 3 December 1992
Winnie Mandela, right, arrives at the Rivonia Trial court along with Mandela's mother Noqaphi Nosekeni and Mandela's daughters Zenani, aged four, and Zindziswa, aged two. The daughters would not be allowed to see their father for 12 years.
The Rivonia Trial takes six months until June 1964, ending with life sentences for nine of the accused. The lead counsel is Bram Fischer. Unknown to his colleagues, he is himself involved in the underground, and will be arrested on similar charges a few weeks later.

The court case marks the final blow to the resistance movement, which will not recover the initiative for another two decades.

Mandela uses the courtroom as an arena to proclaim his political views in a famous speech (see next page).
Final page of Nelson Mandela’s speech from the dock, which he handed to political activist Sylvia Neame, who was herself arrested and jailed a few months later, but preserved the famous sheet. The page reads:

“During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.”

Below the final paragraph of his typewritten speech Mandela wrote:

“The invincibility of our cause and the certainty of our final victory are the impenetrable armour of those who consistently uphold their faith in freedom and justice in spite of political persecution.”
A rare glimpse of prison life

Photographs of prisoners, even those taken before imprisonment, were banned in South Africa during the apartheid era. Mandela’s portrait was never published inside the country, which only increased the mythology surrounding the man. On rare occasions, however, the authorities allowed access to sympathetic foreign publications in the hope of improving South Africa’s image. This photograph, of a compliant Mandela humbly sewing a postal bag on Robben Island, was one famous example.

Photograph: Cloete Breytenbach
Mandela with his closest friend and mentor in prison, Walter Sisulu. The political prisoners spent 13 years of hard labour in a Robben Island lime quarry. The glare from the white rock caused permanent damage to Mandela's eyes.

Photograph: Cloete Breytenbach
Oldest son Themba is killed

At the age of 25, Mandela’s eldest son Thembi is killed in a car crash. Thembi had two young daughters with a girlfriend he had met at school, Mandela’s first grandchildren. After his parents’ divorce Thembi became silent and withdrawn, never forgiving his father. And although he lived in Cape Town, within sight of Robben Island, he was the only member of the family never to visit his father in prison.

“To lose a son, your eldest son, to whom I was very much attached, and I had no opportunity, you know of paying my respects to his memory by attending the funeral, and seeing to the expenses of the funeral myself, and making sure that he rested well and peacefully. That was very devastating.”

From a conversation with Richard Stengel 9 March 1993
Release Mandela campaign

The international Anti-Apartheid movements wage a long campaign for the release of South African political prisoners, with Nelson Mandela the most frequent focus of the protests. It is these campaigns that make Mandela’s name an international byword for courageous resistance.

SA History Archives
Exiled activist Wolfie Kodesh, who had hidden Mandela in his flat during his fugitive period, joins a demonstration in London a few days before Mandela's release in 1990.

Photograph: RIM-UWC-Mayibuye Archives
A photograph seen around the world. A famous name, but an unfamiliar face, emerges from the prison gate alongside wife Winnie.

Photograph: Graeme Williams, Africa Media Online, 11 February
In 1991, at the first national conference of the ANC held inside South Africa after its decades-long banning, Mandela was elected president of the party. His long-time friend Oliver Tambo, who had run the ANC in exile for three decades, became national chairperson.

But democracy did not come easily or quickly. Four difficult years would pass, in which violence escalated, leaders were murdered, and fringe political parties threatened civil war. Mandela was frequently called upon to play the statesman, pacifying not only his rivals but also his own supporters.

Finally, agreement was reached, and Mandela and millions of other black South Africans were able to vote in South Africa’s first democratic elections in April 1994. Mandela was elected president.

That year he published his autobiography, Long Walk to Freedom, which he had begun writing in prison.

In 1993 he and FW de Klerk were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their different roles in the peaceful end of apartheid.

After serving a five-year term as president of the country, Mandela ceded the ANC presidency to Thabo Mbeki. He retired from public life in June 1999.


In a television interview, Machel described how lonely Mandela was when she first met him. “After 27 years in jail, what he most longed for was not the glory of political life, but to have a family life,” she said. “It was a meeting of minds and a meeting of hearts.”
An extraordinary sight in South Africa: the recently unbanned flags of the ANC and Communist Party flutter over a Soweto sports stadium, as Nelson Mandela greets the crowd, flanked by recently returned exile Joe Slovo.

Photograph: Graeme Williams, Africa Media Online
Three black leaders on a sad day

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela, all three leaders of the South African resistance, meet on the solemn occasion of the 1992 funeral of Helen Joseph, one of the leaders of an extraordinary march of 20 000 women to the Union Buildings in Pretoria in 1956. She was the first person to be house-arrested in South Africa, spending 23 years under banning orders. She was also close to Mandela, and often looked after his daughters while he was in prison.

Photograph: Gille De Vlieg, AMO
Mandela’s 1990 release was to be followed by four tense years of negotiations punctuated by violence and stalling. But finally, largely thanks to Mandela’s statesmanship, an agreement was struck and elections called for April 1994. Immediately Mandela went on the campaign trail around the country, where he was greeted by ecstatic audiences. Here he is flanked by Walter Sisulu and Tokyo Sexwale.

Photograph: Greg Marinovich, Africa Media Online
In the early morning, as the sun rose over the green rolling hills of Natal, Nelson Mandela stood beside a grave in the grounds of a small rural school in Inanda, thinking of old friends like Oliver Tambo, Bram Fischer and Albert Luthuli who would not be voting that day.

Mandela had chosen to come to Inanda, near Durban to cast his vote, for it was there that the founding president of the ANC, John Dube, was buried, and it was the school that he had founded which was to serve as a polling station during the election.

After laying a wreath on Dube’s grave, he walked down the slope towards the school. ‘I did not go into that voting station alone,’ he said. ‘I was casting my vote with them all.’

*From: Nelson Mandela, A Biography.*
*Martin Meredith. Penguin Books, 1997*
A beaming Mandela casts his ballot. “This is for all South Africans an unforgettable occasion,” he said. “We are moving from an era of resistance, division, oppression, turmoil and conflict and starting a new era of hope, reconciliation and nation-building.”

The day was indeed unforgettable, and free of violence. In their millions, black and white queued alike for hours, but in perfect good humour, and even the whites felt that at last a great burden had been lifted.

Photograph: Paul Weinberg, Africa Media Online
Mandela becomes president

The first South African president, appointed on May 10th 1994, presides over a unity cabinet comprised of both long-time allies and long-time rivals. Here Mandela acknowledges the crowd at his inauguration, together with vice presidents FW De Klerk and Thabo Mbeki – the one the past president, the one the president to be.

Photograph: Guy Stubbs, Africa Media Online
George Bizos, who began his law career at the same time as Mandela, became a life-long friend, defending both Nelson and Winnie on a number of occasions, and finally becoming a trustee of Mandela’s estate. 

Photograph: Gisèle Wulsohn
A green shirt that united the country

The moment that became a Hollywood movie. South Africa wins the Rugby World Cup on home ground, and Mandela, donning a Springbok jersey and cap – once-hated symbols of Afrikaner nationalism – unites the country.

“This cap does honour to our boys,” he tells a black crowd before the final match. “I ask you to stand by them, because they are our kind.”

Here Mandela leads a victory lap around the field, accompanied by rugby chief Louis Luyt (left), once an ardent supporter of apartheid.

Photograph: Paul Velasco, PictureNET Africa
I know that when my time comes, Walter (Sisulu) will be there to meet me, and I am certain he will hold out an enrolment form to register me into the ANC in that world, cajoling me with one of his favourite songs we sang when mobilising people behind the Freedom Charter.

On the death of Walter Sisulu, 3 May 2003
At the 46664 concert in London’s Hyde Park, Mandela is flanked by Will Smith, Annie Lennox and Lewis Hamilton. Named after his prison number, the 46664 organisation raises awareness and funds in the fight against AIDS, with the unpaid help of a range of celebrities.

Photograph: Lefteris Pitarakis/AP/PictureNET Africa
Despite spending much of his life without the company of children, Mandela became famous for his ability to make connections with the very young. Here he helps a blind child to find out what he looks like.
The huge, warm laugh for which he will always be remembered. Mandela with ANC leaders Cheryl Carolus, left, and Mac Maharaj.

Photograph: Africa Media Online
I would like it to be said that:
‘Here lies a man who has done his duty on earth’
That is all.

From the MSNBC documentary:
Headliners and Legends 2006
Sources

The publishers have made every effort to establish copyright on photographs.
The following sources have been used:

ANC Archive, Fort Hare
Africa Media Online
Times Media Limited
Cloete Breytenbach
Giselle Wulsohn
Independent Newspapers
Jurgen Schadeberg
Museum Africa
PictureNET Africa
RIM-University of Western Cape / Mayibuye Archives

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Photographic research by Gail Behrmann
Editing and design by Irwin Manoin
Produced for Brand South Africa by Big Media Publishers, Parktown, Johannesburg.