

LONG WALK TO FREEDOM

BY NELSON MANDELA

Preface by
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Foreword by
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THE TRINITY FORUM READING

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PREFACE

I GREW UP IN APARTHEID SOUTH Africa, but didn't understand its true character until my teens, when I biked to a nearby black township to visit a friend from my Youth for Christ club in his home. The realities of my privilege as a white South African in the early 1980s were suddenly and vividly exposed. In my neighborhood, the streets were freshly paved; in his, the streets were dirt. My house had running water; in his neighborhood, families lined up each morning at the communal tap to fill their containers with the water they needed that day.

Less visible, but perhaps even more pernicious were the effects of the apartheid government's education policies. My education included a school with freshly equipped science labs and a well-stocked library, sports fields, a gym, and a swimming pool, and access to a music education program that included weekly practices with our city's youth symphony orchestra. None of this was available in my friend's school. The apartheid politician Hendrik Verwoerd expressed the attitudes behind those policies when he asked "What is the use of teaching the [black] child mathematics when it cannot be used in practice? That is quite absurd. Education must train people in accordance with their opportunities in life."

Confronting the difference in opportunity offered to me and my black friends shortly after I converted from my cradle racism to evangelical Christianity raised the question of my own political responsibilities. My reading Isaiah 58, with its pointed call to "loose the chains of injustice.... do away with

the yoke of oppression" forced more grappling with how I should respond. In the years that followed, my friends and I participated in small ways in the anti-apartheid movement, anticipating that the struggle against that oppressive political order would continue for most, and perhaps all of our adult lives. Motivation for investing our lives in that long struggle came from our deepest convictions, shaped by the Christian Scriptures, by the friendship of local mentors (an Anglican monk, a Pentecostal youth evangelist, a Catholic nun), and by the example of courageous leaders—including the long-incarcerated Nelson Mandela.

For the remainder of the 1980s, Nelson Mandela served as an icon of resolve and fortitude for those of us in the resistance movement against apartheid. His analysis of the South African situation in his statement at the infamous Rivonia Trial rang true; his commitment to change called us to action: "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."

The changes that came in the late 1980s and early 1990s caught those of us active in the struggle against apartheid as much by surprise as they did that regime's supporters. As South Africa's leaders negotiated a change towards a constitutional democracy in which all citizens were to enjoy the same legal rights regardless of race, tensions increased. Many South Africans feared that negotiations would descend into a race war with a bloody end—and these fears were not unreasonable. Some of those who suffered oppression and exploitation under a white supremacist government felt that the day was coming to exact retribution, not embrace reconciliation. As we were to discover in later years, through the investigations of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, dissident factions within the apartheid government sought to undermine the negotiations towards democracy by covertly fomenting violence.

In these times of dread and danger, Mandela took a resolute stance for reconciliation and the accomplishment of a transition to democracy without violence or harsh retribution. In these years, Mandela became *the* essential voice for a peaceful transition. For those of us who held him as an icon of resistance, his moral authority required serious consideration of his arguments against violence. To those for whom he had previously evoked a deep fear of black reprisal, Mandela's insistent stand against violence after his release from prison came as a surprise that provoked a reconsideration of their own

attitudes. Had Mandela not offered white South Africans his forgiveness, had he not held steady against pressure from those of his own supporters who demanded vengeance, the history of South Africa would have been much different—indeed, much bloodier.

As I have reflected on the life of Nelson Mandela in the months since his still recent death in 2013, what has stood out most clearly to me has been the losses he suffered as a correlate of the leadership he provided—and the losses suffered by those nearest and dearest to him. The costs of taking up the responsibilities of leadership are clear in Mandela's long years in prison, in the loss of a father suffered by his children, and in the loss of a husband and partner suffered by his then wife, Winnie Madikizela.

Nelson Mandela, like America's Abraham Lincoln, demands our respect for his moral courage and our attention to the character of his leadership. This is not to say that we must agree with his every argument or decision. As with Lincoln, Mandela made some questionable practical decisions in service of a great and good principle. As with Lincoln, Mandela the man was not admirable in his every action or trait of behavior. But what remains unquestionable is his historical significance, and the value of his example of resolve in defeat and charity in victory.

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FOREWORD

ON A COLD NIGHT IN June, 1992, in a squatter camp south of Johannesburg, a gang of armed men massacred 45 unarmed supporters of the African National Congress, South Africa's largest anti-apartheid movement. This was one of scores of attacks in a three month crescendo of violence in mid-1992 that claimed nearly 4,000 lives. Since his release two years earlier after decades in prison, ANC leader Nelson Mandela had been negotiating with government leaders to end apartheid. The people of South Africa and the world were watching. But Mandela appeared powerless against this surge of government-supported black-on-black violence. And within the ANC advocates of armed rebellion were increasingly vocal. The end of apartheid seemed as far away as it had ever been.

Yet within two years, apartheid was abolished, the ANC won a landslide victory in South Africa's first nonracial democratic election and Nelson Mandela became President. President Mandela and outgoing President F.W. de Klerk worked together to forge a new, united South Africa—and to win the Nobel Peace Prize. How had the South Africa come to such a violent point in its history? How did this seemingly impossible transition of leadership happen? And who was the man—Nelson Mandela—who made that transition possible?

The Cruel Rise and Remarkable Fall of Apartheid

The first European explorers arrived in present day South Africa in the late 1400s, but it was discovery of diamonds and gold in the 1800s that accelerated European colonial expansion. Following two wars between the British and

the Boers (Dutch, French, German, and Flemish settlers), the Union of South Africa was established by Britain in 1910 and became independent in 1931.

The legislative seeds of apartheid were sown in the 1890s and early 1900s with a series of laws denying blacks and Asian Indians basic political, economic, and social rights. The depth of racial segregation greatly deepened with the 1948 election victory of the Afrikaner-led National Party (NP), which instituted discrimination between white, black, Indian and "coloured" racial groups. The NP also introduced "grand apartheid," a series of laws formalizing racial discrimination in virtually every sphere and location of life. The goal of the NP was a white-majority South Africa and relocation of the majority of the black population to ten adjacent independent Bantustans ("black homelands").

Organized opposition to black oppression began with formation of the African National Congress in 1912. The ANC was strengthened by the formation of the ANC Youth League in 1944, co-founded by Nelson Mandela. Although the 1950s was a decade of non-violent protest by whites and non-whites, tensions were steadily escalating. Disillusioned with the ANC, a splinter group formed the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) in 1959, with the goal of fighting for African rights—excluding other races. On March 21, 1960, at a PAC-organized protest in Sharpeville, 69 unarmed protesters were killed by police and as many as 400 were injured. Days later, the government declared a state of emergency, banned the ANC and the PAC, and arrested thousands, including Nelson Mandela and other prominent anti-apartheid leaders.

With the ANC banned and means of peaceful protest outlawed, the ANC reluctantly endorsed armed resistance. Within the ANC, Mandela formed a military wing, the *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (meaning "Spear of the Nation"), which was focused on sabotage, as the form of violent resistance with the least loss of life and greatest opportunity for reconciliation afterwards. In 1964, Mandela was arrested and put on trial in what became one of South Africa's most famous cases: the Rivonia trial. Mandela and nine others were found guilty of sabotage, sentenced to life in prison, and sent to Robben Island, a notoriously rough and brutal prison off the coast near Cape Town.

As international opposition and internal conflict over apartheid grew, South Africa became increasingly isolated. In the early 1960s South Africa withdrew from the United Nations, left the British Commonwealth, and was banned from the 1964 Olympics. International pressure for dismantling apartheid increased throughout the next two decades, with a growing number of international campaigns for disinvestment, boycotts, and sanctions. American university campus protests and their widespread media coverage spiked

in the 1980s. Increasing support for anti-apartheid efforts led many business to divest themselves of South African holdings. The 1986 U. S. Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act imposed stiff sanctions on the regime. By 1987, South Africa's economic growth rate had fallen to among the lowest in the world.

The National Party went through several phases in its pursuit of apartheid. One of apartheid's chief architects, Hendrik Verwoerd, became Prime Minister in 1958. He systematically extended apartheid's ruthless discrimination until his assassination in 1966. His successor, John Vorster, relaxed some of the lesser apartheid laws, but international opposition continued to build. When defense minister P.W. Botha became Prime Minister in 1978, he efforts to maintain white dominance met increasing resistance. He declared a state of emergency in 1986, giving cover for the government to detain, torture and sometimes kill dissidents. Change came in 1989, when F. W. de Klerk became Prime Minister, announced to Parliament that apartheid had failed and began negotiating with Nelson Mandela, then still in prison. In February 1990 de Klerk freed Nelson Mandela and rescinded bans against anti-apartheid organizations.

President Nelson Mandela - The Leader

The end of apartheid was inevitable. Internal opposition, international pressure, and the declining economy made it so. But the successful transition to a nonracial democracy was neither inevitable nor likely. That required the unique leadership of Nelson Mandela. What gave Mandela his extraordinary political power and personal influence? How was he able to win the confidence of former white oppressors, while keeping the support of more radical black supporters? Mandela's own *Long Walk to Freedom* and those who knew him suggest several essential characteristics of President Mandela's extraordinary leadership.

Determined pursuit of one life goal—Mandela's goal was not merely the end of apartheid. His goal was far greater and more visionary: the establishment of a nonracial South Africa—a South Africa that respected and created opportunity for all its citizens. The seeds of his life mission were sewn in his "country childhood" and stories of the peaceful time before Europeans came with "fire breathing weapons" that destroyed the "fellowship of the various tribes." His life choices reflected his goal. In opening the first black legal practice in South Africa, Mandela believed that ".... becoming a successful attorney and thereby

model of achievement for my people" was the most effective path he could follow. He was able to stymie opponents and win legal victories through his legal expertise and courtroom debate experience. When he faced entrenched and increasingly violent apartheid defenders, Mandela did not shrink back from his goal, but altered his tactics to fit the circumstances.

Judicious exercise of authority – Mandela commanded great authority, in good measure because of his judicious use of that authority. He described his approach to leadership as akin to playing chess: "My style of play was slow and deliberate; my strategy conservative. I carefully considered the ramifications of every option and took a long time between moves." He sought the opinions of others in his decisions, noting "I have always endeavored to listen to what each and every person in a discussion had to say before venturing my own opinion." This fit well with the ANC's long history of collective decision-making, where members would share their views and only then vote. Mandela regularly found himself outvoted on issues ranging from hunger strikes at Robben Island to ANC leadership choices. However, "Once the decision was taken," he insisted, "I would support it as wholeheartedly as any of its advocates."

Nonetheless, when the situation called for timely and potentially contentious action—as in the delicate negotiations leading up to his release from prison and the first democratic election—he moved ahead decisively on his own. By using his authority judiciously, he was able to maintain the confidence and trust of all.

Graciousness – Mandela had an uncanny ability to understand, empathize with, and reassure even his opponents. He was friendly and attentive to everyone regardless of their age or status. Even de Klerk noted, "He had an exceptional ability to make everyone with whom he came into contact feel special."

While he vigorously condemned apartheid, Mandela rarely denounced the individuals involved. In his view, hostility toward others was self-defeating. At Robben Island he led his fellow inmates in treating wardens with courtesy—regardless of the wardens' response. When he ran for president, some of his strongest supporters were former wardens—proof of the validity of his deep belief that, "all men, even prison service wardens, were capable of change."

Mandela acted as a negotiator for the ANC even while still in prison. Speaking with then President Botha, Mandela compared the ANC rebellion against apartheid to the Afrikaner rebellion against the British. He reminded Botha that they were all brothers. On the afternoon of his release from prison

he told the press, "I knew that people expected me to harbor anger toward whites. But I had none.... I wanted South Africa to see that I loved even my enemies while I hated the system turned us against one another." During the one presidential election debate, Mandela was at times quite harsh with de Klerk. Sensing the moment, however, Mandela concluded by describing their relationship as, "a shining example to the entire world of people drawn from different racial groups who have a common loyalty, a common love, to their common country." To de Klerk's surprise, he then reached over and shook his hand—a spellbinding image at the time.

Mandela's efforts weren't just political: knowing the passion South Africans have for sports, he actively cheered the Springboks—a historically white rugby team—to victory in the World Cup trophy in 1995. When Mandela walked onto the field to present the trophy to the Springboks captain wearing the once reviled green and gold Springboks jersey, the entire stadium wildly erupted in a chant, "Nel-son! Nel-son!"

Integrity – In the outpouring of admiration for Mandela following his death on December 5, 2013, one of the dominant themes was Mandela's unwavering moral compass. Desmond Tutu described him as "A colossus of unimpeachable moral character and integrity." Scores of other world leaders, including fellow Nobel Prize winners Kofi Annan and President Barack Obama, expressed similar sentiments.

Mandela's character was reflected in his view of humanity: "No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love." His actions were consistent with his goals and values; he was willing to die for his beliefs. Known as "world's most famous prisoner," he never for a moment considered compromise in exchange for government offers of release from prison.

Mandela's strong moral compass reflected his quiet personal faith. His mother, a devout Christian, ensured he was baptized and raised a Christian. He was deeply influenced by the church pastor at his Methodist mission board school, concluding that, "virtually all achievements of Africans seemed to come through the missionary work of the Church." As President, his expressed faith when speaking at Christian conferences and assemblies. At one such event in 1994, he spoke of the "Good News by our risen Messiah," who chose not one race, country, language, or tribe, but, "who chose all of humankind." Mandela praised the churches of South Africa for helping to bring apartheid

to an end. Yet he also was acutely aware that religion could be used to divide, and never forgot that the Dutch Reform Church provided apartheid with its “religious underpinnings” when it suggested Afrikaners were “God’s chosen people” and that blacks were inferior.

But if Mandela rarely spoke publicly about his faith, he was adamant about the necessity of forgiveness and reconciliation—which he extended to architects, perpetrators, and enforcers of apartheid—in restoring a land divided by hate and oppression. Encouraged by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Mandela oversaw the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which granted amnesties in exchange for testimony of crimes committed during the apartheid era. And many South Africans were deeply touched by his simple acts of extending hospitality to his former opponents by having tea with the wife of Hendrik Verwoerd, a chief architect of apartheid, and lunch with Percy Yutar, the aggressive lead prosecutor at the Rivonia trial.

Confident Humility – Nelson Mandela went into prison a young, arrogant revolutionary. He emerged a quarter century later a mature, humble statesman. Throughout his entire life, however, he exhibited a self-assured – some would say aristocratic – bearing. When the “Free Mandela” campaign was launched in the 1980s, he knew that making the campaign personal was essential for maximum impact. But he suppressed any sort of self-promotion. During his last years in prison he was aware of the myth that had been created around him. So when he emerged from prison he sought always to speak on behalf of the people: “I was not a messiah, but an ordinary man who had become a leader because of extraordinary circumstances.” Mandela told his biographer, Anthony Sampson, “I’m no angel,” and insisted that Sampson make his own judgments and criticisms so the movement could learn from his mistakes.

When the ANC leadership approached Mandela to be their candidate for President, he initially refused. He urged them to choose someone more experienced in government and younger. (He would be 76 that year.) When the ANC prevailed, he was unequivocal that he would serve only one term. Once elected, Mandela focused on national reconciliation, including formation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and foreign affairs. Recognizing that national governance was not where his experience or talent lay, he left most of this work to his Deputy Presidents, F.W. de Klerk and Thabo Mbeki. True to his word, he stepped down after his first term – the first African President to do so.

Madiba - The Man

Mandela received the English name, Nelson, from a teacher when he entered school. But family, friends, and admirers often referred him by his Xhosa clan name, Madiba, a sign of respect and affection. Who was Madiba, the husband, father, friend, political ally, and prison mate? Outwardly he was friendly relaxed, and displayed a mischievous sense of humor. Behind this genuine but public image was a very private person, who confided in few people, often concealed his emotions, and remained in many ways a mystery even to those closest to him. He could be stubborn, at times quick-tempered, and loyal to a fault.

Except for his penchant for well-tailored suits and colorful batik silk “Madiba shirts,” he was a man of simple habits. He did not smoke, drink, or swear. Even as President, he insisted on making his own bed. He believed that exercise is essential to both physical health and peace of mind. As a young lawyer in Johannesburg he enjoyed the rigorous exercise of boxing, which he found to be an excellent outlet for stress. Throughout his years in prison he kept his early morning boxing-days routine with stationary running in his cell and strengthening exercises. Always the product of his country childhood and strengthening exercises. Always the product of his country childhood even in prison he made sure to have a plot for raising vegetables, which he shared with fellow prisoners and his wardens.

Madiba’s personal life was complex and at times tumultuous. He was married three times, first to Evelyn Ntoko Mase (a nurse and Jehovah’s Witness, which required political neutrality), then to Winnie Madikizela-Mandela (a social worker and anti-apartheid activist associated with charges of human rights abuses) and finally on his 80th birthday to Graça Machel (a politician, humanitarian, and widow of the late president Machel of Mozambique). Madiba fathered six children and had 17 grandchildren. One daughter died in childhood, his first son died in a car crash, and his second son died of AIDS. His three surviving three daughters have pursued different paths, including politics and business.

Mandela’s success as a leader depended on his voracious, life-long appetite for learning. When the MK moved to armed resistance, for example, to develop its strategies Mandela read everything he could on guerrilla warfare and independence movements in Africa and around the world. Through his work to ensure access to books and educational experiences for all prisoners, Robben Island became known as the “University” for its inmates. He saw learning of all types as essential to personal development and future opportunity for everyone. And even into his eighties he would be up before dawn reading.

Mandela's Legacy and South Africa's Unfinished Agenda

Martin Luther King Jr. famously wrote, "freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor." Yet under Nelson Mandela's political and moral leadership, that is exactly what happened. South Africa's unexpectedly peaceful transition to nonracial democracy is arguably the greatest social transformation of the twentieth century. South African and the world were fortunate that a man of Nelson Mandela's depth of character and personal strength was there to make it happen.

Twenty years after Mandela's election South Africa remains a young democracy. It faces a daunting unfinished agenda punctuated by self-interested political leaders, corruption, crime, and persistent inequalities in most spheres of life. Now, a new generation of leaders must build on Mandela's legacy to pursue the vision of a vibrant South Africa, one which creates opportunity for all. That generation—and indeed of each us—have much to learn from Mandela's remarkable story and inspiring leadership.

LONG WALK TO FREEDOM

A Country Childhood

A PART FROM LIFE, A STRONG constitution, and an abiding connection to the Thembu royal house, the only thing my father bestowed upon me at birth was a name, Rolihlahla. In Xhosa, Rolihlahla literally means "pulling the branch of a tree," but its colloquial meaning more accurately would be "troublemaker." I do not believe that names are destiny or that my father somehow divined my future, but in later years, friends and relatives would ascribe to my birth name the many storms I have both caused and weathered. My more familiar English or Christian name was not given to me until my first day of school. But I am getting ahead of myself.

I was born on the eighteenth of July, 1918, at Mvezo, a tiny village on the banks of the Mbashe River in the district of Umtata, the capital of the Transkei. The year of my birth marked the end of the Great War; the outbreak of an influenza epidemic that killed millions throughout the world; and the visit of a delegation of the African National Congress (ANC) to the Versailles peace conference to voice the grievances of the African people of South Africa. Mvezo, however, was a place apart, a tiny precinct removed from the world of great events, where life was lived much as it had been for hundreds of years.

The Xhosa are a proud and patrilineal people with an expressive and euphonious language and an abiding belief in the importance of laws, education, and courtesy.... Each Xhosa belongs to a clan that traces its descent back to a specific forefather. I am a member of the Madiba clan, named after a Thembu chief who ruled in the Transkei in the eighteenth century. I am often addressed as Madiba, my clan name, a term of respect.

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On the first day of school, my teacher, Miss Mdingane, gave each of us an English name and said that from thenceforth that was the name we would answer to in school. This was the custom among Africans in those days and was undoubtedly due to the British bias of our education. The education I received was a British education, in which British ideas, British culture, British institutions, were automatically assumed to be superior. There was no such thing as African culture. Africans of my generation—and even today—generally have both an English and an African name. Whites were either unable or unwilling to pronounce an African name, and considered it uncivilized to have one. That day, Miss Mdingane told me that my new name was Nelson. Why she bestowed this particular name upon me I have no idea. Perhaps it had something to do with the great British sea captain Lord Nelson, but that would be only a guess.



Birth of a Freedom Fighter

I cannot pinpoint a moment when I became politicized, when I knew that I would spend my life in the liberation struggle. To be an African in South Africa means that one is politicized from the moment of one's birth, whether one acknowledges it or not. An African child is born in an Africans Only hospital, taken home in an Africans Only bus, lives in an Africans Only area, and attends Africans Only schools, if he attends school at all.

When he grows up, he can hold Africans Only jobs, rent a house in Africans Only townships, ride Africans Only trains, and be stopped at any time of the day or night and be ordered to produce a pass, failing which he will be arrested and thrown in jail. His life is circumscribed by racist laws and regulations that cripple his growth, dim his potential, and stunt his life. This was the reality, and one could deal with it in a myriad of ways.

I had no epiphany, no singular revelation, no moment of truth, but a steady accumulation of a thousand slights, a thousand indignities, a thousand unremembered moments, produced in me an anger, a rebelliousness, a desire to fight the system that imprisoned my people. There was no particular day on which I said, From henceforth I will devote myself to the liberation of my people; instead, I simply found myself doing so, and could not do otherwise.

.... I had come under the wise tutelage of Walter Sisulu [an anti-apartheid activist and fellow member of the ANC]. Walter was strong, reasonable, practical, and dedicated. He never lost his head in a crisis; he was often silent when others were shouting. He believed that the ANC was the means to effect change in South Africa, the repository of black hopes and aspirations. Sometimes one can judge an organization by the people who belong to it, and I knew that would be proud to belong to any organization in which Walter was a member. At the time, there were few alternatives. The ANC was the one organization that welcomed everyone, that saw itself as a great umbrella under which all Africans could find shelter.



The Nationalists, led by Dr. Daniel Malan, a former minister of the Dutch Reform Church and a newspaper editor, were a party animated by bitterness—bitterness toward the English, who had treated them as inferiors for decades, and bitterness toward the African, who the Nationalists believed was threatening the prosperity and purity of Afrikaner culture....

Malan's platform was known as apartheid. *Apartheid* was a new term but an old idea. It literally means "apartness" and it represented the codification in one oppressive system of all the laws and regulations that had kept Africans in an inferior position to whites for centuries. What had been more or less *de facto* was to become relentlessly *de jure*. The often haphazard segregation of the past three hundred years was to be consolidated into a monolithic system that was diabolical in its detail, inescapable in its reach, and overwhelming in its power. The premise of apartheid was that whites were superior to Africans, Coloureds, and Indians, and the function of it was to entrench white supremacy forever. As the Nationalists put it, "*Die wit man moet altyd baas wees*" (The white man must always remain boss). Their platform rested on the term *baasskap*, literally boss-ship, a freighted word that stood for white supremacy in all its harshness. The policy was supported by the Dutch Reform Church, which furnished apartheid with its religious underpinnings by suggesting that Afrikaners were God's chosen people and that blacks were a subservient species. In the Afrikaner's worldview, apartheid and the church went hand in hand.



(After the Nationalists were elected in 1948, the Youth League—a subset of the ANC—entered a new phase of activism. Though the ANC had subsequently kept its

activities within the law, it adopted a Program of Action, calling for boycotts, strikes, stay-at-homes, and other forms of mass action.)

I was sympathetic to the ultra-revolutionary stream of African nationalism. I was angry at the white man, not at racism. While I was not prepared to hurl the white man into the sea, I would have been perfectly happy if he climbed aboard his steamships and left the continent of his own volition.

The Day of Protest was the ANC's first attempt to hold a political strike on a national scale and it was a moderate success. In the cities, the majority of workers stayed home and black businesses did not open.... The Day of Protest boosted our morale, made us realize our strength, and sent a warning to the Malan government that we would not remain passive in the face of apartheid. June 26 has since become a landmark day in the freedom struggle and within the liberation movement it is observed as Freedom Day.

I was far more certain in those days of what I was against than what I was for. My long-standing opposition to communism was breaking down. Moses Kotane, the general-secretary of the party and a member of the executive of the ANC, often came to my house late at night and we would debate until morning.... "Nelson," he would say, "What do you have against us? We are all fighting the same enemy. We do not seek to dominate the ANC; we are working within the context of African nationalism." In the end, I had no good response to his arguments.



(The National Party came into power in 1948 with the election of D.F. Malan and immediately instituted racist laws.)

If we had any hopes or illusions about the National Party before they came into office, we were disabused of them quickly. Their threat to put the kaffir in his place was not an idle one. Apart from the Suppression of Communism Act, two laws passed in 1950 formed the cornerstones of apartheid: the Population Registration Act and the Group Areas Act.... the Population Registration Act authorized the government officially to classify all South Africans according to race. If it had not already been so, race became the sine qua non of South African society. The arbitrary and meaningless tests to decide black from Coloured or Coloured from white often resulted in tragic cases where members of the same family were classified differently, all depending on whether one child had a lighter or darker complexion. Where one was allowed to live

and work could rest on such absurd distinctions as the curl of one's hair or the size of one's lips.

The Group Areas Act was the foundation of residential apartheid. Under its regulations, each racial group could own land, occupy premises, and trade only in its own separate area....



(In 1952, the ANC launched the Defiance Campaign, which included non-cooperation with six discriminatory laws that had been put into place by the National Party.

Throughout the Campaign, members of the ANC continued to debate the best form of rebellion.)

The Coloured people rallied against the Separate Representation of Voters Act organizing a tremendous demonstration in Cape Town in March of 1951 and a strike in April that kept shops closed and schoolchildren at home. It was in the context of this spirit of activism by Indians, Coloureds, and Africans that Walter Sisulu first broached the idea to a small group of us of a national civil disobedience campaign. He outlined a plan under which selected volunteers from all groups would deliberately invite imprisonment by defying certain laws.

The idea immediately appealed to me, as it did to the others, but I differed with Walter on the question of who should take part. I had recently become national president of the Youth League, and in my new role I urged that the campaign should be exclusively African. The average African, I said, was still cautious about joint action with Indians and Coloureds. I still feared the influence of Indians.... In addition, many of our grassroots African supporters saw Indians as exploiters of black labor in their role as shopkeepers and merchants

Walter vehemently disagreed, suggesting that the Indians, Coloureds and Africans were inextricably bound together.... My view was voted down.... But I was nevertheless persistent and I raised the matter once more at the national conference in December 1951, where the delegates dismissed my view.... Now that my view had been rejected by the highest levels of the ANC, I fully accepted the agreed-upon position....



The government saw the [Defiance] campaign as a threat to its security and its policy of apartheid. They regarded civil disobedience not as a form of protest but as a crime, and were perturbed by the growing partnership between Africans and Indians. Apartheid was designed to divide racial groups, and we showed that different groups could work together. The prospect of a united

front between Africans and Indians, between moderates and radicals, greatly worried them. The Nationalists insisted that the campaign was instigated and led by Communist agitators. The minister of justice announced that he would soon pass legislation to deal with our defiance, a threat he implemented during the 1953 parliamentary session with the passage of the Public Safety Act, which empowered the government to declare martial law and to detain people without trial, and the Criminal Laws Amendment Act, which authorized corporal punishment for defiers.



(In 1952, the apartheid government further cracked down on the Defiance Campaign by arresting Mandela and other activists.)

On July 30, 1952, at the height of the Defiance Campaign, I was at work at my then law firm of H. M. Basner when the police arrived with a warrant for my arrest. The charge was violation of the Suppression of Communism Act....

My arrest and those of the others culminated in a trial in September in Johannesburg of twenty-one accused, including the presidents and general-secretaries of the ANC, the SAIC [South African Indian Congress], the ANC Youth League [Mandela's branch of the ANC], and the Transvaal Indian Congress [an Indian anti-apartheid organization with socialist leanings]. Among the twenty-one on trial in Johannesburg were Dr. Moroka, Walter Sisulu, and J. B. Marks. A number of Indian leaders were arrested, including Dr. Dadoo, Yusuf Cachalia, and Ahmed Kathrada.



On December 2, we were all found guilty of what Judge Rumpff defined as "statutory communism"—as opposed to what he said "is commonly known as communism." According to the statutes of the Suppression of Communism Act, virtually anyone who opposed the government in any way could be defined as—and therefore convicted of—being a "statutory" Communist, even without ever having been a member of the party. We were sentenced to nine months' imprisonment with hard labor, but the sentence was suspended for two years.



We made many mistakes, but the Defiance Campaign marked a new chapter in the struggle. The six laws we singled out were not overturned; but we never had any illusion that they would be. We selected them as the most immediate

burden pressing on the lives of the people, and the best way to engage the greatest number of people in the struggle.

I nevertheless felt a great sense of accomplishment and satisfaction: I had been engaged in a just cause and had the strength to fight for it and win. The campaign freed me from any lingering sense of doubt or inferiority I might still 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 punch 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.



The Struggle is My Life

(1952, Mandela and other leaders were banned from attending meetings or gatherings for six months.)

Along with many others, I had become convinced that the government intended to declare the ANC illegal.... just as it had done with the Communist Party. It seemed inevitable that the state would attempt to put us out of business as a legal organization as soon as it could. With this in mind, I approached the National Executive Committee with the idea that we must come up with a contingency plan for just such an eventuality. I said it would be an abdication of our responsibility as leaders of the people if we did not do so. They instructed me to draw up a plan that would enable the organization to operate from underground. This strategy came to be known as the Mandela-Plan, or simply, M-Plan.

The idea was to set up organizational machinery that would allow the ANC to make decisions at the highest level, which could then be swiftly transmitted to the organization as a whole without calling a meeting. In other words, it would allow an illegal organization to continue to function and enable leaders who were banned to continue to lead. The M-Plan was designed to allow the organization to recruit new members, respond to local and national problems, and maintain regular contact between the membership and the underground leadership.



In March 1956, after several months of relative freedom, I received my third ban, which restricted me to Johannesburg for five years and prohibited me from attending meetings for that same period.

But this time my attitude toward my bans had changed radically. When I was first banned I abided by the rules and regulations of my persecutors. I had now developed contempt for these restrictions. I was not going to let my involvement in the struggle and the scope of my political activities be determined by the enemy I was fighting against. To allow my activities to be circumscribed by my opponent was a form of defeat, and I resolved not to become my own jailer.



Treason

(In December of 1956, 156 anti-apartheid leaders were arrested for treason; the Treason Trial lasted until 1961. During the trial, the ANC was banned after the institution of a State of Emergency. Participation in the organization became punishable by ten years in jail.)

At 1:30 in the morning, on March 30, I was awakened by sharp, unfriendly knocks at my door, the unmistakable signature of the police. "The time has come," I said to myself as I opened the door to find half-a-dozen armed security policemen. They turned the house upside down, taking virtually every piece of paper they could find, including the transcripts I had recently been making of my mother's recollections of family history and tribal fables. I was never to see them again. I was then arrested without a warrant, and given no opportunity to call my lawyer. They refused to inform my wife as to where I was to be taken. I simply nodded at Winnie; it was no time for words of comfort.

Thirty minutes later we arrived at Newlands police station, which was familiar to me from the many occasions when I had visited clients there.... Inside I found a number of my colleagues who had been similarly rousted out of bed, and over the course of the night, more arrived; by morning we totaled forty in all. We were put in a cramped yard with only the sky as a roof and a dim bulb for light, a space so small and dank that we remained standing all night.

.... Near midnight, we were told we were to be called out, but for what we did not know. Some of the men smiled at the expectation of release. Other knew better. I was the first to be called and I was ushered over to the front gate of the prison where I was briefly released in front of a group of police officers. But before I could move, an officer shouted....

"Nelson Mandela," the officer said, "I arrest you under the powers vested in me by the Emergency Regulations." We were not to be released at all, but rearrested under the terms of what we only then discovered was a State of Emergency. Each of us in turn was released for mere seconds, and then rearrested. We had been arrested illegally before the State of Emergency; now we were being properly arrested under the State of Emergency that came into force at midnight. We drafted a memorandum to the commander asking to know our rights.



(In 1960, the Emergency was lifted and Mandela and other anti-apartheid leaders were released from prison.)

The Emergency was lifted on the last day of August. We would be going home for the first time in five months. When people in Johannesburg heard about the end of the Emergency, they drove up on the chance that we might be released when we were let go, we were met with a jubilant reception from friends and family. Winnie had gotten a ride to Pretoria and our reunion was joyous. I had not held my wife in five months or seen her smile with joy. For the first time in five months, I slept in my own bed that night.

After one has been in prison, it is the small things that one appreciates: being able to take a walk whenever one wants, going into a shop and buying a newspaper, speaking or choosing to remain silent. The simple act of being able to control one's person.



(Though the State of Emergency had been lifted, Mandela remained on trial for another nine months. The verdict of the Treason Trial declared Mandela and other defendants not guilty.)

Even before the doors of the Old Synagogue opened on the morning of March 29, 1961, the day of the long-anticipated verdict in the Treason Trial, a crowd of supporters and press people jostled to get inside. Hundreds were turned away.

When the judges brought the court to order, the visitors' gallery and the press bench were packed...

The court said the prosecution had failed to prove that the ANC was a Communist organization or that the Freedom Charter envisioned a Communist state. After speaking for forty minutes, Justice Rumpff said, "the accused are accordingly found not guilty and are discharged."

After more than four years in court and dozens of prosecutors, thousands of documents and tens of thousands of pages of testimony, the state had failed in its mission. The verdict was an embarrassment to the government, both at home and abroad. Yet the result only embittered the state against us even further. The lesson they took away was not that we had legitimate grievances but that they needed to be far more ruthless.



The Black Pimpernel

(As non-compliance was proving ineffective, Mandela convinced the ANC that it was time to form a military organization that embraced sabotage as a form of activism. After much debate, the ANC agreed, putting Mandela in charge of this new group in 1961.)

I, who had never been a soldier, who had never fought in battle, who had never fired a gun at an enemy, had been given the task of starting an army. It would be a daunting task for a veteran general much less a military novice. The name of this new organization was Umkhonto we Sizwe ('The Spear of the Nation')—or MK for short. The symbol of the spear was chosen because with this simple weapon Africans had resisted the incursions of whites for centuries.

On June 26, 1961.... I released a letter to South African newspapers from underground, which commended the people for their courage during the recent stay-at-home, once more calling for a national constitutional convention. I again proclaimed that a countrywide campaign of noncooperation would be launched if the state failed to hold such a convention. My letter read in part:

I am informed that a warrant for my arrest has been issued, and that the police are looking for me. The National Action Council has given full and serious consideration to this question.... and they have

advised me not to surrender myself. I have accepted this advice, and will not give myself up to a Government I do not recognize. 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 cooperate 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? 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.



.... Since the ANC had been reluctant to embrace violence at all, it made sense to start with the form of violence that inflicted the least harm against individuals: sabotage.

Because it did not involve loss of life it offered the best hope for reconciliation among races afterward. We did not want to start a blood feud between white and black. Animosity between Afrikaner and Englishman was still sharp fifty years after the Anglo-Boer War; what would race relations be like between white and black if we provoked a civil war? Sabotage had the added virtue of requiring the least manpower.

Our strategy was to make selective forays against military installations, power plants, telephone lines, and transportation links; targets that would not only hamper the military effectiveness of the state, but frighten National Party supporters, scare away foreign capital, and weaken the economy. This we hope would bring the government to the bargaining table. Strict instructions were given to members of MK that we would countenance no loss of life....



Rivonia

(After a warrant was issued for Mandela's arrest in 1961, he left South Africa and traveled internationally to gain military training and increased support for the ANC. In July of 1962, he returned to South Africa with Cecil Williams—a British supporter of MK—knowing that his arrest was imminent. The subsequent trial became known as the Rivonia Trial.)

Cecil and I were engrossed in discussions of sabotage plans as.... I noticed a Ford V-8 filled with white men shoot past us on the right. I instinctively turned round to look behind and I saw two more cars filled with white men. Suddenly, in front of us, the Ford was signaling us to stop. I knew in that instant that my life on the run was over; my seventeen months of "freedom" were about to end.



The initial hearing was set for Monday, October 15, 1962. The organization had set up a Free Mandela Committee and launched a lively campaign with the slogan "Free Mandela." Protests were held throughout the country and the slogan began to appear scrawled on the sides of buildings. The government retaliated by banning all gatherings relating to my imprisonment, but this restriction was ignored by the liberation movement.

I enumerated the many times that we had brought our grievances before the government and the equal number of times that we were ignored or shunted aside. I described our stay-away of 1961 as a last resort after the government showed no signs of taking any steps to either talk with us or meet our demands. It was the government that provoked violence by employing violence to meet our nonviolent demands. I explained that because of the government's actions we had taken a more militant stance. I said that I had been privileged throughout my political life to fight alongside colleagues whose abilities and contributions were far greater than my own. Many others had paid the price of their beliefs before me, and many more would do so after me.

When I had finished, the magistrate ordered a ten-minute recess to consider the sentence. I turned and looked out at the crowd before exiting the courtroom. I had no illusions about the sentence I would receive. Exactly ten

minutes later, in a courtroom heavy with tension, the magistrate pronounced sentence: three years for inciting people to strike and two years for leaving the country without a passport; five years in all, with no possibility of parole. It was a stern sentence and there was wailing among the spectators.

On October 9, 1963, we were picked up in a heavily fortified police van. It had a steel divider running along the center, segregating the white prisoners from the Africans. We were driven to the Palace of Justice in Pretoria, where the Supreme Court sits, for the opening of The State versus the National High Command and others, what later became known as The State versus Nelson Mandela and others, and is still better known as the Rivonia Trial. Near the court stands a statue of Paul Kruger, the president of the Republic of the Transvaal who fought against British imperialism in the nineteenth century. Underneath this Afrikaner hero is a quotation from one of his speeches. The inscription reads, "In confidence we lay our cause before the whole world. Whether we win or whether we die, freedom will rise in Africa like the sun from the morning clouds."



Right from the start we had made it clear that we intended to use the trial not as a test of the law but as a platform for our beliefs. We would not deny, for example, that we had been responsible for acts of sabotage. We would not deny that a group of us had turned away from nonviolence. We were not concerned with getting off or lessening our punishment, but with having the trial strengthen the cause for which we were all struggling—at whatever cost to ourselves. We would not defend ourselves in a legal sense so much as in a moral sense. We saw the trial as a continuation of the struggle by other means. We would readily admit what was known by the state to be true but refuse to give away any information we thought might implicate others.

I spent about a fortnight drafting my address, working mainly in my cell in the evenings. When I was finished, I read it first to my comrades and fellow accused. They approved of it, suggesting a few changes, and then I wanted to impress upon the court that we had not acted irresponsibly or without thought to the ramifications of taking up violent action. I laid particular emphasis on our resolve to cause no harm to human life.

I had been reading my speech, and at this point I placed my papers on the defense table, and turned to face the judge. The courtroom became extremely quiet. I did not take my eyes off Justice de Wet [the trial's presiding judge] as I spoke from memory the final words.

"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."

I had read for over four hours. It was a little after four in the afternoon, the time court normally adjourned. But Justice de Wet, as soon as there was order in the courtroom, asked for the next witness. He was determined to lessen the impact of my statement. He did not want it to be the last and only testimony of the day. But nothing he did could weaken its effect. When I finished my address and sat down, it was the last time that Justice de Wet ever looked me in the eye.



On Friday, June 12, 1964, we entered court for the last time. Nearly a year had passed since the fateful arrests at Rivonia. Security was extraordinarily high. Our convoy raced through the streets with sirens wailing. All the roads leading to the courthouse had been blocked off to normal traffic. The police checked the identification of anyone attempting to go near the Palace of Justice. They had even set up checkpoints at the local bus and railway stations. Despite the intimidation, as many as two thousand people assembled in front of the courthouse holding banners and signs such as "WE STAND BY OUR LEADERS." Inside, the spectators' gallery was full, and it was standing room only for the local and foreign press.



(Justice de Wet read the verdict of the Rivonia Trial to a packed courtroom.)

The function of this court as is the function of the court in any other country is to enforce law and order and to enforce the laws of the state within which it functions. The crime of which the accused have been convicted, that is the main crime, the crime of conspiracy, is in essence one of high treason. The state has decided not to charge the crime in this form. Bearing this in mind and giving the matter very serious consideration I have decided not to impose the supreme penalty which in a case like this would usually be the proper penalty for the crime, but consistent with my duty that is the only leniency

which I can show. The sentence in the case of all the accused will be one of life imprisonment.

.... We looked at each other and smiled. There had been a great collective gasp in the courtroom when de Wet announced that he was not sentencing us to death. But there was consternation among some spectators because they had been unable to hear de Wet's sentence. Dennis Goldberg's [one of the accused] wife called to him, "Dennis, what is it?"

"Life!" he yelled back, grinning.

"Life! To live!"



Robben Island: The Dark Years

(In June of 1964, Mandela was sent to Robben Island, South Africa's notorious prison that isolated political prisoners. Located less than seven miles off the coast of beautiful Cape Town—and separated by shark-infested waters—the prison was known for its particularly harsh conditions.)

The challenge for every prisoner, particularly every political prisoner, is how to survive prison intact, how to emerge from prison undiminished, how to conserve and even replenish one's beliefs. The first task in accomplishing that is learning exactly what one must do to survive. To that end, one must know the enemy's purpose before adopting a strategy to undermine it. Prison is designed to break one's spirit and destroy one's resolve. To do this, the authorities attempt to exploit every weakness, demolish every initiative, negate all signs of individuality—all with the idea of stamping out that spark that makes each of us human and each of us who we are.

As a leader, one must sometimes take actions that are unpopular, or whose results will not be known for years to come. There are victories whose glory lies only in the fact that they are known to those who win them. This is particularly true of prison, where one must find consolation in being true to one's ideals, even if no one else knows of it.

I was now on the sidelines, but I also knew that I would not give up the fight. I was in a different and smaller arena, an arena for whom the only audience was ourselves and our oppressors. We regarded the struggle in prison as a microcosm of the struggle as a whole. We would fight inside as we had fought

outside. The racism and repression were the same; I would simply have to fight on different terms.



After we had been sent to Robben Island, there was concern among our supporters that we would not be permitted to study. Within a few months of our arrival, the authorities announced that those who wanted to study could apply for permission.... The state, after the Rivonia Trial, was feeling confident and thought giving us study privileges would be harmless. Later, they came to regret it....

But the privilege of studying came with a host of conditions. Certain subjects, such as politics and military history, were prohibited. For years, we were not permitted to receive funds except from our families, so that poor prisoners rarely had money for books or tuition. This made the opportunity to study a function of how much money one had. Nor were we permitted to lend books to other prisoners, which would have enabled our poorer colleagues to study.

There was always controversy about whether or not we should accept study privileges. Some members of the Unity Movement at first felt that we were accepting a handout from the government, which compromised our integrity. They argued that studying should not be a conditional privilege but an unfettered right. While I agreed, I could not accept that we should therefore disavow studying. As freedom fighters and political prisoners, we had an obligation to improve and strengthen ourselves, and study was one of the few opportunities to do so.



Time may seem to stand still for those of us in prison, but it did not halt for those outside. I was reminded of this when I was visited by my mother in the spring of 1968. I had not seen her since the end of the Rivonia Trial. Change is gradual and incremental, and when one lives in the midst of one's family, one rarely notices differences in them. But when one doesn't see one's family for many years at a time, the transformation can be striking. My mother suddenly seemed very old.

.... Several weeks later.... I was told to go to the Head office to collect a telegram.... informing me that my mother had died of a heart attack. I immediately made a request to the commanding officer to be permitted to attend her funeral in the Transkei, which he turned down....

Over the next few months I thought about her a great deal. Her life had been far from easy. I had been able to support her when I was practicing as an attorney, but once I went to prison, I was unable to help her. I had never been as attentive as I should have been.

A mother's death causes a man to look back on and evaluate his own life. Her difficulties, her poverty, made me question once again whether I had taken the right path. That was always the conundrum: Had I made the right choice in putting the people's welfare even before that of my own family? For a long time, my mother had not understood my commitment to the struggle. My family had not asked for or even wanted to be involved in the struggle, but my involvement penalized them.

But I came back to the same answer. In South Africa, it is hard for a man to ignore the needs of the people, even at the expense of his own family. I had made my choice, and in the end, she had supported it. But that did not lessen the sad news I felt at not being able to make her life more comfortable, or the pain of not being able to lay her to rest.



Robben Island: Beginning to Hope

(Even while in prison, Mandela continued to fight for the rights of prisoners, advocating for reading materials and news. Eventually, prisoners were given the right to purchase newspapers, and were thereby able to hear news of ANC progress. At Robben Island, prisoners were placed into various groups based on the lengths of their sentences; those designated as "A Group" prisoners would receive certain rights that others did not. Mandela was immediately designated as a "D Group" prisoner, receiving fewer rights than other groups.)

In 1978, after we had spent almost fifteen years agitating for the right to receive news, the authorities offered us a compromise. Instead of permitting us to receive newspapers or listen to radio, they started their own radio news service, which consisted of a daily canned summary of the news read over the prison's intercom system.

But even without our expurgated radio broadcast, we had learned what the authorities did not want us to know. We learned of the successful liberation

struggles in Mozambique and Angola in 1975 and their emergence as independent states with revolutionary movements. The tide was turning our way.



In 1980, we were granted the right to buy newspapers. This was a victory, but as always, each new privilege contained within it a catch. The new regulation stated that A Group prisoners were granted the right to buy one English-language newspaper and one Afrikaans newspaper a day. But the annoying caveat was that any A Group prisoner found sharing his newspaper with a non-A Group prisoner would lose his newspaper privileges. We protested against this restriction, but to no avail.

One story I was certainly not able to read was in the *Johannesburg Sunday Post* in March 1980. The headline was "FREE MANDELA!" Inside was a petition that people could sign to ask for my release and that of my fellow political prisoners.... the *Post*'s campaign ignited a public discussion of our release.

The campaign for our release rekindled our hopes. During the harsh days of the early 1970s, when the ANC seemed to sink into the shadows, we had to force ourselves not to give in to despair. In many ways, we had miscalculated; we had thought that by the 1970s we would be living in a democratic, nonracial South Africa. Yet as we entered the new decade my hopes for that South Africa rose once again. Some mornings I walked out into the courtyard and every living thing there, the seagulls and wagtails, the small trees, and even the stray blades of grass, seemed to smile and shine in the sun. It was at such times when I perceived the beauty of even this small, closed-in corner of the world, that I knew that someday my people and I would be free.



Talking with the Enemy

(While Mandela was in prison, the ANC continued their campaign of protest and sabotage, with training camps in Mozambique, Tanzania, and Angola for MK soldiers. Tensions between the South African government and the militant ANC continued to tighten with violent attacks being carried out on both sides.)

.... In 1981, the South African Defense Force launched a raid on ANC offices in Maputo, Mozambique, killing thirteen of our people, including women and

children. In December 1982, MK set off explosions at the unfinished Koeberg nuclear power plant outside Cape Town and placed bombs at many other military and apartheid targets around the country. That same month, the South African military again attacked an ANC outpost in Maseru, Lesotho, killing forty-two people, including a dozen women and children.

MK's first car bomb attack took place in May of 1983, and was aimed at air force and military intelligence office.... Nineteen people were killed and more than two hundred injured.

The killing of civilians was a tragic accident, and I felt a profound horror at the death toll. But as disturbed as I was by these casualties, I knew that such accidents were the inevitable consequence of the decision to embark on a military struggle. Human fallibility is always a part of war, and the price for it is always high. It was precisely because we knew that such incidents would occur that our decision to take up arms had been so grave and reluctant. But as Oliver [Tambo] said at the time of the bombing, the armed struggle was imposed upon us by the violence of the apartheid regime.



Faced with trouble at home and pressure from abroad, [then President] P. W. Botha offered a tepid, halfway measure. On January 31, 1985, in a debate in Parliament, the state president publicly offered me my freedom if I "unconditionally rejected violence as a political instrument." This offer was extended to all political prisoners. Then, as if he were staking me to a public challenge, he added, "It is therefore not the South Africa government which now stands in the way of Mr. Mandela's freedom. It is he himself."

I had been warned by the authorities that the government was going to make a proposal involving my freedom, but I had not been prepared for the fact that it would be made in Parliament by the state president. By my reckoning, it was the sixth conditional offer the government had made for my release in the past ten years. After I listened to the speech on radio, I made a request to the commander of the prison for an urgent visit by my wife and my lawyer, Ismail Ayob, so that I could dictate my response to the state president's offer.

Botha wanted the onus of violence to rest on my shoulders and I wanted to reaffirm to the world that we were only responding to the violence done to us. I intended to make it clear that if I emerged from prison into the same circumstances in which I was arrested, I would be forced to resume the same activities for which I was arrested.



On Sunday, February 10, 1985, my daughter Zindzi read my response to a cheering crowd of people who had not been able to hear my words legally anywhere in South Africa for more than twenty years.

Zindzi was a dynamic speaker like her mother [Winnie Madikizela] and said that her father should be at the stadium to speak the words himself. I was proud to know that it was she who spoke my words.

I am a member of the African National Congress. I have always been a member of the African National Congress and I will remain a member of the African National Congress until the day I die. Oliver Tambo is more than a brother to me. He is my greatest friend and comrade for nearly fifty years. If there is any one amongst you who cherishes my freedom, Oliver Tambo cherishes it more, and I know that he would give his life to see me free....

I am surprised at the conditions that the government wants to impose on me. I am not a violent man.... It was only then, when all other forms of resistance were no longer open to us, that we turned to armed struggle. Let Botha show that he is different to Malan, Strijdom and Verwoerd. Let him renounce violence. Let him say that he will dismantle apartheid. Let him unban the people's organization, the African National Congress. Let him free all who have been imprisoned, banished or exiled for their opposition to apartheid. Let him guarantee free political activity so that people may decide who will govern them.

I cherish my own freedom dearly, but I care even more for your freedom. Too many have died since I went to prison. Too many have suffered for the love of freedom. I owe it to their widows, to their orphans, to their mothers, and to their fathers who have grieved and wept for them. Not only I have suffered during these long, lonely, wasted years. I am not less life-loving than you are. But I cannot sell my birthright, nor am I prepared to sell the birthright of the people to be free....

What freedom am I being offered while the organization of the people remains banned? What freedom am I being offered when I may be arrested on a pass offense?.... What freedom am I being offered when my very South African citizenship is not respected?

Only free men can negotiate. Prisoners cannot enter into contracts.... I cannot and will not give any undertaking at a time when I and you, the people, are not free. Your freedom and mine cannot be separated. I will return.



(In 1989, Frederik Willem de Klerk became president of South Africa and immediately began negotiations with Mandela and other activists as he attempted to repeal apartheid laws. After declaring the ANC a legal organization, de Klerk announced that he would release Mandela from prison immediately.)

On February 2, 1990, F. W. de Klerk stood before Parliament to make the traditional opening speech and did something no other South African head of state had ever done: he truly began to dismantle the apartheid system and lay the groundwork for a democratic South Africa. In dramatic fashion, Mr. de Klerk announced the lifting of the bans on the ANC.... and thirty-one other illegal organizations; the freeing of political prisoners incarcerated for nonviolent activities; the suspension of capital punishment; and the lifting of various restrictions imposed by the State of Emergency. "The time for negotiation has arrived," he said.

It was a breathtaking moment, for in one sweeping action he had virtually normalized the situation in South Africa. Our world had changed overnight. After forty years of persecution and banishment, the ANC was now a legal organization. I and all my comrades could no longer be arrested for being a member of the ANC, for carrying its green, yellow, and black banner, for speaking its name. For the first time in almost thirty years, my picture and my words, and those of all my banned comrades, could freely appear in South African newspapers. The international community applauded de Klerk's bold actions. Amidst all the good news, however, the ANC objected to the fact that Mr. de Klerk had not completely lifted the State of Emergency or ordered the troops out of the townships.

On February 9, seven days after Mr. de Klerk's speech opening Parliament, I was informed that I was again going to Tuynhuys. I arrived at six o'clock in the evening. I met a smiling Mr. de Klerk in his office and as we shook hands, he informed me that he was going to release me from prison the following day. Although the press in South Africa and around the world had been speculating

for weeks that my release was imminent, Mr. de Klerk's announcement nevertheless came as a surprise to me. I had not been told that the reason Mr. de Klerk wanted to see me was to tell me that he was making me a free man.



Freedom

(Shortly after President de Klerk's announcement, Mandela was freed on February 11th, 1990—after 27 years of imprisonment.)

I awoke on the day of my release after only a few hours' sleep at 4:30am.... I did not dwell on the prospect of my release, but on all the many things I had to do before then. As so often happens in life, the momentousness of an occasion is lost in the welter of a thousand details.

By 3:30[pm], I began to get restless, as we were already behind schedule. I told the members of the reception committee that my people had been waiting for me for twenty-seven years and I did not want to keep them waiting any longer. Shortly before four, we left in a small motorcade from the cottage. About a quarter of a mile in front of the gate, the car slowed to a stop and Winnie and I got out and began to walk toward the prison gate.

Within twenty feet or so of the gate, the cameras started clicking, a noise that sounded like some great herd of metallic beasts. Reporters started shouting questions; television crews began crowding in; ANC supporters were yelling and cheering. It was a happy, if slightly disorienting chaos. When a television crew thrust a long, dark, furry object at me, I recoiled slightly, wondering if it were some newfangled weapon developed while I was in prison. Winnie informed me that it was a microphone.

When I was among the crowd I raised my right fist and there was a roar. I had not been able to do that for twenty-seven years and it gave me a surge of strength and joy. We stayed among the crowd for only a few minutes before jumping back into the car for the drive to Cape Town.... My ten thousand days of imprisonment were over.



Before I went to prison I never held such a press conference as I did that day [of my release]. In the old days there were no television cameras, and most ANC

press conferences were conducted clandestinely. That afternoon, there were so many journalists, from so many different countries, I did not know whom to speak with. I was pleased to see a high percentage of black journalists among the throng. At the press conference I was once again keen to reassert a number of themes: first, that I was a loyal and disciplined member of the ANC. I was mindful of the fact that the most senior ANC people would be watching my release from abroad, and attempting to gauge my fidelity from a distance. I was aware that they had heard rumors that I had strayed from the organization, that I was compromised, so at every turn I sought to reassure them. When asked what role I would play in the organization, I told the press that I would pay whatever role the ANC ordered.

.... Asked about sanctions, I said the ANC could not yet call for the relaxation of sanctions, because the situation that caused sanctions in the first place—the absence of political rights for blacks—was still the status quo. I might be out of jail, I said, but I was not yet free.

I was asked as well about the fears of whites. I knew that people expected me to harbor anger towards whites. But I had none. In prison, my anger toward whites decreased, but my hatred for the system grew. I wanted South Africa to see that I loved even my enemies while I hated the system that turned us against one another.



(After his release, Mandela was elected president of the ANC and went on to lead negotiations between South Africa's political parties.)

In July 1991, the ANC held its first annual conference inside South Africa in thirty years. The conference was attended by 2,244 voting delegates who were democratically elected at ANC branches at home and abroad. At the conference I was elected president of the ANC without opposition. Cyril Ramaphosa was elected secretary-general, evidence that the torch was being passed from an older generation of leadership to a younger one. Cyril, whom I met only upon my release from prison, was a worthy successor to a long line of notable ANC leaders. He was probably the most accomplished negotiator in the ranks of the ANC, a skill he honed as secretary-general of the National Union of Mine Workers.



On December 20, 1991, after more than a year and a half of talks about talks, the real talks began: CODESA—the Convention for a Democratic South Africa—represented the first formal negotiations forum between the government, the ANC, and other South African parties.

On the convention's first day, the lion's share of the participating parties, including the National Party and the ANC, endorsed a Declaration of Intent, which committed all parties to support an undivided South Africa whose supreme law would be a constitution safeguarded by an independent judiciary. The country's legal system would guarantee equality before the law, and a bill of rights would be drawn up to protect civil liberties. In short, there would be a multiparty democracy based on universal adult suffrage on a common voters' roll. As far as we were concerned, this was the minimum acceptable constitutional threshold for a new South Africa....



(After 38 years of marriage, Mandela announced his separation from Winnie Mandela, noting the difficulty of balancing his family life with his activism.)

On April 13, 1992, at a press conference in Johannesburg, flanked by my two oldest friends and comrades, Walter and Oliver, I announced my separation from my wife. The situation had grown so difficult that I felt that it was in the best interests of all concerned—the ANC, the family, and Winnie—that we part....

Perhaps I was blinded to certain things because of the pain I felt for not being able to fulfill my role as a husband to my wife and a father to my children. But just as I am convinced that my wife's life while I was in prison was more difficult than mine, my own return was also more difficult for her than it was for me. She married a man who soon left her; that man became a myth; and then that myth returned home and proved to be just a man after all.

As I later said at my daughter Zindzi's wedding, it seems to be the destiny of freedom fighters to have unstable personal lives. When your life is the struggle, as mine was, there is little room left for family. That has always been my greatest regret, and the most painful aspect of the choice I made. "We watched our children growing without our guidance," I said at the wedding, "and when we did come out [of prison], my children said, 'We thought we had a father and one day he'd come back. But to our dismay, our father came back and he left us alone because he has now become the father of the nation.'" To be the father of

a nation is a great honor, but to be the father of a family is a greater joy. But I was a joy I had far too little of.



(In 1993, Nelson Mandela and President F.W. de Klerk were together awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their negotiations and efforts to end apartheid and unify South Africa.)

I have never cared very much for personal prizes. A man does not become freedom fighter in the hope of winning awards, but when I was notified that I had won the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize jointly with Mr. de Klerk, I was deeply moved. The Nobel Peace Prize had a special meaning to me because of its involvement with South African history.

I was the third South African since the end of the Second World War to be so honored by the Nobel committee. Chief Albert Luthuli was awarded the prize in 1960. The second was Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who selflessly fought the evils of racism during the most terrible days of apartheid.

The award was a tribute to all South Africans and especially to those who had fought in the struggle; I would accept the award on their behalf. But the Nobel award was one I never thought about. Even during the bleakest year on Robben Island, Amnesty International would not campaign for us on the grounds that we had pursued an armed struggle, and their organization would not represent anyone who had embraced violence. It was for that reason that assumed the Nobel committee would never consider the man who had started Umkhonto we Sizwe [MK] for the peace prize.

.... I was often asked how could I accept the award jointly with Mr. de Klerk after I had criticized him so severely. Although I would not take back my criticisms, I could say that he had made a genuine and indispensable contribution to the peace process. I never sought to undermine Mr. de Klerk, for the practical reason that the weaker he was, the weaker the negotiations process. To make peace with an enemy one must work with that enemy, and that enemy becomes one's partner.



(In 1994, Mandela ran against de Klerk for the presidency of South Africa on the ANC party platform.)

When the time came for the actual debate, however [between Mandela as the ANC candidate and de Klerk as the National Party candidate], I attacked the National Party quite firmly. I accused the National Party of fanning race hatred

between Coloureds and Africans in the Cape by distributing an inflammatory comic book that said the ANC's slogan was "Kill a Coloured, kill a farmer." "There is no organization in this country as divisive as the new National Party," I declared. When Mr. de Klerk criticized the ANC's plan to spend billions of dollars on housing and social programs, I scolded him, saying he was alarmed that we would have to devote so many of our resources to blacks.

But as the debate was nearing an end, I felt I had been too harsh with the man who would be my partner in a government of national unity. In summation, I said, "The exchanges between Mr. de Klerk and me should not obscure one important fact. I think we are a shining example to the entire world of people drawn from different racial groups who have a common loyalty, a common love, to their common country.... In spite of criticism of Mr. de Klerk," I said, and then looked over at him, "sir, you are one of those I rely upon. We are going to face the problem of this country together." At which point I reached over to take his hand and said, "I am proud to hold your hand for us to go forward." Mr. de Klerk seemed surprised, but pleased.



(On April 27th of 1994, South Africans voted in the country's first nonracial democratic election; it was Mandela's first time voting. He was elected as the first president of a democratic South Africa.)

The images of South Africans going to the polls that day are burned in my memory. Great lines of patient people snaking through the dirt roads and streets of towns and cities; old women who had waited half a century to cast their first vote saying that they felt like human beings for the first time in their lives; white men and women saying they were proud to live in a free country at last. The mood of the nation during those days of voting was buoyant. The violence and bombings ceased, and it was as if we were a nation reborn. Even the logistical difficulties of the voting, misplaced ballots, pirate voting stations, and rumors of fraud in certain places could not dim the overwhelming victory for democracy and justice.

Before I entered the polling station, an irreverent member of the press called out, "Mr. Mandela, who are you voting for?" I laughed. "You know," I said, "I have been agonizing over that choice all morning." I marked an X in the box next to the letters ANC and then slipped my folded ballot paper into a simple wooden box; I had cast the first vote of my life.



On the evening of May 2, Mr. de Klerk made a gracious concession speech. After more than three centuries of rule, the white minority was conceding defeat and turning over power to the black majority. That evening, the ANC was planning a victory celebration at the ballroom of the Carlton Hotel in downtown Johannesburg. I was suffering from a bad case of the flu and my doctors ordered me to remain at home. But there was nothing that could keep me away from that party. I went onstage at about nine o'clock and faced a crowd of happy, smiling, cheering faces.

From the moment the results were in and it was apparent that the ANC was to form the government, I saw my mission as one of preaching reconciliation of binding the wounds of the country, of engendering trust and confidence. I knew that many people, particularly the minorities, whites, Coloureds, and Indians, would be feeling anxious about the future, and I wanted them to feel secure. I reminded people again and again that the liberation struggle was not a battle against any one group or color, but a fight against a system of repression. At every opportunity, I said all South Africans must now unite and join hands and say we are one country, one nation, one people, marching together into the future.



That day had come about through the unimaginable sacrifices of thousands of my people, people whose suffering and courage can never be counted or repaid. I felt that day, as I have on so many other days, that I was simply the sum of all those African patriots who had gone before me....

The policy of apartheid created a deep and lasting wound in my country and my people. All of us will spend many years, if not generations, recovering from that profound hurt. But the decades of oppression and brutality had another, unintended effect, and that was that it produced the Oliver Tambo, the Walter Sisulu, the Chief Luthuli, the Yusuf Dadoo, the Bram Fischer, the Robert Sobukwe of our time—men of such extraordinary courage, wisdom, and generosity that their like may never be known again. Perhaps it requires such depth of oppression to create such heights of character. My country is rich in the minerals and gems that lie beneath its soil, but I have always known that its greatest wealth is its people, finer and truer than the purest diamonds.

It is from these comrades in the struggle that I learned the meaning of courage. Time and again, I have seen men and women risk and give their lives for an idea. I have seen men stand up to attacks and torture without breaking, showing a strength and resiliency that defies the imagination. 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.

I never lost hope that this great transformation would occur. Not only because of the great heroes I have already cited, but because of the courage of the ordinary men and women of my country. I always knew that deep down in every human heart, there is mercy and generosity. No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite. Even in the grimmest times in prison, when my comrades and I were pushed to our limits, I would see a glimmer of humanity in one of the guards, perhaps just for a second, but it was enough to reassure me and keep me going. Man's goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished.

We took up the struggle with our eyes wide open, under no illusion that the path would be an easy one. As a young man, when I joined the African National Congress, I saw the price my comrades paid for their beliefs, and it was high. For myself, I have never regretted my commitment to the struggle, and I was always prepared to face the hardships that affected me personally. But my family paid a terrible price, perhaps too dear a price for my commitment.

In life, every man has twin obligations—obligations to his family, to his parents, to his wife and children; and he has an obligation to his people, his community, his country. In a civil and humane society, each man is able to fulfill those obligations according to his own inclinations and abilities. But in a country like South Africa, it was almost impossible for a man of my birth and color to fulfill both of those obligations. In South Africa, a man of color who attempted to live as a human being was punished and isolated. In South Africa, a man who tried to fulfill his duty to his people was inevitably ripped from his family and his home and was forced to live a life apart, a twilight existence of secrecy and rebellion. I did not in the beginning choose to place my people above my family, but in attempting to serve my people, I found that I was prevented from fulfilling my obligations as a son, a brother, a father, and a husband.

In that way, my commitment to my people, to the millions of South Africans I would never know or meet, was at the expense of the people I knew best and loved most. It was as simple and yet as incomprehensible as the moment a small child asks her father, "Why can you not be with us?" And the father must utter the terrible words: "There are other children like you, a great many of them...." and then one's voice trails off.

I was not born with a hunger to be free. I was born free—free in every way that I could know. Free to run in the fields near my mother's hut, free to swim in the clear stream that ran through my village, free to roast mealies under the stars and ride the broad backs of slow-moving bulls. As long as I obeyed my father and abided by the customs of my tribe, I was not troubled by the laws of man or God.

It was only when I began to learn that my boyhood freedom was an illusion, when I discovered as a young man that my freedom had already been taken from me, that I began to hunger for it. At first, as a student, I wanted freedom only for myself, the transitory freedoms of being able to stay out at night, read what I pleased, and go where I chose. Later, as a young man in Johannesburg, I yearned for the basic and honorable freedoms of achieving the potential, of earning my keep, of marrying and having a family—the freedoms not to be obstructed in a lawful life.

But then I slowly saw that not only was I not free, but my brothers and sisters were not free. I saw that it was not just my freedom that was curtailed, but the freedom of everyone who looked like I did. That is when I joined the African National Congress, and that is when the hunger for my own freedom became the greater hunger for the freedom of my people. It was this desire for the freedom of my people to live their lives with dignity and self-respect that animated my life, that transformed a frightened young man into a bold one, that drove a law-abiding attorney to become a criminal, that turned a family-loving husband into a man without a home, that forced a life-loving man to live like a monk. I am no more virtuous or self-sacrificing than the next man, but I found that I could not even enjoy the poor and limited freedoms I was allowed when I knew my people were not free. Freedom is indivisible; the chains on any one of my people were the chains on all of them, the chains on all of my people were the chains on me.

It was during those long and lonely years that my hunger for the freedom of my own people became a hunger for the freedom of all people, white and black. I knew as well as I knew anything that the oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed. A man who takes away another man's freedom

is a prisoner of hatred, he is locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. I am not truly free if I am taking away someone else's freedom, just as surely as I am not free when my freedom is taken from me. The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity.

When I walked out of prison, that was my mission, to liberate the oppressed and the oppressor both. Some say that has now been achieved. But I know that that is not the case.

The truth is that we are not yet free; we have merely achieved the freedom to be free, the right not to be oppressed. We have not taken the final step of our journey, but the first step on a longer and even more difficult road. 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. The true test of our devotion to freedom is just beginning.

I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter; I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can rest only for a moment, for with freedom come responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not yet ended.



THE TRINITY FORUM

Group Discussion Guide

Discussion Questions

- 1 Mandela asserts that he and other freedom fighters had to “sacrifice themselves for the cause of the oppressed”—a sacrifice that inevitably cost their families as well. What sacrifices did Mandela make in his pursuit of freedom for South Africa? Are all leaders faced with similar sacrifices?
- 2 Christianity played a complicated role in the rise and fall of the apartheid. The Nationalist Party—apartheid’s platform—was supported by the Dutch Reformed Church, but many freedom fighters cited faith as a motivator towards ending apartheid. How do leaders use faith to defend their platforms? How does one guard against the manipulation of faith for political ends?
- 3 Though the ANC resisted the use of violence for a while, Mandela argued that it was ultimately “the only weapon that would destroy apartheid.” What do you think of his assertion? Is the use of violence ever acceptable? How can leaders reconcile ends and means?
- 4 Mandela states that in the beginning of his life as a freedom fighter, he was more aware of what he was against than what he was for. How did Mandela’s thinking evolve as he became decidedly “for” a cause? Why is it more difficult for a leader to stand for a cause, rather than be opposed to one? How did this evolution affect Mandela’s leadership?

5 Mandela acknowledges his own failures and missteps in his autobiography. Do you agree with his assessment of himself? How does self-awareness—or its lack—affect leadership?

6 The relationship Mandela had with authority posed a dichotomy: he repeatedly opposed the authority of the South African government but submitted frequently to the requests or consensus of the African National Congress—a political party he went on to lead. Why did he reject certain authorities while submitting to others? What does this say about his perception of authority? How do you respond to an authority with whom you disagree?

7 Imprisoned for 27 years, Mandela maintained an exercise regimen and read avidly. How did Mandela use his time in prison to hone his leadership skills? How did this persistence benefit Mandela later on?

8 Though he fought against apartheid for most of his life, Mandela makes very few personal critiques of the individuals who perpetrated this oppressive system. He also sought reconciliation for all South Africans, rather than punishment for apartheid perpetrators. How was Mandela able to maintain a respect for those with whom he disagreed? What effect did this have on South Africa as it transitioned from leader to leader?

9 In just a few short years, Mandela went from being a prisoner of the state to the President of South Africa and a Nobel Prize recipient. What are the challenges and dangers of sudden position and fame? How did Mandela respond to those challenges? How can one guard against the potential dangers of power?

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Further Resources

- John Carlin and Anthony Peckham, *Invictus*, DVD. WarnerBros, 2009
- John Carlin, *Playing the Enemy: Nelson Mandela and the Game That Made a Nation* (Penguin, 2008)
- Olea Nel, *South Africa's Forgotten Revival: The Story of the Cape's Great Awakening in 1860* (Xulon Press, 2008)
- Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (Little, Brown and Company, 2008)
- Nelson Mandela, "Rivonia Trial Speech" (<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=3430>, 1964)
- Martin Meredith, *Mandela: A Biography* (PublicAffairs, 2011)
- Anthony Sampson, *Mandela: The Authorized Biography* (HarperCollins, 2011)
- Patti Waldmeir, *Anatomy of a Miracle: The End of Apartheid and the Birth of the New South Africa* (Rutgers University Press, 1998)

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