"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world"

Nelson Mandela
University of the Witwatersrand
2003

ICAE mourns the passing of Nelson Mandela and joins thousands of people around the world in this feeling of tremendous loss of a man who fought endlessly for human rights. He has been an inspiration and role model for so many and his memory will surely continue inspiring thousands more.

“No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background or his religion. People 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”. NM.
We love you Tata!

- Dingani Ngobeni
  IALLA Graduate

I am greatly honoured to be afforded the opportunity to reflect and contribute to this special edition on the life of our former President, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela - the first democratically elected President of the Republic of South Africa. To us in the ANC and many across the country and continent, Mandela remains our President.

We grew up without knowing where Mandela was taken and kept. We were fortunate to be taught about the quest to fight for freedom, democracy, justice and peace. We embraced the teaching of the leaders of the mass democratic movement and we undertook to fight for the release of Mandela and many of our leaders. We sang songs invoking the spirit of our fallen heroes and heroines to fast track release of the political leaders, including Mandela.

When Madiba was released from prison, he touched my life greatly and that of many millions in the country, continent and the world. My first encounter with Mandela was at the ANC Education Policy Conference at the University of Witwatersrand before the 1994 general elections. We were convened by the leadership of our glorious movement the ANC to prepare policy in preparation for Government. After cementing all policy positions, the ANC pronounced it was ready to govern. I was particularly inspired by Madiba's passion for education. It is through his commitment, passion and leadership that the ANC continues to fight for the improvement of the quality of our education. The focus has been on addressing educational inequalities that existed in the country which were determined along racial lines. Such backlogs included the neglect of Adult education, early childhood development, infrastructure backlogs, etc.

I remember President Mandela's unique leadership style of persuading big business to build schools across the country, especially in rural communities. This innovative way enables business to contribute to the eradication of mud structures. The challenge of mud structures is still a reality today since the apartheid government did not invest in the education of an African child, black in particular.

As a rural boy, I was equally touched by the leadership of Madiba. This inspired me and many of the rural folk to believe in our capabilities. We remain indebted to Madiba and the generation of his comrades and friends. They taught us to be disciplined, humble, dedicated in our conduct and approach to life. In honour of this great son of the soil, we cannot fail to trample on the principles that he upheld until he drew his last breath.

When the news broke of Madiba’s passing before midnight, I was privileged to be in the King Sabata Dalidyeo Municipality, where his village, Qunu, is located. I immediately wrote the following to most of my comrades via social media "Revolutionary greetings to all the cadres who will wake up to the news of the untimely death of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. Our Madiba, President, General, Commander of our armed forces, Commissar, founder of our glorious armed force - Umkhonto weSizwe, father, grandfather, friend, icon, hero just to name a few. Let us release him to join Oliver Tambo - the glue that kept our glorious movement intact, Chief Luthuli, all the other leaders of the liberation movement and the Gods of the Madiba clan. Let us sing revolutionary songs to invoke the spirits of our departed heroes and heroines. The Heavens are open for God to warmly receive our greatest leader. Let his passing inspire us to do more for the poor and Defenseless. We should remain resolute to defend our glorious movement, the ANC".

Today as we are attending his memorial service attended by ordinary people, dignitaries and Heads of States, it is raining non-stop. This in Africa is a sign that God and the ancestors are happy. It is a blessing to Mandela, the son of the soil. May his soul rest in peace. We love you Tata!
Personal Reflections on Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela

- Steven le Roux
  IALLA Graduate

I remember the excitement I felt in February 1990 hearing the announcement that the ANC and Nelson Mandela were declared unbanned by the then South African government. I was a student at the time and had for a few years been involved in educational programmes aimed at uplifting disadvantaged people and counteracting the damages that were being caused by an oppressive educational system. It was thus odd hearing the news whilst doing a part time job to earn extra money, dressed in a large “Caramel Bear” outfit. With the excitement there was also a sense of trepidation of what this meant for the future of our country.

![Image]

In my teenage years, I perceived Nelson Mandela almost as a “tragic hero” figure in the sense of literary tragic plays. As South African school children we had limited information and what we did know about Mandela was most likely misinformation from the state, so he remained this name hidden away from our eyes. The joy of the South African miracle that occurred though is that unlike fictional tragic heroes, Nelson Mandela was able to live to achieve his destiny and make the immense contribution he has made to South Africa and the world. I vividly remembered the day of his release from prison, Sunday 11th February 1990. Whilst some school acquaintances had arranged to get together to watch videos as a Valentine’s Day get together, I would not miss watching Madiba’s release for the world as I already felt my life moving in a different direction as I became a young adult. It was a moving experience, and the first time many young white South African’s showed open support for the ANC and Mandela by wearing ANC T-shirts and other visible signs of support in public.

Life in South Africa over the next few years was exciting but tense with people feeling like our road to democracy was one with steep cliffs on either side. During this time Nelson Mandela’s calm but firm approach to the negotiations built a quiet confidence in many South Africans. He showed the ability to listen and reach agreement with opposition parties, but to do so without compromising his essential principals. The elation and camaraderie felt when voting on 27 April 1994, followed by the profound sense of achievement of justice whilst watching President Mandela’s famous inauguration speech are held in the hearts of myself and millions of people across the world forever. 1994 was a watershed year in my life. I turned 25 years old three days before President Mandela’s inauguration. The events that year brought confirmation that the life and career path I had chosen, namely to work in the field of education and development for the upliftment of the disadvantaged people of South Africa, was the right one, and thus I accepted a permanent job offer from Project Literacy. Nelson Mandela’s ability to lead us to this point thus impacted on the road my life would follow. On a personal level my views and values had developed during these transitional years, and brought me together in the same year with my like-minded wife.

![Image]

I was privileged to meet President Mandela in person on official Project Literacy business. We were a partner in establishing the Ekuseni Youth Centre for Excellence, a Youth Development Centre under the Department of Correctional Services that was to pioneer a more progressive and humane approach to the development and rehabilitation of youth offenders. Although our country had taken enormous strides since 1990, it had been only six years since the commencement of the dismantling of a harsh and unjust approach to imprisonment and correctional centres, the abolishment of the death penalty and indeed the release of Nelson Mandela himself from prison. Thus as an initiative of President Nelson Mandela, and especially having him give the opening address to the youth at this centre, was special. The success of the new approach relied on people from very liberal progressive approaches to work together with conservative prisoner officials with a traditional approach to prisoner management and treatment. It would need the wisdom of a person like Madiba to help the different parties to buy into the approach and work towards something new. His ability to get into the shoes of others also helped him assist people to understand other perspectives. In his speech he said, “Ekuseni presents a model for us all. Nation building is an evolutionary process in which a nation develops pride in its identity and faith in its future as a nation. Through sharing the responsibility of this project these partners are actively participating in the building of that nation. In cutting new paths to our future we create our future anew and we ourselves are recreated, as is our country” – President Nelson Mandela – 19 November 1996.
I took these words to heart and continue to have pride and faith in our nation. I remain a committed partner in actively participating in the continued building of our nation. With the passing of Tata Madiba we are reminded that we need to continuously create and recreate ourselves and our country to ensure that we cut the path towards achieving the ideals of this great activist, influential pacifist, this great father of our nation.

Reflection on Tata Nelson Mandela

- Portia Mbude-Mutshekwane
  IALLA Graduate

I will always be profoundly grateful for the role Tata Nelson Mandela has played to bring transformation to the lives of many South Africans as our first black President, a struggle hero, freedom fighter, and global icon.

As the world celebrates his life/legacy much has been shared about the details of Mandela’s political journey; the challenges he overcame and the battles he fought. From my personal reflections, I recall the value of what Mandela stood for when I was a youth whose education was affected by political turbulence of the 1980s and also when I shared student accommodation with one of his granddaughters Ms Nandi Mandela at Liesbeeck Gardens. My late husband Mr Solly Mutshekwane on the other hand was in the league of comrade networks with Mandela’s daughter Zindzi Mandela as senior students at Glenres UCT.

In February 1990, the liberation movements were un-banned and leaders were freed from prisons. As SANSCO members (South African National Students Congress) at UCT when we heard the news of Mr Mandela’s release we set off marching, singing the struggle songs towards the Parade in Cape Town to welcome, greet and hear Tata Madiba addressing the crowd for the first time on Sunday 11th February 1990.

As youth and students of the 1970-1980s, a toyi toyi march signaled an expression of protest or defiance, chanting freedom songs sang with knees up at 90degrees. Mandela to us symbolized an epitome of struggle. I lost one of my shoes in the march, that did not bother me I proceeded barefoot marching towards Cape Town to get a glimpse of Tata Mandela. We arrived at 10.00am at Grand Parade and, waited the whole day. Not knowing how he looks like added the excitement. His images were banned so we had no clue what he looked like. By midafternoon the crowd became bigger and bigger at the Parade. South Africa stood at awe on that day, everyone wanted to get a close encounter, of this famous political figure. Others across provinces in South Africa were glued in their TV sets awaiting his arrival.

When he finally arrived escorted by political leaders at the balcony of Cape Town City hall, to address the crowd later that evening, the history of South Africa turned a new leaf. Having waited in anticipation, we expected a statement of confrontation. To our surprise he made a symbolic gesture, he spoke about peace, reconciliation, non-racial society and the need for the reconstruction of our country. These values embedded the legacy he left behind.

Today as I reflect on sharing a flat with her granddaughter Nandi, I think it was a blessing in disguise for I learnt to understand Tata Mandela vision for education. As a parent and grandparent, Mandela took an intense interest in education. When Nandi visited her Grandfather, she would come back feeling elated about encouragement on her academic work. He emphasised with her that she must focus on her studies; Education is the most important element, this I find compelling in his vision for education. One of his quotes cites Mandela “saying “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”, in a country where pockets of poverty are very high, Mandela meant that Education can lift people out of poverty. As a
nation we have a key role to play in inventing our children future shaped by social commitment, civic engagement and external responsiveness to the needs of communities”.

During State of the nation address as President of South Africa, May 1994

Mandela’s speech alluded to the fact that “The youth of our country are the valued possession of the nation. Without them there can be no future. Their needs are immense and urgent. They are at the centre of our reconstruction and development plan. In this context, we must also address the needs of the aged and disabled, uplift disadvantaged sectors such as the women to improve the lives of our people in the rural communities and the informal settlements ”Mandela, 1994.

As I reflect on my life, his words had impact in the roles I carry in community development, in my role as mother, student and professional to contribute towards the upliftment of others hence my involvement in youth development, and human rights and civic education programs.

Currently I work at Parliament of Republic of SA, with key responsibility to engage the public, civil society and social actors about the role and work of Parliament, so that Mandela’s vision of Peoples Participation in Parliament is achieved. I also volunteer my time to improve adult literacy by being involved in the National Mass Literacy Campaign that seeks to halve illiteracy in South Africa by 2015.

Remembering Tata Nelson Mandela through the lens of my student days means that we must continue to work together as South Africans to build a culture of tolerance, peace, unity, and social justice for a better life for all. The best way we can recognize Nelson Mandela for his work is by taking action and inspiring change.

To conclude Tata Mandela is an incredible human being that personified reconciliation, for he represented hope for us as humanity. He’s the person that made it possible for us to see that we can all come together and live together and be together, despite all our differences.

*May his soul rest in peace, Hamba kahle Tata*

- **Paul Bélanger**

*The indefatigable courage of Nelson Mandela* has freed South Africa from apartheid. What he has done and the way he did it have encouraged millions of women and men around the world to intensify their struggle against all forms of discrimination. With his wisdom and profound insight, Mandela said after the collapse of...
apartheid: “we are not yet free; we have merely obtained the freedom to become free.” Yes, Mandela showed us that to resist is a difficult and essential step, but, as he said, we need to go further and transform our societies. This alternative vision for a collective future is the great heritage he has given us.

**FRANÇAIS**


Paul Bélanger

**Sturla Bjerkaker**

Our world is full of special people, unique personalities, fantastic human beings, great women and men. Inside every one of us there are thoughts, visions, hate and love, respect and tolerance, mourning and memories, capacity and ability... For many of us, most of our inner capacity remains there, inside, and we live our lives more or less anonymously and quiet.

Yes, most people belong to the quiet and noiseless people. But also among those we find so many men and women who through most of their lives contribute to the wellbeing of their families, their neighbourhood, their colleagues and theirs friends. The quite people are also heroes in their own lives.

Some people become more visible than others. This can be caused by coincident or by sudden happenings in their lives. But it can also be a result of conscious behaviour, planned activity, and recognition of injustice in their surroundings.

Many people also belong to the voiceless people. To be noiseless might be a choice for many. To be voiceless is not. To be voiceless is a situation of oppression and poverty, a life where you never meet an opportunity to learn, to be educated and to get a voice.

“It is nothing special about me. I am just an ordinary man”, Nelson Mandela said. And I agree. And disagree. Like you and me, he was a human being living his life, eating his meals, doing his work. But he was different.

In what way was Mandela different?

I think he was a genuine and very sensitive observer who could not accept what he saw. He could not only be the observer, the quiet and the noiseless man. He saw the voiceless. He saw the obvious fact that apartheid is selecting equals to unequals.

And added to this, he had the unique ability to do something about it. He must have recognised his own skills to be calm and conscious and at the same time be able to make decisions and commitments. He must have known that he had these skills, he knew how to use them, and he used them. I think this was the uniqueness of Nelson Mandela.

I will give tribute to all people who live their lives in harmony together more or less in quiet. And I will give my honour to Nelson Mandela, who did the same, but also did more, much more, very much more. The day he decided not to be quiet he changed the world.
• Alan Tuckett

Nelson Mandela's death has of course produced eulogies and appreciations of his life from all round the globe. He represented an inspiring mix of tenacity of purpose, generosity of spirit, and a crystalline commitment to human rights, fairness and social justice. Like that other great African liberator, Julius Nyerere, he was an educator by example – showing what is involved in democratic action. Like so many others I wish I had had the chance to speak to, but more importantly listen to him.

But, like the weather, the cause he symbolised touched my life directly. I had of course marched, worn badges, and sung along to Jerry Dammers' Free Nelson Mandela. But in 1986 I was the Principal of Clapham-Battersea Adult Education Institute in Inner London and at the same time President of the International League for Social Commitment in Adult Education (ILSCAE). Shirley Walters of the University of the Western Cape, and an ILSCAE member, wrote to say she was visiting London with a colleague, Joe Samuels, and wanting to meet. I wrote back to say that ILEA had an intellectual boycott of South Africa, and that we couldn’t meet, but that I would be in the Bath Arms pub at 6p.m. on the relevant day. From that point my South African colleagues involved me more, particularly as South Africa prepared for the end of apartheid.

In 1994 I represented ODA, the UK’s development ministry then, in a visit to identify funding to support the traditionally white university adult education departments in the country in opening access to the majority communities. On that trip I was struck by the wealth of talent in the third sector, and a year later by the challenge left for the voluntary sector when the vast majority of its leadership was hired to play key roles in the new administration. It was clear to everyone that the right of adults to learn was a key component of democratic societies. No one had illusions about the scale of the challenges they faced, or about the risks of disappointed expectations. Yet, the energy, excitement and hard headed realism of the ANC and COSATU colleagues was exceptional and a major learning experience for me.

I worked with Joe again in supporting the first Adult Learners’ Week in the country in 1995, which captured the excitement, the unfamiliarity of working across boundaries, and the recognition that trust and generosity would be needed to make the new South Africa. The awards ceremony was held on Robben Island, just newly open, and with many of the trappings of the prison all too visible. We visited Mandela’s cell – now a major tourist attraction – and the limestone quarry where his eyesight was damaged by the glare of reflected sunlight. Back again in 1997, we stayed on the island, and water - which had to be shipped from the mainland – ran out after the last boat of the day had gone. The Ugandan minister for education expressed frustration at this, but we agreed one night’s privation was as nothing to the decades Mandela and his comrades endured.

Yet Mandela’s death must give us pause, and to ask how well we are doing ourselves in protecting and enhancing human rights. In the UK, where I live, and in too many places shaped by neo-liberal orthodoxies, it seems to me we have a narrower and narrower conception of democracy, and that we could do with Mandela’s vision, tolerance, generosity of spirit, and firmness of purpose now. It is, surely, part of our task in ICAE to help make the vision a reality wherever we live and work.

• Celita Eccher

It was not unexpected to receive this sad news because we knew that Mandela was seriously ill and that he was going to leave us soon.

It is difficult to say in words what Mandela means for the world, for his country and for each one of us who, nearer or farther, have learnt so much from him. I recall the University classes packed with students, willing to change the world with the generosity and enthusiasm of young people in a very special moment, back in 1968. In many Assemblies of the Federation of University Students of Uruguay (FEUU, by its Spanish acronym), we used to have comrades coming to inform about Mandela’s imprisonment, about the struggle of African people against apartheid, and we used to sign letters without knowing if they finally reached their right destination.

We welcomed, with absolute joy, his liberation and election as first South African black President in the new South African democracy. Then I had the opportunity to visit South Africa, during the year he was elected, because I had to attend my first meeting of ICAE’s Executive Committee. I was representing Latin America in that meeting and I can still recall the Popular Education groups and the high hopes of popular educators... So many things had to change!
Throughout this time, I have been lucky enough to visit South Africa more than once, where I have endearing friends, from all walks of life and colors, some of them coming from long struggles, others are younger but, from all of them, I learnt things from the past and present. And I started to admire Mandela more and more, through his life, his actions; a real leader who has left grounding lessons to follow, to live in peace, to enjoy and grow respecting difference.

He has physically left but he has stayed in each one of us, in all the lessons we’ve learnt and felt with him. We are absolutely moved by his passing, yet he leaves us full of challenges to build a world in peace NOW.

Mandela, the Icon and his Legacy

- Deen Soliar
  UMTAPO
  ICAE members

As the world mourns Mandela who has undoubtedly touched people from across the globe, much more will be said about him, his life and legacy, in the coming weeks and months.

Documented material on Nelson Mandela abounds and perhaps it is fitting that only Mahatma Gandhi would have as much that has been written and presented about him in the struggle for peace and justice. Raised to iconic status by the entire world from all walks of society, the legacy left by Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, however, will remain enigmatic.

Mandela the human being and Mandela the liberator and politician may not necessarily be seen as complementary by those looking through more discerning lenses.

From an objective point of view, there is unanimity that Mandela as a human being ‘extraordinaire’ would be difficult to rival. His compassion, caring, humility, and ability to forgive made him the living embodiment of the African philosophy of Ubuntu. Not many human beings would have had the capacity to forgive and reconcile with their captors and oppressors after 27 years of incarceration and after having sacrificed so much. Even though such generosity of spirit may have been unacceptable to many, and the consequences of which continue to plaque the country, the ability to extend such forgiveness to one’s enemy, is beyond the realm of normal human behavior.

Mandela’s deep and genuine concern for children in a country and world where children have borne the brunt of some of the worst atrocities in society has been the other characteristic that has raised him to the level of greatness. In this regard, the Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund and Mandela Children’s Hospital are the legacies that will entrench his contribution to a better future world.

Mandela the freedom fighter, the liberator and Mandela the politician, however, from a critical perspective, is fraught with contradictions. No freedom fighter of the colonised world has been anointed by the West as Mandela has been. In fact, history is replete with genuine leaders of Africa such as Lumumba, Sankara, Cabral, and Biko who were killed by the forces of colonialism and imperialism. When Obama stood in Mandela’s prison cell and reflected on the courageousness and fortitude of this icon, he still held the keys to those at Guantanamo Bay and a conscience that must deal with Black Panther Herman Wallace’s death three days after he was released in October 2013 after 40 years in a US prison as he must deal with the pronouncement of Assata Shakur, exiled in Cuba, as the most wanted woman in the world while she continues to proclaim her innocence.
Yet, in spite of Mandela’s ‘sainthood’ conferred on him by the Western world, he is also revered throughout the developing world, and more than anything else, this guarantees his unique place in history as a one of the greats of recent times.

1994 saw South Africa’s first democratic elections take place and fittingly, Nelson Mandela became the first black President of the country. This fact alone made him, in the eyes of most South Africans, both young and old, the liberator and the father of the new South Africa in which apartheid was abolished ending over 300 years of white minority rule. An ANC cadre until his death, Mandela’s legacy in this regard is contentious. If the current crop of ANC leaders and government officials represent that legacy, it doesn’t leave much to be desired. South Africa has now become the most unequal country in the world and is occupying its lowest spot ever in the world corruption index.

A legacy Mandela himself would not have been proud of and perhaps it has been best that, in recent years, he had no direct part in it. Indirectly, of course, much of it stems from the neo-liberal economic policy adopted by the country under Mandela’s presidency and which continues to underpin government policy. The late Dr Neville Alexander, himself a former Robben Island prisoner of 10 years, stated that one should not have been surprised by such an economic position because Mandela never claimed to be a socialist or communist and therefore he was not acting contrary to his beliefs.

Esteemed international journalist and author, John Pilger, possibly best summarises the dilemma he presents in a single sentence: “Mandela’s greatness may be assured – but not his legacy”.

Again, in spite of the less than desirable political party and state legacy that he left, Mandela was and is still respected by the different South African liberation movements. Saths Cooper, who was part of the leadership of the Black Consciousness Movement leadership that was imprisoned on Robben Island in 1972, wrote the following:

“From the time that I first met him in those miserable conditions in prison till the time of his recent illness he exuded a regal demeanour and carriage that infused respect amongst all who came into contact with him. A stickler for custom and pleasantries, he dictated the pace of the ensuing interaction, by careful listening, usually without interruption, and then presenting how he saw the way forward. Very few could refuse to take tea with him, by which time any anger and rancor had dissipated. .. During his presidency of our country he was magnanimous to many of his detractors within the ANC who, if they had been in power, may not have been as generous. He went out of his way to accommodate numerous former prisoners from across the political spectrum who owe their positions to his ability to rise above partisanship”.

As the dust settles and the media clutches onto every sensational straw, much more will be said about the legacy left by Mandela. All told, however, Madiba stood tall in today’s world that sorely lacks individuals of integrity, humility, and compassion. He will be remembered in Africa and the international community as a symbol of peace and reconciliation rarely seen in modern-day history. May his spirit and compassion remain forever in the hearts and minds of people all over the world.
A tribute to Dr Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela,
By the national chairperson of the Adult Learning Network (ALN),
Mr Archie Mokonane   IALLA Graduate
Friday, 6 December 2013, Cape Town, South Africa

"What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead."

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela
1918 - 2013

"Death is something inevitable. When a man has done what he considers to be his duty to his people and his country, he can rest in peace. I believe I have made that effort and that is, therefore, why I will sleep for the eternity."

(From an interview for the documentary Mandela, 1994)

I believe Tata, Madiba has reached that point in his life on Thursday, 5 December 2013 at 20h50.

The day the earth stood still to honour and remember the life of a struggle icon; Dr Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. A man sent to our nation to liberate us from the evils of apartheid.

South Africa as a nation was numbed by your sudden departure, Tata. We have no words to express what we feel today. We draw strength from your words and deeds; the example you have set; the path you have walked.

Many will endeavour to follow in your footsteps; their long walk to freedom; and like you, they will succeed and find rest.
We are indeed indebted to you and your family but we know it was all to ensure our freedom; freedom from oppression; freedom from illiteracy and poverty.

Today when we look back at the road we have travelled, we realise that so many of us have made it; so many more can read and write and build meaningful lives. For this we will continue to fight for the worthy cause against the evils of illiteracy, inequality and poverty. We are resolute in our fight against these evils, today more than ever.

It’s our duty in service to our fellow country man and women.

You said that:

“What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived.
It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead.”

And so, we will continue to make a difference in the lives of many South Africans that still live in poverty and illiteracy. We will emulate you in living a significant life.

Hamba kahle Madiba
May your soul rest in peace

Till we meet again.
On behalf of the board of the Adult Learning Network (ALN) and all South Africans.

We wish to express our sincere condolences to the family and friends of Dr Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. Our thoughts and prayers are with you during this time of your bereavement. We know that God will comfort you and you will be strengthened by all those who have been touched by his life.

[Words = 444]