



● **Who is
Nelson Mandela?**



**Standing for the
Truth Campaign**

Nelson Mandela

The Man

Family and Educational Background

Born into the royal Tembu household near Umtata in the Transkei in 1918, Nelson Mandela was destined to become chief someday. However his father died in 1930 leaving him in the charge of his cousin, David Dalindyo, Acting Paramount Chief. Nelson graduated from Healdtown Methodist School and enrolled at the University of Fort Hare in 1938, aged sixteen. He read for a BA degree and was expelled in 1940 together with Oliver Tambo for helping to organise a student protest. He left Transkei for Johannesburg to escape an arranged marriage and to further his studies.

The ANC Youth League (ANCYL)

Once in Johannesburg he completed his BA degree through UNISA. On the encouragement and advice of Walter Sisulu he enrolled for a law degree at Wits University. Deeply incensed at the appalling living conditions of the Urban African, the overcrowded townships, incessant pass raids and restriction of educational and economic opportunity, Mandela joined the ANC in 1940. After four years of involvement he, Sisulu, Tambo and others formed the ANC Youth League. Dissatisfied with the slow pace of change of the authorities and the "gentlemanly" method of bringing about change of the older ANC leaders, the Youth League argued for a more direct and militant way of confronting the South African State. Their efforts were rewarded when in 1948 the ANC adopted *The Programme of Action*. This programme was to commit the ANC to a new way of challenging the pung apartheid state by means of boycotts, strikes, civil disobedience and passive resistance. However there was to be no violence of any sort.



The Defiance Campaign

Mandela quickly rose through the ranks of ANC leadership. In 1948 he was national secretary of the ANCYL. In 1949 he was elected to the ANC National Executive and by 1950 he was elected National President of the ANCYL. 1952 saw the start of the first major event of the *Programme of Action - the Defiance Campaign*. Thousands of volunteers throughout the country defied six of the worst of the unjust laws of the Apartheid government. The laws were designed to further humiliate and divide the "non-European" population of South Africa and erode whatever existing political and economic rights they still had. These laws were:

- The extension of passes to African women and children;
- Stock limitation in the African reserves. Opposition to this law was a protest against the scarcity of land for Africans brought about by the *1913 Land Act*;
- The further division of African people along tribal lines in reserves by the imposition of the *Tribal Authorities Act*;
- The *Group Areas Act* which entrenched the division of people in urban areas on racial and tribal lines;
- The *Coloured Voters Act* or the *Voters Registration Act* which aimed at removing 'Coloureds' from the voters roll and placing them on a separate voters roll;
- The *Suppression of Communism Act* which allowed the Minister of Justice to define who was or was not "Communist" and to detain them.

The campaign was seen by its leaders as part of the national liberation struggle to create or transform the conditions which would restore HUMAN DIGNITY, EQUALITY, and FREEDOM to all South Africans. Mandela was volunteer-in-chief. By his inspiration and leadership by example, 8500 people including himself were imprisoned by the end 1952.

Throughout the campaign the volunteers were disciplined and peaceful. The leaders consistently insisted on this.



The Treason Trial

By the end of 1952 Mandela had been elected as president of the Transvaal branch of the ANC as well as national vice president under Albert Luthuli. In December of that year he and 19 others were charged under the *Suppression of Communism Act* for their role in the *Defiance Campaign*. Mandela received a nine month suspended sentence as well as a six month banning order. This was renewed for two years when it expired in September 1953. Mandela resigned himself to working underground. In 1956 the state came up with a fresh attempt to stem the tide of the national liberation movement. It accused 156 prominent political activists and leaders of all races of being part of an international "communist inspired" attempt to overthrow the South African State by violence. *The Freedom Charter* and the *Programme of Action* were the main documents used as evidence. Almost the entire leadership of the ANC were on trial including Chief Albert Luthuli and Nelson Mandela. By 1959 all except 30 of the accused were released without charge. Mandela was among the 30 who remained on trial until 1960. In the last two years of the trial Mandela and a co-accused Duma Nokwe helped to conduct the defence of their fellow trialists.

In 1958 Mandela married Winnie Nomzamo Madikizela, a qualified social worker, also originally from the Transkei. In 1960 the remaining treason trialists were acquitted. In March of that year the world was incensed by the massacre at Sharpeville. The ANC organised protestations in response to the brutality of the police at Sharpeville. These were violently suppressed and a state of emergency was declared. The PAC (Pan Africanist Congress) and the ANC were banned. 20000 people were arrested including Mandela and many of the Treason Trialists. Mandela was released after the emergency ended. It was at this point that he decided to go underground.



The "Black Pimpernel"

In the months which followed, Mandela earned the nickname of the "Black Pimpernel", disappearing and reappearing at crucial moments to give direction and leadership to the people. In December 1960 he appeared at the "allin African Conference" in Pietermaritzburg to address the crowd. The demand of the conference was for a National Convention and a rejection of the proposed South African Republic.

Umkhonto we Sizwe - "Spear of the Nation"

A three day strike called in the name of Mandela to coincide with the declaration of the Republic on 31st May 1961 was well supported, despite state attempts to crush it violently. The army and police were out in full force and many more activists of all races were arrested. At this point Mandela announced, "In my mind we are closing a chapter on this question of a non-violent policy." Six months later in December 1961 *Umkhonto We Sizwe* "the spear of the nation" made its appearance with several acts of sabotage. A new chapter in the history of the national liberation struggle was opened, after 40 years of peaceful protest.

Rivonia

Mandela had travelled overseas and in Africa spreading the news of what was happening in South Africa. On his return, he was arrested in August 1962 and charged with incitement and illegally leaving the country. He was sentenced to five years imprisonment. When his colleagues were arrested at Rivonia in July 1963, he was brought out of prison to stand trial with them. The charge was that of conspiracy to overthrow the government by force. Mandela conducted his own defence. The ten trialists were sentenced to life imprisonment.



Nelson Mandela was sent to prison because of his opposition to apartheid and his unwavering commitment to a non-racial, democratic and united South Africa, free from racial discrimination and inequality, in which all South Africans will have an equal say in government. These ideals have yet to be realised.

WHY MANDELA'S RELEASE IS AN ISSUE FOR CHRISTIANS

- * South Africa is in the grip of escalating internal civil conflict. Mandela is recognised by the majority as their leader. He is therefore indispensable in bringing about **UNITY** and **PEACE** in our country.
- * Apartheid is internationally condemned as a crime against humanity. Mandela's unconditional release will therefore be welcomed by the international community as a crucial first step towards the dismantling of apartheid.
- * The Gospel demands that Christians **STAND FOR THE TRUTH**. Consequently churches in South Africa and the world over have declared apartheid a Heresy and a False Gospel. Nelson Mandela has been imprisoned for taking his **STAND FOR THE TRUTH** against the apartheid heresy. Christians have a moral duty therefore to support his release.