

If you are asked to choose the greatest icon of current times, who would we choose? It's a fair stake that a lot of people would pick Nelson Mandela. A man who went through a really unjust society, he refused to break, and rather continued fighting, continue striving for justice and, after decades of punishment, he won.

However, what caused Mandela to have that type of power and belief? This book chapter tells you the story of Mandela's life, revealing the incidents that shaped the man.

Chapter 1 - Nelson Mandela's interest in social justice started while he was still a child living in rural South Africa.

Nelson Mandela barely requires an introduction. The life of Nelson Mandela is a classic story of one man's fight against oppression, and we'll definitely still be telling it in future years.

In 1918, Mandela was given birth to in a small village in the South African countryside called Mvezo. He hit from the Xhosa tribe, a proud ethnic group that strongly valued law, courtesy, and education. He was called Rolihlahla at birth, meaning "trouble maker" in the Xhosa language.

Gadla Henry Mphakanyiswa who is the father of Mandela, was a chief in the tribe, a distinction that traditionally would have gifted him with high social class in the community. But, the British influence, had deteriorated the authority of tribal chiefs; therefore, the title had little political power at the time.

Furthermore, the British could overthrow anybody who challenged their authority, that was because every chief had to be approved by the government. Mandela's father was really stubborn and regularly confronted them, and it didn't take time before the British annulled his status as chief.

After the death of Mandela's father, another regent of the tribe, Jongintaba, offered to become Mandela's guardian. This would eventually have a vast effect on his life.

While Mandela was still a child, he regularly went for tribal meetings at the regent's court, where he got to know about the dilemma of his people. One of the greatest prominent people there was Chief Joyi, an elderly chief with royal lineage who protested against white supremacy.

Chief Joyi assumed that the close tribes had lived peacefully until white Europeans come in and planted the seeds of conflict. He mentioned that the white man was greedy and stole the land that should've been shared, destroying the tribes' unity.

Mandela would learn later on in his life that Chief Joyi's history lessons hadn't been right all the time. However, they really impacted his life: they revealed to him social injustice.

Chapter 2 - Mandela first started confronting authority while he was a student at Fort Hare.

The young Mandela liked physical activities such as stick fighting; however, he was also an introvert. Also, he was the first in his family to attend school, where his lifelong devotion to learning and education started.

The village school Mandela went to was completely British. The students learned wholly about British history, culture and institutions; African culture was basically never talked about in the classroom. So, Mandela learned about the history of his people from the elders in the regent's court.

As at then, it was typical for Africans to have an anglicized name with their normal one. Mandela's teacher, Miss Mdigane, picked Mandela's for him: Nelson. Mandela never understood why she chose that name, however, he suspected it could've been associated with the great British sea captain Lord Nelson.

Mandela studied really well. A lot so that he ended up finishing his junior certificate at Healdtown College in two years instead of three. Afterward, in 1937, he changed to Fort Hare College, where he studied English, anthropology, politics, native administration and law.

Fort Hare was where he started confronting the authority. One night, Mandela with some of his fellow students began talking about the lack of freshmen representation in the House Committee, and they chose to elect their own House Committee that better talked about what they like.

Mandela with his friends caucused among the freshmen and gathered huge support. After, they said to the warden that if he overruled them, they'd quit, which would become great displeasure to their freshmen supporters.

Eventually, they won: the warden let the Committee stand. But, the next year, things didn't go really good.

During his second year, Mandela intensely supported a student boycott and eventually got expelled for it. Done with his time at Fort Hare, he decided to relocate to Johannesburg and find a job.

Chapter 3 – The political work of Mandela's started in Johannesburg.

Johannesburg was a busy city when Mandela got there in 1941. He wasn't aware of it at the time; however, in Johannesburg, he'd make lifetime friends who'd fight against oppression with him.

Mandela had his first job in a gold mine as a night watchman. According to him, the gold mine was a strong sign of white oppression –a lot of Africans slaving away daily, in a huge capitalist enterprise that just profited the white owners.

But, his actual aim was to become a lawyer. One day, one of Mandela's cousins decided to take him to a person who could assist, Walter Sisulu.

Sisulu directed a real estate agency that focused on giving houses for Africans. Sisulu, as well as Mandela, would eventually become really close and the pair would encounter a lot of difficulties together.

Sisulu succeeded to get Mandela a spot as a clerk in one of Johannesburg's biggest law firms, where he worked while he was studying at the University of South Africa for a BA in law.

Gaur Radebe, who is one of Mandela's colleagues and the only other black worker at the firm, was a prominent member of the African National Congress, or ANC.

In 1912, the ANC was established which makes it the oldest African national organization in the country. It intended to get full citizenship for every Africans in South Africa.

Gaur hoped that the ANC was the best plan for change in the country, and, immediately, Mandela started going to ANC meetings with him.

In 1943, Mandela has his first experience of real political activism, during a bus boycott that protested the increasing bus fares. Mandela turned out to be an active member of the boycott – not only an observer. Marching together with his people was terrifying and empowering.

During his promising political life, Mandela also made friends with some other activists, such as Tony O'Dowd, Harold Wolpe and several members of the Communist Party. These links would prove important in his future fight against apartheid.

Chapter 4 - The National Party's ascend to power marked the start of apartheid.

The house of Walter Sisulu's Johannesburg turned to be a hotspot for the members of ANC and African intellectuals. Anton Lembebe was one of the people who regularly visited the house was, a prominent lawyer who'd have a huge influence on Mandela.

Lembebe claimed that Africa justly belonged to black people. He summoned African men from every tribe to unite together and claim their right to the land.

Reclaiming the land would abandon the Western principles and morals that had made a lot of Africans to internalize extreme feelings of shame about their culture – basically healing a culture-wide inferiority complex.

At the end of the day, Mandela, Sisulu, Lembede and some others visited Dr. Xuma, the head of the ANC at the time. They proposed the ANC form a Youth League to get support, as the organization was still a bit small. At first, Dr. Xuma was reluctant because he believed that the African masses couldn't be organized; however, in 1944, he accepted to build the Youth League.

Afterward, in 1948, something surprising occurred. The general election was won by Dr. Daniel Malan's National Party.

The National Party had operated on a political campaign known as apartheid, meaning “apartness” in Afrikaans. The election had been won by them by using very racist slogans such as Die kaffer op sy plek – “The nigger in his place.” Immediately Malan came to power, he started executing a list of acts that put apartheid into practice.

The Group Areas Act was one of the first of such acts, which specified that diverse racial groups had to live in strictly separated regions. The Youth League wrestled back, organizing a National Day of Protest, where they advised every African worker to remain in their home.

On the 26th of June 1950, was when the National Day of Protest happened. It was a success, encouraging both the movement and Mandela's devotion to the fight.

All thanks to the protest and the Defiance Campaign, a related political move, the number of ANC members increased to 100,000 in only one year.

Chapter 5 - As the National Party's methods became harsher, Mandela realized the need for violence.

The National Day of Protest strengthened the ANC; however, that also showed the power of the National Party, which only increased its endeavors to crush resistance.

The National Party enacted the Suppression of Communism Act after the protest. They then made use of it to target Mandela.

On the 30th of June 1950, Mandela was arrested for violating the act. Due to the part he'd played in planning and carrying out the former year's protests, the government had been targeting for a while.

Huge demonstrations happened on the streets of Johannesburg when Mandela and the others accused along with him first showed in court. On the 2nd of December 1950, all of them were found guilty of "statutory communism" and were sentenced to nine months in prison. The sentence was postponed for two years, but, letting Mandela keep on with his work.

Mandela began his own law firm in August of 1952. It concentrated on assisting Africans, a lot of whom were now desperately in need of legal assistance. It had become illegal for Africans to go on Whites Only buses, drink from Whites Only fountains or walk through Whites Only doors.

When he went to court, Mandela gave a point of being defiant. For instance, in a trial, he achieved to free a client by embarrassing her white employer.

The employer had accused her black housemaid of stealing her "madam's" clothes. Therefore, Mandela took a piece of the evidence – a pair of her panties. He showed them to the court and asked her if it belonged to her. Embarrassed, she said no, and the case was eventually dismissed.

As the matter got worse, Mandela and Sisulu came to hope that the National Party's increasingly harsher laws could just be faced with violence. Sisulu attempted to secretly travel to China to request the government if they'd give them weapons; however, the ANC leadership immediately discovered, which caused a heated debate on the use of violence in the ANC.

Chapter 6 - The government targeted Mandela as well as the other ANC leaders as the matter became worse.

On the 5th of December, 1956, Mandela was arrested at his house. The warrant for his arrest was hoogverraad, the Afrikaans word for High Treason. He'd long anticipated the government to make a huge move against the ANC, and now it had eventually taken place.

The government asserted that they had proof that Mandela had orchestrated violent acts in the Defiance Campaign. Also, they arrested almost every of the Campaign's other leaders.

It was obvious from the beginning that the prosecution's case was feeble. Solomon Ngubase was the star witness, a man who was sentenced for fraud. He asserted that he went to an ANC meeting where the leaders had chosen to send Walter Sisulu to the Soviet Union in order to get weapons for an armed fight.

During Ngubase's interrogation, the defense proved that he wasn't an ANC member neither was he a university graduate, as he'd stated. This was an extreme setback to the prosecution.

As the court case continued, the struggle fumed outside. The severity of the matter seriously hit home on the 26th of March 1960, when a misfortune happened in the town of Sharpeville.

There, a lot of Africans had come together around a local police station, showing against the "pass laws," which needed every Africans to hold their passbooks when they left their designated area. The police were terrified and opened fire on the crowd without any caution. A minimum of 69 people was murdered, with the majority being shot in the back as they attempted to escape.

More than 50,000 people assembled in Cape Town to protest the shootings. Riots occurred and the government confirmed the State of Emergency, pending habeas corpus.

But, the court case improved. Though the state had offered thousands of pages of material, the judge ruled that the proof of a violent plot was inadequate and every of the accused was innocent.

Chapter 7 - The ANC's struggle moved underground at the end of the trial and Mandela established the MK.

While Mandela together with his friends was in prison waiting for their trial, they decided that it was high time to move things underground.

Mandela was aware that there was no time to celebrate after his release; the ANC had to fight back immediately and they had to change their schemes.

In the ANC, the debate on violence had already been ongoing for a few years. In 1961, during a secret executive meeting, Mandela asserted that the state had left the ANC no other choice.

However, the ANC leadership agreed that the party would keep an official policy of non-violence; Mandela, but, could form a militant organization within it. The new, militant wing of the ANC was named Umkhonto we Siswe which means "The Spear of the Nation." The short form was called the MK.

The MK began by utilizing sabotage. Mandela had never shot a gun at someone in his life; however, he started studying everything he could about guerrilla warfare, sabotage and revolution.

Also, he relocated to a small suburb of Johannesburg the Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia, which had been acquired by the movement. Liliesleaf Farm functioned as a safe house and training field for the MK, and that was where Mandela learned his shooting and learned how to make use of explosives.

He as well as other MK members decided to make use of sabotage first, as it had the lowest risk of injury and needed less manpower. Therefore, in December of 1960 in Johannesburg, they exploded homemade bombs at a number of government buildings and power. Also, they started spreading a manifesto announcing the MK's arrival.

The government was surprised about the explosions, which, scheming retaliation, increased its efforts too.

Chapter 8 - Mandela was persecuted by the government as the fight become really serious.

At that point, the government was eager to do anything possible to get catch Mandela, who'd turned to an iconic person in the movement.

On the 5th of August, 1962, they eventually arrested him while he was returning to Liliesleaf Farm after a secret MK meeting. They took him to prison, where he was joined by Sisulu, who'd also been arrested.

During the first day of Mandela in court, he, together with his wife and a lot of the spectators wore leopard-skin karosses, traditional Xhosa attire. He mentioned in his first address that he planned to put the government on trial and he didn't feel morally assured by the laws, because they were enacted by a parliament he couldn't vote for.

He then narrated numerous cases where the government had declined the ANC's efforts to handle their problems through official means. The ANC had no other choice than violence.

The key evidence of the prosecution was a six-page action plan gotten from Liliesleaf Farm that implicated Mandela as well as the others for their planning of the MK. It was clear in the document that they'd be found guilty.

The trial gathered a huge deal of international attention and quotes from the speech Mandela said on the day of the judgment were published in a lot of newspapers. Vigils were done in cities across the world.

On the 12th of June, 1964, Mandela was proven guilty of all the charges; however, international pressure on South Africa assisted in saving his life. For instance, a group of UN experts recommended that amnesty be given to every person that opposed apartheid. The charges

against Mandela would've typically had a death penalty; however, instead, his last sentence was life in prison.

Chapter 9 - Mandela together with his prisoners maintained their resistance in prison.

Mandela was sent to Robben Island after the trial, where he'd use the following 20 years of his life.

Daily life was really ugly on Robben Island. Stones that were the size of a volleyball were thrown into the prison courtyard every day and the prisoners had to break them into gravel with small hammers. The weather was boiling hot.

Mandela was part of the class of prisoners that were retained under the sternest control. He was just permitted to be visited by one visitor and only one letter every six months. Also, his correspondence was seriously censored; he could hardly read the letters he got from his wife, Winnie.

Solitary confinement was the worst aspect of the prison was, in which prisoners could be provided with the smallest infractions. Only failing to get up in your cell when a guard got in was enough.

The prison was made to emotionally break them; therefore, they maintained the spirit of resistance to survive through their days. When every one of the prisoners apart from Indians was provided shorts to wear, Mandela requested to see the warden of the prison, since he believed it wasn't decent for an African man to put on shorts.

After two weeks of protest, the guards surrendered. The win was little; however, it was essential.

The prisoners experienced a lot of other difficulties too. It was hard for access books and magazines, and any other thing related to politics or news was sternly prohibited.

Luckily, the guards weren't particularly bright. One prisoner was able to get a copy of The Economist since the guards believed it was about economics.

Afterward, in 1966, the prisoners agreed to go on a hunger strike to protest the prison's living situations. Ultimately, the guards took part in the strike. The prison authorities understood the strike was a lot for the prison; therefore, they accepted the requests of the prisoners'. The insurgency had shown to be contagious.

Chapter 10 - Mandela together with his co-African freedom fighters had extensive backing from the international society, which pressured the South African government.

As time went on, the guards at Robben Island slowly became less strict with the prisoners; however, the matter outside only got worse. But, there were also indications of hope. During the 1970s, there was an increase in group protests around Africa and a new, more militant generation of freedom fighters started to arise.

Mandela, as well as other prisoners, had restricted access to the news; however, they were able to get information on an uprising in 1976.

During June of that year, fifteen thousand schoolchildren had assembled in Soweto an urban region in Johannesburg to protest legislation needing schools to teach half of their courses in Afrikaans, a language the majority of African children didn't want to learn.

Once more, the police opened fire on the mass without cautioning them, murdering a 13-year old Hector Pieterse together with a lot of other people. Also, two white men were stoned to death. The incidences generated riots and protests all through the country.

A lot in the new generation of South African freedom fighters were very aggressive and militant. Those who were sentenced and taken to Robben Island saw Mandela and the other Rivonia prisoners as moderates.

A lot of the young freedom fighters belonged to the Black Consciousness Movement. They assumed that the black man had to release himself from his feeling of inferiority to whites for him to free himself from oppression. Mandela liked their militancy; however, he believed their sole focus on blackness wasn't mature.

The uprisings in South Africa during the late 1970s were fully covered by the international media, and people across the world became more furious about apartheid. "Free Mandela" campaigns and incidences were coming up worldwide.

The Johannesburg Saturday Post published a story in 1980 with the headline FREE MANDELA, together with a petition the readers could sign. The article ignited a debate in the country on Mandela's freedom.

Chapter 11 - The South African government and freedom fighters eventually started to negotiate when they both acknowledged that the violence was a lot.

By the early 1980s, the fight was just becoming bloodier. What would be the end? The violence looked to be increasingly out of control, drawing society down with it. Something needed to be done.

In 1981, the South African Defense Force invaded the ANC's offices in Maputo, Mozambique, murdering thirteen people. The MK, who'd turned out to be really violent at then, reacted. In May 1983, as retaliation, they exploded a car bomb outside a military facility, murdering nineteen people.

Mandela understood that, without negotiations, the matter would become very chaotic. The ANC had stated that they wouldn't negotiate with the racist government; however, Mandela began to see that it was essential.

In 1986, after the government affirmed the State of Emergency again, Mandela asked for a meeting with Kobie Coetsee, the Minister of Defense. Shockingly, his request was accepted and he was taken to Cape Town to the minister's private home.

Coetsee questioned Mandela what it would need to keep the ANC from using violent methods. That was the first step in negotiations.

In May of 1988, Mandela and a committee of state officials started having a lot of secret meetings. In December of the next year, Mandela saw the new president, F. W. de Klerk. de Klerk was devoted to promoting peace and paid attention to what Mandela had to say.

February of 1990, de Klerk declared that he would cancel the ban on the ANC, which was still officially an illegal organization (that had extensive support all over the country). Also, he accepted to release every political prisoner that had been jailed for nonviolent activities. On the same day, de Klerk met with Mandela and said to him he'd be set free.

Chapter 12 - Mandela was set free in 1990, got the Nobel Peace Prize and kept on with his political work.

On the 11th of February, 1990, Nelson Mandela was set free. But, for the people of South Africa people, freedom was still a long way off.

Since 1988, Mandela had been detained in a low-security prison outside Cape Town. He had his personal living space there, which functioned as a type of halfway house between freedom and prison.

During the day of his release, Mandela was meant to be taken from the house to the front gate by car; however, a television presenter told him to walk the last part of it. While he moved toward the gate with his wife standing next to him, he lifted up his fist and the crowd shouted.

Later on, during that day, he delivered a speech from a City Hall balcony, before a huge crowd. He shouted out the word “Amandla,” which is the Xhosa word for “power,” and the crowd responded “Ngawethu,” meaning “to us.”

The next afternoon, Mandela said to the reporters that he'd do anything the ANC considered appropriate. He didn't see any conflict of interest between supporting ANC's militant fight and progressing with negotiations. The ANC would react to peace with peace.

But, the relationship between the government and ANC was still tense. 1992 December, the ANC executives chose to have a series of secret bilateral talks with the government. Firstly, it was decided that every party that got above 5% in the general election should have proportional representation in the cabinet. That signified that the ANC would need to work together with the National Party, which activated controversy within the ANC.

On the 27th of April 1994, the first non-racialized election happened in South Africa. The ANC got 62.6% of the votes. In a moment before that, Mandela was given the Nobel Peace Prize.

Long Walk to Freedom by Nelson Mandela Book Review

Nelson Mandela committed his life to the morals he believed in. Although he as well as his people encountered a lot of issues, persecution, and violence, Mandela stayed committed, even when he was taken to prison. His work and dedication made him become the torchbearer of the anti-apartheid movement and the man who made the way for a free and democratic South Africa.

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