**MADIBA, 1918 – 2013**

**Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela**, born on the 18th of July 1918, was 95 at the time of his departure on the 6th of December 2013.

He was an anti-apartheid revolutionary and was the first black South African, elected in a fully representative, multiracial election, to become President of the Republic of South Africa, in 1994. He held the post till 1999.

Prior to that, Mandela spent 27 years in prison, mainly on Robben Island in Cape Town. Major national and international campaigns lobbied for his release and these succeeded in 1990 when he was released by President F.W. de Klerk, with whom he successfully negotiated to abolish apartheid and establish a multi-racial South-Africa. He was elected President in 1994 and formed a Government of ***national unity.***

Amongst his most remarkable contribution to his country’s welfare-and to world history- was the formation of a ***Truth and Reconciliation Commission (T&RC),*** to investigate crimes committed under apartheid by both the government and the ANC, with Archbishop Desmond Tutu as its chair. To prevent the creation of martyrs, the Commission granted individual amnesties in exchange for testimony of crimes committed during the apartheid era. The example of the South African T&RC inspired many to similar efforts towards reconciliation, flowing trauma like civil war or slavery. Our own ***Truth and Justice Commission*** of Mauritius is a good example. Using the South African example, Mandela encouraged nations to resolve conflicts through ***diplomacy and reconciliation*** and called for an African Renaissance on the continent.

Much well les known was his ***Land Restitution Act of 1994*** which enabled people who had lost their property as a result of the apartheid era’s ***Natives Land Act*** ***of 1913***to claim back their land. Thousands of such land claims were successfully settled, leading to some measure of equity as far as land ownership is concerned.

Nelson Mandela is affectionately called **Madiba** (his clan name)by his people, rather like the Indian population-and now the world- refers to Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi as the **Mahatma.**

Across the planet, Mandela came to be seen as a moral authority, with a great*"concern for truth".*He has attained an emeritus status comparable to that of a Dalai Lama or a [Mustafa Kemal Atatürk](http://www.ranker.com/review/mustafa-kemal-atat%C3%BCrk/1634664) , a [Abraham Lincoln](http://www.ranker.com/review/abraham-lincoln/392246) or a JFK, a [Mahatma Gandhi](http://www.ranker.com/review/mahatma-gandhi/1500397) or a  Jawaharlal Nehru, a [Winston Churchill](http://www.ranker.com/review/winston-churchill/2402826) or a Charles de Gaulle, a Marx+Lenin or a [Mikhail  Gorbachev](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1990/gorbachev-facts.html), a William Wilberforce or a Martin Luther King Jr.

He has been the subject of a huge number of articles, research papers, books and films. My personal best is the film ***Invictus*** (2009) where black American actor Morgan Freeman accurately portrays Mandela. Late in 1994, Mandela's main autobiography, ***Long Walk to Freedom*,** was published. Just like the **Nehru jacket**- a tailored coat with a mandarin collar worn by Pandit Nehru when PM of India between 1947 to 1964, we have an item of dress which Mandela liked wearing- a batik silk shirt with bright and colourful prints- and which has become known as a **Madiba shirt.**

 In his extraordinary 2005 speech in London's Trafalgar Square, Mandela had this message for us: *'Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings’.*

He rightfully advised the path of ‘*giving the best of yourself, of making sacrifice’* in order to achieve your goals. He was also for team work and collective leadership in, for example, ensuring equity for all and eradicating poverty. And like Barrack Obama said this morning *‘it’s not enough just to pay tribute’*, follow his example and let him inspire you.

As we know, he was deservedly co-awarded the Nobel Peace prize in 1993 and will long be fondly remembered, at home in South Africa, in Mauritius and all around the world.

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