



Wes-Kaapse Provinsiale Parlement
Western Cape Provincial Parliament
IPalamente yePhondo leNtshona Koloni

**NELSON MANDELA
1918–2013**

FACT SHEET 20

REVISION 1, 29 JUNE 2018

In 2018 South Africa and the people of the world celebrate the centenary of Nelson Mandela. The theme for the centenary celebrations is *Be the Legacy*, meaning that each person should emulate the true values of Madiba, a great leader who showed the world what selflessness and forgiveness are, strived for the freedom of all people, and achieved justice and equality for all. By living his values, we can keep the dream of a better South Africa and world alive. In this fact sheet we walk in Mandela's footsteps, from his birth in 1918 until his passing in 2013, pausing at important landmarks along the journey.



- Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was born on 18 July 1918, the son of a chief and chief councillor to the paramount chief of the Thembu and a member of the Madiba clan.
- Mandela's name is Rolihlahla, which literally means "pulling the branch of a tree" or colloquially "troublemaker". He was given the name "Nelson" by a schoolteacher.
- In 1934, when he was 16, Mandela went to initiation school to undergo "ulwaluko", a traditional ceremony for boys transitioning into manhood. In the same year he was enrolled at Clarkebury, the school where he was first introduced to a Western style of education.
- Mandela, the first member of his family to attend high school, was enrolled at Healdtown, the Wesleyan College at Fort Beaufort, where he matriculated in 1938 at the age of 19.
- After high school Mandela went to the University of Fort Hare, where he made many lifelong friends, including Oliver Tambo. In 1940 he fell out with the university about the election of the Student Representative Council and left Fort Hare.
- He started working as a clerk and later a mine policeman at Crown Mines. He was dismissed, however, as he had defied Chief Dalinyebo. After showing remorse and convincing the Chief of his wish to remain in Johannesburg, he received the Chief's consent and financial support.
- In Johannesburg Mandela was introduced to Walter Sisulu, who took him under his wing. Sisulu, who joined the ANC in 1940, became a lifelong friend, political mentor and confidant.
- After completing his BA by correspondence through Unisa, Sisulu found a firm of white attorneys who were prepared to employ Mandela and register him as an articled clerk. While working at the firm, Mandela enrolled for a BA degree in law at the University of the Witwatersrand.
- In 1944 Mandela joined the ANC and soon became part of a group of young intellectuals who became the driving force in establishing the ANC Youth League.
- On 15 July 1944 Mandela married Evelyn Mase, a nurse at the Johannesburg General Hospital, and Sisulu's cousin. In 1945 Evelyn gave birth to the couple's first child, a boy named Madiba Thembekile. Evelyn was the only breadwinner while Mandela studied and devoted his time to politics. In 1946 their daughter, Makaziwe, was born, but she passed away in infancy.
- In 1948 the National Party narrowly won a whites-only national election on the platform of a new policy of total racial segregation, called "apartheid". Mandela, Sisulu and Tambo began lobbying the ANC to embark on militant mass action. A successful "May Day" (1 May) rally took place in 1950. The government of the day responded with unrestrained brutality.
- In 1952 the ANC embarked on campaigns against apartheid laws. Called the "Defiance Campaigns", they did not bring change to the laws, but changed the ANC into a mass-based and militant organisation.
- Oliver Tambo joined Mandela as a partner in his legal practice in 1952 – the first African-run legal partnership in the country. During the next two years they worked together, defending hundreds of people affected by apartheid laws.
- In December 1952 Mandela and 19 other activists were arrested and, in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act, charged and sentenced to nine months' imprisonment with hard labour, suspended for three years. He was also served with a banning order that prohibited him from attending gatherings for six months or leaving Johannesburg. These orders were repeatedly renewed to curb his influence but Mandela kept playing a key role in all major ANC campaigns.
- The strain of Mandela's increased devotion to politics ended in his being divorced from Evelyn in 1958.

- Mandela was one of 156 leaders who were arrested and charged with treason after a police raid in December 1956. The treason trial dragged on for four and a half years. In 1958 Mandela married Nomzamo Winifred Madikizela, a social worker from Bizana.
- In March 1961 he and his 36 co-accused in the treason trial were found not guilty.
- The Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) called for mass peaceful anti-pass protests on 21 March 1960. Armed police outside a police station in Sharpeville opened fire on protesters, killing 69 people and wounding 200 in what is known as the Sharpeville Massacre. A state of emergency was declared. Mandela and 2 000 political activists from all the liberation movements were detained.
- On 8 April 1960 the government banned the ANC and the PAC.
- Mandela went underground and remained a fugitive for the next 17 months. When it became clear that violent resistance in South Africa was inevitable, Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) was formed. Mandela, the first Commander-in-Chief, travelled to Casablanca, to receive guerrilla training from the National Liberation Front of Algeria (NLFA).
- On 5 August 1962 Mandela was arrested and sentenced to five years' imprisonment for incitement and illegally leaving the country. Mandela spent seven months at the Pretoria Central Prison before he was transferred to Robben Island.
- In July the police raided the safe house of the South African Communist Party at Lilliesleaf Farm, Rivonia. Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Ahmed Kathrada, Dennis Goldberg and Lionel Bernstein were among the arrested. Police found Mandela's diary of his African tour, documents relating to the manufacture of explosives and copies of a draft memorandum about a guerrilla war.
- The Rivonia Trial commenced in October 1963. Mandela was brought from Robben Island to stand trial with his comrades on charges of sabotage, conspiracy to overthrow the government by revolution, and assisting an armed invasion of South Africa by foreign troops.
- On 12 June 1964 all the accused were sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island.
- Mandela was housed in B-section, in a single cell, so as not to influence other prisoners.
- Mandela received visits from his wife, Winnie, in July 1966 and June 1967, and from his mother, with his daughter Makie and son Makgatho, in 1968. In 1969, his eldest son, Thembi, died in a road accident.
- Between 1975 and 1976, together with Walter Sisulu and Ahmed Kathrada, Mandela wrote his autobiography. The original manuscripts were buried in the vegetable garden but prison guards found them in 1977 during construction work. Mac Maharaj managed to smuggle out copies when he was released. This manuscript formed the basis of Mandela's autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, which was published in 1995.
- In 1982 Mandela and other political prisoners were moved to Pollsmoor. That same year the "Release Nelson Mandela" campaign, with calls for sanctions, became one of the most powerful international solidarity movements in history, the Anti-Apartheid Movement.
- In 1985 Mandela rejected an offer made by then State President PW Botha to release him on condition that violence and the armed struggle be renounced.
- Celebrations worldwide, particularly a 12-hour music concert in London for Mandela's 70th birthday, drew enormous attention and many foreign countries started to put pressure on the South African government to release Mandela.
- In 1988, after being hospitalised for the treatment of tuberculosis, Mandela was taken to a house on the grounds of the Victor Verster Prison near Paarl.

- On 4 July 1989 Mandela held a short meeting with State President PW Botha at Tuynhuys. Mandela again requested the unconditional release of all political prisoners, which Botha refused to do. Botha resigned as state president in August 1989.
- In December 1989 Mandela met with the new state president, FW de Klerk. The government realised that apartheid was nearing its end and opted for formal negotiations with the ANC.
- On 2 February 1990 State President FW de Klerk announced the unbanning of the ANC and all other banned political parties, and the release of Mandela and all other political prisoners. On Sunday 11 February after 27 years in prison, Mandela was released.
- In May 1990 Mandela headed an ANC delegation in talks with South African government representatives at Groote Schuur in Cape Town, resulting in the Groote Schuur Minute. This signified a commitment by both the ANC and the government of the day to end the political violence that had gripped the country.
- In July 1991 Mandela was elected ANC President, succeeding an ailing Oliver Tambo.
- Mandela signed the National Peace Accord on behalf of the ANC in September 1991. This agreement between a number of political organisations established structures and procedures to end the political violence.
- The first meeting of Codesa (Convention for a Democratic South Africa) took place in December 1991. After two subsequent meetings were fruitless, the ANC called for a mass action campaign to put pressure on the South African government.
- On 13 April 1992 Mandela announced at a press conference that he and his wife, Winnie, had agreed to separate because of irreconcilable differences.
- Following the assassination of the South African Communist Party leader Chris Hani in April 1993, Mandela called for restraint, discipline and peace.
- South Africa's first democratic elections took place from 27 to 29 April 1994 and the ANC won 62% of the national vote. On 9 May Mandela was elected president.
- In his State of the Nation Address on 24 May 1994 Mandela announced the allocation of a budget for the government's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP).
- On his 80th birthday on 18 July 1998, Mandela married his third wife, Graça Machel, widow of former Mozambican president, Samora Machel.
- Mandela retired from active political life in June 1999 after completing his first term of office as president, but continued to play an active mediation role in conflicts around the world.
- In 2003 he was diagnosed with prostate cancer and on 1 June 2004 Mandela announced that he was bowing out of public life to lead a quieter life. He devoted much of his time raising funds for the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund.
- In 2007, Mandela established The Elders, a group of 12 eminent leaders chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, with the aim to use their wisdom to resolve global problems.
- The United Nations General Assembly announced on 10 November 2009 that Mandela's birthday, 18 July, would henceforth be known as "Mandela Day", marking his contribution to freedom and human rights.
- Mandela passed away peacefully on 5 December 2013 at his home in Houghton Estate, Johannesburg. His memorial service was held on 15 December in the FNB Stadium, Johannesburg, and was attended by 91 sitting heads of state.
- At the time of his death, Mandela was survived by his third wife Graça Machel, second wife, Winnie Mandela, and their two daughters, a daughter from his marriage to Evelyn Mase, and 18 grandchildren.