

Introduction

Nelson Mandela was born in Transkei, South Africa on July 18, 1918. His father was Chief Henry Mandela of the Tembu Tribe. Mandela himself was educated at University College of Fort Hare and the University of Witwatersrand and qualified in law in 1942.

He joined the African National Congress in 1944 and was engaged in resistance against the ruling National Party's apartheid policies after 1948. He went on trial for treason in 1956-1961 and was acquitted in 1961.

After the banning of the ANC in 1960, Nelson Mandela argued for the setting up of a military wing within the ANC. In June 1961, the ANC executive considered his proposal on the use of violent tactics and agreed that those members who wished to involve themselves in Mandela's campaign would not be stopped from doing so by the ANC.

This led to the formation of Umkhonto we Sizwe. Mandela was arrested in 1962 and sentenced to five years' imprisonment with hard labour.

In 1963, when many fellow leaders of the ANC and the Umkhonto we Sizwe were arrested, Mandela was brought to stand trial with them for plotting to overthrow the government by violence. His statement from the dock received considerable international publicity.

On June 12, 1964, eight of the accused, including Mandela, were sentenced to life imprisonment. From 1964 to 1982, he was incarcerated at Robben Island Prison, off Cape Town; thereafter, he was at Pollsmoor Prison, nearby on the mainland.

During his years in prison, Nelson Mandela's reputation grew steadily. He was widely accepted as the most significant black leader in South Africa and became a potent symbol of resistance as the anti-apartheid movement gathered strength.

He consistently refused to compromise his political position to obtain his freedom.

Nelson Mandela was released on February 11, 1990. After his release, he plunged himself wholeheartedly into his life's work, striving to attain the goals he and others had set out almost four decades earlier.

In 1991, at the first national conference of the ANC held inside South Africa after the organization had been banned in 1960, Mandela was elected President of the ANC while his lifelong friend and colleague, Oliver Tambo, became the organisation's National Chairperson.

Laid to rest in December 2013 – fair well to another great inspiring African man...

The Mandela Timeline



1912: The African National Congress (ANC) is founded; its goal is to end white domination and create a multi-racial South Africa.

July 18, 1918: Rolihlahla Dalibhunga Mandela is born in a small village in the Transkei province in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. The eldest son of a Tembu chief.

1927: Mandela's father dies, and at the age of nine, Mandela becomes the ward of the acting regent of the Thembu people, chief Jongintaba Dalindyebo.

1939-1940: After receiving a good education at local boarding schools, Mandela enters Fort Hare University and completes two years, and is expelled from Fort Hare University for being involved in student strike.

1941-43: Leaves for Johannesburg to avoid a marriage arranged for him by his guardian, chief Jongintaba and became a mine policeman.

Mandela meets Walter Sisulu, who becomes a mentor and lifelong friend. Sisulu introduces Mandela to the law firm Witkin, Sidelsky and Eidelman, where he obtains a position.

Completes Bachelor of Arts degree by correspondence before starting law degree at University of Witwatersrand and joins the ANC.

Started serving articles in Jewish law firm.

1944: Believing that the ANC leadership is too staid, Mandela, Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu form the ANC Youth League. They plan to organize mass support for the ANC and make it a more activist organization.

1945: Mandela marries Evelyn Mase, a nursing student living in Johannesburg, who grew up in Mandela's home province.

1948: The National Party comes to power under Dr. Daniel Malan. His platform is called apartheid, meaning "apartness." They implement new laws supporting racial discrimination and oppression including the Separate Representation of Voters Act and the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act.

1949: In response to the new apartheid policies, the ANC Youth League drafts a Program of Action calling for mass strikes, boycotts, protests and passive resistance.

1950: Became National President of Youth League.

1952: Opened first legal partnership in the country with Tambo.

Elected ANC Deputy National President.

Appointed National "Volunteer in chief" of defiance campaign, mastering opposition to apartheid laws: Mandela and others broke curfew regulations.

Mandela and others arrested and charged under Suppression of Communism Act, given nine months hard labor, suspended for two years.

Served with banning orders continually for next nine years.

1953: Renewed bans restricting activity forced him to exercise leadership duties secretly.

1956: Arrested and charged with high treason.

1957: Mandela and his first wife part.

1958: Married Momzamo Winnie Madikizela

1959: Parliament passes the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act, which forces the resettlement of blacks into eight separate "tribal homelands." The ANC vigorously opposes the act. However, some tribal leaders adopt the Bantu policy and work with the government.

April 1959: A former ANC Youth League member, Robert Sobukwe, launches the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), a new political group that opposes including whites and Indians in the anti-apartheid struggle.

March 21, 1960: Sharpeville: Anti-apartheid protesters gather to challenge South Africa's pass laws that prescribe where blacks can go. The police open fire and 69 people die--most of them from bullet wounds in the back.

The government declares a State of Emergency and bans the ANC and other opposition groups. Mandela is arrested. Oliver Tambo leaves the country under orders to work for the ANC cause from exile.

March 29, 1961: Mandela and the other defendants in the Treason Trial are found not guilty. It is a big victory for the ANC.

Mandela went underground and nicknamed Black Pimpernel.

December 1961: The ANC responds to government's banning by endorsing an "armed struggle." Mandela launches the armed struggle by forming Umkhonto we Sizwe (The Spear of the Nation)--or MK. MK's policy is to target only government offices and symbols of apartheid, not people. Mandela made Commander-in-Chief.

January 1962: Smuggled out of country to address Pan-African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa conference in Addis Ababa after first sabotage attacks by MK in ANC's turn from non-violent resistance. Went for military training in Algeria.

Mandela escapes the country and travels in Africa and Europe, studying guerrilla warfare and building support for the ANC.

July 1962: Mandela returns to South Africa.

August 1962: Mandela is captured near Howick, Natal. He is held on Robben Island.

November 1962: Sentenced to five years for incitement and illegally leaving the country.

While in prison police raided ANC underground headquarters, arrested several leaders and found strategy of armed struggle.

October 1963-1964: Although already serving a sentence, Mandela is brought to trial again along with other ANC leaders and charged with sabotage, attempting to violently overthrow the government and assisting invasion of South Africa by foreign troops; Mandela's statement from the dock – that he was prepared to die for his ideal of a democratic and free society – attracted world attention.

June 12, 1964: Known as the Rivonia Trial, the accused escape execution, but the judge sentences them to life in prison. Mandela and his comrades are sent to Robben Island.

1966: Verwoerd is assassinated by a deranged white farmer; John Vorster succeeds him as prime minister.

1968-69: Within a one-year period, Mandela's mother dies and his oldest son is killed in a car crash. Mandela is not allowed to attend the funerals.

1976: Soweto students protest mandatory instruction in Afrikaans, the language of the white rulers. Protests spread throughout Soweto. In crushing it, the government kills 575 people over an eight month period, a fourth of them under age 18.

1977: Winnie is banished to Brandfort, a remote township. Her daughter Zindzi goes with her. Over the following years, Winnie will spend over a year in jail (including solitary confinement) and face constant police harassment and humiliation. In response, she becomes more aggressive and militant in opposing white rule.

September 12, 1977: Steve Biko dies after police beatings whilst in detention. The UN Security Council imposes an arms embargo on South Africa.

1978: Vorster resigns; P.W. Botha, who held various political appointments in the National Party, takes over as prime minister.

1980: In exile, Oliver Tambo and the ANC launch the "Release Mandela" campaign. In the following years, numerous countries and international groups sign petitions, pass resolutions and hold rallies for Mandela's release.

1982: After 18 years on Robben Island, Mandela is transferred to Pollsmoor Prison in Cape Town.

1983-1984: Angered by rent increases and Botha's plan for giving Indian and mixed-race voters--but not blacks--token places in Parliament, black residents of townships south of Johannesburg start an insurrection that spreads across the country. The police respond brutally. In one township, Langa, 20 people are fatally shot at a funeral procession.

The resistance escalates. Township operatives organize strikes and boycotts to make black townships "ungovernable." MK guerrillas begin killing farmers, policemen and accused collaborators.

1985: Botha offers to free Mandela if he will renounce violence. Mandela's daughter Zindzi reads his response rejecting the deal to a packed stadium near Johannesburg. In November, Minister of Justice Kobie Coetsee makes an unexpected visit to Mandela who is hospitalized for prostate surgery. Although a social visit, it marks a turning point. On Mandela's return to prison, he is put in a separate cell from his comrades so the government can have private access to him.

April 1986: Winnie's increasingly controversial and militant activities culminate in a speech at a funeral in which she endorses "necklace murders"--the death by burning tires around the necks of those who collaborate with the government. Her speech is widely reported in the foreign press as a call to violence; it is privately denounced by the ANC.

June 1986: The government declares a State of Emergency in response to widespread unrest in the black townships.

July 1986: Secret talks for possible negotiations, approved by Botha and led by Coetsee begin between Mandela and the government. Mandela makes the decision without consulting other leaders of the ANC organization.

August 1986: A few months after the Reagan administration reassess its policy on South Africa, the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee votes overwhelmingly for strict economic sanctions against South Africa. Over the next few years, major U.S. companies start closing down operations (some only partially) in the country and U.S. banks stop loaning money.

1987: As talks with the government continue in earnest, Mandela tells his ANC comrades such as Govan Mbeki and Ahmed Kathrada about the negotiations. Their reactions range from outrage to strong support. Rumors start within the ANC that Mandela has "sold out."

June 1988: On the 24th anniversary of Mandela's imprisonment, a rock concert called "Freedomfest - Nelson Mandela's 70th Birthday Celebration" is held outside London and televised in 60 countries. He had become the world's most famous political prisoner.

August 13, 1988: Surgery for fluid around the lung. Subsequently revealed he had tuberculosis.

December 1988: After being treated for tuberculosis, Mandela is transferred to Victor Verster Prison, near Pearl in the Cape. He is housed in an isolated cottage with a pool, a chef (Jack Swart), and gardens. His meetings with the government continue.

In the same month, four young males, including 13-year-old Stompie Seipei, are abducted by members of the Mandela United Football Club (a group of young men acting as Winnie Mandela's bodyguards) and beaten inside Winnie's home. The other youths escape, but Stompie disappears. His battered body is found weeks later; Winnie is eventually implicated in the whole affair.

July 5, 1989: After numerous delays, Mandela and Botha meet for tea at the president's residence. The meeting is cordial and Mandela presses for the release of Walter Sisulu from prison.

August 1989: Botha resigns and F.W. de Klerk sworn in as acting president. Mandela is encouraged when de Klerk releases most of the Rivonia Trial prisoners, including Sisulu, and begins to dismantle the apartheid structure. He abandons the long-term master plan of congregating blacks into separate homelands, and accepts the principle of "power sharing" with them. De Klerk recognizes that apartheid is not working. Despite millions of arrests for violations of the pass laws, blacks continue to migrate into banned areas.

December 13, 1989: Mandela and de Klerk have the first of three initial meetings.

February 2, 1990: In a dramatic speech to Parliament, de Klerk announces the lifting of the bans against the ANC and other political organizations and says Mandela will be freed soon.

February 11, 1990: After 27 years of imprisonment, Mandela is released. His new life is busy, visiting old friends and supporters, becoming deputy president of the ANC, and traveling with Winnie to the U.S., Europe and North Africa. In Sweden, he visits his old friend Oliver Tambo.

March 1990: Appointed Deputy President of ANC to Tambo.

May 1990: The ANC and the National Party begin negotiations on forming a new multi-racial democracy for South Africa. These talks will be off and on for months, with delays due to the ANC's anger over the violence in the black townships. Mandela and de Klerk continue to hold private meetings.

July 14, 1990: Inkatha Freedom Party, a Zulu group led by Chief Buthelezi, is launched as a political party. They are at odds with the ANC, particularly over the armed struggle. Although Mandela reaches out to Buthelezi to resolve their differences, the Inkatha targets ANC strongholds in the Natal province and widespread violence escalates, with support from the white police force.

August 6, 1990: The ANC and the government sign the Pretoria Minute, in which both parties agreed to end the armed struggle. Mandela presses de Klerk to investigate police brutality and government support of the violence in the Natal province. Their relationship is strained over the issue of violence.

February 1991: Held talks with Inkatha leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi which failed to stop violence between their supporters.

Winnie's trial starts for the kidnapping and assault of four youths by the Mandela United Football Club. Throughout the years of the controversy Mandela stood by his wife; he attends the trial. She is found guilty of kidnapping, but not assault, and sentenced to six years in prison. In her appeal, she is given a suspended sentence and fined.

July 1991: For the first time, the ANC holds its annual conference in South Africa. Mandela is elected ANC president, Tambo made Chairman.

September 1991: Signed National Peace Accord with de Klerk and Buthelezi.

December 20, 1991: The first formal negotiations with the government take place at the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA 1). Mandela lashes out at de Klerk in a speech, after de Klerk berated the ANC in an earlier speech. They don't meet again for five months.

April 13, 1992: Mandela announces his separation from Winnie. She resigns as head of Social Welfare for the ANC, but not from the National Executive Committee.

Violence continues in townships with frequent clashes between police and residents.

Mandela is outraged and says the police are supporting the violence rather than stopping it.

Mandela holds de Klerk responsible; de Klerk is adamant that he does not have the power to control the violence.

May 1992: Another round of talks are held at CODESA 2 to construct a plan for a future democracy. The talks end in stalemate, but both sides agree to continue to work towards a solution.

June-September 1992: Frustrated over the unsuccessful negotiations, the ANC decides on a policy of "rolling mass action" consisting of strikes, protests and boycotts, to show the government the support the ANC has across the country. Meanwhile, the violence continues with an Inkatha raid on ANC members that leaves 46 dead in Boipatong township. The rolling mass action culminates in a general strike protesting the violence.

September 1992: The increasing death toll forces Mandela and de Klerk to restart negotiations. They sign the Record of Understanding, which promises to establish formal investigations into the violence and police actions. It also establishes an elected constitutional assembly that will develop a new constitution for the country.

April 10, 1993: Chris Hani, a popular young ANC leader, is killed by a white extremist.

1993: Mandela appears on television calling for restraint and successfully heads off violence.

December 1993: Mandela and de Klerk are jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

April 26-29, 1994: For the first time in South Africa's history all races vote in democratic elections.

May 2, 1994: Mandela claims victory, de Klerk concedes.

May 6, 1994: Official results show ANC has won with 62.6 % of the vote and the ANC wins 252 of the 400 seats in the national assembly.

May 9, 1994: Elected as first president of a democratic South Africa

May 10, 1994: Nelson Mandela is inaugurated as president of South Africa, with his daughter Zenani beside him; de Klerk is sworn in as deputy president.

March 1996: Mandela divorces Winnie; to the end, she tried to prevent the divorce.

December 1997: Hands leadership of ANC to Deputy President Thabo Mbeki in first stage of phased transfer of power.

July 18, 1998: On his 80th birthday Mandela weds Graca Machel, the widow of a former president of Mozambique.

1999: Steps down after one term as president.

2001: Diagnosed with prostate cancer.

June 2, 2004: Announces that he will be stepping down from public life.

January 6, 2005: Announces that only surviving son Makgatho Mandela has died from AIDS at the age of 54.

November 1, 2006: Mandela receives Amnesty International's 2006 "Ambassador of Conscience" award for being a moral guide in a world plagued by human rights abuses.

July 18, 2007: Celebrates 89th birthday. Launches an international group of elder statesmen, to tackle world problems including climate change, HIV/AIDS and poverty.

August 29, 2007: Britain honors Mandela by unveiling a bronze statue alongside Winston Churchill and Abraham Lincoln in London's Parliament Square.

2007: Witnesses the installation of his grandson, Mandela, as chief of the Mvezo Traditional Council.

June 25, 2008: Mandela uses a speech at a dinner in London to condemn a "tragic failure of leadership" in Zimbabwe.

June 26, 2008: U.S. lawmakers erase references to Mandela as a terrorist from national databases.

June 27, 2008: Stars pay tribute to Mandela, celebrating his 90th birthday, in London's Hyde Park.

2008: Turns 90 years old, asks the emerging generation to continue the fight for social justice.

2009: Votes for the fourth time in his life; Attends the inauguration of President Jacob Zuma on May 9 and witnesses Zuma's first State of the Nation address; Turns 91.

February 2010: Attends a reunion gathering at his home in Johannesburg to celebrate the 20th anniversary of his release from prison; (June) attends the funeral of his great-granddaughter Zenani, 13, who was killed in a car accident; (July) makes a surprise appearance of the final match of the 2010 FIFA World Cup™ at Soccer City in Soweto.

December 2013: Mandela Dies

A tweet from the Nelson Mandela Twitter page

"Death is something inevitable. When a man has done what he considers to be his duty to his people & his country, he can rest in peace" #Madiba

— NelsonMandela (@NelsonMandela) [December 5, 2013](#)

Twelve Quotes from Mr Nelson Mandela



1. *On his opposition to apartheid:*

"During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die." - Statement at the opening of his defence in the Rivonia treason trial, April 20, 1964.

2. *On his decision to take up arms against apartheid:*

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"I and some colleagues came to the conclusion that as violence in this country was inevitable, it would be wrong and unrealistic for African leaders to continue preaching peace and non-violence at a time when the government met our peaceful demands with force. It was only when all else had failed, when all channels of peaceful protest had been barred to us, that the decision was made to embark on violent forms of political struggle." - Statement at the opening of his defence in the Rivonia treason trial, April 20, 1964.

3. *On South Africa attaining democracy:*

"We understand it still that there is no easy road to freedom. We know it well that none of us acting alone can achieve success. We must therefore act

together as a united people, for national reconciliation, for nation building, for the birth of a new world. Let there be justice for all. Let there be peace for all. Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all. Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another and suffer the indignity of being the skunk of the world. Let freedom reign." - *Speech at his inauguration as South African president in Pretoria, May 10, 1994.*

4. *On racism:*

"Racism is a blight on the human conscience. The idea that any people can be inferior to another, to the point where those who consider themselves superior define and treat the rest as sub-human, denies the humanity even of those who elevate themselves to the status of gods." - *Address to the UK's Joint Houses of Parliament, July 11, 1996.*

5. *On apartheid rule:*

"We are extricating ourselves from a system that insulted our common humanity by dividing us from one another on the basis of race and setting us against each other as oppressed and oppressor. That system committed a crime against humanity." - *Speech in Pretoria upon receipt of a report from the Truth & Reconciliation Commission, which investigated apartheid-era atrocities, October 29, 1998.*

6. *On his government's achievements during his five years as president:*

"We have laid the foundation for a better life. Things that were unimaginable a few years ago have become everyday reality. I belong to the generation of leaders for whom the achievement of democracy was the defining challenge." - *Speech to parliament in Cape Town, March 26, 1999.*

7. *On his successor Thabo Mbeki's unorthodox views about AIDS:*

"In all disputes a point is arrived at where no party, no matter how right or wrong it might have been at the start of that dispute, will any longer be totally in the right or totally in the wrong. Such a point, I believe, has been reached in this debate. Let us not equivocate: a tragedy of unprecedented proportions is unfolding in Africa." - *Speech to the 13th International AIDS Conference in Durban, July 14, 2000.*

8. *On AIDS:*

"HIV/AIDS is the greatest danger we have faced for many, many centuries. HIV/AIDS is worse than a war. It is like a world war. Millions of people are dying from it." - *Statement issued in Johannesburg, December 1, 2000.*

9. *On his retirement from public life at the age of 85:*

"One of the things that made me long to be back in prison was that I had so little opportunity for reading, thinking and quiet reflection after my release. I intend, amongst other things, to give myself much more opportunity for such reading and reflection." - *Statement in Johannesburg, June 1, 2004.*

10. *On South Africa, a decade after the fall of apartheid:*

"Today we are a nation at peace with itself, united in our diversity, not only proclaiming but living out the contention that South Africa belongs to all who live in it. We take our place amongst the nations of the world, confident and proud in being an African country." - *Lecture in Cape Town, September 10, 2004.*

11. *On poverty:*

"Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life. While poverty persists, there is no true freedom." - *Speech delivered in Johannesburg, July 2, 2005.*

12. *On human solidarity:*

"As the years progress one increasingly realises the importance of friendship and human solidarity. And if a 90-year-old may offer some unsolicited advice on this occasion, it would be that you, irrespective of your age, should place human solidarity, the concern for the other, at the centre of the values by which you live." - *Lecture in Kliptown, Soweto, July 12, 2008.*

Read more: <http://www.smh.com.au/world/nelson-mandela-quotes-12-of-his-most-famous-statements-20131206-hv4nl.html#ixzz2mjnNhh2C>

17 Inspiring Facts About Nelson Mandela



It's common knowledge that Nelson Mandela served 27 years in prison, helped usher in the end of Apartheid, and was elected the first black president of South Africa in 1994. As incredible as those accomplishments are, they are far from the totality of why people all over the world are mourning his passing today at the age of 95. For those too young to remember Mandela's historic fight for racial equality (and didn't even manage to catch *Invictus*), here's a primer on some of the most fascinating aspects of the beloved icon's life story.

1. This man that changed the world grew up in a tiny village and was the first member of his family to attend school. His father, who served as a counselor to tribal chiefs, died when he was 9, and the boy was adopted by the Thembu regent, Chief Jongintaba Dalindyebo.

2. In 1952, Mandela and Oliver Tambo set up South Africa's first black-run law firm. They provided affordable legal counsel to blacks who had broken Apartheid-era laws. Mandela wrote in his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*, "I realized quickly what Mandela and Tambo meant to ordinary Africans. It was a place where they could come and find a sympathetic ear and a competent ally, a place where they would not be either turned away or cheated, a place where they might actually feel proud to be represented by men of their own skin color."

3. He started off as a pacifist — then took up arms. Though he was initially committed to nonviolent protest, Mandela changed his stance in the early sixties and began advocating a sabotage campaign against the government. In 1961, he co-founded "Spear of the Nation" or MK, the militant wing of the African National Congress.

4. Mandela was a master of disguise and a genius at evading arrest. He was [dubbed](#) the Black Pimpernel for his legendary ability to escape capture. He frequently disguised himself as a fieldworker, a chauffeur, or a chef.

5. He was dressed in a chauffeur's outfit when he was finally arrested. In 1962, Mandela was finally apprehended while driving with fellow activist Cecil Williams. In his biography, he [wrote](#): "At Cedara, a small town just past Howick, I noticed a Ford V-8 filled with white men shoot past us on the right ... I knew in that instant that my life on the run was over with other ANC leaders of sabotage."

6. A courtroom speech about being ready to die helped save his life. Mandela's [speech](#) during his trial received international attention and was published as *I Am Prepared to Die*. Ironically, expressing a willingness to be executed helped spare him that fate, and Mandela was sentenced to life in prison.

7. In prison, he was highly skilled at secretly passing notes. During his incarceration on infamous Robben Island, Mandela and the other prisoners would communicate by leaving notes in discarded matchboxes, under piles of dirty dishes, and taped in toilet tanks. Using these methods, Mandela and the other prisoners organized a [hunger strike](#) and succeeded in their effort to improve their living conditions.

8. He had a chance to get out of prison — and declined, on principle. In 1985 South African President P.W. Botha offered Mandela his freedom if he would agree to renounce armed struggle. He refused, saying, "What freedom am I being offered while the organization of the people remains banned? Only free men can negotiate. A prisoner cannot enter into contracts."

9. When he finally got out, he only strengthened his fight against Apartheid. Immediately after his release from prison on February 11, 1990, Mandela urged supporters to [increase pressure](#) on South Africa's white minority government, and called on the international community to maintain its sanctions. "Now is the time to intensify the struggle on all fronts," he told the massive crowd. "To relax our efforts now would be a mistake which generations to come will not be able to forgive."

10. He appeared in a Spike Lee film. Mandela has a [cameo](#) in 1992's *Malcolm X* as a teacher reciting one of the civil rights activist's speeches.

11. But he refused to deliver a certain line of Lee's script. Mandela [declined](#) to say the closing words "by any means necessary," so Spike Lee cut back to footage of Malcolm X saying it.

12. He worked as hard to make peace as he did to bring down Apartheid. Prior to the ANC's triumph, many feared that South Africa would descend into civil war and that there would be mass acts of violent retribution. But President Mandela established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate human-rights abuses under Apartheid and largely averted bloodshed.

13. His policies saved and improved innumerable lives. [According to](#) Anthony Sampson, Mandela's official biographer, by the end of his administration, "Three million people were connected to telephone lines and safe drinking water, 1.5 million children were brought into the education system, 500 clinics were upgraded or built, two million people were connected to the electricity grid and 750,000 houses were built providing shelter for nearly three million people."

14. He used sports to bring the racially divided country together. Mandela saw national reconciliation as one of the most important tasks of his presidency. As covered in *Invictus*, one key moment came when South Africa hosted the 1995 Rugby World Cup. While black South Africans despised the national rugby team, Springboks, Mandela encouraged them to support the team. When they faced New Zealand in the final, Mandela appeared in a Springboks jersey with captain Francois Pienaar's number on the back and the mostly white crowd erupted in cheers. After the team's win, Pienaar was asked what it was like to have "62,000 fans supporting you here in the stadium." He answered, "We didn't have 62,000 fans behind us. We had 43 million South Africans."

15. He was open about his biggest mistake — and tried till the end to make up for it. Though Mandela has [admitted](#) that he didn't do enough to address the HIV/AIDS crisis during his presidency, after he left office much of his work focused on combating the disease. He established the nonprofit organization 46664 (his prison number) in 2002, with the mission of promoting HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness. In 2005, he [announced](#) that his 54-year-old son Makgatho Mandela had died of an illness related to AIDS. He urged South Africans to treat AIDS as an "ordinary" disease, instead of a curse for which "people will go to hell and not to heaven."

16. He probably won more awards than anyone in history. In addition to the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize, Mandela has received [more than 250 awards](#), including honorary degrees from more than 50 universities worldwide. In 2001, he became the first living person to be made an honorary Canadian citizen, and he was the last person to receive the Lenin Peace Prize from the Soviet Union.

17. There's now a global holiday in his honor. In 2009, the United Nations declared that Nelson Mandela International Day will be celebrated every year on July 18 (his birthday). The purpose of the day is to honor Mandela's legacy and promote community service.

