

HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE: The face of Nelson Mandela is omnipresent – not just in SA, but all over the world. Now it represents more than just Mandela the man and the Struggle icon – it is also an image used to make money.

Jumping on the Mandela brandwagon

TO MOST people born after his February 11, 1990, release from 27 years of incarceration, Nelson Mandela and his fight against apartheid is mostly a mythical yet unquestionable fable.

Regrettably, to the youth, the "old" SA can often seem a figment of some creative adult imagination... possibly to explain their lack of advancement in post-apartheid SA.

But in African culture, parents are hardly ever questioned or doubted, so it's best advised to accept their truth.

Where their parents' values may embrace austerity, modesty and diligence borne from the scars of the fight for freedom, for many young people their values are often defined by the intrigue of opulence, largesse and a carefree "freedom" romanticised in the world of rap artists.

Their heroes and role models – dead or alive – are immortalised in memorabilia and music.

Their history is not contained within the 244-year-old Encyclopaedia Britannica, but in the 14-year-old Google, written in fleeting seconds in no more than 140 characters, and captured in an Instagram in some "iCloud". Their self-expression is inspired by hip hop stars and language code barely recognisable from its English or other roots.

As such the idea of wearing "Mandela brand" clothing may be consistent with their desire to add to their collection a bit of "historical edge" to go with their G-Star or Louis Vuitton. For them, "cool" and "hip" are the ultimate barometers of right or wrong. Unlike the symbolism of wearing a Che Guevara or Bob Marley T-shirt to express youthful, often uninformed, sympathy with a rebellion against a system, the "Mandela brand" is not so much a social commentary but a fashion statement.

Brand Mandela, such as the 46664 brand vigorously endorsed by celebrities such as Bono, Bob Geldof and Naomi Campbell, is now the "new cool", not the "old right".

Operating under increasingly tight economic conditions, the management of non-profit entities such as Mandela's various charitable foundations are being forced to explore other ways to get the cash.

Increasingly they are taking inspiration from Hollywood and celebrity brands like the queen of England, or the queen of pop, Lady Gaga.

Devotees of these celebrity brands are willing to pay for anything bearing their "hero's" stamp and the brand managers are becoming ever more predictably uncreative in exploiting this devotion.

And with good insight. In this year-long celebration of the queen's jubilee, the monarchy's value has been estimated by the UK's Brand Finance to be £44.5 billion (R570bn) greater than Tesco at £33bn and M&S at £7.4bn.

No one has yet put a value on "Brand Mandela". Although he retired from public life in 2004, the image is powerful – and valuable.

He has essentially bequeathed his legacy to his charitable organisations – the Nelson Mandela Foundation, the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, the Mandela Rhodes Scholarship and, more recently, 46664.

While charitable foundations and family may have had good intentions in striving to protect his legacy, their actions have

We all seem to have willingly fallen silent as the Nelson Mandela brand goes on sale, writes Thebe Ikalafeng

Thebe Ikalafeng is a global leader, writer and adviser in African brands and branding

had unintended and detrimental consequences for his legacy. Misguided by profit-oriented entities and individuals under the guise of "raising funds" for his good deeds, it's been nothing but a profiteering racket of immense proportions, at odds with his raison d'être – the emancipation of his people and fight for human rights.

Out of naiveté, irresponsibility or misguided enthusiasm, the Nelson Mandela Foundation's quest to nationalise or internationalise the brand has resulted in a legacy being "commercialised" beyond reason, and loss of the essence of what the brand Mandela represents.

The brand has now been reduced to a high-street commodity rather than a cornerstone of our identity and our democracy. Instead of representing what's good in us, it's become the symbol of greed and misplaced values.

In 2004, The Coca-Cola Company pledged \$150 000 to the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund linked to the estimated royalties from a special promotional can to mark 10 years of SA's democracy.

To put it in perspective, the Coca-Cola brand was valued in 2004 by Interbrand to be \$67bn and returned \$4.2bn to shareholders.

So if you compare the two brands, then that payment was not equitable.

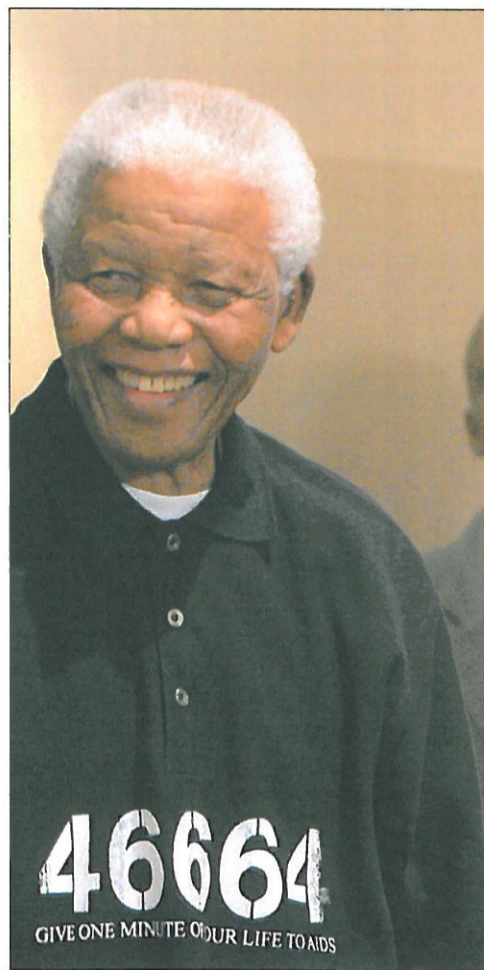
Surely a disparity of major proportions, because of the misplaced foundations of the very metric of branding when it comes to the value of icons like Mandela.

How does that metric measure the respective value of the likes of the queen of England, the pope, Gandhi, Winston Churchill, Abraham Lincoln or even African icons such as Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah or Kenneth Kaunda to their nations?

Certainly in the case of these icons, their celebrity has not been commercialised to the detriment of their legacies. While the elder statesman has now effectively retired from public, there has been no slowdown in the greedy "Mandela rush" to cash in and "keep his legacy alive" – at a price.

Everybody, from the credible to the dodgy, is riding the Mandela brandwagon to get what they can before he departs.

Everyone from Oprah to Michelle Obama schedules the obligatory Mandela photo opportunity as part of their African safari.



ALL ADDS UP: It started with Nelson Mandela's Robben Island prison cell number. Then 46664 was the name of a music concert which aimed to create HIV/Aids awareness. Today, on Mandela's birthday, it's a clothing brand that's being launched in the US.

Most South Africans will argue that that privilege has not been as easily accessible to many he fought for, or who supported him while in jail.

Now in his twilight years, Mandela probably deserves nothing less than the rest he sought, along with peace and the preservation of his legacy.

Therefore nothing could be more callous and off-brand than the recent announcement of the launch of the 46664 brand in the US scheduled for his birthday, July 18.

According to Chris Vogelpeol, the menswear designer for Brand ID, a division of Seardel, SA's biggest clothing and textile manufacturer established to design and market the 46664 brand, the launch is to "promote and sustain his legacy".

With a "Made in China" label for good measure.

Vogelpeol says: "What we are trying to do is take South Africa or Africa into the global market."

So what's the role of SA Tourism, Brand SA and the Department of

International Relations and Co-operation? The contribution of the 46664 apparel to the overall 46664 charity will start at 7 percent and end at 9 percent of annual turnover.

Surely his value, while it shouldn't be reduced to pennies, is worth more than that... and the ultimate damage to the Mandela brand.

Achmat Dangor, CEO of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, said at the launch that "the legacy of Nelson Mandela is powerful enough to stand on its own".

So how on earth can wearing the 46664 brand be a part of a "movement for good"?

Also, if the cause is truly altruistic, then surely the entire profits – and not merely a percentage of sales – should be returned to enable the Nelson Mandela Foundation to continue its good work of protecting Mandela's legacy and history for years to come.

The foundation is capable of doing good things with the legacy of Mandela, as it's done championing the UN's declaration of July 18 as Mandela Day and securing a

\$1.25m contribution from Google to fund the recently completed Nelson Mandela Digital Archives.

As we celebrate his 94th birthday and reflect on a life well lived, it is worth considering how he wants to be remembered: a man who's done good for his people and his country.

It's hardly an idea worth making into a fashion statement.

With his name and image all over highways and byways, and etched deeply in the veins of those who know why he sacrificed 27 years in jail and 67 years in jail and service, the ultimate betrayal of his legacy may be by the very people he could have relied on to protect his brand.

South Africans and the world appear to have willingly gone silent as his brand gets put on sale.

Over the years the "business" of profiteering from the Mandela brand has had many regrettable casualties and embarrassing damage to his public image and unquestionable reputation.

There has been public fallout with

many who were once friends and supporters... such as his former long-term lawyer Ismail Ayob, who was sued by Mandela for millions in profits from a Mandela-endorsed art scheme devised by Ayob. The art was sold to heads of state, celebrities and industrialists.

Mandela is said to have been furious at this ill-exposure, in addition to discovering unaccounted millions from the sales.

Unfortunately for the icon, the extent of exploitation of his brand has not been limited to strangers. Among some in his family, who should have been counted on to be guardians of his brand, there have been allegations of invoking the Mandela brand or selling off rights to, among other things, his funeral.

When he retired in 2004, Mandela appealed to his admirers to "allow me to rest". But it seems that while there's money to be made off his name directly or indirectly by association, his wish will never be realised.

©Thebe@ikalafeng.com
Twitter: @thebeikalafeng

Bitter infighting tears family apart while world watches

NDILEKA Mandela was just four when her father, Thembekile, was killed in a car accident in 1969.

Thembi, as he was known, was Nelson Mandela's child by his first wife, Evelyn, and a proud portrait of him and his father – which is held by the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory – shows a fresh-faced, happy young boy.

Thembi, who died at only 24 in a three-car smash on a foggy Touws River road, would now have been approaching 70.

Instead, his death was probably marked quietly by the family just days ago, on July 13.

Mandela has openly expressed his grief about losing his son, and then not being allowed to go to his funeral or being told much about the events. Mandela had already been on Robben Island for five years, having been sentenced to life imprisonment in 1964.

Today, Ndileka – the eldest of his 17 grandchildren – is becoming one of the more well-loved members of the fractious Mandela family. In the four years since

Mandela last shared his birthday with a circle wider than his family, she has often been quoted, developing an independent, positive and gentle voice in the media.

It was Ndileka, for instance, who told the world about her grandfather's state of health when he was in hospital. She has often been pictured with him, especially at his home in Qunu, not far from her cousin Mandela's village of Mvezo.

Mandla – who is the son of Mandela's other son, the late Makgatho – is an ANC MP, chief of the traditional council of Mvezo and the designated heir of the Mandela name. He is the most powerful member of the family and therefore difficult to touch from inside it.

But Mandla was said to have caused a brewing feud in the family last year when he had his father and Thembekile's remains exhumed from the Mandela family cemetery in Qunu and reburied in Mvezo, Mandela's birthplace.

The remains of Mandela's daughter, Makaziwe, who died in 1948 at only nine months old, were also exhumed.

Ndileka Mandela's voice of reason lives up to Madiba's legacy, writes Janet Smith

Now it seems Ndileka's role might be the one that is being actively downplayed by the "other" Mandelas, as a blood feud appears to be deepening between the two sides: Evelyn's grandchildren and Winnie and her family. That feud went scandalously public recently when Mandela's 47-year-old granddaughter earned the fury of his fiery ex-wife, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela.

Ndileka had attended President Jacob Zuma's Nelson Mandela memorial lecture at the Christ Worship House Church in Thohoyandou last Tuesday, but Madikizela-Mandela claimed Ndileka's presence did not have the family's "endorsement". She was loudly echoed by the anti-Zuma faction in the ANC Youth League, which supports Madikizela-Mandela.

Madikizela-Mandela was a source of support for former youth league president Julius Malema during his legal troubles with the mother body and has subsequently been identified as one of the prominent ANC members calling for an end to Zuma's leadership.

The league reportedly said Ndileka was "breaking rank", and Ndileka responded, saying she is "not part of any rank or faction". She told The Sunday Independent: "This was an event to honour the legacy of granddad and I didn't want to be drawn into party politics, one way or the other, then or now. Any suggestion that I was lying is not deserving of comment. When we talk about family endorsements and family opinions, we must be clear who we are speaking about."

The battle between the Mandelas has drifted into the ANC's own discourse in recent years. The party was even said to have tried to intervene a few months ago when Mandla Mandela's second marriage was taken to court by his first wife, who alleged he was acting bigamously.

Madikizela-Mandela, 75, did not preserve her anger only for Ndileka. She was also said to have lashed out at the party itself earlier this month. Apparently, she sent an e-mail saying her family were "deeply hurt" by being made to feel that "we do not matter" unless "to be used for some agenda".

The rumour is that she accused the ANC of exploiting Mandela's birthday at the family's expense and of marginalising herself and the children, especially at major centenary events. Madikizela-Mandela apparently turned down the opportunity to meet the leadership for discussions earlier this month. This isn't the first time the ANC and Madikizela-Mandela – who has sought to represent the revolutionary morality of Mandela – have battled.

In 2010, outrage followed critical comments she reportedly made about her former husband in an interview with journalist Nadira Naipaul for the London Evening Standard.

Naipaul wrote that Madikizela-Mandela had dubbed Mandela "a figurehead" who had "let the nation down" by agreeing to "a bad deal for the blacks". In the same interview, Madikizela-Mandela called Mandela "a corporate foundation... wheeled out globally to collect money".

But she denied it all, saying the interview was "fabricated" and "an inexplicable attempt to undermine the unity of my family, the legacy of Nelson Mandela and the high regard with which the name Mandela is held".

Even as the unfortunate disgrace of a family at war plays out in the media, Mandla was drawn to defend Ndileka. His words "My grandfather is the magnet of this family" echo the loudest.

Indeed, even Madikizela-Mandela's moral torch may fade once the great man is gone.