

We never imagined this moment

He represents the spirit of freedom, the fall of apartheid and the dawn of democracy

THIS is an unwelcome moment we never imagined on July 18, 1918, in Mvezo, on the banks of the Mbashe river in the Eastern Cape, when

AbaThembu Chief Gadla Henry Mphakanyiswa and Nosekeni Fanny Mandela welcomed Nelson Rolihlahla Madiba Mandela in the waning days of a World War that spanned July 28, 1914 to November 11, 1918.

We never imagined this moment during the Rivonia Trial on June 12 1964 when a despairing and suffering nation put its hopes on the shoulders of a 44-year-old lawyer, facing more than 221 charges – with his comrades – Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Dennis Goldberg, Ahmed Kathrada, Raymond Mhlaba, Elias Motsoaledi, Andrew Mlangeni – defiantly guilty for attempting to overthrow an inhumane apartheid system.

We never imagined this moment when on a hopeful day on February 10, 1985, after years of silence and absence, a principled Mandela sent a message through a young Zindzi from Pollsmoor Prison to the people at Jabulani Stadium that he will not accept a conditional release because “your freedom and mine cannot be separated”.

We never imagined this moment on February 11, 1990 when a dignified 70-year-old returned unconditionally from 27 years of incarceration to fulfill a promise and opportunity of “a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities”.

We never imagined this moment on April 27, 1994 when Mandela led 19 726 579 South Africans who patiently queued in all corners of an emerging new South Africa to cast



Thebe Ikalafeng

their first vote as a free people. We never imagined this moment at Ellis Park on June 24, 1995, when 40 million South Africans and the world united behind the once divisive Springbok colours wrapped in the flag of a new nation to defeat the mighty All Blacks of New Zealand 15-12, with Mandela proudly hoisting the Webb Ellis trophy to set an example for a new united nation – even if for a moment.

We never imagined this moment on December 10, 1996 when we adopted the new constitution and realised the promise and human rights embodied in the Freedom Charter of Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Oliver Reginald Tambo and many others made in Kliptown on June 25-26, 1955.

We never imagined this moment after defeating the wrath, torture and evil of Jan Smuts, BJ Vorster, HF Verwoerd and PW Botha, and tentatively trusting their successor FW de Klerk in 1990 – and the leadership of Mandela to deliver a long longed-for freedom.

Now, after a million steps across all the corners of the earth and 95 years from those tentative steps in Mvezo, the Long Walk has come to an unwelcome end.

An extraordinary ordinary life is no longer – an unwelcome conclusion at 8.50pm, on a chilly December evening.

“Although we knew that this day would come,” said President Jacob Zuma, “nothing can diminish our sense of a profound and enduring loss.”

We are accustomed to him speaking for us – for everyone. In his last days, he said nothing, and everybody spoke for him – of him.

To many, he is the incarnate. Oscar winner Morgan Freeman said playing Mandela (in *Invictus*) was much more difficult than playing God... in *Bruce Almighty*.

To ordinary people and leader alike, a hero. A “personal hero” to everyone, US President Barack Obama noted.

“Not only a hero of our time, but a hero of all time,” said British Prime Minister David Cameron.

To his beloved ANC – and many worldwide: “He is the epitome of humility, equality and justice.”

To everybody, the moral standard. “In him,” said Zuma said, “We saw what we seek in ourselves.”

“A profoundly good human being,” says Obama.

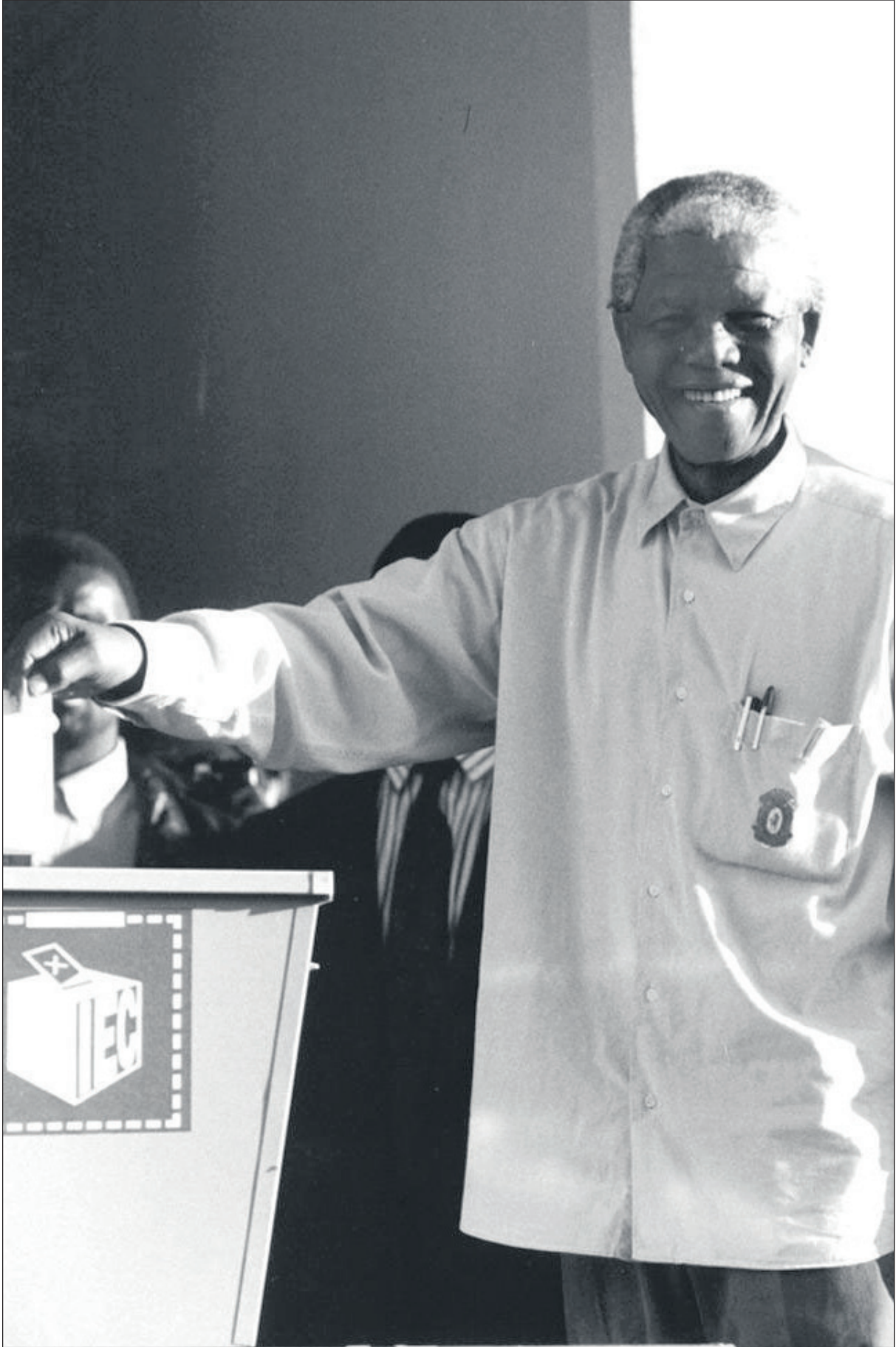
As Cameron put it: “A great light has gone out of our world.”

His is an immeasurable global loss, with a legacy and lessons for all generations:

On humility: “I stand here before you not as a prophet, but as a humble servant of you, the people.”

On courage: “The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.”

On freedom: “To be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.”



ICON: Nelson Mandela voting in South Africa’s first democratic elections in April 1994. Mandela embodied the principles of reconciliation and tolerance, says the writer.

PICTURE:WWW.ANC.ORG.ZA

On forgiveness: “Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your

enemies.” His deeds, as Obama surmised, buoyed Mandela to “take history in his hands and bend the arc of the moral universe towards justice”.

In that, he joins a rare galaxy of incomparable luminaries such as

Dr Martin Luther King, John F Kennedy, Mahatma Gandhi, Kwame Nkruma, Mother Theresa, Pope John Paul II, and Winston Churchill who once said, “history will be kind to him, because he intended to write it”. Mandela wrote his story – our

history. He gallantly took the challenge of John F Kennedy to not ask for what the country can do but did what the country needed of you.

He proved Ghandi right that “an eye for an eye isn’t the way to resolve the problems of the world”, and found a way to heal rifts of a wounded nation.

Kwame Nkrumah foresaw, that “the forces that unite us are greater than the superimposed influences that keep us apart”.

He showed like Mother Theresa, that “God won’t give you anything you can’t handle”; and like Pope John Paul II, “freedom consists not in doing what we like, but in having the right to do what we ought.”

Mandela himself once observed that “after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb”.

His summit is the peak of the best of humanity. Like the apostle 2 Timothy 4:7 noted, “he has fought the good fight and finished the race”.

“Death,” we appeal, like the poet, John Donne, “be not proud for taking the best of us.”

“This,” as Zuma noted, “is the moment of our greatest sorrow.”

But we are consoled by Mandela’s own comfort in his mortality – and contributions to the world.

“Death is something inevitable. When a man has done what he considers to be his duty to his people and his country, he can rest in peace.”

Writer Leo Buscaglia once said “your talent is God’s gift to you, but what you do with it is your gift back to God.”

The world is better for Mandela’s gift. As he encouraged us, “it is now in our hands”.

Although he is no longer with us – “with the ages” – as Obama put it, we take comfort in his example and assurance: “I shall be amongst you and with you.”

This is a life well lived. Like Erma Bombeck, he can attest to his Maker: “I used everything you gave me.”

“Let us pause,” as Obama says, “and give thanks for the fact that Nelson Mandela lived.”

We can never imagine our lives without Zindziwa, Zenani, Makaziwe, Makgato and Thembi sharing this gift with us.

We can never imagine our lives without the generosity of Evelyn Mase, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and Graca Machel for sharing the love of their lives with us.

We can never imagine our lives without the incomparable Nelson Rolihlahla Madiba Mandela.

Hamba Kahle Mkhonto We Sizwe. Akekho ofana nawe. Lala ngxoxolo sophitsho ngqolom-sila Madiba yem yem. Go well Madiba.

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Forum

His teachings will guide the generations to come

IT IS SAID that from death life manifests. Challenge is: what do the departed leave behind and what do the living take from the departed?

What is abundantly clear is that elaborate symmetrical ornamentation of life – the situation wherein the leaving bequeath the living with some normative ideals.

This is albeit with the latter’s propensity to squander the heritage due to short-termism, denialism, nostalgia and the fast-forward chase of the exigencies of everyday life.

We simply ignore the most important lessons sprung up by the death and the circumstances surrounding it.

Therein lies the urgency of life. Therein resides the burden of Madiba’s death on our national memory and imagination.

With him we were rich, without him we are wealthy: from his life, his smile, his

wit, his inability to judge, his firmness, his attitude to life, his love for his people the world over.

Madiba was an extraordinary man, capable of acting outside the boundaries of human disposition, always content in the belief that out of adversity comes freedom and the betterment of the human condition.

He always acted within and as part of the leadership collective, selflessly subjecting himself to the dictates of his organisation. Even when he assumed a cult-like figure to those he led, he never actually became one.

Correctly observing the shock of many peace and freedom-loving people of America, Nina Simone asked of Martin Luther King’s death: “What are we going to do now that the king of love is dead?” These words resonate: what is South Africa going to do now that the king of national reconciliation is dead?

The answer, like death itself, may be

too complex to contemplate. Yet perhaps our comfort should derive from his own 1996 reflections on the same subject.

Madiba observed: “Death is something inevitable. When a man has done what he considers to be his duty to his people and his country, he can rest in peace. I believe I have made that effort and that is, therefore, why I will sleep for the eternity.”

And so we march forth knowing full well that our hero, the distinguished leader of the “talented tenth” (a generation of torchbearers who gave the world a human face), has fallen, yet his spirit, teachings and warmth obtains and shall continue to guide generations. May his soul forever nourish the land we inhabit. From his death, may life manifest.

Busani Ngcaweni
Pretoria

Madiba will live forever, we carry his ideals with us

1918-FOREVER
IT HAS been said that people die, but their legacy lives on forever. Never has the truth of that statement been more evident than now, as we mourn the departure of one of the world’s greatest leaders.

Our deepest sympathy to Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela’s family, friends, colleagues and the entire South African nation.

We mourn his passing, but in so doing we commit ourselves to working even harder to ensure that we live up to the trust he placed in us, to never give up the dream of creating a united South Africa.

We celebrate a life lived in the service of humanity, the work he did in creating a nation that can hold its

head high in the knowledge that we will continue to work towards a society in which everyone, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation or disability, has an equal chance.

Tata Madiba once said: “There is no passion to be found playing small – in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living.” He didn’t, and neither will we.

The best tribute we can pay to this great South African is to walk in his footsteps, and follow his example.

We salute you, Madiba. You are a true hero, and your country will remember your valour.

Senzi Dlamini
Johannesburg

We know what to do now

YOU know what he gifted us
And what destiny he made for us!
You know what he expected of us
And what he so wanted to see from us!
You know what he wanted us to do
And what duty mindfully to discharge!
You know his wish for the greatness we were to reach for
And the kind of freedom to live and die for!
All the tyranny he stood up to;
All the ideals he lived for;
All the values he imbued us with;
All the love he was possessed of –
All, all of these, if they live with us
Nelson Mandela lives on forever!

Farouk Cassim
Cape Town

Dancing and singing to Qunu for one last dance

WE WILL dance all the way to Qunu, Madiba
Walk Mandela, walk all the way to Qunu.
Walk Madiba, walk all the way to Qunu.
Walk Tata, walk all the way to Qunu.
We will dance Madiba, we will dance all the way to Qunu
Walk Madiba.
Walk like a tortoise Mandela.
Walk like a tortoise all the way to Qunu.
We will dance, we will dance all the way to Qunu
Hard Mandela, hard like a tortoise shell.
Brave Madiba, brave like a lion.
Strong Mandela, strong like a bull elephant.
We will dance Madiba, we will dance all the way to Qunu
Stealthy Mandela, stealthy like a leopard.
Walk Mandela, walk all the way to Qunu.

Smile Mandela, smile all the way to Qunu.
We will dance Madiba, we will dance all the way to Qunu.
Dance Mandela, dance all the way to your ancestors.
Walk Mandela, walk like a tortoise.
Hard, Mandela, hard like a tortoise shell.
Farewell Madiba. Farewell Tata. Farewell Mandela.
We will dance Madiba, we will dance all the way to Qunu.
We are waiting Msholoz, we are waiting for one big dance in Qunu.
We are waiting Msholoz, we are waiting for one big dance for Madiba
We are waiting Msholoz, we are waiting for one big dance for Tata.
We are waiting Msholoz for one big dance for Mandela.
Bob Kihara

Glorious chapter in SA’s history has come to a close

NELSON Mandela’s death, after a protracted illness, brings to a close a glorious chapter in South Africa’s history.

Perhaps the most famous revolutionary that ever lived, the man who liberated the country from the shackles of a repressive system will best be remembered for the transition to democracy that will be recorded as one of the least bloodless since colonial powers started dispensing autonomy to occupied nations.

A brilliant lawyer, his foray into politics was a result of experiencing first-hand the harsh realities of inhumanity under a white government – which he vowed would never continue to oppress while he was alive.

Feted by world leaders; recipient of major awards, honorary doctorates, commemorative stamps, medallions and a Nobel Peace Prize; Mandela leaves behind a name famously ingrained globally, and one that has been mentioned in the same breath as other pacifist heroes – India’s Mahatma Gandhi and the US’s Martin Luther King, jr.

The great man departs – leaving behind a fragmented nation fraught with corruption, mismanagement, rampant unemployment and moral decay, and a divided ANC that has betrayed his ethos of reconciliation, and non-violence.

AR Modak
Johannesburg

His confidence and tolerance will remain with us all

MY FAMILY and I send our condolences to all the Mandela family members on the passing of Tata.

We also share with all South Africans and the global community our sense of loss and sadness at his passing.

Nelson Mandela will always define a deep part of what and who we are as individuals and as a nation.

It is difficult to separate the great journey to secure a democratic and non-racial South Africa from his personal qualities and character.

For all South Africans he was the face and form of that voyage, particularly in

the crucial decade of 1990 to 2000.

In the defining and tempestuous years of 1990 through to April 27, 1994, his leadership never gave the impression that he was overwhelmed by events, even in the darkest hours of Boipatong and other atrocities that were meant to derail the negotiations.

When at times we felt doubt or fear, his strong, resonant voice rolled out over the radio or TV and, like a tide going out, our reservations about the future receded.

We took immense nourishment and

succour from his fearless and positive attitude.

His charismatic openness, straight aim and direct but respectful communication with his opponents was a singularly rare quality in a time of racist and right-wing demagoguery.

A country in turmoil needs to feel that the Ship of State, riding the storm, is in good hands and he never gave us cause to doubt that the storm would pass and the country would be free.

It is the qualities of tolerance and forgiveness, however, which stand out as

his lasting legacy as well as the way he used these to unite the country both during and after his presidency.

With all our fellow South Africans we acknowledge with deep gratitude the debt we owe to this man from Qunu, who bequeathed us this great country of promise.

Today, although we grieve, we also proudly rejoice in his remarkable life, which we were privileged to share through extraordinary times.

Johnny Clegg
Johannesburg