

NELSON ROLIHLAHLA MANDELA



Nelson Mandela with his son Thembekile

90 years ago, in the small village of Mvezo in the old Transkei, a young Xhosa-speaking boy was born. He grew up to be a symbol of the struggle for freedom, equality, human dignity and ubuntu. He was to become a scholar, a student, a lawyer, a husband and father, a freedom fighter and the first black President of South Africa. Rolihlahla Mandela, later called Nelson by his teacher and known and loved by all as Madiba (his clan name), was the son of a Thembu chief, Gadla Henry Mphakanyiswa, and his third wife, Nosekeni. The name his parents gave him translated as 'trouble maker', perhaps foretelling his future destiny as a politician and freedom fighter.

After attending high school at Healdtown, Fort Beaufort, Mandela enrolled at Fort Hare University, where

the first seeds of his social conscience began to germinate. There he met Oliver Tambo, a future colleague and ANC president, and clashed with university authorities over student elections.

FREEDOM: "I was not born with a hunger to be free. I was born free - free in every way that I could know. Free to run in the fields near my mother's hut, free to swim in the clear stream that ran through my village, free to roast mealies under the stars and ride the broad backs of slow-moving bulls. As long as I obeyed my father and abided by the customs of my tribe, I was not troubled by the laws of man or God. It was only when I began to learn that my boyhood freedom was an illusion, when I discovered as a young man that my freedom had already been taken from me, that I began to hunger for it." — **Nelson Mandela**

By 1941 Mandela had made his way to Johannesburg to find work in the mines. It wasn't long before his path crossed with Walter Sisulu. Over the next 60 years their destinies were to intertwine, as co-founders of the ANC's ambitious Youth League, as activists and as political prisoners.

HALALA "RHOLIHLAHLA" NELSON MANDELA

By Mdloyi Zintle - Velile High School - Grade 9

Diza Dalakadebemkhwahlaza
Thambo dalakadebemqongqotna
Qhawe Lamaqhawe
Wena Ugingwele tshetshe yesizwe sqkhwaxhosa
Ndoda ndini eyanika ithemba estaweni sayo
Wena wathenjiswa ngobutyebi ngabelungu
Wabuza abantwana bakho bazakuthinina
Babuza abelungu bangaphina abantwana bakho
Wathi bangangenwele zakho.
Kaloku wawuxela wonke Ummi Womzantsi Afrika.
Yiyo lonto namhlanje ndikubonga
Ndisithi Hallala Wena Wasivula Amehlo Sabora.
Halala tatu "Rholihlahla Nelson Mandela".
Themba lomntu wonke Womzantsi Afrika.

Isizwe sethu namhlanje sizele luxolo,
Isizwe sethu namhlanje sizele luthando,
Novelwano, Isizwe sethu namhlanje sisenkululekweni.
Basishiya abaninzi ngenxa yoku zabalazela inkululeko.
Kodwa nalapho wema waqina wamela Umzantsi Afrika
Kuba ufuna kubekho uxolo, uthando, nenkululeko.
Halala "Rholihlahla" themba labazali bethu nabantwana
Bonke bomzantsi Afrika...

COLLABORATION: "Mandela's endurance and charisma made him the symbol of our liberation struggle... Tambo's single-mindedness and diplomatic skills sponsored the world-wide campaign against apartheid... And Sisulu, "the father of them all", set the strategic directions and the standards of humanity and comradeship which characterised the South African liberation movement... The interconnection of these three great men shaped our nation's history through the decades of struggle that led to the new South Africa." — **Rusty Bernstein**, also arrested at Lillesleaf Farm, Rivonia

This solidarity between Mandela, Sisulu and Oliver Tambo powered the ANC in its quest to uplift and liberate disenfranchised South Africans.

In 1944, Mandela married Evelyn Mase, a cousin of Walter Sisulu. In the same year, Walter married his life-long love, Albertina Sisulu. Theirs was a symbol of enduring love, of devotion to one another and dedication to the political cause. Mandela's commitment to, and progress within the ranks of the ANC, however, came at great cost to his family life. In 1956, Mandela and Evelyn divorced and he married Winnie Madikizela, who shared his dedication to the struggle. He had become Deputy President of the ANC, while she was active in the ANC Women's League.

Mandela's political activities and his clashes with the apartheid regime led to the Rivonia Trial and a prison sentence for treason. 27 years behind bars, 18 of those on Robben Island, did not crush his spirit as he continued to correspond with freedom fighters on the outside, hoping to bring apartheid to an end.

Finally, in 1990 Mandela was released and he, together with his political comrades, displayed remarkable tolerance and forgiveness towards former political foes. Within four

years they had negotiated South Africa into a new era of democracy. In 1994 he was inaugurated as President and the rights and values he had spent a lifetime fighting for became enshrined in the country's new liberal constitution.

In retirement Mandela can reflect on bittersweet memories. His marriage to Winnie also ended in divorce, he lost a son to AIDS and he had to live with the regret of not being able to spend many years with his children. While imprisoned, he expressed this regret on hearing of the death of his son, Thembi: "I find it difficult to believe that I will never see Thembi again... he was a lusty lad of 17 that I could never associate with death. He wore one of my trousers which was a shade too big and long for him. The incident... set me thinking. As you know, he had a lot of clothing, was particular about his dress and had no reason whatsoever for using my clothes. I was deeply touched for the emotional factors underlying his actions were too obvious. For days thereafter my mind and feelings were agitated to realise the psychological strains and stresses my absence from home had imposed on the children."

Despite Madiba's private pain, he exudes warmth and affability in public. He has continued to make public appearances and attach himself to worthy causes. His status as a Nobel Peace Laureate has increased his stature as an icon of freedom. The Nelson Mandela Foundation was established in his name to develop his living legacy

and capture the vision and values of his life and work. His third wife, Graça Machel, is a partner in his charitable efforts and has given him love and companionship in his twilight years.

Happy 90th birthday, Madiba. We acknowledge the sacrifices you and your family have made in creating a legacy of freedom, equality and human dignity for the people of your country. We wish you the peace, rest and love you deserve.

LIFE LESSON: Do you remember the story of Madiba being thrown off the back of an unruly donkey? Madiba and his friends took turns to ride the animal. When Madiba's turn came, the donkey bolted and threw him into a thorn bush, to the amusement of his friends. Feeling humiliated, he resolved never to dishonour an opponent. Many years later, ANC colleague Carl Niehaus felt strongly that the new National Anthem should not include Die Stem because it reminded him of his wife being tortured by apartheid agents who forced her to sing Die Stem. Mandela counselled him to "put inclusivity before pain", to "think with his head, not his blood" and to try not to humiliate the Nationalists by discounting their heritage. It was an important lesson that helped ease tensions between the Nationalists and the ANC as South Africa entered a new democracy.

SOLIDARITY: "This work is not for yourselves — kill that spirit of self and do not live above your people, but live with them. If you can rise, bring someone with you. Do away with that fearful animal of jealousy — kill that spirit, and love one another as brothers and sisters. The other animal that will tear us to pieces is tribalism; I saw the shadow and it must cease to be." — **Charlotte Maxeke**, one of the earliest female activists in South Africa

ALBERTINA NONTSIKELELO SISULU

9 0 years ago, in the tiny Camama village in the old Transkei, a young Xhosa-speaking girl was born who grew up to be a symbol of commitment and courage. She was to become a scholar, a student, a nurse, a wife and a mother, and a freedom fighter. Albertina Sisulu, first christened Nontsikelelo Thethiwe, had family responsibilities from an early age as her mother was chronically ill and her father was a migrant worker. Her education had to be put on hold for two years after her father's death as she looked after her siblings. As a diligent student, she was awarded a bursary to complete her secondary education at Mariazell College.

In 1939 Albertina moved to Johannesburg to work as a trainee nurse. In the city she was confronted with the racial prejudices and injustices that she committed to exposing and removing. It wasn't long before she met Walter Sisulu, whom she was to marry in 1944. Their lifelong partnership was testimony to their commitment to one another and to the struggle for freedom.



Wedding photograph of Walter and Albertina Sisulu, 15 July, 1944

COMMITMENT: "All these years the women have been fighting side by side with men ... and I dare say without women in every struggle there is no progress. Today we are being divided. Our own children, who are Coloureds and Indians, are taken away from us. Our own children are going to be called up as soldiers to fight against their own brothers. We as women are the only people who can stop that. The children are ours. They don't belong to the Government." — **Albertina Sisulu**

While Walter, Mandela and Tambo were active in the ANC Youth League, Albertina played an important part in the ANC Women's League. She was amongst the brave women who marched on the Union Buildings in 1956 to protest the pass laws. In 1963, when her husband and other Rivonia Treason Trial accused were sentenced to life imprisonment, Albertina was detained with her son.

COURAGE: Courage means standing with your values, principles, convictions and ideals under all circumstances — no matter what. If you stick to your principles, you will often have to confront painful interests. Having courage means doing this without fear. It means having the courage to change things ... This is why we must always be sure to have the courage to do what is right." — **Oscar Arias Sanchez**, Nobel Peace Laureate from Costa Rica

In the years that followed, the apartheid government banned Albertina for a total of 17 years and strictly controlled her movements while her husband was in prison. During this time, Albertina fought financial stress but still managed to secure an income for her household despite detentions and harassment by the police. Her profile as a freedom fighter was such that on a visit to meet President George Bush Senior in the USA, Walter joked that he was introduced as "Mrs Sisulu's husband" wherever they went!

Happy 90th birthday, Ma Sisulu. Thank you for showing us courage and fortitude in adversity and a lifelong commitment to your family and your people. We wish you many more years in the comfort and love of your treasured family.

FORTITUDE: "I was given another ten years' house arrest. That was the worst. Now I am alone and the man is in jail. The children are looking up to me for education, for everything. So because I had five of my own children, three boys and two girls, and (three adopted children of) my late sister-in-law ... (and) because I was afraid of these boys without a father, I decided to take my children to a boarding school. I used to rob Jim to pay John." — **Albertina Sisulu**

A BORN LIONESS

By Jerida Maphoto — Khaiso High School — Grade 12

Truly speaking, Mama Sisulu is a born lioness who diligently fought for the cause of freedom. She was able to call for unity and togetherness. She advocated humanity in the land. Ubuntu is what she called for ...

It is now time to celebrate the lives of our heroes and thank them for what they have done in our lives. Let us give praise to a king and a queen for their positive contribution in the achievement of democracy in our country. 90 years of dedication ... Re a leboga dinaledi. Re a leboga Dikwankwetle! Siyabonga Izinkanyezii! Baie dankie! Thank you Nelson Mandela and Mama Albertina Sisulu.

"Happy birthday to you on your 90th year of your lives." I love you.

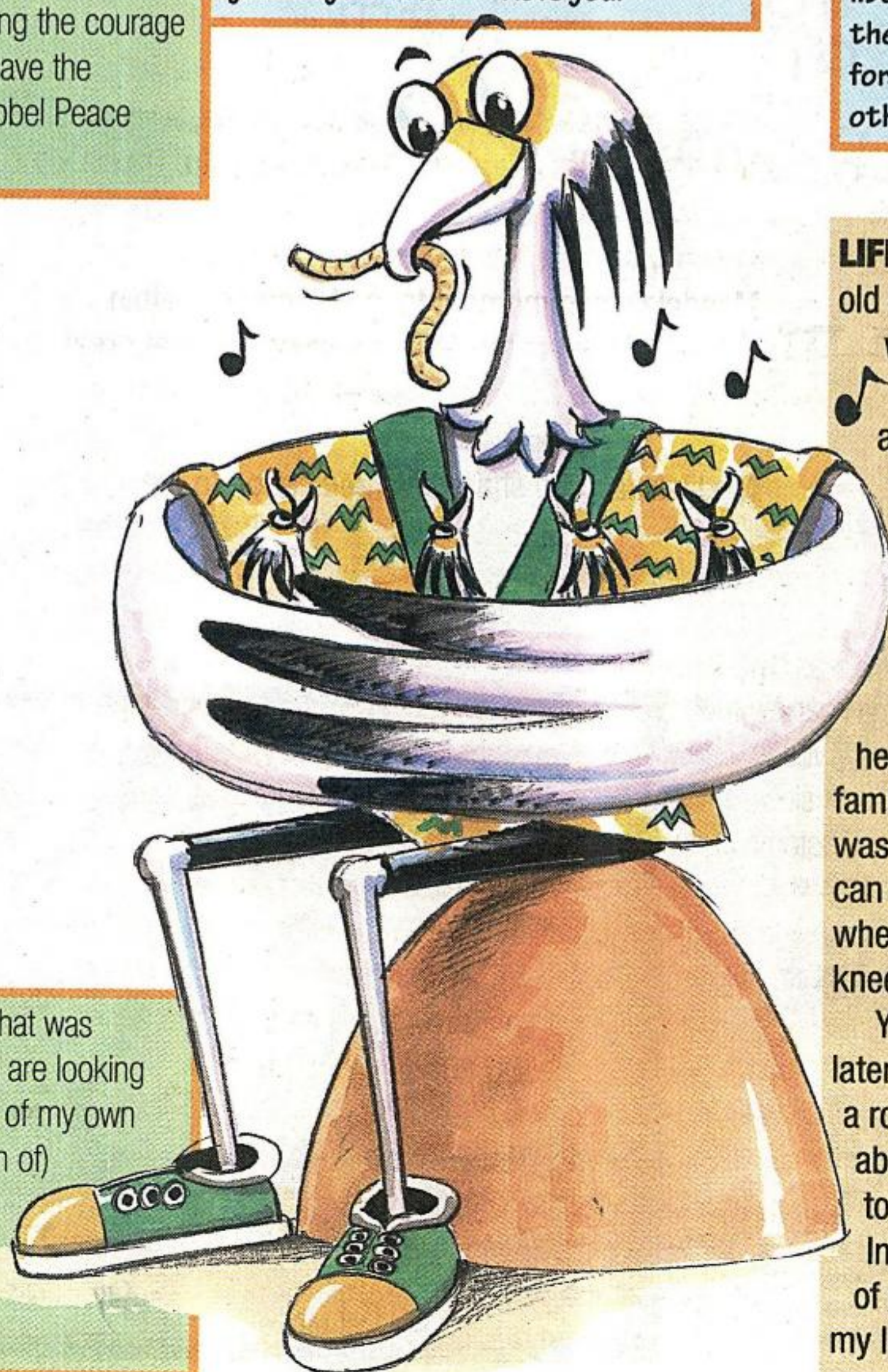
WOMAN OF THE SOIL

By Babalwa Ndonga — Mount Frere S.S.S — Grade 10

Mama Albertina respected the human dignity of her husband, her country and herself. Apartheid could not make her fear anything. She said, "I cannot sell out my nation." Because of this she was treated badly by police, but her faith and trust in God did not fail. She believed that the church here on earth was supposed to change the form of government to what it is today — freedom for everyone.

We must learn to forgive, have tolerance, respect human dignity and wait for the time to reach our goal.

She was later called the woman of the soil because she was determined to die for the liberation of the oppressed. I think she is pleased these days as we have democracy in our country for black and white. People must not hate each other.



LIFE LESSON: When Albertina was eleven years old her mother was chronically ill, and her father was on his deathbed. The ailing man asked Albertina to look after her mother, brothers and sisters, saying to her, "I know you are strong." Although her brother was five years her senior, and tradition dictated that he should have that responsibility, Albertina resolved that she would "honour my father's trust in me".

When she had her own family and children her personal strength and the primacy of her family was evident — especially when her daughter was detained during the 1976 unrest: "The Boers can do what they like to (Walter) and me, but when they take my children they break me at the knees."

Yet Albertina sought no pity. She told the press later in her life: "Although politics has given me a rough life, there is absolutely nothing I regret about what I have done and what has happened to me and my family throughout all these years. Instead, I have been strengthened and feel more of a woman than I would otherwise have felt if my life was different."