

# Mandela

## The Man & The Myth

How Nelson Mandela Brought Freedom to South Africa

*Apartheid – a name that conjures up images of demeaning, brutal, systematic abuse by the state against a disenfranchised and destitute underclass.*

*For 46 years, South Africa was synonymous with apartheid. It was a country controlled by an elite minority of whites whose treatment of the black majority was debasing, cruel and barbaric – until one man defied it all and helped bring about a revolution.*

*Nelson Mandela suffered many decades of deprivations, beatings and imprisonment for his defiance. Yet, his firm conviction ultimately won out, leading to the overthrow of apartheid.*

*His victory turned him into a living legend – despite the fact that the man behind the myth was all too flawed and human.*

• Chaim Rivkin



When Nomuula, a black woman, tried to board a train with her children they were turned away; the law did not permit blacks to ride in the same train cars as whites. She was sent to the disheveled cars in the back.

Arriving at her destination, she disembarked from the train and took a car into the city. When the car stopped at a gas station, the owner had no problem accepting her payment in exchange for filling up her tank with gas. But when Nomuula asked for the key to use the restroom, she was refused. The owner pointed to a sign that declared, "Only Whites Allowed." This was not the owner's decision—it was the law.

After travelling for several hours Nomuula and her children were exhausted. She searched for a hotel where they could stop and rest. Once again, however, she met with formidable barriers. The hotel she found was for whites exclusively. Even at the grocery where she stopped for some food, she was not permitted to enter. As a black woman she was sent to the back door to wait until a worker took her order and delivered it to her.

This was only part of the discriminatory, demeaning lifestyle blacks in South Africa were forced to endure. Laws separated families. Laws relocated races. People were randomly arrested and shot.

This was apartheid.

For South Africans who survived the decades of punishing racial classification, humiliating work rules, forced relocation and arbitrary treatment by authorities, the end of apartheid was the birth of a new world – a world ushered in in large part due to one man: Nelson Mandela.

## Apartheid

The first white men arrived in South Africa around 350 years ago after reports reached Europe of gold mines being discovered there. Thousands of Europeans—among



Apartheid-era sign stating that entry to this building is permitted to "whites only."



Only whites may swim at this beach.

them many Jews—flooded the region in the hope of striking it rich.

In 1651, a group from the Netherlands decided to settle permanently in South Africa. In 1756, they began importing slaves from West Africa, Malaysia and India. Arriving in closed, horse-drawn wagons, the Dutch settlers drove the local tribes off their farmland. Since the inhabitants of South Africa supported themselves chiefly from their livestock, this deprived them of their livelihood. Now they were forced to work on the white men's farms to feed themselves.

When diamond mines were discovered in South Africa in 1867, locals were given the most dangerous jobs. Paid less than their white equivalents, they were held in



Sign on a bench stating that only "Europeans" may use it.



Left: This apartheid-era bench declaring it for white use only is preserved as a reminder of the past. Right: White apartheid police.



Jews arrive in South Africa during the gold rush.



barracks that were walled in and patrolled by armed guards. The widespread suppression made it impossible for the South Africans to organize and demand better wages and working conditions.

During the bloody Boer Wars at the turn of the 20th century, the British took control of South Africa. In 1909, South Africa was united and granted home rule by Great Britain. The all-white government permitted non-whites to vote, but not to hold leadership positions within the government. Blacks were barred from college and by 1940 less than 30% of South Africans received any formal education.

The average white man was earning five times as much as an African. Native South

African miners received 1/12 the pay of their white colleagues, and they were forced to accept the most hazardous jobs. When 75,000 South African blacks gathered for a mass strike to demand better wages, the police used force to disperse them. Over 1,000 workers were killed and injured and the remainder was forced to return to the same work conditions as before.

In time, the blacks of South Africa more or less resigned themselves to a life of discrimination. In 1948, however, the level of subjugation reached new proportions. The National Party, headed by white supremacist Daniel Malan, came to power in elections that were limited to white voters. The National Party had campaigned on a platform of