

A CENTURY OF STRUGGLE



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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



100
Celebrating
Centenary
2018
Be the Legacy

A CENTURY OF
STRUGGLE

Be the legacy!

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MINISTERIAL FOREWORD



Our history is one of struggle and sacrifice. For over 400 years we have battled colonialism, land dispossession and apartheid. We have fought hard for our right to equality, freedom and dignity. Finally we have reached a point where we are building a new South Africa that belongs to all, a place for everyone to live and thrive in.

We would never have reached this point if it was not for our many leaders who stood together to resist the injustices of the past. From Bambata, who refused to collect a poll tax that would further impoverish his people, to Charlotte Maxeke who dedicated her life towards improving the conditions of African women.

In 2018 we celebrate 100 years of two of South Africa's most famous leaders, Tata Nelson Mandela and Ma Sisulu. Madiba is well known the world over. His years as a freedom fighter, prisoner, negotiator and president are well documented. Ma Sisulu similarly is known for her lifelong struggle for human rights – particularly those of women in South Africa.

This publication “A century of struggle ... Be the legacy!” takes a look at the past 100 years of our struggle. This is told through the life stories of Nelson Mandela and Albertina Sisulu. We include the stories of Albert Luthuli and Fatima Meer. While their stories are different, the principles and values that they stood for and the leadership they provided shines through. These were leaders that were able to show courage in the face of adversity, they spoke truth to power and worked selflessly to build a better life for all. South Africans united behind them because of the way they lived and led. They listened closely to the needs of the people and accounted for their actions. They came from a movement that was disciplined and selfless.

This is the kind of leadership we need in South Africa today. Already we are seeing young leaders rise up to be counted. They are in our universities and schools fighting for the right to be educated. They are in our communities where they are working to clean up the streets. As a country we have had many successes but there are still many challenges that need us to pull together. Democracy is a struggle – and it is time for a new generation to take it forward.

It is in your hands.

Be the legacy!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Motshekga'.

Mrs AM Motshekga, MP

Minister

The road we have walked has been built by the contribution of all of us; the tools we have used on that road had been fashioned by all of us; the future we face is that of all of us, both in its promises and its demands.

Mandela, N, 2012



■ **Struggle icons on a billboard erected across Buffalo Street, East London.** From left, Chris Hani, Albertina Sisulu, Alfred Nzo, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Robert Sobukwe, Nelson Mandela, Steve Biko and Oliver Tambo. Photo by Stephanie Lloyd. (*Africa Media Online*)

INTRODUCTION

Apartheid was introduced by the Nationalist Party in 1948 and had a devastating effect on the lives of black South Africans. Apartheid, an Afrikaans word meaning separateness, was a legal system that divided South Africans into different race groups - white, black, Indian and coloured.

White people benefited from this system while black people faced many hardships. All the good jobs were kept for whites. Government spent a lot of money on educating white rather than black school children. Land was taken away forcibly. And to make sure that the different races never mixed: beaches, restaurants and parks were kept separate; and marriage between people of different races forbidden.

Throughout our history there has been resistance to this segregation and discrimination. Many people in and outside of South Africa have fought against apartheid and for democracy. Hundreds of thousands have participated in bus boycotts, marches, and the Defiance Campaign. They have protested against forced removals from areas like Sophiatown and District Six. Many others have died fighting apartheid. Through people working together, apartheid was destroyed – and South Africa is now a democracy with a future.

This book traces the history of the struggle against apartheid as seen through the eyes of a number of our leaders. We have chosen these leaders as they played a significant role in the struggle and we need:

... to grapple with the meanings of their lives and to see what bearing their legacies have on the present.

Suttner, R, 2017

For each of the leaders, we have used select events and key themes that tell us about the role they played. This does not mean that these leaders were not involved in other things. We use these events and themes to teach about our past so that we can understand the issues that South Africa faces today, like racism, sexism and poverty.

As young people in a new democracy, the history of this country is important as the more we know about the past, the more chance we have to avoid these mistakes and build a better future. As Mandela said on his 90th birthday:

The world remains beset by so much suffering, poverty and deprivation. It is in your hands to make of our world a better one for all, especially the poor, vulnerable and marginalised!

Mandela, N, 25 June 2008

HONOURING OUR LEADERS

The father of our nation, **Nelson Mandela**, is the focus of *A century of struggle ... Be the legacy!* In 2018, we celebrate the centenary of this great leader by sharing his life story. We trace his humble beginnings leading up to him becoming a politician, prisoner, negotiator and president. We learn about how he navigated the traditional and western worlds in his early years, his involvement in setting up the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL), his choice to begin the armed struggle, his lonely years as a prisoner on Robben Island, and finally his swearing in as the first black South African president. We find out how his views changed when he challenged his own ideas on issues of race and gender. We look at the values that made him a great leader and explore what these were and how they are relevant to South Africa today.

Albertina Sisulu would also have turned 100 years old in 2018 if she was alive today. Albertina grew up in the rural areas of the eastern Cape and moved to Johannesburg where she studied nursing. She was actively involved in the women’s struggle – setting up and leading the Federation of South African Women (Fedsaw) and participating in the anti-pass protest at the Union Buildings in Pretoria. Hers is a story about fighting gender discrimination within organisations and in society. She became a Member of Parliament in a democratic South Africa and continued to fight for women’s rights. Sexism and gender discrimination are important themes to explore in our focus on Albertina.

Chief Albert Luthuli lived through some of the segregation that took place at the turn of the century. His story traverses two worlds – from taking up a chieftainship in Natal to becoming one of the first African National Congress (ANC) presidents. Chief Luthuli had strong views on culture – he believed that culture is not fixed and that we are all citizens of the world. His story is about being a leader and servant of the people – in his traditional role as chief and within political organisations. The role of leaders in society remains an important topic in South Africa today.

Fatima Meer was in high school when she became politically active. She joined the Natal Indian Congress (NIC), an organisation that fought for the rights of Indians in South Africa. In 1949, violence broke out between Indian and black people in Durban. She realised that despite all black people (including Indians) being discriminated against, Indians were better off than Africans. This created tension. She decided that her role would be to build relations between Africans and Indians. She worked with ANC members to fight racism. Through her story we explore racism – and the work that has and still has to be done to combat this.

In *A century of struggle ... Be the legacy!* we honour our leaders.

We need new leaders to continue the struggle for freedom and democracy.

Be the legacy!



NELSON MANDELA



ALBERTINA SISULU



ALBERT LUTHULI



FATIMA MEER

Be the legacy!



CHAPTER 1

NELSON MANDELA

Our generation traversed a century that was characterised by conflict, bloodshed, hatred and intolerance; a century which tried but could not resolve the problems of the disparity between rich and poor, between developing and developed countries.

I hope that our endeavours as the ANC have contributed and will continue to contribute to this search for a just world order.

Langa, M and Mandela, N, 2017, p. xviii

1918

Born Rolihlahla Mandela, the son of Chief G Mphakanyiswa in Mvezo, Cape Province. The family moved to Qunu in 1919.

1925

Starts school and receives his English name, Nelson.

1928

His father dies and he goes to live in Mqhekezweni with the Thembu regent, Chief Jongitaba Dalindyebo.

1935

Starts school at Clarkebury Boarding School in Engcobo.

1939

Starts tertiary education at Fort Hare. Moves to Johannesburg in 1941 after he is suspended for participating in a student protest.

1944

Mandela serves on the executive of the newly formed ANC Youth League and is elected national secretary in 1948.

1952

Establishes the first black legal practice with Oliver Tambo. Joins the Defiance Campaign and receives his first banning order.

1956

Arrested and accused of high treason. He and his co-accused are acquitted in 1961.



■ **Nelson Mandela c. 1950**
(Apic/Hulton Archive, Gallo Images/Getty Images)

CHILDHOOD AND EARLY YEARS

Rolihlahla Mandela was born into the Madiba clan in Mvezo, Transkei, on 18 July, 1918. Mvezo village was in the heart of the rural Transkei and home to the Xhosa nation.

His mother was Nonqaphi Nosekeni and his father, Nkosi Mphakanyiswa Gadla Mandela, was a chief and main advisor to the acting King of the Thembu people, Jongintaba Dalindyebo.

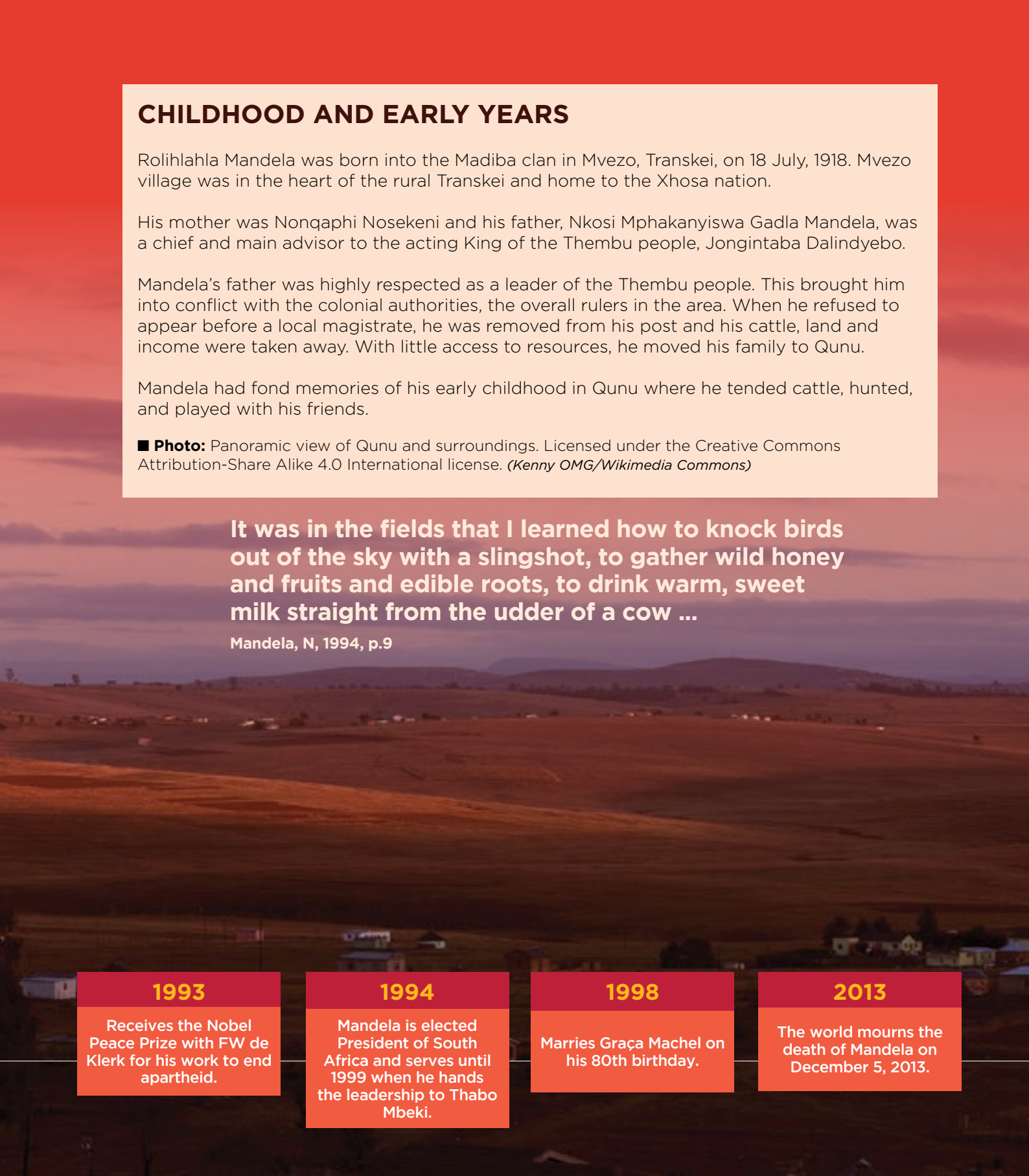
Mandela's father was highly respected as a leader of the Thembu people. This brought him into conflict with the colonial authorities, the overall rulers in the area. When he refused to appear before a local magistrate, he was removed from his post and his cattle, land and income were taken away. With little access to resources, he moved his family to Qunu.

Mandela had fond memories of his early childhood in Qunu where he tended cattle, hunted, and played with his friends.

■ **Photo:** Panoramic view of Qunu and surroundings. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license. (Kenny OMG/Wikimedia Commons)

It was in the fields that I learned how to knock birds out of the sky with a slingshot, to gather wild honey and fruits and edible roots, to drink warm, sweet milk straight from the udder of a cow ...

Mandela, N, 1994, p.9



1962

Travels Africa to find support for the struggle. Arrested and charged with leaving the country without a passport and inciting strike action.

1964

Gives a three-hour speech. at the Rivonia Treason Trial. He and his co-accused are jailed for life. Sent to prison on Robben Island.

1985

PW Botha announces he will release Mandela if he rejects violence. Mandela refuses the offer.

1990

The ban on the ANC and other liberation movements is lifted. Mandela is released from prison and is elected ANC president in 1991.

1993

Receives the Nobel Peace Prize with FW de Klerk for his work to end apartheid.

1994

Mandela is elected President of South Africa and serves until 1999 when he hands the leadership to Thabo Mbeki.

1998

Marries Graça Machel on his 80th birthday.

2013

The world mourns the death of Mandela on December 5, 2013.

THE THEMBU PEOPLE

The Thembu people had been living in eastern South Africa in the area between the Fish River and modern day KwaZulu-Natal since the 1700s. At the time they were ruled by their own king but later the different families unified under one King: Ngubengcuka (1810–1830).

The 1800s were a turbulent time for the Xhosa people. Clashes over land and resources with British and Dutch settlers increased. During the frontier wars the British seized the best land because they had guns. Many Xhosa clans broke up when their social systems were destroyed.

By 1910, Thembuland had become an administrative district of the Union of South Africa. This meant the white colonial powers could decide who would be the ruler.

The Native Administration Act of 1927 decreed that the British were to be the ultimate authorities in tribal areas in place of the chiefs.



GOING TO SCHOOL

The family had big plans for Mandela. They decided Rolihlala – which means “troublemaker” – would be the first in the family to get an education. On his first day, an excited Mandela dressed early for school.

My father took a pair of his trousers and cut them at the knee ... they were roughly the correct length, although the waist was far too large. My father took a piece of string and drew the trousers in at the waist. I have never owned a suit I was prouder to wear than my father’s cut-off trousers.

Capozzi, P, 2010, p. 10

At the village school, a single room with a tin roof, his teacher gave him his English “Christian” name: Nelson. The name stuck with him throughout his life.

Three years later tragedy struck when his father died and Mandela had to move again. The acting king of the Thembu people had promised Mandela’s father that he would look after Nelson and so he was taken to the Great Place at Mqhekezweni, the house of the regent, Chief Jongintaba. It was here that he shared a hut with Jongintaba’s son, Justice. They became good friends.

Life at the Great Place offered a different kind of education. Mandela learnt what it meant to be a great leader. He was introduced to politics and history. He found out about the great Xhosa kings and chiefs that ruled before the white settlers arrived. He learnt about the wars of resistance. He sat in on tribal councils where the King and his chiefs were called to settle local disputes. He discovered how true democracy gives everyone– chiefs, labourers and landowners – an opportunity to speak and negotiate solutions to problems.

At 16, honouring the age-old Xhosa tradition of *ulwaluko*, Mandela and 25 of his friends prepared to “go to the mountain” to complete an initiation ritual: the rite of passage in becoming a man.

The village organised a welcome ceremony where Mandela received two heifers and four sheep as gifts. He was also given a new name – Dalibunga – which means founder of the council (a traditional ruling body of the Xhosa). This was to prepare him for his role as a future chief.

At the ceremony, Chief Meligqili spoke of how the white colonial authorities had taken away Xhosa land and how the great nation had lost much of its power. His sombre words carried an important message.

At the time, Mandela’s focus was on his education and he did not pay much attention to the words of the chief. It was only much later that this history of enslavement of the African people was to motivate him to join the struggle for freedom.

For now, he had other plans: to complete his schooling and register for university education.

There sit our sons, young healthy and handsome. The flower of the Xhosa tribe. The pride of our nation. We have just circumcised them as a ritual that promises them manhood. But I am here to tell you that it is an empty, illusionary promise. A promise that can never be fulfilled. For we Xhosa, and all black South Africans are a conquered people that are slaves in our own country, we are tenants on our own soil, we have no strength, no power, no control over our own destiny in the land of our birth.

Chief Meligqili quoted in Mandela, N, 1994, pp. 27-28, from a speech to welcome back the new initiates

■ Xhosa boys during initiation.
Photo by Alexander Joe.
(AFP/Gallo Images/Getty Images)





■ **Above:** Nelson Mandela at school c. 1935 (*Associated Press (AP), Orion Media Services*)

HIGH SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY

Mandela went off to boarding school at Clarkebury College and then on to Healdtown, a Wesleyan college in Fort Beaufort, to complete his high school education. These were happy and exciting days. Mandela was one of a few Africans receiving an education that would enable them to take on leadership roles within their communities. The education relied heavily on British tradition but Mandela enjoyed this, including the strictness and discipline of these schools.

Clarkebury and Healdtown were important for other reasons too. It was here that Mandela first met students and teachers from a variety of backgrounds from places as far away as Johannesburg and

Botswana. He began to think about the similarities between his life and those of his fellow Africans, and about white domination and the poverty and injustices black people in South Africa were facing.

However, he still saw his future as a counsellor within the Xhosa chiefdom. It would be a long time before he accepted his kinship with other Africans.

Mandela enrolled at Fort Hare University after completing his schooling. Fort Hare offered western style education to black Africans. The university had 150 students and was seen to be serving the African elite. Many students went on to become distinguished African scholars and leaders.

For Mandela this world was new and strange and he had to adapt.

Fort Hare's worldliness may not seem like much, but to a country boy like myself, it was a revelation. I wore pajamas for the first time, finding them uncomfortable in the beginning, but gradually growing used to them. I had never used a toothbrush and toothpaste before; at home, we used ash to whiten our teeth and toothpicks to clean them. The water-flush toilets and hot-water showers were also a novelty to me. I used toilet soap for the first time, not the blue detergent that I had washed with for so many years at home.

Mandela, N, 1994, p. 14

Mandela registered to study English, politics and law with the hope that he could become a translator or clerk in the Native Affairs Department, a distinguished career for a black person at the time. He studied hard but also participated in sports and took to acting in a number of plays.

He joined the Student Christian Association (SCA) where he met his lifelong friend, Oliver Tambo. They taught Bible classes together in the villages around Fort Hare but did not see a lot of each other as they lived in different student dormitories.

In his second year, things began to change.

For a long time, students had been complaining about the quality of food and lack of student representation in the university administration. Mandela became involved in campus politics and supported a call to boycott the Student Representative Council (SRC) elections if campus authorities did not respond to their demands.

Although the majority of students boycotted the elections, 25 out of 150 students voted and Mandela was elected onto the SRC! He resigned immediately, arguing that this was not a valid election

but the head of the university told him he had to accept the post or leave the university. He was given until the end of the university holidays to decide.

Mandela spent a lot of time thinking about the right thing to do. It was not an easy decision and he discussed and debated it with his friends. The regent was putting pressure on him to return to university and take up the SRC seat. Eventually he decided not to because he felt the university authorities were unjustly trying to force him to make this decision. He was expelled from Fort Hare. It was devastating for Mandela.

A university degree, I believed, was a passport to not only community leadership but financial success.

Mandela, N, 1994, p. 47

With his dreams about building a proper house for his mother and providing for his sisters fading, Mandela returned to the Transkei.

In the meantime, the regent had decided Mandela and his own son, Justice, should get married if they were not going to study further. Suitable wives had already been chosen and the bride price was set. As a member of the royal household, Mandela was being groomed to become a chief and a king's counsellor. Tradition dictated that the king could select his wife.

Mandela did not want to marry. He and his cousin stole some of the regent's cattle to pay for transport to Johannesburg, fled their arranged marriages and abandoned village life for the big city.

When we left home – of course we ran away – in Queenstown we hired a car. Then the friend of the owner of the car, a lawyer said, ‘All right, my mother is going to Johannesburg. You can be in the same car but I want 15 pounds from you.’ Which we gave him because we had sold some cattle of the regent’s so we had a lot of money. The old lady was sitting next to the driver in front and Justice was behind her. Now Justice never feared whites – he was talking loudly. So the old lady, because she had never met a fellow like this who doesn’t fear whites, along the journey she said ‘No, this boy must sit there and let this quiet one sit behind me’. So we changed but she was unhappy about Justice and kept a hawkish eye on him for the rest of the journey although occasionally unbending to his witticisms.

(ed.) Mac Maharaj & Kathrada, A, 2006, p. 362

So began life for Mandela in Johannesburg. He did, however, keep his commitment to completing his education and enrolled at the University of South Africa. He returned to Fort Hare in 1943 for his graduation.

COMING TO JOHANNESBURG

Johannesburg in the 1940s was an exciting place. In Egoli – the City of Gold – there were plenty of jobs and opportunities to make your fortune.

The Second World War (1939–1945) was underway and South Africa supplied goods

and men to support Britain in its war effort. There was work on the mines and in the factories of the Witwatersrand.

Africans migrated from the rural areas to be part of the boom. This was also the start of a new phase in Mandela’s life – “one that would test me in ways that I could not imagine.”

Mandela began his own search for work. The goldmines were hiring. Mandela and Justice searched for the headman who the regent had suggested might help them find jobs on the mine. Mines recruited along tribal lines and mine bosses promoted this system in order to keep Africans divided.

The headman was happy to help. Justice was employed as a clerk and Mandela as a security guard, but this arrangement only lasted a few days as news filtered back to the city on how the pair had left Thembuland. They were both fired.

This turn of events led Mandela to Walter Sisulu who was to become his lifelong friend and comrade. Walter was working as an estate agent in the city registering freehold properties for black people. Mandela was introduced to Sisulu in the hope that he would either employ him or help him find work.

From the outset, Mandela was impressed by the man who he discovered was a force to be reckoned despite having had little formal education.

I had been taught that to have a BA meant to be a leader, and to be a leader one needed a BA. I found out that many of the most outstanding leaders had never been to university at all.

Mandela, N, 1994, p. 64

■ Nelson Mandela at the offices of Mandela and Tambo Attorneys, 1952.

Photo by Jurgen Schadeberg

(Premier Archive; Gallo Images/Getty Images)

MANDELA AND TAMBO ATTORNEYS

The law firm Mandela established in 1952 with Oliver Tambo to raise additional income to support his family was affected by his banning order. Although the firm was inundated with work – from pass law offences, through to families evicted by white farmers – Mandela was unable to take up any cases nationally without permission from white government authorities.



■ **Above:** Alexandra Township in the 1940s.
Photo by Terence Spencer.
(LIFE Images collection; Gallo Images/Getty Images)

DARK CITY

Sisulu helped Mandela find a job as an articled clerk at the law firm Witkin, Sidelsky and Eidelman. He went to live in Alexandra township, which was known as Dark City because it had no electricity.

In Alexandra, life was exciting and although the racial policies of the (present) government have destroyed its social fabric and reduced it to a ghost town, it always evokes in me fond memories. Here I learnt to adjust myself to urban life and came into physical contact with all the evils of white supremacy. Although the township had some beautiful buildings, it was a typical slum area – overcrowded and dirty, with undernourished children running around naked or in filthy rags. It teemed with all kind of religious sects, gangsters and shebeens ... Very often the police would raid for passes, poll tax and liquor and arrest large numbers ... Its establishment was an acknowledgement that a section of our people had broken their ties with the rural areas and become permanent town dwellers.

Mandela, N, 2011, ch. 3

Living conditions in Alexandra, and political discussions he had with colleagues set Mandela on his political journey. His bosses had warned him to stay away from politics – “a source of trouble and corruption”. But his own experience of poverty and the shocking conditions in which black were living angered him. He drew closer to his colleagues who invited him to attend Communist Party and African National Congress (ANC) meetings.

He went initially as an observer and was fascinated by the lively meetings called to discuss passes, rents and bus fare increases, but over time he began to participate in the boycotts and marches and became more and more active in the political struggle.

The young man who had arrived in the city believing that he would one day return to the Transkei as a Xhosa chief began to see that he was destined to fight a bigger fight – for all Africans in South Africa.

I had no epiphany, no singular revelation, no moment of truth, but a steady accumulation of a thousand slights, a thousand indignities, a thousand unremembered moments, produced in me an anger, a rebelliousness, a desire to fight the system that imprisoned my people. There was no particular day on which I said, ‘From henceforth I will devote myself to the liberation of my people’; instead, I simply found myself doing so, and could not do otherwise.

Mandela, N, 1994, p. 89



THE ANC IS MY LIFE

Conditions in South Africa deteriorated as economic depression set in after World War II. Black South Africans, who already faced poverty and extreme hardship found it difficult to survive. The situation was about to get much worse. In the white general election of 1946, Dr DF Malan of the Nationalist Party came into power on a *swart gevaar* (black danger) campaign that played on the fears of the white population. Apartheid – the separation of race groups – was formalised and a host of laws introduced to reinforce the system and deal with any opposition.

Despite changing conditions the ANC remained conservative – its policy was that of peaceful passive resistance. Younger ANC youth league members began agitating for change. Led by Anton Lembede, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Oliver Tambo, the youth league, which was formed in 1944, challenged the traditional leadership and argued that the party should become a mass-based, militant organisation that would work to end racial oppression and deliver freedom for all.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Mandela was not in favour of supporting joint mass action with whites or Indians. He wanted Africans to lead these struggles and felt that if this was not the case the ANC might become dominated by either whites or Indians. Over time his views changed as he realised how the government had used race to divide people.

In 1950, the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC), the Communist Party and Transvaal ANC held a convention in which they called for a general strike on 1 May, 1950 to demand abolition of the pass laws and all other discriminatory legislation. In Sophiatown, Orlando and Alex the police opened fire on protesters and 18 people were killed. The 26th of June was set as a stay-away date to protest these killings.

So began the ANC's active participation in mass campaigns that increased resistance to apartheid.

The conflict that erupted in 1949 between Indians and Africans in Durban (see page 137) inspired Mandela because he saw how Africans and Indians were being divided along racial lines to ensure support for the apartheid government's racist agenda.

■ **Left:** Dr James Moroka, Nelson Mandela and Yusuf Dadoo outside a Johannesburg courtroom during the Defiance Campaign. Photo by Jurgen Schadeberg.

(Premier Archive; Gallo Images/Getty Images)

People [who] were going to jail because of a principle, because they were protesting against a law which they regarded as unjust. Students who were my colleagues left classes and went to defy for the love of their people and their country. That had a tremendous impact on me.

Mandela, N, 2011, ch. 6

THE DEFIANCE CAMPAIGN

The Defiance Campaign, a campaign of civil disobedience against unjust laws was launched on 26 June, 1952. Mandela joined the organising committee and was appointed Volunteer-in-Chief. He toured the country encouraging people to join this campaign that was jointly organised by the ANC and South African Indian Congress (SAIC). Lawyers, factory workers, teachers, students were all called to defy apartheid laws. Some entered “whites only” buildings, did not carry passes, or stayed on the streets beyond 11 p.m., which was the official curfew.

Over a period of five months, 9 000 protesters were arrested and released with no charge or small fines. But the real success of the campaign was its publicity and the swelling of ANC membership from around 20 000 to 100 000 members.

In July 1952, Mandela and 19 others were charged under the Suppression of Communism Act. They were sentenced to nine months of hard labour suspended for two years.

A month later, Mandela received his first banning order, which was reinstated every few years until his imprisonment on Robben Island. The ban restricted him to Johannesburg and he was forbidden to attend any meetings. This affected his work as well as his political life.

My bans drove me from the centre of the struggle to the sidelines, from a role that was primary to one that was peripheral. Though I was often consulted and was able to influence the direction of events, I did so at a distance and when expressly asked. I no longer felt like a vital organ of the body ...

Mandela, N, 1994, p. 150

■ **Right:** An ANC meeting, Cape Town, 1950.
(Independent Media Archives)



REMOVALS, REPRESSION AND RESISTANCE

Despite everything, Mandela remained active. Sophiatown, a township near the poor-white areas of Westdene and Newlands in Johannesburg, was the focus of the ANC's next campaign. It is estimated that at the time there were between 60 000 and 100 000 black people living in Sophiatown on freehold land. The government decided to move them to Meadowlands and give the land to poor white people.

The ANC mobilised Sophiatown residents to resist this forced removal, but on 9 February, 1955, 4 000 police and army trucks began demolishing houses and forcing people onto government trucks bound for Meadowlands. The protests had been crushed.

The Nationalist government did not stop there. More discriminatory laws were introduced and planned opposition crushed. The Bantu Education Act was one example. This Act transferred the authority for African education from the Department of Education to the Native Affairs Department. This was a carefully thought out plan to ensure that Africans did not get an education equal to that of white people.

Protests broke out and the ANC called for an indefinite boycott of schools. Community halls, shacks, houses were all turned into places of learning. Government responded by making it illegal to provide unauthorised education. Resistance faded and eventually all the alternative schools closed. The apartheid state used its power to crush any opposition to its apartheid plans.



■ A mural on the Christ the King Anglican Church in Sophiatown.
(Josef Langerman, Wikimedia Commons, GNU Free Documentation License)

A CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE

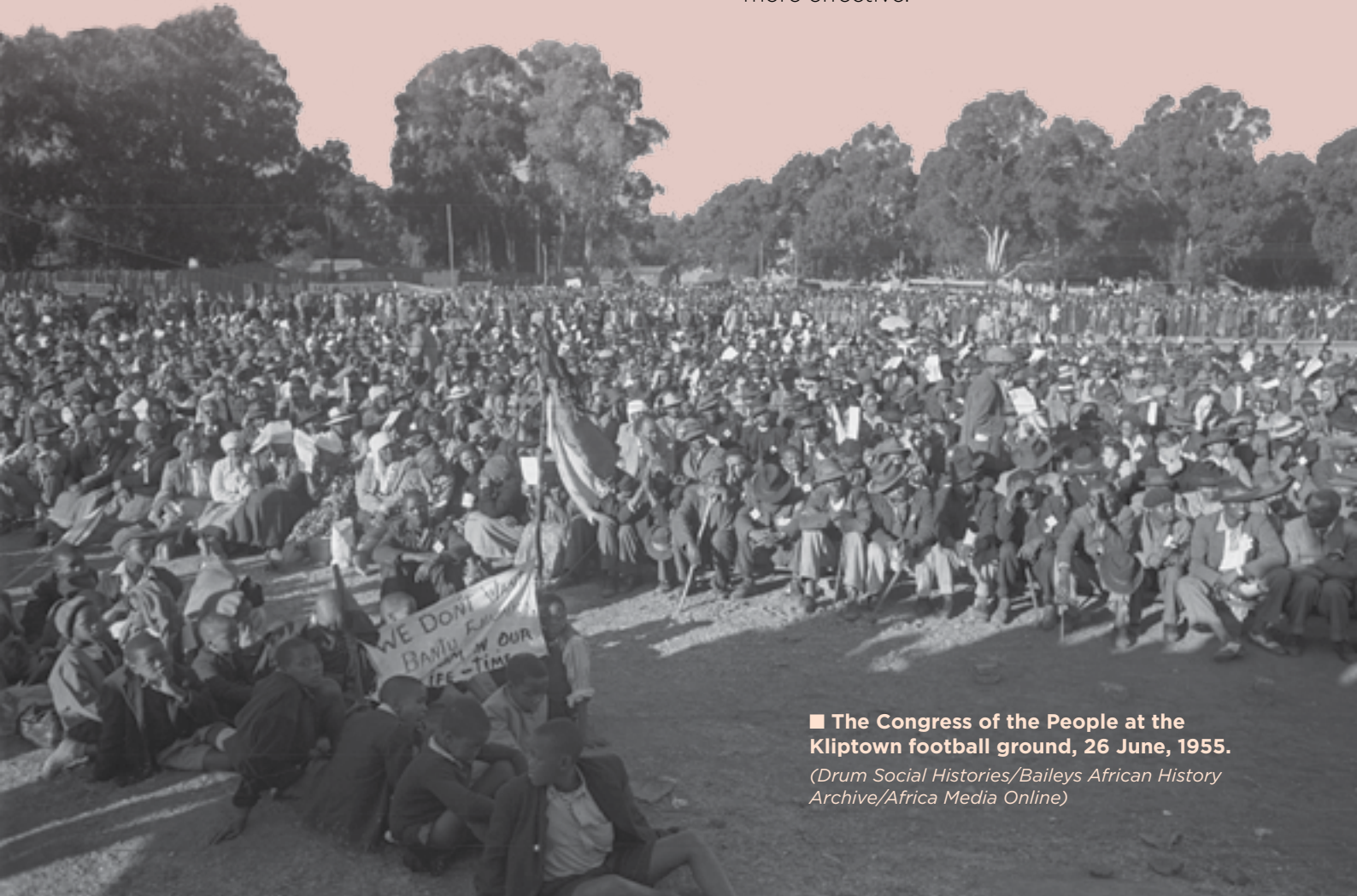
In 1955, the ANC held a Congress of the People for South Africans of all races to draw up a Freedom Charter for a democratic South Africa. Nationwide canvassing began and people from all walks of life provided their views on what the future South Africa should look like.

The congress took place in Kliptown, the oldest residential district of Soweto, on 25 and 26 June, 1955. Around 3 000 people from all over the country participated – black and white, rich and poor, men and women. Each clause of the Freedom Charter – the document key to the liberation of South Africa – was read out, debated and agreed on.

As a banned person, Mandela was not allowed to attend and watched in secret from the sidelines. On the second day the police moved in and broke up the meeting.

Force was being on people who were gathering peacefully to decide on the country's future. The ANC began to question whether their method of mass protest was working. Was the ANC's policy of non-violence, which differed from pacifism in that ANC members defended themselves when attacked, the most effective method of resistance?

There was talk of change – from holding public meetings, issuing press statements and organising stay-aways – to something more effective.



■ The Congress of the People at the Kliptown football ground, 26 June, 1955.
(Drum Social Histories/Baileys African History Archive/Africa Media Online)



■ **Above:** Treason trialists, December 1956.
(Keystone-France/Gamma-Keystone Gallo Images/Getty Images)



■ **Left:** ANC supporters give the thumbs-up as a prison van carrying anti-apartheid militants passes them on the way to Johannesburg's courthouse, 28 December, 1956.
(OFF/AFP/Getty Images)



■ **Below left:** Mandela supporters, 1962. Photo by Dennis Lee Royle
(Associated Press (AP), Orion Media Services)

A freedom fighter learns the hard way that it is the oppressor who defines the nature of the struggle, and the oppressed is often left no recourse but to use methods that mirror those of the oppressor. At a certain point we can only fight fire with fire.

Mandela, N, 1994, p. 154-155

CHARGED WITH TREASON

Shortly after the Congress of the People, the police began to arrest the alliance organisers. All 156 were charged with high treason and conspiracy to overthrow the state. If they were convicted, they would all have faced the death penalty. Mandela, Sisulu, Luthuli and Tambo were among the leaders charged for their roles in the Defiance Campaign, the Sophiatown removals and Congress of the People.

Protests broke out nationally with protesters declaring: "We stand by our leaders". At court appearances, initially held in Johannesburg, crowds gathered to support their leaders. The leaders were released on bail – £250 for whites, £100 for Indians and £25 for Africans. Even bail money at the time was different for different race groups!

The Treason Trial dragged on for over four years. During that time the state dropped charges against some of the accused, including Luthuli and Tambo. At the final count 30 accused remained, including Mandela.

While the courtcase dragged on, the ANC continued campaigning against apartheid. The pass laws were seen as particularly wicked. In 1960, the ANC decided to organise a national anti-pass campaign that would begin on 31 March and end on 26 June, with as many people gathering to burn their passes.

The **Pan African Congress (PAC)** did not join with the ANC and decided to hold their own anti-pass demonstrations. On 21 March, 1960, a demonstration in Sharpeville was met with massive police brutality. By the end of the day, 69 Africans had been killed.

■ **The aftermath of the Sharpeville Massacre, 21 March, 1960.**

(Photo by Keystone-France/Gamma-Keystone via Getty Images)



THE PAN AFRICAN CONGRESS (PAC)

The PAC broke away from the ANC in 1959. They were Africanists and called for a “government of the African by the Africans and for the Africans”. They did not support communism and believed that whites and Indians were foreign minority groups. Robert Sobukwe was the first PAC president.

When news of the massacre reached the treason trialists they decided to continue the anti-pass campaign. A day of mourning was set for March 28, 1960 at which struggle leaders publicly burnt their passes. The state responded with force and declared a state of emergency.

Again, leaders were arrested and thrown into jail. The situation worsened when the ANC and PAC were banned. Anyone who was a member could be fined or imprisoned and those accused of “furthering the aims” of these organisations could face up to ten years in prison.

When the Treason Trial finally came to an end in March 1961, all the defendants were found not guilty. The judge could not find any evidence that the ANC had decided to overthrow the state by violence or that the accused were communists.

Now that Mandela was finally free and his ban was about to end, he was given a new task: to organise a national convention in which all South Africans would sit together to draft a new non-racial constitution.

If the government refused, a national three-day stayaway would be called from 29 May, 1961 until 31 May, 1961, the day South Africa was to be declared a republic.

This was a difficult time. Government repression increased and every campaign was met with violence. It was time for the ANC to rethink its approach.

The ANC began to make plans to take the struggle underground.

SOUTH AFRICA BECOMES A REPUBLIC

South Africa became a republic on 31 May, 1961. This had been a dream of many Afrikaners since the 19th century. They wanted to break ties with Britain and exit the Commonwealth. White South Africans were only allowed to vote on whether the country should become a republic or not. This was decided by a slim majority as many white English-speaking South Africans wanted to remain connected to Britain.

Two days before the planned stay-at-home, the government staged the greatest peacetime show of force in South African history. The military exercised its largest call up since the war. Police holidays were cancelled. Military units were stationed at the entrance and exit of townships ... At night the helicopters trained searchlights on houses.

Mandela, N, 1994, p. 257



■ **Mandela with commanders of the Algerian army in 1962**
(Keystone-France/Gamma-Keystone/Gallo Images/Getty Images)

THE BLACK PIMPERNEL

In 1961, Mandela travelled the country building ANC structures and planning the national convention. Oliver Tambo was already in exile, but Mandela had agreed to stay on and organise internal structures. These were dangerous times and he was forced to stay with different friends in safe houses to avoid arrest. He took a new name – David Motsamayi.

Mandela spent a lot of time thinking about how the ANC should approach the next

phase of the struggle. It was obvious that the government was out to block any resistance. In an interview with British television Mandela reflected on this:

If the government reaction is to crush by naked force our non-violent struggle, we will have to reconsider our tactics. In my mind we are closing a chapter on this non-violent policy.

Kathrada, A and Maharaj, M, p. 102

We took up the attitude that we would stick to non-violence only insofar as the conditions permitted that. Once the conditions were against that we would automatically abandon non-violence and use the methods which were dictated by the conditions. That was our approach.

Mandela, N, 2011, ch. 3

At the time, this was not the ANC position. Only later that year, at the national congress and after much discussion and debate, the ANC announced its support for an armed struggle. All attempts to get government to listen to their demands had been met with force and it was time for a new approach.

Mandela was asked to lead the armed struggle and he helped set up Umkhonto weSizwe (MK), which means Spear of the Nation, the armed wing of the ANC. The strategy was to bomb buildings that were symbols of apartheid rule and damage electricity and telephone lines. It was thought this would weaken the economy and foreign capital would be pressured to leave. Civilians were not to be the target.

In December 1961, MK set off the first bombs at power stations and government offices in Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Durban.

Thousands of leaflets were distributed throughout the country introducing MK and explaining why the ANC had chosen armed struggle. The government was taken by surprise and reinforced efforts to find the ANC leaders.

Mandela was living undercover at Lilliesleaf Farm, a secret hide-out and safe house in Rivonia, which was used by ANC and Communist Party activists.

On 11 January, 1962, he travelled around Africa and visited England to gain support for the armed struggle. He received military training in Morocco and Ethiopia and returned to South Africa in July 1962.

On his return he was forced underground once again. He disguised himself as a gardener and a driver and was constantly on the move. The police referred to him as the Black Pimpernel because he managed to avoid arrest for almost two years.

Eventually, on 5 August, 1962, on a trip to brief Chief Albert Luthuli, ANC president at the time, on ANC matters, Mandela was arrested in Howick, a small town just outside Pietermaritzburg in what was then the province of Natal.

Mandela was charged with leaving the country without a permit and inciting workers to strike but not for any of his MK activities. His arrest sparked protests and calls to “Free Mandela”. Despite this, he was convicted and sentenced to five years in prison, which he began serving at the Pretoria Local Prison. On 27 May, 1963 he was transferred to Robben Island but was returned to Pretoria on 12 June.

Within a month of his imprisonment, police raided Lilliesleaf Farm and captured the entire high command of Umkhonto we Sizwe.

RIVONIA TREASON TRIAL

On 9 October, 1963, Mandela joined ten fellow trialists in the Rivonia Treason Trial. The ANC decided to use the trial as a political platform to outline their beliefs. The trialists agreed that they would not deny the acts of sabotage but would explain why they had opted to follow this path. They would also not supply any information that might implicate others.

Mandela chose to make a statement from the dock instead of becoming a first witness for the defence, as had been discussed with his co-accused.

On 11 June, 1964, Mandela and seven accused – Walter Sisulu, Ahmed Kathrada, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Denis Goldberg, Elias Motsoaledi and Andrew Mlangeni – gathered at the Palace of Justice where a guilty verdict was handed down. They returned to their cells despondent because they were expecting to receive the death penalty. The question was whether they would appeal should this happen. They took a decision: no matter the sentence, they would not appeal.

At the trial the following day, they heard their fate. When Justice De Wet ruled, “The sentence in the case of all accused will be one of life imprisonment”, there were cries of joy. They had escaped the death penalty, although all were to begin sentences that would rob them of many years of their lives.

Goldberg was sent to Pretoria Prison because he was white, while the others were sent to Robben Island.

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 idea of a democratic and free society in which all persons will live together in harmony 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.

Final words of Mandela’s statement during the Rivonia Treason Trial. (Mandela, N, 1994, p. 354)

In the “State versus the National High Command and others” all the accused were being charged with sabotage. In pleading, each stated:

My lord, it is not I but the government that should be in the dock. I plead not guilty.

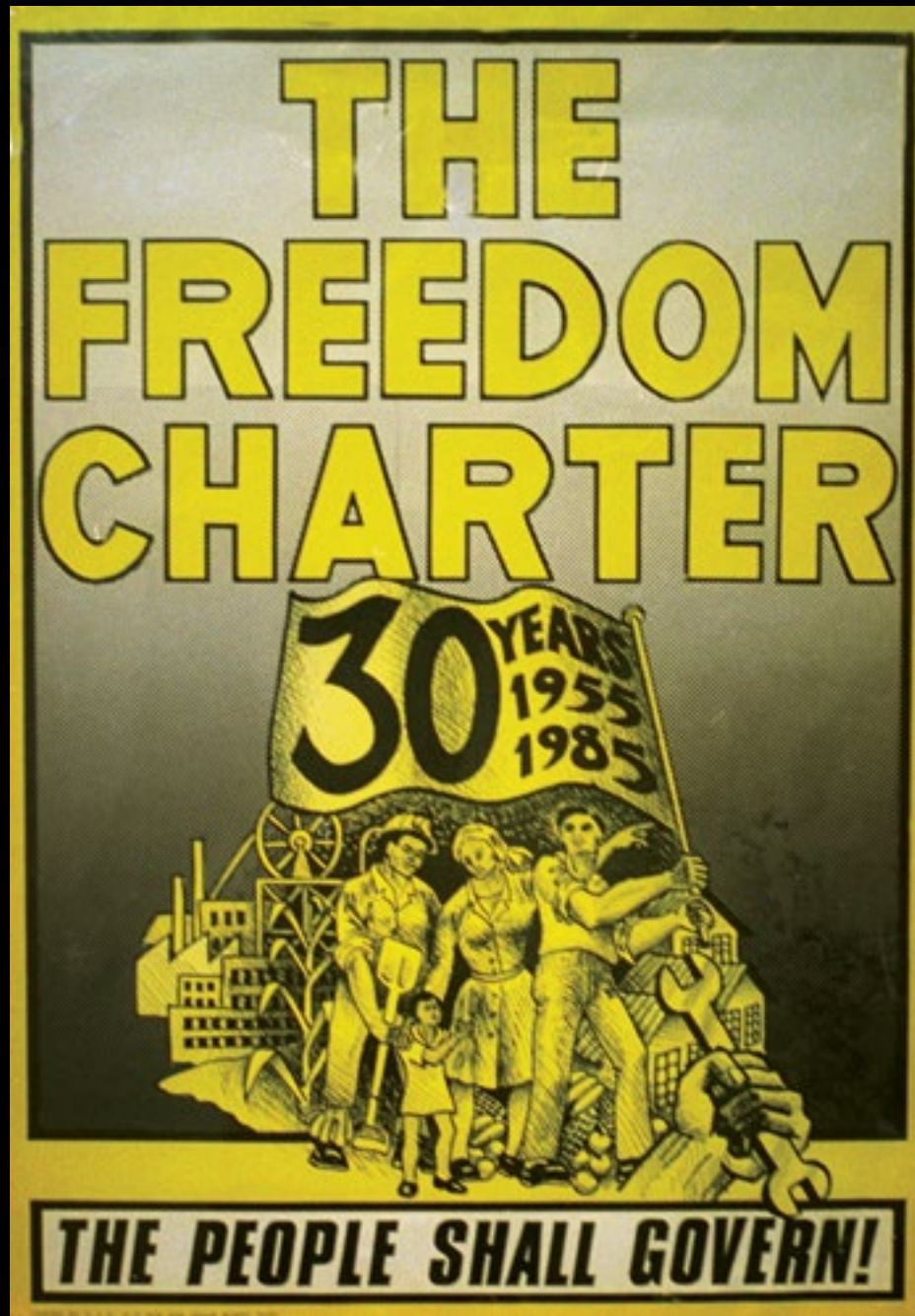
Mandela, N, 1994, p. 115



■ **Above:** Protest for Mandela and Walter Sisulu after they were sentenced to life imprisonment after the Rivonia Treason Trial, 1964. (*Associated Press (AP), Orion Media Services*)

We were expecting a death sentence and we had resigned ourselves to it. But of course, it’s a very serious experience where you feel that somebody is going to turn to you and tell you now that ‘This is the end of your life’ and that was a matter of concern, but nevertheless we had tried, you know to, to steel ourselves for this eventuality, tragic as it was. And I was with brave colleagues, they appeared to braver than myself.

Mandela, N, 2011, ch. 6



■ Poster celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Freedom Charter.
(Graeme Williams / Africa Media Online)

THE PRISON YEARS

Robben Island should live in the memory of our people. Robben Island – one time leper colony, Second World War naval fortress guarding the entrance to Cape Town harbour – a tiny outcrop of limestone, bleak, windswept and caught in the wash of the cold Benguela current, whose history counts the years of our people's bondage. My new home.

Mandela, N, 2011, ch. 7

Prison life was difficult. The Island was cold in winter and hot in summer. Prisoners were woken at 5.30 a.m. to wash and clean the cells and empty the bucket toilets. They were taken to the limestone quarry where they worked in rows smashing and loading the rocks and stones. This was done in silence; for the first two years they were forbidden to talk to each other. At 4 p.m. they were given an hour to have a cold bath – they only received warm water eight years later – before returning to their cells.

The first battle was about the prison uniform. African prisoners were given short pants while Indian and coloured prisoners wore trousers. This was seen by the political prisoners as an attempt to undermine their dignity as African men. Mandela challenged this – but it was only three years later, after many battles and some time spent in solitary confinement, that this demand was accepted.

■ **Right:** A prison cell on Robben Island.
Photo by Klaus Rose.
(Ullstein Bild, Gallo Images/ Getty Images)



The quality of the food was another source of conflict. Breakfast was maize porridge, lunch, boiled kernels of maize and fermented maize stirred into water or milk, and dinner, maize porridge again with some vegetables and gristly meat. Dinner was eaten in the cells to prevent the prisoners from interacting with one another. They were also kept in their cells over the weekend.

The prisoners protested these conditions, drew up petitions, went on hunger strike – and very slowly, over time, things began to change.

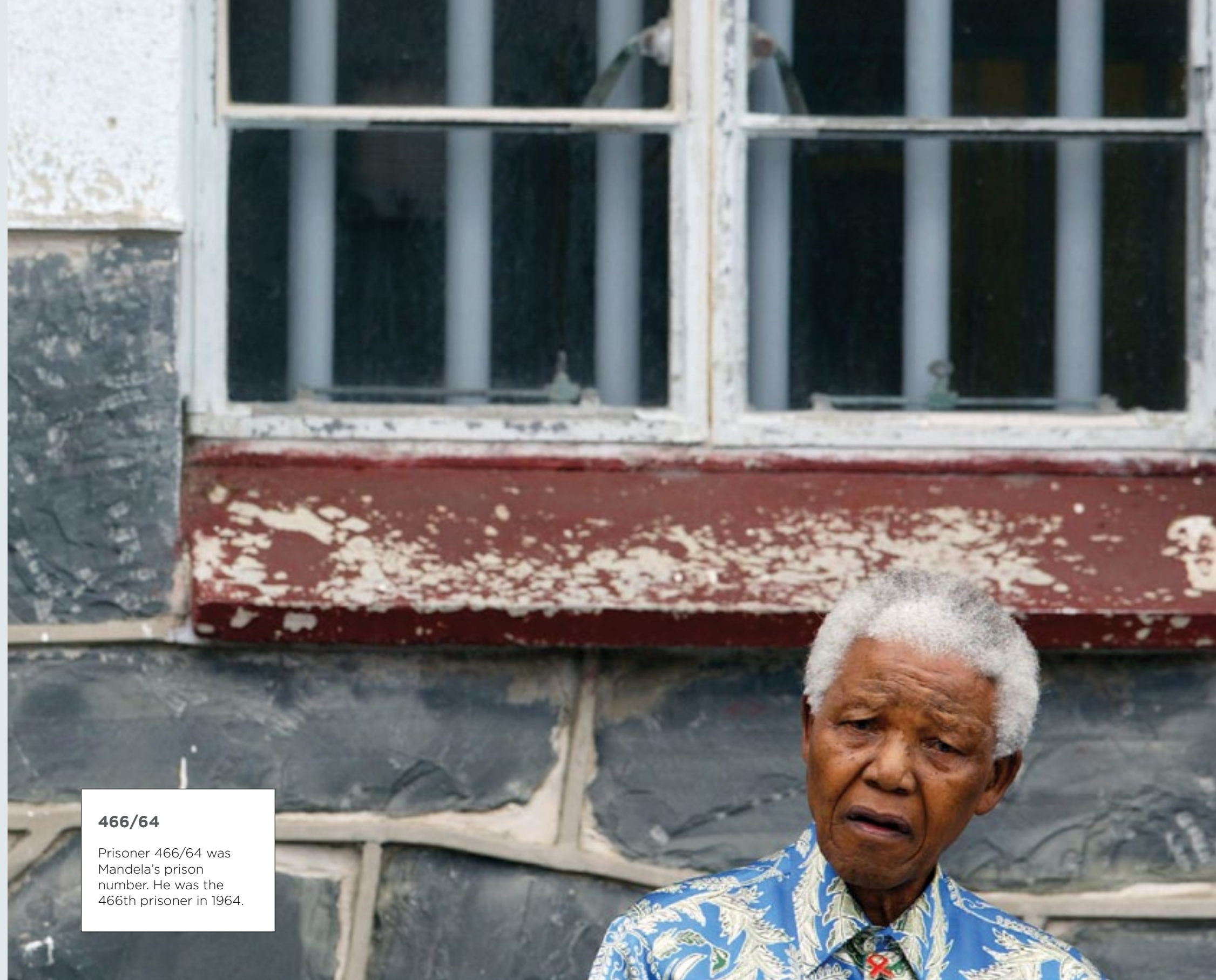
Prison not only robs you of your freedom, it attempts to take away your identity. Everyone wears a uniform, eats the same food, follows the same schedule. It is by definition a purely authoritarian state that tolerates no independence or individuality. As a freedom fighter and a man, one must fight against the prison's attempt to rob one of these qualities.

Mandela, N, 1994, p. 321

■ **Right:** Nelson Mandela outside his former prison cell in 2003. Photo by Paul Gilham.
(Gallo Images/ Getty Images)

466/64

Prisoner 466/64 was Mandela's prison number. He was the 466th prisoner in 1964.





A letter was like the summer rain that could make even the desert bloom.

Kathrada, A and Maharaj, M, p. 136

The hardest thing for prisoners to bear was separation from their families. Mandela, known as prisoner 466/64, arrived on the Island as a Category D prisoner. This category prisoner could send and receive one letter and one visit every six months. The letter could only be 500 words long and was censored.

Warders were aware of how much family meant to the prisoners and used this as a means of torture. On occasion Mandela returned to his cell and found newspaper articles about Winnie on his bed. He read about how she had been dragged away in the night with their daughter Zindzi clutching her skirt and about her detention and bannings. All this caused him great distress as he was unable to help in any way.

Sometimes Winnie and other members of his family would arrive on Robben Island only to be told they had not followed the rules. The visit would be denied. Letters to and from family were censored or not sent to him at all.

The pain of being separated from his family was made worse by the news of the deaths of his mother and his son. His mother visited in 1968 but this was the last time he would see her – she died of a heart attack shortly thereafter. A year later, his son, Thembekile, was killed in a car accident. He was only 25 years old.

When Mandela asked for special permission to attend his mother's funeral the authorities turned him down. It was part of the plan to break the prisoners.

■ **Left:** Winnie Mandela on her way to Robben Island to visit her husband, Nelson Mandela.
(Independent Media Archives)

I returned to my cell and lay on my bed. I did not know how long I stayed there, but I did not emerge for dinner. Some of the men looked in, but I said nothing. Finally, Walter came to me and knelt by my bed, and I handed him the telegram. He said nothing, but only held my hand. I do not know how long he remained with me. There is nothing that one man can say to another at such a time.

Kathrada, A and Maharaj, M, p. 201

Despite their hardships, the prisoners remained committed. The ANC set up a committee on the Island to discuss and debate policy.

They encouraged other political groupings to participate in a prison committee to fight for better conditions and keep the struggle alive. Conditions gradually improved. Prisoners used their time to educate themselves and each other. Many

registered at universities to complete their studies. Robben Island became known as "The University" because of the debates and discussions among prisoners.

Walter (Sisulu), perhaps the greatest living historian of the ANC, began to tell them about the genesis of the organisation ... Syllabus A also included a course by Kathy (Ahmed Kathrada) "A History of the Indian Struggle". Mac (Maharaj) who had studied in the German Democratic Republic taught a course on Marxism ... I taught a course in political economy.

Mandela, N, 1994, p. 65

■ **Below:** SACP chief Joe Slovo, Toni Yengeni, Walter Sisulu and ANC Secretary-General, Alfred Nzo, visiting Robben Island in 1991. Photo by Brenton Geach. (Independent Media Archives)



It was not only the inmates who were being educated. Mandela also tried to educate and win over his warders.

Resistance to apartheid was on the rise again. In 1976, schoolchildren took to the street to protest against being taught in Afrikaans. Young ANC militants involved in the uprising began arriving on the island. They had been radicalised and Mandela was forced to negotiate with prison authorities on their behalf a number of times. They brought news of the outside struggle and engaged in lively debates.

By 1977 work at the quarry had slowed down and prisoners had more time for reading, writing and discussions. Conditions continued to improve. Prisoners were allowed more visits from family members, access to newspapers and magazines and could listen to approved news broadcasts. But this was still prison!

Slowly the years passed. Outside the prison walls, resistance to apartheid grew. MK launched a military campaign and trade unions and communities began organising against apartheid.

The government was worried and discussed Mandela and his role as a black leader. They were aware that in 1974 he had turned down an offer of release by Minister of Justice, Jimmy Kruger, because it came with conditions: abandon the armed struggle, recognise the Transkei government and return to live there. Was it possible to really enter into negotiations with him now?

With junior officers Nelson was charming and fatherly. Many young warders were friendly to him, occasionally soliciting advice from him in connection with their jobs or social problems. Some brought him greetings from their parents.

Mandela, N, 1990, p. 265

■ **Right:** Nelson Mandela visiting Victor Verster prison on 1 January, 1995.
(TSJ Merlyn Licensing BV, Gallo Images/ Getty Images)



TALKS-ABOUT-TALKS

In March 1982, after 18 years on Robben Island, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Raymond Mhlaba and Andrew Mlangeni were transferred to Pollsmoor Prison on the Cape mainland. The transfer caught them all by surprise. They had been given no reasons for this.

A man can get used to anything, and I had grown used to Robben Island ... and while it was never a home ... it had become a place where I felt comfortable.

Kathrada, A and Maharaj, M, p. 195

The 1980s were a turbulent time for South Africa. The United Democratic Front (UDF) – a front of different organisations working together to fight apartheid – was formed.

The ANC was increasingly active. Oliver Tambo issued a call to make South Africa ungovernable and apartheid unworkable. The townships were on fire. International companies began pulling out of the country and the financial crisis deepened.

Mandela was honoured locally and internationally and calls were made for him to be released. Prime Minister, PW

Botha, responded by declaring a State of Emergency and sent the army into the townships. Activists were arrested, tortured and killed. The National Party felt increasing pressure and saw that they were losing control. They knew that things had to change. They offered Indians and coloureds an opportunity to participate in a tri-cameral Parliament. But this was met with further resistance.

Botha remained stubborn. He insisted that he would only let Mandela go free if he denounced violence as a political strategy. Mandela refused.



The government realised it was losing control of the situation. They needed to start talking to Mandela and the ANC if things were to change.

In 1985, Mandela was paid a surprise visit by Justice Minister Kobie Coetsee. Over the next three years Coetsee continued to meet Mandela to discuss the conditions for his release and for the start of negotiations.

■ **Above:** South African soldiers read about Mandela's release. February 1990. Photo by Georges De Keerle.
(Gallo Images/Getty Images)

What freedom am I being offered while the organisation of the people remains banned?

What freedom am I being offered when I may be arrested for a pass offence?

What freedom am I being offered to live my life as a family with my dear wife who remains in banishment in Brandfort.

What freedom am I being offered when I must ask for permission to live in an urban area ... when my very South African citizenship is not respected.

Only free men can negotiate. Prisoners cannot enter into contract. I cannot and will not give any undertaking at the time when I and you, the people, are not free. Your freedom and mine cannot be separated. I will return!

Statement read by Mandela's daughter, Zindzi, at a rally in Jabulani, Soweto. 10 February, 1985.

Mandela insisted that he should meet PW Botha directly to discuss these matters.

ANC National Executive Committee (NEC) members were worried that Mandela was acting alone. He reassured them that these meetings were "talk-about-talks" and that he was using them to put pressure on the government to meet with the ANC leadership.

Throughout these talks, Mandela continued to argue:

We are prisoners, we don't negotiate. You have to negotiate with the ANC. You have to un-ban them, let them come back, release the political prisoners, then only can negotiations happen on an equal level.

Nelson Mandela quoted in Lodge, T, 2007, p.159

Opposition parties, church leaders and international emissaries began to meet secretly with the ANC to discuss how to reach a settlement that everyone would be happy with. The ANC agreed to negotiate but only if certain conditions were met. They drew up a list of conditions referred to as the Harare Declaration which was adopted by the United Nations (UN) as the plan for the negotiated settlement.

PW Botha was still not prepared to give in to any of the ANC's demands and resigned. In August 1989, FW de Klerk became leader of the Nationalist Party and announced his willingness to start negotiations. He immediately removed some of the apartheid laws and agreed to release eight political prisoners: Walter Sisulu, Elias Motsoaledi, Wilton Mkwayi, Andrew Mlangeni, Ahmed Kathrada, Raymond Mhlaba, Jafta Masemola and Oscar Mpetha. Five days later they were freed.

In December 1989, Mandela met with De Klerk for the first time and on 2 February, 1990 at the opening of Parliament, it was announced that the ANC, PAC, South African Communist Party (SACP) and 31 other political parties would be unbanned.

Capital punishment was also suspended, and political prisoners including Mandela were to be released from jail.

Real negotiations could begin at last.



■ **Top:** Nelson Mandela and wife Winnie raise their fists upon his release from Victor Verster prison, 11 February, 1990. Photo by Greg English. (Associated Press (AP), Orion Media Services)

■ **Bottom:** Crowds welcoming Mandela after his release. (Associated Press (AP), Orion Media Services)

FREE AT LAST ...

Mandela was released from prison on 11 February, 1990. Thousands waited for him outside Victor Verster Prison; others gathered at the Grand Parade in Cape Town and millions more switched on their televisions as Mandela took his first steps to freedom.

Mandela made his first speech as a free man at the Grand Parade where colonial armies had paraded and Queen Victoria's birthday had been celebrated for more than 50 years. It was here, in 1882, that the Zulu king, Cetshwayo was brought up from the dungeons. Things in South Africa were never going to be the same again – and this signalled the start of that change.

Mandela stayed in Cape Town overnight but returned to his home in Orlando, Soweto two days later.

It is only then that I knew in my heart that I had left prison. For me no. 8115 was the centre point of my world, the place marked with an X in my mental geography.

Mandela, N, 1994, p. 560-61

In the first weeks of his release, crowds gathered daily outside no. 8115 to welcome him home. They danced and sang freedom songs. Mandela had been hoping to spend some time with his family but this was not to be.

Mandela had press conferences, visits from national and international dignitaries and ANC meetings to attend to. He travelled overseas and met presidents and prime ministers. The ANC in exile also wanted to meet him in Lusaka to discuss the negotiated settlement.

In July 1990, the Pretoria Minute was signed after a fresh round of negotiations. The National Party agreed on the date for the release of all remaining political prisoners and the return of exiles. All security legislation was to be reviewed. The ANC agreed to suspend the armed struggle to show they were committed to the negotiations.

Friends, comrades and fellow South Africans. I greet you in the name of peace, democracy and freedom for all! I stand here before you not as a prophet but as a humble servant of you, the people. Your tireless and heroic sacrifices have made it possible for me to be here today. I therefore place the remaining years of my life in your hands.

An extract from Mandela's first speech after his release, Cape Town, 1990

... BUT VIOLENCE GROWS

The number of violent attacks continued to grow and in the first three months of 1991, 400 people had been killed. In Sebokeng, on January 12, 1991, 39 people were killed and hundreds injured when they were attacked with traditional weapons. The ANC had been warned about the attacks and told the police but they did nothing. In Natal, hundreds died in clashes between Inkatha and the ANC.

There were also reports of 'death squads' that were supported by the state.

Some felt it was difficult to continue with negotiations under these conditions. They wanted the Nationalist government to commit to stopping the violence.



■ **Nelson and Winnie Mandela outside their house, no. 8115 Vilakazi street, Orlando West, Soweto, 14 February, 1990.** Photo by Georges DeKeerle. (Hulton Archive; Gallo Images/Getty Images)

Mandela found it impossible to negotiate under these conditions and the ANC suspended talks. These only started again after a National Peace Accord was signed between the ANC, Inkatha and the government that called for an end to the violence.

This violence is both organised and orchestrated ... it is specifically directed at the democratic movement ... It constitutes a cold-blooded strategy of state terrorism.

Speech by Nelson R. Mandela, at the United Nations, New York, 15 July 1992

Mandela was elected President of the ANC in 1991 and the ANC met on South African soil to discuss the way forward. In December 1991, a negotiating forum called the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa) began.

At Codesa a declaration of intent was drawn up and signed. The declaration outlined the principles for a new democratic South Africa and constitution. There was also agreement on how an interim government would work and what would happen to the homelands.

But state-sponsored violence continued and in Boipatong, on 17 June 1992, 42 people were killed.

Mandela again suspended talks with De Klerk. Talks were restarted only after the government accepted the ANC's demands: release political prisoners, fence off hostels and ban traditional weapons.

By November 1992, all parties had agreed to create a Government of National Unity (GNU) with power-sharing in the first five years.

In April 1993 when Chris Hani was assassinated, Mandela appealed to the nation for calm. Countrywide, rallies were held to mourn the popular leader.

Later that month, Oliver Tambo suffered a stroke and died. Mandela put pressure on De Klerk to set a date for an election. Eventually, they agreed on 27 April, 1994.

Up until the elections, violence continued and Chief Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi, head of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), threatened to boycott the elections.

Eventually, with only a few days to go before the elections, an international mediator was able to convince the IFP to participate.



■ **Above:** Nelson Mandela and Jacob Zuma at a two-day Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa), December 21, 1991. Photo by Walter Dhladhla. (AFP/Getty Images)



■ **Mandela for president.**
Photo by David Turnley.
(Corbis Historical; Gallo Images/ Getty Images)

PRESIDENT MANDELA

On 27 April, 1994, 29 million South Africans of all races voted peacefully. Millions of observers from all over the world flocked to witness this. When elections results were finally announced, the ANC had won 62.6% of the vote.

On 10 May, 1994, Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as the first black president of a democratic South Africa. It was a day of great joy! Local and international dignitaries gathered at the Union Buildings in Pretoria

to see Mandela sworn into office. From the outset Mandela knew that the road ahead would be bumpy. Not only did he have to address the pain of the past, he had to get *all* South Africans, black and white, working together to build this new democracy.

At his inauguration he thanked everyone who had contributed – some with their lives – towards achieving this democracy. This was a historic moment – finally after many years South Africa would be a country where all its citizens were free.

Mandela met with his Cabinet soon after his inauguration and together they drafted the plans for a new South Africa. There were so many things that needed to change. They had to break down the apartheid system that had been in place since 1948. Laws had to be changed. Government has to address poverty and disease. There had to be an end to the conflict that was happening in the different areas of the country, especially KwaZulu-Natal. A Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) would have to be set up to help heal the wounds of the past and allow for a united and non-racial nation to be built.

Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another ... The sun shall never set on so glorious a human achievement. Let freedom reign.

Mandela, N, 1994, p. 614



■ **Above left:** South Africans queue to vote in the country's first democratic election on 27 April, 1994. Photo by Joao Silva (*Associated Press (AP), Orion Media Services*). ■ **Above right:** Nelson Mandela votes for the first time. (*South Photography, Hulton Archive; Gallo Images/Getty Images*). ■ **Opposite:** Nelson Mandela at a campaign rally before the first democratic elections in South Africa. (*Brooks Kraft LLC/Corbis; Gallo Images/Getty Images*)



■ **Above:** Mandela's inauguration, May 10, 1994. Photo: David Brauchli (*Associated Press (AP), Orion Media Services*)



■ **Above:** Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki and FW de Klerk. 1994. Photo: John Parkin (*Associated Press (AP), Orion Media Services*)

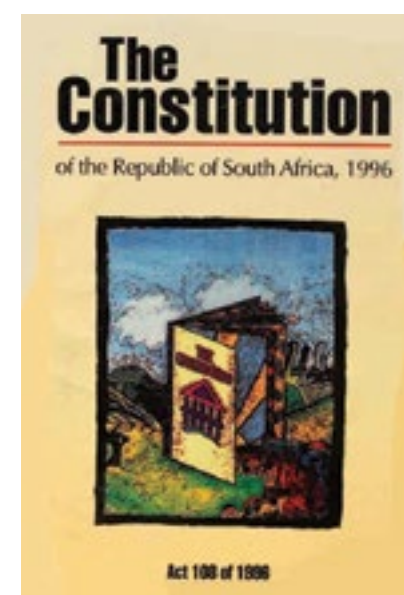
Rebuilding South Africa's reputation was also high on Mandela's agenda. He travelled the world looking for support for the newly emerging South Africa. Deputy President, Thabo Mbeki and the Cabinet ran the day-to-day affairs of the country and were responsible for its transformation into a non-racial democracy.

There were many challenges. There was resistance to change. The country and its people had been damaged by centuries of oppression and inequality. Some wanted to still hang on to their privileged positions. There was still a lot of work to be done and battles to be fought.

There were many successes too. South Africa started to build a new national identity in the Mandela era. The first democratic flag was raised in 1994 and a new national anthem sung for the first time.

A NEW CONSTITUTION

In 1996, a new Constitution was adopted. A constitution sets the rules for a country. The preamble of the South African Constitution talks about a new society "based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights". Our Constitution also includes details of how the new democratic government is structured.



The state will not unfairly discriminate against anyone on the grounds of race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, Chapter 2, Section 8



I will continue to entertain the hope that there has emerged a cadre of leaders in my own country and region, on my continent and in the world, which will not allow that any should be denied their freedom as we were; that anyone should be turned into refugees as we were; that any should be condemned to go hungry as we were; that any should be stripped of their human dignity as we were.

President Mandela addresses the 53rd UN General Assembly, New York, 21 September, 1998.

■ **Left:** Nelson Mandela and Winnie Mandela in France, 1990 Photo by Christian Lutz. (Associated Press (AP), Orion Media Services)



WHAT MANDELA SAID ABOUT POVERTY

Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is people who have made poverty and tolerated poverty, and it is people who will overcome it. And 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.

Nelson Mandela's Quotes and Tributes

■ **Left:** Nelson Mandela addresses a crowd on 31 January, 1994. Photo: David Brauchli (*Associated Press (AP), Orion Media Services*)

TRUTH, RECONCILIATION AND A NEW SOUTH AFRICA

A Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was set up to investigate apartheid violence. Anybody who had been a victim could come forward and be heard at the TRC and those who were guilty of violence could also give their testimony and request amnesty from prosecution. Horror stories were told at the hearings. In 1996, the TRC presented its report and findings. It was clear that the wounds of the past would take a long time to heal.

Many things changed. A Ministry of Reconstruction and Development was set up to address the issues of the poorest of the poor. Although there were many challenges, there were many important successes. Over 700 000 new houses were delivered to the poorest families during Mandela's time. Old age pensions and social grants programmes for poor households were expanded.

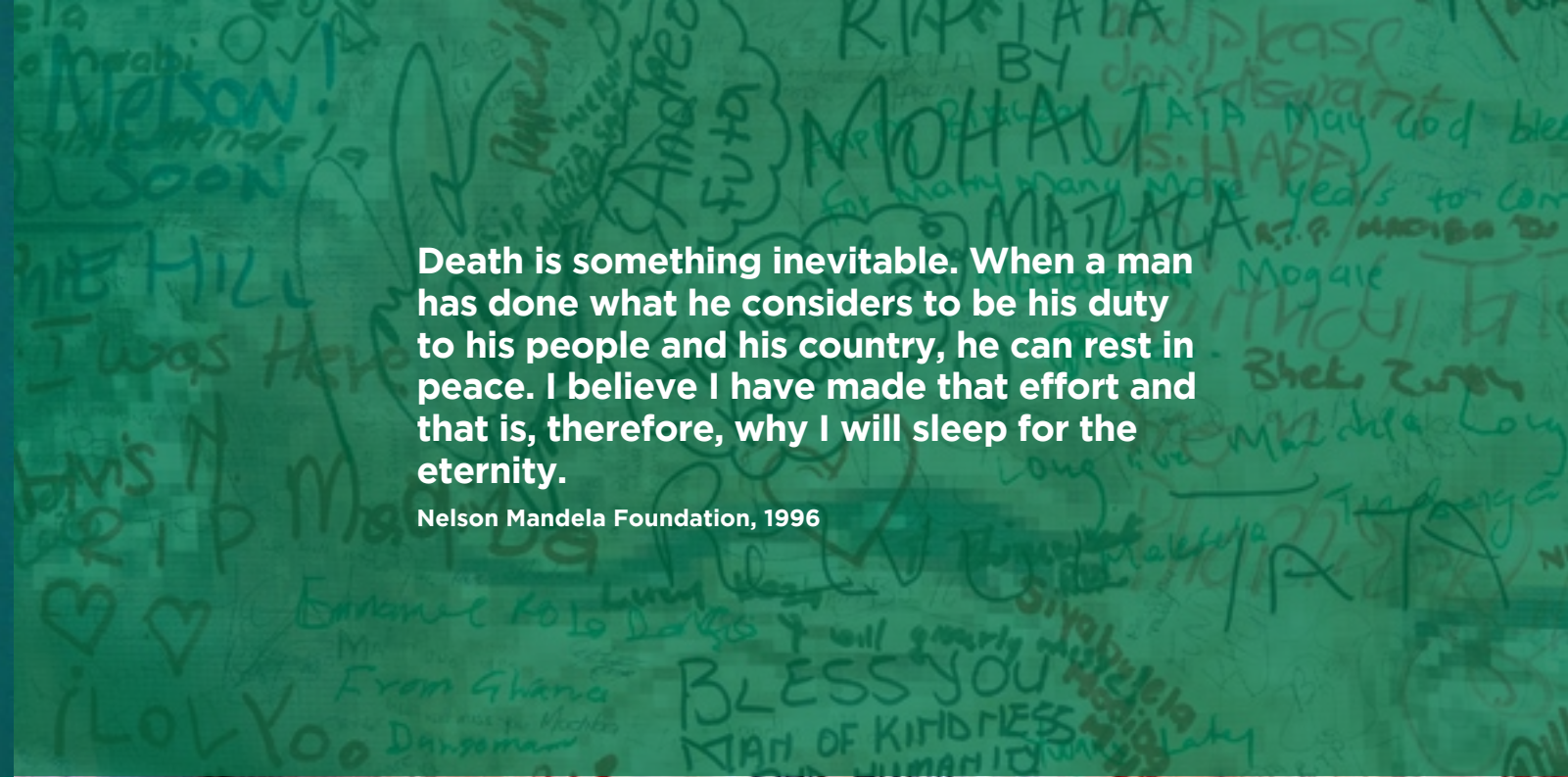
MANDELA RETIRES

In 1999, after five years as president Mandela wanted to hand over to a new leadership. The ANC won the elections and Thabo Mbeki became president. The Democratic Party, which later became the Democratic Alliance (DA), became the official opposition.

Mandela continued to travel. He met with world leaders and increased his work for the Mandela Foundation. One of the aims of the foundation was to fight HIV and

AIDS which caused the death of his second son, Makgatho. Mandela announced this fact so that those living with the disease would not be stigmatised. The 46664 concerts were used to raise money for AIDS charities during the 2000s.

He was also asked to help end international crises. He was a mediator in the Burundi peace talks. He travelled to Indonesia to negotiate the release of Xanana Gusmão, a hero of East Timor's struggle who was later elected president of that country.



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.

Nelson Mandela Foundation, 1996

■ **Above:** President Nelson Mandela at the launch of ‘46664 – Give 1 minute of your life to stop AIDS’ campaign. London, October 21, 2003. Photo: Scott Barbour (Gallo Images/Getty Images)

■ **Right:** Child with a commemorative poster of Nelson Mandela, Photo: Louise Gubb. (Corbis News, Gallo Images/Getty Images)

In 2004, Mandela announced his official retirement, or what he described as his “retirement from retirement”. After years dedicated to the struggle, Mandela would be able to spend his last days with his family.

Mandela died on 5 December, 2013. He touched the lives of millions during his time as a freedom fighter and as leader of South Africa.

I am confident that nobody present here today will accuse me of selfishness if I ask to spend time, while I am still in good health, with my family, my friends – and also with myself.

Mandela, N, June 2004.

In December 1997, during his farewell to the ANC conference, Mandela diverted from his speech-writer’s pages to caution the incoming leaders against surrounding himself with yes men and women. This he followed with a warning of the dangers when a leader hangs out with “powerful and influential individuals who have far more resources than all of us put together”.

Langa, M and Mandela, N, p.3





■ **Above:** Nelson Mandela and Graça Machel at the Soccer World Cup, 2010. Photo by Mike Hewitt, FIFA. *(Gallo Images/ Getty Images)*

LOVE, MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Mandela was married three times. Political life kept him from his family and was the reason two of his marriages failed. This caused him a great deal of pain. He wrote about the pain of being separated from his family, unable to be a father to his children

Mandela’s first marriage was to Evelyn Mase in 1946. They had two sons – Thembekile and Makgatho – and two daughters – Makaziwe, who died at nine months old and a second daughter named Makaziwe in her honour. Over the years his marriage to Evelyn deteriorated as he became more politically active.

Evelyn wanted him to spend time with her and the children and be a family but Mandela wanted to be involved in politics. After ten years the couple divorced as they could not resolve their differences.

Mandela’s second marriage was to Nomzamo Winifred Madikizela (Winnie). It was love at first sight. When Adelaide Tambo introduced them, Mandela immediately asked her out and took her on

I knew the hardship, misery and humiliation to which my absence would expose them (his family). I have spent anxious moments thinking of them ...

Letter to Amina Cachalia, 8 April, 1965. From *Conversations with Myself*

a date to a well-known Indian restaurant in Johannesburg.

In 1958 they were married in Bizana, Eastern Cape and had two daughters, Zenani and Zindzi. They spent more time apart than together. Mandela was arrested, banned and finally imprisoned. Winnie too had become politically active and was in and out of prison.

The marriage did not survive the long years of being apart. Mandela announced that he was separating from Winnie. This was a difficult time as he had many regrets about being an absent husband and father who gave up his family life for politics. As his daughter remarked, “You are a father to all our people”. Because of his duties he was only able to spend limited time with his family.

Mandela met Graça Machel, the widow of the former president of Mozambique, Samora Machel, a year after his divorce from Winnie. He celebrated his 80th birthday by marrying Graça. Both championed human rights – particularly

Physical suffering is nothing compared to the trampling down of those tender bonds of affection that form the basis of the institution of marriage and the family that unite man and wife. This is a frightful moment in our life.

From a letter to Winnie Mandela, 1 August 1970. From *Conversations with Myself*



■ **Above:** Winnie Mandela, her daughter and her grandson with a birthday card for Mandela, Cape Town. *(Independent Media Archives)*

those of children – and participated in the global Elders group, which tackles some of society’s toughest problems. When Mandela died in 2013, Graça said on his passing:

If you can imagine how millions of people felt this sense of loss, then you can imagine what it means for me. That huge presence, filling every detail of my life, every detail of my life full of him. And now, it's pain, it's emptiness and it's actually searching now – at a certain point you even search yourself, who I am now after this experience. It's like something has changed inside you as well.

‘Graça Machel speaks of her loss for the first time’ *Mail and Guardian*, 28 Jun 2014

A tree was chopped down
by Zindzi Mandela

A tree was chopped down
and the fruit was scattered
I cried
Because I had lost a family
The trunk, my father
The branches, his support
The fruit, the wife and children
Who meant so much to him
Tasty
Loving as they should be
All on the ground
The roots; happiness
Cut off from him.
systems destroyed.

From *Conversations with Myself*



2009
90th
BIRTHDAY

1993
NOBEL PEACE
PRIZE

1994
FIRST BLACK
PRESIDENT

NE

03-502-9234

FREE
1990

1964
RIVONIA TRIAL

BORN
1918

A family walks past a mural depicting former South African President Nelson Mandela during different times in his life near the Regina Mundi Catholic Church in the Soweto area March 31, 2013 in Johannesburg, South Africa. Photo by Chip Somodevilla.

(Gallo Images/Getty Images)

KUMALO



ACTIVITIES



ACTIVITY 1: FAMILY TREE

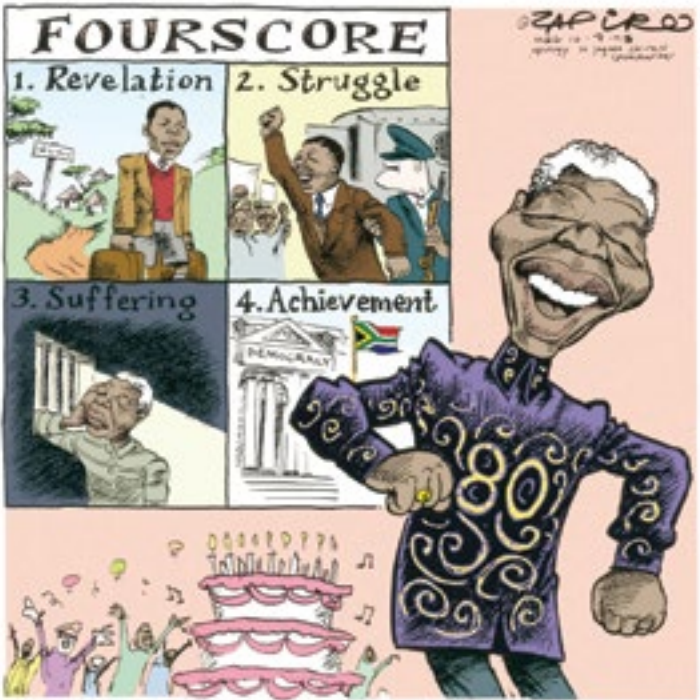
Mandela's father was a Xhosa chief. He came from a long line of chiefs and was proud of his heritage. He married three times and over time his family has grown. Family trees give you some idea of your family members and where you came from. They are important in they help you to understand your family history.

1. Interview your parents and draw your own family tree.
2. Who were your grandparents and great grandparents? Where did they live? What did they do?
3. Where do you fit into your family tree?



■ **Left:** Mandela at the wedding of his great grand nephew, Prince Mfundo Mtirarar, 7 December, 2002 in Umtata, Eastern Cape Province. Photo by Rajesh Jantilal.
(AFP/Gallo Images/Getty Images)

ACTIVITY 2: ANALYSING CARTOONS



Cartoon: Fourscore © 1996 Zapiro. Originally published in *Mail and Guardian*. Re-published with permission.

This cartoon explains the different phases of Mandela's life. Each block represents a different time in his life.

- 1. Write a short paragraph on which phase each block represents.
- 2. What principles do you think he lived according to in the different phases of his life?
- 3. Mandela once said, “It always seems impossible until it is done”. Why do you think he said this?
- 4. Do you have an example of something that has happened in your life that seemed impossible until it was completed?

ACTIVITY 3: WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU?

- 1. There are 24 values in the table below. To get some idea of the values **you** live by decide which things you value most in life. What are your top five values in order of importance?
- 2. Now think about the values that Mandela adopted. How would Mandela have filled in the table? Look at his story to help you. What do you think he valued most in life? List his top five values in order of priority.
- 3. How do your values and Mandela's values match up?

VALUES	NOT IMPORTANT	QUITE IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT
1. Being able to make good decisions			
2. To be respected			
3. To have lots of friends			
4. To have lots of money			
5. To have a religious belief			
6. Being curious about how things work			
7. Being loving and caring			
8. The job of my choice			
9. To have a happy, fulfilling relationship			
10. The ability to grant happiness to others			
11. Being healthy			
12. An A+ average in all my subjects			
13. To be more powerful than others			
14. To have few friends that last a lifetime			
15. Good health for the rest of my life			
16. Looking good			
17. To become someone important who everyone likes			
18. Enough money so that I never have to work			
19. Having family support			
20. An opportunity to create new ideas and design something new			
21. To be able to trust and be trusted			
22. A chance to become a famous musician			
23. An opportunity to eradicate poverty in South Africa			
24. Being treated fairly and being fair to others			

ACTIVITY 4: THE ROLE OF LEADERS



Original cartoon by Manas Maisnam for Kanglaonline.com

This cartoon shows Mandela arriving in heaven. He is being shown to a room by Father Time. His room is next to Albertina Sisulu’s and Chief Albert Luthuli’s.

- 1. What is significant about him getting a room next to Luthuli and Sisulu?
- 2. What do Mandela, Luthuli and Sisulu have in common? Are there any differences?

Draw a table with three columns. At the top of each column put in the name of each of these leaders.

- 1. Describe what makes each of these people a leader. What are the qualities each has?
- 2. Were they good leaders? If yes, what made them good leaders?
- 3. What makes people bad leaders?
- 4. What can we do to become good leaders?

ACTIVITY 5: HERITAGE TOURS

Imagine that you are a South African tour operator. Design a Mandela heritage tour. You can choose to do this for your province or nationally.

- 1. What would you include as part of this tour? (Mention about five important sites)
- 2. Why would you include these particular sites?
- 3. Find photos of the sites you will visit and paste them in your workbook. Write a paragraph explaining the significance of each site as if you are a tour operator explaining to tourists.
- 4. Record the heritage tour on your cellphone if you have one. Take video clips and photos.

ACTIVITY 6: MUSIC AND VALUES

Music and songs have played an important part in the fight against apartheid. Songs were used to gather support for the fight, to mobilise people and encourage them in difficult times. There are a number of songs that were sung during this time that soon became popular. These songs are still sung today. Here are a few.

1. Thina sizwe esimnyama (We the black nation)

Sikhalela (We weep for)

Sikhalela izwe lethu (We weep for our nation)

Elathathwa (That was taken)

Elathathwa ngamhlophe (That was taken by the whites)

2. Bahleli bonke etilongweni (They are sitting together in prison)

Bahleli bonke kwaNongqongqo (They are sitting together in Nongqongqo (name of prison)

Hi Hi Hi Halala! (Cries of pain; Exclamation)

Nanku Nanku Nanku Mandela (Here is Mandela)

Nanku Nanku etilongweni (Here he is in prison)

Hi Hi bawo Luthuli (Father Luthuli)

Hayi uzotheni, uzotheni (What have we done wrong?)

3. Yinde lendlela esihambayo (The road we have embarked on is long)

Washo Mandela kubalandeli bakhe wathi siyodibana nge-Freedom Day (Mandela said to his followers “We’ll meet on Freedom Day”

Somlandela Luthuli (We will follow Luthuli)

Somlandela yonke indawo (We will follow him everywhere)

Somlandela Luthuli

Lapho ayokona somlandela (Where he goes we will follow)

Sobashiya abazali ekhaya (We will leave our parents at home)

Siphuma sangena kwamany’amazwe (We will tread in foreign lands)

Lapho kungazi khon’ubaba no mama (Where our fathers and mother never stepped)

Silwel’ inkululeko (Chasing our freedom)

Study the words of each protest song.

- 1. What events are being referred to in each of the songs?
- 2. Are any of these songs still relevant to what is happening in South Africa today? Why? Why not?
- 3. Write your own poem, song or music. This should reflect a little on apartheid but should focus on what works or has changed for you.

The future is in your hands! Think about what you would like a future South Africa to look like. What would you like to change if you were president? Tweet your responses to the @PresidencyZA with #1dayYouthPresident



CHAPTER 2

ALBERTINA SISULU

The weight of resistance has been greatly increased in the last few years by the emergence of our women. It may even be true that, had the women hung back, resistance would still be faltering and uncertain ... Furthermore, women of all races had far less hesitation than men in making common cause among things basic to them.

Former ANC president and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Albert Luthuli

1918

Born Nontsikelelo Thethiwe in the Eastern Cape.

1939

Leaves for Johannesburg to study nursing at the Johannesburg General Hospital

1944

Attends the first conference of the ANC Youth League. Marries Walter Sisulu.

1947

Becomes the breadwinner when Walter quits his job to work for the ANC.

1948

ANC Women's League (ANCWL) is formed and Albertina becomes a member

1954

Helps found the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW)

1955

Alternative education classes at the Sisulu house in Soweto

1956

Women's anti-pass protest to the Union Buildings in Pretoria



The years that I spent as a young girl were not comfortable years, because when I was fifteen years my parents died, both of them. And we are a family of five, and I am the second to the eldest. So because of the conditions in our country we were not highly educated as we would have loved to. Actually my brother never went to school, the one I come after. He had to be looking after the livestock and be helping so as to get some food from the neighbours and things like that.

African National Congress website, entry for Sisulu, A

Left: Albertina Sisulu in 1963 after her release from 48 days of detention under the 90-day law. In 1958 she was jailed for two weeks after the protest against passes. Photo by Drum photographer.

(Drum Stories/Baileys African History Archive/Africa Media Online)

EARLY YEARS

Nontsikelelo Thethiwe was born in 1918, the year the Spanish flu killed 40 million people worldwide and 30 000 in South Africa. Her mother caught this flu while pregnant with Nontsikelelo and was left weak and in ill health. When her condition did not improve, Nontsikelelo’s father grew concerned. As he spent six months away from home working on the mines in Johannesburg, he moved the family to Xolobe where there would be more family support. As the eldest of eight girls, Nontsikelelo was forced to take on the care of her brothers and sisters while her father was away and her mother in poor health.

Nontsikelelo attended school in Xolobe and excelled in all her subjects despite her family responsibilities. Here she was given her ‘Christian’ name, Albertina. In Standard 5 she was elected Head Girl but was forced to leave school to look after her mother whose health was deteriorating. She missed almost two years of school because of these hardships.

Albertina’s absence from primary school almost ruined her chances of a good high school education. She had entered a competition to win a scholarship to Mariazell College in Matatiele. However, when authorities learnt that she was older than her classmates they withdrew the prize.

1963
Held for three months in solitary confinement under the new 90-day detention law.

1963–1980
Seventeen years of continuous banning – longer than anyone else in South African history.

1983
Elected co-President of the United Democratic Front (UDF).

1986
State of Emergency is declared and Albertina placed under house arrest.

1989
All restrictions on Walter and Albertina lifted. Walter returns home.

1994
Becomes a Member of Parliament and is active in promoting women’s organisations and issues

2011
Dies at her home in Linden, Gauteng



Left: Albertina Sisulu in her Orlando West home, after returning from work at Dr Abu Baker Asvat's rooms, Photo by Gille de Vlieg. *(Africa Media Online)*



Above: Walter and Albertina Sisulu after his release from prison in 1989. Photo by Paul Weinberg *(Africa Media Online)*.

Her teachers were angry and wrote a letter to the district newspaper protesting against the decision. A local Roman Catholic priest saw the article and intervened and Albertina was allowed to claim her prize.

School life at Mariazell College was tough but the education was good. Pupils were woken at 4 a.m. to bath and clean their dormitories, and to go to the chapel for prayers. Albertina had to work at the school during the holidays to pay back her board and lodging. She worked in the fields and the laundry and only went home about once a year.

A CAREER IN NURSING

With her schooling almost complete, Albertina had to choose a career. She considered becoming a nun because her school was run by nuns and she liked the discipline. But when she heard they made no money and that she would not be able to support or have much contact with her family, she changed her mind. She decided to become a nurse so that she could send money to her family:

I wanted to set up a home (with my brothers and sisters), since we'd grown up in other people's houses.

**ANC website,
entry for Sisulu, A**

Albertina left for Johannesburg in 1940 to study at the Johannesburg "Non-European" hospital called Johannesburg General.

Life in Johannesburg in the 1940s was exciting and different from anything Albertina had ever experienced. It was the home of *tsotsis*, shebeens that hosted live bands and parties that went on long into the night. But the city also offered economic opportunity – the chance of a better life and decent wages that could help to support a family.

In 1941 she met Walter Sisulu – brother and cousin of two of her closest friends, Rosabella (Barbie) Sisulu and Evelyn Mase. Although she found him handsome, she did not want to get into a relationship with him. After he had asked her out many times, she decided to join him at the "bioscope" (movies) – a passion of his.

This was the start of a relationship that lasted a lifetime despite the arrests, separations, bannings and imprisonments each of them faced.

**RACISM AND
INJUSTICE AT WORK**

Albertina was initially not interested in politics although she fought against the injustices at her workplace. The first was in her nursing conditions. White nurses were placed in positions of authority over black nurses despite their qualifications or experience. Conditions for black nurses were also hard.

And then there was the racism against black patients. After a horrific accident at Park Station, the central bus and train terminus in Johannesburg, black patients poured into the hospital. White authorities would not allow the black patients to be treated in the “European” wards despite there not being enough beds in the “non-European” wards. The injured had to lie on the floor and wait for treatment or until beds become available.

These events opened Albertina’s eyes to the injustices experienced by black people.

■ **Opposite page:** Apartheid signage, Cape Town Station, 1966.

(Independent Newspapers Archive)

I was employed by the City Health of Johannesburg as a midwife. In those days we were doing our work in districts. We used to visit our patients in the townships with difficulties, because we used to do that on foot. You know what it means to be a midwife? You have got to carry a big suitcase full of bottles and for your lotions that you are going to use, and bowls and receivers, and we used to carry those suitcases on our heads. And if you are lucky enough to have transport in that area, you take either a bus or a taxi to reach your patient. I did that from 1946 up to 1980. Nineteen-eighty I was appointed a senior nurse running a small hospital in Orlando East.

African National Congress website, entry for Sisulu, A



**MARRIED TO THE
STRUGGLE**

In 1944 Albertina and Walter Sisulu married. They held their traditional wedding at Albertina’s home in Tsomo and on their return to Johannesburg a reception was held at the **Bantu Men’s Social Centre**. Nelson Mandela was the best man and Evelyn (at the time married to Mandela) one of the bridesmaids.

The couple moved into their block house at No. 7372 Orlando Township, Soweto. But this was no ordinary marriage. Walter was already on the committee of the ANC Youth League and Albertina accompanied him to meetings.

The Bantu Men’s Social Centre (BMSC) was very much the meeting place in Johannesburg in the 1940s and 50s. It was a natural place for Nelson to come to – it was where he and others launched the ANC Youth League. Everyone used to go there. I remember a wedding reception at night when I was about six or seven and walking home at about eleven to Robinson Deep Mine where we lived with no trouble. It never occurred to me to be scared. People talk now about Sophiatown but it was not just Sophiatown. Sophiatown was simply part of this life and the BMSC was really the centre. The main hall was used as a concert and dancing facilities but you also used to be able to play volleyball and other games. My parents played tennis at the BMSC. Sometimes I think we were living such a good life that nobody now knows about.

In a way the BMSC was quite formal then, although you did have the jitterbug and music from America post 1945.

Kathrada, A and Maharaj, M, 2006, p. 58

The Sisulu home was also always busy with visitors constantly moving in and out, many of whom were prominent political leaders. Albertina although not fully active at the time was increasingly inspired by the struggle for equal rights. Miriam Matsha, Albertina's sister-in-law, once said "the best political education I had was living at No. 7372".

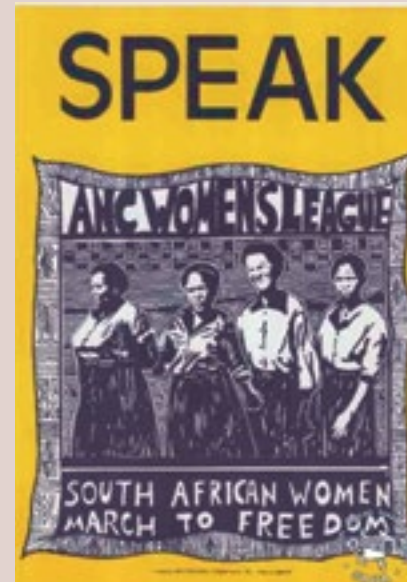
Walter did not expect Albertina to follow in his footsteps or manage the home without him. He believed in equality between race groups as well as between men and women.

As much as he didn't force me to join any organisation, he also allowed me to go wherever I liked. And during the time he was banned and under house-arrest, he used to do all the house-work when I'd go out for our meetings. I must say, of all the men, he's the man who gave me freedom. I never had a problem with him as a woman. I got my freedom the day I got married, really.

Green, P, 1989

Three years into their marriage, Walter Sisulu quit his job and joined the ANC full time. Albertina became the sole breadwinner on a nurse's salary and at the time committed herself to this role.

Fedsaw and the ANC Women's League organised a boycott of Bantu Education. Alternative schools sprang up and at No. 7372 Orlando in Soweto, learners arrived for lessons. The government responded by making it illegal to run alternative schools and shut down those that were still open. Parents were forced to send their children back to the government schools and the inferior education on offer. Some Christian schools tried to assist by becoming private but only parents with access to funding could afford them.



FORMING WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS

In 1943, ANC membership was opened up to women for the first time and in 1948 the ANC Women's League (ANCWL) was launched.

The Defiance Campaign of 1952 inspired many more women to join the ANC and ANCWL. Women leaders decided to set up an organisation that would include women of all races, classes and political backgrounds. To join you needed to share a common vision – of a democratic South Africa with equality for all – black and white, men and women.

In 1954, the Federation of South African Women (Fedsaw) was launched. Fedsaw's first conference was attended by 150 women from all over South Africa and a Women's Charter was adopted. The demands in the Women's Charter were included in the Freedom Charter that was adopted by the Congress of the People in Kliptown in 1955.

At the time Albertina was active in Fedsaw and the ANCWL but did not take up any leadership positions.

THE WOMEN'S CHARTER

The Women's Charter called for the enfranchisement of men and women of all races: for equality of opportunity in employment; equal pay for equal work; equal rights in relation to property; marriage and children; and the removal of all laws and customs that denied women such equality. It further demanded paid maternity leave, childcare for working mothers, and free and compulsory education for all South African children.

We, the women of South Africa, wives and mothers, working women and housewives, African, Indians, European and Coloured, hereby declare our aim of striving for the removal of all laws, regulations, conventions and customs that discriminate against us as women, and that deprive us in any way of our inherent right to the advantages, responsibilities and opportunities that society offers to any one section of the population.

Preamble to the Women's Charter

BOYCOTTS, PROTESTS AND MARCHES

In 1948, the National Party came to power and entrenched apartheid laws that made living in South Africa even more difficult for black people. Bantu Education was one of the most hateful laws and part of the relentless government campaign to deprive people of their basic human rights.

In 1953 the government passed the Bantu Education Act, which the people didn't want. We didn't want this bad education for our children. This Bantu Education Act was to make sure that our children only learnt things that would make them good for what the government wanted: to work in the factories and so on; they must not learn properly at school like the white children. Our children were to go to school only three hours a day, two shifts of children every day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, so that more children could get a little bit of learning without government having to spend more money. Hawu! It was a terrible thing that act.

Baard and Schreiner, *My Spirit is Not Banned*, Part 2. www.sahistory.org.za

In 1955, the government announced its intention to extend the pass laws to women. The ANC Women's League and Fedsaw set up a joint working committee to coordinate the women's anti-pass campaign. Regular meetings were held to get as much support as possible.

THE 1956 WOMEN’S MARCH

The women’s anti-pass protest in 1956 was a historic moment for South Africa. Around 20 000 women from all over the country gathered to march on the Union Buildings demanding to see Prime Minister Strijdom to hand over their memorandum. Albertina was actively involved – making sure that the police did not stop any women from travelling to Pretoria and buying and distributing tickets for those attending the march.

The march was a huge success. Bundles of petitions with more than 100 000 signatures were placed outside the prime minister’s door and the women stood in silence for 30 minutes with their hands raised in the Congress Salute. After singing freedom songs, especially the famous “*Wathint’ abafazi, Strijdom! Wathint’ imbokodo uzo kufa!*” (Now you have touched the women, Strijdom! You have struck a rock, You will be crushed!), the women left the Union Buildings together in unity and solidarity.

They came in a disciplined manner, courageously climbing the steps of the Union building. Indian women wore their saris, the ANC Women’s League wore their black, green and gold, there were those in their everyday wear, and there were those from rural areas in traditional dress. Imagine that colourful array of women climbing those steps ... I felt a lump in my throat when I looked at this large army of women: dignified women, courageous women. I felt so humbled to be part of such bravery.

Sophia Williams de Bruyn, In Prayer and Protest



■ **Women’s March, Union Buildings, 9 August 1956.** The march to the office of Prime Minister Strijdom was led by (left to right) Rahima Moosa, Lillian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph and Sophia Williams-De Bruyn

(Drum Social Histories/Baileys African History Archive/Africa Media Online)

The march was historic because it was organised by women from different race groups at a time when large public protests were illegal. The government did everything they could to try and stop it but the women were determined.

WOMEN LEADERS

Rahima Moosa was born in Cape Town in 1922. In 1943 she became a shop steward for the Cape Town Food and Canning Workers Union and was active in labour politics. Later, she moved to Johannesburg and became involved in the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC). She was also an organiser for the Congress of the People where the Freedom Charter was adopted. She became a listed person after this and died one year before the first democratic elections.

Lillian Ngoyi was born in Pretoria in 1911. In 1952 she joined the Garment Workers Union and participated in the Defiance Campaign. She became increasingly politically active. She was one of the first black women to serve on the ANC executive and became president of the ANCWL and Fedsaw. She was arrested and was part of those charged with treason. She was set free but was banned in 1962 and 1972.

Helen Joseph was born in England in 1905. In 1951 she began working for the Garment Workers Union. She was one of the founders of Fedsaw and of the Congress of Democrats, which led white resistance against apartheid. She was also a Treason Trialist. Although she was released, she was banned and placed under house-arrest until she was 80 years old.

Sophia Williams-De Bruyn was born in 1938 in Korsten, Port Elizabeth. During her school holidays she worked at the Van Lane Textile Factory. She later became a shop steward and joined the Textile Workers Union. She was a founder member of the South African Council on Trade Unions (Sactu) that later became Cosatu. In 1955 she became a full time member of the Coloured People’s Congress that was affiliated to the ANC. After the 1960s she went into exile in Lusaka.

RESISTANCE TO THE PASS LAWS

Initially, women did not have to carry passes. The government tried to force passes on women. These passes were used by the government to control the movement of black people. In 1952, the Native Laws Amendment Act made it an offence for any African (including women) to be in an urban area for more than 72 hours. The only women who were exempt were the wives and unmarried daughters of the African men who had permanent residence. In townships throughout South Africa women protested:

In 1957 the government decided to extend the pass laws to the women. We said 'Nothing doing. We are not going to carry passes'. We organised women to protest and go to jail. Well, I led the second batch against the extension of passes. We went to jail. We had two thousand women in one jail here at Number Four. We stayed there for three weeks awaiting trial. It was almost a month when our case ended, and Nelson Mandela was our lawyer. We were all discharged. We were found not guilty.

ANC website, entry for Sisulu, A

This was only the start of the anti-pass campaign for Albertina. In 1957 and 1958 she continued to oppose the extension of pass laws to women. At her workplace, the South African Nursing Council (SANC) asked all nurses to supply their identity numbers to the Council. Realising this was linked to the government's campaign to extend passes to women, the nurses refused and those at Baragwanath Hospital organised a demonstration. After much negotiation, SANC dropped the demand for the identity numbers.

It is for the youth to take the baton that we have already handed over to them and to fight the ills and injustices in our country right now, which are the increase of the abuse of women, violence against women and children, the wage gap and the inequality and poverty.

Sophia Williams de Bruyn, from “Take the baton and soldier on”. African News Agency (ANA), 9 August 2016.



■ **Women's March, 9 August, 1956.**
Photo by Jurgen Schadeberg.
(Premier Archive, Gallo Images/Getty Images)



THE TREASON TRIAL AND ARRESTS

The militancy of the women earned them a lot of respect but by the 1960s the women's movement, like the ANC, was being crushed by shootings, arrests, trials and bans.

The South African government was not happy about the boycotts, protests and demonstrations against apartheid and responded with violence.

In 1956, 156 Congress leaders were arrested and put on trial for high treason. The Treason Trial was the apartheid government's response to the adoption of the Freedom Charter at the Congress of the People in Kliptown on June 26, 1955. The leadership of all the participating organisations – the ANC, the South African Indian Congress (SAIC), the Congress of Democrats (CoD) and the South African Congress of Trade Unions (Sactu) were arrested and put on trial. Eventually they were acquitted.

During this time, many leaders had to choose between working underground or exile. Walter Sisulu decided to stay in the country and went into hiding. Police arrested Albertina at the Soweto surgery where she worked, in the hope they would be able to get to Walter.

Albertina was held for three months in solitary confinement under a new 90-day detention law – the General Laws Amendment Act of 1963 (or 90-day clause). She was the first woman arrested under this law, which was introduced to break the spirit of the leaders.

In 1963, Walter was arrested with 16 others. The Rivonia Trial ran from 1963-1964 and resulted in many ANC leaders being sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island. Walter was one of these leaders.

■ **Above:** A Fedsaw meeting. Photo by Paul Weinberg.
(Africa Media Online)



■ **Left:** Celebrating Albertina Sisulu's release from prison.

(Drum Social Histories/Baileys African History Archive/Africa Media Online)

On the day of the sentencing, Albertina led the crowds in singing the ANC anthem and saluting the convicted men as the police van drove them off to start their sentences.

To me, my husband was a prophet,” says Albertina. “He told me all that was going to happen. In fact, he prepared me. He told me about Robben Island, long before I could even think of it, as early as when he was still in the Youth League. He would say, ‘You know, the stand we are taking is going to take us to Robben Island.’ I said, ‘Listen, it’s only Makana (the rebel Xhosa chief who was the first inmate) who went to Robben Island and I don’t think other people will go there.’ But he replied; ‘Be prepared. We will go there one day.’

Green, P, 2011

ROBBEN ISLAND

Family members of the Rivonia Treason trialists were only allowed half-hour visits. On her first visit to the Island, Albertina Sisulu is reported to have cried out, *“Oh, our men are shrinking here! ... But their spirit is strong.”*

Although she was never refused visits, she often did not have the money to fly to Cape Town and authorities would wait until the last minute to grant permission which made it impossible for her to get there on time by bus or train.

Through it all, Albertina and her children carried on their family commitment to keep resistance alive – a difficult and dangerous task in the 1960s and 1970s.

The state was brutal and crushed any resistance with force. Albertina was banned seventeen times in her lifetime – longer than anyone else in South Africa – ten years that included dusk-to-dawn house arrest.

It was only after the 1976 Soweto Uprising that the ANC and women’s movement began to revive as resistance began to grow across the country.

VISITS TO ROBBEN ISLAND

Albertina talks about her visits to Walter on Robben Island

Each time I got my permission from the prison authorities, I would hand the permit over to the Chief Magistrate of Johannesburg so they would give me the permission to leave the area.

That permit would be kept there until the last day. So it would be impossible for me to go, because the only way I could get there was by train.”

In the early 1960s, there weren't even glass cubicles on the Island.

When we started with Robben Island, it was worse than you could ever think. Those men [the warders] were very cruel. We used to see the prisoners in the open air. They would put a rope up and, some distance away, a table. We would stand at the table and the prisoners would line up behind the rope. We would be shouting at each other. You can imagine so many voices shouting, you couldn't even hear what they were saying.

When the noise got too high, the policemen would just do this – she bangs her fist on the table – and we would all be quiet. Then we'd start again, start again, start again.

Green, P, 2011



■ **Albertina Sisulu addresses a UDF rally.** Photo by Paul Weinberg. (*South Photos/Africa Media Online*)

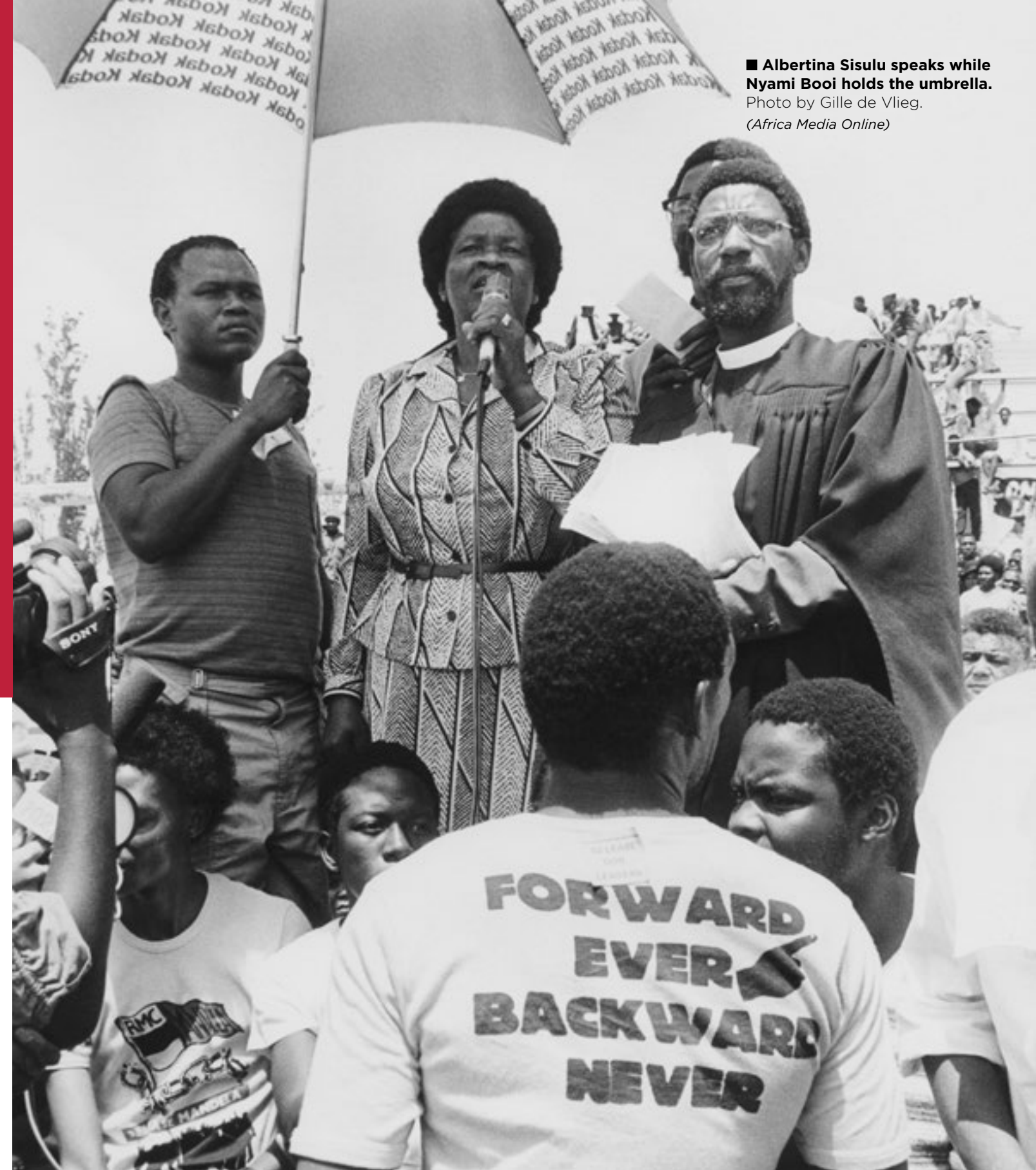
THE UDF

Albertina returned publically to political life when the United Democratic Front (UDF) was formed in 1983. In the intervening years she worked underground for the ANC and set up an ANC cell called *Thusang Basadi* (Wake up Women). Her banning, restrictions and imprisonment made this work very difficult for her.

In the 1980s, political activity began to grow in leaps and bounds. There was a groundswell of protests all over South Africa – consumer boycotts, strikes and school boycotts.

These protests needed one voice or front to be strong. The UDF offered a way for social, political or cultural organisations to join the liberation struggle and fight a common enemy.

The UDF was launched in 1983 and Albertina was elected Co-President while in jail after having been arrested for singing freedom songs at a friend's funeral. Immediately, churches, civic and student associations, trade unions, and sporting bodies joined.



■ **Albertina Sisulu speaks while Nyami Boo holds the umbrella.** Photo by Gille de Vlieg. (*Africa Media Online*)

Although the UDF had been set up to oppose the tri-cameral parliament, it was seen as the organisation that would contribute towards the fall of apartheid.

The UDF's tri-cameral parliament campaign was rolled out in 1984 and was highly successful. The Indian and coloured referendum was cancelled. This inspired over 600 organisations to join the UDF. But these organisations had different ideas about what they wanted to achieve and how they were going to do this. The UDF had many challenges as well as successes.

The rise of the UDF was met with violent resistance from the apartheid government. Between 1984 and 1986, the black townships exploded. The government sent the army into the townships to quell the resistance. At this time, no less than six Sisulus spent time in prison. "The government doesn't feel comfortable unless it has a Sisulu in jail," said Zwelakhe Sisulu.

That was now 1986. The first State of Emergency, I was the first to be restricted. To be in this house and have no visitors. The State of Emergency of eighty-six carried on until a day before Walter entered that gate. ... I am saying nothing about, you know, being arrested just for two days for questioning. That was the food in this house. The police would knock at the unholy hours, one o'clock. Sometimes we don't even know why they are here. They will just tell you, well it is a general check up, just to harass you. You know, when they knock, they knock from the door and all the windows. When you open the door, the house is surrounded by police, demanding you to open.

Albertina Sisulu (www.anc.org.za)

THE UDF AND THE TRI-CAMERAL PARLIAMENT

The UDF was started by coloured and Indian anti-apartheid activists who rejected the government's proposal of a tricameral parliament.

The "reform" would allow for parliamentary representation for coloureds, Indians and whites in separate racially defined houses. The coloured and Indian houses would be small, under-resourced and conservative. Black people would have no representation. They would only have rights in the "independent homelands" or Bantustans. Black people already living in townships would be able to elect local councillors but these councillors would fall under the control of the Bantu Administration Board.

The government planned referendums for white, coloured and Indian people to vote "yes" or "no" to the plan. The UDF rejected these referendums and these had to be cancelled.

In February 1988, the UDF, 16 other organisations and 18 people, including Albertina now aged 70, were banned. This new round of repression showed how deep the crisis in South Africa had become.

Economic sanctions were supported by the international community and business in South Africa was alarmed. More and more youth were joining political organisations and it became increasingly difficult to quell the resistance. The UDF convinced the apartheid government that violent military solutions were no longer possible and that only genuine negotiations could save the country.



■ **Above:** The delegation that met with Nelson Mandela in prison after the announcement of the release of political prisoners, Cape Town. (*Independent Newspapers Archive*)

FREE AT LAST

In 1989, things changed radically when President De Klerk lifted all restrictions on Albertina. Her husband, Walter and seven other political prisoners were released after 26 years in prison.

Consistent with her long struggle and steadfast in her political commitment, Albertina expressed her personal happiness, but it would not be enough.

She said her husband's freedom would "not minimise the spirit and actions of defiance among our people ... until we bring the government to a genuine negotiated settlement ... for a full democratic, participatory non-racial South Africa for all."

Despite Walter's release (and the release of Mandela in the following year), there were still a lot of challenges to be addressed.

Common ground had to be established between the government and the ANC if the negotiation process was to succeed. The ANC leaders – internally and in exile – had also to consult on their approach to the negotiations. And in the meantime, political violence continued with 12 protesters killed by police in Sebokeng and hundreds dying in clashes between the ANC and Inkatha supporters in Natal.

Finally, in December 1990, the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa) started. This process was to bring about a new political system in the country but with increasing violence negotiations stopped and started on a number of occasions.

During these years Albertina continued to fight, particularly for the rights of women. In 1992, as the ANC Women's League Deputy President, she proposed that South African women develop a Woman's Charter to be included in the ANC's proposal on gender rights for the new constitution.

She believed that apartheid could only be abolished if women worked together.

In November 1992, the government and the ANC agreed to the creation of a transitional government called the Government of National Unity (GNU) and Nelson Mandela was elected as the first president of a democratic South Africa.



■ **Above:** Nelson Mandela, Albertina Sisulu and Thabo Mbeki at the 50th Anniversary of the Freedom Charter, 26 June, 2005. Photo by Siphwe Sibeko. (*Associated Press (AP), Orion Media Services*)

Albertina Sisulu served in the first democratically elected Parliament and remained committed to women’s issues throughout. During a 1997 interview, she spoke of the difficulty women faced alone during the struggle.

The women of South Africa have been leading the struggle hand in hand with the men. There has never been any difference except that the women’s side is more vulnerable to any oppression, the side of their home and the children.

www.ewn.co.za

Albertina died in her Linden home in 2011.



■ **Above:** ANC Women's League members at Albertina Sisulu's funeral. Photo by Themba Hadebe.

(Associated Press (AP), Orion Media Services)

You provided leadership and exercised power with quiet dignity. Through your selflessness and dedication, through your moral authority and sincere humility – during and after the struggle – you rightly earned to be the mother of all our people. I hope that our cadres and people in general, will cherish your qualities, learn from them, and emulate them in their own lives and conduct.

Now, I smile when I imagine how you all join hands and hold a leadership caucus and look down on us from an ANC branch – always with the unity of our nation and the progress of our continent at the top of the agenda.

Hamba kahle, Ntsiki. Thank you for your love and the life we shared.

A big hug to all our comrades

**Your brother
Madiba**

From a speech at Albertina Sisulu's funeral by Nelson Mandela, delivered by his wife, Graça Machel, June 2011



ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY ONE: THE WOMEN’S STRUGGLE

Albertina Sisulu spent her life fighting for women to be accepted as equal partners at home, work, in society and in the struggle.

Fill in the table below. Think about problems women face at home, in the workplace and in society because they are women. Think about what rights women should have and list those rights. Do these rights exist in South Africa? Yes / No? Explain what rights are missing and why you think this?

Women’s rights	Do these rights exist in South Africa today? Explain.
At home	
At the workplace	
In society	
In the struggle	

ACTIVITY TWO: DESIGN A WOMEN’S CHARTER

1. Discuss with your friends / classmates and write down a list of rights that you think should appear in a Women’s Charter.
2. Compare this with the Women’s Charter developed by Fedsaw in the 1950s.
3. Have conditions changed for women in South Africa? Why? Why not?
4. Choose an issue that you still feel impact women today. Design a poster that you could use to promote women’s rights.

ACTIVITY THREE: DISCRIMINATION

Read through the scenarios below.

- 1. How are the women described in each of the scenarios?
- 2. Is this accurate? Why? Why not?
- 3. Do you think that men would be presented in the same way?
- 4. Do you think that the scenario is discriminatory in any way?
- 5. Why? Why not?

A. Cyclone Dineo hit the Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces in February 2017. Cyclones are named after people because it is easier to remember. Familiar names used in the region are normally given to these. Bonang Matheba and Kelly Khumalo are South African celebrities who have been criticised in the media for being too dramatic.



B. Mavis has worked for X company for three years. The office gossip is that she had been given the job because her boss Thabo thought she was pretty. Bruno from accounting had seen them together at church the previous Sunday and told the others. Bruno did not like that Mavis was his boss and felt women tend to get emotional and nasty if they don't like you. Mavis had disciplined him for coming late a number of times and this was just not fair.

ACTIVITY FOUR: GROWING UP FEMALE

Young people talk about growing up as girls. This is what they have to say:

"I always did more work at home than my brother. I had to cook and clean. My brother was allowed to play sports and do his homework."

"When I was in matric I told my parents that I wanted to be a scientist. They said that this was not a career for girls."

"My parents did not worry about my marks. They said that I was going to get married anyway and would have to stay at home and look after the children."

"I really wanted to be class monitor and worked hard for this. But the teachers told me that this was a job for a boy."

"I fell pregnant when I was in high school. My teachers and friends spoke harshly to me about this. They did not say anything to my boyfriend."

- 1. As a girl / young woman, is your experience similar? Share your own experiences.
- 2. Do you agree with any of the ideas / views?
- 3. When reading this, do you think that girls are equal to boys?
- 4. Do you think that things need to change?
- 5. How would you go about changing things?
- 6. Do you think that Albertina Sisulu faced any discrimination as a girl and as a woman? Read her story again and discuss.



CHAPTER 3

ALBERT LUTHULI

The greatest leader of the freedom struggle: a colossus and yet a foot soldier of our people.

Nelson Mandela, quoted in a speech by KwaZulu-Natal Health MEC, Dr S Dhlomo, at the Chief Albert Luthuli Memorial Lecture, 2016

1898

Born at a Seventh Day Adventist Mission in Bulawayo

1906

Goes to live with his uncle, Martin Luthuli, Chief of the Christian Zulus at Umvoti Mission Reserve in Groutville, Natal.

1920

Qualifies as a teacher and takes up a post at Adams College in Amanzimtoti.

1928

Elected secretary of the Natal Native Teachers Union.

1935

Accepts the role of Chief of the Groutville reserve and returns home to become an administrator of tribal affairs, which he did for 17 years.

1938

Delegate at an international missionary conference in India.

1948

Undertakes a nine-month, church-sponsored tour of the United States

1951

Elected provincial president of the ANC for Natal.

A sepia-toned portrait of Albert Luthuli, an older man with a grey beard and mustache, looking slightly to the right. He is wearing a light-colored, button-down shirt. The background is a textured wall made of mud and sticks.

GROWING UP

Albert Luthuli was born in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) in 1898. His father was a Seventh Day Adventist who moved to Bulawayo to act as an interpreter for an American missionary.

When his father died ten years later, his mother returned to Groutville, KwaZulu-Natal, her family home. Here Luthuli attended the local mission school and later went on to study at the Ohlange Institute, a school founded by John Dube, the first president of the African National Congress. It was known to provide quality education for African children.

At Ohlange, Luthuli was taught to work hard, be self-sufficient and think independently. The school was popular and soon more and more students began arriving. At the time, the school did not have enough money to take in all students and to make room some of the scholars slept on the floor on mats or in the unfinished buildings.

■ In 1953, Albert Luthuli was banned and confined to a small area around his home near Stanger in Natal.
Photo by Ranjith Kally.

(Drum Social Histories / Baileys African History Archive / Africa Media Online)

1952

Dismissed as chief for his role in the Defiance Campaign. Elected President of the African National Congress

1953

Banned and confined to his home in Natal.

1957

Released with 60 others in the pre-trial phase of the Treason Trials.

1960

Released with 60 others in the pre-trial phase of the Treason Trials.

1967

Dies after being struck by a train on a railway bridge very close to his home.

BECOMING A TEACHER

After school, Luthuli decided to become a teacher so that he could earn the ten-pound monthly salary to help his mother. He went off to do his teacher training at the Methodist Institution at Edendale, Pietermaritzburg. Two years later he was offered a bursary to study at Fort Hare University but turned this down and chose instead to study further at Adams College.

Luthuli loved Adams College and went on to become an educator at the Teacher Training Centre. At this time, Adams College was believed to be one of the best schools in southern and central Africa.

It was here he met his wife Nokukhanya MaBhengu, granddaughter of the Zulu chief Dhlokolo of the Ngcolosi to whom he taught isiZulu and School Organisation.

Luthuli continued as a professional educator from 1920 to 1935. Here he saw how his students struggled to make ends meet. Despite being seen as middle class they were not wealthy. At the time teachers were earning £18 per quarter and conditions of service were poor. He joined the Natal Native Teachers Union to fight these conditions and in 1928 was elected secretary.

ASSUMING THE CHIEFTAINSHIP: MONEY, FAME AND POWER NOT MY PARTICULAR GODS

From the 1920s to the 1940s South Africa was in a state of upheaval. There was a worldwide economic depression and increasing poverty. Many people began to think about different ways to survive. African women began moving to the cities hoping to get work as domestics. Afrikaners also drifted off the land seeking employment in shops, factories and the mines. The government responded by increasing the segregation laws.

In 1923, African migration to the cities was restricted by the Native Urban Areas Act. Africans were also not allowed to organise in trade unions or political organisations. The government was using its power to make sure Africans could not compete for the limited economic opportunities that existed.

In Groutville the economic depression hit hard. Sugar farming, which is still an important part of the KwaZulu-Natal economy today, suffered badly. This had a direct impact on the local community.

This was a world of its own – one in which we were too busy with our profession to pay more than passing attention to what happened elsewhere.

Albert Luthuli talking about Adams College in Serote, W, 2017, p. 34

■ **Right:** Albert Luthuli and his wife, Nokukhanya MaBhengu, outside their home in Groutville. (*Drum Social Histories/Baileys African History Archive/Africa Media Online*)





My view has been, and still is, that a chief is primarily a servant of his people. He is the voice of his people. He is the voice of his people in local affairs.

Luthuli , A (1953). Speech: The Road to Freedom is via the Cross.

■ **Left:** Albert Luthuli at his home in Groutville, 1959. Photo by Alf Kumalo. (*Drum Social Histories/Baileys African History Archive/Africa Media Online*)

LUTHULI ON CULTURE

Zulu culture, a very definite one in its own right, has also been moulded by contact with other cultures in this modern age, which is a good thing because one expands by mixing with other peoples. I hasten to say that I do not subscribe to the theory that the original Zulu culture cannot expand by absorbing from the modern world but must forever and forever remain what it was. To the current policy of Bantu education, advocating separate education for different peoples by claiming that in this way African tribes will preserve native cultures, I say: We are citizens of the world finally, and therefore we must know what is taking place in the world. Any culture must take into itself the values of other cultures.

Local chiefs were also struggling to lead their people. Community elders visited Luthuli to ask him to become chief. In 1936, after he had thought about it for two years, he returned to Groutville to take up the chieftainship. His duties included settling community and family disputes, issuing fines and working with the local people to improve their lives.

He always tried to stop conflicts before they got too big, and he always tried to stop a case from turning into a trial. He used to say, 'It's true that the authorities say a wrongdoer must be fined. That is what the chief is expected to do to sort out the problem. But if I fine people where are they going to find the means to pay? How will they be able to send their children to school?'

Nokukhanya MaBhengu, wife of Chief Albert Luthuli

Luthuli was a unique chief in that he adopted both traditional and modern styles. He was religious and followed the Christian faith. Because he did not believe customs and practices were fixed, he introduced changes like allowing women to participate in the chief's councils.

Poverty, and the restrictions African people faced in South Africa, were growing. Every day he was confronted with these realities.

He witnessed that there was “... no adequate land for our occupation, our only asset, cattle dwindling, no security of homes, no decent or remunerate employment ...”

Luthuli , A (1953). Speech: The Road to Freedom is via the Cross

TIME FOR CHANGE

Luthuli became actively involved in fighting to protect African people's rights from further erosion. He set up a Groutville Bantu Cane Growers Association and improved farming methods to help the local economy grow. He also engaged in negotiations with the government to bring about change.

Letters, petitions and negotiations did not bring about any improvements for Africans though. Instead, in 1948, the Nationalist Party of DF Malan campaigned on an “apartheid ticket” and was voted into power by a white minority further consolidating its power. Under apartheid,

black people were restricted even further. Apartheid kept wealth and power for white people. Stricter laws were introduced, such as the Pass Laws, the Group Areas Act, and the Bantu Education Act to achieve this.

Luthuli learnt a lot during this period – about white rule, the apartheid laws and how these restricted his people from ever being economically free. His attempts to negotiate with those in power came to nothing and demonstrated their unwillingness to change. The moderation and restraint shown by black South Africans had been stretched to breaking point – and it was time for change.

THE APARTHEID LAWS

Hundreds of laws were introduced in the early 1900s to keep land and wealth in the hands of white people. Each decade saw an increase in these laws. When there was resistance, the National Party introduced new laws that gave them the power to ban or arrest people.

Here are just some of the laws that were introduced during Luthuli’s time.

Native Land and Trust Bill: Consolidates the 1913 Land Act that limits the amount of land that Africans can own to 13%

The Urban Areas Act of 1923: created urban black slum to supply cheap labour to whites

The Group Areas Act: (1950 and subsequent amendments) gave the government power to proclaim residential and business areas for the sole use of particular race groups

Pass Laws of 1952 required that all African, Coloured and Indian people carried a passbook at all time.

The Bantu Education Act (1953) redefined what Africans would be taught and for what purpose

The Native Laws Amendment Act (1952) and Natives (Urban Areas) Amendment Act (1955) that described conditions under which African men and women might legally live in urban areas.

Public Safety Act (1953): Allowed the government to declare a State of Emergency and suspend the rule of law.

Criminal Laws Amendment Act: Allowed for the banning and restriction of people without trial.



■ **Above:** Campaign against pass laws. 1959
(Drum Social Histories/Baileys African History Archive/Africa Media Online)



■ **Above:** Cape Town welcomes Luthuli, November 1961.
(Drum Social Histories/Baileys African History Archive/Africa Media Online)



The Congress attempted to give flesh and blood meaning in the South African setting to such words as democracy, freedom and liberty.
Albert Luthuli

■ **Left:** The Congress of the People in Kliptown June 26, 1955
(Drum Social Histories / Baileys African History Archive / Africa Media Online)



■ **Above:** Crowds welcome banned ANC president, Albert Luthuli and ANC deputy president, Oliver Tambo. (Museum Africa/Africa Media Online)

JOINING THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

Luthuli had also grown tired of arguing with the government and achieving nothing. Increasing hardships made him realise that his moderate approach was not helping his people. He decided to join the ANC and work with others to bring about change.

He put his chieftainship aside and joined the ANC, an organisation that had started to actively protest against the increasing injustices faced by African people, which

included limited access to land, influx control measures and lack of decent employment.

Luthuli was fired as Chief of the Abase-Makolweni Tribe after he joined the ANC. The local community did not want this to happen but the Governor-General of the Union of South Africa, who had authority over all 'native' (meaning African) people in South Africa, dismissed him.



I have joined my people in the new spirit that moves them today, the spirit that revolts openly and boldly against injustice and expresses itself in a determined and non-violent manner'

Albert Luthuli

■ **Left:** Albert Luthuli, President General of the African National Congress, gives the 'Africa' sign to delegates at the 41st Annual Conference of the African National Congress. February 1954. Photo by Bob Gosani. (Drum Social Histories/ Baileys African History Archive/Africa Media Online)

THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

In 1946, when John Dube died, WC Champion replaced him as the ANC Natal provincial president.

Champion later lost his seat to Luthuli because he opposed the new strategy of boycotts, stayaways and strikes introduced by the Youth League. Champion wanted to remain independent of national decisions taken by the ANC. His view was unpopular with the youth who had become increasingly radicalised and were looking for another leader.

In 1951, Luthuli was voted ANC Natal provincial president by a small majority and attended the ANC National Conference in Bloemfontein. It was here that he first learnt of plans for the Defiance Campaign. On his return to Natal he began organising for this. He saw this new phase of the struggle as "militant but not violent".

At the National Conference in 1952, Luthuli was elected ANC president-general, this time by a large majority. He was a popular choice because of his way with words, his standing in the community and his loyalty to the ANC. He began devoting his time to organising for the Defiance Campaign.

... in 1913, the white man came along and said: no purchase of land by the black man. The Law was amended in 1935 to entrench that further; the Government claimed that it was going to increase the areas of the Native reserves by buying land adjacent to the reserves, bringing it to a total of 13 percent of all the land in South Africa. Until the last census, Africans numbered eight million in this country; whites two; Coloured one and one quarter; Indians half a million. Those eight million Africans owned only 13 percent of the land!

Here we touch on an extremely sore point, which, apart from the question of franchise, is the biggest single injustice perpetrated on us. It is not even 13 percent because the white man has not yet redeemed his promise of increasing the land around reserves. Even if it were 13 percent, how could one accept that? That is sufficient to make anyone enter the struggle.

Common policy has it that Africans may not reside in the so-called white city. Residences outside of it called townships are established and Africans merely allowed into the city to serve the white man. Here is another attitude that angers one: you only want me when I serve you; when my services are not needed you say, Go away.

It is against this background and with a full sense of responsibility that, under the auspices of the African National Congress (Natal) I have joined my people in the new spirit that moves them today, the spirit that revolts openly and boldly against injustice and expresses itself in a determined and non-violent manner’.

Chief Albert Luthuli: The Road to Freedom is via the Cross

DEFIANCE

The Defiance Campaign was only the beginning of the mass resistance of South Africa's people to apartheid. In the 1950s and 1960s, anti-apartheid protests and campaigns grew.

There was the Alexandra bus boycott, Azikwelwa (We will not ride), to protest the increase in fares as government refused to subsidise the buses. The Bethal community organised a **potato boycott** to protest the living conditions of rural farm workers.

There were on-going protests, stay-aways as well as a national strike.

THE POTATO BOYCOTT

If a boy did not have his pass, the police would arrest him and take him to a farm and make him work there. At the farm they take his clothes away and they give him a sack to wear. At night he must sleep with only that sack on the concrete floor, even if it is winter. During the day those boys had to dig potatoes. They had to use their hands because there were not enough implements to go round, and they used to come back from Bethal with their fingers bleeding and so forth. [...] so after a time we thought no, if they are going to do this to our children then we must not eat potatoes; we must stop eating the potatoes that are hurting our children so much.

from My Spirit is not Banned by Frances Baard and Barbie Schreiner (sahistory.org.za)

■ Luthuli with Indian leaders of the Defiance Campaign.

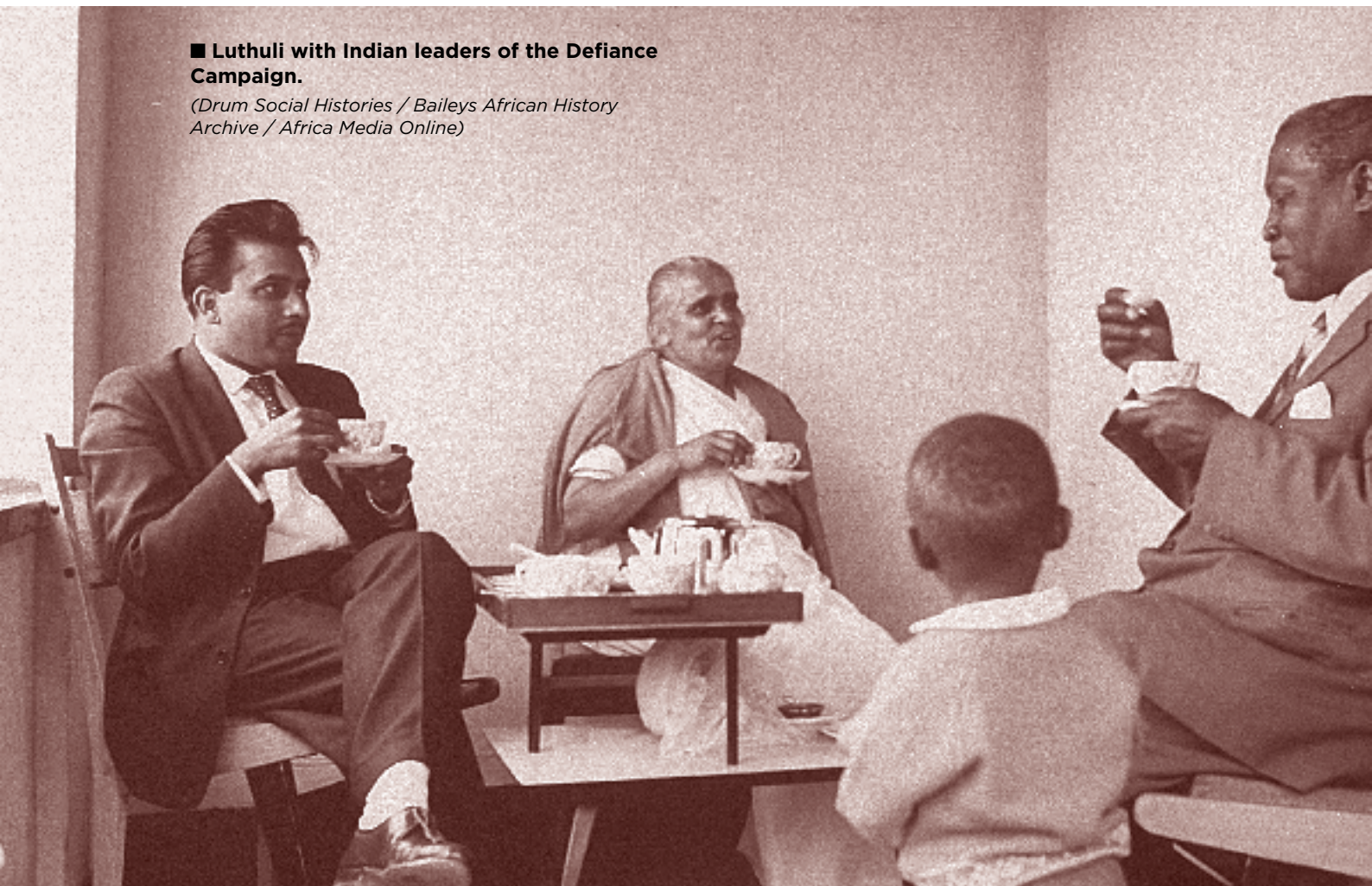
(Drum Social Histories / Baileys African History Archive / Africa Media Online)

THE DEFIANCE CAMPAIGN AGAINST UNJUST LAWS

The Defiance Campaign began on the 26 June, 1952 and all racial groups under the leadership of the African National Congress (ANC), the South African Indian Congress (SAIC) and the Coloured People's Congress participated.

Volunteers signed a pledge to participate and to defy apartheid's unjust laws. Over 8,500 volunteers defied the pass laws and curfew regulations, went into the 'whites only' section of railway stations and post offices – and protested peacefully against all other oppressive and humiliating rules.

The Defiance Campaign attracted the attention of the white authorities who crushed the resistance. They introduced new laws that allowed for banning and detentions. Some ANC members felt that this campaign had been a failure. But at this time the ANC grew from an organisation of 7 000 to 100 000 and for the first time became a truly mass-based organisation. This was also a time when South Africans came together in their organisations to work together to bring about change.





CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE

A particularly significant event was the Congress of the People in Kliptown in 1955 where the Freedom Charter was adopted by the ANC and its allies – the South African Indian Congress, the South African Congress of Democrats and the Coloured People's Congress. The Charter was read to the almost 3 000 delegates who accepted its principles as those upon which a new South Africa would be built.

All these protests, campaigns and activities helped to swell ANC membership.

The apartheid regime met the non-violent resistance of the people with physical violence, and resorted to beatings, banning and arrests. The government enacted new laws that provided for long terms of imprisonment and ten lashes for any resistance.

It closed all avenues of peaceful protest by restricting the leaders of the movement, charging them with high treason and banning their organisations.

■ **Opposite page:** Youth with copies of the Freedom Charter during a UDF rally in the 1980s. Photo by Paul Weinberg. *(Paul Weinberg/South Photos/Africa Media Online)*

■ **Below:** Welcome to Luthuli, June 1959, Cape Town. Photo by Cloete Breytenbach. *(BAHA/Africa Media Online)*



THE FREEDOM CHARTER

The people shall govern
All national groups shall have equal rights
The people shall share in the country's wealth
The land shall be shared among those who work it
All shall be equal before the law

All shall enjoy equal human rights
There shall be work and security
The doors of learning and culture shall be opened
There shall be houses, security and comfort
There shall be peace and friendship

BANNING AND IMPRISONMENT

In 1953, one year into his ANC presidency, Luthuli received his first banning order and for a year was prevented from attending political gatherings or leaving the Umvoti district. When it ended he flew to Johannesburg to address Sophiatown residents who were being forcibly removed from their homes. At the airport he was met by police who handed him his second banning order – to run for a further two years.

Banning and imprisonment came to define the Luthuli period. Throughout his ANC presidency (1952–1967) Luthuli was mostly confined to his rural home in KwaZulu-Natal. Here he spent the time as actively as he could – writing speeches, holding interviews, advising national leaders and attending conferences where possible.

These years were also spent writing articles for newspapers, publications and books. He was a prolific writer. His most famous press article “The Road to Freedom is via the Cross” explained why he had decided to become an ANC leader.

Many other statements were also drafted to be read out at meetings he was banned from addressing. This included the “Resist Apartheid: Statement to Meeting in Johannesburg, July 11, 1954”, which addressed the issue of the Sophiatown removals while “Prepare for Congress of the People: message, May 1955” was delivered to the Congress of the People gathering in Kliptown. In 1962 his autobiography *Let My People Go* was published.



■ Above: A meeting in Durban honouring Luthuli, 12 November, 1961. (Drum Social Histories/Baileys African History Archiv /Africa Media Online)



■ Above: Article about Luthuli, December, 1961. (Drum Social Histories/Baileys African History Archive/Africa Media Online)

After one meeting, a crocodile of men and women of all races followed him down the street, singing ‘Somlandela Luthuli ... We will follow Luthuli’. Swinging and swaying in the traditional steps – one, two, three, kick- ‘we will follow, we will follow Luthuli ...’

from Benson, M, 1985, 208-209

While the restrictions on him were relaxed, Luthuli made many speeches to a variety of audiences. He spoke of the need to allow Africans their fundamental human rights such as freedom of speech, freedom to sell their labour, universal education and the right to be in government. He was committed to the principles of non-racialism and believed that white and black people would need to learn to work together if South Africa was to prosper. He was also a Christian and believed that non-violence was the best way to achieve freedom.

Luthuli made an effort to reach out to white and Indian South Africans. He met frequently with the Indian community and in 1959 addressed large audiences that included white people. At times he was not well received. At a meeting in Pretoria, for example, he was assaulted and knocked off the platform by a group of young Afrikaners. At other times he was seen as a hero.

In 1956, together with other ANC leaders, Luthuli was arrested and charged with high treason. In 1957, he and 60 others were released in the pre-trial examination. He was called as a defence witness and was testifying in Pretoria when the Sharpeville Massacre took place. He burnt his pass to protest the killing of 69 innocent protesters.

In 1961, the white population held a general election that kept the National Party in power. Luthuli reacted by calling a national convention in opposition. He wanted the convention to draw up a Constitution for a free and democratic South Africa. He continued this anti-apartheid fight until his death in 1967 participating in activities when not banned or making his views known through his writings and teachings.



■ King Olav V of Norway shakes hands with Albert Luthuli
(Gallo Images/Getty Images)

INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

In 1961, Luthuli was the first African to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his “fight against racial discrimination” with “non-violent methods”. At the time he was banned and had to apply for special permission to travel to Norway to receive his award. Faced with national and international pressure, he flew to Oslo to accept the award on behalf of “freedom loving people” across the African continent.

Many international politicians visited Luthuli because of his stature as an international icon in the cause of human dignity. The United States Senator Robert Kennedy paid him an unofficial visit in 1966.

Luthuli died in 1967. While walking near his home he was reportedly struck by a train and killed. To this day his death is considered suspicious.

Yes, it is idle to speak of our country as being in peace, because there can be no peace in any part of the world where there are people oppressed. For that reason South Africa has been, and continues to be, the focus of world attention. I therefore regard this award as a recognition of the sacrifice made by many of all races, particularly the African people, who have endured and suffered so much for so long. It can only be on behalf of the people of South Africa, all the people of South Africa, especially the freedom-loving people, that I accept this award, that I acknowledge this honour. I accept it also as an honour not only to South Africa, but for the whole continent of Africa, to this continent, Mother Africa!

May the day come soon, when the people of the world will rouse themselves, and together effectively stamp out any threat to peace in whatever quarter of the world it may be found. When that day comes, there shall be “peace on earth and goodwill amongst men”, as was announced by the Angels when that great messenger of peace, Our Lord came to earth.

Chief Albert Luthuli’s speech on accepting the Nobel Peace Prize, Oslo, 1961



ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1: LEADERSHIP AS SERVICE

Zweli Mkhize, ANC Treasurer General, writing for the Daily Maverick, an online news site in 2017 had this to say on Luthuli: *“Luthuli much like Nelson Mandela, had the ability to think futuristically. Between these two leaders there is much to learn about selfless leadership that strives to achieve goals beyond yourself for the people you lead.”*

Luthuli: Powerful leader, gentle servant of his people and constant as the rain

1. Chief Albert Luthuli considered himself “a servant of the people”. What leadership qualities do you think that Chief Albert Luthuli showed throughout this life? Write these down here.
2. List at least five qualities that you expect in a leader.
3. Do you agree that leaders should be selfless and servants of the people. What would this involve?
4. Choose someone that you think is or would make a good leader. This person could be someone at school, in your community or a famous person. Write a blog that introduces this person. What leadership qualities do they have?
5. Why do you think that the author suggests that Luthuli could think futuristically? Do you support this view? Why? Why Not?
6. What do you see as the future of South Africa? What could you do to become a youth leader of the future?

ACTIVITY 2: CLASSROOM DEBATE:
CULTURE - IS IT DYNAMIC OR STATIC?

“Unlike many chiefs today Luthuli did not operate with the notion of custom as practices operating unchanged from time immemorial and from early in his chieftaincy introduced changes, including the right of women to participate in gatherings of the chieftaincy and its councils.”

Raymond Suttner, Op-Ed: Remembering Luthuli on the 50th anniversary of his death

Chief Albert Luthuli himself had very firm views on Zulu culture. He argued that culture is **dynamic**. Others may argue that culture is **static**. Here are the opposing views.

- Culture is **static** because it is passed down from older generations and there should be little or no change. Values, rules, norms and practices of culture explain why we behave as we do.
- Culture is **dynamic** and is always changing. Through interacting within society, we adapt and change our culture. This is because humans interact and influence each other.

What are your views on culture?

Organising a debate

Set up a debate on the topic **“Culture – is it static or dynamic?”** in the classroom. Choose two teams of three people each. In each team there should be a chairperson and two speakers. Team A must argue that culture is static, while Team B should argue that it is dynamic. Each team should be given a couple of days to research the topic and prepare their arguments. This is how the debate should run:

TEAM A: Culture is static	TEAM B: Culture is dynamic
Chairperson introduces team and argument	Chairperson introduces team and argument
Speaker 1 puts across their point of view for 2 minutes	Speaker 2 puts across their point of view for 2 minutes
Speaker 3 puts across their point of view for 2 minutes	Speaker 4 puts across their point of view for 2 minutes
Debate is opened up to the class	
The chairperson sums up the team's point of agreement and concludes the debate for the team	The chairperson sums up the team's point of agreement and concludes the debate for the team

The class then decides who had the better argument and who has won the debate.

ACTIVITY 3: WORDSEARCH

Read the text carefully and find the answers to the questions in the Wordsearch below.

- 1. Where was Luthuli born? (Bulawayo)
- 2. Where was his ancestral home? (Groutville)
- 3. What career did Luthuli follow post-school? (Teacher)
- 4. What leadership positions did Luthuli hold throughout his life? (Chief, President)
- 5. What contributed to the African National Congress (ANC) becoming a mass-based organisation? (Defiance Campaign)
- 6. What was adopted at the Congress of the People in Kliptown? (Freedom Charter)
- 7. Where was Luthuli when he received his second banning order? (airport)
- 8. What are five key values or principles that Luthuli lived by? (service, respect, honesty, humility and courage)
- 9. In 1961, what award did Luthuli receive? (Nobel Peace Prize)
- 10. Which US Senator visited Luthuli in his later years? (Kennedy)

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BULAWAYO

GROUTVILLE

TEACHER

CHIEF

PRESIDENT

DEFIANCE

CAMPAIGN

FREEDOM

CHARTER

AIRPORT

SERVICE

RESPECT

HONESTY

HUMILITY

COURAGE

NOBEL







PEACE

PRIZE

KENNEDY

ACTIVITY 4: “NOT MY PARTICULAR GODS”

When Chief Albert Luthuli accepted his chieftainship, he declared: “Money, fame and power are not my particular gods.” What do you think he meant by this? Divide into groups. Fill in the table below by answering the questions provided.

	Is this person powerful or disempowered or neither?	What makes them powerful, disempowered or neither?	Rank these people from who you think are the most empowered to those who are most disempowered
			
			
			
			
			
			

- 1. Why do you think some people are more powerful than others?
- 2. Do you think that you have any power? Why? Why not?
- 3. Do you think that this should change? Why? Why not?
- 4. What does our Constitution say about people and power?



1928

Born at Grey Street, Durban

1946

Becomes involved in the Passive Resistance Campaign, and makes her first political speech at 17.

1948

Enrols at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.

1951

Marries Ismail Meer

CHAPTER 4

FATIMA MEER

We have to be in the process of perpetual revolution to progress and guarantee the rights of people. There can be no peacetime so long as there is poverty and hunger and so long as basic human rights are trodden.

Fatima Meer

1954

Banned for two years because of her contribution to the Defiance Campaign

1956

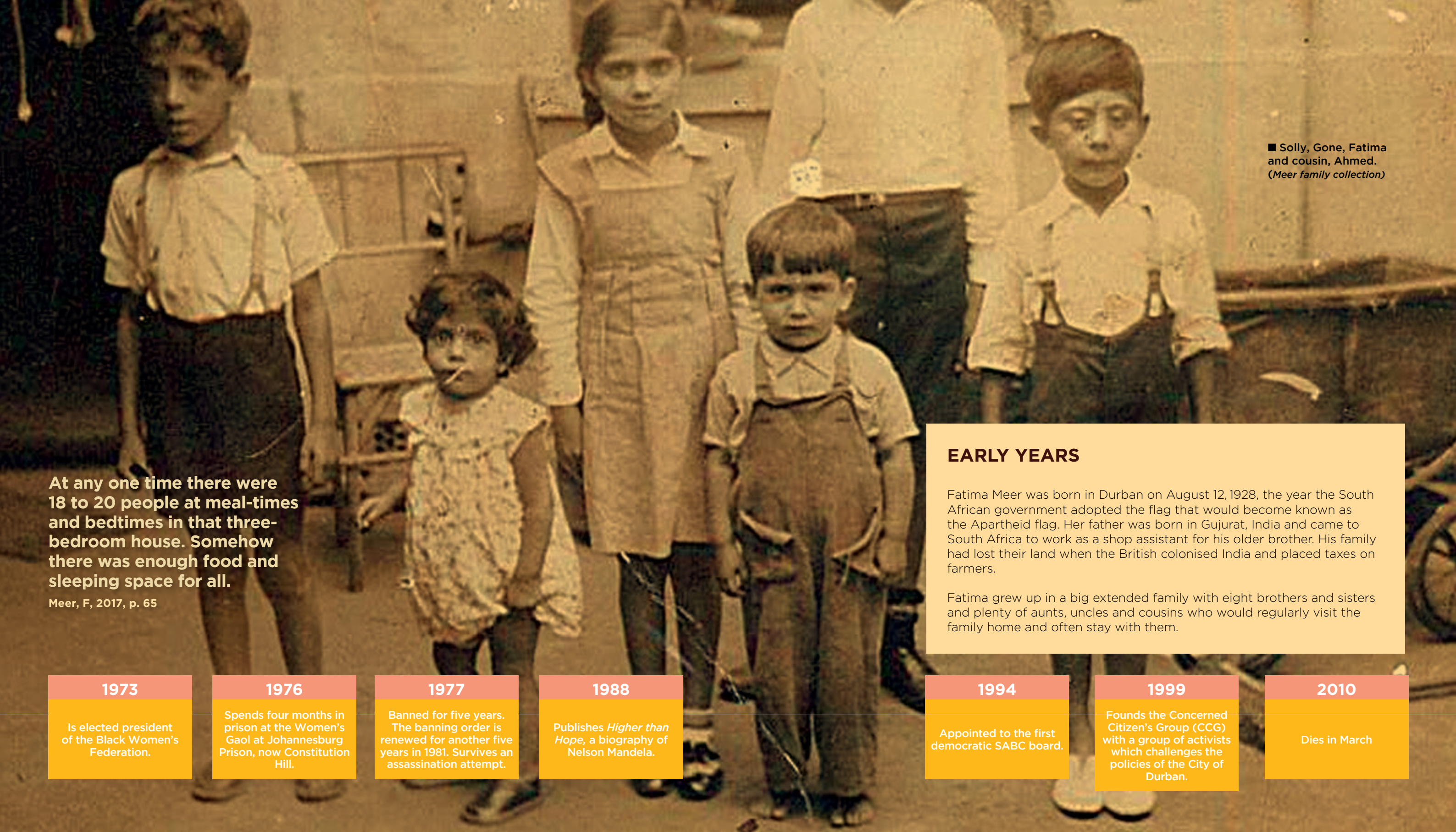
Her husband Ismail is arrested along with 155 others and stands trial in Johannesburg. in the Treason Trial

1969

Publishes her first book, *Portrait of Indian South Africans*.

1972

Founds the Institute of Black Research at the University of Natal



■ Solly, Gone, Fatima and cousin, Ahmed.
(Meer family collection)

At any one time there were 18 to 20 people at meal-times and bedtimes in that three-bedroom house. Somehow there was enough food and sleeping space for all.

Meer, F, 2017, p. 65

EARLY YEARS

Fatima Meer was born in Durban on August 12, 1928, the year the South African government adopted the flag that would become known as the Apartheid flag. Her father was born in Gujarat, India and came to South Africa to work as a shop assistant for his older brother. His family had lost their land when the British colonised India and placed taxes on farmers.

Fatima grew up in a big extended family with eight brothers and sisters and plenty of aunts, uncles and cousins who would regularly visit the family home and often stay with them.

1973	1976	1977	1988	1994	1999	2010
Is elected president of the Black Women's Federation.	Spends four months in prison at the Women's Gaol at Johannesburg Prison, now Constitution Hill.	Banned for five years. The banning order is renewed for another five years in 1981. Survives an assassination attempt.	Publishes <i>Higher than Hope</i> , a biography of Nelson Mandela.	Appointed to the first democratic SABC board.	Founds the Concerned Citizen's Group (CCG) with a group of activists which challenges the policies of the City of Durban.	Dies in March

Fatima had two mothers because her father, Moosa Meer, had two wives. The children called them Ma and Amina Ma. The family was Muslim, so polygamy was accepted.

Fatima's birth mother, Amina Ma, was white. She was born Rachel Farrell and met Moosa when he was working at the shop next door to where she lived in Kimberley. After she got married her name changed to Amina and she learnt the Gujarati language. She also dressed with a scarf like the other women in the Meer family. According to young Fatima "two mothers were better than one".

With so many children in the family, Fatima's childhood included a lot of fun and games, which extended into the streets around their home.

We rummaged in the bins and boxes dumped in these and often came up with what we considered treasures – broken toys, scraps of material, electrical parts. We were particularly happy when our parents found use for any of these.

Meer, F, 2017, p. 82

■ **Below:** Fatima's mothers, Amina Ma and Ma. (Meer family collection)



One Christmas Eve we were a ragamuffin gang walking down West Street, collecting discarded [cigarette] butts and puffing away on these. Somebody produced pieces of cheese for us to nibble on so that the pungent flavour would camouflage the tell-tale odour of smoke. In fact we did not like smoking, but illicit puffing was the closest we got to sinning and we found it utterly delicious, like the apple shared by Adam and Eve.

Meer, F, 2017, p. 82

Fatima's father was the editor of the newspaper *Indian Views* and was her role model. He loved books and made sure all his children attended school. Her first experience of racial discrimination came when as a little girl she sat on a park bench reserved for white people or "Europeans".

That was the first time I realised that we belonged to a group called non-Europeans. I sat on a bench and the park ranger was promptly on to me, shooing me off the bench. My father quickly came to my rescue. He whisked me off the bench and distracted my attention away from something he resented deeply, but did not think I was ready to understand.

Fatima Meer

■ **Right:** Fatima walking in West street, Durban in the 1940s.

(Meer family collection)





■ **Above:** Fatima's high school photograph. Durban Girls Secondary School, Dartnell Crescent, Durban, 1939. *(Meer family collection)*

GETTING INTO POLITICS

In high school Fatima was active in debating and drama and edited the school magazine. It was as a teenager that her political activism began. Fatima's older brother, who was studying in India, wrote to her, telling her about a terrible famine in Bengal, India, where many people were starving. She felt motivated to raise money to support the cause and went from shop to shop after school telling people about the famine. She also organised a concert.

Fatima's uncle, Al Meer, whom she called Gora Papa, was a member of the Natal

Indian Congress (NIC) an organisation founded by Mahatma Gandhi in 1894 to fight for the rights of Indians in South Africa. The NIC would later work closely with the ANC on many campaigns. Al Meer took the teenage Fatima to lectures and political meetings.

In 1946 the government introduced the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act. This law limited the areas in which Indians could live and own land. It was one of many laws that the government passed in the 1900s to ensure that white people had most of the wealth and land in the country.

When I look back on my time spent with Gora Papa, I have the sense that he was cultivating me. This cultivation was continuous until I passed matric and went to university. Then I think he saw his mission accomplished and he relaxed. It was Gora Papa who put the idea in my head that I could get up and speak to people.

Meer, F, 2017, p. 96

In response to the act, the Natal and Transvaal Indian Congresses started a passive resistance campaign. In Durban, protesters set up tents on "resistance plots" on land that belonged to the city. Protesters were influenced by the passive resistance campaigns led by **Gandhi** and vowed not to use force or violence. They did not resist arrest. As people were arrested other protesters took their place at the resistance plots.

Fatima's uncles were active in the campaign and her mothers raised funds and provided food and drinks for the protesters. Fatima joined them. She formed the Passive Resistance Students' Council with other students and raised money for the campaign. She was also a regular at resistance plot. During this campaign she made her first public speech at age 17.

MAHATMA GANDHI



■ **Above:** Gandhi in South Africa, 1909. *(Wikimedia Commons)*

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi or Mahatma Gandhi came to South Africa in 1893 to find work in an Indian firm. He spent the next 21 years in South Africa. Although apartheid had not been formally introduced, racial segregation existed. Gandhi protested against this through non-violent means.

In 1894 he founded the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) which initially also engaged in non-violent civil protest against laws such as the registration of Indians and the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act.

In 1915 Gandhi returned to India where he continued to fight against discrimination and British colonialism.

Fatima failed her matric year because she was active in politics. Her school told her she could only return if she stopped her involvement in the passive resistance campaign. She refused and with the support of her family finished her matric on her own.

Although the passive resistance campaign did not succeed in getting government to change the act, it nurtured a new generation of activists like Fatima.



My father had written the speech and I had memorised it. It was a great success. As a young girl, standing up on that lorry which was our platform, I caught people's imagination. Monty Naicker than asked me to join him and Dr. Goonam in leading the 6 000 strong march that followed the speeches. Days later Monty gave me a photograph of myself making the speech which he had signed. I was very proud of myself.

Meer, F, 2017, p. 107

■ **Left:** Fatima made her first political speech at the age of 17, 1946.
(Meer family collection)

LEAVING HOME AND STARTING UNIVERSITY

After finishing matric, Fatima went to the University of Witwatersrand (Wits) in Johannesburg to study social sciences. It was 1948, the year the National Party (NP) came into power. This was a turning point: the NP passed the apartheid laws that entrenched the discrimination and inequality that black people experienced in the country.

In the 1940s most universities in South Africa were not yet formally segregated but there were very few black students who had the opportunity to attend university.

At university Fatima made new friends and attended a few parties and concerts but her socialising was limited. She was staying with family friends and it was not considered proper for a young Indian woman to go out socially without family.

At Wits Fatima continued her political activism by joining the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM). The NEUM united black, Indian and coloured people and did not support collaboration with the government.

On one occasion Fatima was seen putting up posters for NEUM with a fellow member, a young white man. Talk went around and caused a scandal for her family. It was seen as shameful for a young Indian woman to be spending time with a white man. Eventually she returned to Durban to finish university there.

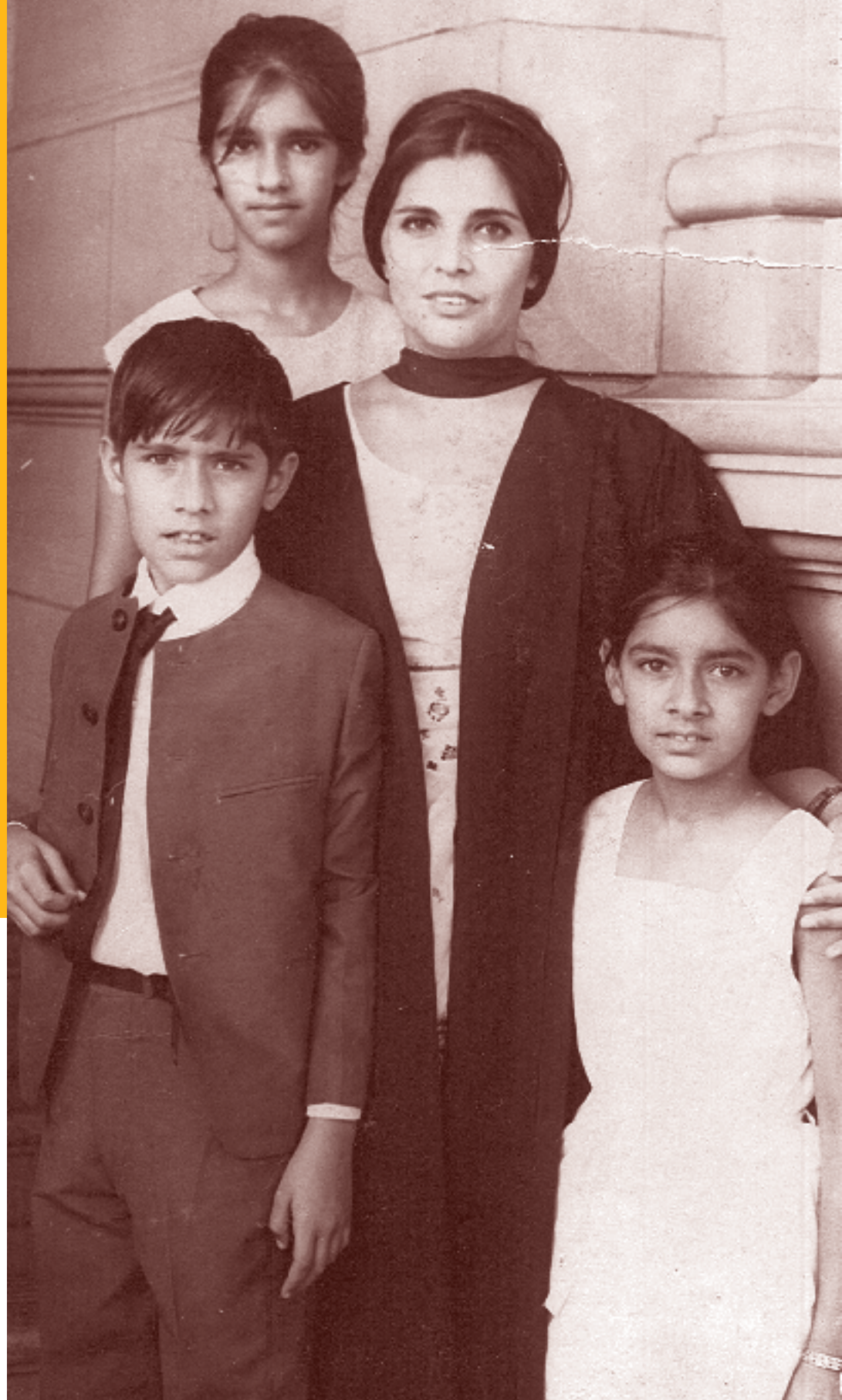
UNIVERSITY EDUCATION UNDER APARTHEID

In 1959, the government passed the Extension of University Education Act which meant students who were not white could only study at the previously open universities with a permit.

New universities were later developed for Indian, coloured and black students. These universities got less funding and support than white universities and academic standards were lower.

■ **Left:** Fatima at her graduation with her children Shamim, Rashid and Shehnaz.

(Meer family collection)



DURBAN 1949: CONFLICT BETWEEN INDIAN AND BLACK PEOPLE

In January, 1949 violence broke out in Durban between Indian and black people. The violence started when an Indian shopkeeper assaulted a young black man in a Durban market. As others got involved it led to a bigger fight between Indian and black men. The following day violence erupted in different parts of Durban as black people targeted Indians in retaliation. A hundred and forty-two (142) black and Indian people were killed and over 1 000 were injured. Shops, houses, and factories were destroyed or damaged.

When the riots happened Fatima was in Durban and became involved in supporting people who fled the violence and were living in refugee camps.

She recognised that there were Indians, and particularly wealthy Indians who: ... *like whites begin to believe that their good fortune has something to do with their inherent superiority as Indians.*

Meer, F, www.sahistory.org.za

But for her this was not the whole story. During the 1949 riots many black people did not support the violence against Indians and protected their Indian neighbours. Many black and Indian people lived alongside each other peacefully.

The ANC and NIC response to the riots was to join forces to patrol key areas and speak to the crowds.

They called for unity between black and Indian people. They knew the government benefited from these communities being divided and that if they united they would be a strong force against the government.

WHAT CAUSED THE VIOLENCE?

The tensions that resulted in the 1949 violence had been building for some time and the causes were many.

Indian and black communities lived alongside each in Durban but were segregated. The two communities had many negative views about each other. Although both groups were treated as non-Europeans and were both discriminated against by laws, in many ways Indians were better off.

Indians could own land in more areas than black people and did not have to carry passes. When Indians came to South Africa they started setting up shops and businesses, while black people were mostly farmers who started moving to the city after losing their land to white people or due to the pressure of taxes by the colonial government.

Between the 1920s and 1940s a global economic depression affected South Africa. Poverty increased and many people moved to the cities to look for opportunities. Black communities in Durban were under extreme pressure. Life in the city was not easy as the government's laws denied them opportunities and employment was hard to find. Most of the people who started the violence were men who were forced to live in overcrowded shack settlements and compounds. They were frustrated and angry.

Many Indians were shopkeepers, landlords, factory supervisors and bus owners. Some used their position to exploit and overcharge people. The feeling was that Indians were benefitting at the expense of black people. Many black people believed Indians "not only had better rights, but a sense of snobbishness and superiority over the Africans". This can help explain why Indians became a target for people's frustrations.

"Indian South Africans: The Struggle to be South African" (omalley.nelsonmandela.org)

There also exist strong emotional bonds between the two peoples – bonds forged in the shared misery of economic circumstances, joint experiences of malnourished babies, of living in overcrowded shacks, of sharing a communal tap, a communal privy.

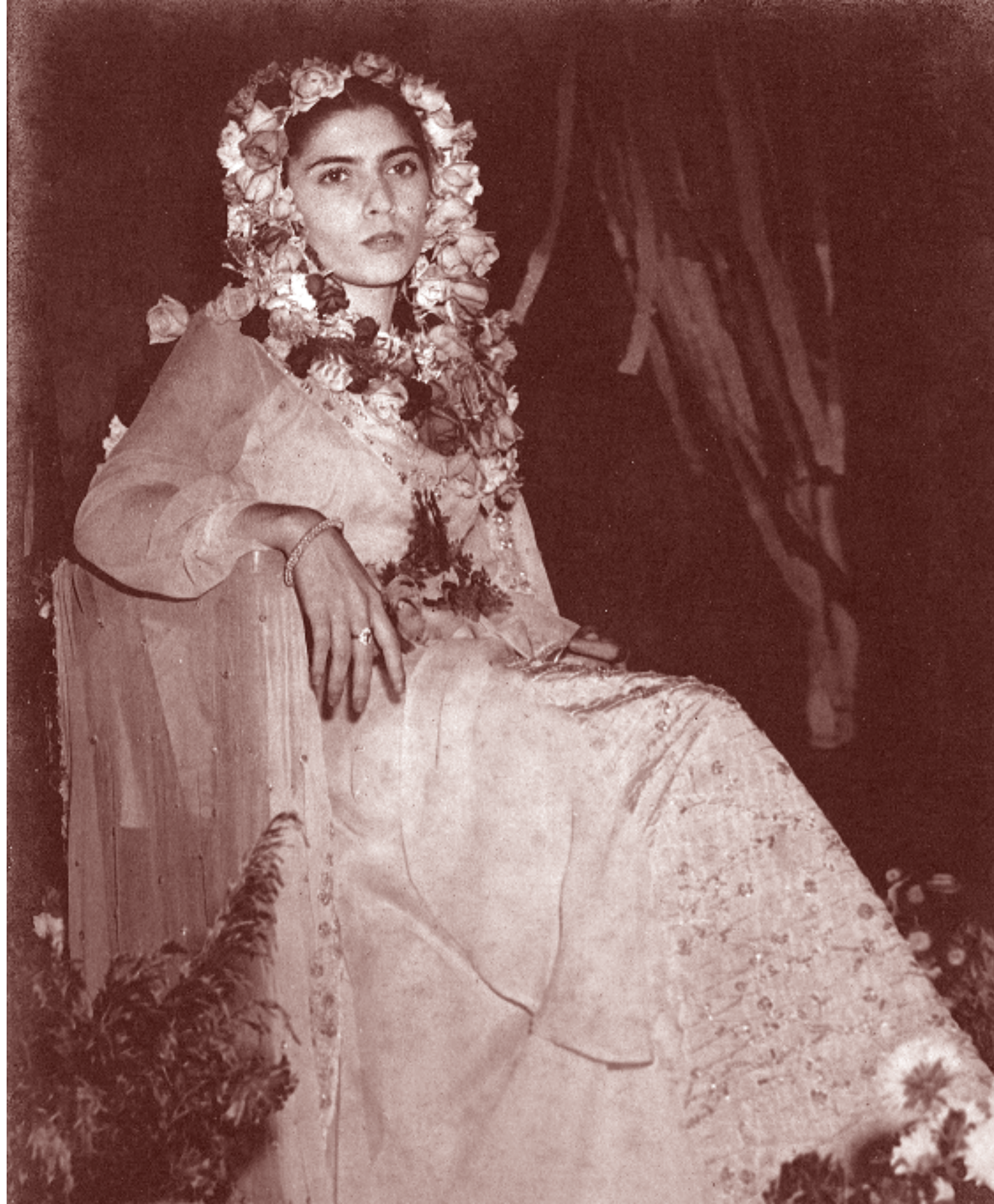
Meer, F, African and Indian in Durban

Many felt that the government had encouraged the violence and remarked that the police made little effort to stop this.

A key concern for Fatima was to find ways for black and Indian people to support each other and work together to challenge apartheid.

I was very concerned about relations between blacks and Indians. I had lived through the 1949 riots and I was anxious about building positive relations between the two communities. I was very friendly with Bertha Mkhize, the President of the ANC Women's League in Natal. Together we formed the Durban and District Women's League in 1952 basically an amalgam of the women from the ANC and NIC. I was the secretary, Bertha the president. We decided to work in Cato Manor, where the worst violence had occurred during 1949. Bertha found a church and we established a pre-school and a milk distribution centre. I set up contact with the bus owners in the area and collected money. We distributed milk each morning. We bused out each morning and spent an hour so there.

Meer, F, 2017, p. 149



LOVE AND MARRIAGE

In 1950 Fatima fell in love with Ismail Meer and married him the following year. Ismail was her father's first cousin. He was ten years older than her and had always been an important influence in her life, helping her choose her field of study and inspiring her activism. Ismail had just graduated with his law degree and was doing his articles to complete his degree. He was an active member of the Natal Indian Congress and wrote articles for the *Guardian*, a newspaper set up by trade unions and members of the Communist Party. Fatima and Ismail shared many ideals and values including a shared vision of the world they wanted to live in and the role they wanted to play to create it. After he died she wrote that, "the most important relationship in my life was and is with Ismail".

The fact that they were related meant they shared another important part of their lives – family. In the Gujarati Muslim tradition it was encouraged for relatives to get married. As one of Fatima's mothers used to tell her:

Seek a marriage partner in the family and if you can't find one there, then look in the neighbourhood, and if there is none there too, then look in the village. Heaven help you if you are forced to go beyond the village.

The young couple were married in a ceremony at Fatima's family home in Pinetown and then moved to a flat in Durban. Two years later, their first child Shamim was born followed by Shehnaz in 1955 and Rashid in 1956.

THE GROUP AREAS ACT

One of the laws passed by the National Party government was the Group Areas Act of 1950 which allowed the government to decide which areas people could live and work in based on their race.

The act paved the way for the development of townships and the destruction of areas like Sophiatown where different race groups lived alongside each other. It allowed the government to reserve the best parts of the city for white people and force black, Indian and coloured people into areas outside the city, from which they would have to travel long distances to get to work.

Resistance to the Group Areas Act particularly united Indians that were active during the passive resistance campaign, as they would be directly affected.

■ **Right:** A mass meeting in Durban on 28 May, 1950 to protest the Group Areas Act and Suppression of Communism Act, under the auspices of the ANC, NIC and the Coloured People's Congress.
(Wikimedia Commons)



I recall a mass meeting at Curries Fountain Sports Ground. The sports ground was filled with people. We addressed them from the stadium – Monty Naicker (prominent activist and NIC president). Alan Paton (author and founder of the Liberal Party) and I. There were probably other speakers, but these are the ones I recall. I was in a bus a few days later and I heard two women passengers discuss the meeting. The one referred to the woman speaker: “She spoke! She said things that shook everyone”. The reference was to myself and I felt proud.

Meer, F, 2017, p. 158

THE DEFIANCE CAMPAIGN AND THE FREEDOM CHARTER

While Ismail and Fatima were starting a family and setting up a life together their activism and work life continued.

Fatima in the early 1950s had completed her first degree in sociology and psychology and was busy with a postgraduate honours degree in sociology at the University of Natal. She also worked as a research assistant at the Institute for Community and Family Health, where she collected the stories and experiences of Indians who lived in poor communities. However she lost her job, which was government funded, because of her political activism.

The National Party government in the 1950s passed a string of laws which further entrenched the power that white South Africans had and limited the rights of black, Indian and coloured South Africans, in relation to where they could live and work and own land.

In response to these laws, the ANC, South African Indian Congress (which included the NIC) and the Coloured People's Congress started the Defiance Campaign. Supporters of this campaign broke apartheid laws. Fatima and Ismail organised and attended many political meetings during this period. Both were often speakers.

She spoke! She said things that shook everyone.

Meer, F, 2017, p. 158

BANNING

In November 1954, Fatima was banned for the first time, for a two-year period:

As a result of my repeated appearances at mass political meetings, I had become a prime suspect in the eyes of the Special Branch, and I was honoured with my first banning order ahead of Dr. Naicker himself. I became quite a celebrity and had a special photograph taken which appeared on the front page of The Leader [newspaper].

Meer, F, 2017, p. 158

A day later, Ismail was banned as well. Being banned meant it was illegal to go to political, social or family gatherings. This severely affected a person’s life including their ability to earn money. It also limited their ability to organise resistance to the government which was the main goal of banning.

In 1954, many other leaders involved in the Defiance Campaign were also banned. One of the government’s aims was to sabotage the Congress of the People which took place in Kliptown, Soweto in 1955.

The meeting was organised by the Congress Alliance, which included the ANC, SAIC, Coloured People’s Congress, SA Congress of Trade Unions and the Congress of the Democrats. The Congress had been called to create a vision for a new South Africa in which there was equality between all race groups. Members of the alliance had collected ideas for this vision from people across the country. In Kliptown, 3 000 people gathered to agree to Freedom Charter which was the document that had been put together from these ideas.

Fatima and Ismail could not attend the meeting because they were banned. Fatima was also pregnant with her second child, who was born three days after the meeting.

For the year Ismail was on trial in Johannesburg, he lived living with family friends. This year was difficult for the family.

The Treason Trial took its toll on us. Ours was a very small family, with deep emotional bonds and we relied on these for our day-to-day well-being and sense of security. The Treason Trial threatened all of this. For Ismail, there was the trauma of being wrenched away from his newly found family in which he was finding so much happiness. For the rest of us, it was a period during which we learnt how very much we depended on and loved each other.

Meer, F, 2017, p. 166

With Ismail away, Fatima had to take responsibility for the family and finances. She found a job at the University of Natal sociology department as a tutor and then junior lecturer. She was supported at home by her mothers and Phoowa who cooked and cleaned for the family. Laila and Sharda helped look after the children.

In the 1960s, after the Sharpeville Massacre the government cracked down hard on activists. The ANC was banned. Many political activists were put into jail or went underground or into exile. Ismail was arrested and detained after Sharpeville and released three months later. In 1963 he was banned for five years.

THE TREASON TRIAL

Banning and arrests were to become a feature of Meer family life. In 1956 Ismail was one of 156 people arrested and charged with treason in the Treason Trial. The government had allowed the Congress of the People to take place in Kliptown and the Treason Trial was their response. The 156 people were charged with high treason and trying to overthrow the government. In the first days many of those arrested were kept in communal cells at the Johannesburg Prison, now Constitution Hill. Nelson Mandela described it as, “the largest and longest unbanned meeting of the Congress Alliance in years.” The case ended in 1961 after the judges ruled that the government did not have enough evidence. Charges had already been dropped against Ismail and many others earlier than this in 1958.



■ Ismail after appendix operation under police guard as a treason trialist.
(Meer family collection)

■ Fatima with a copy
of her book *Portrait of
Indian South Africans*

(Meer family collection)



1960S: TEACHING AND WRITING

Fatima put her energy into teaching at the University of Natal and writing during this quiet political period. She also got involved in education work, collecting money to start schools for black children. The government's Bantu education system had been introduced and protests against the poor quality education began. Many activists began setting up good alternative independent schools.

Writing remained an important means of activism for Fatima in this period. As Apartheid further separated people, Fatima used writing as a way of connecting. In 1966 she wrote the book *Portrait of Indian South Africans*.

I wrote about Indian South Africans in the hope that they would reach out and make contact with other South Africans, in the hope that South Africans would recognise themselves in the lives of their fellows. I felt that there was a need for those who shared the country to know each other. As segregation had crystallised into apartheid, barriers between communities had grown wider. Opportunities for interpersonal contact were less than in earlier times, as each community was residentially barricaded into its own little homeland or group area. The written word seemed to me important as a channel of meaningful contact.

Meer, F, 2017



THE 1970S: BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS, THE SOWETO UPRISING AND DETENTIONS

While the 1960s was a quiet period with leaders and organisations banned, in the 1970s there was a renewal of energy. This was led by university and high school students and the black consciousness movement.

This movement called on “non-white” South Africans to join together in a common identity, to be proud to be black and to use this pride and unity as a starting point for struggle. They saw social change as

starting on a personal level with how we understand and see ourselves. As Steve Biko said, “the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed”.

In 1972, Fatima, founded the Institute for Black Research, to publish research and writing by black people in South Africa. In 1975, she was key in founding the Black Women’s Federation, a national organisation for black women that dealt with education, housing, labour, rural development issues as well as detentions.

The energy of the 70s came to a head and erupted in the 1976 Soweto Uprising.

School children took to the streets of Soweto to protest against Afrikaans being made a language they had to learn in. The police responded with bullets and teargas and the uprising spread. People took to the streets across the country.

The government responded by arresting and detaining activists. According to its own reports 2 430 people, including 160 schoolchildren, were arrested and detained in the three months following June 16.

All these people were detained under section 6 of the Terrorism Act which said that the police could arrest and keep in prison anyone that they thought was

involved in terrorism, for 60 days. If they wanted to they could also extend this time. They also did not have to tell family members where they kept those arrested. Terrorism was very broadly defined as any act that could “endanger the maintenance of law and order”.

This period was hard for the Meer family. Their youngest child Rashid, who was involved in protests at the University of Durban Westville, was arrested and detained first. When the police came to their house, the family thought it was for Fatima and were shocked that the police had come for Rashid.



Those of us who were in the frontline of that liberation struggle never trusted the minister’s figures. We knew that the government used statistics for damage control. We multiplied their figured by three to arrive at reality.

Winnie Mandela, from the foreword of Prison Diary by Fatima Meer, referring to the number of people arrested during the Soweto Uprising

■ **Left:** Virginia Gcabashe and Ellen Kuzwayo carry Fatima after her election as President of the Black Women’s Federation. Celebrating with them are Theresa Hendrickse, Zubie Seedat and Sally Motlana. *(Meer family collection)*

■ **Right:** Fatima with Winnie Mandela. *(Meer family collection)*



We were shaken. Rashid was tense, and I grew tense with him; I could feel his nervousness. I helped him put a few things together. It can only be for a few days, I kept telling myself ... 'When can we see him?' was my sole concern. 'Can we bring him breakfast in the morning?' As irrelevant as that sounds, it gave me a contact line, even though it was an imaginary one. As the day set in we realised the meaning of incommunicado detention. Knowing that your teenage son was in detention and entirely at the mercy of the police was bad enough, but not knowing where he was detained and having no means of contacting him was unbearable.

Fatima Meer

The next day Fatima's son-in-law, Bobby was detained as well. Eight days later Fatima herself was arrested and spent 137 days at the Women's Gaol in Johannesburg Prison (now a museum – Constitution Hill). She was not told exactly why she was arrested but she suspected that it was for her work with the Black Women's Federation. Winnie Mandela and Jeannie Noel who organised the federation's first conference with her were also imprisoned. Although they were in single solitary cells, the women political prisoners shared two yards and found ways to have a community life.

The voice switches off. I am exhilarated. I want to shout. I am not alone. I am with friends! I am with friends!

Meer, F (1976)



The wardress Cecelia plays a game of spill & spell with awaiting trial prisoners, Edith Mbandaka. Both are breaking scales. The wall in the foreground is our cell. The back & side walls, are the walls of our prison yard. That is what we would have to scale to escape. No trapping ropes allowed.

On her first day in jail, Fatima lay in bed with a headache:

I lie cold, sick, miserable on my improvised bed. I turn my face to the wall. I hear a muffled knock. All my sense are on alert. There is absolute silence; then it starts again – thud! thud! thud! Where did it come from? I have no sense of the geography of the cells. The knocking continues – thud! thud! I return the knock.

"How are you?" the voice comes in a loud whisper, through the wall, but from where? I am totally disoriented.

"I'm fine," I answer a little too loudly for my caller's comfort.

"Sh!" I am warned. "They will hear you. We are not allowed to talk. You can talk now because the wardresses are gone."

"What's your name?" I ask.

"ZA. That's my name for here. We'll give you a name too."

"Is Jean here?"

"Yes, she will talk to you in the evening after the wardresses retire. Sh! There are footsteps."

The voice switches off. I am exhilarated. I want to shout. I am not alone. I am with friends! I am with friends!

That night, after the lights go out, the last clanging of the keys stop and the sound of sturdy feet in laced-up shoes fade and disappear, the cells come alive. There are five of us. Jeanie was buoyant. She says she has been biting her toenails: 'It gives me something to do. They told us they were locking us up and throwing away the keys, the swine.'

We raise our voices and they carry through the walls. I am introduced to LK – Sibongile Kubeka from KwaMashu. TH, quiet of voice and opinion and ZA have been in prison for over a year without having been brought to trial. I am christened LX, Jeanie is OC. I ask ZA to describe herself to me. She says I should try and recognise her when I see her. She has a wonderful laugh and is highly spirited despite her year in detention.

Meer, F (1976)



The political detainees had a sense of why they were there and supported each other.

We had our bad days and we missed our families and our lives outside. We were frustrated and irritated with each other and the wardresses. We had misunderstandings and differences of opinion but we were sustained by our sense of solidarity and our sense of mission.

Meer, F (1976)

Fatima managed to get paints and paper, to paint flowers and cards but used these to paint prison life. Her paintings show the everyday life of women in prison: fetching water, lining up to wait for breakfast or sanitary pads, spending time together. When she was released she managed to get the paintings smuggled out of jail.

THE VIOLENCE OF APARTHEID

Although by the end of 1976 everyone in Fatima's family was out of detention and back home they were still all banned, which limited their political activity. In 1977 the Black Women's Federation was also banned. Rashid's banning meant that he could not study for five years. He decided to go into exile and escaped with a fake passport to join family that lived in England. He only returned to South Africa in 1994.

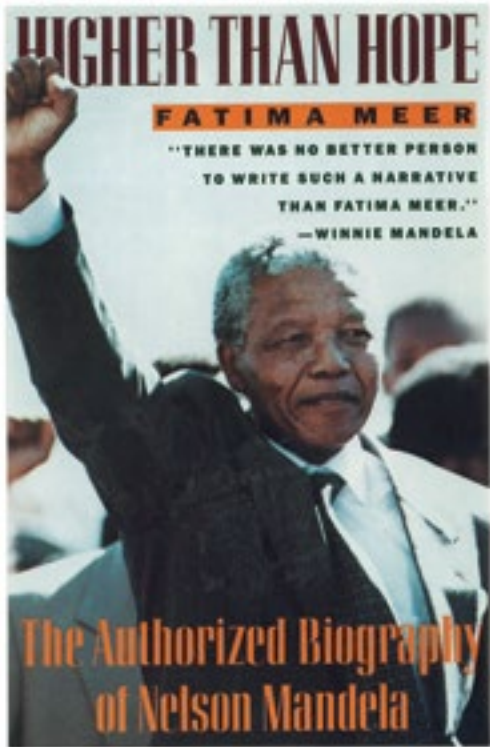
Although Fatima was banned for the next ten years, she was still wrote and taught. She supported the UDF, a movement started in 1983 to fight against apartheid. She established the Tembalishe Tutorial College in 1979 to train students in typing, screen-printing, carpentry, sewing and pottery and started Phambili High School in 1986. She often broke her banning order by attending political meetings and memorial services for activists who had died.

After 1976 the government increased their violence against those who were resisting them. Many activists were killed and police unleashed violence daily in townships. In 1977 Fatima survived an assassination attempt.

We were at home, Ismail and I, telling stories to my young nieces who were staying with us at the time when my daughter Shehnaz sounded the alarm that our garage was on fire. This immediately got me rushing to the door. Fortunately for, Zwelinye Goba, our former gardener, was staying with us at the time and he preceded me by seconds or minutes to the door. He is a tall man, I am a short woman, and he was shot twice in the shoulder. When I got to the door, Zwelinye was already lying there bleeding and he said to me, 'Please go away, they are calling your name, and they are swearing at you'. Had I been the first to open the door, I would have been shot in the head most likely fatally. Zwelinye was rushed to the hospital where he made a good recovery.



■ **Above;** In 1985 the Meer family home was petrol bombed but no one was hurt. Photo by David Turnley. (Getty Images/Gallo Images)



HIGHER THAN HOPE

In the 1980s Fatima continued to publish books through the IBR on the political situation of the country and how people’s lives were affected by apartheid. When she was banned she published under the name of her daughter YS Meer.

In 1987 she published *The Trial of Andrew Zondo*, about a 19-year-old MK soldier who was sentenced to death for planting a bomb in a shopping-centre in Amanzimtoti, which resulted in the deaths of five people.

In 1988 she published a biography of Nelson Mandela, *Higher than Hope*. Fatima and Ismail had a close friendship with the Mandelas which started when Ismail and Nelson studied law together at Wits.

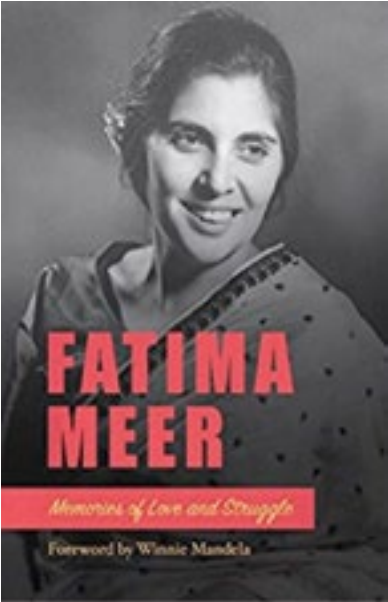
The Mandelas would regularly stay at their home when visiting Durban. When Nelson wanted to marry Winnie, he sent her to the Meers for a visit so they could agree that he “made the right choice of a woman”. This was a start of close friendship between Fatima and Winnie. The two continued to support each other personally and politically through all hardships.

In 1975 when Nelson was in prison the two women confronted the Minister of Justice and Prisons:

Returning home on Monday following the meeting, reporter, Farook Khan, drew Fatima Meer’s attention to the Minister of Justice and Prisons, Jimmy Kruger, whose car had just pulled up outside the airport. Fatima eased Winnie towards the indicated car ‘to have some fun and games’. The Minister, a short man in wide-rimmed spectacles, was at the point half buried in the boot of the car, withdrawing [his] suitcase. ‘Mr. Kruger, I don’t think we have met. I am Fatima Meer and this is Mrs. Mandela’. The little man beamed at the two women and said he was pleased to meet them. Winnie asked, ‘When are you releasing my husband?’ ‘That’s up to you,’ he said, wagging a finger. ‘Listen to him,’ Winnie guffawed. ‘He says it’s up to me. What have I got to do with my husband’s release?’ ‘If you behave yourself,’ the Minister said. ‘Behave myself?’ The two women laughed derisively and left the Minister to join their friends.

Nelson Mandela, The world celebrating the Mandelas

In the late 1970s, Fatima received a message from Madiba, who was in jail, that he would like her to write his biography. *Higher than Hope*, which was published in 1988 is based on conversations with Winnie and letters that Nelson had written to his family.



When South Africa began to approach democracy, Ismail and Fatima both found ways of participating in the project of creating a new society. Ismail became a member of parliament for the ANC in the Natal legislature. Fatima was on the board of the SABC which had the role of transforming the company from being an agent of apartheid to a democratic public broadcaster. Fatima challenged the managers. As one said:

We can handle Dr Ivy [Matsepe-Casaburri, the chair] fine. But when we catch sight of that little, stooped figure in the sari clumping down the corridor, we grown men quiver in our suits!

From “Fatima – Whirlwind in a sari”, a profile by Mark Gevisser

Fatima continued her community work and activism. She set up another school and training centre. She also helped set up the Concerned Citizens Group in Chatsworth, Durban. In Chatsworth there were many people facing eviction after their water and electricity was cut off because they could not afford to pay for these services. The Concerned Citizens Group protested against this and demanded that the local government reconnect their services.

Fatima said she would be willing to challenge the new government if the rights of South Africans were not met.

I have always stood for the poor and the rights of the poor and though I and all my friends have been in the ANC for over 60 years, if I have to stand against the organisation to address the needs of the vast majority of South African citizens then I will unhappily do so. We have to be in the process of perpetual revolution to progress and guarantee the rights of people. There can be no peacetime so long as there is poverty and hunger and so long as basic human rights are trodden. The cause of rampant crime in our country is inequality. We are the second most unequal country in the world. More than half the population lives in poverty. Can we call this living in peace? The definition of peace is equity, harmony, not starvation. I believe we need to strengthen the numerous community-based organisations in our country and increase the voices of civil society.

Meer, F, 2017, p. 226

In 2002, Fatima had a stroke that paralysed the left side of her body but continued to attend meetings, speak publicly and support community activism.

She died on 12 March, 2010 after suffering a second stroke.



ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1: 10 QUESTIONS – GETTING TO KNOW FATIMA MEER

Read through Fatima Meer’s story and answer the following questions:

- 1. At what age did Fatima become active in politics? What made her decide to get involved?
- 2. What was the purpose of the Asiatic Land Tenure and Representation Act?
- 3. How did people respond to the Act?
- 4. In 1949 violence broke out between Indian and African people in Durban. Why did Fatima think this was the case? Do you agree?
- 5. What impact did this violence have on Fatima?
- 6. What did Fatima do to resist the apartheid discrimination in South Africa?
- 7. Do you think that what the white government was doing was fair?
- 8. In 1955, the Congress of the People took place. What was the purpose of the Congress?
- 9. Do you support what was agreed at the Congress of the People?
- 10. Fatima spent time in the Women’s Prison. What was she arrested for?
- 11. What would you do if your freedom was taken away from you?
- 12. What values did Fatima live by throughout her life?
- 13. What would you do today to change things and make them fair for everyone?

ACTIVITY 2: A GAME OF PRINCIPLES

Many leaders like Fatima Meer fought for human rights. These can be found in our Constitution today.

IN the first column of the table are five key human rights principles. What do each of these mean? Fill in your answers in columns 2, 3 and 4.

Human rights principles and values	Explain what each principle means	Is this a principle that your school lives by? Why? Why not?	What needs to change so that these constitutional principles are upheld?
Equality			
Participation			
Accountability			
Universality			
Interrelatedness			

ACTIVITY 3: GATHERING ORAL HISTORIES

Apartheid as a system officially ended in 1994 with the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as the first black president. There are still many people in South Africa that have experienced both apartheid and democracy. We are looking for their oral histories!

Interview your parents, grandparents or community members to find out their stories. Do at least two interviews – and write these stories into a blog that tells some of the history of apartheid by the people who lived through it. Find out what has changed in their lives. Where possible, take photographs. This interview should look at:

- 1. **Life under apartheid:** What was it like living during apartheid? How were they affected? Their own experiences of apartheid?
- 2. **On leadership:** Who did they identify as leaders? Why did they choose these leaders? What qualities did they have?
- 3. **Life in a democracy:** What are the changes they have seen since 1994? How has it affected them? What are they happy with? What would they like to see change?
- 4. **Lessons learnt:** What are the lessons learnt?

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