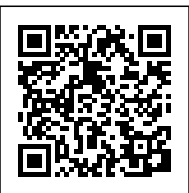


MANDELA'S LEGACY IS INDESTRUCTIBLE

Posted on December 5, 2013 by Keghart



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Toronto, 5 December 2013

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In an era racked by world wars, genocides and other horrors, Nelson Mandela was an icon of reconciliation who helped save South Africa from civil war.

Freedom fighter. Democrat. Healer. Nobel Peace laureate. Father of a nation. Nelson Mandela towered above the evil of apartheid with a gritty nobility of spirit that became a beacon of hope for his struggling South African people and an inspiration to all. His death leaves the nation of 50 million grieving the passing of a beloved father figure, and the world bereft of a champion of peace.

As Prime Minister Stephen Harper noted in a gracious tribute, "the world has lost one of its great moral leaders and statesmen" with his passing. "Mandela's enduring legacy for his country, and the world, is the example he set through his own 'long walk to freedom.' With grace and humility, he modelled how peoples can transform their own times and in doing so, their own lives."

For many months South Africans kept Mandela in their thoughts and prayers even as they reconciled themselves to the declining health of their 95-year-old former president. "He's our freedom fighter," said Gerald Moshe, a 19-year-old student who has never known apartheid, as a nation waited for the inevitable. "Without him, we'd be under apartheid. Now we can do anything." Simple words. But few of the tributes that have poured in from the great and the good were more eloquent.

Famously, Mandela spent 10,000 days in apartheid prisons under a racist white regime between 1962 and 1990 as the authorities tried to make the world forget him and abandon his cause. Instead, as President Barack Obama has said, he became "a hero for the world," his fame and stature steadily

growing. And when he emerged he preached freedom, brotherhood and "the common humanity that bonds both black and white," where a lesser spirit might have been consumed by bitterness and the desire for revenge.

"We come from a people who, because they would not accept to be treated as subhuman, redeemed the dignity of all humanity everywhere," he told Canada's Parliament after his release in 1990. Four years later South Africa peacefully shook off the fetters of apartheid and joined the ranks of free nations.

In a century racked by world wars, genocides and other horrors, the man known as Madiba was an icon of civility and reconciliation who, like fellow Nobel Peace laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu, helped save his Rainbow Nation from civil war.

The African National Congress leader not only helped end three centuries of white rule, but as the nation's first democratically elected black president from 1994 to 1999 presided over a political miracle, persuading the newly liberated black majority to set aside past injustice and work with their former oppressors to create a democratic, multiracial society of equals. "We have confounded the prophets of doom," he once famously said, "and achieved a bloodless revolution."

While South Africa with all its poverty, crime, corruption and hardship is far from a perfect society, it is immeasurably better for his leadership.

Canadians have special reason to mourn his passing. We have long regarded Mandela as family, and he in turn hailed us as "brothers and sisters."

Well before Mandela was freed in 1990 to declare that "apartheid has no future," former prime minister Brian Mulroney worked hard to rally the United Nations and the Commonwealth against the racist regime and to free its prisoners. In 1998, then-prime minister Jean Chrétien's government awarded Mandela the first Order of Canada bestowed on a foreign leader. Three years later he became an honorary Canadian citizen.

At the time he thanked Canadians for having supported democracy and nonracialism well before the international tide had turned against apartheid. He praised Canada's tolerance and diversity. And he lauded "your proud sense of independence in world affairs" even living in the shadow of the leading superpower.

Mandela's own life, chronicled in his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*, underwent as remarkable a transformation as his country would. As head of the African National Congress military wing in the early 1960s after the notorious Sharpeville Massacre that raised South Africa's racial conflict to a more violent stage, he led the armed struggle. But after spending long years at Robben Island and other prisons he emerged a deeply changed man, and managed the peaceful transfer of power and the emergence of a new order. He retired from public life nearly a decade ago.

South Africa's political liberation, nearly two decades on, has not brought the prosperity many had

hoped for. The white minority, freed from mental bondage to a sick ideology of apartness, continues to be prosperous, while most blacks still live in poverty. And the once-revered ANC government has been criticized as incompetent and corrupt. The euphoria of peaceful revolution has long since faded.

But Nelson Mandela's remarkable legacy is imperishable. He embodied his people's great yearning for freedom, led them to it, defeated a great evil, and then held out a hand of friendship.

"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 ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and 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." Nelson Mandela, at his trial in 1964.

Our Law Says Mandiba's a Terrorist

Thomas Walkom, [The Toronto Star](#), 7 December 2013

Lost in the eulogies for Nelson Mandela is one inconvenient fact.

Under current Canadian law, this iconic hero of South Africa's liberation would be considered a terrorist.

To remember this is not to diminish Mandela. He peacefully transformed a desperately divided apartheid state into a more-or-less united country.

The extravagant eulogies that followed his death are well-deserved.

But Mandela's complicated history also underscores how crudely the post-9/11 world approaches what it calls terrorism.

Former U.S. president Bill Clinton once likened Mandela to India's Mahatma Gandhi. Both were visionaries. But unlike Gandhi, Mandela was not averse to using violence.

In 1961, he established an armed wing of the anti-apartheid African National Congress to wage war on the South African state.

Modelled on Fidel Castro's guerrilla forces in Cuba, MK, as it was known, sabotaged power stations, attacked military bases and engaged in the occasional car bombing.

People died.

Mandela was in jail for most of these operations. But he never renounced his decision to authorize violent resistance. Indeed, a few months before being elected South Africa's first black president he formally lauded his old MK comrades for embodying the "fighting spirit of our people."

Armed resistance, he said in that 1993 speech, had once played a useful role in South Africa's political dialectic. But the time had come to move from this "period of armed propaganda" into a new phase of peaceful negotiation.

At the time, Canada's government seemed to understand that the border between terrorism and freedom fighting was fuzzy, that sometimes armed struggle could act as a way station on the road to peace.

Mandela was welcomed to Canada, three times. On his last trip, in November 2001, he was awarded honorary citizenship.

Yet had he come two months later, after Canada's stiff new anti-terrorism laws were proclaimed, he could have been arrested for the crime of having once been involved in activities that harmed property or people and that were aimed at effecting political change.

In the world of real politics, Mandela would never have faced such charges. By 2001, he was too famous. But other, less famous people have run afoul of the Canadian government's overly broad use of terms such as terrorism or war crimes.

Omar Khadr is one. Wounded at the age of 15 in a 2002 Afghanistan firefight, the Canadian citizen has spent his life since then in prison.

Canada's Conservative government calls Khadr a terrorist and murderer. The U.S. claims that his role in the death of an American soldier during battle was a war crime.

But these labels rest on the U.S. insistence that any one who militarily opposed its 2001 invasion of Afghanistan was by definition, a war criminal, terrorist or both.

George Galloway is another example. The British MP was denied entry to Canada in 2009 as a terror supporter because he had once delivered relief supplies to Hamas-controlled Gaza.

There are other less well-known cases. My colleague, Nicholas Keung, reported on one this week when Ottawa's privacy commissioner chided the government for tarring some failed refugee claimant as war criminals — without evidence.

That followed a July ruling by the Supreme Court that overturned Ottawa's decision to label a former Congolese diplomat as a war criminal and thus deny his refugee claim.

War crimes have taken place in the Congo, the court said, but there was no evidence that the former diplomat had any role in them.

Mandela would understand why such broad-brush definitions are inherently unfair. He himself was hard to pigeon-hole.

Western leaders praised him lavishly. But he continued to support people and causes with which these leaders did not always agree — including Castro, former Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi

At home, he was seen as a man of the people. Yet, as Carleton University political scientist and South African specialist Linda Freeman noted to me in an email, his economic policy “leaned toward the powerful rather than the poor.”

And he knew that, while peace is always preferable, sometimes the downtrodden must make war to get there.

