

NELSON  
MANDELA  
LONG WALK TO  
FREEDOM





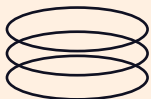
# BEFORE YOU READ

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❖ ‘Apartheid’ is a political system that separates people according to their race. Can you say which of the three countries named below had such a political system until very recently?

(i) United States of America (ii) South Africa (iii) Australia

❖ Have you heard of Nelson Mandela? Mandela, and his African National Congress, spent a lifetime fighting against apartheid. Mandela had to spend thirty years in prison. Finally, democratic elections were held in South Africa in 1994, and Mandela became the first black President of a new nation. In this extract from his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, Mandela speaks about a historic occasion, ‘the inauguration’. Can you guess what the occasion might be? Check your guess with this news item (from the BBC) of 10 May 1994.

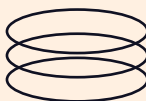




# BEFORE YOU READ

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**In this extract from his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, Mandela speaks about a historic occasion, ‘the inauguration’. Can you guess what the occasion might be? Check your guess with this news item (from the BBC) of 10 May 1994.**





# Mandela Becomes South Africa's First Black President

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Nelson Mandela has become South Africa's first Black President after more than three centuries of White rule. Mr Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) party won 252 of the 400 seats in the first democratic elections of South Africa's history. The inauguration ceremony took place in the Union Buildings amphitheater in Pretoria today, attended by politicians and dignitaries from more than 140 countries around the world. "Never, never again will this beautiful land experience the oppression of one by another," said Nelson Mandela in his address. ... Jubilant scenes on the streets of Pretoria followed the ceremony with blacks, whites and coloureds celebrating together... More than 100,000 South African men, women and children of all races sang and danced with joy.

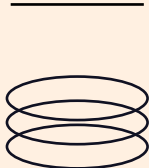




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**TENTH May dawned bright and clear. For the past few days I had been pleasantly besieged by dignitaries and world leaders who were coming to pay their respects before the inauguration. The inauguration would be the largest gathering ever of international leaders on South African soil.**

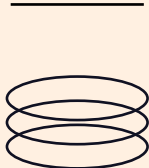
**The ceremonies took place in the lovely sandstone amphitheatre formed by the Union Buildings in Pretoria. For decades this had been the seat of white supremacy, and now it was the site of a rainbow gathering of different colours and nations for the installation of South Africa's first democratic, non-racial government.**





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**On that lovely autumn day I was accompanied by my daughter Zenani. On the podium, Mr de Klerk was first sworn in as second deputy president. Then**

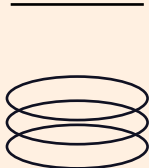




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**Thabo Mbeki was sworn in as first deputy president. When it was my turn, I pledged to obey and uphold the Constitution and to devote myself to the wellbeing of the Republic and its people. To the assembled guests and the watching world, I said:**

**Today, all of us do, by our presence here... confer glory and hope to newborn liberty. Out of the experience of an extraordinary human disaster that lasted too long, must be born a society of which all humanity will be proud.**

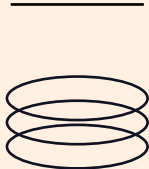





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**We, who were outlaws not so long ago, have today been given the rare privilege to be host to the nations of the world on our own soil. We thank all of our distinguished international guests for having come to take possession with the people of our country of what is, after all, a common victory for justice, for peace, for human dignity.**

**We have, at last, achieved our political emancipation. We pledge ourselves to liberate all our people from the continuing bondage of poverty, deprivation, suffering, gender and other discrimination.**



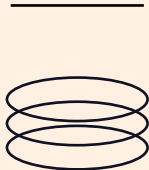


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**Never, never, and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another .**

**The sun shall never set on so glorious a human achievement.**

**Let freedom reign. God bless Africa!**





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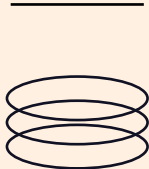
**A few moments later we all lifted our eyes in awe as a spectacular array of South African jets, helicopters and troop carriers roared in perfect formation over the Union Buildings. It was not only a display of pinpoint precision and military force, but a demonstration of the military's loyalty to democracy, to a new government that had been freely and fairly elected. Only moments before, the highest generals of the South African defence force and police, their chests bedecked with ribbons and medals from days gone by, saluted me and pledged their loyalty. I was not unmindful of the fact that not so many years before they would not have saluted but arrested me. Finally a chevron of Impala jets left a smoke trail of the black, red, green, blue and gold of the new South African flag.**





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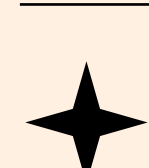
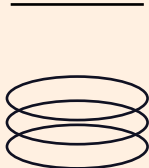
**The day was symbolised for me by the playing of our two national anthems, and the vision of whites singing ‘Nkosi Sikelel –iAfrika’ and blacks singing ‘Die Stem’, the old anthem of the Republic. Although that day neither group knew the lyrics of the anthem they once despised, they would soon know the words by heart.**





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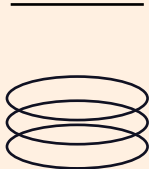
**On the day of the inauguration, I was overwhelmed with a sense of history. In the first decade of the twentieth century, a few years after the bitter Anglo-Boer war and before my own birth, the white-skinned peoples of South Africa patched up their differences and erected a system of racial domination against the dark-skinned peoples of their own land. The structure they created formed the basis of one of the harshest, most inhumane, societies the world has ever known. Now, in the last decade of the twentieth century, and my own eighth decade as a man, that system had been overturned forever and replaced by one that recognised the rights and freedoms of all peoples, regardless of the colour of their skin.**





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**That day had come about through the unimaginable sacrifices of thousands of my people, people whose suffering and courage can never be counted or repaid. I felt that day, as I have on so many other days, that I was simply the sum of all those African patriots who had gone before me. That long and noble line ended and now began again with me. I was pained that I was not able to thank them and that they were not able to see what their sacrifices had wrought.**





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**The policy of apartheid created a deep and lasting wound in my country and my people. All of us will spend many years, if not generations, recovering from that profound hurt. But the decades of oppression and brutality had another, unintended, effect, and that was that it produced the Oliver Tambos, the Walter Sisulus, the Chief Luthulis, the Yusuf Dadoos, the Bram Fischers, the Robert Sobukwes of our time\* — men of such extraordinary**





*Oliver Tambo*



*Walter Sisulu*



*Chief Luthuli*



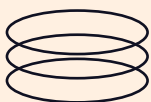
*Yusuf Dadoo*



*Bram Fischer*



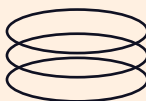
*Robert Sobukwe*





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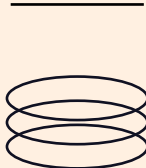
**courage, wisdom and generosity that their like may never be known again. Perhaps it requires such depths of oppression to create such heights of character. My country is rich in the minerals and gems that lie beneath its soil, but I have always known that its greatest wealth is its people, finer and truer than the purest diamonds.**





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**It is from these comrades in the struggle that I learned the meaning of courage. Time and again, I have seen men and women risk and give their lives for an idea. I have seen men stand up to attacks and torture without breaking, showing a strength and resilience that defies the imagination. I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.**





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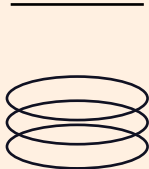

**No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite. Even in the grimmest times in prison, when my comrades and I were pushed to our limits, I would see a glimmer of humanity in one of the guards, perhaps just for a second, but it was enough to reassure me and keep me going. Man's goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished.**





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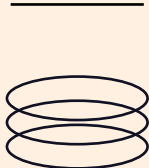
**In life, every man has twin obligations — obligations to his family, to his parents, to his wife and children; and he has an obligation to his people, his community, his country. In a civil and humane society, each man is able to fulfil those obligations according to his own inclinations and abilities. But in a country like South Africa, it was almost impossible for a man of my birth and colour to fulfil both of those obligations. In South Africa, a man of colour who attempted to live as a human being was punished and isolated.**





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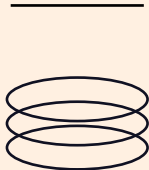
**In South Africa, a man who tried to fulfil his duty to his people was inevitably ripped from his family and his home and was forced to live a life apart, a twilight existence of secrecy and rebellion. I did not in the beginning choose to place my people above my family, but in attempting to serve my people, I found that I was prevented from fulfilling my obligations as a son, a brother, a father and a husband.**





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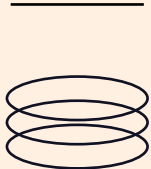
**I was not born with a hunger to be free. I was born free — free in every way that I could know. Free to run in the fields near my mother’s hut, free to swim in the clear stream that ran through my village, free to roast mealies under the stars and ride the broad backs of slow-moving bulls. As long as I obeyed my father and abided by the customs of my tribe, I was not troubled by the laws of man or God.**





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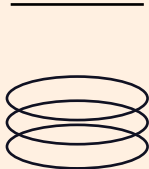
**It was only when I began to learn that my boyhood freedom was an illusion, when I discovered as a young man that my freedom had already been taken from me, that I began to hunger for it. At first, as a student, I wanted freedom only for myself, the transitory freedoms of being able to stay out at night, read what I pleased and go where I chose. Later, as a young man in Johannesburg, I yearned for the basic and honourable freedoms of achieving my potential, of earning my keep, of marrying and having a family — the freedom not to be obstructed in a lawful life.**

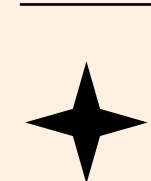
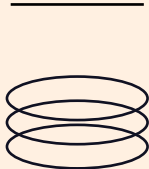
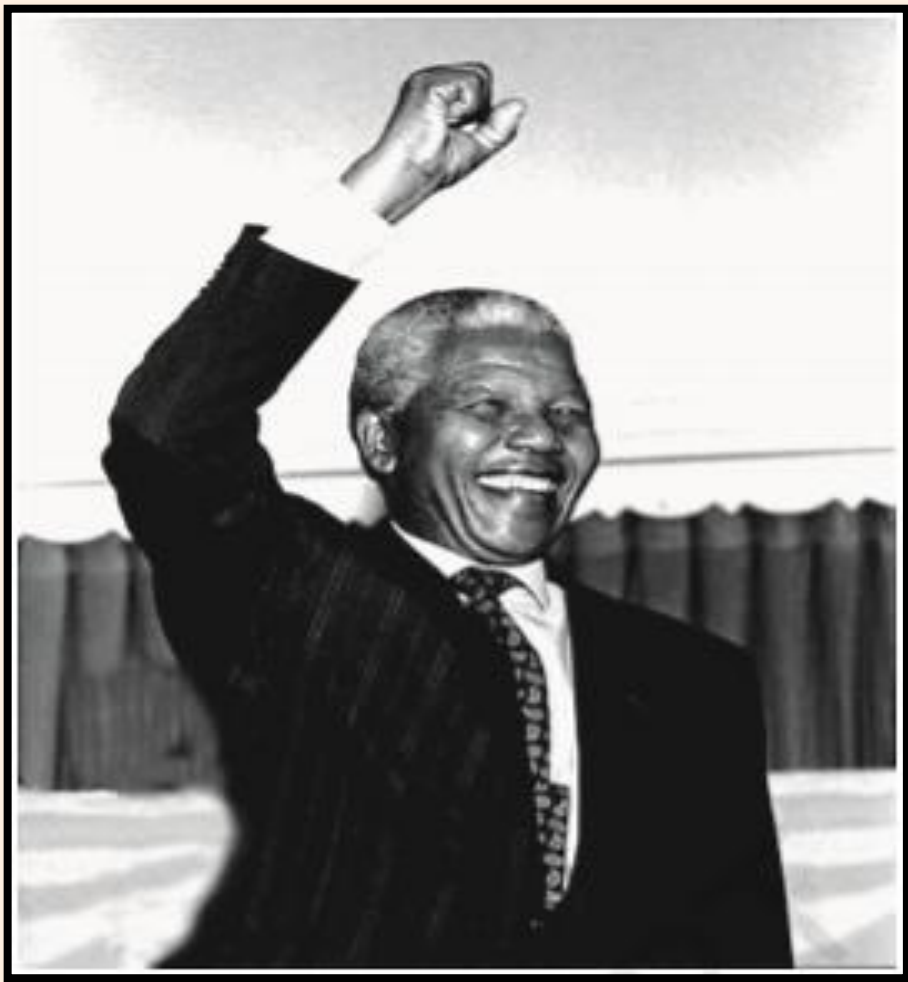




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**But then I slowly saw that not only was I not free, but my brothers and sisters were not free. I saw that it was not just my freedom that was curtailed, but the freedom of everyone who looked like I did. That is when I joined the African National Congress, and that is when the hunger for my own freedom became the greater hunger for the freedom**

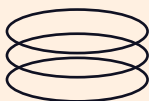






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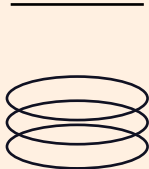
**of my people. It was this desire for the freedom of my people to live their lives with dignity and selfrespect that animated my life, that transformed a frightened young man into a bold one, that drove a law-abiding attorney to become a criminal, that turned a family-loving husband into a man without a home, that forced a life-loving man to live like a monk. I am no more virtuous or self-sacrificing than the next man, but I found that I could not even enjoy the poor and limited freedoms I was allowed when I knew my people were not free. Freedom is indivisible; the chains on anyone of my people were the chains on all of them, the chains on all of my people were the chains on me.**





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**I knew that the oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed. A man who takes away another man's freedom is a prisoner of hatred; he is locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrowmindedness. I am not truly free if I am taking away someone else's freedom, just as surely as I am not free when my freedom is taken from me. The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity.**





THANK  
YOU