

Research Mentor Text

Nelson Mandela, born in the Eastern Cape of South Africa, was an anti-apartheid activist who later served as the first president of South Africa from 1994 to 1999. In 1941, he moved to Johannesburg, where he witnessed the injustices of apartheid. This propelled Mandela to join the African National Congress, a political party and Black Nationalist group. Eventually, he helped found the ANC youth league, which called for civil disobedience against the apartheid system.

In 1952, Mandela led the Campaign for Defiance Against Unjust Laws. It was the largest movement of non-violent resistance in South Africa and included participants of all racial groups. Mandela and other participants of this campaign protested without permits, broke curfew rules enforced on Africans, and entered the "European only" sections of public spaces. As a result of his civil disobedience, he and nineteen others were sentenced to imprisonment with hard labor for nine months. Even though the campaign did not end apartheid, it did mobilize thousands to fight against oppression in South Africa, and it caught the attention of the United Nations, which began to investigate the country's racial policies. Mandela later began to call for armed struggle as the police became increasingly violent against protestors. He traveled to different countries to gain support for more militant actions against apartheid. Upon his return, he was arrested for leaving the country without a permit and for encouraging workers to strike. He was imprisoned from 1962 to 1990.

In 1991, Mandela was elected president of the African National Congress, and in 1993, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his work toward abolishing apartheid. In 1994, Mandela became South Africa's first Black president. Mandela's civil disobedience led to the dismantling of white supremacist rule in South Africa. As president, he helped rebuild South Africa's economy, which was in crisis from apartheid, and he helped address issues related to poverty and inequalities. After his presidential term, he set up the Nelson Mandela Foundation, dedicated to

freedom and equality for all. Even after his death in 2013, his foundation uses his legacy to continue to fight for social justice around the world.

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