



OPINION PIECE

Remembering Nelson Mandela

5 December 2014

It was during this period in 2013 that the founding president of our new democratic order died.

South Africans stood shoulder-to-shoulder and bowed their heads in mourning at the passing of the revered master statesman, the father of our nation, the man who meant everything to us, young to old, but more especially to our children.

A year ago on the 5th of December, the world was in shock at the passing of as we indicated, the father of the nation, promoter of peace, world icon and South Africa's first black and democratically President, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela.

As we remember Madiba, Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa asked that South Africans keep Madiba's legacy alive by living his values in every aspect of our own lives.

The Deputy President said there should be unflinching sacrifice in the humble service of all of humanity. He said all South Africans are urged to play their part in "putting all their energies and efforts to build a better South Africa, in a better Africa, in a better world, and in memory of this icon of our people, Nelson Mandela."

People were left reeling and during a 10-day mourning period they pulled together, all with the same feeling of being united in grief but at the same time, in celebrating his life.

Mandela taught us about the worth of a human being – all human beings. He respected everyone for who they were. The monument to Madiba's life is our non-racial democracy and our Constitution. South Africans must treasure our Constitution because it directly reflects our astonishing founder.

A year ago, Madiba was welcomed home to Qunu, in the Eastern Cape, by the name given to him at his initiation: "Ah! Dalibhunga" – we cherish his legacy.

Calls from everyone in South Africa, Africa, Europe, The Far East and the world are that South Africans should remember the former President Nelson Mandela by living the values he stood for. Mandela had in many ways displayed many different sides of himself over the course of his life. The Mandela most frequently remembered seemed to be his role of forgiver, unifier and leader.

Minister in the Presidency Jeff Radebe remembers that the former president had stressed that he wanted to be remembered just as a simple person, like any other citizen when he died. "When asked how he would like to be remembered, former president Nelson Mandela simply said he would leave that entirely up to South Africans", Minister Radebe said.

In his usual humble manner he would say: "I would just like a simple stone on which is written 'Mandela'."

The memory of our icon cannot be confined to a tombstone or even just to the world's history books.



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The Mandela of peace and prosperity is remembered as Mandela who delivered his historic 1964 speech from the dock at the opening of the defence case in the Rivonia Trial.

This is because within the text of this seminal speech South Africans and the world can identify some of the values that guided him then and, three decades later found their way into our Constitution.

These factors are key to unlocking the potential of South Africa for its people who must cherish and protect them with everything they have; otherwise we stand to lose their value.

The values of fairness and justice, service to South Africa and its citizens, dignity, non-racialism and the overarching theme of freedom were his trademarks. Mandela understood that freedom was just a word unless people use it to express the livelihoods they value.

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