



NELSON MANDELA

(1918-2013)

In the 1600s and 1700s, British and Dutch colonists started arriving in South Africa and taking power, resources and land away from the native black South Africans. By 1948, white people had control of the government. They didn't let black South Africans vote, interact with white people, or even move out of the areas in which they lived.

Nelson, whose name actually means 'troublemaker' in one South African language, was born in a small village in 1918. He was appalled by the treatment of his people and began joining groups to fight back against it. For doing so, he was kicked out of university.

Next, he joined a group called the African National Congress, and campaigned with them.

The government declared him a terrorist. They arrested him, found him guilty of treason and threw him in jail. His enemies called for him to be executed. But the judge gave him a life sentence instead.

Nelson was so well known for his activism that, while he was in jail, the rest of the world began to look at how black people were being treated in

South Africa. They put pressure on the white government to release him. Eventually, many years later, the white president, Frederik de Klerk did.

'If you want to make peace with your enemy,' Nelson said, 'you have to work with your enemy.'

And that is what he did. Together with Frederik, Nelson wrote new laws that would give South Africans of all colours the same rights.

By 1994, Nelson had gone from spending twenty-seven years in prison, to being his country's first democratically elected president. All that time, he'd never given up hope.

