

Review

# The relevance and legacy of Nelson Mandela in the twenty-first century Africa: An historical and theological perspective

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Great people come and go out of this world, leaving behind great ideas which are easily forgotten by members of the society. This essay is written to remind people of the great ideas and impressive virtues bestowed on the person of Nelson Mandela. It candidly analyses Nelson Mandela – a great statesman, exemplary humanist, freedom fighter, and a strong opponent of apartheid. The essay highlights Mandela’s immense contribution to the society – morally, religiously, economically, politically, socially and culturally. It depicts Mandela as a legendary patriot and a sage of the century. Looking at the status quo in Africa, the essay calls upon African leaders to look at Nelson Mandela, a role model in good leadership, love and reconciliation. He has shown the world how to sympathize with sufferers as well as the condemned. Nelson Mandela has been exemplary in matters pertaining to good governance – identified by transparency, independent judiciary and the rule of law. He has been a frontline champion in empowering the poor as well as assisting the marginalized and the forgotten. In the person of Nelson Mandela we see a living example of co-existence with people of different political ideology, race, religion, gender, and social stratification. To balance the kudos, some comments from Nelson Mandela’s critics are incorporated in the essay, to show that no human being is perfect or criticism-free. However, criticism does not erode Mandela’s global fame. He has done things which are so great and valuable that we need to look at them, preserving the ones worth preservation.

**Key words:** Afrikaners, Apartheid, Black Consciousness Movement, Boers, German Holocaust, Green Belt Movement, Jen, Nationalists, Pan-Africanism, Ubuntu, Umkhoto we Sizwe.

## INTRODUCTION

This essay seeks to examine the lesson or model we get from the person of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela who, without objection, remains one of the greatest statesmen ever produced by Africa. In political wit and economic vision Mandela resembles Winston Churchill, Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King, and in patriotism and humanistic involvement he rubs shoulders with famous African statesmen like Julius Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda, and Patrice Lumumba – his contemporaries. In the

liberation struggle, this South African legendary figure is accorded the stature of exemplary freedom fighters such as Jomo Kenyatta, Samora Machel, Kwame Nkrumah, Agostino Neto, and Robert Mugabe. His conspicuous social and political profile brings to our attention a historic role and contribution so great that it can justifiably be equalized with what was done by people like Confucius, Mahatma Gandhi, and Jawaharlal Nehru.

The annals of history indicate that in 1963 Nelson

Mandela, by then a frontline activist of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* or 'Spear of the Nation' (an armed organ of African National Congress which strongly opposed the apartheid policy in South Africa) was convicted of treason and sabotage. Mandela became a member of ANC in the first half of 1940s and in 1952 he joined the ANC Youth Wing. In the same year he became the ANC President in Transvaal Province. It was at this time Mandela got an opportunity of working closely with people like Oliver Tambo, Albert John Luthuli and Robert Mongaliso Sobukwe who remained his militant colleagues for a number of years.

Without being given any chance for appeal and as a means of silencing his fellow activists, Nelson Mandela was hurriedly hauled into prison to serve a life imprisonment. He stayed in prison for a period of twenty-seven years, most of them spent as a solitary confinement on Robben Island, and immediately after his release on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1990 he rose to international fame and respect. Contrary to the expectation of many people across the globe, he is still looked upon as a model of peace, compassion and reconciliation, and the few years he served as the President of South Africa (May 1994 to June 1999) stand as a lasting example of good governance, tolerance and solidarity. We can therefore state that the socio-cultural and economic-political relevance and legacy of Nelson Mandela is a great lesson for African sons and daughters, as it is narrated in the subsequent sections.

Nelson Mandela possesses rare virtues. He radiates with the fruit of the Holy Spirit as we read from Gal 5: 22-23 – love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Mandela has always been a good example in all these virtues. His incomparable love made him sacrifice his life for the sake of liberating Africa; his happiness made him cheerful even in solitary confinement; his peacefulness made him a model even among his political rivals; and his perseverance enabled him stay in prison for twenty-seven years, hoping that one day he would come out. He is a person who believes that even the darkest night finally dawns.

Wherever he goes and in whatever he does, Nelson Mandela is always exemplary in defending and respecting the dignity of everybody, regardless of his or her social status and he has always been considerate as far as suffering with others is concerned. So many people from all walks of life have accorded him maximum trust, and he has been admired and respected even by young children. He is a unique person in the sense that he has always been ready to jeopardize his life by putting himself in the midst of social turmoil like the Lockerbie scandal.

His moderation in deed and speech has enabled him act and speak without going out of the boundaries of the social code of conduct. With all these virtues Mandela has always remained a man of the people, accepted by many people inside and outside South Africa. Oliver

Tambo (the South African veteran freedom fighter, older than Nelson Mandela for only one year) stipulates Mandela's particular virtues as follows:

*As a man Nelson is passionate, emotional, sensitive, quickly stung to bitterness and retaliation by insult and patronage. He has a natural air of authority. He cannot help magnetizing a crowd: he is commanding with a tall, handsome bearing; trusts and is trusted by the youth, for their impatience reflects his own; appealing to the women. He is dedicated and fearless. He is the born mass leader (Nelson, 1996: xiii).*

Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela's long-time comrade in arms, crowns his candid description on Mandela:

*His inspiration lives on in the heart of every African patriot. He is the symbol of the self-sacrificing leadership our struggle has thrown up and our people need. He is unrelenting, yet capable of flexibility and delicate judgement. He is an outstanding individual, but he knows that he derives his strength from the great masses of people who make up the freedom struggle in our country (Nelson, 1996: xv).*

Nelson Mandela's imprisonment reminds people of the Sharpeville Massacre. The massacre took place on March 21, 1960 when thousands of unarmed Africans (dissatisfied or complaining of the apartheid pass laws) marched with great solidarity outside a police station and as a result of fear and panic the police opened fire, killing 69 people instantly and wounding about 180 others (Assa, 2006). When Mandela remembered these massacres, he went headlong into dedicated freedom fight and defense of human dignity in his home country and what he did henceforth is a great lesson for any African committed to African liberation struggle. Resistance against the pass laws had started even before the Sharpeville Massacre. Women in particular were so resistant to the pass laws that Mandela explains with much praise:

*In 1957, spurred by the efforts of the ANC Women's League, women all across the country, in rural areas and in cities, reacted with fury to the state's insistence that they carry passes. The women were courageous, persistent, enthusiastic, indefatigable, and their protest against passes set a standard for anti-government protest that was never equaled. As Chief Luthuli said, 'When the women begin to take an active part in the struggle, no power on earth can stop us from achieving freedom in our lifetime (Nelson, 1994: 206)'*

Elsewhere, Mandela gives the following explanation about the pass laws:

*Pass laws, which to the Africans are among the most*

*hated bits of legislation in South Africa, renders any African liable to police surveillance at any time. I doubt whether there is a single African male in South Africa who has not at some stage had a brush with the police over his pass. Hundreds and thousands of Africans are thrown into jail each year under pass laws. Even worse than this is the fact that pass laws keep husband and wife apart and lead to the breakdown of family life (Nelson, 1996; Mary, 1994).*

## ICON OF FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION

From his tiny cell on Robben Island, Nelson Mandela championed his political party (the ANC) in such a way that finally a black person was chosen to lead South Africa. His political career and enigmatic leadership was characterized by deep sympathy, forgiveness, humility and reconciliation – virtues which were reflected in his deeds and speeches wherever he went, before and after his imprisonment on Robben Island. As we read from the Bible, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Mt 5:9). It was Mandela’s love for peace and reconciliation which elevated him to international recognition and finally earned him the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize in 1993. In 2012 the resolution of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee to award the Nobel Peace Prize to the European Union (EU)<sup>1</sup> made the world remember the historic event when Mandela was given the Nobel Peace Prize for his relentless fighting for peace in South Africa and the world at large.

At this time when African countries parade themselves as places where multi-party politics is practised, there is a lot to learn from Nelson Mandela. Popularly known as Madiba, the clan of his Xhosa ethnic group, Mandela is a shining model of forgiveness and cooperation. As it was realized at the Curitiba LWF Assembly some years ago, the work of Church organizations such as LWF and WCC should be expressed in a “practical cooperation in developing an integral strategy . . . based on the biblical understanding of the intrinsic unity of justice, peace, as well as individual and social well-being.”<sup>2</sup>

It is quite encouraging to see that in the person of Nelson Mandela we see a good example of justice and peace, some of the basic tenets emphasized in Christianity as well as other world religions. Peace and justice have been essential requirements in all human societies, from the time Adam and Eve were put in the Garden of Eden, down to the present time. Cain killed his brother Abel because there was no peace and justice in his heart. The ethnic clashes witnessed in different areas

of the world are caused by absence of peace and justice. Even the military competition which has now become the order of the day worldwide is something triggered off by the fact that there is no peace and justice between a community and another community or between a nation and a nation. Whether we like it or not, peace and justice will continue being prerequisites of human life until the end of ages.

Nelson Mandela did not like to take sides when he got out of prison. In other words, he maintained a neutral political stance so that he could move forward with the rest of his countrymen, including the racially minded Boers. He was just like Nehru, India’s first Prime Minister, who toiled day and night to establish a democratic government in his country. Nehru’s insistence for peace and justice earned him fame across the globe and his “neutralist policies in foreign affairs”<sup>3</sup> made him one of the most democratic leaders the world has ever seen, just like Nelson Mandela. Nehru stressed democracy and socialism in the Indian society and he succeeded to a large degree. Basing his administrative philosophy on important pillars like democracy, socialism, and unity<sup>4</sup> he drove India to a notable stride of social, economic and political prosperity.

The majority expected Nelson Mandela to exercise tit-for-tat following his release from prison but in the actual fact he behaved in quite a different manner. Nobody expected him to behave the way he did. He forgave even his strongest political opponents and with great humility he tried his best to reconcile different antagonistic parties. Nobody expected Mandela to be able to work closely with Frederick de Klerk, a person who belonged to the very South African regime which had brutally treated Mandela and his comrades in the ANC. Mandela admits that his hatred towards the white rulers in South Africa decreased when he was in prison. When he got out of prison his stance was that the only way of building a new South African was encouraging the blacks and the whites to collaborate because South Africa belonged to them all. He really recognized the role of members of the white community in the anticipated South Africa, and because of that he opposed all campaigns to kick the whites out of his country. Frankly and quite clearly, Mandela explains:

*We did not want to destroy the country before we freed it, and to drive the whites away would devastate the nation. I said that there was a middle ground between white fears and black hopes, and we in the ANC would find it. ‘Whites are fellow South Africans,’ I said, ‘and we want them to feel safe and to know that we appreciate the contribution that they have made towards the development of this country.’ Any man or woman who abandons apartheid will be embraced in our struggle for a democratic, non-racial South Africa; we must do every-*

<sup>1</sup> The EU was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize as a sign of admiring and appreciating its endless struggle for maintaining peace in the world) made the world remember Mandela’s relentless involvement in fighting for peace.

<sup>2</sup> *From Budapest to Curitiba: 1985-1989*, LWF Report, November 1989 No. 27, p. 238.

<sup>3</sup> *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 8, p. 584.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 586.

*thing we could to persuade our white compatriots that a new, non-racial South Africa would be a better place for all (Nelson, 1994: 559).*

What a great lesson for the present-day politicians in Africa! Bearing in mind the lack of cooperation and the name-smearing campaigns practiced by countless myopic and selfish politicians, Mandela is a political buoy that deserves being examined or taken seriously as a role model as far as forgiveness is concerned. Looking at the current parliament proceedings in Africa where temper and vitriolic arguments have become the order of the day, one realizes that Mandela's spirit of love and forgiveness is very much needed in African countries. The message Mandela wants to drive home is that in the human interactions love matters the most and no person is born with hatred. As he puts it quite clearly, "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."<sup>5</sup>

In history, Nelson Mandela will continue being a model of genuine love to his fellow human beings. He will remain a reliable source of love and encouragement, particularly for the ones laden by social predicaments. As we have said earlier, Mandela resembles great teachers such as Confucius. We say so because the thought or motto of Confucius, briefly explained, is love to all people. In translating *jen*, the Chinese character which characterized the deeds and thoughts of Confucius, cultural interpreters say that *jen* means "love, magnanimity, or humanheartedness."<sup>6</sup> In the light of these virtues, the teachings of Confucius have an obvious replica in Mandela's personality. Just as Confucius is for the Chinese community, Mandela looms high as a South African sage, with teachings so stable and good that he has many disciples all over Africa.

Mandela was ready to work with people like Frederick de Klerk because he realized the value and importance of maintaining unity in his community. He knew that disunity is one of the greatest foes which Africans must resist or avoid at any cost. The disunity we see between the rich and the poor, blacks and whites, males and females is the case in point. All Africans need to realize this reality because as Michelangelo the painter summed it up, hell is truth realized when it is too late. Nobody is ready to see Africa persisting being a place where people suffer as if they are in hell.

The secret behind Mandela's forgiveness and reconciliation was the realization that the anticipated new South Africa (expected to be largely peaceful and prosperous) could be built only by united and reconciled people. Peaceful and prosperous South Africa could

come into existence only by eradicating or keeping at bay divisive social enemies like disunity, hatred, malice, revenge and rivalry. As Christian scriptures put it in Gal 5:20, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, etc. are some of the things which always make the society stunt and backward in terms of progress and social cohesion. At the occasion of receiving the Nobel Prize in 1993, Mandela insisted that a "new society cannot be created by reproducing the repugnant past, however refined or enticingly repackaged."<sup>7</sup>

From the perspective of Nelson Mandela's context of forgiveness and reconciliation, the philosophy of Kenneth Kaunda (the first President of Zambia) comes to mind. Wherever he went, Kenneth Kaunda (easily identified by the frequent waving of his white handkerchief) declared a very memorable motto to his fellow citizens: 'One Zambia, one nation!' From the very beginning Kaunda knew that leading a country divided on ethnic, racial and cultural lines would not bring any progress. This is what African politicians should bear in mind because what we see nowadays are egocentric political rivalries and popularization of the supremacy of political parties and not the spirit of building one country and one nation as Kaunda would put it.

## ASSISTING AND EMPOWERING THE POOR

Commenting on politics, Nelson Mandela once said that political power "should be the basis for the economic empowerment of people. We should not allow . . . politics to be relegated to trivialities chosen precisely because they salve the consciousness of the rich and powerful, and conceal the plight of the poor and powerless."<sup>8</sup>

Nelson Mandela mobilized his government to fight for the citizens languishing in need and poverty. Looking back in history, Mandela himself says that the South African people always "raised their voices in condemnation of the grinding poverty, the low wages, the acute shortage of land, the inhuman exploitation and the whole policy of white domination. But instead of more freedom, repression began to grow in volume and intensity" (Nelson, 1996; Mary, 1994).

As it is quite evident, many people in Africa still live under the poverty line, just as the situation was in South Africa a number of years ago. It is the poor and the exploited landless people Nelson Mandela would urge us to go for their immediate rescue. In many African societies there are people who do not know where the next meal would come from, while there are few chaps who live in affluence and unnecessary luxuries. There are Africans who drive vehicles which are extremely expensive and some Africans fly to western cities to purchase

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 615.

<sup>6</sup> *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 4, p. 1092.

<sup>7</sup> Mandela, *Nobel Prize Lecture*, 1993.

<sup>8</sup> Jennifer Crwys-Williams (ed.), *In the Words of Nelson Mandela*, London: Michael Joseph, 1998, 82.

a piece of bread or a bottle of cosmetics whereas the poor languish in want and frustration. Seeing the escalating number of beggars in the streets of African towns and cities, one would indeed pity the Africans who cannot afford buying even the cheapest medicine when they fall sick whereas some of their fellow countrymen go to London or Paris to do shopping for their pets. This pathetic scenario is what has made a Kenyan clergyman assert that the world is full of “huge insecurity amidst obscene affluence . . . massive poverty, disease and violence . . .” (Samuel, 2006: x). It is very discouraging to see that most victims of insecurity, poverty and violence live in Africa.

Throughout the time he was in office, Nelson Mandela tried all he could to assist and empower the poor. His government tried day and night to make sure that the poor could set themselves free from the fangs of poverty. It is saddening to see that over the years, Africans have been so poor that they have justified their state of destituteness as if they were born to be poor. Nobody would deny the fact that in terms of resources, Africa is one of the wealthiest continents. As a group of courageous and patriotic women have affirmed,

*Africa is wealthy. God has blessed the African continent with abundance of wealth: communities of people, resource-laden lands and diverse ecology. However, the enslavement of Africa's people and the plunder of Africa's natural resources during the 500 years of colonialism had impoverished African people while enriching European colonial powers.*<sup>9</sup>

Nelson Mandela's government had many programmes geared towards the assistance and empowerment of the poor. This is something which needs emulation because as we have pointed out, the number of beggars in Africa is becoming bigger and bigger. Mandela's compassion and simplicity enabled him live even with beggars. Eddie Daniels attests this fact when he says that “Mandela is a good man. He can walk with kings and beggars.”<sup>10</sup> We need to emulate Mandela, because as Paul says in his letter to the congregation at Ephesus, we are God's “workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph 2:10). In interpreting this verse, William Barclay says that “it is God's love which lays on us the obligation to show that we are trying throughout all life to be worthy of it . . . by seeking with our whole hearts to live the kind of life which will bring joy to the heart of God” (William, 1960: 123).

The increase of notorious beggars such as Paulo Mawezi (alias Matonya) who died in dire poverty on 23<sup>rd</sup>

August 2012 is a typical example. Story had it that Matonya, who elevated himself to national fame through begging, came to Dar es Salaam in 1961 and he has been begging in the city until he passed away and buried in Bahi (his home village) in Dodoma Region. It is further narrated that when Matonya fell ill he had no money to take himself to the hospital. Maybe he died of hunger. But the rich (those who possess more than they need or those who overeat) who ignored Matonya should not forget that they too will die one day. Deaths caused by things like overeating (considered in the past as the problems of the western hemisphere) are on the increase in Africa. So the poor will die and the rich will also die. It is a vicious circle.

Following Matonya's demise he was buried in a very simple way, with less than twenty people attending his funeral which took place on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2012. There was no even the simplest casket for him – his pitiful remains were simply wrapped up in a tattered skin shroud and poverty of the highest type was witnessed at his funeral site. To the surprise of everybody, only one politician (once a chairman of the ruling party) mourned Matonya, for reasons known only to himself. Matonya's funeral will remain in people's memory for decades as a historic illustration of the poorest funeral service ever witnessed in Tanzania (fifty years after independence), contrary to the funerals which are full of luxury and pomposity.

It would be unthinkable for Mandela to allow a person buried in negligence and poverty as it was done to the late Matonya. If the national cake is squandered as we see it being done days in and days out, why couldn't some amount of money be set apart for the upkeep and funeral of people like Matonya? With the numerous natural resources bestowed on most African countries, Mandela would not understand, nor would he allow the have-nots of the land to get a poor funeral as it was done on the person of Matonya. So incidents like Matonya's funeral are some of the challenges which we should face if at all we want to continue telling the world that Africa is a place where equality and human dignity is observed. In other words, we must cease preaching mere theories as far as supporting and helping the poor is concerned.

People who swim in need and poverty are sometimes discarded like Lazarus. The Lazaruses of this earth are looked upon as useless and as propagators of filth and jiggers. It is quite saddening to see that Africa, the continent full of Lazaruses and the place where great personalities like Mandela come from has been looked upon as a beggars' continent. This mentality pushed Albert Schweitzer, who worked as a medical doctor in West Africa, to remark sarcastically that Africa is a ‘beggar lying at Europe's doorstep’ an attitude which made him build the Lambarene Hospital in Cameroon.

It is indeed discouraging to see that terrible selfishness is entertained by most rich people in Africa. This type of selfishness, which people like Nelson Mandela would like to see being stamped out from our societies, is something which makes our life so bitter that we feel as if

9 Rogate R. Mshana (ed.), *Poverty, Wealth and Ecology in Africa*, Geneva: WCC, 2012, p. 25.

10 Eddie Daniels, a member of the banned South African Liberal Party (SALP), quoted in Benson, *Nelson Mandela: The Man and the Movement*, 1994, p. 1.

we are in hell. The parable about the rich man and Lazarus is a vivid example of the gulf which exists between the haves and the have-nots of Africa. The rich man lived without having pity on the poor Lazarus and if “a man lives without compassion, he manifestly digs a chasm between himself and his fellow men; and by the same token he separates himself from God, for God is love.”<sup>11</sup>

Nelson Mandela would not like to see people who are as poor as Lazarus being tossed here and there simply because they lack the daily bread like other citizens. It is pathetic to see that in Africa the gap between the rich and the poor widens everyday and things like unemployment and inflation are on the increase. These problems are the consequences of discarding the traditional African way of communal living: equal sharing and communal commitment. In other words, the current socio-cultural and economic-political problems in Africa are the result of violating what South Africans call *ubuntu*, defined by Mandela as “that profound African sense that we are human only through the humanity of other human beings.”<sup>12</sup> Mandela radiates with *ubuntu* because as he says, his main concern is to make his humanity meaningful by respecting the humanity of others, including his enemies!

There is a need of being aware of the fact that the international machinery which demands or insist free trade and market liberalization has had a very negative effect on Africa, including immersing Africa in terrible poverty. “Africa’s underdevelopment (poverty) has . . . resulted from poor governance, weak institutions, poor policies, and lack of implementation. Africa’s poverty and ecological issues hinge on two planes – the international system and weak internal structures.”<sup>13</sup>

### Improving working and living conditions

One of the most obnoxious issues in Africa today is bad working conditions, an issue which Nelson Mandela addressed with his whole might. Such a suffering-inducing situation pushed Mandela to fight for the poor as much as he could. Together with his government ministers, he worked nonstop to improve the working conditions of many workers in his home country. To make this effective, his government improvised the Labour Relations Act in 1995, an act which considerably helped to maximize democracy at work places as well as helping to settle quite a big number of labour grudges and misunderstandings. When Mandela stood trial in 1964, he said:

*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.*<sup>14</sup>

The everyday concern of the ANC, a political party the motives of which got a very positive support from Nelson Mandela, has been to establish a society where democracy, equality and human dignity is given credence. To prove this, Mandela goes on to say:

*The ANC offers a home to all who subscribe to the principles of a free, democratic, non-racial and united South Africa. We are committed to building a single nation in our country. Our new nation will include blacks and whites, Zulus and Afrikaners, and speakers of every other language. ANC President-General Chief Luthuli said: ‘I personally believe that here in South Africa, with all of our diversities of colour and race, we will show the world a new pattern for democracy. I think that there is a challenge to us in South Africa, to set a new example for the world.’ This is the challenge we face today.*<sup>15</sup>

Considering the situation in which most people work in Africa, nobody would object that things are far from good. When misunderstandings flare up at various work places, things are sometimes handled in a way which is quite the opposite of what Nelson Mandela did. Democracy is increasingly throttled at work places and work disputes are not handled in a healthy or human way. Even in South Africa itself, Mandela’s spirit of supporting and assisting the poor seems to diminish. The recent incident of miners who were brutally gunned down by police at the Marikana mining centre near Johannesburg (in South Africa’s North-west Province) is something which will continue placing South Africa in shame for many decades to come. The strike which took place on 6/8/2012 at Lonmin’s Platinum Mines left forty-four innocent people dead and about eighty others wounded. In this particular incident, capitalism depicts itself at its most frightening aspect because as a political analyst puts it, the Marikana “tragedy comes at a time when the capitalist ethos is grappling with its long-held tenet of ‘profit at any cost’ or, more euphemistically, ‘institutional investors are bound by their fiduciary duties to act in the best interests of their clients and to maximize profit’” (Tom, 2012: 84-85).

In other African countries there are uncountable incidents of anomy, just like the one witnessed at Marikana. To the surprise of everybody, the peaceful and unarmed demonstrating miners were afterwards declared guilty of killing their fellow miners – the best example of

<sup>11</sup> *The Interpreter’s Bible Vol. VIII*, p. 290.

<sup>12</sup> Jennifer Cywys-Williams (ed.), *In the Words of Nelson Mandela*, p. 114.

<sup>13</sup> Rogate R. Mshana (ed.), *Poverty, Wealth and Ecology in Africa*, p. 41.

<sup>14</sup> Nelson Mandela quoted his 1964 trial words on his release from prison on 11 February 1990. The words are also quoted in Benson, *Nelson Mandela: The Man and the Movement*, 1994, p. 136.

<sup>15</sup> Mandela’s speech in Durban South Africa, on 25 February 1990.

sorcerer's escapism. Ironically, history keeps on repeating itself. As Robin Hallett recalls, in 1945 "70,000 mine workers went on strike after the Chamber of Mines [in South Africa] had persistently disregarded all their requests for improved wages: the police were called in and drove the miners back to work with some loss of life" (Robin, 2005: 669).

When the police forces in Africa (used as brigades of assisting the ruling parties remain in power indefinitely) employ unnecessary strength to kill innocent civilians as we have recently seen it taking place in Tanzania and South Africa, we know for sure that the spirit of Mandela is diminishing in many places in Africa. We need someone with the courage of Mandela to go to the South African leaders and tell them that what was done to the striking miners in 1945 and in 2012 is bad and inhuman. Courage is needed, despite the consequences. When apartheid was in its peak, in terms of brutality and oppression, Mandela raised a public outcry:

*The breaking up of African homes and families and the forcible separation of children from mothers, the harsh treatment meted out to African prisoners, and the forcible detention of Africans in farm colonies for spurious statutory offences are a few examples of the actual workings of the hideous and pernicious doctrines of racial inequality. To these can be added scores of thousands of foul misdeeds committed against the people by the Government: the denial to the non-European people of the elementary rights of free citizenship; the expropriation of the people from their lands and homes to assuage the insatiable appetites of European land barons and industrialists; the flogging and calculated murder of African labourers by European farmers in the countryside . . . ; the vicious manner in which African workers are beaten up by the police and flung into jails when they down tools to win their demands; the fostering of contempt and hatred for non-Europeans, the fanning of racial prejudice between whites and non-whites, between the various non-white groups; the splitting of Africans into small hostile tribal units; the instigation of one group or tribe against another; the banning of active workers from the people's organizations, and their confinement into certain areas (Nelson, 1996: 41).*

Indeed, the apartheid policies in South Africa brought about the notion of history repeating itself. Over and over again the world has witnessed that people who sacrifice their time and energy are sometimes the ones who are treated in the harshest way. For example, Jesus came to bring us salvation but his reward was despise, flogging and finally crucifixion. The charismatic and youthful Steve Biko, who through Black Consciousness Movement wanted to bring social reform by non-violent means, got the reward of being murdered on 12 September 1977 while in police custody. Ken Saro-Wiwa, the renowned Nigerian writer, stood up adamantly for the rights of the Ogoni people but at last he was led to the gallows by

Sanni Abacha's hangmen. The courage of these people ended up with losing their lives but the necessary message was sent. For example, Ken Saro-Wiwa died saying repeatedly that the messenger can be killed but the message cannot be killed. That was the truth in connection with the apartheid regime which jailed Mandela for twenty-seven years but could not jail his political commitment.

It is in the midst of inhuman treatment of unarmed and rather defenseless people who suffer in their free countries the witnessing ministry of the Church is very much needed. In every African society the Church is supposed to witness the message of socio-political salvation and defend uncompromisingly all people who are exploited and brutally treated by the ruling class. As an institution of believers, the Church ought to involve itself in various activities as Paul John Isaak reminds us. "Some of these activities . . . involve promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms, reconciliation and nation building. The Church should jealously defend its right to speak and its voice should be heard publicly and not secretly (Paul, 2006: 1211)"

It is the responsibility of the Church to protect God's children against all sorts of social degradation, torture, abuse, and discrimination. In the twenty-first century the Church should struggle day and night to bring about the kind of healing which would bring about real social, economic, political and human wholeness in Africa. This kind of appeal is aired because the Church, as the body of Christ, is sometimes accused of not having been sufficiently "faithful in bearing just witness to the questions of justice in the economy, ecology and relationships among people."<sup>16</sup> All members of the Church must feel really "called to proclaim and live the love of God to humanity in its need, to remove the causes of human suffering, to defend justice and peace in the community and in the whole world of creation (James and Gyula, 1989: 25)."

The woman tormented by unbearable bleeding for twelve years went secretly and with great faith touched Christ's garment and instantly her flow of blood ceased. Jesus' kind and consoling words will continue being resonant in our ears: "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease" (Mk 5:34). In the Swahili Union Version, the last part of this verse is even stronger: ". . . get healed, never experience your suffering any longer." The woman with the problem of haemorrhage (probably caused by cancer of the cervix) was completely healed and began to enjoy life like the other people around her. The touch enabled her experience the kind of divine healing which gave her total peace – physically, spiritually, and mentally. Prior to this miraculous event she suffered beyond narration. Probably she could not freely intermingle with other people and she might have also felt rejected by other members

<sup>16</sup> Rogate R. Mshana (ed.), *Poverty, Wealth and Ecology in Africa*, p. 8.

of her society. She was highly pained psychologically because in the Jewish religious setting she was ritually unclean, a condition which required her to keep distance in all social gatherings. The terrible disease robbed her of the basic rights enjoyed by other people. So what Jesus did to her was something which touched her in all faculties of her being because she got healed once and for all. People who are tortured by various problems in the society need this kind of healing. They need to live, walk and work with the kind of peace and life enjoyment brought about by Christ's power of bringing total healing. Divine-given peace and enjoyment have enabled Nelson Mandela do all the things which make us look at him as an icon of peace and reconciliation.

Nelson Mandela supported young children and students, so that life could be more meaningful, more enjoyable and more profitable for them. If African children, workers and students live in a more enjoyable condition our societies will be more stable and progressive. Explaining the motive behind people's fight, Amilcar Cabral says that people "fight and accept the sacrifices demanded by the struggle in order to gain material advantages, to live better and in peace, to benefit from the progress and for the better future of their children."<sup>17</sup> Cabral's memorable remarks are similar to Mandela's, because Mandela constantly explains about the value of his fellow citizens to engage in worthwhile fights which aim at improving their social wellbeing. Mandela's first public speech after his release from prison proves his humility and readiness to serve people. In this historic speech Mandela says:

*Friends, comrades and fellow South Africans. I greet you all in the name of peace, democracy and freedom for all! I stand here before you not as a prophet but as a humble servant of you, the people. Your tireless and heroic sacrifices have made it possible for me to be here today. I therefore place the remaining years of my life in your hands (Nelson, 1994: 555).*

*As Mandela has always reminded us, we need to fight for the sake of improving the working and living conditions of other groups in our countries, apart from the civil servants. That is, mothers, drivers, messengers, house maids, watchmen, cleaners, and so forth.*

### Supplying social services

When people vote a new government into office, one of their leading expectations is to get reliable and sufficient social services. They expect to get electricity, water, roads, and efficient means of telecommunication. They also expect to get maximum protection for their property. In Tanzania for example, the supply of electricity is

extremely unreliable because the monopoly of the current power supply company is quite disappointing, if not frustrating. People want enough power in their houses and business areas but they do not get it. Power cuts have become a lasting tradition and nobody seems to bother about rectifying this situation. Power connection charges are indeed high and power bills keep on rising, even if there is nobody living in a house. As far as power and water supply is concerned, our countries need to learn from Mandela.

Go to schools and hospitals and see how things have deteriorated. Even if school and medical facilities are claimed to be supplied, the truth is that they are quite inadequate. School and hospital buildings are erected but in most cases there are not enough teachers and doctors. Yes, buildings may be there but the basic necessities which would make people get enough social services are largely not there. Considering the problem of strikes and demonstrations which is now becoming a common phenomenon in Africa, one would realize how Mandela's strategy to bring enough social services is highly needed in Africa.

What African leaders need to know is that reliable supply of power would reduce the acute problem of deforestation. The late Professor Wangari Maathai (the frontline Kenyan environmentalist) who defiantly challenged the destructive regime of her country is worth mention. With her Green Belt Movement Maathai got both national and international recognition as far as tree planting and environmental conservation is concerned. She fought nail and tooth to curb the destructive tendency of people who cut acres and acres of trees only to satisfy their temporary hunger to get areas for erecting buildings, as well as getting firewood and charcoal.<sup>18</sup>

African leaders should unblock their deaf ears and listen to the pestering message that people need reliable supply of clean water which in the long run would reduce diseases like typhoid. They must struggle to rescue Africa from the terrible poverty which makes the continent a den of all sorts of physical, mental and psychological diseases. As Mandela sees it, in Africa

*Poverty goes hand in hand with malnutrition and disease. The incidence of malnutrition and deficiency diseases is very high amongst Africans. Tuberculosis, pellagra, kwashiorkor, gastroenteritis, and scurvy bring death and destruction of health. The incidence of infant mortality is one of the highest in the world. . . . These diseases not only destroy the vital organs of the body, but they result in retarded mental conditions and lack of initiative, and reduce powers of concentration. The secondary results of such conditions affect the whole community and the standard of work by African labourers (Nelson, 1996:*

<sup>17</sup> Amilcar Cabral, PAICC leader, quoted by Paul Nugent, *Africa Since Independence*, Palgrave: Macmillan, 2004, p. 260.

<sup>18</sup> See Mary N. Getui, "Mission of the Church and Concern for the Environment" in A. Nasimiyu-Wasike and D.W. Waruta (Eds), *Mission in African Christianity*, Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1993, p. 40-42.



185).

As long as basic social services are not supplied as they should be, African countries will continue having people who complain indefinitely. What we need to learn from Nelson Mandela is to make sure that as many people as possible are connected to reliable power and water networks. We also need to see the value and importance of preserving forests as well as building quality schools and hospitals, with all the required facilities. Going to treat people outside the country as we see it frequently being practised is a situation which should be discouraged as much as possible because very few Africans can afford medical treatment overseas. The big amounts of money used to send patients abroad should be used to make medical facilities available in our countries.

Another issue which falls into social services is the supply of reliable travel services by road, sea and air. We are thankful that in many African countries there are more all-weather roads compared to how things were during the colonial era. But bearing in mind that South Africa is far ahead, in other parts of Africa there is an urgent need of increasing the pace of improving social services such as the road and railway networks. Nice roads and railways would ease the day-to-day movement of people and goods. It is appalling to see that for quite a long time now railway services in a country like Tanzania are more or less defunct. Even a blind person would tell you that the factors behind the collapse of railways are the individualistic politicians and businessmen who benefit either from the total collapse or the ailing condition of important railways such as Central Railway Line, Mnyusi Railway Line and Tazara in the case of Tanzania.

Efficient air and aquatic travel services would indeed show that we are walking into the footsteps of Nelson Mandela who saw efficient infrastructure as one of the methods of solving the economic problems facing Africa. Memories are still live in our minds about terrible accidents like MV Bukoba and the recent boat disasters in Pemba and Zanzibar which have claimed thousands of people who are very much needed by our societies. Like any other compassionate person, Mandela would be highly perturbed by such accidents, accidents which are preventable. Lack of good infrastructure is the result of greed and selfishness, social ulcers which have eaten most African leaders down to the bone marrow. Even Jesus Christ himself knew the danger and bitter consequences of these diseases. Sociologists and psychologists may give variant definitions of greed, definitions which are outside the scope of our essay. But from the perspective of our argument, greed (which in most cases is manifested in selfishness) is the pursuit of wealth for self-gratification without regard to God's purpose or the rights of others. The basis of greed is the notion that life consists in the acquisition of abundant possessions for oneself. In the Bible greed is associated with the deadly sin of those depraved. As such, greed is regarded as evil. Greed is immoral. . . . [That is why]

Jesus in his teaching counsels us to guard against all kinds of greed.<sup>19</sup>

It is indeed a blessing to have people who are not controlled by greed, a typical example being Nelson Mandela.

### Protecting the vulnerable

During his term in office, Nelson Mandela made sure that his government defended the vulnerable, the old and street children in particular. With the increasing tendency of young people to drift into urban centres, the old citizens are left in the villages, vulnerable to poverty, hunger, loneliness, and diseases. Protecting the vulnerable was something which Mandela did with great concern and for many years he will be remembered for that.

The old folks we see neglected in most African villages are the very people who have shed their sweat day and night to release Africa from colonialism. It is because of this truth they deserve being protected and assisted as much as possible. Neglecting or disowning these old people is behaving like the hunter who lets the dog suffer the rupture of thorns in pursuit of the antelope, but when the antelope is caught and slaughtered by the greedy hunter the dog is kicked aside.

We often witness how old people are exploited and left unattended when it comes to things like pension, medical care, entertainment and recreation. Neglecting the vulnerable is like forgetting the farmer during harvest, the farmer who has toiled under the scorching sun. See how the national cake is squandered by few people, while the old people dress in rags and feed on leftovers. It is imperative to help the senior citizens because, as the Bible tells us, it is the only way of living long in this world. Even from the African traditional viewpoint, neglecting the old was one of the most feared things. That is why African parents, grandees in particular, are held with high regard, being given the best care and respect imaginable.

Street children are on the increase – there are street children even in the remotest villages in Africa. Some of these children are fathered and mothered by people who hold high positions in the society, behaving as if they have not done anything bad. Mandela struggled to pass across the message that the street children, most of whom have survived the plight of being thrown into dustbins and pit latrines have parents who should be traced and held responsible in courts of law. Street children are citizens who deserve all basic human rights such as education, shelter, food, and medical care. According to Julius Nyerere this is development because while contributing to the 'Just Africa Debate' he said that in the process of development, African governments need to ensure that all their people [including street children] have enough food, and access to at least basic health and education. Without those services the nation

<sup>19</sup> Rogate R. Mshana (ed.), *Poverty, Wealth and Ecology in Africa*, p. 109.

cannot advance however much money is obtained – not if development means the development of people.<sup>20</sup> Leaving street children at large in the streets of African towns and cities is something which exposes Africa to shame of the highest calibre. With great concern and sympathy Mandela asserts that the “children who sleep in the streets, reduced to begging to make a living, are testimony to an unfinished job.”<sup>21</sup> Yes, caring for street children is indeed an unfinished task. Thus something must be done pretty soon to come to the rescue and care of street children in Africa.

### **Sympathizing with the Condemned and the Marginalized**

Nelson Mandela sympathized with victims of condemnation and marginalization. He sympathized with the victims of HIV/AIDS. The world will not forget how he even sympathized with the Libyan national convicted of planting a bomb on the Pan American Airliner which crashed in Scotland in 1988 – the Lockerbie saga. He made lasting history when he volunteered to settle the dust stirred up by this particular plane tragedy. Mandela involved himself in this sensitive incident without showing any sign of justifying terrorism, something which elevated him to the rank of an international reconciler.

It is pathetic to see that very few people sympathize with various convicts in Africa. People do not sympathize even with the individuals or groups of people who are convicted on false grounds. Explaining his prison experience, when he was arrested and thrown to jail with almost all members of the ANC executive leadership, Mandela writes quite touchingly: “It is said that no one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones – and South Africa treated its imprisoned African citizens like animals (Nelson, 1994; 187)”. Mandela’s opinion was the result of the fact that about 156 people (himself included) were arrested and told to line up in front of a prison door and then ordered to strip completely, regardless of the fact that the arrested people consisted of businessmen, priests, lawyers, professors, and medical doctors – people who command high respect in the society. Worse still the arrested group comprised of innocent middle-aged and old people (Nelson, 1994: 186). This revives in our minds the nauseating 1963-64 Rivonia Trial where Mandela and his comrades in the ANC were falsely accused of “sabotage and a conspiracy to overthrow the Government by revolution and by assisting an armed invasion of South Africa by foreign troops (Nelson, 1996: 162)”.

Another development in Nelson Mandela’s reconcilia-

tion concern was witnessed in March 1995 when he involved himself personally and later through the person of Desmond Tutu in counteracting the decision of Sanni Abacha to execute Olusegun Obasanjo and Shehu Yar’Adua – when Abacha accused them of staging a coup in Nigeria. It was Mandela’s campaign to defend Obasanjo and Yar’Adua which made the military tribunal established by Abacha to change the punishment from execution to life imprisonment, a decision which later on enabled Obasanjo and then Yar’Adua to assume the presidency of Nigeria.

Nelson Mandela’s diplomacy and reconciliation tact enabled him take over from Julius Nyerere the task of reconciling the Tutsi and the Hutu, following the Rwandan genocide which took place in 1994. The genocide is believed to have claimed the lives of between 650,000-800,000 Tutsi people, a figure which some historians dare to compare with the German Holocaust which made about 6,000,000 Jews lose their lives in gas chambers (Paul, 2004: 456). Mandela carried out very well this OAU-given assignment and between the years 2000-2003 a peace agreement between the Hutu and the Tutsi was signed. The genocide, which seemed to have been well planned, was sparked off by the death of both the presidents of Burundi and Rwanda, whose plane – coming from a meeting in Dar es Salaam – was downed by a missile on 6 April 1994. The Presidents who died on the downed plane were Juvenal Habyarimana of Rwanda and Cyprian Ntaryamira of Burundi.

The genocide in Rwanda is a great lesson for the whole of Africa. As Samuel Kobia argues quite correctly, “The fact that the vast majority of the victims of genocide are racial, ethnic, political or religious minorities needs to be emphasized by Christian churches and other faith groups because genocides have one thing in common, they are premised on the politics of exclusion and power (Samuel, 2006: 98)”.

It is quite true. Exclusion and power are the pandemics which have put Africa where it is now, and if we want to survive, we must rethink our selfish aims or projections. Nelson Mandela, through his personality, teaches us to avoid all sorts of violence if at all we want the coming generations to have a continent to inherit. A careful study on Mandela’s early political career proves that he did not condone violence – it was the status quo which pushed him into violent fight for the freedom of his country, as it is evident in the following extract which airs his point of view:

*Experience convinced us that rebellion would offer the government limitless opportunities for the indiscriminate slaughter of our people. But it was precisely because the soil of South Africa is already drenched with the blood of innocent Africans that we felt it our duty to make preparations as a long-term undertaking to use force in order to defend ourselves against force. If war were inevitable, we wanted the fight to be conducted on terms most favourable to our people. The fight which held out*

<sup>20</sup> Julius K. Nyerere, “Ethics and the Economy” in Viggo Mortensen (ed.), *A Just Africa. Ethics and Economy*, LWF Studies, Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1994, p. 23.

<sup>21</sup> Jennifer Crwys-Williams, *In the Words of Nelson Mandela*, 1998, p. 19.

*prospects best for us and the least risk of life to both sides was guerilla warfare.*<sup>22</sup>

We need to cultivate and protect peace, dignity and respect for the other person, even if we do not share common interests. We need to learn from Nelson Mandela how to be patient, tolerant and merciful, because without realizing the importance of these virtues, our continent will no longer be a God-given haven but a stinking dustbin full of people who devour one another like beasts in the jungle.

Nelson Mandela sympathizes with HIV/AIDS victims because he has a first-hand experience of the pandemic – he once experienced the travail of losing one of his sons to HIV/AIDS. Even Kenneth Kaunda lost one of his sons to this scourge, as he once confessed in an interview about his life and career on a Chinese TV programme. Mandela is quite aware of the fact that child rearing is one of the biggest problems which beset big people such as kings, queens, presidents, bishops and diplomats – to mention only a few.

How many leaders in our societies sympathize with the condemned and the marginalized, as Nelson Mandela did? Very few indeed! The condemned and the marginalized are left in prisons and remand houses, completely forgotten and unattended. Mandela loved his people so much that he promised to continue fighting for their rights and dignity even after serving a prison spell. Without mumbling, he declared fearlessly in a courtroom:

*Whatever sentence Your Worship sees fit to impose upon me for the crime for which I have been convicted before this court, may it rest assured that when my sentence has been completed I will still be moved, as men are always moved, by their conscience; I will still be moved by my dislike of the race discrimination against my people when I come out from serving my sentence, to take up again, as best I can, the struggle for the removal of those injustices until they are finally abolished once and for all (Nelson, 1994: 319).*

Petty criminals (some of them are accused of having stolen a chicken or a piece of cassava) are forgotten in jails like heaps of dung in the jungle. Real criminals (the ones who steal the national income and own accounts worth billions in overseas banks) are embraced, praised and protected while the practice should be quite the opposite.

The Church is supposed to sympathize with the so-called criminals of the society. Jesus Christ, the Master of the Church, never judged or condemned the culprits. After forgiving them he told them to go home happily, but never to sin again. Bearing this in mind, a strong call is made to all Churchmen and Churchwomen to make sure

that God's precious children suffering in notorious prisons are visited, to show them sympathy and encouraging them with prayer. There is a pressing need to visit the inmates of Kirikiri, Keko, Shimo la Tewa, and Kamiti – to mention only a few – maximum security prisons where people (some of them tried quite unfairly) are tortured or treated like crazy tigers. If we are not ready to sympathize with our falsely condemned brothers and sisters we cannot say that we are following into the footsteps of Nelson Mandela. As it is stressed by Mortensen, the Church must comprehend the fact that the "example of Jesus who walked and lived among the people, hearing their cries, is a model for us as we seek to show solidarity and walk with suffering brothers and sisters."<sup>23</sup>

As Prophet Isaiah writes, and as Nelson Mandela would say, we are all anointed and commissioned to go to all parts of Africa, to preach good news to the poor, to heal the heartbroken, to declare liberty to those who languish in prisons, and to announce the Lord's accepted year (Is 61:1-2). This is exactly what Jesus Christ was sent to do in the world, a commission witnessed in His ministry everywhere. This was what was done by the twelve disciples and it is what the whole Church of Christ is supposed to do today. Contrary to that our life on the African continent will be nothing but a caricature. Let us march forward as bold and determined soldiers, as we are reminded by the songwriter.<sup>24</sup> The freedom fighters and the first African nationalists played their part with exemplary dedication and achieved what they achieved and it is now our time to fulfill the social responsibilities placed on our shoulders. With this understanding in mind, Mandela narrated vividly when South Africa was released from colonial fetters, "We pledge ourselves to liberate all our people from the continuing bondage of poverty, deprivation, suffering, gender and other discrimination (Nelson, 1994: 613)."

### **Moral Integrity and Ethical Uprightness**

Nelson Mandela has tried as much as possible to uphold his moral integrity and from the ethical viewpoint he is a shining example. African leaders and all other people entrusted with high positions in the society must look at Mandela as a role model. There are many bad things in Europe and America but concerning leadership integrity, the Western Hemisphere has something good to be examined. In most cases, people who are given positions of leadership in the West are expected to be morally upright and dependable. Immoral behaviour and abuse of power while in office is something which raises

<sup>22</sup> Nelson Mandela, quoted in Benson, *Nelson Mandela: The Man and the Movement*, 1994, p. 128.

<sup>23</sup> Viggo Mortensen, "Talking to the Pharaohs" in Viggo Mortensen (ed.), *A Just Africa*, p. 12.

<sup>24</sup> See the hymn called 'Onward, Christian Soldiers' in *Sacred Songs and Solos*, No. 706 and in *Service Book and Hymnals*, No. 560. Also see *Redemption Songs*, No. 460.

vehemence and strong dislike from the general public and a good example is the Lewinsky scandal which was about to kick out of office one of the strongest US Presidents. In the Western societies accountability and proper behaviour are things which are accorded top priority. In other words, immoral behaviour while occupying a public office is something which is intolerable.

It is indeed pitiable to see that some African leaders swim in immorality, pretending that it is private life. We know how immorality tarnishes occupants of public offices and as Henry Okullu says correctly, "it is not a wild exaggeration to state that many African people now find themselves in a moral wilderness and are trying to build states without values (Henry, 1975: 9)." Time has come for African leaders to be held responsible for their unbecoming deeds and constitutions should be changed so that even heads of state can be held responsible or accountable for leadership misbehaviour, even a long time after they have left office. Mandela led his country and left office being morally clean and ethically upright. To maintain his moral and ethical integrity he makes sure he has a proper wife all the time, to minimize speculations during his associations with women. Even when his marriage inevitably ended in divorce he married immediately after the divorce.<sup>25</sup> Never has there being a foul story about Mandela having an affair with a woman not his wife, as we see it happening to quite a big number of African leaders. Occupying a public office and keeping a paramour at the same time are things which erode the moral standards of many African leaders – males and females.

In most African societies the cry of many parents, guardians, and members of the general public in general is moral laxity among students, teachers, politicians and other public office holders. There is a high rate of immorality even among married couples, and it is reported that quite a big number of HIV/AIDS victims in Africa are married people. As we have pointed out, we need to look at Nelson Mandela who towers up as a leader whose moral behaviour is exemplary. It is the responsibility of every citizen to make sure that Africa does not continue being a cave of immoral deeds. A leader who is morally upright is stronger than a leader who possesses a fleet of tanks and machine guns. Leadership which is rife with political profiteering, swindling, material aggrandizement, and looting of the meager national cake is what Africa should guard against because people like Nelson Mandela consider such unethical deeds as the greatest enemies of good governance in Africa.

<sup>25</sup> Nelson Mandela got married to Evelyn Nkoto in 1944 and in 1957 the marital union ended in divorce. In the same year he married the famous Winnie Makidizela but unfortunately again this second marriage was terminated by divorce in 1996. Two years later (in 1998) he married Graca Machel (the widow of the Mozambican President, the late Samora Machel) and they have been living together to date.

## POSITIVE ATTITUDE ON POLITICAL AND RACIAL PLURALISM

The wrangles we see between different political parties and different races are an indication that Africa has a long way to go as far as political and racial pluralism is concerned. Members of various political and racial affiliation look at one another with spite and malice, something which paints quite a negative picture, contrary to the stand of Nelson Mandela. For Mandela, peaceful coexistence and cooperation between followers of different political parties and races should be cultivated. Viewing a member of a different political party or race as a leper is something which is completely discouraged by Nelson Mandela. In a personal memoir, recollecting his trial in October 1962 which was led by white judges and advocates, Mandela makes his stand quite evident: "I hate race discrimination most intensely and in all its manifestations. I have fought it all my life. I fight it now, and I will do so until the end of my days. It makes me feel most intensely the set-up that surrounds me here. It makes me feel that I am a black man in a white man's court. This should not be (Nelson, 1994: 313; Mary, 1994: 103)."

It is high time Africans live under the guidance of well conceived political, cultural and religious policies – with a pluralistic attitude. Talking on the South African Constitution, Nelson Mandela says that what "challenges us is to ensure that none should enjoy lesser rights; and none tormented because they are born different, hold contrary political views, or pray to God in a different manner."<sup>26</sup> This is a comment which should not be ignored.

Nelson Mandela is of the opinion that real social and political development is brought about by cooperation between members of different political parties and races. Such belief made him include members of different races into his government as well as setting up a government of national unity which took leaders from different political parties. This should be a great lesson for African politicians who think that anybody outside their political party or race is useless and doomed to ill fate and failure. Blind politicians must understand that belonging to a different political party or race does not make a person less useful. Over the centuries great ideas and historic discoveries have come from people who have different opinion or people who look at things from a different perspective.

Maintaining a positive attitude on political and racial pluralism as Nelson Mandela has been doing means having unity in diversity. In other words, Africans can be really united and at the same time maintain their diverse origins and inclinations. Racial, political, economic, religious, cultural, and gender diversity can continue existing without removing us from a united fold. That is

<sup>26</sup> Jennifer Crwys-Williams (ed.), *In the Words of Nelson Mandela*, p. 26.

what Mandela wanted and still wants to see in Africa. The political and economic organizations such as The East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Organization of African Unity (OAU - now African Union), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and other development organs are some of the best examples of working in unity but at the same time maintain diversity. Even the limbs of human body are different but when they cooperate they enable the body work as one unit. In Mandela's understanding, and as it should be the understanding of every sensible African, political and racial pluralism is not a curse but a great blessing.

### PAN-AFRICAN COMMITMENT AND INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT

Pan-Africanism was a movement which appealed considerably to Nelson Mandela. His early writings and speeches radiated with many slogans which emanated from Pan-African congresses and his contribution to Pan-Africanism equals the contribution of renowned Pan-Africanists such as Toissant Louverture, William Dubois, Marcus Garvey, and George Padmore. Even famous politicians from the Afro-American community like Martin Luther King and Malcolm X had many things with an echoing of Pan-Africanism, just like Mandela's speeches and writings.

Being aware of the oppression, marginalization, exploitation, and slavery the black communities worldwide had been subjected to, Nelson Mandela could not hesitate joining the seething struggle of Pan-Africanism which had started a number of decades earlier. Starting in the African Diaspora in North America and West Indies, the Pan-Africanism movement spread to Africa in the mid 1940s and later on liberation-conscious champions like Mandela were irresistibly swept by its tide. The spirit of Pan-Africanism must have been part and parcel of Mandela's personality because from his childhood evils which were rampant in the environment he grew up in were oppression, discrimination, oppression, apartheid, segregation and so forth, things which were "associated with the era of racist rule in South Africa."<sup>27</sup>

In the 1940s Nelson Mandela was a young man. His staunch political ambitions made him cooperate with other young men (among them Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu) to form the youth wing of ANC, a political party which had been started by Africans to fight against racialism, demanding equal rights, and stamping out

ethnic factions in South Africa. When Albert Luthuli became the ANC President in 1953, the youth arm of the party, fuelled by the vigorous and patriotic input of people like Nelson Mandela and his colleagues, opened a new chapter in political consciousness in South Africa. Describing his own person, Mandela says, "I have always regarded myself, in the first place, as an African patriot (Nelson, 1996: 182)."

The mighty winds of Pan-Africanism and nationalism began blowing or gained strong momentum in 1945, when the first group of African nationalists attended the 6<sup>th</sup> Pan-African Congress in Manchester. One of the resolutions of the congress was liberating Africa from political and economic domination and the liberation spirit was maintained down to the 1960s when most African countries became independent. By this period Nelson Mandela was already quite active in the liberation struggle in South Africa, but his struggle was cut short by his unfair trial and imprisonment in 1962. The trial and detention was a proof that Mandela had fallen prey to an iron-fist regime, with its tyrannous weapons (the army and the police force) which are egoistically used as awful tools of perpetuating dictatorship or bad governance in many parts of Africa. It is indeed saddening and disappointing to see that the obnoxious oppressive machinery (the police force, the army, and the prison) are still used in Africa as tools of suppressing or intimidating people, more than half a century after independence. Despite the unfair trial and imprisonment Mandela has left a lasting legacy which every liberation-minded person (inside and outside Africa) should look at. It is on these grounds we assert that one of the greatest achievements of Pan-Africanism and nationalism was the emergence of independent states in different areas of Africa – a credit to people like Nelson Mandela.

If we consider nationalism as something which involves a group of people or organization struggling for human rights as well as revealing the dedication or aspirations of a certain society standing up to oppose foreign rule and domination (Thomas, 1956: 25), we can claim with certainty that Nelson Mandela was a hard-core nationalist as far as opposing apartheid and establishing a democratic rule in South Africa is concerned. In March 1956 Mandela was banned for the third time not to visit areas or associating with people of his liking, but this third banning found him a different person. He was no longer ready to accept the colonial bans like a cow going to be slaughtered. Mandela's own words prove his stand:

But this time my attitude towards my bans had changed drastically. When I was first banned, I abided by the rules and regulations of my persecutors. I had now developed contempt for these restrictions. I was not going to let my involvement in the struggle and the scope of my political activities be determined by the enemy I was fighting against. To all my activities to be circumscribed by my opponent was a form of defeat, and I was not to become my own jailer (Nelson, 1994: 178).

<sup>27</sup> Reinhard Gertze, "Language, Literature and Ideology" in Brian Harlech-Jones, Ismael Mbise and Helen Vale (eds.), *Guardian of the Word: Literature, Language and Politics in SADC Countries*, Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan Publishers (Pty) Ltd, 2001, p. 17.

Nowadays we see many African leaders who claim to stand for the dignity and rights of their countrymen but what they actually do is quite the opposite. There are many African leaders and administrators who really betray their countries by embracing or collaborating with the very colonial masters who enslaved and exploited Africa for many years. The merciless foreign entrepreneurs continue siphoning Africa's wealth in the dubious business called foreign investment and the bizarre cooperation with the greedy representatives called local development partners. Mandela would not be peaceful to see this dirty game going on in African societies.

Very early in independent Africa, a number of African leaders were satisfied with mere flag independence in the countries they led. For instance, to the surprise of many people, Leopold Sedar Senghor, the renowned poet and statesman from French-speaking Africa, dared to remark publicly that he and his countrymen needed nothing more than building a separate hut on the very compound of the former colonial master – France. Contrary to his contemporaries, such as Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Sekou Toure of Guinea Conakry, Senghor did not reject the colonial master altogether. Rather, he demanded being given an equal share at the dining table occupied by French rulers and other colonial stalwarts. He allowed France to continue supplying aid as well as making trade and administrative initiatives in his country. Even after independence, he permitted many French advisors and soldiers to continue staying in his country and worse still he went as far as allowing a Frenchman (Mr. Jean Collin) to serve as Finance Minister in Senegal until 1970. Such extreme decisions were witnessed in some other African countries such as Kenya and Ivory Coast where political and cultural life-styles or tenets of the former colonizers were embraced indiscriminately (Paul, 2004: 194-195). Mandela is a person who does not like to see Africa continuing licking the boots of foreign masters.

Like most of his predecessors in West Indies and the Caribbean Islands, Mandela saw Pan-Africanism as a sharp tool of spearheading the inevitable liberation struggle in Africa and for that matter he did not hesitate to embrace it. Pan-Africanism was a unifying movement, an appropriate forum for the expression of African freedom and dignity, an effective tool for reviving or safeguarding the despised culture and traditions of the black people, as well as the best way of promoting and advancing the dormant economy of people of African descent. It was indeed a movement in which black people in Africa and in the African Diaspora at large combined effort to fight for the black people's solidarity and dignity in the international arena.

Most Pan-Africanists looked upon Pan-Africanism as the best way of enabling the blacks shake off their shoulders all factors which made them victims of racial prejudice and segregation, ethnic and political schism, social and economic exploitation, disregard and inferiority complex, military repression and neo-colonialism. Confirming his inclination to Pan-Africanism, his advocacy

for communal land ownership and African socialism as well as his endless fight for human equality and dignity, Mandela writes:

*I am attracted by the idea of a classless society, an attraction which springs in part from Marxist reading and, in part, from admiration of the structure and organization of early African societies in the country. The land, then the main means of production, belonged to the tribe. There were no rich or poor and there was no exploitation (Nelson, 1996: 182).*

The Church needs to look at social evils in Africa the way the first generation of African nationalists did. Failure to do that makes the Church act contrary to what is expected of it. As far as the role of the Church in the society is concerned, "failure to address the structural sins of greed, exploitation, racism, dehumanization and inequitable sharing of power . . . results in trivialization of poverty, where the poor are blamed for their plight."<sup>28</sup> We need to know that poverty is not the right of those who are currently poor and wealth is not the right of those who are currently rich. As the Ghanaian Church leader (Bishop Nicholas Duncan-Williams) reminds us, "God did not predetermine who would be rich and who would be poor. He simply created His spiritual laws and freely gave them to everyone. Every person then has a choice – to implement the laws of poverty, or to implement God's spiritual laws of prosperity."<sup>29</sup>

The destructive forces of globalization and militarism, the endless and perilous competition in accumulation of weapons (including weapons of mass destruction) are things which need to compel us sit down and rethink the purpose of our life in Africa and the world at large. International terrorism is on the increase, despite the struggle of the so-called superpowers to combat it. The fear caused by terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabab, and Boko Haram seem to grip even the nations which claim to possess very sophisticated weapons. Most people travel around with fear and uncertainty because no traveler knows where and when a terrorist group would strike. International drug trafficking affects Africa equally the same, something which indicates that nowadays life in Africa is worse than it has ever been.

Sadistic leaders like Nero, Hitler, Mobutu, Amin, Abacha, Saddam and others have faded from the face of the earth but nobody can guarantee that such despots will not be born anymore. Bearing in mind that history repeats itself, sooner or later Africans may find themselves living in countries ruled by such ruthless leaders.

It was the Pan-African concern which pushed Nelson Mandela to support various groups fighting to free their

<sup>28</sup> Rogate R. Mshana (ed.), *Poverty, Wealth and Ecology in Africa*, p. 8.

<sup>29</sup> Bishop Nicholas Duncan-Williams, quoted by Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role*, London: C. Hurst, 1998, p. 79. Also quoted by Paul Nugent, *Africa Since Independence*, p. 376.

countries from colonial jaws. In 1959 the formation of the PAC (Pan-Africanist Congress) which had Robert Sobukwe as its first President and a party which largely shared many motives with ANC is a move which indicates that Pan-Africanism ideas dominated the person of Nelson Mandela for quite a long time. Other formidable African nationalists like Jomo Kenyatta, Kwame Nkrumah, Kamuzu Banda, and Nnamdi Azikiwe (to mention only a few) were also caught up in the Pan-Africanism web because they were undergoing further studies overseas when the movement was at its apex. In the opinion of Walter Rodney, these Africans who were educated in the West and those from West Indies embraced Pan-African ideas because they had been "educated within the international capitalist structure of exploitation on the basis of class and race (Walter, 1989: 306)." Rodney goes on to say that after realizing "their inferior status in the societies of America was conditioned by the fact of being black and the weakness of Africa, the Pan-Africanists were forced to deal with the central problem of Europe's exploitation and oppression of the African continent (Walter, 1989)." For Mandela and his fellow nationalists, Africa's independence meant liberating Africa in its totality. He knew for sure that if one is free and his neighbours are enslaved, one's liberty is far from being genuine. In other words, as the Chagga would put it, a villager is liberated when all villagers are free.

Most Pan-Africanists were quite formidable and critical in their manifestoes of liberating their countries and Africa at large. One such person is Sekou Toure who historians tell us that he was a Pan-Africanist who was very radical in his political methodology (Assa, 2006: 316). The wish that African countries should become independent simultaneously was something which was very much insisted by the first disciples of Pan-Africanism and nationalism. For example, Julius Nyerere was ready to delay the independence of Tanganyika so that the other East African states (Kenya and Uganda) could become independent at the same time. A similar stand was witnessed in Kwame Nkrumah's political campaigns. Nkrumah said that independence of his country was meaningless if it was not united with independence of all countries in Africa.<sup>30</sup> Mandela is a role model politician as far as Pan-African consciousness is concerned and for that he deserves being studied, if not imitated. Forgetting Mandela is like forgetting the people who dug up the roads we trod on everyday as well as forgetting the people who have constructed the furrows and pipelines which bring us the water we depend on for our existence. In one of his speeches, Mandela says:

*The ideological creed of the ANC is, and always has been, the creed of African Nationalism. It is not the concept of African Nationalism expressed in the cry, 'Drive the White man into the sea'. The African*

*Nationalism for which the ANC stands is the concept of freedom and fulfillment of the African people in their own land (Nelson, 1996: 178).*

## **STANDING FOR INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY AND RULE OF LAW**

One of the greatest weaknesses in Africa is that in most African countries there is no independent judiciary nor is there sufficient rule of law. The judiciary is controlled by the ruling clique by remote control and most judges are appointed by the heads of state so that they can perpetuate the whims of the ruling class. The police force and the army machinery are there to serve interests of the ruling class, and it is because of this there are so endless complaints in many parts of Africa.

Among the things Nelson Mandela fought for as much as he could is to see proliferation of independent judiciary and the rule of law. In Africa over and over again we see people who place themselves above the law. What we need to remind ourselves of is the fact that real judiciary should not favour people. It must be free and once it makes decisions no person is allowed to interfere with it. Contrary to that the judiciary lacks credibility. Mandela's government, under his attractive leadership styles, tried as much as it could to strengthen the whole campaign of promoting independent judiciary and the rule of law. He envisaged plans and strategies which promulgated establishing independent commissions of enquiry. He pressed for new constitutions rather than operating with constitutions which are full of appendages as it is the case in many African countries.

Following into the footsteps of Nelson Mandela is something which is very important because nowadays we see how so many people go into strikes and demonstrations because they feel that there is no enough democracy in their societies. For so long power has been retained in the egoistic single-party rules camouflaged in multiparty politics and most people seem to be fed up with the stereotype political machinery. In Africa people have been longing for change of power or at least a change in leadership but to no avail. We need to understand that genuine democratization of "all aspects of political life within a pluralistic system lead to rotation of power and leadership."<sup>31</sup>

In October 1997, while delivering a speech at a Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) at Edinburgh, Nelson Mandela made a statement which was so sensational and intriguing that it sparked off a widespread debate in the circles of politics and judiciary. The aim of the statement was to criticize the leaders, largely in Africa, who do not give chance for independent judiciary and rule of law in their respective countries.

<sup>30</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, "Independence Speech", 1957.

<sup>31</sup> Wasim Abu Fasha (ed.) *Palestine: Human Development Report 2004*, Birzeit University: Development Studies Programme, p. 67.

Amidst a thunderous applaud from the audience Mandela said that “no one nation should be complainant, prosecutor and judge.”<sup>32</sup> Mandela’s remarks, touchy but educative, should be a great lesson for African leaders who manipulate the judiciary as if it is their land of inheritance. Yes, it is indeed a folly for a nation to be complainant and prosecutor and judge at the same time.

Unless Africa practices real democracy, people’s rights will persist being suppressed and social maladies such as corruption, nepotism and embezzlement of public funds will continue being the order of the day. The factor behind this particular increase of social evils, among other things, is that most African societies have judiciaries which are not independent and the rule of law is almost non-existent. A serious reading in the prophets’ writings reveals the fact that most prophets preached against all sorts of social injustice. For example, Prophet Micah who prophesized in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century BC accused the leaders of his time (both religious and secular) to do justice to the poor, and all people oppressed by injustice, corruption and inequality. Like Nelson Mandela, the prophets attacked all forms of social injustice. They reprimanded the leaders of their days and because of that they were “beaten, jailed, starved, humiliated and threatened with death because they challenged the rich and the powerful”<sup>33</sup> just like it was done on the person of Nelson Mandela. It is on these grounds Africa needs many Micahs and Mandelas, people who are ready to endanger their lives to salvage Africa from the current socio-political decadence.

### Critics of Nelson Mandela

Over the decades, Nelson Mandela has had a number of critics, some of them leveling very bitter and malicious criticism on this inspirational leader. Criticism on Mandela is not a strange phenomenon because, as the Chagga of Kilimanjaro put it proverbially, strength and weakness travel together. Even the strongest people are weak somewhere. Jomo Kenyatta (the first President of Kenya) was a metallic freedom fighter who steered Kenya into freedom and great stride of progress but he was weak somewhere – he could not tolerate his critics or people who did not support his views. The Lewinsky scandal more or less kicked out of office one of the ablest US Presidents. Julius Nyerere, apart from his impressive political strategies, was sharply criticized as being a champion of socialist policies which camouflaged dictatorship and suppressed democracy. Therefore, nobody is perfect or criticism-free. Able leaders like Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Kwame Nkrumah, and Haile Selassie, to mention only a few, impressed the world by their wonderful leadership and administrative

qualities but at the same time they were bitterly criticized. In one way or another, great statesmen and stateswomen become victims of frightening criticism.

The foremost criticism on Nelson Mandela comes from Winnie, Mandela’s second wife, who tolerated his twenty-seven-year spell in prison and the wife with whom he spent most of his time in freedom fighting. “You can praise a black president with one hand and slap him with the other”<sup>34</sup> is one of the most remembered criticisms Winnie threw at the person of Nelson Mandela. This remark implies that, according to Winnie, Mandela is a very good person and at the same time he is a very bad person.

Winnie’s sweeping and sarcastic statement is not surprising because as one person experienced in marital relationships (has said), a husband is a hero to everybody except his wife. Over and over again, Winnie Mandela criticized her husband for letting down his fellow black citizens in South Africa, because after his release from prison they did not see a better South Africa as Mandela had been preaching.

Some critics are of the opinion that Mandela was not a good leader because were he a good and strategic political leader as most of his admirers claim, he could not leave his country in lawlessness as it was witnessed immediately after his short term in office. Such wanton critics are oblivious of Mandela’s stand, because the element of crime in South Africa, in the period which followed his release from prison was among the things which distressed Mandela very much. The following witness is self-explanatory:

*Each day, each weekend, the newspapers were filled with fresh reports of new and bloody violence in our communities and townships. It was clear that violence was the number one issue in the country. In many communities in Natal and on the Reef around Johannesburg, a poisonous mixture of crime, political rivalries, police brutality and shadowy death squads made life brutish and untenable. As long as crime was not dealt with, the progress to a new dispensation would remain uneven and uncertain (Nelson, 1994: 582).*

Mandela says that he contacted Chief Manasi Buthelezi and requested him to arrange a meeting so that they could try to arrest the wind of violence in South Africa (Nelson, 1994: 582).

So from the very beginning, Mandela has been insisting non-violent means of fighting against social evils such as exploitation and racial discrimination. Most of his comrades in the ANC shared Mandela’s stance of demanding freedom and equal rights without necessarily being violent. One such comrade was Albert Luthuli

<sup>32</sup> en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nelson\_Mandela.

<sup>33</sup> Samuel Kobia, *Called to the One Hope: A new Ecumenical Epoch*, p. 21.

<sup>34</sup> See “Winnie Mandela’s Criticism of Nelson Mandela”, in [www.theroot.com/views/mandelas/obama](http://www.theroot.com/views/mandelas/obama)



about whom we are told that his “belief in the teachings of Christianity were reflected in his political outlook, in which . . . non-violent resistance to injustice was regarded not only as the correct opposition tactic but as a spiritual force in itself.”<sup>35</sup>

Marian Tupy supports the people who criticize Nelson Mandela for failing to curb the evil deeds which rocked South Africa in the 1990s. In a biting criticism Tupy writes:

*After all, few have enjoyed Nelson Mandela’s saintly reputation while still alive. . . . Those who lived [in South Africa] . . . in the 1990s remember Mandela as a man of peace who strove for reconciliation between the races. But this same Mandela also refused to stop and to condemn atrocities committed in the name of the African National Congress (ANC) against other black organizations — the Inkatha Freedom Party in particular. Thousands of black South Africans died between Mandela’s release from jail in 1990 and his assumption of the presidency in 1994. As John Kane-Berman of the South African Institute of Race Relations explains . . . South Africa’s descent into a low-scale civil war and the ANC’s nonchalant use of increasing violence to obtain political concessions from F.W. De Klerk’s government must partly be laid at Mandela’s door (Marian, 2010).*

Nelson Mandela is also criticized for failing to make his marriages hold together. He has married three times, experiencing two divorce cases before finally settling down with his third wife, the widow of the late Samora Machel. Some critics argue that if he were as strong as it is explained by his fans, why did he fail to live with his first two wives? Mandela is criticized or accused of being an African leader who is so misguided that he supports gay rights.<sup>36</sup> The critics who blame Nelson Mandela for supporting gay rights base their criticism on concrete evidence because approving of gay relationships is regarded by the majority as utter violation of moral principles and because of that it is strongly abhorred in many places, inside and outside Africa. All in all, Mandela is criticized for being a hard nut or a man who is always right in his own eyes and a person who is ready to die for his own convictions, even if the whole society is against his stand.

There are critics who bluntly label Nelson Mandela a terrorist. This is because before rising to international fame and prominence, he joined hands with his fellow fighters in the ANC freedom fighting and in doing so he involved himself in terrorist deeds which caused deaths of innocent people in his own country. Mandela strongly disagrees with those who call him a terrorist. He asserts ironically:

*I was called a terrorist yesterday, but when I came out of jail, many people embraced me, including my enemies, and that is what I normally tell other people who say those who are struggling for liberation in their country are terrorists. I tell them that I was also a terrorist yesterday, but, today, I am admired by the very people who said I was one.*<sup>37</sup>

Mandela is accused of collaborating and befriending terrible despots and terrorists such as the late Yasser Arafat of Palestine, Saddam Hussein of Iraq and Muamar Ghadafi of Libya as well as hard-core communists like Fidel Castro of Cuba and the late Mao tse Tung of China. From Mandela’s personal witness, he really collaborated with Communist China, because as he says in his autobiography, the armed wing of ANC once visited China (a visit Mandela suggested to his comrades in the ANC) with the intention of soliciting weapons. In response to Mandela’s suggestion, the ANC chose a group of people to visit China and the group was led by Walter Sisulu and Duma Nokwe. Talking about the ANC delegation to China, Mandela narrates: “Walter was privy to my thoughts and, before he left, I made a suggestion: he should arrange to visit the People’s Republic of China and discuss with them the possibility of supplying us with weapons for an armed struggle. Walter liked the idea . . . (Nelson, 1994: 148)”

Responding to his critics’ accusation that he collaborates with communists, Nelson Mandela says categorically that he himself is not a communist but he admits cooperating closely with communists, the South African ones in particular. Despite the fact that in his political career he occasionally cooperated with communists, Mandela confesses honestly that he clearly saw the danger of communist policies. He says, “I joined ANC in 1944, and in my younger days I held the view that the policy of admitting communists to the ANC, and the close cooperation which existed at times on specific issues between the ANC and the Communist Party, would lead to a watering down of the concept of African Nationalism (Nelson, 1996: 180).” Explaining the reasons underlying his friendship with communists, Nelson Mandela says that:

*for many decades communists were the only political group in South Africa who were prepared to treat Africans as human beings and their equals; who were prepared to eat with us, talk with us, live with us and work with us. They were the only political group which was prepared to work with the Africans for the attainment of political rights and a stake in society. Because of this, there are many Africans who today tend to equate freedom with communism. They are supported in this belief by a legislature which brands all exponents of democratic government and African freedom as communists and*

<sup>35</sup> *Collier’s Encyclopedia*, Vol. 15, p. 119.

<sup>36</sup> Explicit on this issue, Mandela says, “I understand their [gays’] position, and I think they are entitled to carry on with what pleases them.” (Jennifer Crwys-Williams (ed.), *In the Words of Nelson Mandela*, 1998, p. 49).

<sup>37</sup> Mandela, *Larry King Live*, May 16, 2000.

*bans many of them [who are not communists] under the Suppression of Communist Act. Although I am not a communist and I have never been a member of the Communist Party, I myself have been named under the pernicious (Nelson, 1994: 131).*

Nelson Mandela has proven himself to be one of the boldest Africans who have dared to refuse bowing to the US foreign policies and for that he is accused of being defiant to the strongest nation in the world. He refused to the utmost of his ability the decision of America and her military allies to invade Iraq because according to him America is a 'threat to world peace' and he once described Dick Cheney (the US Vice President under the Bush administration) as a 'dinosaur', a derogatory and blunt language which, as Gary Younge puts it, nobody would "expect from the kindly old statesman who forgave his jailers."<sup>38</sup>

To point an accusing finger at Mandela as a person who discredits the western powers is to be rather unfair and off the point. For instance, since very early in his political career, Mandela has been looking at the western administrative structure as being good and exemplary. The following extract proves that Mandela is not completely opposed to the politics of the Western Hemisphere as some of his critics want us to believe:

*I have great respect for British political institutions, and for the country's system of justice. I regard the British Parliament as the most democratic institution in the world, and the independence and impartiality of its judiciary never fail to arouse my admiration.*

*The American Congress, that country's doctrine of separation of powers, as well as the independence of its judiciary, arouses in me similar sentiments (Nelson, 1996: 183).*

## CONCLUSION

One of the most important lessons in history is that the great and kind people who lived in the past are sources of inspiration and encouragement for us who live today. Nobody would deny the fact that the heroes and humanitarian individuals who lived in the past have left us a lasting legacy in terms of courage and social commitment. From the viewpoint of this observation, Mandela's legacy will be imprinted on the hearts of all Africans who know the value of living responsibly on the African continent. As it is proven by the theme of our essay, the things we learn from Nelson Mandela, champion of the people, will stay with us centuries in and centuries out. If the lesson drawn from Mandela is effectively practiced by the present generations in Africa,

the coming generations will doubtlessly follow suit – good deeds speak louder than empty words.

Evil people go into oblivion when they pass away but upright people like Nelson Mandela live even after death. Good people are remembered indefinitely and so shall Nelson Mandela whose exemplary life deserves being implemented now, tomorrow, forever and ever! Nelson Mandela, helper of the marginalized and the discarded, liberator of captives and the oppressed, brother of street children and the exploited. Long live, Nelson Mandela, the great son of Africa!

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<sup>38</sup> Gary Younge, "No More Mr Nice Guy" in *The Guardian*, 18 September 2002.