

Mandela - a great, gigantic, incomparable, incredible human brand



By [Thabani Khumalo](#)

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For the first time, in 2010, citizens of the world will be celebrating the life of a living legend. On 18 July 2010, South African and global communities will celebrate the birthday of the world's favourite person, Nelson Mandela. The United Nations (UN) has declared 18 July as Nelson Mandela International Day in recognition of the former South African president's commitment to human rights, reconciliation, peace and progress.

The idea of Mandela Day was first introduced by South African president Jacob Zuma in 2009 and later spearheaded by the Nelson Mandela Foundation and the 46664 Campaign. Madiba, as he is popular called in South Africa, is arguably one of the most visible, recognisable, celebrated and revered human brands in the world.

Brand Mandela

Brand Mandela has truly become a huge industry, with the Mandela name and likeness finding its way on to everything including clothes, coins, comics, cities, streets, statues or any other commodities linked to humanity, humility, heroism, honesty or human existence.

Super-celebrities from Oprah to Obama, Michael Jordan to Maradona, Sepp Blatter to Beyonce, Bono to Beckham, Tiger Woods to Williams Sisters and Giorgio Armani to George Wear sing his praises. Even kings, queens, princes, presidents, prime ministers and premiers put aside their tight schedules to rub their shoulders with the greatest human brand that South Africa has ever produced.

Global citizens name streets, bridges, parks, residential areas and buildings after him. Business, community organisations and celebrities pay tribute through donations to his foundations and people-in-the-street flock to be photographed next to statues built in his honour.

Call it Brand Mandela - a label that his attorney once estimated as second only to Coca-Cola in global recognition.

A living legend and monument

Who is Nelson Mandela? It is extremely hard, if not impossible, to describe Madiba. He is not a normal celebrity, but a superstar of humanity, a titan of human struggle and hope, an undefeated champion of political activism, an authentic miracle maker, a living legend, an icon, a gigantic and humble human being, a tireless soldier, a Messiah, a creative genius, a revolutionary, force of reconciliation, and a living monument.

His famous quote - "During my lifetime, I have dedicated myself to the struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the idea of a democratic and free society in which all people live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and cherish. But, if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die." (Mandela: 1964) - made him an undisputed source of inspiration and hope for all world citizens, rich or poor, capitalists or socialists, black or white, young or old, male or female, and leaders or followers.

Born to lead

Mandela was born on 18 July 1918 at Mvezo, a tiny village in the district of Umtata, but later moved to Qunu. According to him, it was in that village that he spent some of the happiest years of his boyhood and where he can trace his earliest memories with ease.

During his years in prison, his reputation and stature grew steadily. He was widely accepted as the most significant black leader in South Africa and became a potent symbol of resistance as the anti-apartheid movement gathered strength. He consistently refused to compromise his political position during his struggle to obtain freedom and abolish apartheid. After his release from prison in 1990, he became an even greater icon for reconciliation, reconstruction, and human development.

Today, the Mandela brand is being used as a global symbol for forgiveness, human rights, hope, peace, health and harmony. An international opinion poll once found that if the world population had to take part in a presidential election, Mandela would have been the most popular choice.

Mandela, ANC inseparable

Great leaders are sometimes born but often they are made from the circumstance and training that they go through in the processes called life and education. Nelson Mandela's wisdom, history, experiences, achievements and curriculum vitae are incomplete without mentioning his home, the African National Congress (ANC).

Despite studying and completing academic degrees through universities, his exclusive leadership and knowledgeable education was researched, learned, acquired and discovered within the 'ANC's University'. It is for this reason that the brands ANC and Madiba are so intertwined in such that they inseparable.

If we can make every day a Mandela Day, the world would be filled with love, laughter, life, peace and wealth.

Happy birthday, Madiba!

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