



After decades as an outlaw, banned for his beliefs, Nelson Mandela becomes the leader of his beloved South Africa.

Nelson Mandela elected

On May 10, 1994, Nelson Mandela took office as the first democratically elected president of South Africa.

Mandela skillfully moved to make sure that whites took part in the new government. Former white leader F.W. de Klerk became one of Mandela's two vice presidents. In a famous photo, the two men joined hands.



New leader Nelson Mandela triumphantly joins hands with his two vice presidents. At left is F.W. de Klerk, the last president of the Apartheid government, who gracefully became vice president under Mandela. Vice president Thabo Mbeki, right, went on to succeed Mandela as president.

Nobel Peace Prize

In celebration of the transition to true democracy, Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Women and men, blacks and whites, all races and ethnic groups – this new South African parliament represented a dramatic shift from the all-white, all-male governments that instituted Apartheid.



A constitution with rights for all

Mandela presided over the creation of a new Constitution. It guaranteed equality to all – whites and blacks, women and men. Signed into law in 1996, it is considered the world's most progressive constitution.

"[Discrimination is prohibited] against anyone on [the basis of]... race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth."

SOUTH AFRICAN CONSTITUTION, ADOPTED 1996