

# **MANDELA LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE**

**ROLIHLAHLA  
MADIBA MANDELA:  
A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE  
OF A LEADERSHIP GIANT  
BESTRIDING THE 20th &  
THE 21st CENTURIES**



**By  
Prof. Sani Abubakar Lugga, MFR  
The Waziri of Katsina, Nigeria**

**A PAPER PRESENTED AT THE INTERNATIONAL  
DUBAI LEADERSHIP SUMMIT ON:**

**“REFLECTIONS ON NELSON MANDELA: LESSONS  
IN LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE”**

**ORGANISED BY  
ST. CLEMENTS UNIVERSITY, THE  
COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY AND THE  
LONDON GRADUATE SCHOOL AT DUBAI,  
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES,  
FROM 3RD TO 5TH AUGUST, 2015**



## MAP OF AFRICA SHOWING SOUTH AFRICA



## 1960 SHARPEVILLE MASSACRE IN SOUTH AFRICA



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## **Abstract**

*The spirit of leadership of Nelson Mandela was rooted in the African tradition and culture and widened by the acceptance and understanding of other cultural differences that inspired his unparalleled points of view on leadership. From a background of purely African culture, Mandela transformed into a world leadership colossus; but without forgetting his roots. Education, a working career, interaction with diverse people, and a life of imprisonment refined and redefined him from a largely, raw emotion-laden 'go alone' leader, to become an exceptional five-star executive with a quiet mien and persona that could readily enter 'the magic theatre' and pick on excellent and acceptable possibility options. Mandela made history as an exceptional leadership colossus of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. He reconciles families and nations even at death; and he is a learning mine for the pursuit of excellence among nations and organizations.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Envisioning that, “*One day, I’m going to be Prime Minister of South Africa*” (Mandela cited in Meredith, 1995); and hoping to achieve “*a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities*” (Mandela, 1995:368; Meredith, 2010: 265; Stengel, 2010:59) sounded like sham hallucination under an adamant apartheid regime. Much more, were the background of Nelson Mandela and the heinous circumstances at the various times of his visions.

Nelson Rolihlahla Madiba Mandela was a rural Qunu based village boy of Transkei region in South Africa. His regular clothing as a boy was “a blanket... wrapped around one shoulder and pinned to the waist.” His first wear to school was a pair of his father’s trousers cut at the knee by the father and cinched with a piece of string for the “far too large” waist to hold (Mandela, 1995:13). When he voiced out his vision of becoming the Prime Minister to the hearing of Nat Bergman, a colleague at a law firm in 1953, Mandela was then aged 35 (Meredith, 2010). His open expression of hope for a free and democratic society was at the age of 46 in 1964. This was at the cusp of his serving life jail sentence. Mandela would not despair throughout the 10,000 hours (27 years) of his reprimand in prison custody, until South Africa regained her freedom. Nelson



Mandela was released in 1990 and became the first democratically elected President in 1994.

Looking back from the end of the Anglo-Boer War in 1902, when disregard for races other than the White was formalized; it was unforeseeable to contemplate freedom in South Africa. The 1902 Transvaal Constitution and the Peace Treaty at Vereeniging stated that there was no equality between Coloured people and White inhabitants in the State or the Church (cited in Meredith, 2010:37). In fact, Lord Milner, the then British High Commissioner, made it clear that political equality of the White and the Black was impossible, emphasizing that, “The White man must rule because he is elevated by many, many steps above the Black man.”

That “hubristic leadership” style (cited in Covey, 2012) of the White minority saw every other race as inferior: the Indians, the Boers or the Afrikaans and worst of all, the Black African Natives were at best inconsequential slaves. The minority White and later, their sympathizers, ruthlessly ruled by segregation, suppression, restrictions, intimidation, harassment, humiliation, molestation, abductions, banning, burning, arrests, imprisonment and killings of any other race that stood in their way of pride. They enacted obnoxious Laws in succession with the aim of relegating every other race (Black Africans in particular) to permanent inferior status. A few examples of the Laws are:

1. The Natives' Land Act of 1913 that elevated segregation by prohibiting Africans from purchasing or leasing land outside areas designated to Natives;
2. The Suppression of Communism Act of 1950, which gave powers to the government to suppress not only the Communist Party but other opponents it deemed to be troublesome.
3. The Bantu Education Act of 1953, which was aimed at giving the natives "an inferior type of education, designed to relegate Africans to a position of perpetual servitude."

The differential attitudes of the white minority received non-violent resentment without violence at first, marked by protests, boycotts, passive resistance campaigns, strikes, condemnations, the launching of "Defiance Campaign" along with its slogan *Mayibuye Africa!* - "Let Africa Return." Calls for the abolition of discriminatory legislations were made; and at a later stage resort was also made to violence with the founding of MK - the military wing of the African National Congress (ANC). Ultimately, the different political groups united and wrote the "Freedom Charter" that became the working document for all. That unity culminated in the use of negotiation as a veritable tool for establishing a free and democratic South Africa.

## **THE NEED FOR LEADERSHIP IN EFFECTING CHANGE IN APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA**

The Apartheid Regime in South Africa was a big challenge to the whole World. Nelson Mandela, who became the President on May 10, 1994, described the Regime as “an extraordinary human disaster that lasted too long...” (Inaugural Speech cited in Mandela, 1995). The solution to the monstrous dehumanizing racial discrimination could be found in leadership. Freidman (2008:405) knows it better that, “Whenever you face a big challenge... the quality of leadership is often the deciding factor.” Tracy and Chee (2013) could not agree less that, “Whenever you face an adverse situation, and everything starts to fall around you, remember that it can be an opportunity to demonstrate you have ‘the right stuff’ necessary to be a leader.”

Making the dream of a democratic and free society realizable in South Africa in spite of the many years of terrorizing apartheid regime makes Hamel and Prahalad (1994:159) to define leadership as, “the art of making the impossible come true.” This obstacle-overcoming approach to defining leadership is in line with Drucker (1999:118), who wrote, “Leadership rests on being able to do something others cannot do at all or find difficult to do even poorly.”

Furthermore, Tracy and Chee (2013) also agree that leadership is the art of turning the “worst possible

outcome” (WPO) into the best outcome. It calls for “questioning and challenging the status quo so that outdated or unproductive norms can be replaced to meet new challenges” (Daft (1999:45). In other words, leadership is change and it is a dynamic phenomenon.

A major paradigm shift of leadership is the flattening of hierarchies to teamwork. This means that leadership is no longer the exclusive domain of the senior executives. Hence, Pearman (1998) defines leadership as “the process used by anyone, regardless of rank, to create a meaningful collaboration among individuals for a common purpose.” Pearman insists that “Leadership isn’t embodied in the person at the head of the table,” but rather it is the relationship of people working together. He urges the world to step out of the old ways of thinking about leaders and leadership and move to a new concept of leadership.

The new paradigm of leadership is about improving relationship with others. In building relationship, Hawley (1993), had seen it as seeking to motivate people or put “life” back into them. It is all about “searching the fountain of vitality.” It is looking for what he refers to as “the lost sparkle, foraging for vanished vim, vigour, and verve for the spirit that comes from the Source.” In other words, leadership is spirit and that means it has to do with love and the very basis of love is in the selfless giving of oneself, which comes naturally when one cares deeply.

However, the kind of love that is considered to be leadership is what Luongo (2007:9-10), refers to as “love at the professional level.” It is a love for what we passionately do every day - a conditional love that goes with responsibility and the attached consequences. It is a “tough love” that demands for honest feedback on the ability of leaders, parents and friends. It calls for making tough decisions like telling an employee, “I love you, but you just don’t get to work here anymore,” because “they were in circumstances where they just weren’t going to prosper.” This level of truth is necessary for developing relationships to their full potential.

### **Rising To The Highest Rung Of Leadership**

Leadership is therefore, more relational than positional. Maxwell (2008:6) asserts that, “An individual who takes a relational approach to leadership will never be lonely...Positional leaders are often lonely.” In looking beyond positions, leadership must transcend four rungs to the fifth as advocated by Maxwell (1993 and 2011) and Collins (2001) for efficiency and effectiveness:

1. **Position:** it is the right of a leader over his followers. Positional power has aspects of fear to it, and if one relies totally on it, followers are likely to be fearful that rewards may be withheld or even worse. People follow a leader because they have to. A leadership position is an opportunity to become a leader and when people use

their positions to lead others for a long time and fail to develop genuine influence, they become branded as positional leaders and they may be stranded.

2. **Permission:** titles have a limitation as Maxwell explains borrowing from an *Infantryman's Journal* (1954), "No man is a leader until his appointment is ratified in the minds and hearts of his men." Therefore, a leader must go beyond position and seek the people's permission in order to lead them. It has to do more with relationship than with "positionship." Relationship is the bottom floor and the foundation upon which leadership must be built.
3. **Production:** leaders should rise to the level of being productive and giving results to sustain the loyalty and commitment of their people. This shows that one is competent in organizing people and resources toward the effective and efficient pursuit of predetermined objectives.
4. **Peoples' Development:** leaders should show concern for the development of their people. A leader should particularly be concerned about the development of the people working with him. Collins calls this stage the *Effective Leader* stage, which catalyzes commitment towards vigorous pursuits of a clear and compelling vision, stimulating higher performance standards. Concern for the "Peoples' Development" (or reproduction) level, endears the people to the leader.



**5. Pinnacle or Personhood:** Pinnacle or personhood attracts respect; which in turn attracts followership. Leaders who have reached this level build enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of *personal humility* and *professional will* (Collins, 2001). Collins describes such leaders as self-effacing, displaying a fierce resolve to do whatever is needed to be done to make an organization great. Level 5 leaders never let their ego get in the way of their primary ambition for the larger cause of an enduring great institution. These leaders are: quiet, humble, modest, reserved, shy, gracious, mild-mannered, and “always courteous.” Level 5 leaders are driven by and infected with an incurable need to produce results, dogged in big and small decisions and diligent. Quiet leadership is what is in vogue but it is not new. It dates back to some 2500 years ago when Lao-Tsu wrote about it:

“A leader is best  
When people barely know he exists,  
Not so good when people obey and acclaim him,  
Worse when they despise him.  
Fail to honour people,  
They fail to honour you, but of a good leader, who  
talks little,  
When his work is done, his aim fulfilled,  
They will say, “We did this ourselves.”

## **THE SUPPLY OF LEADERSHIP OF THE KIND OF MANDELA**

Few leaders rise to Level 5 Executives and if they do rise, have difficulty staying there. Quality leadership of the highest level is in short supply. White and Prywes, (2007:9) lament this scarcity, “The world is chronically short of people with extraordinary leadership ability.” Such extraordinary leaders take the less travelled road and are willing to risk their lives for the common good.

Nelson Mandela was one exceptional person that took the *Long Walk to Freedom* (the title of his autobiography). He shared in Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru that, “There is no easy walk to freedom anywhere and many of us will have to pass through the valley of the shadow of death again and again before we reach the mountain tops of our desires.” Mandela did not just choose the rough road, he was “prepared to die” for it as he attested to shortly before his life sentence (cited in Mandela, 1995:368; Meredith, 2010: 265; Stengel, 2010:59).

### **The Shaping Of Mandela For Leadership: A Cultural/Traditional Perspective**

Great leadership is built on culture or tradition. Kim Ann Zimmerman ([www.livesciences.com](http://www.livesciences.com)) has defined culture as “the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts.” Furthermore,

Zimmerman draws from the definition of culture by the Centre for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition that it is the “shared patterns of behaviours and interactions, cognitive constructs and understanding that are learned by socialization.”

Culture appears to have become the key in our interconnected world, which is made up of so many ethnically diverse societies, but also riddled by conflicts associated with religion, ethnicity, ethical beliefs and other elements that make up culture. However, culture is not fixed. It is essentially fluid and constantly in motion. This makes it difficult to be defined. In other words, culture is dynamic. In a world that has become a global village, there appears to be a cultural convergence. Thus, the African cultures, the Western cultures and the Eastern cultures have been coming together, rubbing each other and making it more difficult to differentiate one from the other.

Nelson Mandela’s life was no doubt impacted by the African culture in his early days. The 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries’ globally acknowledged leader, Madiba Mandela, presents a typical example of an African, groomed by tradition but without prejudice to other cultures. The making of Mandela as a political leader was a combination of so many cultures. On Robben Island, he would tell his comrades that Afrikaans were Africans too. They were people of Dutch, German, and other European ancestry

who had immigrated to Africa, cutting-off their ties with Europe. The Afrikaner no longer had a homeland elsewhere but in South Africa. He was a transplant now firmly rooted in Africa, just like the hardy and beautiful Jacaranda tree, which came from Europe and had long since become a symbol of South African culture (Stengel, 2010:139). African culture has for long been a mixture of foreign cultures.

### **The Cultural Construction And Transformation Of Nelson Mandela For Leadership**

South Africa, like many other countries of the world, is populated by large groups of immigrants. Thus, while Mandela first received his leadership lessons from his rich African background, it was not enough to carry him along into the diverse and wider society. The Afro-cultural leadership foundation of Nelson Mandela produced a quiet leader in him. The role of tradition and culture in the life of Nelson Mandela can be appreciated along the following:

- 1. Place of Birth:** places of birth have a lot of impact on leaders as Gladwell (2008) asserts, “who we are can certainly not be separated from where we come from.” Places of birth have a lot to do with the character of a person. Character determines the quality of one’s leadership. In his 8<sup>th</sup> Habit, Covey maintains, “I am convinced that 90% of failures in life are character failures not ability failures.”

Mandela never denied his source of origin and it is this source that he grew up to defend. Rather than see something wrong with his place of birth and feel inadequate, it became the source of inspiration. Even after his release from prison, Mandela who believes “that a man should have a home within the sight of the house where he was born,” built a country house for himself in Qunu. The house was completed in 1993 (Mandela, 1995:607).

**2. Names:** names are one of the metaphors of life; and having only one metaphor is a great way to limit one’s life (Robbins, 1998: 233). Less powerful names can also be limiting in the life of a leader. Mandela was born on July 18, 1918 at a very challenging time. The whole world was at war (WWI). His original names were based on the African culture: **Rolihlahla Madiba Tatomkhulu Dalibunga**.

**a. Rolihlahla**, his first name, means “Tree Shaker in Xhosa” (Stengel, 2010:227) or “pulling the branch of a tree” but more colloquially, “troublemaker” (Meredith, 2010:2).

**b. Madiba** was his name taken after an 18<sup>th</sup> century king from his clan. The name came to be associated with magical powers that made things happen.

**c. Tatomkhulu** (“Grandpa”) was his nickname given to him in Chief Jongintaba’s house. It was borne out

of his seriousness that made him look like an old man (Mandela, 1995:18). Of course, Mandela lived up to the age of 95 years - a Grandpa indeed.

**d. Dalibunga**, meaning, “Founder of the Bunga,” a Transkei Kingdom. It was a name given to him at the ceremony of circumcision.

**Nelson**, his popularized English name, was given to him by Miss Mdigane his schoolteacher. Though the meaning of the name is not absolutely clear, Mandela linked it with the great British sea captain, Lord Nelson (Mandela, 1995:14). Not only was Mandela bearing an English name, it almost became a new form of culture to have Africans bear one foreign name, to the extent that Mandela’s father, who remained faithful to his traditional religion, was called Henry.

Mandela never lacked the creative and inventive metaphors as far as names were concerned. His life was not far away from the manner of his names.

**3. Upbringing:** Mandela was raised as a child under strict codes of customs and taboos through each stage of his adolescence. Meredith (2010:3) notes that the number of taboos restricting the course of daily life for men, boys, girls and especially married women, ran into hundreds. Most were associated with sex, with key passages of life and with food. All were held in superstitious awe. Any transgression could incur the wrath of ancestral spirits,



which was to be avoided at all costs. In other words, the customs and taboos instilled a sense of controlled and disciplined life, which in itself is leadership. There is no leadership without self-restraint. Other areas of Mandela's early upbringing were as follows:

- a. Herding of Cattle:** shepherding the flock is very often equated with leading people. Mandela was exposed to caring for domestic animals both in Qunu his home village and at Mqhekezweni, his second home where he was brought up by his guardian, Chief Jongintaba Dalindyebo, the acting regent of Thembuland, who also had a herd of cattle. He testified, "I became a herd-boy, looking after sheep and calves in the fields."
- b. Engagement in farming practices:** Mandela also learnt how to grow crops in his early childhood and this was to prove useful to him later in life.
- c. Discipline:** Mandela had early self-discipline though, he said, it was reinforced by his aunt Phathiwe, "who lived in the Great Place and scrutinized my homework every night."
- d. Exercise:** walking long distances while on journeys as a kid was a thoughtless exercise, and playing games in school became the base for a life of physical exercise that Mandela never gave up.

**4. Royal Connections and Perceptions:** leadership was as natural to the growing Mandela as it was nurturing. The following influenced Mandela's leadership:

- a. His father, Gadla Henry Mphakanyiswa,** was the village headman at Mvezo. A tall, respected figure, he presided over local ceremonies and officiated at traditional rites for such occasions as births, marriages, funerals, harvests and initiation ceremonies. Mphakanyiswa had no formal education, but had a keen sense of history and was valued as a counsellor to the village families and was wealthy enough at one time to afford four wives and thirteen children.
- b. His great – grandfather, Ngubengcuka,** was a Thembu king, renowned for his skill in bringing stability to diverse Thembu clans in the early nineteenth century.
- c. Mandela's mother** was the third of Gadla's wives. She bore four children, the eldest of whom, Mandela, was her only son but the youngest of Gadla's four sons. Mam Nosekeni could neither read nor write like her husband but later became a Christian, taking the name of Fanny, while the husband adhered to the traditional Qaba faith, involving the worship of ancestral spirits.

**d. His Guardian, Jongitaba Dalindyabo,** was the regent of Thembuland and he treated his son, Justice, the heir to throne with attention as he did to Mandela, the king often driving them to school.

**5. Meeting Tribal Leaders from All over Southern Africa:** when Mandela was assisted with accommodation in the mining compound at the WNLA compound, he had the privilege of meeting with tribal leaders from all over Southern Africa. It was then that on one occasion, he met with the Queen Regent of Basutoland, which is now called Lesotho, Mantsebo Moshweshwe (Mandela, 1995:83). The Queen Regent was surprised that Mandela could not understand Sesotho language, and asked a thought provoking question, “What kind of lawyer and leader will you be who cannot speak the language of your people?” (Mandela, 1995:84). Such interactions influenced the thinking, perspective and actions of Nelson Mandela.

**6. Traditional Democratic Leadership Practices:** Mandela had close observation of the style and manner of the King at meetings as he admits, “My later notion of leadership was profoundly influenced by observing the Regent and his court.”

**a. Traditional Democracy:** Mandela describes the traditional democracy he witnessed in his early days as “democracy in its purest form.” It was a situation

whereby in spite of the existence of hierarchies, everyone was to be heard without interruption and a minority was not to be crushed. The meetings lasted many hours, certainly in search of ideal solutions, “The foundation of self government was that all men were free to voice their opinions and equal in their value as citizens.” However, Mandela regrets to mention that women were deemed to be second-class citizens.

**b. Listening ability of the King:** Acceptance of Criticisms: Mandela, learnt from the Regent how to accommodate criticism in silence. “As a leader, I have followed the principles I first saw demonstrated by the Regent at the Great Place. I have always endeavoured to listen to what each and every person in a discussion had to say before venturing my opinion.” The Regent’s axiom was that “a leader, is like a shepherd. He stays behind the flock, letting the most nimble go out ahead, whereupon the others follow, not realizing that all along they are being directed from behind.”

The listening ability of Jongitaba was what Mandela, regarded as the best of the African tradition of leadership (Stengel, 2010:81). Mandela once expressed his strong belief in the classless society, which to his mind he said, “was similar to

traditional African culture where life was shared and communal” (Meredith, 2010:87).

**7. Transition into Manhood:** There were also African traditional practices that prepared adolescence into manhood.

**a. Circumcision:** this was the first major sign of one becoming a man based on the Xhosa tradition. Circumcision took place at about sixteen years of age as was the case of Mandela. It was a formal way of incorporating the males into society. The rite of circumcision was preceded by a great exploit from the prospective candidates.

Circumcision was a trial of bravery and stoicism, “a man must suffer in silence.” Painful as the circumcision really was, a candidate proved he was a man, by crying out with the words, “*Ndiyindoda!*” (I am a man) rather than weeping in pains. The reason was that, “a man should conceal his pains.” Of course, these were the early lessons for emotional maturity and learning to do the opposite in life, such as laughing even at tough situations, which is a mark of leadership. Indeed, Winston Churchill one of Mandela’s idols used to extort his followers to, “Laugh a little, and teach your men to laugh ... if you can’t smile, grin. If you can’t grin, keep out of the way till you can.” To Churchill and

Mandela, “It is a crime to despair” (Hayward, 1998:115).

**b. Ceremony of Receiving Adults:** circumcision was followed by an instructive ceremony of receiving the new adults by destroying their last links to childhood, presentation of speeches, songs and gifts. To some, the gifts were the foundation of one’s wealth.

**c. Hospitality of an African:** it is an African culture to be hospitable to guests. Occasions such communal meetings and adult initiation ceremonies were moments of celebration with a lot to eat and drink. Welcoming of guests was one attribute of the African culture. Mandela exhibited this culture of hospitality up to his adult life. Meredith (2010:48) reports the hospitality of the Mandela’s in his early days in Johannesburg, “There were always many visitors, especially from Transkei... The Mandela’s were always hospitable, making up beds on the floor when too many arrived.”

**d. Preparation for Marriage:** Marriage was the next consideration for the adult man. The good thing is that people were prepared for maturity in good time.

**8. Persona and Mien:** The early persona and mien of everyone were the traditional dress and other customs, which guided the dressing life of someone in the future.



Entrenched in Mandela's life was what Duhigg (2013:100) refers to as "key-stone habits" such as,

- a. Appearance: To Mandela, "Appearance constitutes reality" (Stengel, 2010:92). Mandela was what sociologists refer to as "impression management," reported Stengel (2010:93).
- b. Dressing his bed: Mandela reportedly dressed his bed even when he became the President of South Africa.
- c. Keeping a clean environment: Mandela always ensured that his environment was kept clean.

## **9. Political Integration and Influences**

The African National Congress (ANC) was at first a Black-African oriented Political Party, which eventually embraced people from other races. ANC and other political parties of differing cultural backgrounds eventually merged against the common opponent rather than operated separately. One of the major results of the political cooperation was the writing of the Freedom Charter.

- 10. Cultural Integration:** since culture is dynamic, the interaction with other races and the cooperation among political parties resulted to a synergy that produced a new culture. Massive cultural successes resulted from rapport with the masses (Robbins, 1986:244). The person

of Nelson Mandela was a combination of several cultures and rapport with the respective people:

- a. Early Education:** Mandela's first form of education was certainly what he saw his parents doing. But his later formal education was what he reports as, "The education I received was a British education, in which British ideas, British culture, British institutions, were automatically assumed to be superior. There was no such thing as African culture" (Mandela, 1995:14).
- b. Further Studies and a Working Career:** There is no doubt that further tertiary education did not affect the culture of Nelson Mandela. Even though his cherished legal profession affected his manner of dressing, his persona made it difficult for the African content of his life to be removed. In fact, at critical moments of apartheid harassment, resort was made by Africans to African costumes for more dynamism.
- c. Interaction with Diverse People:** working, studying and interacting with people at political settings in the urban centres exposed Mandela to many people with their various cultural backgrounds. Mandela borrowed from the ways of doing things by other societies to solidify in himself the person that he was.

**d. The “Robben Island University” of non-academic hard knocks:** refined Mandela into a patient person in the following areas:

- i. Exercise:** Mandela was a sportsman in his college days through to the university and in the prison. At his studies at Fort Hare, he was competing in both soccer and cross-country running. Running consistently taught him self-discipline. Mandela, who never gave up exercise, said, “I have always believed that exercise is not only a key to physical health but to peace of mind... Exercise dissipates tension, and tension is the enemy of serenity. I have found that I worked better and thought more clearly when I was in good physical condition, and so exercise became one of the inflexible disciplines of my life” (Mandela, 1995:490). In our present sedentary society, leaders must make exercise a duty.
- ii. Farming:** early farming practices in the village helped Mandela to pick interest in farming to get rid of boredom and provide alternative food for the prisoners and the prison wardens, “I cultivated a garden and that became one of the happiest diversions...I grew onions, eggplant, cabbage, cauliflower, beans, spinach,

carrots, cucumbers, broccoli, beetroot, lettuce, tomatoes, peppers, strawberries, and much more.” This also gave Mandela an opportunity to exercise his body and generosity, “Each morning, I put on a straw hat and rough gloves and worked in the garden for two hours. Every Sunday, I would supply vegetables to the kitchen so that they could cook a special meal for the common-law prisoners. I also gave quite a lot of my harvest to the warders, who used to bring satchels to take away their fresh vegetables.”

**iii. Reading and writing:** Mandela maintained a reading and writing culture even in the prison. His autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom* is a product of about twenty years of writing (1974 – 1994).

**11. Communicative Ability and Respect for the Peoples language:** Mandela picked interest in learning Afrikaans in prison. “Mandela realized that he not only had to learn the language, he had to comprehend the culture” (Stengel, 2010:138). Mandela memorized Afrikaans poetry and read deeply the Afrikaner history. He knew that Afrikaans were not only proud of their frontier history, but of their military prowess. They cherished the names of the Boer Generals who had

fought off troops of the British Empire during the Anglo - Boer War, at a time when Britain was the greatest military power on earth.

**12. Maturity:** In his childhood, Mandela was said to be an impatient person, though with praise worthy attributes. His youthful attitudes were later reshaped with time. Stengel (2010:171) states, “As a young man, Mandela was impatient: He wanted change yesterday. Prison taught him to slow down, and it reinforced his sense that haste often leads to error and misjudgement. Above all he learned how to postpone gratification - his whole life embodies that.” In other words, he moved from a culture of rewarding speed to that of a slow and considered action.

**13. Entering the Magic Theatre (The Third Alternative):** the magic theatre negates a foolish consistency. Ralph Waldo Emerson cautioned many years ago, “A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds.” What he meant is that we should not feel shackled to our ideas, but should dump them if we can think of better ones (Covey, 2013: 79). It is a cultural maturity to think of entering the magic theatre where “a thousand possibilities await us,” (Hesse cited in Covey).

In the magic theatre, a third alternative can be found. The third alternative personality is conscious of the synergy between the “I” and “You” that offers the “us” decision

that may be stronger than each taking actions separately. Mandela gradually grew to enter the magic theatre where there are many possibilities. The magic theatre resulted in the following:

- i. The Acceptance of Other Peoples' Differences:** the magic theatre enables us to see differences not as threats but as creative forces for innovation. Basically, the African concept of togetherness is based on the Zulu proverb, *Umntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, which translates to, "A person is a person through other people" (Stengel, 2010:231).
- ii. The Unification of Political Parties in South Africa:** The development of the Freedom Charter for instance was the result of the collective efforts of all the political parties.
- iii. The Initiation of Negotiations by Mandela:** Mandela's request for negotiations is part of this learning. The win - win situation between De Klerk and Mandela at the time of Mandela's release was a leadership result of negotiations.
- iv. The Conciliatory Measures of Mandela:** the spirit of forgiveness is top of the magic theatre with various better options for actions.
- v. The Healing of Festered Wounds:** Today, the name of Nelson Mandela commands the unity of families and nations. At his funeral, archenemies of



over fifty years, America and Cuba, shook hands of unity signalling the beginning of the end of hostilities. Rohlalihla Madiba Mandela has become the spirit of cooperation, synergy and greater performance. The name Mandela invokes leadership of the highest order. The mere mention of the name of Mandela, Africa's born South African human rights activist, turned prisoner and rose to the position of President, and knew when to leave that exalted position, commands respect - the pinnacle of leadership!

### **LEADERSHIP & CULTURAL VALUES CONSISTENT WITH MANDELA**

Culture and leadership are dynamic phenomena whose values do not quite change rapidly. There are some basic values that are never changed at all and some of which actually made Mandela what he was.

- 1. Long Term Perspective:** Mandela's book, the **Long Walk to Freedom** speaks volumes of his visionary perspective. He never lost his vision and sight.
- 2. Keeping Hope Alive:** During the harsh days in the Seventies, Mandela recalled, "we had to force ourselves not to give-in to despair." He kept on hope for the attainment of a free and just society.
- 3. Humour:** Laughter was his strong weapon of looking at negative things for keeping hope alive.

- 4. Greetings:** Mandela, was the first person to stand up clap and greet people at a political or social event. “He greets people, he is not greeted by them,” wrote Stengel (2010:94).
- 5. Hospitality:** He consistently maintained his hospitality even in prison where he cultivated assorted vegetables and generously gave them out for the improvement of the feeding of prisoners and prison workers.
- 6. Descent Dressing:** Mandela’s liking for descent dressing was the mark of his persona in court and out of court.
- 7. Discipline:** he was a very consistent person, hardworking and regular at bodily exercises.
- 8. Austere and Key Stone Habits:** the grip of self-control rarely left him. His habits remained austere. He did not drink or smoke, and never swore. He was forthright in upbraiding his audience for bad habits: “If you want to continue living in unbridled poverty; without clothes and food, then go and drink in shebeens. But if you want, better things, you must work hard. We cannot do it all for you; you must do it yourselves.” Mandela also took men to task, to undertake domestic chores, “I make my own bed, I can cook a descent meal. I can polish a floor” (Meredith, 2010:498).
- 9. Speaking through the Heart:** Mandela did not just learn to speak other peoples’ languages but learnt to speak through their hearts.

- 10. Empathic Listening:** attentive listening can be a great encouragement to a speaker. Mandela developed this capacity over time.
- 11. Paradigm Shifts:** having a new perspective makes the differences of the world. Dropping one's original perspective became characteristic of Mandela, for example apologizing when wrong and shifting to a third better alternative.
- 12. Reconciliation: the Truth Commission:** having a new perspective is the foundation of reconciliation. At the peak of his conciliatory capacity, he established the Truth Commission for general reconciliation.
- 13. Collectivism:** Making the impossible a reality however requires the cooperation of others. No one person has ever done anything so great. All great achievements are the results of cooperative efforts. Nevertheless, having one formidable person in a team or an organization cannot be ruled out. Oglivy (cited in Maude, 1978:37) held, "I have observed that no creative organization... will produce a great body of work unless it is led by a formidable individual."

Nelson Mandela stood out as the formidable person in the South African cause, challenging the outdated paradigms and recreating a new paradigm that shifted from his originally shallow "go alone" perspective to a cooperative orientation of even learning to speak the

languages of others and working with those that would otherwise have been considered his enemies.

## **LESSONS FOR ADOPTION FROM THE CULTURAL VALUES OF NELSON MANDELA**

There is no doubt that one's nature and nurture have some influences on the leadership capability and capacity of that person. Therefore, leaders or potential leaders have a lot to learn from their cultural affiliations and from other cultures since the world is diverse. From Nelson Mandela, the following may be the useful lessons:

1. Culture is the bedrock for leadership development.
2. Both culture and leadership are dynamic processes.
3. A leader should be proud of his country home and culture without prejudice to other cultures.
4. The African culture is rich in leadership lessons that can be reinforced and expanded by learning and appreciating others.
5. Mandela, was never shy of his roots, that explains why he went back to build a country home in the rural suburb of Qunu, his home base; but he was also quick in appreciating other cultures.
6. Leaders should learn to postpone gratification as the walk to real success is a long and less travelled road.
7. Leadership development takes place in stages, especially; becoming a mature person takes time.

8. Leadership cannot be attained without tuning the spirit in the face of difficulties. Anybody who has attained great leadership qualities must have subjected himself to some privations.
9. Holding on to values that are consistent to one's life and the lives of others.
10. Renunciation of Leadership: One great culture of leadership instituted by Nelson Mandela is for leaders to know when and how to quit. Mandela knew his role and he kept to it, "to set the course and not to steer the ship" (cited in Stengel, 2010:201).

## **CONCLUSION**

Leadership is ancient. Leadership depends on the dynamics of culture (s). Leadership is relational. At its highest level, leadership is characterized by personal humility and professional will to overcome negative circumstances. African tradition and culture offer immense opportunities for grooming leaders. Africa is a fertile ground with enough obstacles to be overcome for the attainment of full leadership status. The apartheid regime in South Africa was one great obstacle waiting for a demonstration of leadership. Nelson Mandela is an example of leadership and cultural dynamics that sparked off what Robert F. Kennedy described as the "ripples of hope," which went across oceans, across continents, across racial divides and across generations.

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