

NOTES FROM: *Long Walk to Freedom*, by Nelson Mandela

SUMMARY: This is an absolutely *phenomenal* memoir by one of the most inspirational civil rights leaders *ever*, Nelson Mandela, who later won the Nobel Peace Prize for his work fighting racial oppression in South Africa under apartheid.

Mandela later went on to become president of his country, but not before spending 27 years imprisoned on Robben Island for conspiring to bring down the racist regime that kept his country - and its people - divided. It kept his *family* divided too, as many times Mandela's young daughter would be brought to visit him in prison and would often try to get him to come back with them, being too young to understand why he could not.

As far as I'm concerned, this is one of those books that absolutely *everyone* should read, no matter who they are or where they come from. It's never been more important, since today, racism is basically a psy-op to keep people busy fighting each other for no good reason instead of using that energy and focus to get rich and change their lives. Mandela's memoir is an urgently needed reminder that we're *not* different people with different languages, but rather *one people* with different languages. *We have no real enemies on this earth.*

Reading this was the same kind of experience as reading the Mister Rogers biography, *The Good Neighbor*, by Maxwell King. I *felt* myself being changed by that book, and that's *exactly* what happened while reading *Long Walk to Freedom* as well. *I was literally never the same.* And I will *keep* recommending it to *everyone, everywhere, forever.* It's *that* good.

"As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn't leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I'd still be in prison."

"I knew as well as I knew anything that the oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed. A man who takes away another man's freedom is a prisoner of hatred, he is locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. I am not truly free if I am taking away someone else's freedom, just as surely as I am not free when my freedom is taken from me. The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity."

"I had no epiphany, no singular revelation, no moment of truth, but a steady accumulation of a thousand slights, a thousand indignities and a thousand unremembered moments produced in me an anger, a rebelliousness, a desire to fight the system that imprisoned my people. There was no particular day on which I said, 'Henceforth I will devote myself to the liberation of my people'; instead, I simply found myself doing so, and could not do otherwise."

"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."

"I must have been a comical sight, but I have never owned a suit I was prouder to wear than my father's cut-off pants."

"She was an extraordinarily clever and gifted person, whose potential was limited because of her family's meager resources. This was an all too typical South African story. It was not lack of ability that limited my people, but lack of opportunity."

"I was beginning to realize that a black man did not have to accept the dozens of petty indignities directed at him each day."

"I started work immediately as a night watchman."

"The government in South Africa had always utilized divide-and-rule tactics when dealing with Africans and depended on the strength of ethnic divisions between the people."

"Part of my salary was spent on an even more vital item - candles - for without them I could not study."

"Many days I walked the six miles into town in the morning and the six back in the evening in order to save bus fare."

"If wealth is a magnet, poverty is a kind of repellent."

"We are not different people with different languages, but one people with different languages."

"The passing of the regent removed from the scene an enlightened and tolerant man who achieved the goal that marks the reign of all great leaders: he kept his people united."

"There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you have altered."

"I now believed I was seeing things as they were. That too, of course, was an illusion."

Mandela's Son: "Where does daddy live?"

"I missed them a great deal in those days, long before I had any inkling that I would spend decades apart from them."

"I was far more certain in those days of what I was against than what I was for."

"Others said that we should approach this issue not from the point of view of principles but of tactics, and that we should employ the method demanded by the conditions. If a particular method or tactic enabled us to defeat the enemy, then it should be used. In this case, the state was far more powerful than we, and any attempt at violence by us would be devastatingly crushed. This made nonviolence a practical necessity rather than an option. This was my view, and I saw nonviolence in the Gandhian model not as an inviolable principle but as a tactic to be used as the situation demanded. The principle was not so important that the strategy should be used even when it was self-defeating. I called for nonviolent protest for as long as it was effective."

“Nonviolent passive resistance is effective as long as your opposition adheres to the same rules as you do.”

“There is no moral goodness in using an ineffective weapon.”

“It is the oppressor who defines the nature of the struggle, and the oppressed is often left no recourse but to use methods that mirror the oppressor.”

“A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but by how it treats its lowest ones.”

“To be truly prepared for something, one must actually expect it. One cannot be prepared for something while secretly believing it will not happen.”

"Be absolute for death; for either death or life shall be the sweeter."

“The campaign to improve conditions in prison was part of the apartheid struggle. It was, in that sense, all the same; we fought injustice wherever we found it, no matter how large, or how small, and we fought injustice to preserve our own humanity.”

"The authorities respected only what they were afraid of."

“Strong convictions are the secret to surviving deprivation; your spirit can be full even when your stomach is empty.”

“There is nothing so encouraging in prison as learning that the people outside are supporting the cause for which you are inside.”

"I had not held my now-grown daughter virtually since she was about her own daughter's age."

"He handed me my tiny granddaughter whom I did not let go of for the entire visit. To hold a newborn baby in my rough hands, hands that for too long had held only picks and shovels, was a profound joy. I don't think a man was ever happier to hold a baby than I was that day."

“Education is the enemy of prejudice.”

“One must draw the distinction between principle and tactics. It's not always clear, but sometimes you have to be seen to be collaborating in order to force change in more meaningful ways.”

"I cherish my own freedom dearly, but I care even more for your freedom. Too many have died since I went to prison. Too many have suffered for the love of freedom. I owe it to their widows, to their orphans, to their mothers, and to their father who have grieved and wept for them. Not only have I suffered during these long, lonely, wasted years. I am not less life-loving than you are. But I cannot sell my birthright, nor am I prepared to sell the birthright of the people to be free. What freedom am I being offered while the organization of the people remains banned?"

What freedom am I being offered when I may be arrested for a past offense? What freedom am I being offered to live my life as a family with my dear wife who remains in banishment in Brandfort? What freedom am I being offered when I must ask for permission to live in an urban area? What freedom am I being offered when my very South African citizenship is not respected? Your freedom and mine cannot be separated. I will return.”

“An oppressive system cannot be reformed, it must be entirely cast aside.”

“I realized that they could take everything from me except my mind and my heart. They could not take those things. Those things I still had control over. And I decided not to give them away.”

"My ten thousand days of imprisonment were over."

"I might be out of jail, but I was not yet free."

"I wanted South Africa to see that I loved even my enemies while I hated the system that turned us against one another."

“No one is born hating another person because of the color 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. Man's goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished.”

"I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter; I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can rest only for a moment, for with freedom come responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not yet ended."