

## Remembering Nelson Mandela

By Burton Hodges  
Opinion Editor

I was 7 years old when Nelson Mandela completed his term as the President of South Africa in 1999. Most textbooks, at least the ones used in North Carolina public schools while I was growing up, taper off “history” around the ‘80s. Maybe in high school books there was a little bit of information regarding the iconic human rights figure, but for all intents and purposes, the life and times of Nelson Mandela were obscured from my education.

What I know about Mandela now is what I have taught myself from biographical chronicles of his life, his work, and the legacy that he left behind.

I do not know enough to say that I know who he was, but I know what he stood for, and I have learned enough about him as of recent to suggest that on Dec. 5th 2013, the world lost its finest living revolutionary.

He was a rebel. He was a freedom fighter. He was a champion.

Nelson Mandela was a humanist and a renaissance man. Or at least he acted like one. Nelson Mandela stole the power from a

hegemony of racial discrimination, helped restructure and promote a new Constitution and served one short term as president after a life-long pursuit to earn that office for his race.

Nelson Mandela didn’t just pursue equality for his black brothers and sisters, but for his gay and lesbian brothers and sisters as well. He was driven by a puritanical belief in natural human rights.

In a piece written for a biography of Mandela, author John Battersby asserts that Mandela held the conviction that “inclusivity, accountability, and freedom

of speech” were the fundamentals of democracy. He

was an apostle of democracy and abided by the decisions of the majority, even when he disagreed with them.

Nelson Mandela had roots in the Methodist Church but was outspoken about his connection and comfort with multiples faith creeds across the world.

He was a

liberal and a socialist, hated capitalism, opposed private landowners and hated big money.

He was often critical of American involvement in foreign affairs—often calling our actions overseas “atrocities.”

CNN reported last week that he was on the U.S. terror watch list until he was 89 years old, because of his African National Congress’s militant fight against apartheid. Indeed, Margaret Thatcher once criticized the African National Congress as a “typical terrorist organization.”

He was criticized for being too “soft” on white people, seeking reconciliation instead of retaliation.

He was a statesman and refused to condemn his friends Fidel Castro and Muammar Gadhafi for their repeated violations of human rights.

He served almost 30 years in prison.

He had several wives, many children and was somewhat of a sex machine. He had impeccable style, a devious sense of humor, and a sharp temper.

Anthony Sampson described him in his official biography as being a “master of imagery and performance.”

At his eulogy in Johannesburg, President Obama compared him to “Washington, Lincoln, Ghandi and King, Jr.” rolled into one man.

But what I don’t quite understand is why Americans seem so upset that Mandela, who is—and I’m sorry Mr. President but this is the truth—far more of a cross between Malcom X, Karl Marx and Thomas Jefferson than any other combination of historical figures, has died.

I find it curious that Nelson Mandela received so much attention from the American public following his death. If he were an American politician today, he would’ve never made it out of jail, much less to the White House.

While some fundamentalist conservatives in America aren’t too upset up over the loss of Mandela, Tea Party Senator Ted Cruz, who helped to orchestrate a government

