Biography of Nelson Mandela

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Under this system, black South Africans could not have a voice in the government, socialize with whites, or travel outside their living area without government approval. 

**Mandela’s Activism and Imprisonment**

Mandela was a founding member of the African National Congress's Youth League and later become second-in-command. Through this group, Mandela was able to take organized political action against apartheid. In the 1950s, he was the leader of the African National Congress. The South African government considered him an enemy.

In 1963, the government put Mandela on trial for treason, condemning him to a lifetime sentence. Throughout his imprisonment, Mandela continued his work to end apartheid by sending secret messages from his cell on Robben Island.

**Leader of a New South Africa**

On February 2, 1990, 27 years after Mandela was imprisoned, South Africa’s president Frederik Willem de Klerk removed the ban on the A.N.C and released Mandela. The two men had held meetings about his release while Mandela was in prison. Three years later, Mandela and de Klerk were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Mandela used the joint award to show forgiveness, and that reconciliation was possible in the deeply politically and racially divided South Africa.

In 1994, Mandela became South Africa's first democratically elected president. He focused his presidency on building peace and unity in his country. In 1999, at the end of his term as president, Mandela chose not to seek re-election. He remained politically active, however, working to promote peace throughout Africa and to draw attention to social injustice and the spread of HIV and AIDS.

He was married three times and had six children and 17 grandchildren.