NELSON MANDELA 1918 – 2013
A TRIBUTE BY THE REGENT BUSINESS SCHOOL, DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA
SOME ASPECTS OF HIS LEGACY THROUGH A PRAGMATIC ECONOMIC APPROACH, NO EASY WALK TO FREEDOM AND TO AN OPEN SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY. THE WORLD OF FINANCE MOURNS AND SO DOES THE WORLD AT LARGE: THE FALLEN ICONS VALUES AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS STILL RESONATE: A TRIBUTE FROM SOUTH AFRICAN BUSINESS AND THE REGENT BUSINESS SCHOOL, DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT
This paper is written in order to celebrate the life and times of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, a great revolutionary, a humanitarian, the first President of democratic South Africa and a true world icon, imprisoned by the apartheid state of South Africa for his beliefs and values. He was the leader of the banned African National Congress (ANC). He brought light into a dark world. Mandela had no easy walk to freedom. The paper in many ways is a personal reflection of the writer and the article uses some newspaper analyses on his legacy and, outlines the issue of economic freedom that was vital to an open society. He set South Africa on a pragmatic path and his speech at Davos was a watershed for the South African economy. The South African business community, the world of business finance and the Regent Business School mourns and salutes the fallen icon. The paper does not pretend to capture or enunciate his legacy in great detail, nor does it pretend to capture the subtle nuances of the life and times of Nelson Mandela, because this will be an almost impossible and herculean task to achieve in a paper of this nature.

Key Words: Democratic, Revolutionary, Icon, Freedom, Economic, Legacy, Icon, Reflection

INTRODUCTION
Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was born in 1918 (18 July) and was laid to rest in 2013 (December) at the age of 95. He was imprisoned for life with many of his comrades for 27 years and was elected as the first democratic President of South Africa in 1994. He has left the world a legacy that will forever inspire the generations to come. He embodied all of humanity’s hopes and dreams. He saw what was possible before others could fully comprehend that one day South Africa would take a leap from being a pariah state and become a beacon of hope. History will remember him as someone who helped South Africa avert a bloodbath that would have laid waste to the beloved country at the foot of the majestic African continent. As Ellis Mnyandu (2013:1) states that “for many people, the most indelible memory of Mandela will be his emergence from the Victor Verster Prison on February 11, 1990, after 27 years of imprisonment.

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The long spell behind bars included 18 years on windswept Robben Island, off the coast of Cape Town. When news of Mandela’s death broke on Thursday, December 5, 2013, many could not help but wonder what it must have felt like for him and his fellow inmates to have as their home a penal colony a stone’s throw from the most picturesque city in the world.” To the unanimated, that oddity is one of many stark reminders of the brutality that black people faced in South Africa. Before the dawning of a democratic dispensation in 1994, being black was tantamount to a crime. Even those who stood in silence and became complicit in the injustices of the day somehow knew that even a whisper of Mandela’s name carried with it a force so great as to galvanize the masses of the oppressed to flight to dismantle the brutal apartheid system. The subtext of any of the conversations about Mandela be it in the townships or elsewhere, among the young and the old, was always a sense of hope, expectation, belief and confidence, that the man behind the name was somebody who knew the course to a future full of promise for all South Africans, black and white. Among many of Mandela’s core qualities that were so abundantly evident in his lifetime were humility and the ability to unify. As Mnyandu (2013) states that “although he said that, nobody should ever think of him as saint, he understood that people looked up to him to provide moral clarity to bring about justice in South Africa. It was that clarity that underpinned his quest for a country at peace with itself. In many respects, that quest now falls to all South Africans, irrespective of race, class, colour or creed to take it forward, imbued with Madiba’s (Mandela’s) magnanimity. Mandela, whose iconic leadership endeared him to people the world over, never had a sense of self – importance about himself. His life fully epitomized what it meant to serve humanity. It calls for all South Africans to look within themselves and ask what contribution must be made to keep Mandela’s dream alive, especially in an era when his beloved ANC has negated his ideals and values. This is seen by the rampant corruption, poor governance, political patronage, the looting mentality, increased poverty, inequality and unemployment under the current leadership of the ANC. The nation has to regroup and reinvigorate itself with a sense of responsibility to unite around the ideals that Mandela stood for. And these ideals evolved around the restoration of human dignity because lest we forget that apartheid brutalized even its architects, albeit psychologically. But for black people, the scars were physical, psychological and economic, and still remain.

Today, and in the future, South Africa and the rest of the world will need more leaders of Mandela’s ilk, the kind of leaders who put their cause first and themselves last. In many ways Mandela gave the world a glimpse of what one can achieve when he or she works tirelessly to better the lives of others. He had a knack and the ability of putting business leaders, chief executives, world leaders and anybody with the means to make a real difference, on the spot. As a leader he believed in harnessing the power of the collective and, to bring about change. As we go into the future without Nelson Mandela, this generation and others to come will do best to internalize that which Mandela stood for and in so doing consolidate and build upon the foundation and his legacy, for he brought light into the dark world that South Africa was.

NO EASY WALK TO FREEDOM AND APPRECIATION OF THE POLITICAL ECONOMY

Nelson Mandela is an iconic legendary political leader who was pivotal in liberating and then uniting South Africa socio-politically. He had a sound and solid appreciation of South Africa as a political economy that was shackled multidimensionally by apartheid. He perceived apartheid as the politics of oppression and suppression as much as he fathomed it as the economics of exclusion and exploitation. In his 1953 address to the ANC (Transvaal – now Gauteng Province)
Congress titled “No Easy Walk to Freedom,” he exhorted the members to be “prepared for them (the oppressors) like men in business who do not waste energy in vain talk and idle action (Khoza, 2013: 18)”.

The reference to men in business is interesting, coming as it does from the radically outspoken Mandela, who at that stage lent his ear to socialists in the movement against apartheid. Of even greater significance is the fact that he was a subscriber to and an exponent of the Freedom Charter as was developed by the founding fathers of the ANC, and whose tone and thrust are essentially socialist in ideology and advocated forms of nationalization. On reflection, it is evident that Mandela never allowed himself to become ensconced in any ideologicalism except realism and pragmatism.

Shortly after his release from prison he was invited to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, where he engaged in serious discourse with world political and business leaders on economic and political challenges of the day.

The thoughts and ideas he distilled from those profound conversations changed the course of South Africa’s economic history; from socialism, as advocated by many during the struggle for liberation, to the pragmatism of a mixed economy that took root. The economy, which had been in sharp decline under apartheid, was turned around and grew by a moderate 2.7 percent a year during Mandela’s presidency. More importantly changes in policy during this period laid the groundwork for higher levels of growth in the next decade. After a rocky start to economic policy formulation, the contentious Growth, Employment and Redistribution (Gear) policies were launched in 1996. They set out a cohesive framework that helped open up the economy, instill fiscal and monetary discipline and encourage private sector investment. The resulting fall in government debt service costs helped fuel the expansion in social spending in subsequent administrations (Unlike the escalating debt exacerbated by overt corruption under the present ANC led government).

Gear was later criticized for not delivering on all its promises, but that was because it had never been fully implemented, particularly in terms of its labour policies. The relationship between government and big business improved under Mandela’s leadership, with many role players prevailed on to go beyond the call of duty and build schools and clinics. Public – private partnerships as a cooperation philosophy gained momentum under his presidency. He advised those that deride ubuntu (African humanism) as too soft and unworkable for business, that humanness does not weaken business, it strengthens it. It cements the relationships on which teamwork and innovation rest. It builds trust among employees, customers and communities. “Teamwork and trust are vital components of world – class enterprises today. They embody the positive values of the “triple bottom line” of business sustainability. He further advised that there were many roads to growth, but in Africa a sense of common purpose is our best bet for development and change (Mandela, 1998).

Africa is imbued with the values of ubuntu and it is natural and commercially sensible to work within the existing cultural and moral system. South African enterprises must be encouraged to participate across the continent and to counter – penetrate African economies, with the goal of sustainable development. Entrepreneurship needs to be understood in the broadest sense as reflecting the same impulse that motivates enlightened leaders throughout Africa, namely to overcome suffering and to fight poverty. In a life fully lived, he redefined the term ‘emergent’ from one of condescension and derision to one of economic, political and cultural vibrancy, commanding unconditional global respect. This is a leadership defined by moral authority and suasion, probity, humility, integrity, passion and compassion. He did not shy away from the difficult or unpopular decisions and measures. His leadership generated trust, goodwill and confidence and was politically and personally as gracious, honourable and magnanimous in
adversity as in success. The features of Mandela’s leadership were on display for the world to see, although there has been little analysis as to why he was so effective. He represented a collective ethic of reconciliation for a nation that was still deeply conflicted. “The polarized races wanted to learn and live together, but needed a leader to symbolize this yearning: Mandela did that and achieved it. There was nothing abstract or mythical about his attuned leadership. It was down to earth” (Khoza, 2013: 18). The personal qualities he brought to the presidency included the following:

- Insightful empathy and was non-judgmental.
- Passionate and compassionate.
- He was inspirational, engendering in others self-worth, pride and hope.
- His commitment to action, but remaining flexible within reason and responsive to essential changes in the environment or in expectations.
- He exemplified that the leader should be held accountable because probity is the ethical imperative to remain up right and honest in service and behave in a manner that is beyond reproach.

**ECONOMIC FREEDOM VITAL TO OPEN SOCIETY**

As the worst excesses of apartheid crept ever more resolutely around the neck of South African business, many of our peers in the business world and within business schools in South Africa, including the Regent Business School, came to realize that it was not only an inequitable and cruel ideology, but an insurmountable obstacle to economic growth and national prosperity. It created an environment of community conflict in which corporate progress and planning was made almost impossible. In 1004 the democratic government inherited a stagnant economy which was inward-looking, highly concentrated and globally uncompetitive, and in which growth had been negative. The dramatic turnaround from the precipice of economic disaster was in no small measure due to Nelson Mandela’s policy of reconciliation among all South Africans, irrespective of race and colour. His acknowledgement that economic freedom was essential in an open society and his readiness to recognize the role of the private sector in the development of a prosperous and secure society that would allow South Africa to emerge as a truly democratic state was a hallmark of his vision and character.

Raymond Ackerman (2013: 18) Chairman of the huge Pick and Pay Group of South Africa in 2010 puts it simply and plainly as follows “that the business community owes Mandela a considerable debt for the foundations laid during his presidency because he left an economic regime which had reinstituted fiscal discipline, reduced budget deficits and earned the plaudits of international bankers, but a political system characterized by institutional stability, democratic habits and the sovereignty of a globally admired constitution.” He further added that the global icon and revolutionary created an environment in which commerce had been able to flourish and extend its international reach for the first time in almost half a century, in which labour law reform and economic transformation were incrementally transferring control of the economy from the hands of the few to those of an expanding and multiracial middle class.

Confronted by the formidable challenge of dismantling the economic legacy of apartheid, President Mandela’s guidance and influence became the informing text of a free, democratic South Africa. His foresight will forever stand as one of history’s most ambitious and idealistic statements of humanitarian purpose. And the crowning glory of Mandela’s life is that almost 20 years after the democratic election of 1994, the political and economic systems which the first democratic government set in place remain essentially intact. Along with the properties of democracy such as the rule of law and free and fair elections, the characteristics of the free
The economy remain as an essential component of the Mandela legacy. This is not to say that all was happy concurrence and unanimity about appropriate policy approaches. Numerous businessmen will be familiar with Mandela’s unpublicized, but irresistible appeals, for financial support in his quest to build schools and clinics, particularly in the poorest and most deprived communities of South Africa. I had the privilege as Director General of education in the North West Province to personally meet him when he came to the provinces rural areas to hand over two schools to rural communities and received an invitation from him to personally meet with him in Johannesburg to discuss education because he remembered me for taking a stance to promote democracy against all odds when racism and conflict was brewing at the Vryburg High School. He told me not to waiver but to promote the values of my late maternal uncle the late Chota Motala espoused and, who was a close family friend of Mandela and a treason trial accused with the global icon. This was the simplicity and forcefulness of his presidency. A Nelson Mandela presidency that was completely in touch with his bureaucrats and the citizenry and brought confidence to the country. These appeals and meetings were invariably met with enthusiasm, because they came from a man who by sheer force of his moral virtue which had captured the loyalty and affection of people at home and abroad and among his people.

The period of South Africa’s transition was perilous and anxious and we forget how close our divided society came to disintegration. Time and again, it was only Mandela’s intervention and political ability, charisma and acumen that restored negotiations and brought about hope anew into the processes that led to the constitutional settlement for a democratic South Africa. Even after his retirement, his influence as a moral lodestar and exemplar continued to exercise enormous impact on the conduct of South African society. Without the steady influence of Mandela’s leadership, all confidence in South Africa’s future would have rapidly evaporated, resulting in the flight of skills, capital, and hope.

MANDELA SET SOUTH AFRICA ON A PRAGMATIC PATH AND DAVOS SPEECH WAS A WATERSHED FOR THE ECONOMY OF SOUTH AFRICA

In February 1992 Nelson Mandela made a pivotal decision on the type of economic policy the African National Congress (ANC) would promote. It was a decision that ensured the stability of South Africa’s financial markets and determined the course of the country’s economic development after the ANC came to power in April, 1994. Speaking at the World Economic Forum’s annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, Mandela made a last minute change to his prepared text, which was already publicly available. Hazelhurst (2013:19) states that Mandela spoke of “a private sector which would play a central and critical role to ensure the creation of wealth and jobs and reports at the time quoted him saying “we would like to create conditions for investors to invest without any fear of their properties being nationalized and, also promised investors could be sure of getting a ‘safe return’ and would be allowed to repatriate their profits.”

For the two years after his release from Pollsmoor prison in February 1990, Mandela had repeatedly advocated nationalization as a policy platform, to the dismay of South Africa’s business community and potential investors abroad. But Mandela was famously pragmatic and despite his emotional commitment to socialism he understood the need to work with the companies that were creating South Africa’s wealth.

The Davos speech was described as a watershed in relations between the ANC and the international investor community. The party had historically favoured a central planning approach, a standpoint reflected in the original text of Mandela’s Davos speech and, former Reserve Bank Governor Tito Mboweni, who was an aide to Mandela at that time, recounted events in a letter published late last year in the Sunday Independent. He explained that Mandela
was scheduled to debate South Africa’s future direction with former president FW De Klerk and Inkatha Freedom Party leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi at the Davos plenary. (Hazelhurst, 2013: 18). Hazelhurst further adds that “we were presented with a speech prepared by some well meaning folks at the ANC office in Johannesburg, which focused on nationalization as the ANC policy and it was decided that the content was inappropriate for a Davos audience. Basically, the drafty was torn apart, and it was decided that a new speech be prepared.” The speech was a signal to global investors that South Africa was open for business. And capitalists were not the only observers who approved of the change. Mandela’s shift from socialism was endorsed by the leaders of communist China and Vietnam, according to Mboweni. Mboweni in Hazelhurst (2013: 18) noted that “Madiba (Mandela) then had some very interesting meetings with the leaders of the communist parties of China and Vietnam. They told him frankly: “we are currently striving to privatize state enterprises and invite private enterprise into our economies. Why are you talking about nationalization? It was those decisive moments that made him think about the need for our movement to seriously rethink the issue. Mboweni was refuting the suggestion that Mandela had bowed to pressure from ‘Western capitalists.” Mandela’s new line was not wholly welcome within the ANC and not reflected in all subsequent policy documents. And schisms still persist within the ruling party which continues to create episodes of great uncertainty among international investors. However, Mandela’s change of economic direction set the tone for sound policy practices. And it allowed former Finance Minister Trevor Manuel to restore order to the chaotic finances inherited from the National Party. Fiscal reforms, starting in 1996, which led to a surplus in revenues in 2007/2008, provided a valuable buffer for the bad times that lay ahead.

**WORLD FINANCE MOURNS FALLEN ICON**
The money spinning wheels halted for a while as news of Mandela’s death spread across the world. The world’s biggest stock exchange, paid respect with a minute of silence and the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) halted trading for five minutes after 11 am. South African banks also announced that they would close head offices, branches and other premises on the day of Mandela’s burial. According to Magwaza (2013: 19) JSE Chief Executive Nicky Newton King said Mandela’s global statesmanship made him one of the most revered leaders the world had known. His attention to all he met combined with his ability to listen and to understand those on the other side, were just a few of the reasons that so many people in the world today have been influenced by him, including some who were his former adversaries.” The chairman of the JSE, Humphrey Borkum, recalled several visits to the exchange by the former president and that there were not many occasions that trading activity would simply halt on the JSE’s old open outcry floor. Mandela was an inspiration to everyone and placed a huge importance on education both for his personal growth, even when on Robben Island, and as a path to a better life for other South Africans” (Geoff Rothschild in Magwaza, 2013:19). Both global and local businesses pledged to honour the icon. “The chief country officer for Citi Bank in South Africa, Donna Oosthuyse said “The world has lost a true hero and stalwart for human rights and dignity. President Mandela’s passing is deeply saddening for the world as a whole and all of us at Citi mourn his loss.

**SOME TRIBUTES**

- “The Regent Business School – An outstanding human being and global leader that placed his life before all else and ushered in a bloodless coup. We pay tribute to him and
may he be a great source of inspiration to others and to South Africa. We will attempt to fulfill and support his passion for education as a business school.

- National Union of Mine Workers – It is time that as South Africans we reflect on the legacy he left behind and the future we have to craft for generations to come.
- Lew Geffen – It is a sad day for South Africa, but I hope that South Africans will unite in Mandela’s memory to re – ignite his dream of a truly democratic country at peace with itself.
- NAFCOC President – As Black business, we have lost a friend, and we owe many of our successes over the years to his exemplary leadership in ensuring that Black people take their rightful place in the commanding heights of the South African Economy. Madiba was the man of the century and our generation has been fortunate to have had the blessing of his leadership. He is a man who taught the world to forgive and we should emulate him.
- Toyota Chief Executive – Mandela will be remembered for many things and Toyota will celebrate his contribution to opening South Africa to the world. Under his watchful eye and subsequent governments, South Africa has made its voice heard and has changed from a local vehicle supplier to a large exporter. We hope that our continued investment will be a fitting tribute to his dreams for South Africa and its people.
- Business Leadership South Africa – As with many South Africans, we share the grief over the loss of one of the country’s greatest leaders who played a crucial role in unifying our country, leading the transition to democracy, and laying the foundations for economic growth.
- Millions of tributes have been paid to the global icon from presidents, prime ministers, religious leaders, business leaders and ordinary people who remember Mandela’s contribution to world affairs. These are too many to enumerate.” (Business Report, 2013: 18 – 19).

CONCLUSION
A great man has departed. A man who influenced the world like many before him and his contribution to all facets of life and his inspiration to oppressed people, business management and its accompanying leadership styles and, liberation and social movements will live on. May his soul rest in peace for a job well done and thus bringing his long walk to freedom to an end but, making humanity and the world a better place to live in. Go in peace Tata Mandela. The World and South Africa will surely be the poorer without you. Hamba Kahle Madiba. Aluta Continua. The emancipation of the world must continue with the inspiration and legacy that you Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela have so importantly and gracefully left us with, to consolidate, nurture and attempt to take to greater heights, in spite of the challenges that confront nations and people throughout the world. The Regent Business School pays tribute to the memory of a great humanitarian and leader of our times.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


