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The first time Nelson Mandela ever voted in his life took place in 1994 when he voted for himself as President of South Africa. Paul Weinberg took this official photo at Mandela's polling place - Ohlange School, Inanda, Durban. The photographer has made this photo available subject to a Creative Commons license. [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

By 1985, television viewers around the world were used to seeing violence between South African blacks and whites. Soweto became a household word as people everywhere bore second-hand witness to the effects of apartheid.

Then ... the completely unexpected happened. P.W. Botha - South Africa's President, known as "P.W" (by those who liked him) and "the great crocodile" (by those who didn't) - agreed it was time to talk with Mandela. Kobie Coetsee, South Africa's minister of justice and prisons, began a dialogue with prisoner 446/64.

During his long years in prison, Mandela had perfected his new strategy of winning-over white people by touching their hearts. He learned the Afrikaners' history and taught himself their language, impressing his jailors that he cared enough to know. He read *The Diary of Anne Frank*, later describing its impact on him.

He began to link his own freedom with that of all South-African blacks. As Zindzi, his daughter, told a Soweto rally (using her father's words):

I cannot and will not give any undertaking at a time when I and you, the people, are not free. Your freedom and mine cannot be separated. (John Carlin, *Playing the Enemy*, page 23.)

Mandela was aided by something else - his innate charm - as he talked first with Coetsee, then with Botha and, finally, with F.W. de Klerk.

Although it took years to negotiate his freedom, Nelson Mandela had started to believe that he would one day walk out of prison. With the world watching on live television, he did that - on the 11th of February, 1990 - leaving Victor Verster prison behind him.

He also believed ... correctly, it turns out ... that he would one day become South Africa's first black President. That event happened on the 27th of April, 1994, when Mandela's party - the ANC - won 62% of the country's vote. It was the first time black Africans had been allowed to vote in a national election.

When Mandela was inaugurated - on the 10th of May, 1994 - South Africa was far from unified. It would take an event - something much bigger and more important than any one individual, including the new leader - to bring the country together.

President Mandela had an idea how that might be accomplished, but his plan had everything to do with one of the most detested symbols of apartheid - rugby, as played by an Afrikaner-dominated team known as the Springboks.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/MANDELA-BECOMES-PRESIDENT-Invictus>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/MANDELA-BECOMES-PRESIDENT-Invictus>

Media Stream



P.W. (Pieter Willem) Botha

Image online, courtesy the Library of South Africa.

Passages quoted above, on [Botha's passing](#), online courtesy BBC.

Passage quoted above from Mandela's Manifesto, presented to President P.W. Botha before their meeting on July 5, 1989.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/P.W.-Pieter-Willem-Botha>



Kobie Coetsee - Meets Mandela

Photo of Kobie Coetsee, online courtesy South Africa History.org

Quoted passages from [Carlin-Koetsee interview](#), online courtesy FRONTLINE and PBS.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Kobie-Coetsee-Meets-Mandela>



F.W. de Klerk

Photo of F.W. de Klerk, online courtesy the Library of South Africa.

[Quoted passage](#), online courtesy South Africa History.org.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/F.W.-de-Klerk>



Mandela Votes for the First Time

Photo online, courtesy ANC (African National Congress).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Mandela-Votes-for-the-First-Time>



Victor Verster - Mandela's Last Prison

Mandela Monument at Drakenstein Prison (formerly known as Victor Verster Prison) in Paarl, online courtesy Fon's Public Gallery at Picasaweb.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Victor-Verster-Mandela-s-Last-Prison>

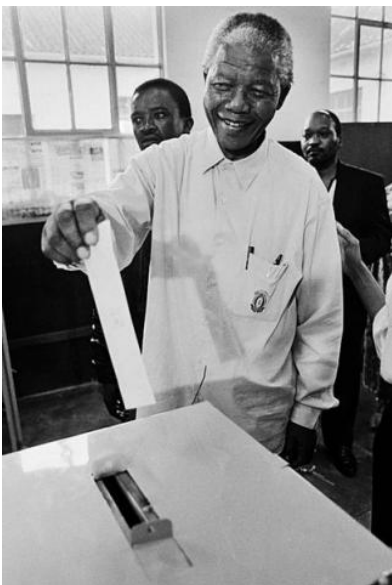


Mandela Inaugural - May 10, 1994

Photo online, courtesy the Library of South Africa.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Mandela-Inaugural-May-10-1994>



MANDELA BECOMES PRESIDENT

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Township Unrest - Anti-Apartheid Violence

Preview of documentary on unrest in South African townships during 1976 and the 1980s. Clip online, courtesy Popular Memory.org.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Township-Unrest-Anti-Apartheid-Violence>



Mandela on The Diary of Anne Frank

Mandela on *The Diary of Anne Frank*, online courtesy the Anne Frank House. See more videos at the Anne Frank Channel at YouTube.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Mandela-on-The-Diary-of-Anne-Frank>



Nelson Mandela - Leaves Prison

February 11, 1990 news clip from the BBC. Video online, courtesy BBC Worldwide Channel at YouTube.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Nelson-Mandela-Leaves-Prison>



P.W. Botha on Mandela

Video clip of Cliff Saunders' interview with former South African President, P. W. Botha. Online, courtesy Afrikaner Broadcasting.

At the end of the clip, reference is made to the Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP) and its motto - "Die Land is Ons Land" (This Land is Our Land). The HNP was formed in October, of 1969, by former members of the National Party (NP) who disagreed with NP policies. The HNP, for example, had a very restrictive view about the rights of South Africa's non-whites.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/P.W.-Botha-on-Mandela>