

# SOUTH AFRICA



Today South Africa is called a 'rainbow nation' because people of African, Asian and European origin all live there together. About 80% of the population is black and 20% is Asian, mixed-race or white. They speak English, Afrikaans (a language similar to Dutch) and many different African languages.

At different times in its history, South Africa has been both a Dutch and a British colony. When it was a part of the British Empire, South Africa was governed by its white population. This system continued after the country became independent from Britain in 1934. White South Africans were richer and had better jobs than the black population, who could not vote in elections. In 1948, the government created a system that legally separated white people and black people. It was called 'apartheid'. Black and white people had to live separately and could not get married or use the same transport, schools, libraries or other public buildings. The apartheid system was a form of racial discrimination, but it continued until 1994.



**Nelson Mandela** was born in South Africa in 1918. He studied Law at university and he became a lawyer in Johannesburg, helping poor black people with their legal problems. In 1944, he joined the African National Congress (ANC), a protest movement that wanted black South Africans to have the same rights as the white people. In 1960, the government banned the ANC.

Nelson Mandela



Mandela criticised the government and he organised protests. In 1962, at the age of 46, he was arrested and in 1964 he was sent to prison on Robben Island for life. Conditions at the prison were very hard. Prisoners had to do hard, physical work, and there were no books or radios.



In the 1960s, other countries began to oppose the apartheid system in South Africa. They organised demonstrations, they refused to buy South African products, and sports teams refused to play there. In the 1980s, the South African government finally began to make changes. The new President, F.W. de Klerk, started to free political prisoners, and he removed the ban on protest movements. In 1990, after 27 years, Mandela was finally released from prison.

In the 1994 elections, black South Africans could vote for the first time. They chose Nelson Mandela as their country's first black president. Mandela didn't want revenge for the years of apartheid and injustice. He asked all South Africans to work together in peace. He was honoured around the world and, in 1993, he shared the Nobel Peace Prize with de Klerk.

Nelson Mandela died in 2013 aged 95. Today, he is an inspiration to people all around the world for his courage and forgiveness.



## Glossary

**mixed-race** *di razza mista*

**banned** *mise al bando*

**removed the ban** *rimosse il bando*

**revenge** *vendetta*

**injustice** *ingiustizia*

**honoured** *onorato*

**forgiveness** *capacità di perdonare*