



GOVERNMENT DIALOGUE

IN CONVERSATION WITH THE PUBLIC EMPLOYEE

June 2014

By: Phumla Williams

When the former President Nelson Mandela was growing up in the rolling hills of the then Transkei in the present-day Eastern Cape, I doubt he imagined that he would become one of the world's greatest leaders.

As he was growing up, he was exposed to the unfair practices of a colonial administration and the hardships endured by black South Africans. This inspired him to challenge the oppressive system, and this heralded the beginning of his dramatic and long political journey.

In the end, Madiba dedicated 67 years of his life to the liberation struggle that was aimed at changing the socio-economic and political well-being of all South Africans. This was a sacrifice like no other.

In November 2009, the United Nations honoured Madiba by officially declaring his birthday, 18 July, as Nelson Mandela International Day. The day seeks to recognise Mandela's values, his dedication to the service of humanity, as well as acknowledge his contribution to the struggle for democracy internationally and the promotion of a culture of peace throughout the world.

In his State of the Nation Address recently President Jacob Zuma announced that the theme for this year is to clean South Africa.

He urged all South Africans to dedicate 67 minutes on 18 July to clean the country in honour of Madiba.

This year marks the fifth anniversary of the event and it will be the first that the day is celebrated since the icon's passing. We can be grateful that he lived to see many of us heeding his call



to make time to serve others, especially the less fortunate.

Nelson Mandela International Day is a call to action for all of us to take 67 minutes of our time – one minute for every year of Mandela's public service – to make a small gesture of solidarity with humanity and a step towards a global movement for good. It is also a call for all of us to work together to liberate people and confront social ills.

It is one of the best ways to honour Madiba's life and legacy.

Our service to humanity should, however, not only last for 67 minutes on 18 July. It should happen every day.

Madiba himself followed three rules: free yourself; free others and serve every day. This is how Madiba lived his entire life and because he was able to put other people's needs before his own, many lives were changed. He became an inspiration to leaders and ordinary people across the globe.

Although Madiba may not have changed people's lives directly, his actions, values and his contribution to making the world a better place, had and still have an impact on people of different races, cultures and beliefs in countries across the world.

As public servants we should strive to emulate Mandela's incredible qualities of selflessness, humility and service.

This year South Africa celebrates 20 Years of Freedom. As we celebrate this milestone and move our country forward, let us remember this stalwart's contribution to a free and democratic South Africa. Twenty years into democracy, South Africa is a better place to live in.

During Mandela Month, let us remember that as public servants we are expected to serve the people of South Africa with respect and dignity.

Let's make every day a Mandela Day.



government
communications

Department:
Government Communication and Information System
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

