

## Mr Nelson Mandela

On 4 September 2000, the degree of Doctor of Laws (honoris causa) was conferred upon Nelson Mandela by the Chancellor, Emeritus Professor Dame Leonie Kramer. In a unique joint ceremony, he received a similar award from the Chancellor of the University of Technology, Sydney, Sir Gerard Brennan.



The Chancellor Emeritus Professor  
Dame Leonie Kramer, Nelson  
Mandela and Sir Gerard Brennan,  
*photo, 'The Gazette', August 2005.*

### Citation

I have the honour to present Nelson Mandela, a leader in the struggle for peace and justice, for the conferring of the degree of Doctor of Laws (honoris causa).

At the end of the 20th century, Nelson Mandela is widely recognized as one of the most significant figures of the Century. He has received the Nobel Peace prize, jointly with the then President of the Republic of South Africa, F W de Klerk; he was himself subsequently elected President. He has received countless awards and decorations and honorary degrees from over 50 universities.

He is rightly credited with steering South Africa, almost miraculously, from apartheid to the recognition of racial equality and he had stood resolutely through bitter imprisonment for the principles of equality and democracy. None of these achievements could have been foreseen by even the most sanguine external observer 50 years previously except, perhaps, for those who knew him personally.

In 1950, Nelson Mandela BA LLB, the son of the principal councillor to the Acting Paramount Chief of Thembuland, was elected to the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress, the ANC. So he was already recognized as a leader in the struggle for South African reform but its chances of peaceful success and world-wide support must have been considered miniscule.

By 1964, Mr Mandela had represented the ANC at the Conference of the Pan-African Freedom Movement for Central, East and Southern Africa in Addis Ababa and had received support from many of the leaders of African nations but he had already been imprisoned for two years and he was then sentenced to life

imprisonment in the maximum security prison on Robben Island so his chances of affecting the subsequent course of the South African struggle must also have appeared miniscule.

So when did it become inevitable that he would be the great and internationally revered leader that he has become? In fact we watched in wonder as a trickle of support became a torrent.

Later that year he was elected Honorary President of the Students' Union of University College, London. In 1975, a newly discovered nuclear particle was named the Mandela particle by researchers at the University of Leeds. In 1983, he was jointly awarded the Simon Bolivar International prize by UNESCO and in 1984, Special AKA's song "Free Nelson Mandela" became a world-wide hit to the extent that everybody in this room could sing the refrain if forced to it in a moment of compulsory karaoke.

In 1987, he became the first person ever to be awarded the Freedom of the City of Sydney. In 1988, a billion people watched the Nelson Mandela 70th Birthday Tribute Concert from Wembley Stadium. and a street was named after him in New Delhi.

All these moments of recognition, sublime and ridiculous, were reflections of our love and support and desire to see change for the better for the people and peoples of South Africa.

Mr Mandela has frequently, since his release from prison in 1990, accepted personal honours on behalf of the people of South Africa. We rejoice in this and acknowledge that the minimization of bloodshed, the avoidance of civil war, the establishment of an admirably democratic constitution in South Africa after so many years of injustice and suffering were national achievements, the result of astonishing resilience by the oppressed; but also a fierce holding on to hope of eventual justice; and faith in the efforts of people of good will by members of all races within and without South Africa itself.

Thirty six years ago, in his statement from the dock at the Rivonia Trial Mr Mandela said: *During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to the struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities.*

Today we honour that ideal, and his persistence in it and his achievement of it. But in doing this we also honour those others who are not named individually here, but whose steadfast grasp of the ideals so simply expressed and so eloquently embodied by Mr Mandela have helped us to keep believing that "all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well."

Chancellor, I have great pleasure in presenting Nelson Mandela to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Laws (honoris causa) and I invite you to confer the degree upon him.