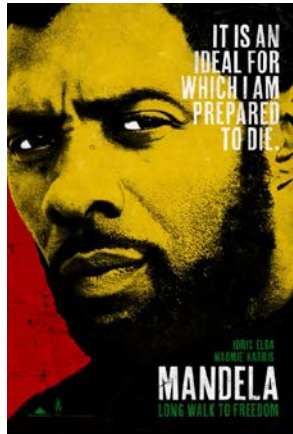


MANDELA: LONG WALK TO FREEDOM By Lorraine Viade, Psy.D.



This biopic of one of the greatest role models of our time, Nelson Mandela, depicts the man as both sinner and saint. His transformation from peaceful protester, to violent revolutionary, to full forgiveness of the leaders of apartheid after 27 years in prison, is a remarkable story. I didn't know what to expect from the movie but I was always moved by the sheer charisma of the man.

Idris Elba does a beautiful job in the role. His performance is deft and simple which is not an easy accomplishment when trying to capture the greatness of Nelson Mandela. When a person is transformed from hate to love and from anger to forgiveness, the results can be truly amazing. One man can make a big difference. Few could do it the way he did. He sacrificed his freedom in order to gain freedom for his people. Is there anyone out there today who would do that?

Mandela was not without flaws, however. His family life was not what you might have imagined. He had the sort of charm that attracted women and he did not resist. He did love his children but his marriage to Winnie ended due to ideological differences and to the consequences of being separated for so long. Winnie, in her own right, was a powerful leader who sacrificed a great deal to see democracy in South Africa. Behind great leaders, there usually are great women and Winnie certainly is one of them.

Nelson Mandela was a great leader because he did not compromise himself. He did not choose to become violent. He realized that fighting for freedom was the only way to be heard. He knew the risks and faced the consequences with the calm dignity of one who is willing to die for what he believes. Mandela remained steadfast. And even though it cost him years of freedom, the end seems to have justified the means.

Beloved by many after his release, Mandela died the same week the movie was released. His autobiography on the big screen is only a fraction of who Mandela was and who he will always be to the people of the world. Of course, movies don't tell the whole story, but in this case, you do get a true sense of what the man was about and how important loyalty was for him. His loyalty to the people of South Africa and his

ability to negotiate change as a man sentenced to life in prison are remarkable in themselves, but his spirit is what made him great. But let us not forget his skill as a politician and his ability to work with others to achieve his goals for the sake of his people.

The spirit of forgiveness and compassion are unbreakable. Once obtained, all can be removed and a person will still survive and even thrive despite all efforts to break their will. This is the ultimate resilience accompanied by spiritual enlightenment. It is something special to behold and is not easily accomplished. It is achieved by letting go of anger and resentment, for those are the poisons that lead to failure. Nelson Mandela teaches us that ultimate forgiveness is possible. Just something to think about the next time you are offended by the actions of others.

I give *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* four portraits of the man.

