

## Extract from Long Walk To Freedom by Nelson Mandela

*Nelson Mandela the great freedom fighter of South Africa's apartheid system fought tooth and nail for equality for all people in the racist South Africa. Blacks were uneducated, could not own land and were forced to carry passes classifying them and barring them from many public facilities. Any political opposition was silenced by "banning orders", designed to confine a person to his house – making them prisoners in their own home. After serving about 38 years in prison he was released as the government collapsed and true multi-cultural democracy in South Africa finally began to blossom. This is his story of a typical incident that he experienced before his arrest. As one of the first black lawyers of South Africa, he bought a car:*

On my way down to Thaba 'Nchu I passed through Kroonstad a conservative Free State town about 120 miles south of Johannesburg. I was driving up a hill and saw two white boys ahead of me on bicycles. My driving was still a bit unsteady, and I came too close to them, one of whom suddenly made a turn without signalling and we collided. He was knocked off his bicycle and was groaning when I got out of the car to help him. He had his arms out, indicating that I should pick him up, but just as I was about to do so, a white truck driver yelled for me not to touch the boy. The truck driver scared the child, who then dropped his arms as though he did not want me to pick him up. The boy was not badly hurt, and the truck driver took him to the police station, which was close by.

The local police arrived a short time later, and the white sergeant took one look at me and said, "Kaffer, jy sal kak vandag!" (Kaffir, you will shit today!) I was shaken by the incident and the violence of his words, but I told him in no uncertain terms that I would not, and certainly would not just because a policeman had told me to. At this, the sergeant took out his notebook to record my particulars. Afrikaans policeman were surprised if a black man could speak English, much less answer back.

After I identified myself, he turned to the car, which he proceeded to ransack. From under the floor mat he pulled out a copy of the left-wing weekly, *The Guardian*, which I had hidden immediately after the accident. He looked at the title, and like a pirate with his booty cried "My word, we've caught a communist!"

*Four hours later he returned .....*

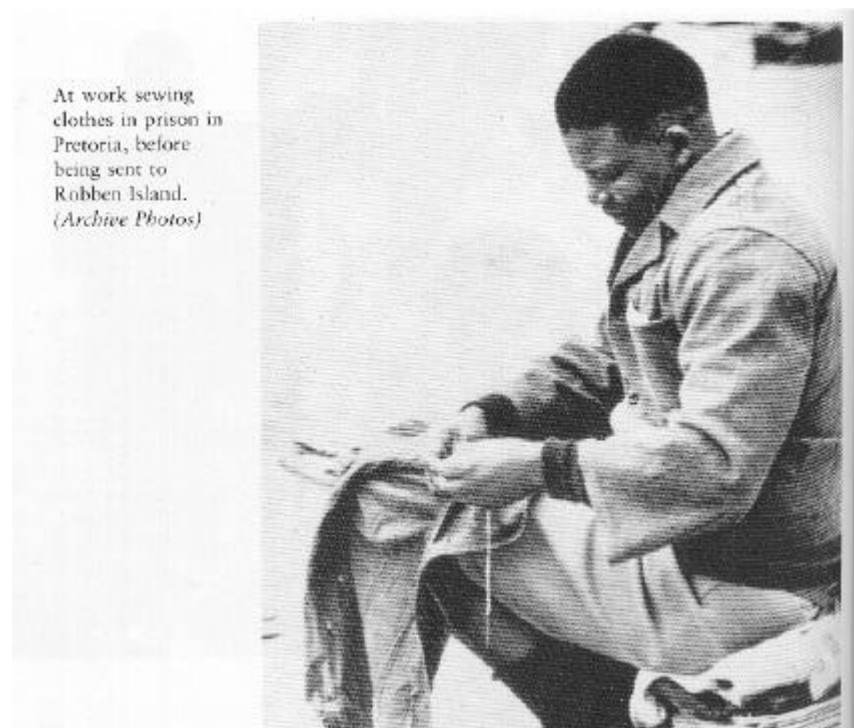
"What is your name?"

"Mandela", I said.

No, the first one," he said I told him.

"Nelson", the sergeant said, as if he were talking to a boy, "I want to help you resume your journey. But if you are going to be difficult with me I will have no alternative but to be difficult with you and lock you up for the night." That brought me down to earth and I consented to everything.

I resumed my journey late that night, and the next morning I was travelling through the district of Excelsior when my car ground to a halt. I had run out of petrol. I walked to a nearby farmhouse and explained in English to an elderly white lady that I would like to buy some petrol. As she was closing the door, she said, “I don’t have any petrol for you.” I tramped two miles to the next farm, and chastened by my unsuccessful first effort, tried a different approach. I asked to see the farmer, and when he appeared I assumed a humble demeanour, “My baas has run out of petrol,” I said. (Baas, the Afrikaans word for boss or master, signifies subservience.) Friendly and helpful, the farmer helped me.



1. List all the ways that Mandela is undermined as a person in this passage.
2. What conclusions do you think Mandela drew from this incident?
3. Try to imagine what it must be like to be the “wrong” colour in a racist society. Write a personal description of how you would feel and how you would react in a racist society. You could write as either a black or white person.