

## Was the role of Nelson Mandela the most important factor in ending Apartheid in South Africa?

Nelson Mandela's role in bringing Apartheid to an end was very important, however, there were many other factors that contributed to the ending of Apartheid.

The African National Congress, also known as the ANC, was a major factor in ending Apartheid. Even when the ANC became illegal in South Africa it moved to continue its work against Apartheid. In 1940 Dr. A. B. Xuma became president of the ANC; he rescued a struggling organisation. In 1944 he reorganised it, put its finances onto a secure footing and attracted some able, young, new members who formed the ANC's Youth League. These new members consisted of Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Oliver Tambo who all greatly helped bring Apartheid to an end. By 1948, thanks to the Youth League, the ANC was ready to give more effective leadership to black resistance than ever before.

Other black organisations such as the PAC, UDF and COSATU also contributed to bringing Apartheid to an end. However, these organisations were not as influential as the ANC of which Mandela was a member.

There were many individuals who helped to end Apartheid in South Africa. Together these individuals were extremely important, although individually Nelson Mandela probably made the most progress. Winnie Mandela, Mandela's wife, fought for her husband's release from prison. She came to symbolise defiance to white rule but in 1989 she was implicated in the death of a Soweto boy and lost some of her influence. Archbishop Desmond Tutu spoke out against injustice all his life. He became an Anglican priest in 1961. In 1984 he won the Nobel Peace Prize for work against Apartheid. F. W. de Klerk was a major force in ending Apartheid in that he released Mandela and cancelled Apartheid laws. In 1993 he shared the Nobel Peace Prize with Mandela even though he was white. Walter Sisulu was the leader of the ANC. He was imprisoned for life in 1964. He was freed in 1989 and became the ANC deputy president in 1991. Oliver Tambo served as president of the ANC from 1960 to 1991. He helped build international opposition to Apartheid. Steve Biko was a leader of the Black Consciousness Movement in the 1970s. As a student he believed white-dominated political groups could never win against Apartheid. He contributed to bringing Apartheid to an end by making young black people believe they were important.

Mass protests also helped bring Apartheid to an end; the examples are the Sharpsville massacre (in 1960) and the Soweto (in 1976). Sharpsville was a very important turning point in the fight against Apartheid. In 1960 the PAC organised a protest against the pass laws at Sharpsville. Some 5000 unarmed protesters gathered. Stone throwing led to shooting. At the end of the day 69 Africans were dead and 178 wounded. Obviously this massacre caused devastation, upset and anger. The ANC called for a national day of mourning. The ANC and PAC were banned by the government, Mandela was imprisoned along with 2000 other anti-apartheid activists and Oliver Tambo fled abroad to set up ANC offices in safety. Soweto was also important because of the worldwide press coverage it attracted.

White governments began to put pressure on apartheid in South Africa. The pressure consisted of sporting pressure and trade boycotts. Nelson Mandela in 1994 said, and I quote, "Sustained international pressure and economic sanctions played a very important role in ensuring that it became impossible to continue with Apartheid." This shows that Mandela felt trade sanctions were a very important factor in ending Apartheid. Sporting Pressure involved South Africa being banned from the Olympics in 1964 and by the late 1960s there was no international cricket or rugby which was important as South Africa was sports mad. Trade boycotts (sanctions) began in 1962 when the UN banned trade but it continued as there were profits to be made and uranium was needed. In the 1970s there became great pressure on big companies such as Take and Lyle and General Motors to pull out. In 1974 South Africa was banned from the UN and in

1984/5 townships were becoming ungovernable, there were major strikes, a financial crisis and Barclays bank pulled out. There were many people in the West not buying South Africa's fruit and wine and in 1986 the common market banned purchase of South Africa's iron and steel. Therefore the reform of Apartheid was becoming inevitable. This was a long term, economic factor.

Soon there was pressure from white liberals in South Africa. The English in South Africa began to think Apartheid should come to an end. However, the hard-line Afrikaners felt Apartheid should not end. Neighbouring states had black governments and so there was fighting against Apartheid inside and outside South Africa. The National Parliament increasingly felt isolated.

Another short term factor that helped bring Apartheid to an end was the collapse of communism in 1989. The fear of communism had gone and therefore there was no longer a valid reason for Western governments, such as America and Britain, to support South Africa's white government.

Nelson Mandela contributed largely to the ANC; he was a main individual in the struggle against Apartheid and devoted his life to fighting for his beliefs. However, I do not believe that Mandela was the most important factor in ending Apartheid. I think that the mass protests were extremely important in ending Apartheid and I feel they were more so than Mandela. Another factor I believe to have been more influential than Nelson Mandela was the trading boycotts because without South Africa's trade market money would become a problem. Mandela was, though, probably more important than pressure from white liberals in South Africa and neighbouring states. On the whole Mandela's work largely contributed to the end of Apartheid yet I do not believe he was the most important factor.