Inspiration (Nelson Mandela) Backstory

Nelson Mandela was born in Transkei, South Africa in 1918. He spent his youth in a traditional tribal community in which he would have been granted a high-office position by right of his ancestry. Instead of choosing a life of comfort and ease, however, he chose a path of struggle and sacrifice in order to secure for his country the basic human rights deserved by all people.

Mandela spent his early adulthood as a member of the African National Congress (ANC), striving for political and social change in a climate of extreme racial oppression resulting from the South African government's apartheid laws.

In June of 1961, Mandela and his colleagues came to the conclusion that it would be ineffective for African leaders to continue preaching passive resistance at a time when the government met their peaceful demands with force. This decision to engage in more aggressive forms of political struggle led to Mandela's arrest.

The trial resulted in a life sentence for Mandela and seven of his colleagues. During his imprisonment, Mandela became a symbol of the anti-apartheid movement by continually refusing to sacrifice his ideals in exchange for freedom.

Mandela was eventually freed as a result of great pressure from the international community. After his release in February of 1990, he aggressively strove to attain the goals he and others had laid out decades earlier—to achieve a just and equal society for people of all colors.

In 1993, he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of all South Africans who had suffered to bring equality to their land. The era of the South African apartheid formally ended April 27, 1994. And two weeks later, after a lifetime dedicated to fighting for a fair government, Rolihlahla Nelson Dalibunga Mandela was inaugurated as president of South Africa.

Since the end of his presidential term in 1998, Mandela has continued to advocate for many social and human rights organizations. By his perseverance to achieve equality for all in the face of overwhelming adversity, Nelson Mandela's life answers the question "What can one person do?"