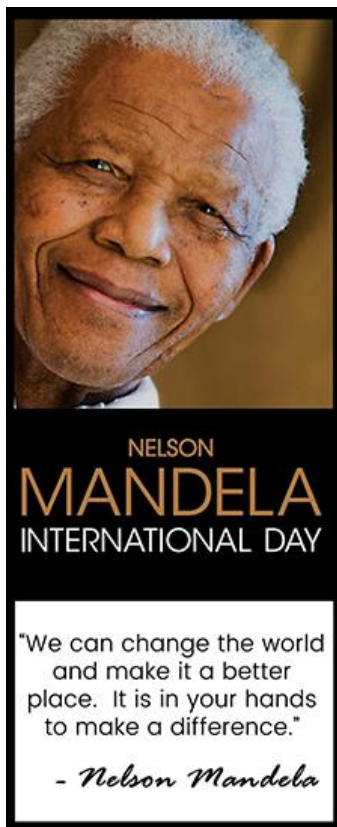




Nelson Mandela International Day 18th July 2020

“Our march to freedom is irreversible. We must not allow fear to stand in our way”.



The United Nations designates 18th July as the “Nelson Mandela International Day” in recognition of Nelson Mandela’s contribution to the struggle for democracy internationally and the promotion of a culture of peace throughout the world.

July 18th is also a memorial day because it was on that day in 1918 that Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was born into the Madiba clan in the village of Mvezo, in the Eastern Cape, South Africa.

Having spent 27 years in prison for political offenses did not deter Nelson Mandela from attaining his vision of a united and democratic South Africa. Instead, he persisted because he knew that he had a mission to accomplish and with his determination succeeded in bringing down *Apartheid* that in the language of Afrikaans means “apartness”.

Apartheid was a system of legislation that upheld segregationist policies against non-white citizens of South Africa. Being true to his promise and being committed to peace, unity and reconciliation, Nelson Mandela is an example of how we can all lend a helping hand in putting an end to conflict, racism and inequality. His actions and generosity were revered on the world scene and in 1993, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Nelson Mandela, also known as “Madiba” was the first black president of South Africa from 1994 to 1999. He was a social rights activist, politician and philanthropist who for 20 years advocated and campaigned against apartheid.

The people of Seychelles respect and acknowledge Nelson Mandela’s values and service to humanity. His memory still lives on in our hearts and our minds. A three-metre bronze statue of the late president, conveniently located in the Peace Park at the heart of Victoria reminds us of Madiba’s words or hope that **“our march to freedom is irreversible [and that] we must not allow fear to stand in our way”**.

With the setting up of its Truth, Reconciliation and National Unity Commission, Seychelles has embarked on its own journey of seeking the truth, reconciling and uniting its people after living in fear for so long. The journey is definitely not going to be easy and it will certainly have many challenges and limitations but we need to be brave and remember what Nelson Mandela had to endure to help his people.

'We were expected to destroy one another and ourselves collectively in the worst racial conflagration. Instead, we as a people chose the path of negotiation, compromise and peaceful settlement. Instead of hatred and revenge we chose reconciliation and nation-building' - Nelson Mandela.

It is not impossible for us to unit and shape peace together. We are but a small island state in the middle of the Indian Ocean, friends of many and enemy to none. Let's collectively put the past to rest and think of the future Seychelles! We need to heal as a nation if we are to embrace a better and brighter future.

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen how the world is connected and how despite our differences we all need to work together. We need to use this moment to reflect on what we can do as an individual, as a family or as a community to continue the work that Nelson Mandela has started.

The *James R. Mancham* Peace and Diplomacy Research Institute at the University of Seychelles and the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) Seychelles share Madiba's dedication for a peaceful and united world. A world where we all live as one family under God. A world filled with love and hope. The Institute and UPF-Seychelles urge everyone to take action and inspire change so that the legacy of Nelson Mandela continues to live on. He is an inspiration to us all and we have to live each day and make each day a Mandela Day.

We join with all the South Africans and the rest of the world in commemorating the Nelson Mandela International Day.

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