

Individuals Who Have Counted



Some people can make a difference. Can you?

The 20th century witnessed many important events, as well as significant social and political achievements. Many of the things humanity values most about itself, derive directly from the hard work and imagination of resistance movements and individuals committed to make the world a better place.

Individuals such as Nelson Mandela, Princess Diana, Martin Luther King, to name only a few, have made a lasting contribution, not only in their own country, but in the whole world.



As the world's most famous prisoner, and leader of the African National Congress, Nelson Mandela's moral integrity shines far beyond South Africa, where he was born. His long walk towards personal and national liberation started following his protests against white colonial rule of the institution where he was a student. Mandela then joined a law firm as an apprentice. Years of daily exposure to the inhumanities of apartheid, gave him courage and incentive to change the world. He was fully aware that instead of an easy life he has been brought up for, his only future certainties would be sacrifice and suffering. When he joined the Youth League of the A.N.C, he became involved in passive resistance against the laws that forced blacks in a position of permanent servility. On return from a visit abroad where Mandela aimed to enlist support for the A.N.C, he was arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment. Mandela fought against white domination, cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. All this in a country where most

liberation movements, including the A.N.C, were banned and severely punished. Following two decades in prison, Mandela was escorted to the State President's office to start negotiating not only his own release, but also the nation's transition from apartheid to democracy. In 1990, President de Klerk lifted the ban on the A.N.C and announced Mandela's imminent release. Nelson Mandela's wisdom, patience and above all the moral integrity he used to unify divided people, is an example to the world, and resulted in the country's first democratic elections and his selection as President.



Princess Diana, seriously interested in social concerns, became a popular public figure in her own right, and was honorary president of many charities. Known as the People Princess, she worked with a wide range of good causes, both in Britain and abroad, while having to cope with worldwide media attention robbing her from a private life. Her care, kindness, human touch, and high influence made a lasting difference to the lives of many. She revolutionized the idea of monarchy, using her fame to help people cope with their misery. She was not afraid to take risks while campaigning against landmines, and her struggle has made a lasting difference. Her death brought millions of tears, but her dedication will forever remain in the hearts of many.



Martin Luther King was another courageous person who made a difference. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, and nearly every major city in the United States has a street or a school named after him. Three decades have now passed since King was gunned down on a motel balcony in Memphis in the US. Had King and the black and white people who marched beside him failed, vast regions of the US would have remained morally indistinguishable from South Africa under apartheid. Before Martin Luther King's struggle, a tired and thoroughly respectable black person could be thrown into jail and fined simply for refusing to give up a seat to a white person. Even highly educated blacks were routinely denied the right to vote. They could not rent or buy a home wherever they chose, and the list of these appalling facts can go on. The movement that King led swept all that away. And though this revolution was the product of two centuries of agitation by thousands upon thousands of courageous men and women, King was its culmination. He was a man of extraordinary moral and physical courage whose

believe in non-violence never swerved. Throughout his struggle for racial equality, he faced hundred of death treats. However, he always let righteousness, justice and truth dominate his actions, rather than fear. He had a dream, that his four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character.

Many others, such as Mother Theresa, who spent her life dedicated to the poorest of India; or Bob Geldoff, who raised millions through his Band-Aid trust to help charitable work in Africa; or the unknown ones , such as the brave man who stood before a column of tanks near Tiananmen Square, should always be remembered as exemplary figures in our history of humanity.

They may just represent a drop of water in our world's ocean of suffering, but, with their human touch and their non-violence means, they have all made a huge and lasting difference.