

## NELSON MANDELA: THE MYTH & ME

**A film by Khalo Matabane**

**Co-production by Born Free Media and gebrueder beetz filmproduktion**

Nelson Mandela's message of freedom, forgiveness and reconciliation still inspires people worldwide. Almost 20 years ago, in 1994, he became the first president of a democratic South Africa - a historical step, the end of Apartheid. Alike many other young South Africans, director Khalo Matabane considered Nelson Mandela his childhood hero. Strong and determined to fight the enemy, that is how Matabane imagined him. At that time, Mandela was still imprisoned. Once he was released and became a respected political actor, Matabane was surprised and maybe a little disappointed by Mandela's attitude. Where was the anger? Instead of revenge, Mandela asks forgiveness – even for the perpetrators of the apartheid regime. In a personal letter to Nelson Mandela, Khalo Matabane confronts his childhood hero with some important questions, which he has been asking himself for many years.

The director's questions and reflections guide us through the different chapters of the film – freedom, forgiveness and reconciliation. Right in the beginning he makes a controversial point: "There is a perception that South Africa is a miracle country, but there were no miracles. People fought for freedom and people paid a huge price, the land is stained with blood." Somalian writer Nuruddin Farah – one of the many international interviewees – even believes that nowadays South Africa is comparable to a balancing act on a tightrope "You could fall either way" he says – good or bad. Democracy or riot. To many observers, the memories of South Africa's bloody unrests of the early 1990s are still fresh. Photojournalist Greg Marinovich found himself in the middle of street fights and documented how people killed each other with rocks, knives and spears in hand-to-hand combat and having eye contact. He shares those memories – both intimate and brutal – with Matabane.

Did Nelson Mandela go too far in his policy of forgiveness and reconciliation? Did he make decisions enhancing today's inequality and poverty? Or couldn't he have made another choice? Those questions in mind and shortly before Mandela passing away, Khlo Matabne travels the globe in search for answers. He meets polarising personalities. One of them is Albie Sachs, former judge and anti-apartheid-activist, who lost an arm and the sight of one eye in a car bomb attack. He was able to forgive the man who tried to kill

him and who was searching for forgiveness, when he met him in person. Revenge is not a solution. German president Joachim Gauck tells the story of how he forgave a former GDR secret police informant who spied on him and who he had always considered his friend. However, other opinions may also be expressed. Charity Kondile's for instance, the mother of an apartheid victim. Her son was barbarically murdered, she refused to forgive the perpetrators in front of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1990. Others have more general doubts: South African literature professor Pumla Gqola believes the narrative around Nelson Mandela to be one-sided and not demanding any true redressing or allowing arguing. "The expectation of forgiveness and reconciliation without justice is in itself an injustice that we're supposed to co-sign on. I'm not co-signing on it" she says.

Then again, how would a violent revolution or war been of help to anyone? Chilean writer Ariel Dorfman considers Mandela's choice against an armed struggle in favour of a peace and democracy one of the biggest achievements in his life and a major political issue of the last century.

To Khalo Matabane, today's South Africa can be described as a time bomb, ready to explode any minute. He says: "Tata Mandela, we are one of the most unequal societies in the world people are impatient they can't wait any longer. Our people feel that change is slow and the system favours the powerful and the wealth. There are protests everywhere, people demand change everywhere, people demand freedom, real freedom everywhere. What is the future, I don't know." And what is the truth? Does it lie in the antagonisms of Mandela's myth? While trying to uncover the truth behind his childhood hero, Matabane confronts himself with different angles. This film will break with established views and ignite discussions.

In co-production with BBC and ZDF in collaboration with arte.

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# GEBRÜEDER BEETZ FILMPRODUKTION

## List of Contributors

<b>Greg Marinovich</b>	South African Photojournalist
<b>Zubeida Jaffer</b>	South African Journalist and Anti-Apartheid Activist
<b>Ronnie Kasrils</b>	Minister of Intelligence Services (2004-2008)
<b>Dalai Lama</b>	Retired Tibetan Political Leader in Exile
<b>Binyavanga Wainaina</b>	Kenian Journalist & Writer
<b>Elia Suleiman</b>	Palestine Film Maker
<b>Prof Pumla Gqola</b>	Feminist and Professor for African Literature
<b>Peter Hain</b>	Former Cabinet Minister in Tony Blair's Government
<b>Colin Powell</b>	Former United States Secretary of State, 2001-2005
<b>Selina Williams</b>	Sister of an Apartheid-Victim
<b>Albie Sachs</b>	Former Constitutional Court Judge, 1994 - 2009
<b>John Carlin</b>	British Writer & Journalist
<b>Prof Adam Habib</b>	Vice-Chancellor, Witswatersrand University
<b>Patrick Chamoiseau</b>	French Writer
<b>Nkwame Cedile</b>	South African Activist
<b>Joachim Gauck</b>	President of Germany
<b>Prof Ariel Dorfman</b>	Chilean Writer and Activist for Human Rights
<b>Wole Soyinka</b>	Nigerian Writer
<b>Nuruddin Farah</b>	Somalian Writer
<b>Tariq Ali</b>	British-Pakistani Journalist & Writer
<b>Dr Henry A. Kissinger</b>	Former Secretary Of State & Security advisor, 1973 – 1977
<b>Charity Kondile</b>	Mother of an Apartheid-Victim