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Mandela spent many years in prison for his efforts in opposing South Africa's apartheid. In this image, taken in 1977, we see him at work in a prison garden. The image is part of the Google Mandela Archive.

Despising the reference-book requirement, Mandela destroyed his passbook in 1952. The law required that anyone without a valid reference book could be arrested. Mandela did not care about the penalty. He cared that he, and other blacks, faced overwhelming discrimination.

Because he believed that non-violent resistance had accomplished nothing positive for South African blacks, Mandela - a member of the African National Congress (ANC) - founded the party's military wing. Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) - also known as MK - took shape in late 1961.

Mandela believed that armed resistance - including violence - was the only way to effectively combat the ever-worsening conditions caused by apartheid. He made his opinions clear in his only recorded interview of the time and, while working underground to thwart the government's puposes, was known as the "Black Pimpernel."

To some, such actions amounted to terrorism. To others, such armed resistance - including the violent death of civilians at the hands of Mandela's movement - amounted to self-defense.

In 1962, a South African court found Mandela guilty of inciting workers to strike and traveling outside the country without a passport. (He had been in London, among several other places.) He was sentenced to five years imprisonment.

A later conviction for treason at the Rivonia Trial - which could have given him the death penalty - resulted in a life sentence to be served at Robben Island prison, off the coast of Cape Town. Charges against him (and others) stemmed from Operation Mayibuye (an MK plan to topple the apartheid government). Mandela, given-up by an informer, had been caught in a roadblock.

The prosecution's case included damaging evidence which police had uncovered during the government's July 11, 1963 raid at Liliesleaf Farm (headquarters for the ANCs military wing located in the Rivonia suburb of Johannesburg).

During his defense, Mandela told the court he was "prepared to die" in order to make South Africa a democracy.

In fact, Mandela had been expecting death. As he writes in his autobiography - *Long Walk to Freedom*:

*I was prepared for the death penalty. To be truly prepared for something, one must actually expect it. One cannot be prepared for something while secretly believing it will not happen. We were all prepared, not because we were brave but because we were realistic. I thought of the line from Shakespeare: "Be absolute for death; for either death or life shall be the sweeter."* (Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, page 374.)

Mandela would remain in prison for twenty-seven years. During that time, he developed a different strategy to

change the minds of apartheid's proponents.

In order to "play the enemy," thereby ending the unjust parts of South Africa's legal system, he realized something profound:

*Don't address their brains. Address their hearts.*

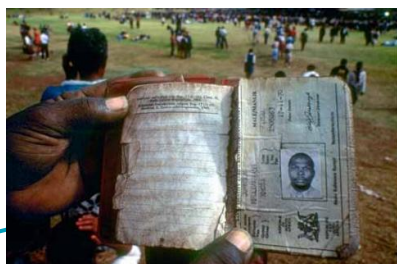
See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/MANDELA-at-ROBBEN-ISLAND-Invictus>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/MANDELA-at-ROBBEN-ISLAND-Invictus>

## Media Stream

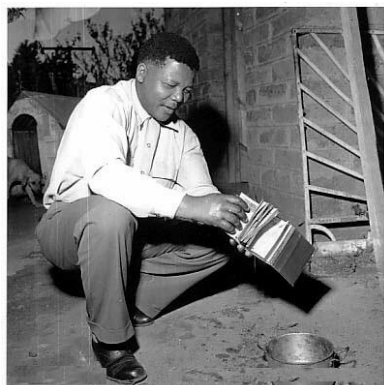


### Apartheid-Era Passbook

Image of passbook - UN Photo # 155573 - is online, courtesy [United Nations Photo Archive Collection](#).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Apartheid-Era-Passbook>

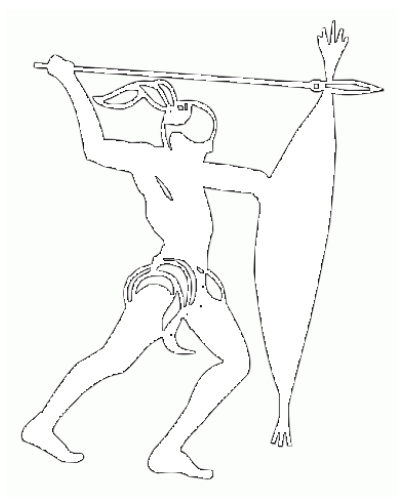


### Mandela - Destroying Pass Book, 1952

Image online, courtesy [Bailey's African History Archive](#).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Mandela-Destroying-Pass-Book-1952>



### Spear of the Nation Logo

Logo of [Umkhonto we Sizwe](#) ("Spear of the Nation"), online courtesy ANC (African National Congress).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Spear-of-the-Nation-Logo>



### Umkhonto we Sizwe - Soldier

Image of armed resistor, a member of Umkhonto we Sizwe, is online courtesy ANC (African National Congress).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Umkhonto-we-Sizwe-Soldier>



### Liliesleaf Raid - Police Investigate

Police photo from the 11 July 1963 Liliesleaf Farm raid, online courtesy [Liliesleaf web site](#).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Liliesleaf-Raid-Police-Investigate>



### Liliesleaf Raid - Weapons

Police photo from the 11 July 1963 Liliesleaf Farm raid, online courtesy [Liliesleaf web site](#).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Liliesleaf-Raid-Weapons>



### Liliesleaf Farm

Police photo from the 11 July 1963 Liliesleaf Farm raid, online courtesy [Liliesleaf web site](#).

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Liliesleaf-Farm>

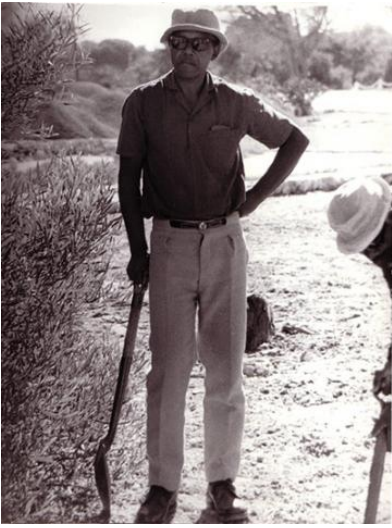


### Liliesleaf Farm - Aerial View

Police photo from the 11 July 1963 Liliesleaf Farm raid, online courtesy [Liliesleaf web site](#).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Liliesleaf-Farm-Aerial-View>



### MANDELA at ROBBEN ISLAND

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### Mandela Recording - I am Prepared to Die

Clip of Nelson Mandela's opening statement at the Rivonia treason trial. Online, courtesy [David Tereshchuk](#) via his TMBdt Channel at YouTube.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Mandela-Recording-I-am-Prepared-to-Die>



### Robben Island Prison

Video by [Jim Hilgendor](#), online courtesy JimHilgendorf Channel at YouTube.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Robben-Island-Prison>