

Transformation inspired by Nelson Mandela

Here are some ideas for using the *Nelson Mandela: The Official Exhibition* experience and the example of Nelson Mandela to inspire change in students or your organisation.

The human library

Nelson Mandela said:

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”.

During his incarceration on Robben Island, he read as often as he was permitted to, to further educate himself, and encouraged his fellow prisoners to do the same. He once described the prison as a ‘University behind bars’, with each prisoner an expert on a different subject.

Inspired by this, students could become a human Mandela library. They use the exhibition and classroom research to become ‘experts’ in a different aspect of his life. They then each take a ‘human book’ out of the ‘library’, working in pairs to exchange information about each other’s specialist subject area. They write a book review, summarising what their partner has told them.

This could be extended by trying a human library where volunteer ‘human books’ talk about their own experiences, or campaigns, or struggles for rights or freedoms. This could be established as a regular activity in the school, perhaps inviting parents or community representatives to share their experiences.

Inter-generational exchange: oral histories

Some parts of Nelson Mandela’s life and the histories associated with it are still within living memory. Students could talk to – or interview – teachers and other school staff, family, friends and other members of the community about their memories of Nelson Mandela and the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

This could be extended to invite testimony from people with other related experiences in different times or places, for example, of racial injustice, political imprisonment, exile, censorship or campaigning. What can the school learn from their stories and their example?

Nelson Mandela where you live

Hundreds of buildings have been named after Nelson Mandela across the UK. The University of Sussex has a building called Mandela House. The community centre in Chapeltown, Leeds, is called the Mandela Centre. More streets are named after him in the UK than anywhere

else in the world outside of South Africa. Students can research their local area and the surrounding boroughs. How many references can they find to Nelson Mandela?

Is there a place in or linked to the school that could be renamed to honour Nelson Mandela, or perhaps another person connected to the Freedom Struggle or a similar situation? For example, you might rename a theatre or library. How might this place be changed to reflect their life’s example?

School aspirations

You could integrate a response to Nelson Mandela and the apartheid story into an award scheme that would benefit the school or individual students. For example, you could apply for a *Rights Respecting, Global Citizenship* or *Artsmark* award, or use projects for *Arts Awards* for students.

Inspired by Nelson Mandela, you could focus your School Council (or young advisory group etc.) in revisiting and reinforcing the core values of the school, or adjusting any rules to improve motivation and cohesion.

Can Nelson Mandela’s story be part of any projects with students – for example, seasonal showcase events, assemblies, final major projects, or after school clubs?