

## Editorial

# The Mandela We Will Remember

*"I have fought against white domination and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."* Nelson Mandela

On Thursday, 5 December 2013, the world lost one of its greatest leaders with the passing of Nelson Mandela. Few people have ever had as unanimous a celebration, in all continents of the world, upon their passing as the one that Madiba is currently having. Beyond the mythologisation that is also so obviously part of what is going on, we are indeed talking about a man who had the courage to pronounce the words cited above in a court where he was being tried for treason by one of the most racist and brutal regimes that have ever existed; a man whose integrity, humility and commitment to the cause of social justice knew no bounds; a man who voluntarily stepped down from power at a time when his popularity was extremely high, and after only five years in office. All these qualities are in stark contrast to what characterizes most leaders of today. His contribution to the struggle to end apartheid and build a peaceful, united and democratic South Africa is huge. He has also inspired millions of people around the world.

Mandela's legacy is far from being exclusively positive. South African society is still riddled with contradictions of a racial and class nature. Some of the inequalities, such as the high concentration of land, wealth and power in a few hands that were among the defining features of apartheid society, are still very much with us. South African capital deploys itself in the rest of the continent with even greater ease today than before. However, despite these problems, there is no comparison between apartheid society and today's democratic South Africa.

Mandela was not alone in the struggle for the liberation of Africa from colonialism and apartheid. Many of his contemporaries, such as Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), Mwalimu Julius Nyerere (Tanzania), Leopold Sedar Senghor (Senegal), Gamal Abdel Nasser (Egypt), Mohamed V (Morocco), Haile Selassie (Ethiopia), Patrice Lumumba (Congo), Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya), Sekou Toure (Guinea), Samora Machel (Mozambique), Augustinho Neto (Angola), Sam Nujoma (Namibia), Ahmed Ben Bella (Algeria) and, later, Amilcar Cabral (Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde), and Thomas Sankara (Burkina Faso) were also highly committed pan Africanists, and in many respects, visionary leaders. The children of Soweto, the women and men of the African National Congress (ANC) and other South African liberation movements such as the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), the Black Peoples' Convention (BPC), and the Azania People's Organisation (AZAPO); the workers' unions, and the many other people who played leadership roles in the liberation movement, such as Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Oliver Tambo, Albert Luthuli, Alfred Nzo, Joe Slovo, Ruth First, Robert Sobukwe, Albertina Sisulu, Dulcie September, Strini Moodley, Neville Alexander, Tssetsi Masinini, Chris Hani, Saths Cooper, Desmond

Tutu, Allan Bosak, and Winnie Mandela, also deserve credit for the extremely important roles that they also played in the liberation struggle. So do the other leaders of the liberation movement; the millions of ordinary peasants, workers, students and professionals; the leaders and populations of the 'Frontline States'; and the global anti-apartheid and solidarity movement. Mandela himself has said and repeated many times that theirs was a collective struggle, and that if there is one thing he would like to be remembered for, it would be that of having been a man who has performed his duty to his people.

However, Mandela not only symbolized the struggle for justice, he also embodied and led the struggle against apartheid, even while he was languishing in jail on Robben Island. That is the Mandela we are also celebrating.

Some of the limitations of his performance as the first President of post-apartheid South Africa had to do with the circumstances under which the transition from apartheid to democracy was negotiated. Although the South African transition is paradigmatic in many respects, and a clear departure from what has been called the 'Nuremberg paradigm' (Mamdani), for it prioritized 'reconciliation' and the creation of a basis for all South Africans to live together in a post-apartheid 'rainbow nation', to accountability (the creation of a 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu was an important part of that process), following what had already become a tradition in African decolonization processes (see the contributions of Zeleza, Mkandawire and Cooper to this issue of *CODESRIA Bulletin*), the 'global community', including the defenders of big business, actually left little room for any radical shifts in the economic system. The ANC's Freedom Charter, that was already much more reconciliatory than the 'manifestoes' around which the movements steeped in the philosophy of the BCM had rallied, was 'cleaned up' (i.e. purged of all references to what could remotely resemble a call for the building of a mixed economy) in the course of the long transition to democratic rule.

In many respects, one can in fact draw a parallel between the kinds of constraints that President Barrak Obama faced in his attempts to reform the health care system of the United States, and the parameters that were set for those who were serious about transforming South Africa. The uproar provoked by the forced mergers of some of the historically disadvantaged (i.e. black and coloured) universities with some historically white universities was a good illustration of the difficulties. The slow pace of the redistribution of land, that is still highly concentrated in a few hands, is another illustration of the difficulties; as were the many struggles that President Thabo

Mbeki has had to wage at various levels. The abandonment of the Reconstruction and Development Programme through which housing and important social services were provided to millions of working and lower middle class people, signaled the definitive abandonment of attempts to build social democracy in South Africa.

Still, the world is very fortunate to have people like Madiba (Nelson Mandela) to show to our children and grandchildren as role models, and evidence of the fact that, yes, there have been, there are, and there can still be people playing visionary leadership roles characterized by courage, moral and professional integrity, humility and unflinching commitment to universal democratic and human values and to their own peoples. Of course, as he has clearly demonstrated in his book *Conversations With Myself* (Macmillan 2010), Mandela was also just a human being, with his doubts, worries, desires and limitations. There is no shortage of examples of leaders and ordinary people displaying such traits.

Furthermore, if we, at CODESRIA, are celebrating Mandela, it is also because his story resonates very well with those of many African scholars (including great South African Scholars such as Ruth First, Archie Mafeje, and Bernard Magubane) who, in their own modest ways, have displayed incredibly high levels of commitment to Africa through their work, and made great sacrifices in their attempts to do research, teach, advise and build independent institutions in and for Africa. The Mandela story also resonates very well with the CODESRIA story.

CODESRIA was established in 1973 by African scholars with a view to creating an autonomous space and a forum for social science research and knowledge production in Africa. Hundreds of scholars contributed (some even made huge personal sacrifices) to the building of a CODESRIA whose only interest is to promote scholarship and produce knowledge in Africa as part of the advancement of science, but also as a contribution to development of our societies in ways that enhance the freedom and wellbeing of our people.

CODESRIA has all along been aware of the need to transform the global epistemological order. African scholars have, for a long time, been working with what Valentin Mudimbe has called a 'colonial library', because the social sciences, as we know them today, are to a large extent the product of the European Enlightenment that came to us through the encounter with the West and we, in Africa and the global South in general, have internalised many of the Eurocentric theories and paradigms in our work.

The context in which CODESRIA was established was one of extreme political fragmentation, because of the colonial partition of the continent into a multitude of small territories. Promoting

social science research in such a context, therefore, required overcoming many barriers that were not only of a disciplinary nature, but also, linguistic barriers (because, in addition to the different African languages, each one of the colonial powers left its own language as the official language of its former colonies), and political, gender, and generational barriers.

CODESRIA has done pioneering work in the field of child and youth, gender, sexuality, and human and citizenship rights. It has published many books that have broken new ground. In addition, CODESRIA publishes 12 journals, the oldest of which is *Africa Development*, first published in 1976 and the youngest is *Method(e)s* (Journal of Social Science Methodology) which will release its first edition in 2014. All CODESRIA journals are published in English and French, some with a translation into Arabic and Portuguese.

The editors of these journals are drawn from the different regions of Africa while others are part of the Africa Diaspora. The journals are representative of the wide spectrum of the social sciences. *Africa Development* takes care of those shades of social sciences that do not fit in the narrowly defined confines of specific disciplines. CODESRIA is convinced that the best way forward, for the social sciences and humanities, is to move along the multidisciplinary/interdisciplinary path because many disciplines cannot make complete sense of social realities in isolation.

CODESRIA is celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, in a context characterized, on the one hand, by a number of contrasting phenomena and contradictory trends indicating both the persistence of huge challenges and the emergence of new ones, and many positive developments and the availability of many opportunities on the other hand.

That is why the Executive and Scientific Committees, and the Secretariat, and the entire CODESRIA community also draw inspiration from Madiba, even as we engage critically with his legacy.

Sincere condolences to his wife Graca Machel, his ex-wife Winnie Mandela and the entire Mandela extended family; to our South African and other African compatriots; and to all the peoples of the world.

*Hamba Kahle Mandela* (Go Well Mandela)

Ebrima Sall  
**Executive Secretary**

Alex Bangirana  
**Head, Publications**