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Leaders Who Changed Their Worlds

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Nelson Mandela

Nelson Mandela is one of the supreme leaders in the world. His revolutionary struggle in South Africa makes him one of the greatest leaders of mankind. Most of us believes that leadership means strong speech and aggressive initiatives etc. but Mr. Mandela portrayed to the world a different leadership style which was peace, love for humanity, smiling face even with enemies, optimistic behavior and a great level of patience. He prioritized his work according to the present condition and according to the need of the citizens. In his lifetime, he worked for the fundamental rights of human mostly for black and color people because they were mistreated. I would say in his phenomenal lifestyle, one of the best positive outcomes he achieved was removing the apartheid from South Africa and formed a multiracial democratic government. In his lifetime he demonstrated two leadership models and three leadership truths to achieve his goal. Nelson Mandela’s Authentic Leadership along with his transformational leadership skill, also his ability to make difference in his community, bringing others under one roof and being able to be trustworthy were all important feature that helped him to stand against the apartheid system.

The first model that he demonstrated is his leadership was authentic leadership. It was credible to his followers. So, According to Leadership Northouse by Peter G. Northouse “Authentic leadership is leaders exhibit genuine leadership, lead from conviction, and are originals, not copies. Authentic leadership develops in people over a lifetime and can be triggered by major life events, such as a severe illness or a new career.”. (196) “Specifically, authentic leaders demonstrate five basic characteristics which are They understand their purpose, they have strong values about the right thing to do, they establish trusting relationships with others, they demonstrate self-discipline and act on their values, and (5) they are passionate about their mission (act from their heart)” (Figure 9.1; George, 2003). So, it clearly shows that Mandela presented his purpose to his followers to be a leader. He stood against all the oppression against color people. He was trustworthy towards his purpose, towards his people. One specific example of his action on this from his Autobiography: Long Walk To Freedom is When he was in prison and offered early release in exchange for changing his viewpoint, he chose to remain in prison rather than compromise his position (Mandela). Nelson Mandela knew who he was at his core. He kept on fighting selflessly for his followers. He knew his values, and his leadership reflected those values. Anyone in this world, if he wants to be something where people can look up to him, first thing is he needs to be authentic, credible. Otherwise it’s not going to work. So, Mandela was at its best on this term.

The second model he demonstrated was transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is defined as a leadership approach that causes change in individuals and social systems. It creates valuable and positive change in the followers with the end goal of developing followers into leaders. One of the examples from Mandela’s action written by Oliver Tambo is “Our buff office files carried thousands of these stories and if, when we started our law partnership, we had not been rebels against South African apartheid, our experiences in our offices would have remedied the deficiency. We had risen to professional status in our community, but every case in court, every visit to the prisons to interview clients, reminded us of the humiliation and suffering burning into our people.” (Oliver Tambo 1) In 1952, Nelson Mandela opened his law office. In that period of time, African were desperate for legal help. They needed someone to handle all this oppression. It shows that he was trying to bring self-awareness amongst all oppressed people. That’s how Nelson Mandela used his leadership skills and approached to his followers.

When it comes to leadership truth, in my opinion Nelson Mandela demonstrated many truths, almost all of the truths that world has but for me three of the truth that caught my eye and I want to know and let the audience know what these are. First truth that was demonstrated by Nelson was “You make the difference”.This truth is from the book called “The Truth about Leadership: The No-Fads, Heart-of-the-Matter Facts You Need to Know by James Kouzes and Barry Z. Author Demonstrated that anybody can show leadership skills at any time. In our life if we want to change something, we should start from ourselves. And that what Mandela did. To be a great leader or the process of great leader starts from making the difference by you and not waiting for others. Others will join if you show your commitment, if you have common goal, integrity and trust. People have to believe in you, they want to know what you stand for, what you vision to achieve. In these case Mandela had taken lot of action to demonstrate truths and contributed to the achievement of his positive outcome. One of the examples from Nelson Mandela’s Autobiography: Long Walk To Freedom is; after all these years of struggle and torture Mandela finally became the first Black President in South Africa. To show people that apartheid needs to be removed fully, in 1995 he let his country to host world rugby Cup to bring racial unity. In the stadium, Black and white sat together cheer for one team which is South Africa (Mandela). I think It was more than game. It helped people in Africa to be gather under one roof. It was the gesture or sign of the rebuilding of the nation. So, he believed in himself and understood, nobody can achieve anything alone. He was firm to his ground about his decision and achieved it then unite his nation in front of the whole world. Another example from Mandela’s Legacy: some reflection by Kuruvilla Mathews is “All South Africans must show unite’, Mandela had exhorted on the eve of the elections. He himself set the example with a magnanimity that won him the worlds admiration. The day after his election he went to Orania to see the widow of Hendrik Verwoerd, the man who had conceived South African racial segregation along the lines of Nazi ideology. As a gesture of reconciliation, he the invited the widows of all the other apartheid heads of government to come to tea at the presidential residence with the wives of all political prisoners from Block 3 on Robben Island. Even better, he had invited to his inauguration ceremony two of representative of apartheid legal system who had condemned his life in prison.” (6) So, these examples are connected with his second truth which is you can’t do it alone from the book called “The Truth about Leadership: The No-Fads, Heart-of-the-Matter Facts You Need to Know by James Kouzes and Barry Z. In this action, he showed not only unity also great example of forgiveness. He tried rebuilding the nation not only with black people. He could have done that. But it would not be great. And that made him great leader. He doesn’t want to work alone. He wanted to walk with everybody regardless the race, color, position etc.

The last truth that I want to talk about is Trust and values altogether. According to the truth about leadership by M. Kouzes “The truth is that trust rules. Trust rules your personal credibility. Trust rules your ability to get things done. Trust makes your team cohesiveness. Trust rules just everything that you do (76). So, one example from his Autobiography: Long Walk to Freedom is the army, police, civil service, agriculture etc. everything in whites’ hand. They did not even know how to run a single village. So, they had to go out with the policy of reconciliation and forgiveness. (Mandela) Nelson Mandela knew that the only way he could unite people was reunion of whites and Blacks. That’s what he did. He put up his trust on white minority too. He could have done the worst by not relying on white and took revenge. But instead of it, he showed his great leadership by taking step like this. He kept his credibility all his lifetime that’s how Mandela become one of the supreme leaders around the world. We all know that if you want to be trusted, first you have to rely on people around you. You have to show them that you trust on them.

After all, we can say Nelson Mandela was remarkable leader, led South Africa out of apartheid after battle against the government. Mandela dedicated himself to achieve equality and make this nation violent less toward black and all color people. South African will remember of this man who transformed their country to a Model nation for the whole world. He helped to unite South Africa as it removed apartheid, the dangerous system of white minority rule. He symbolized of all Africa a commitment to democracy and freedom. That’s how this supreme leader brought peace and freedom through great leadership skills in South Africa.

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