

Introduction

The Mandela Phenomenon as Decolonial Humanism

We must not let the men who worship war and who lust after blood,
precipitate actions that will plunge our country into another Angola
– Nelson Mandela, *Conversations With Myself*

If one wanted an example of an unshakably firm, courageous, heroic,
calm, intelligent, and capable man, that example and that man would
be Mandela. ...

I identify him as one of the most extraordinary symbols of this era.
– Fidel Castro, in Waters, *Nelson Mandela and Fidel Castro*

Let us not make Nelson Mandela some kind of icon on a pedestal
belonging to a museum. He is a wave in an ocean, part of a rich
tradition that raises certain kinds of questions, beginning with our
own lives and our willingness to muster the courage to examine who
we are as humans.
– Cornel West, ‘Nelson Mandela’

We have to pass through the shadow of death again and again before
we reach the mountain tops of our desires.
– Nelson Mandela, in Joffe, *The State vs. Nelson Mandela*

To be a realist utopian in our time is to go beyond the present
reality of the non-ethical paradigm of war as the central leitmotif
of coloniality. It is to embrace decolonial theory of life; to articu-
late and advocate for survivor’s justice aimed at radical political

transformation of society emerging from mass violence and that is opposed to traditional Nuremberg and International Criminal Court paradigm of criminal justice; and to demonstrate deep commitment to the paradigm of peace as opposed to the paradigm of war. Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela not only epitomized survivor's justice but became a metaphor for new pluriversal humanism, peace, reconciliation and racial harmony.

Located at the interface of complex national, continental and global vortex of modern politics, the Mandela phenomenon that is subjected to analysis in this book is an authentically African invention and achievement that emerged and crystallized in the course of the anti-imperial, anti-colonial, anti-apartheid and anti-global coloniality struggles. Like all other embodiments of positive values, the Mandela phenomenon became open to theft. The distinguished social anthropologist Jack Goody's book *The Theft of History* (2006) is very instructive and prompts us to be on our guard against theft of all positive aspects of human history by advocates of Eurocentrism and the Athens-to-Washington paradigm. The Athens-to-Washington paradigm was coined by the leading African historian Paul Tiyambe Zeleza (2007) to capture the Eurocentric idea of rendering human civilization as originating in Greece and reaching its mature stage in present day United States of America. This rendition of human history is a form of usurpation/theft of world history and the story of human civilizations. In South Africa, attempts at stealing the Mandela phenomenon have been underway since he was released from prison. The theft is spearheaded by those who even supported the incarceration of Mandela and his criminalization as a 'dangerous terrorist' during the heydays of apartheid. The very fact that Mandela had to receive the Nobel Peace Prize concurrently with FW de Klerk (the last apartheid president) on 10 December 1993 was the beginning of attempts at stealing the Mandela phenomenon by his adversaries. The harnessing of Mandela's name with that of leading imperialist Cecil John Rhodes to create the Mandela Rhodes Foundation is another glaring attempt at stealing the thunder from an African advocate of pluriversal decolonial humanism who was opposed to imperialism, colonialism and apartheid (Adebajo 2010).

The Nigerian scholar Adekeye Adebajo described conjoining the names of Mandela and Rhodes as ‘a monstrous marriage’, even though Mandela himself saw it as an initiative signalling ‘the closing of the circle and the coming together of two strands in our history’ (Adebajo 2010: 215). As put by Adebajo (ibid.: 217), was this not part of the attempts at rehabilitation of ‘a grotesque imperialist of the nineteenth century’ through associating it with the name of a leading black anti-imperialist decolonial freedom fighter of the twentieth century? This question was also posed by the historian Paul Maylam in his book *The Cult of Rhodes* (2005: 134): ‘The arch-imperialist colonizer of the nineteenth century was being conjoined with the great anti-imperialist freedom fighter of the twentieth century’. Adebajo (2010: 232) posed a penetrating question: ‘Has Mandela perhaps taken reconciliation too far, in rehabilitating an evil figure that Africans really should condemn to the pit-latrine of history?’ Money (10 million pounds) was used by the Rhodes Trust in Oxford to ensure that the name of an imperialist Cecil John Rhodes was conjoined with that of the African decolonial humanist Nelson Mandela. This conjoining becomes even more detestable in the context of the ongoing student-led Rhodes Must Fall Movement. This movement commenced in 2015 as a call by the students at University of Cape Town in South Africa for the removal of Rhodes’ statue. Rhodes’ statue is one of the many relics of South Africa’s colonial and apartheid imperial and colonial past that are considered offensive by the current generation of black South Africans. While the statue of Rhodes has been removed, the Rhodes Must Fall Movement has developed into a new decolonial struggle for decolonization of South African landscape through removal of colonial statues, change of colonial names, transformation of universities, and curriculum change.

One of the political parties of South Africa, the right-wing neo-liberal Democratic Alliance (DA) led by Helen Zille, is also using Mandela’s name in its pursuit of neo-liberal politics and policies that are a far cry from the noble agenda of decolonization and deimperialization of the world that Mandela stood for. This appropriation/theft of Mandela is part of the broader and long-standing Euro-North American-centric modernity’s modus operandi

of colonizing space (discovery and cartography), time (cutting it into pre-modern and modern), being (racial classification and hierarchization of human species) and nature (its reduction into a natural resource) in its drive towards usurpation of human history. At the centre of this usurpation are numerous claims ‘to having invented a range of value-laden institutions such as “democracy”, mercantile “capitalism”, freedom, individualism’ (Goody 2006: 1). With specific regard to Mandela, even once the white-dominated Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) – now the South African Communist Party (SACP) – had even frantically tried to confiscate Mandela to the extent that Joe Slovo, a leading South African communist, claimed that they sent Mandela to the African continent in the 1960s as a communist and he came back as a nationalist (Ellis 2011).

This book is at once a defence of the decolonial Mandela as well as a critical articulation of the Mandela phenomenon as an African invention with a global reach. The study is consistently on guard against the theft of what Mandela’s life of struggle and legacy stood for by advocates of Eurocentrism and liberals who loudly proclaim ideals of democracy and human rights without commitment to genuine decolonization of the modern Euro-North American-centric world system and deimperialization of the present asymmetrical global order. At the centre of the Mandela phenomenon is an admixture of decolonial humanism and undying Thembu aristocratic-monarchical cultural background, which are both vehemently opposed to domination, imperialism, colonialism and apartheid. This is typical of most African people who were born during the fading moments of African history and culture and into the emerging colonial modernity. This made him to be a man of two worlds. Mandela is very explicit on this:

Western civilization has not entirely rubbed off my African background and I have not forgotten the days of my childhood when we used to gather round community elders to listen to their wealth of wisdom and experience. That was the custom of our forefathers and the traditional school in which we were brought up. I respect our elders and like to chat to them about olden times and when we had our own government and lived freely. (Mandela 2010: 22)

Colonialism could not easily erase African history and culture. The rural African society of Eastern Cape, within which Mandela was born, still retained its strong African identity, culture and values. Ubuntu (humanness) permeated African society, in the process engendering particular forms of governance, democracy and human rights. Governance was not clouded in complex institutional arrangements. African chiefs practised governance directly in their courts, and Mandela was a close observer of this at the court of Chief Jongintaba Dalindyebo. This is why his decolonial humanism became about the will to live for those people who have been reduced to the status of the anthropos of the planet and who had been forced to abandon their history, culture and values. In a way, the whole of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela's life and legacy is nothing but an encapsulation of a legendary and epic discourse of African decolonial struggle in general and the embodiment of the political trajectory of South Africa from colonialism, through apartheid, through liberation struggle, to democracy and rainbow nation, in particular. Mandela expressed his humanist orientation when he said:

The anchor of all my dreams is the collective wisdom of mankind as a whole. I am influenced more than ever before by the conviction that social equality is the only basis of human happiness ... It is around these issues that my thoughts revolve. They are centred on humans, the ideas for which they strive; on the new world that is emerging; the new generation that declares total war against all forms of cruelty, against any social order that upholds economic privilege for a minority and that condemns the mass of the population to poverty and disease, illiteracy and the host of evils that accompany a stratified society. (Mandela 2010: 183)

At the centre of the Mandela phenomenon, is the painful reality of a black people, including Mandela himself, who had to walk through the shadow of death as part of struggling for life itself in a racist/imperial/colonial/apartheid environment that demeaned and denied black people life chances. The racist/imperial/colonial/apartheid thinking that dominated South Africa between 1652 and 1994 enabled the colonial/apartheid ideologues to toy with two resolutions to what became known as the nigger/native question:

genocide or reduction of blacks to providers of cheap labour (hewers of wood and drawers of water). But even after the imperative of colonial/apartheid primitive accumulation had dictated that black people were useful as sources of cheap labour, colonialists continued to expose them to various forms of brutalities and exploitation, making their lives to be easily dispensable. This is a theme that is well analysed by the leading South African sociologist and historian Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane in his *Race and the Construction of the Dispensable Other* (2007). Being a dispensable 'Other' is part of being forced to walk through the shadow of death. Using a rich array of primary sources, Magubane examined the way in which black people came to be enslaved, denigrated, likened to animals, and regarded as the inferior, dispensable 'Other.' This process was foundational to the proliferation of racism.

This present book is not another 'glossy coffee-table' celebratory biography of Mandela. It is a deep, critical decolonial ethical reflection on an epic decolonial struggle in which Mandela played an important symbolic and substantive role. The book situates this struggle and Mandela's role within a wider canvas of the post-1492 modern, racially hierarchized world system and its colonial global orders that enabled and authorized not only a paradigm of war but also the slave trade, imperialism and colonialism. It is about Mandela as a symbol and substance of a third humanist civilizational revolution and an embodiment of an important utopic vision of a post-racial world.

The book is not necessarily about Mandela the person, but about Mandela the idea, the symbol, the historian of decolonial humanism and theoretician of freedom. Mandela as a historian of decolonial humanism had this clear conception of the genealogies and trajectories of the South African decolonial humanist struggle:

We are the heirs to a three-stream heritage; an inheritance that inspires us to fight and die for the loftiest ideals in life. The title 'African hero' embraces all these veterans. Years later, more articulate and sophisticated personalities were to follow and, in the process, the tableau of history was enriched a thousand times – the Selope Themas, Jabavus, Dubes, Abdurahmans, Gools, Asvats,

Cachalias, and now you and your generation have joined this legion of honour. (Mandela 2010: 17)

The first stream in Mandela's rendition of decolonial humanist struggle is traceable to the San and the Khoi Khoi, whose legendary leader Autshumayo became the first South African black prisoner to be incarcerated on Robben Island. One of the leaders of the Khoi Khoi, called Klaas Stuurman, articulated a profoundly nationalist demand when he said:

Restore the country which our fathers were despoiled by the Dutch and we have nothing more to ask. We have lived very contentedly before these Dutch plunderers molested us, and why should we not do so again if left to ourselves? Has not Groot Baas given plenty [of] grass roots, and barriers and grasshoppers for our use; and, till the Dutch destroyed them, [an] abundance of wild animals to hunt? And will they not return and multiply when these destroyers are gone? (Quoted in Newton-King 1981: 17)

History give testimony to the fact that indeed the Khoisan bore the brunt of the first colonial efforts by 'white settlers to implement the logic of a herrenvolk state in which "people of colour, however numerous and acculturated they may be, are treated as permanent aliens or outsiders"' (Halisi 1999: 28). Following this logic, Mandela was correct to notice that: 'These are the men who strove for a free South Africa long before we reached the field. They blazed the trail and it is their joint efforts that supply the source of the vast stream of SA history' (Mandela 2010: 16–17). What is emerging from this rendition of African resistance is a Mandela who was a nationalist-decolonial humanist historian. African nationalist historiography is well known for having inaugurated a new articulation of African history in terms of 'domination' and 'resistance'. Africanist historians also played an active role in demonstrating an indelible link between primary resistance and modern nationalist struggles.

But this book is not only about Mandela as a historian of the African decolonial humanist struggle, it is also about him as an embodiment of a paradigm of peace and an advocate of post-racial pluriversal humanism. It is a timely book that is written at a time dominated by global phenomenology of uncertainty and

scarcity of ethical and principled leadership. It is a world locked in a paradigm of war, a world bereft of humanness, goodness, love, peace, humility, forgiveness, trust and optimism. Viewed from this vantage point, Mandela becomes at once a fighter for freedom as well as a symbol of hope for a better future that is free of racism. His life of struggle was indeed inextricably interwoven with the broader long walk of African people to freedom that is constitutive of the third decolonial humanist revolution.

The book is therefore meant to be a refreshing critical reflective work on the role (both symbolic and substantive) of an African leader who played an important part in an epic decolonial struggle, in the process enabling his people to enter a new journey of 'freedom to be free' that took a new form in 1994; it is also a deep reading *into* the recesses of Mandela rather than a simple reading *from* Mandela's real life. In this way the book opens a broader canvas on the meanings of Mandela, placing them within a world that since 1492 has remained racially hierarchized, patriarchal, sexist, imperial, colonial and capitalist (Mignolo 2000; Grosfoguel 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013b, 2013c). This approach enables this book to delve deeper into foundational political and humanist questions of being, power and knowledge, while at the same time challenging the Nietzschean conception of politics as constituted by the will to power. It poses Mandela's life of struggle and legacy as an embodiment of the will to live of a people that Frantz Fanon termed the 'wretched of the earth'. To Mandela, politics was a vocation rather than a profession, hence he escaped the traps of 'fetishism of power' (Dussel 2008).

Organization and Scope

The book is organized into five sections. The first section is this prologue, which delineates the parameters of the book, expresses its conceptual orientation, and introduces Mandela as a central subject of the study and a representative of the third humanist revolution. It outlines the various springs from which Mandela drew ideological power while at the same time highlighting some contestations over the meaning and legacy of Mandela.

The first chapter provides a theoretical framework in which such concepts as decoloniality, critical decolonial ethics of liberation, paradigm of war, paradigm of peace, and pluriversalism are defined and evaluated in terms of their conceptual value in understanding the Mandela phenomenon. It locates Mandela historically and discursively in the broader modern world in which forces of Hellenocentrism, Westernization and Eurocentrism emerged and shaped the world in the image of Europe and North America. At the centre of these inimical processes were imperial reason and racism that enabled imperialism, colonialism, apartheid and underdevelopment. Mandela's people – the African people – were pushed by these processes to inhabit the zone of non-being, governed according to the dictates of the paradigm of war. Mandela emerges in this chapter as a freedom fighter and decolonial humanist who creatively engaged with various ideologies in the process synthesizing these into liberatory resources. It is in this chapter that Mandela is portrayed grappling with the pertinent question of use of violence in the advancement of a decolonial humanist struggle that was itself opposed to violence, as well as with the global idea of freedom.

While this book is not biographical, but it would be incomplete without delving deeper into Mandela's various lives and different faces. Therefore, Chapter 2 is at once focused on the highlights of Mandela's life while elaborating on his political formation and consciousness development, revealing the inevitable antinomies, contradictions and ambivalences cascading from the exigencies of the liberation struggle. This chapter provides a context within which the global iconoclastic figure of Mandela crystallized.

The third chapter is a critical evaluation of Mandela's leadership during the negotiations, in the process highlighting the complexities and challenges that faced the liberation movements, the pressures that the African National Congress (ANC) and Mandela in particular were subjected to by the corporate sector that sought to maintain the economic status quo, and their international allies who were pushing for globalization of the Washington Consensus and its neo-liberal dispensation. Of central importance in this chapter is a decolonial analysis of the

Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) negotiations as signalling a departure from the Nuremberg paradigm, which privileges the victor and victim's justice whose teleology is criminal prosecution and punishments of individuals to a broader and new paradigm of political justice issuing from a survivor's desk, and privileging political reform and overall metamorphosis of settler/native/perpetrator/victim identities (Mamdani 2013a, 2013b). This chapter ends with an analysis of the character of the Mandela presidency (1994–98), with a particular focus on nation-building and economic policies.

The last section is an epilogue that further fleshes out the idea of why it is necessary in the twenty-first century for Africans in particular, and those people from the Global South in general, to continue the struggle for a post-racial pluriversal world. The epilogue identifies the key issues that make the search for a paradigm of peace difficult to realize: egocentrism that breeds and enables the conflictual politics of alterity; the myth of a world without others; the colour line; and the perennial problem of 'blackism' on a world scale. It ends with a return to Mandela's search for a peaceful world, and his active role in conflict resolution on the African continent.

Methodologically, the book is predicated on a new and refreshing decolonial reading of the idea and place of Mandela in global history and humanist revolutions (Renaissance humanism, Enlightenment humanism, and the current decolonial humanism) that is opening up the 'biography' in his autobiography (*Long Walk to Freedom*) to a broader interpretation from the vantage point of experiences emanating from what Walter D. Mignolo (2000) termed 'colonial difference' and Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2008a: 240) termed 'alterity' ('a distinct conception of peace, of interhuman contact and of the very meaning of the human', encapsulating 'the gift' of self-representation and 'entry' of those who have been written out of human history back into history and humanity). The autobiography is reinterpreted decolonially as a testimonial script of the political figure of Mandela as a signifier of critical decolonial ethics of liberation and articulator of a paradigm of peace and racial harmony in a world and society where a paradigm of

war and racial hatred has been institutionalized since the time of colonial encounters in the fifteenth century.

However, this decolonial approach and intervention is not in any way blind to the limits of autobiographies, which are by definition carefully edited, choreographed, retrospective and expedient personal accounts that place the political self at the centre of a given historical period and cast that life in a distinctly positive and heroic light. Mandela himself explained why he presented the story of his life the way he did, and in the process revealed the logic and sensitivities that had to be taken into account:

The story of one's life should deal frankly with political colleagues, their personalities and their views. The reader would like to know what kind of a person the writer is, his relationships with others, and these should emerge not from the epithets used but from the facts themselves. *But an autobiography of a freedom fighter must inevitably be influenced by the question [of] whether the revelation of certain facts, however true they may be, will help advance the struggle or not. If the disclosure of such facts will enable us to see problems clearly and bring nearer our goal then it is our duty to do so, however much such revelations may adversely affect the particular individuals concerned. But frankness which creates unnecessary tensions and divisions which may be exploited by the enemy and retard the struggle as a whole is dangerous and must be avoided.* The utmost caution becomes particularly necessary where an autobiography is written clandestinely in prison, where one deals with political colleagues who themselves live under the hardships and tensions of prison life, who are in daily contact with officials who have a mania for persecuting prisoners. *Writing under such conditions the temptation is strong to mention only those things which will make your fellow prisoners feel that their sacrifices have not been in vain, that takes their mind away from the grim conditions in which they live and that makes them happy and hopeful.* An essential part of that caution and fair play would be to have the widest possible measure of consultation with your colleagues about what you intend to say about them, to circulate your manuscript and give them the opportunity of stating their views on any controversial issue discussed so that the facts themselves may accurately reflect the standpoints of all concerned, whatever may be the comments of the writer on those facts. Unfortunately the conditions in which I [wrote] this story, especially security considerations, made it impossible to consult any but a handful of my friends. (Mandela 2010: 209–10; my emphasis)

Mandela's explanation of how he wrote his autobiography and the sensitivities he had to navigate is very important for all those using *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* as a primary source of information. It is partly an autobiography and partly about other freedom fighters and the trajectories of the decolonial struggle itself. Even the ambiguities and contradictions (antinomies) that Mandela struggled to transcend, which are highlighted in this book in an endeavour to avoid a simplistic celebratory approach, are partly those of the struggle itself. My book therefore provides a broader canvas on which the paradigm of war and paradigm of peace are not in any way reduced to a single event (the South African transition from apartheid to democracy), and a biography in which an exceptional singular personality (Mandela in this case) played a singular part without the assistance of other freedom fighters. What is under interpretation is the Mandela phenomenon as a broader discursive decolonial civilizational project opposed to the Euro-North American-centric civilization project that commenced in 1492.

The central subject of this book is the meaning(s) of Mandela, what he stood for, and what he symbolized in a world that decolonial theorists have described as racially hierarchized, patriarchal, hetero-normative, imperial, colonial, capitalist, Christian-centric, Euro-North-American-centric, and modern (Quijano 2000, 2007; Grosfoguel 2007, 2011; Mignolo 2011). Mandela not only experienced racial discrimination but also a long period of incarceration, and he even walked through the shadow of death. Like other humanists from the Global South such as Aime Cesaire, William E.B. Dubois, Frantz Fanon and many others, Mandela experienced and endured the consequences of being a racialized and dehumanized subject as well as being written out of the human ocumene and being reduced to dispensability. Uniquely and paradigmatically, instead of this experience turning Mandela into a monster in the Nietzschean sense, he emerged from it fighting for a new world governed and informed by a paradigm of peace and underpinned by principles of pluriversal humanism and co-humanness.

The 'Mandela phenomenon' is subject to many interpretations. This book offers a critical decolonial ethical interpretation that

rearticulates the ‘Mandela phenomenon’ as an embodiment of a new paradigm of peace and justice in South Africa in which the erstwhile disputants lived together as born again new citizens, collectively agreeing that apartheid was an evil colonial system and vowing to work together to create a rainbow nation. However, the book acknowledges that dismantling racism and creating a post-racial pluriversal society remain as Mandela’s major ‘unfinished projects’ simply because the modern world system is resistant to decolonization and the global orders are impervious to deimperialization. It needs a decolonial civilizational project, of which Mandela was a committed foot soldier until the end of his life on 5 December 2013.

Mandela as Symbol of the Third Humanist Revolution

The third decolonial humanist revolution is a long-standing liberation struggle, albeit still incomplete. The historical genesis of this decolonial humanist revolution can be traced to the anti-slave revolts. Those who approach it from the diaspora perspective highlight the Haitian Revolution of 1804 as its beginning. But within the African continent, African struggles against various forms of colonialism have a longer genealogy. But what is clear is that genealogically speaking the third humanist revolution must be traceable to all the struggles of all those people who were excluded from the Renaissance and Enlightenment Eurocentric conceptions of the human. The decolonial philosopher Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2008a: 115) articulated this decolonial humanist revolution as ‘a third humanist revolution that has existed alongside the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, always pointing to their constitutive exclusions and aiming to provide a more consistent narrative of the affirmation of the value of the entire human species’.

At the centre of this revolution has been the question of the ontology of those excluded human beings from the existing conceptions of the human. Such initiatives and ideological/intellectual/political creations as Garveyism, Ethiopianism, Negritude, African Personality, Conciencism, Pan-Africanism, African

Socialism, and Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), right up to the revived African Renaissance, were produced within the context and course of African decolonial humanist struggle. Garveyism and Pan-Africanism emerged in the diaspora and spoke to the fundamental problems of blackism on a world scale. Garveyism particularly claimed 'Africa for Africans' and envisioned a return home of those African people who had been exported as slaves. Pan-Africanism emphasized the solidarity and unity of black races across the world. At the continental level, it spoke to the crucial aspect of unity of all black people.

Négritude was a specific response to the limits of the French colonial policy of assimilation that claimed to assimilate black people into French culture as a certificate to enjoy French citizenship and rights. Practically, French racism made some of the assimilated black people try to reclaim their Africanness (their *négritude*) as part of fighting against colonial racism and domination. The same was true of African Personality; it was a rehabilitative initiative aimed at dealing with various forms of alienation and 'name-lessness' within the context of colonial racism. The 'black consciousness' strand of African decolonial thought aimed at reversing the imposed condition of black racial inferiority as an essential prerequisite of liberation. African socialism was directly provoked by the reality of capitalist exploitation that enabled exploitation of human beings by other human beings.

But broadly speaking, in the decolonial theory of the human, the first humanist revolution was during the Renaissance, when a 'shift from a God-centred worldview to a Man-centred conception of selves, others, and world' was initiated (Maldonado-Torres 2008a: 106). The second was the Enlightenment humanism, which Immanuel Kant (1996: 58) celebrated as mankind's emergence and liberation from 'self-incurred immaturity' resulting in the creation of modern institutions ranging from Inquisition, the nation-state, modern racial slavery, to the establishment of universities as centres of studying the humanities (see also Maldonado-Torres 2008a: 109).

What is distinctive about the third humanist revolution is that it is driven by thinkers, activists and intellectuals from the Global

South who have experienced the undersides of modernity including enslavement and colonization. Global South thinkers motivate for a new humanist-oriented modernity that is inevitably predicated on decolonizing and deimperializing the world as part of breaking from the paradigm of war. Its horizon is the regaining of ontological density by black people and the creation of a new and inclusive post-racial pluriversality. Unless racism is transcended successfully and in good faith, the third humanist revolution cannot be realized.

But two of the major obstacles to human liberation and flourishing identified in this book are the paradigm of war and racism. It was the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche in *The Will to Power* (1968) who articulated the core contours of the paradigm of war, insisting that war was the natural state of things and that human beings were destined to rarely want peace – and if they did so it was for brief periods of time. To Nietzsche (ibid.: 550) ‘the world is the will to power’, dominated by human beings who were always attempting to impose their will on others. According to Nietzsche, there were no truly altruistic human actions and the idea of selfless action was discounted as a psychological error informed by Judeo-Christian thought.

According to Nietzsche (1968: 382), ‘the commandment to love one’s neighbor has never yet been extended to include one’s actual neighbor’. It was the same Nietzsche (1909 [1990: 102]) who posited: ‘He who fights with monsters should look to it that he himself does not become a monster ... When you gaze long into an abyss the abyss gazes into you’. Here Nietzsche was addressing the other important aspect of the paradigm of war – that of dehumanizing its victims and making them see war as natural, in the process falling into what Frantz Fanon (1968) understood as ‘repetition without change’. In this case, the ‘repetition without change’ takes the form of embracing the paradigm war and degenerating into what Jean-Paul Sartre termed ‘anti-racist racism’ in one’s search and struggle for peace and new humanism. The post-1945 decolonization project has not yet delivered an Africa that is free from the paradigm of war. In many places, racism has mutated

and assumed different markers including tribalism, regionalism and xenophobia.

Mandela's life of struggle and legacy challenges the paradigm of war and its ability to turn those who were involved in the liberation struggle against such monstrosities as imperialism, colonialism, apartheid, neocolonialism and coloniality into becoming monsters themselves. Deployment of critical decolonial ethics of liberation is meant to open a canvas on the meaning of Mandela and to articulate that he stood for a paradigm of peace. Mandela's life of struggle became an embodiment of pluriversal humanism (a world in which many worlds fit) (see Mignolo 2011). A pluriversal world is opposed to the paradigm of war and racial hatred that emerged at the dawn of a Euro-North American-centric modernity. The paradigm of war is founded on the politics of racial hatred and denial of humanity of black people, which is part of the darker side/underside of modernity (see Mignolo 1995, 2000, 2011).

Apartheid colonialism and the apartheid regime that came to power in South Africa in 1948 were a typical manifestation of this darker side/underside of modernity. It had survived the early decolonization processes of the 1960s and it continued to defy global anti-apartheid onslaught until 1994. Apartheid existed as a form of coloniality, which is not only a darker side/underside of modernity which has survived direct administrative colonialism but is also a constitutive element of the paradigm of war (Maldonado-Torres 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013a, 2013b). Anibal Quijano (2000, 2007), a leading Peruvian sociologist, defined coloniality as a global power structure underpinned by four invisible colonial matrices of power, namely *control of the economy* based on appropriation of natural resources including land and labour as well as finance of indebted countries; *control of authority* through imperial institutions and use of military and sophisticated technology; *control of gender and sexuality* through projection of Christian, bourgeois and monogamous family as a model for the rest of the world and naturalization of human heterosexual relations; *control of knowledge and subjectivity* through universalization of rationalist-scientific Euro-North American-centric

epistemology drawing from the Cartesian *cogito* (see Grosfoguel 2007; Maldonado-Torres 2007).

While situating Mandela within the broader decolonial canvas, the book also highlights the complexities of the Mandela phenomenon as that which is open to different interpretation. The critical decolonial ethical interpretation is just one of them. Fidel Castro's reflections on the life of struggle and legacy of Mandela emphasized the symbolic aspect: 'one of the most extraordinary symbols of this era' (Castro in Waters 1991: 31). This is why in this book Mandela is approached as at once a historian of the South African struggle for decolonial liberation and a theoretician of decolonial freedom who demonstrated a deep understanding of the meaning and essence of freedom. This is evident from his celebrated autobiography in which he reflected deeply on the trajectory of freedom and the meaning of what was achieved in 1994 in these profound words:

The truth is that we are not yet free; we merely achieved the freedom to be free, the right not to be oppressed. We have not taken the final step of our journey, but the first step on a longer and even more difficult road. For, to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others. The task of our devotion to freedom is just beginning. (Mandela 1994: 544)

But Who and What Influenced Mandela?

The Mandela phenomenon is watered from many springs. It was at the end of the traditional initiation ceremony involving circumcision that Mandela not only received a new name, 'Dalibhunga' – meaning 'Founder of the Bungha, the traditional body of Transkei/maker of parliaments' – but was also introduced to his first profound decolonial lesson from Chief Meligqili, son of Dalindybo, in his delivery of the expected congratulatory homily to the new initiates. While the initiates were excited about their entry into manhood, Chief Meligqili told them that the ritual's promise to be a real entry into manhood was empty, illusory and hollow. He explained to the initiates:

There sit our sons, young, healthy and handsome, the flower of the Xhosa tribe, the pride of our nation. We have just circumcised them in a ritual that promises them manhood, but I am here to tell you that it is an empty, illusory promise, a promise that can never be fulfilled. For we Xhosas, and all black South Africans, are a conquered people. We are slaves in our own country. We are tenants on our own soil. We have no strength, no power, no control over our own destiny in the land of our birth. They will go to the cities where they will live in shacks and drink cheap alcohol, all because we have no land to give them where they could prosper and multiply. They will cough their lungs out deep in the bowels of the white man's mines destroying their health, so that the white man can live a life of unequalled prosperity. Among these young men are chiefs who will never rule because we have no power to govern ourselves; soldiers who will never fight for we have no weapons to fight with; scholars who will never teach because we have no place for them to study. The abilities, the intelligence, the promise of these young men will be squandered in their attempt to eke out a living doing the simplest, most mindless chores for the white man. These gifts today are naught, for we cannot give them the greatest gift of all, which is freedom and independence. I well know that Qamata [God] is all-seeing and never sleeps, but I have a suspicion that Qamata may in fact be dozing. If this is the case, the sooner I die the better, because then I can meet him and shake him awake and tell him that the children of Ngubencuka, the flower of the Xhosa nation, are dying. (Quoted in Mandela 1994: 27–28)

Chief Meligqili opened the eyes of the initiates to realize that they were not entering manhood as free people. They were in fact entering a dehumanizing colonial/apartheid world in which black people were considered perpetual children. The second decolonial teacher that Mandela met as a young boy was the great Xhosa poet/praise singer (*imbongi*) and oral historian Krune Mqhayi. Despite the fact that the Xhosa and all black indigenous people were now a defeated and colonized people, Mqhayi still exuded a pre-colonial Africa in his attire. He wore leopard-skin kaross and carried a spear.

Mqhayi, just like Chief Meligqili, reminded the students of the significance of the spear: 'The assegai stands for what is glorious and true in African history; it is a symbol of the African as warrior and the African as artist' (quoted in Mandela 1994: 39). During

his performance, his spear had accidentally hit the modern curtain wire above him and he took advantage of this incident to deliver a decolonial lesson to the students, explaining that the striking of the curtain wire by the spear symbolized the clash between African culture and that of Europe. He elaborated:

What I am talking about is not a piece of bone touching a piece of metal, or even the overlapping of one culture and another; what I am talking about is the brutal clash between what is indigenous and good, and what is foreign and bad. We cannot allow these foreigners who do not care for our culture to take over our nation. I predict that, one day, the forces of African society will achieve a momentous victory over the interloper. For too long we have succumbed to the false gods of the white man. But we shall emerge and cast off these foreign notions. (Quoted in Mandela 1994: 39)

Mandela expressed how he was galvanized and conscientized politically by Mqhayi to challenge white supremacy. When he reached Johannesburg he was politicized by Gaur Radebe who was not simply a clerk, interpreter and messenger in a white-owned legal firm but a political activist and effective mobilizer of black people against colonial injustices who told his white employers: 'You people stole our land from us and enslaved us. Now you are making us pay through the nose to get the worst pieces of it back' (Quoted in Mandela 1994: 68). It was Radebe that influenced Mandela to participate in the bus boycott in 1942. On how he was influenced by Radebe, Mandela wrote:

But what Gaur Radebe knew was far more than I did because he learned not only just facts; he was able to get behind the facts and explain to you the causes for a particular viewpoint. And I learnt history afresh and I met a number of them. (Mandela 2010: 43)

Radebe was one of the early South African organic intellectuals. His academic background was very humble but he had profound knowledge about the black condition in South Africa. In Johannesburg, Mandela also had the opportunity to work closely in the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) with the firebrand Africanists and lawyers Anton Muzwake Lembede and Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe. He also came under the influence

of decolonial Afro-Marxists like Moses Kotane and William Nkomo. It was Lembede who declared that:

it was an illusion of demented political demagogues to imagine that African workers as such can achieve their emancipation and reach their goal of being recognized by the government on the same footing with European trade unions while the rest of the African nation is still in chains and bondage of segregation, oppression, and colour discrimination. (Quoted in Halisi 1999: 64)

While Lembede and Sobukwe articulated the decolonization struggle from the perspective of radical Africanism, Kotane expressed a well-thought-out Afro-Marxist philosophy of liberation. In his letter of 1943, Kotane called for Africanization (which he termed ‘bolshevization’) of the South African Communist Party (SACP):

Our party has and is suffering owing to being too Europeanized. If one investigates the general ideology of our party members (especially the whites), he will not fail to see that they subordinated South Africa in the interest of Europe. There are foreigners who know nothing about and who are least interested in the country in which they are living. But we are living in culturally backward Africa – Africa is economically and culturally backward. In Europe self-consciousness (class) has developed immensely whilst here national oppression, discrimination and exploitation confuses the class war and the majority of the African working population are more national conscious than class conscious. My first suggestion is that the party become Africanized, that we speak the language of the native masses and must know their demands. That while it must not lose its international allegiance, the party must be Bolshevized, become South African, not only theoretically but in reality, and not a party of a group of Europeans who are merely interested in European affairs. (South African Communist Party 1985: 120–22)

The main point that is missing in the existing biographies and hagiographies of Mandela is that his decolonial humanism emerged from the very crucible of deep colonial/racial oppression, the realities of racial proleterianization and practices of institutionalized racism. Mandela also makes it clear that he was also influenced by chieftaincy and the church during his early life:

The two influences that dominated my thoughts and actions during those days were chieftaincy and the church. After all, the only heroes I had heard of at that time had almost all been chiefs and the respect enjoyed by the regent from both black and white tended to exaggerate the importance of this institution in my mind ... Equally important was the position of the church, which I associated not so much with the body and doctrine contained in the Bible but with the person of Reverend Matyolo. (Mandela 2010: 11–12)

Mandela's move to Johannesburg and his stay in Alexandra introduced him to urban life: 'Here I learnt to adjust myself to urban life and came into physical contact with all the evils of white supremacy' (ibid.: 35). In Johannesburg, Mandela 'was introduced to various strands of thought' (ibid.: 43). But it was in the Communist Party meetings that Mandela 'found Europeans, Indians and Coloureds and Africans together' (ibid.: 44). One is led to argue that the Communist Party meetings symbolized the possibilities of a multi-racial society in which people of different races would live together as common citizens and enjoy equality.

While there are no direct connections between some early white liberals, like Olive Cronwright Schreiner, and the Mandela phenomenon, it is interesting to take note of some congruence between how they envisioned an inclusive South Africanism with that of Mandela. In fact the ANC and Mandela had to embrace the liberal, Marxist and nationalist interpretations of the South African problem into a broad Charterist movement in the 1950s. Schreiner was preoccupied with how to resolve the complex racial and ethnic identities that had formed at the southern tip of Africa. This is how she understood identity mix:

If a crude and homely illustration may be allowed, the peoples of South Africa resemble the constituents of a plum pudding when in the process of being mixed; the plums, the peel, the currants, the flour, the egg and the water are mingled together. Here plums may predominate, there the peel; one part may be slightly thinner than another, but it is useless to try and resort them; they have permeated each other's substance: they cannot be re-separated; to cut off a part would not be to resort them; it would be dividing a complex but homogenous substance into parts which would repeat its complexity. What then shall be said of the South African problem as a whole?

Is it impossible for the South African people to attain to any form of unity, organization, and normal life? Must we forever remain a vast, inchoate, invertebrate mass of humans, divided horizontally into layers of race, mutually antagonistic, and vertically severed by lines of political state division, which cut up our races without simplifying our problems, and which add to the bitterness of race conflict the irritation of political divisions? Is national life and organization unattainable by us? ... We believe that no one can impartially study the condition of South Africa and feel that it is so. Impossible as it is that our isolated states should consolidate and attain to a complete national life, there is a form of organic union which is possible to us. For there is a sense in which all South Africans are one ... there is [a] subtle but very real bond which unites all South Africans, and differentiates us from all other people in the world. This bond is our mixture of races itself. It is this which divides South Africa from all other peoples in the world, and makes us one. (Schreiner 1923: 60–61)

This is one early liberal reflection on the idea of South Africanism. The connection perhaps is that at the centre of the Mandela phenomenon pulsed the problem of constructing an inclusive South Africanism that was imbued with humanism as opposed to racism. Schreiner presented and understood the challenge this way:

If our view be right, the problem which South Africa has before it today is this: How from our political states and our discordant races, can a great, healthy, united, organized nation be formed? ... Our race question is complicated by a question of colour, which presents itself to us in a form more virulent and intense than that in which it has met any modern people. (Schreiner 1923: 62–64)

On the future of South Africa, Schreiner just like Mandela imagined a multiracial nation created by South Africans:

Our South African national structure in the future will not and cannot be identical with that of any other people, our national origin being so wholly unlike that of any other; our social polity must be developed by ourselves through the interaction of our parts with one another and in harmony with our complex needs. For good or evil, the South African nation will be an absolutely new thing under the sun, perhaps, owing to its mixture of races, possessing that strange vitality and originality which appears to rise so often from the mixture of human varieties: perhaps, in general human advance, ranking higher than other societies more simply constructed; perhaps

lower, according as we shall shape it; but this, certainly, will be a new entity, with new problems, new gifts, new failings, new accomplishments. (Schreiner 1923: 370)

The African National Congress (ANC) that Mandela joined in the 1940s was basically a school for decolonial humanism, and was blessed with visionary decolonial humanists such as Pixley ka Seme, the founder of the ANC, and Chief Albert Luthuli, a president of the ANC and Nobel Peace Prize winner. Inevitably Mandela's ideological mind was watered from different political springs, all carrying in various degrees decolonial humanism that radiated at the very roots of the ANC itself. Seme was committed to the African struggle that was going to deliver a new civilization that was deeply humanistic. This is how he expressed his decolonial humanistic vision: 'The regeneration of Africa means that a new and unique civilization is soon to be added to the world ... The most essential departure of this new civilization is that it shall be thoroughly spiritual and humanistic – indeed a regeneration, moral and eternal!' (Seme 1906). On the other hand, Luthuli spoke of a broader decolonized civilizational African future as an African gift to the world. During his acceptance of the Nobel Prize, Luthuli informed the world that Africa was offering the world the gift of *ubuntu*, and proceeded to anticipate and envision a new post-racial civilization. His acceptance speech included this prediction: 'Somewhere ahead there beckons a civilization which will take its place in God's history with other great human syntheses: Chinese, Egyptian, Jewish, European. It will not necessarily be all black: but it will be African' (Luthuli 1961).

Mandela is a direct ideological descendent of this ANC decolonial humanism. Understood from this vantage point, a broader canvas is opened that places Mandela at the centre of a broader decolonial critique of the modernity/imperiality/coloniality/apartheid system. The same challenge of creating a peaceful and inclusive post-racial nation moved Thabo Mbeki, as deputy president of South Africa, to also reflect poetically on the meaning of inclusive South Africanism during the adoption of the South Africa constitution in 1996. This is how he articulated the content and form of South Africanism as an emergent historical African identity:

I owe my being to Khoi and the San ... I am formed of migrants who left Europe to find a new home on our native land ... In my veins courses the blood of the Malay slaves who came from the East. Their proud dignity informs my bearing, their culture a part of my essence ... I am the grandchild of the warrior men and women that Hintsa and Sekhukhune led, the patriots that Cetshwayo and Mphephu took to battle, the soldiers Moshoeshoe and Ngungunyane taught never to dishonour the cause of freedom ... I am the grandchild who lays fresh flowers on the Boer graves at St Helena and the Bahamas ... I come from those who were transported from India and China ... Being part of all these people and in the knowledge that one dare contest that assertion, I shall claim that I am an African. (Mbeki 1996: 31–36)

Mandela's political struggles as encapsulated in the autobiography, and as demonstrated in actual leadership of the ANC during Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) as well as his presidency, collectively signified a consistent push for decolonial turn, which Maldonado-Torres (2008b: 8) articulated as including 'the definitive entry of enslaved and colonized subjectivities into the realm of thought at previously unknown institutional levels'. Mbeki's speech is also a typical example of how to articulate this definitive entry and cannot be read in isolation from the broader canvas of the Mandela phenomenon.

The broad conceptual premise of this book is in tandem with Maldonado-Torres's argument (2008b: 8) that '[i]f the problem of the twentieth century and indeed the problem of modernity is the problem of the color line, the solution for the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is, at least in part, the decolonial turn' (see also Du Bois 1903). Mandela in this case is studied as the voice, conscience and representative of the enslaved, colonized and dehumanized subjectivities that have since the time of colonial encounters been fighting for restoration of their lost ontological density and for a new post-racial pluriversal world.

Mandela as a Typical Decolonial Humanist

On his release from prison on 11 February 1990, Mandela greeted his supporters in a particularly revealing way, capturing the core

aspects of decolonial humanism: 'I greet you all in the *name of peace, democracy and freedom for all! I stand before you as a humble servant of you, the people*' (my emphasis). This statement encapsulated what Enrique Dussel (2008: xvi) termed exercising 'obedient power' (command by obeying), founded on principles of politics as 'vocation' and an expression of the 'will to live' rather than the 'will to power'. When Mandela presented himself as 'a humble servant of the people' he was announcing a new conception of politics in which the exercise of power is not for the self but rather on behalf of the people.

Dussel (2008: 24) made a clear distinction between 'politics as vocation' and politics as 'bureaucratic profession'. As a vocation, politics is motivated by ideals and values with a strong 'normative content that inspires the subjectivity of the political actor towards a responsibility to the other, to the people' (ibid.). Politics as 'bureaucratic profession' is motivated by a will to power where the exercise of power is for individual gain. Mandela is one of those politicians that practised politics as vocation – a calling to fulfil a decolonial humanist mission. This explains why Anthony Sampson in *Mandela: The Authorized Biography* (1999: 87) noted that '[d]espite Mandela's political evolution, he still retained his basic African nationalism: his pride in his people and their history, and his determination to regain their rights'.

Mandela can best be described as a radical African nationalist-liberal-decolonial humanist who dedicated his life to a struggle against racism, imperialism, colonialism and apartheid. Racism, the slave trade, imperialism, colonialism, apartheid, neo-colonialism and underdevelopment have all existed as the underbelly of Euro-North American-centric modernity since 1492. When Mandela was released from prison in 1990 he knew that his supporters were much too thirsty for peace, democracy, liberation and freedom after enduring over 350 years of multiple forms of oppression. Apartheid colonialism had robbed black people of dignity and humanity itself. Mandela emerges as an uncompromising historian and a champion of decolonial humanism, and his political thought cannot be ignored in the present-day search for decolonial-liberatory modern political theory.

Decolonial humanism is a long-standing struggle for life spear-headed by those the oppressed people exposed to the negative consequences of modernity. These are people who have been pushed by global imperial designs to live in the ‘zone of non-being’. In the ‘zone of non-being’ there is a scarcity of humanism and life itself. Peace, democracy, liberation and freedom, as constituents of life and humanism, are absent in this ‘zone of non-being’. Mandela dedicated his life to the epic African nationalist-humanist decolonial struggle for peace, democracy and freedom. A biographical approach to understand Mandela’s life of struggle with its proclivity towards celebrations and eulogies is inadequate to the task of capturing the various meanings of Mandela.

Decolonial humanism is opposed to the paradigm of war and racism, and is committed to the advancement of the unfinished and ongoing project of decolonization as a precondition for the paradigm of peace and post-racial pluriversal humanism. Therefore, a critical decolonial ethical study of Mandela’s life of struggle and legacy inevitably enables a critical engagement with the broader question of the meaning and essence of being human (subject, subjection, subjectivity, resistance and liberation) and conditions that inhibited the human flourishing, in this case the paradigm of war and apartheid. Decolonial humanism is preoccupied with two fundamental questions that were clearly posed by the leading African philosopher Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze in his book *Achieving Our Humanity: The Idea of the Postracial Future*:

How would an African or black person anywhere think about the world – the global modern world which thinks of ‘blacks’ as a race – beyond the idea of race but without denying the fact that racial identities and racism are important aspects of the modern experience? In what ways could one transcend the race-conscious traditions of both modern European and African thought which sustain ideologies of race and racism while recognizing that there are in these intellectual traditions powerful tools against racialism and racism? (Eze 2001: ix)

This book challenges the paradigm of war as the normal state of human life and Slavoj Žižek’s intervention that Mandela’s iconic status and ‘universal glory is also a sign that he really

didn't disturb the global order of power' (Zizek 2013: 1). This is a common critique that cascades from those analysts and thinkers who focus on Mandela the person to the extent of missing the bigger picture of Mandela as an idea, a voice and a representative of a broader decolonial utopic imaginary. This type of critique also minimizes the challenges and sensitivities cascading from global and local circles that needed careful negotiation and navigation before placing South Africa on a new post-apartheid platform of 'freedom to be free' as Mandela put it.

There is no doubt that Mandela deployed principles of critical decolonial ethics of liberation to question and challenge the modernity/imperial/colonial/apartheid paradigm of war and racial hatred directly. What is the subject of debate is how successful he was in changing this paradigm. Mandela's uniqueness lies in his advocacy of a paradigm of peace informed by a full commitment to democracy and human rights, to racial harmony, to racial reconciliation, and to post-racial pluriversalism as part of his contribution to speaking the truth to a Euro-North American-centric world system that continues to be resistant to decolonization, and its shifting global orders that continue to be impervious to deimperialization.

Contestations over Meaning and Legacy of Mandela

Contestations over the meaning of Mandela and his legacy is broadly part of the contestations over the idea of South Africa and the concomitant questions of the nation, belonging, citizenship, democracy and the meaning of liberation. Mandela is one of those leading African decolonial humanists and political leaders who consistently tried to learn 'to live within the conceptual purgatory of race and class interpretations of liberation politics' (Halisi 1999: 12), and who eventually took a pragmatic and synthetic position on the idea of South Africa, the essence of the nation, criteria of citizenship and democracy, to the celebration of some and the chagrin of others. Sarah Nuttall and Achille Mbembe captured the

complexities of the idea of South Africa and the place of Mandela in it when they wrote:

We examine the pervasive feeling in South Africa that Mandela's death might reveal a void at the centre of a country that has always tried to mask such an emptiness at its centre: a country that has struggled to define itself as a nation and draw together its many fragments into a sustained sense of commonality in the wake of a long racist past. More than anybody else, Mandela embodied this sense of commonality, and his passing is likely to reignite the metaphysical anxiety that South Africa is neither a concept nor an idea – just a place, a geographical accident. (Nuttall and Mbembe 2014: 268)

Mandela, who turned out to be the pivot of the imagined post-apartheid nation, could not escape being open to all sorts of contestations. At one level, Mandela's life of struggle and legacy became caught up in what C.R.D. Halisi articulated as the liberal versus the republican traditions: 'Forged in the crucible of racial oppression, black political thought fluctuates incessantly between the values of racial autonomy and interracial social incorporation' (Halisi 1999: 1). In reality, 'the conquest and proletarianization have produced powerful traditions of racial populism that are woven into the very fabric of political discourse' (ibid.: 20). Mandela had to swallow all this, digest it, synthesize it, and rearticulate it in a more inclusive manner.

Inevitably, within South Africa, Mandela's legacy is a subject of intense contestation among political gladiators. The political campaign for the national elections that took place on 7 May 2014 witnessed unprecedented struggles and contestations over who and which political party represented Mandela's legacy and embodied his spirit of life of struggle. Despite the fact that Mandela died as a member of the ruling African National Congress and had even vowed to open an ANC branch 'in heaven', the organization came under immense pressure to claim and monopolize Mandela. Since his death on 5 December 2013, and even during his lifetime, such political formations as the Congress of the People (COPE) and the Democratic Alliance (DA) have also been trying to claim a piece of Mandela as they criticized the ANC for betraying his legacy.

The ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP) have responded by trying to keep Mandela tightly as the soul and property of the ANC, inviting voters to continue voting for Mandela through the ANC even after his death. Even the recently formed Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) led by Julius Malema are claiming Mandela as their inspiration. Malema said, ‘We are inspired by President Nelson Mandela himself, the real Nelson Mandela, not the artificial one that you guys have created for yourself’ (Malema in the *City Press*, 22 April 2014).

This jostling over the Mandela legacy cannot be simplistically dismissed as political gimmicks deployed by political gladiators to win elections. It indicates that Mandela meant different things to different people, and those things are evaluated positively across the political ideological divide. The Mandela phenomenon spoke to a future that has not yet been reached – the future as potentiality, possibility, and a space to create new forms of sociality beyond race and racism. The previously mentioned recent work of Rita Barnard, *The Cambridge Companion to Nelson Mandela*, does not fully capture the global meanings of Mandela. Rather it approaches Mandela as an ordinary political figure who was besieged by numerous antinomies as part of trying to penetrate beyond the iconic figure, including exposing how Mandela struggled to synthesize the tensions between tradition and modernity as well as his supposed oscillation between Africanist and non-racial positions. It concludes with a postcolonial meditation on Mandela’s legacy and the future without him.

The current book broadens the debate on the meaning of the Mandela phenomenon while at the same time highlighting the global and local context within which it crystallized and assumed different meanings. Mandela actively worked towards dismantling the institutionalized racism that was known as apartheid. But apartheid was part of a global problem that had permeated into the minds of South Africans just like all other colonial systems. Decolonizing the minds of the people who have experienced long periods of colonization, apartheid and now coloniality, becomes a lengthy if not lifetime undertaking. By the time of his death, Mandela had still not succeeded in undoing the

socio-economic inequalities that were deliberately created under apartheid. Should we therefore dismiss Mandela as a tragic hero who delivered nothing? The South African black consciousness political activist Andile Mngxitama (2008: 1) understands Mandela 'as South Africa's metaphor' of disappointment and 'a perfect embodiment of postcolonial Africa'. He elaborated that:

Mandela is, in some way, a perfect embodiment of postcolonial Africa, a continent blessed with so many possibilities but consistently producing so much disappointment. The African dream of liberation has become a long nightmare. As Mandela turns 90, the country he helped found some 14 years ago is in a mighty mess. Its hatred of black people has reached the apex with the mass slaughtering and displacement of black Africans. Post-1994 has been much celebrated for the benefits it bestowed upon a few; silence has befallen the fate of the black majority which has been bequeathed a bestial existence. (Mngxitama 2008: 1)

This reading of Mandela as a failure is pronounced among some black constituencies that have not seen a qualitative change in their socio-economic life since the transition from apartheid to democracy. This is a constituency that is seething with anger emanating from an expectation crisis. It is this constituency that interpreted Mandela as 'a euphemism or code for deference, patience, forgiveness, reconciliation and absolute love of whites' rather than for humanity in general (More [no date]: 8). This reading of Mandela sees him as having been disciplined by long imprisonment to the extent of undergoing metamorphosis from a radical decolonial nationalist to a highly compromised neoliberal who abandoned the politics of nationalization of the commanding heights of the economy as documented in the Freedom Charter of 1955. Those who push this argument go to the extent of describing Mandela as a sell out. It is a charge that is levelled at Mandela mainly by the unemployed youth who are deeply disappointed by the transition from apartheid to democracy. Mandela is said to have failed to deliver economic freedom. He is said to have presided over profoundly compromised CODESA negotiations that produced 'an intra-elite economic deal of neo-colonialism' (Modisane 2014).

The frustration of the South African youth is understandable; but that Mandela was a sell out might be a sign of a failure to appreciate the complexity of the South African struggle and the challenge of dealing with an undefeated enemy. Zakes Mda's take might be helpful here:

I understand the disillusionment of these young people, although I do not share their perspective. To me, Mandela was neither the devil they make him out to be nor the saint that most of my compatriots and the international community think he was. I see him as a skilful politician, smart enough to resist megalomania that comes with deification. I don't think the policy of reconciliation was ill-advised; it saved the country from a bloodbath and ushered a period of prosperity. (Mda 2013: 1)

As I posited in the Preface, Mandela's struggle must be appreciated from a perspective of a decolonial civilizational project rather than of a narrow political economy. Mandela himself provides part of the answer to his critics:

Only armchair politicians are immune from committing mistakes. Errors are inherent in political action. Those who are in the centre of political struggle, who have to deal with practical and pressing problems, are afforded little time for reflection and no precedents to guide them, and are bound to slip up many times. But in due course, and provided they are flexible and prepared to examine their work self critically, they will acquire the necessary experience and foresight that will enable them to avoid the ordinary pitfalls and pick out their way ahead amidst the throb of events. (Mandela 2010: 34)

The current book reveals the complexities of the South African struggle and the enormity of the issues and dangers that had to be navigated and negotiated to avoid the country falling into further bloodshed and chaos. It takes into account the changing post-Cold War global order and the pressures that were put on the ANC and Mandela from representatives of local and global capital that wanted post-apartheid South Africa to emerge as part of the neo-liberal dispensation. The unrepentant racists were threatening to plunge the nation into bloodshed so as to derail the transition from apartheid to democracy. A so-called black-on-black violence was being fomented and sponsored as part of a broader agenda of derailing the negotiations. Continuing the armed struggle was

constrained by the collapse of the Soviet Union, which had sponsored the ANC. The available options for the negotiators from the liberation side were limited as they were dealing not only with an undefeated enemy but also a cunning and plotting force that still wanted to maintain white dominance.

I must say that writing about Mandela in the context of a complex struggle invokes the proverbial three blind people who were trying to describe an elephant. In this case, it is the broad decolonial civilizational project that needed the buy-in of the ex-colonized and the ex-colonizers alike. Depending on where the blind people were touching, they offered divergent descriptions of the animal. Thus, if the Mandela decolonial civilizational project has failed, it is not because it was wrong but because it lacked the genuine buy-in of ex-colonizers who took advantage of his decolonial magnanimity to reproduce the status quo of domination, racism and inequality. Further to this, such a broad decolonial civilizational struggle cannot be expected to be a mere epochal one; it is even more than a lifetime struggle as it is meant to reverse over five hundred years of Euro-North American-centric modernity/imperiality/coloniality architecture and configuration of power, being and knowledge predicated on race and a 'will to power'.

Seeking to Understand the Mandela Phenomenon

While all biographies, hagiographies and flimologies of Mandela sought to understand him as a political actor – that is, as a person of exceptional qualities – this book is seeking to understand the Mandela phenomenon from a critical decolonial ethical perspective that goes beyond focusing on the Mandela as a person. Those who have studied Mandela and written on him before me, such as Raymond Suttner (2007) and Paul Maylam (2009), emphasized the complexity of the subject. Suttner is a stalwart of the liberation struggle who knew Mandela personally. Building on his personal knowledge of Mandela and the ANC, he criticized most of the biographers of Mandela for 'misunderstanding' him. Suttner posited that:

To understand Mandela, and especially as a political figure, it is essential to locate him as a changing political and human being in a dynamic and diverse political environment. In particular, how the ANC works, how it alters its mode of operating, the extent to which even a powerful personality like Mandela is constrained by this organization, must be understood. (Suttner 2007: 110)

Suttner elaborated that those who wished to understand Mandela have to read 'Mandela in the ANC' not outside the ANC; the complexity is compounded by the fact that the ANC 'is both the same and different' affected by 'continuities and raptures'. Following the argument of Suttner, if one missed the interrelationship between Mandela and the ANC, there was the danger of misreading 'Mandela as a political being who himself changes overtime'. He also admitted that there were times when Mandela's popularity far exceeded that of the ANC, sometimes giving him opportunities to 'act without organizational authority' (Suttner 2007: 110). Interestingly though, Suttner also revealed that Mandela always respected other leaders such as Moses Kotane and Walter Sisulu to the extent of deferring to them. This is how he put it:

The primary relationship between Sisulu and Mandela was always one in which Sisulu would be in the background and Mandela would be in the overt leadership position. But deference to Sisulu's understanding and judgment is a constant theme of their interaction. (Suttner 2007: 112)

More than the question of organizational authority, Suttner also ascribed primacy to settling the question of Mandela's ideological orientation. He noted that some works on Mandela tried frantically to 'fit him into a specific political orientation', with some calling him a liberal and others debating whether Mandela was ever a communist, Marxist, or a Gandhist who was opposed to the use of violence in the liberation struggle (Suttner 2007: 119–23). He outrightly dismissed the idea of Mandela being a Gandhist as inapplicable. On Mandela being a liberal, Suttner (*ibid.*: 120) pointed out that he 'agreed with representative democracy, which is not the exclusive property of liberalism'. The important point that emerges from Suttner's analysis is that Mandela appropriated various local and global ideological resources as a leader of the

ANC in an effort ‘to rally support from all quarters, especially those that had been hostile or indifferent to the struggle of the ANC. It was part of his mission to win them over to support the organization’ (ibid.: 121).

In this, Suttner was correct to emphasize that, in writing about Mandela, one was ‘dealing with a complex life that deserves more in-depth exploration’ (2007: 128). Maylam (2009) adopted two approaches to understand Mandela. The first one was built on the work of John Campbell (1949) on heroes with many faces. Following this work, Maylam explored how Mandela could be understood as an archetypal hero. Archetypal heroes had a clear trajectory of separation, initiation and return to society. With Mandela, this trajectory would fit the Rivonia Trial and imprisonment as representing separation of Mandela from society; the long imprisonment as the political initiation; and the release from prison as the return of a saviour-like figure (Maylam 2009: 35–36). But Maylam found this articulation of Mandela akin to reducing him to a ‘semi-mythical figure’. He therefore preferred an approach that emphasized Mandela’s humanism founded on principles of ‘humility, integrity, generosity of spirit, and wisdom’ that were opposed to the negative attributes of ‘grandiosity, ostentation and personality cults’ (ibid.: 36).

This book is a study of the Mandela phenomenon as underpinned by profound humanism. It is a critical decolonial reflective perspective, which like all other perspectives is limited and provisional. I hope the reflections contained in this book will be taken as worthwhile contemplations of the Mandela phenomenon and that they will be taken as they are – that is, as personal and partial reflections on an important subject and an important African leader. Like all other reflections, they are an invitation to broader interdisciplinary conversations on the Mandela phenomenon beyond the scope of biographies and hagiographies.