

BIOGRAPHIES OF SOME OF THE KEY PEOPLE IN THE PLAY

The play is the story of Mandela's life but Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu and Winnie Mandela, for example, all have their own fascinating stories.

You could use the biographies below as jumping off points to find out more about some of the other people in the play.

WINNIE MANDELA (1936- present)



Nomzamo Winifred Zanyiwe Madikizela was born, the fifth of nine children, in the village of Mbongweni, in the Transkei on 26 September 1936. Her father, was a history teacher, her mother a science teacher.

When Winnie was still young, two tragic events occurred. Firstly her elder sister contracted tuberculosis and died. Secondly, soon after her sister's death, Winnie's mother also developed the disease and passed away.

In 1945, when she was only nine years old, Winnie had her first conscious experience of what the injustices of racism meant in South Africa. News had just arrived that the Second World War had ended, and celebrations had been scheduled. Along with her siblings, Winnie begged their father to attend, and eventually he agreed. However, upon arriving at the town hall, it was discovered that these celebrations were "for whites only" and the children were forced to remain outside with their father while the white population enjoyed the merriment within. The obvious injustice struck a deep blow for Winnie, and thereafter she grew increasingly sensitised to the inequality of the world around her.

Luckily for Winnie, the Apartheid policy of introducing a separate education syllabus for Blacks was only introduced in the early 1950s. Therefore she was able to benefit from an education that was on par with her White peers at the time.

In 1953 Winnie was admitted to the Jan Hofmeyr School of Social Work in Johannesburg. She completed her degree in 1955, finishing at the top of her class, and was offered a scholarship for further study in the USA. However, soon after receiving the scholarship offer, she was offered the position of medical social worker at the Baragwanath Hospital in Johannesburg, making her the first black member of staff to fill that post. Winnie agonised over the decision but she decided to remain in South Africa.

Whilst working at the hospital, Winnie's interest in national politics began to grow. She moved into one of the hostels connected to the hospital and found that she was sharing a dormitory with Adelaide Tsukudu , the future wife of Oliver Tambo.



Young Winnie

Winnie was twenty two when she met Nelson, who was sixteen years her senior. He was already a famous anti-apartheid figure. On March 10 1957, Nelson asked Winnie to marry him and despite government restrictions on Nelson's movements they got married on 14 June 1958, in Winnie's family village.

Winnie quickly discovered that life married to one of Apartheid's most famous opponents was a lonely one. Her husband was always busy with ANC meetings and legal cases. The Mandela residence was also a site for frequent police raids, during which policemen would awaken the household with loud banging on the doors in the early morning and turn the whole house upside down.

On March 30 1960, nine days after the Sharpeville massacre, a police raid on the Mandela home saw Nelson arrested and Winnie left by herself with a young baby and another on the way.

Later in 1960 the Mandela's second daughter, Zindziswe was born. However, Winnie's joy at having a second child was tempered by the news that the ANC executive required Nelson to go into hiding. Nelson had not discussed this with his wife, simply taking her support for granted.

Winnie's married life to Nelson while he was in hiding was unusual, to say the least. They would meet secretly; often with Nelson in heavy disguise. This was the 'Black Pimpernel' phase of Nelson's life, and Winnie had little choice but to fit in around his clandestine activities. Their most intimate and prolonged encounters occurred at the Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia.

On Sunday 5 August 1961, the police finally apprehended Nelson while he was driving from Durban to Johannesburg. It was to be the beginning of his 27 year detention.

With Nelson in jail the police, sensing Winnie's potential to carry on the struggle, slapped her with a banning order. This restricted her movements to the district of Johannesburg; prohibited her from entering any educational premises and barred her from attending or addressing any meetings or gatherings where more than two people were present. Moreover, the banning order also stipulated that media outlets were no longer permitted to report anything she said

The authorities also targeted Winnie's children Zenani and Zindziswa. On numerous occasions Winnie enrolled them into schools, only for the security police to find out and insist that the schools have them expelled. This was in addition to the continued raids on her house; her banning order and frequent last minute refusals to visit her husband in jail.

In 1965, a new and more severe banning order was handed to Winnie. Previously her banning order had limited her movements from 'dusk to dawn' but her new banning order barred her from moving anywhere other than her own neighbourhood. This had several ramifications, including the necessity for her to give up her job as a social worker. Subsequently, she was hounded out of job after job with the police approaching anyone bold enough to give her employment and insisting that Winnie be fired. Due to her continued struggles in finding her daughters a school, Winnie eventually sent them away to Swaziland where she was able to enrol them in a private school.

On the night of 12 May 1969 Winnie awoke to the familiar sounds of a police raid. Her children were home for the school holidays and the police made a particularly thorough investigation of everything in the house. After ransacking the property, they tore Winnie away from her daughters and bundled her into a police van. She had fallen foul of the 1967 Terrorism Act, which allowed the arrest of anyone perceived to be endangering the maintenance of law and order. It stipulated that anyone could be arrested without warrant, detained for an indefinite period of time, interrogated and kept in solitary confinement without access to a lawyer.

Winnie was kept in solitary confinement for seventeen months. For the first 200 days, she had no formal contact with another human being at all aside from her interrogators. The only items in her concrete cell were three thin bug-infested and urine-stained blankets, a plastic water bottle, a mug and a sanitary bucket without a handle. The only other feature of her confines was a bare electric light bulb, which burned constantly and robbed her of any sense of night or day.

During her interrogation, Winnie was kept awake for five days and five nights in an attempt to force her to provide information about the ANC and her husband. After five days of resistance, under every kind of coercion imaginable, the interrogation team brought a prisoner into the adjacent interview room and began torturing him. Winnie's interrogators made it plain to her that her silence was causing unnecessary distress to others fighting for the cause, and eventually she agreed to tell them whatever they wished to hear.

On 1 December 1969, Winnie's trial finally began. Winnie and her co-accused were represented by Joel Carlson, an old friend of Winnie and Nelson's, and a well respected human rights lawyer. After many complications, Winnie's release was finally secured. She had spent a total of seventeen months in prison with thirteen of those in solitary confinement, and after all this the state had failed to secure a conviction.

Winnie's first banning order had expired while she was in jail. However, almost immediately upon being released she was served with another, lasting five years. This forbade her from leaving the house between 6pm and 6am and made it virtually impossible to see her husband on Robben Island.

Now Winnie's life outside of jail took an almost opposite turn to her husband's. While Nelson and his ANC comrades on Robben Island accommodated themselves to being politically inert and concentrated their efforts on intellectual pursuits, Winnie found herself at the coalface of the struggle. The police raids were relentless, with intrusions into her home sometimes happening up to four times a day. Her house was routinely burgled, vandalised and even bombed. During this time Winnie became something of a lightning rod for South Africa's disenfranchised youth. To the Apartheid regime she became a significant political figure in her own right, as opposed to merely being the feisty wife of Nelson Mandela.

By the mid 1970s, Winnie found herself settling into her new role as the symbolic mother to the burgeoning student movement. In May 1976, just a few weeks before the uprising in Soweto, Winnie along with Dr Nthatho Motlana helped to establish the Soweto Parents' Association. In the weeks that followed the violence of June 16, Winnie and Dr Motlana had their hands full attending to youths and parents who had been arrested, injured or killed in the riots. The police attempted to pin responsibility for inciting the violence on Winnie herself, but regardless of how influential she might have been, Winnie's influence alone could never explain the levels of anger amongst South Africa's youth at that time.

Nonetheless, a simple scapegoat had to be found for the Soweto uprising and Winnie fit the bill. Once again she was detained. The police held her in custody for

five months, eventually releasing her in December 1976 without charge. In January 1977, she was served with a fresh five year banning order.

There was, in fact, a far graver fate awaiting Winnie in 1977: in the early hours of the morning on May 15, a police contingent arrived at her doorstep to take her away. On instruction from the government, the police were moving Winnie to domestic exile in a dusty town 400 miles away from Johannesburg.

Prior to her arrival the Department of Bantu Affairs had informed locals that a dangerous female – indeed, a terrorist – would be moving there and that they should avoid contact with her at all costs.

To all intents and purposes Winnie's banishment backfired. While she was living out her banishment she established a local gardening collective; a soup kitchen; a mobile health unit; a day care centre; an organisation for orphans and juvenile delinquents and a sewing club.

After 8 years Winnie's banishment came to an end and she returned to Johannesburg. She found it was a changed and more dangerous place than the one she had left behind. In 1985 Oliver Tambo, from his position in exile, had made a call to all South Africans to: "make the country ungovernable" and people had heeded his call in droves. The youth were running riot and the government's imposition of a series of states of emergency had done nothing to quell the resistance.

Shortly after returning home, Winnie again set to doing what she had always done and looked for ways to help those she saw as vulnerable. To this end, she established a place for disenfranchised youth to feel at home, organise, and socialise. This informal grouping of youngsters became known as the Mandela United Football Club (MUFC). There already existed in Soweto a Sisulu Football Club and it was therefore not an unusual name for the group to adopt. Football was just one aspect of these groups' activities and for MUFC, it would unfortunately be the last thing for which they were remembered.

During the long years that Nelson had been in jail and Winnie had been struggling by herself, the couple had moved in opposite directions. Whilst Nelson and his Robben Island coterie had become more academic and statesman-like during their years cut-off from grassroots politics, Winnie was forced to become a soldier on the ground. During her decades of police intimidation and harassment; her emotional brutalisation and her physical imprisonment and banishment, Winnie had developed combative defences against a hostile world. Since the latter stages of her exile, rumours had begun to circulate about Winnie's increasingly erratic behaviour; her recourse to drink and her occasional bouts of violent behaviour. Once established in Soweto, these rumours refused to dissipate and her frequent public appearances in khaki uniform did little to quell speculation that her approach to liberation was becoming increasingly militarist and violent.



On 28 July 1988, the MUFC became embroiled in a conflict with pupils from Daliwonga High School and as a consequence, Winnie and Nelson's beloved house was set on fire and burnt to the ground. Winnie relocated to a bigger property - some would say a mansion – in Diepkloof and the MUFC moved with her. Shortly after the move, grim stories emerged about kidnappings, assaults and torture by the MUFC. Culminating in Winnie and the MUFC being implicated in the murder of a boy known as Stompie.

On February 2 1990, FW De Klerk used the opening of parliament to unban the ANC.. Also, in a major move, Nelson Mandela was to be released from jail. Just over a week later, on February 11, Nelson walked out of prison hand in hand with Winnie to a reception of hundreds of thousands of supporters. The couple were finally reunited after almost 30 years of separation.



Winnie and Nelson's life after his release was a blur of travel, speeches and media obligations. Despite certain members of the ANC having grown increasingly frustrated with Winnie's militancy, Nelson elected to appoint her to the ANC's head of Social Welfare in September. The decision was a controversial one but given her good relationship with the country's youth, it was ultimately accepted by the dissenting voices within the party.

During this time, Winnie and her accessories in the MUFC were also standing trial for the murder of Stompie. . Winnie was cleared of the murder itself but sentenced to

five years in prison on four counts of kidnapping and one year as an accessory to assault. In the event she was granted leave to appeal and her bail was extended, with the courts eventually ordering her to serve a two year suspended sentence and pay a fine of R15 000. However, the allegations, the trial and the controversy were all taking their toll on the Mandelas, and the image of the happy couple was fading fast.

On April 13 1992, Nelson called a press conference and announced that he was separating from his wife.

Winnie's political career was all but over, and despite a brief stint as the head of the ANC Women's League at the end of 1993 and again in 1997, her retreat from political life had begun. .

In August 1995, Nelson instituted divorce proceedings against Winnie and in March 1996, the divorce was finalised.

Following the end of Apartheid, Winnie continued to campaign for issues she strongly believed in. For instance, in June 2000, she travelled to Zimbabwe to express solidarity with the 'war veterans' taking over white farms, and in July 2000 she wore a T-Shirt emblazoned with the words 'HIV positive' and joined the chorus of voices demanding free anti-retrovirals for sufferers of HIV

WALTER SISIULU (1912-2003)



Walter Sisulu was born in the Transkei on 18 May 1912. Sisulu was born out of wedlock. His father was a Mr. Dickenson, a white assistant magistrate. He was raised by his grandmother and uncle and only moved in with his mother when he was six years old. He attended an Anglican missionary institute, but left at the age of 15 after his uncle died. To help support his family he was forced to seek work in Johannesburg where he found employment in a dairy.

He returned home to undergo traditional Xhosa initiation rites, returning to Johannesburg in 1929 where he worked in a gold mine and later a biscuit factory and attended night school at the Bantu Men's Social Centre.

In 1940, Sisulu was fired from his job at a bakery for his role in organising a strike for higher wages. In the next decade he worked in various companies and always left after some or other disagreement. In 1940 at 28 years old, Sisulu joined the African National Congress (ANC).

In 1941 Sisulu met Albertina Thethiwe, a young nursing student and they were married on 15 July 1944. This was followed by a reception at the Bantu Men's Social Centre in Johannesburg on 17 July. Dr Xuma, then-president of the ANC, and Anton Lembede, president of the newly formed ANC Youth League, were the main speakers. Lembede warned Albertina that she was marrying a man who was already married to the nation.

Walter and Albertina had five children and they also helped raise Walter's sister's children. In their early years of family life Albertina worked as a nurse while Walter's mother played an active part in raising the children.

Albertina's background was relatively sheltered and through her relationship with Walter she became exposed to politics. He was her guide and mentor, as he was to Nelson Mandela, and to many others who interacted with him. Much of their courting revolved around attending ANC meetings and Albertina soon became a freedom struggle leader in her own right.

In 1944 Sisulu attended the ANC annual national conference in Bloemfontein. It was at this conference that Sisulu, (along with Lembede, Mandela, Oliver Tambo, and Ashley Mda) was elected to the executive committee of the newly established ANC Youth League.

During the Second World War, Sisulu campaigned against Black South Africans joining the army. He supported the Youth League in pressing for the reform of the ANC and for the ANC to adopt boycotts and other forms of direct action to address the needs of the disenfranchised. During this period he had his first clash with the police when he was charged after a scuffle on a train with a white ticket collector who had confiscated an African child's season ticket.

In 1950, the government of Daniel Malan prepared to implement its new apartheid policy by introducing a series of harsh racial laws and proposing to ban the Communist Party. As a leader of the ANC, Sisulu played a central role in advocating and planning the 1952 Defiance Campaign. He led a group of passive resisters and was arrested and imprisoned for a brief period before being served with the first of his many banning orders under the Suppression of Communism Act. In December 1952, Sisulu, Mandela, Moroka and others were tried under the Suppression of Communism Act for their leadership role in the Defiance Campaign. All 20 accused were sentenced to nine months' imprisonment with hard labour, suspended for two years.

Sisulu was re-elected as ANC Secretary-General in the same month, and in 1953 spent five months touring China, the Soviet Union, Israel, Romania and the United Kingdom. The tour to the socialist countries convinced Sisulu to join the outlawed and newly reconstituted the South African Communist Party on his return. His membership of the underground communists is again recognised as one of the most important factors cementing the relationship between the ANC and South African Communist Party.

During the 1960 state of emergency following the Sharpeville massacre, Sisulu and many of his co-defendants in the Treason Trial were detained for several months. Following the banning of the ANC and Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), Sisulu was placed under house arrest. In June 1961 he was one of four people, with Joe Slovo, Nelson Mandela and Govin Mbeki who secretly met and discussed the formation of Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) the new more radical wing of the ANC which believed in violent action.

In 1962 Sisulu was continuously harassed by police and arrested six times, though charged only once. Finally, in March 1963, he was convicted of furthering the aims of the banned ANC and for organising the May 1961 stay-at-home protest. He was released on bail pending an appeal and placed under 24-hour house arrest. On 20 April 1963 he skipped his bail conditions and went underground at the SACP's secret headquarters at Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia.

On 26 June 1963 Sisulu made a short broadcast from a secret ANC radio station. On 11 July the police raided the farm and he was arrested with Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Ahmed Kathrada and others.

Sisulu and the rest of the "Rivonia group" were held in solitary confinement for 88 days. They were charged in October 1963 along with Mandela who had been arrested previously, and on 12 June 1964 the Rivonia Trialists were sentenced to life imprisonment for planning acts of sabotage.

That night Mandela and Sisulu were flown with the others in a military plane to Robben Island. Albertina was left to rear her and Walter's five children, plus her late sister's two children, on her own. Albertina became the sole breadwinner of the family. She also functioned as a link between the ANC leaders in jail and those in exile. The security police harassed her constantly and she was restricted, banned, placed under house arrest, arrested and taken into custody and sometimes kept in solitary confinement.



Mandela and Sisulu in jail

While in prison Sisulu studied and completed his 'O' levels. In addition he led the first structured political discussions, which were held while the prisoners worked in the lime quarry. Here he also lectured on the history of the ANC.

Sisulu also played a key role in political organisation on the island and was instrumental in developing an underground ANC political structure called the 'High Organ', which dealt with the daily concerns of prison life and the maintenance of internal discipline. Members of the High Organ were the four ANC National Executive Committee members; Mandela, Sisulu, Mbeki and Mhlaba. Mandela and Mhlaba acted as the secretariat of the High Organ with Mandela as the overall leader.

By the time the post-1976 generation arrived on Robben Island, Walter's informal lectures on the ANC formed the major component of a fully-fledged course of study known as Syllabus A. The syllabus, devised by the High Organ, consisted of two years of lectures on the ANC and the liberation struggle, a course on the history of the Indian struggle by Kathrada, a history of the Coloured People and a course on Marxism by Mac Maharaj. Nelson Mandela acknowledged Walter's contribution to Syllabus A:

'It was Walter's course that was at the heart of all our education. Many of the young ANC members who came to the island had no idea that the organisation had even been in existence in the 1920s and 1930s, through to the present day. For many of these young men, it was the only political education they ever received'. (Long Walk to Freedom, p.557).

Walter and Albertina's children continued the political activism of their parents. Their eldest son, Max, for instance, had been detained at the age of 17 and went into exile after his father had been arrested in Rivonia in 1963. Zwelake was involved with the publication New Nation, which was placed under restriction on several occasions. He was also detained without trial for two years.

The political shift in South Africa and the southern African region that culminated in the release of political prisoners, the return of political exiles and a negotiated political settlement in South Africa marked the end of years of separation for the Sisulu family.

In April 1982 Sisulu, Mandela, and others were moved from Robben Island to Pollsmoor prison in Cape Town. The reason for the move was so that the Botha government could ensure greater secrecy in their effort to convince Mandela to accept their conditions for a negotiated settlement with the ANC. Mandela turned to his fellow prisoners, and Sisulu in particular, for advice in his dealings with the government intermediaries. One of the conditions that Mandela insisted on was the early release of his co-accused and on 15 October 1989, after 26 years in prison, Walter Sisulu, Ahmed Kathrada, Andrew Mlangeni, Elias Motsoaledi, Raymond Mhlaba and Wilton Mkwayi, were released along with Oscar Mpetha, the veteran ANC and SACP Cape Leader, and Japhta Masemola, a Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) leader. Their release was greeted with scenes of wild celebration around the country. Soweto was awash with black, green and gold and a huge ANC flag was draped across the walls of the Sisulu house. Though still banned, the ANC had come out into the open.

Less than three months later, on 2 February 1990, the ANC was unbanned and Nelson Mandela was released 9 days later.

Sisulu subsequently met with the external wing of the ANC in Lusaka and was asked to lead the ANC inside South Africa.

In April 1994 South Africans enjoyed their first ever free and fair elections and overwhelmingly elected the ANC to government. With millions of their comrades, Walter and Albertina Sisulu celebrated the convincing electoral victory of the organisation to which they had devoted most of their lives. Six weeks later, they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on 17 July 1994.

Walter Sisulu was deputy president of the ANC until ill health forced him to retire from active politics in 1994.

Walter Sisulu died on 5 of May 2003, a few days before his 91st birthday

OLIVER TAMBO (1917-1993)



Born on October 25, 1917, in Bizana, South Africa, Oliver Tambo was from a modest farming family. He earned a scholarship to attend the University of Fort Hare (where Nelson Mandela also attended), the only university open to black citizens in the country, where he studied education and science. He received his bachelor's degree in 1941.

In 1944, Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela, helped form the Youth League of the African National Congress. Tambo taught at a missionary school for a time but opted to study law, seeing legal action as a powerful tool in which to dismantle state-supported segregation. In 1952, he joined with Mandela to open the Johannesburg-based Mandela and Tambo, the first black South African law firm.

Tambo became increasingly at the forefront of ANC political activity, further agitating against apartheid. He and other party members were arrested in 1956 for treason, though later cleared. During this period, Tambo married Adelaide Tshukudu, a nurse and member of the ANC's Youth League; the couple would go on to have three children.

After the Sharpeville massacre, where dozens of citizens were killed or hurt, the ANC took on the stance of using violent, militant tactics to overthrow apartheid. The party was banned by the government and Mandela would be sentenced to life imprisonment. Tambo was appointed to head the ANC in exile by the party's president, Chief Albert Luthuli. Tambo became acting party president in 1967, upon Luthuli's death.

Tambo established residences in Zambia and London, England, among other locales, and received party aid from some European countries, including Holland, East Germany and the Soviet Union. From abroad Tambo coordinated resistance and guerrilla movements, and, despite internal organizational struggles, was able to keep the multi-racial ANC intact. During the 1980s, with the unrest in South Africa reaching chaotic heights under the P.W. Botha regime, Tambo was increasingly able to find Western support for the plight of the people, including economic boycotts.

Though steadfast in his political commitment, Tambo was noted for his grace, warmth and affection. He was able to return to his native country in 1990, when the ban against the ANC was lifted by new South African President F.W. de Klerk. In struggling health after having suffered a stroke, Tambo turned over party presidency to Mandela in 1991 and became chairman.



Oliver Tambo died on April 24, 1993, in Johannesburg, South Africa.

FW DE KLERK (1936- Present)



F. W. de Klerk was born in Johannesburg on 18 March 1936 and grew up in a political family, with both his father and grandfather serving in high office.

De Klerk graduated in 1958 from Potchefstroom University with BA and LI.B degrees. At the same time he was awarded the Abe Bailey scholarship (an all-expenses paid educational tour to the United Kingdom). In 1969 he married Marike Willemse, with whom he had two sons and a daughter.

"F.W." was first elected to the House of Assembly, in 1969 as the member for Vereeniging, and entered the cabinet in 1978.

Under P W Botha he held a succession of ministerial posts, including:

- Posts and Telecommunications and Sports and Recreation (1978–1979)
- Mines, Energy and Environmental Planning (1979–1980)
- Mineral and Energy Affairs (1980–1982)
- Internal Affairs (1982–1985)
- National Education and Planning (1984–1989).

He became Transvaal provincial National Party leader in 1982 and chairman of the Minister's Council in the House of Assembly in 1985.

For most of his career, de Klerk had a very conservative reputation. The NP's Transvaal branch was historically the most staunchly conservative wing of the party, and he supported continued segregation of universities while Minister of National Education. It thus came as a surprise when in 1989 he placed himself at the head of *verligte* ("enlightened") forces within the governing party which had come to believe that apartheid could not be maintained forever. This wing favoured beginning negotiations while there was still time to get reasonable terms.

P. W. Botha resigned as leader of the National Party after an apparent stroke, and de Klerk defeated Botha's preferred successor, finance minister Barend du Plessis, in the race to succeed him. A month later, the NP caucus nominated de Klerk as state president. Botha initially refused to resign, saying that he intended to serve out his full five-year term, which expired in 1990. He even hinted that he might run for re-election. However, after protracted negotiations, Botha agreed to resign after the September 1989 parliamentary elections and hand power to de Klerk. However, Botha abruptly resigned on 14 August, and de Klerk was named acting state president until 20 September, when he was elected to a full five-year term as state president.

In some of his first speeches after assuming the party leadership, he called for a non-racist South Africa and for negotiations about the country's future. A couple of months later, in February 1990, he suddenly lifted the bans on the African National Congress (ANC) and the Communist Party of South Africa, and released Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners. In legislative terms, he enabled the gradual end of apartheid. De Klerk also opened the way for the negotiations of the government with the anti-apartheid-opposition about a new constitution for the country.

His presidency was dominated by the negotiation process mainly between his NP government and the ANC, which led to the democratization of South Africa. In 1992, de Klerk held a whites-only referendum on ending apartheid, with the result being an overwhelming "yes" vote to continue negotiations to bring it to an end.



In 1993, De Klerk and Mandela were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their work in ending apartheid.

After the first universal elections in 1994 de Klerk became deputy president in the government of national unity under Nelson Mandela, a post he kept until 1996. In 1997 he resigned the leadership of the National Party and retired from politics.

In 1999, de Klerk established the pro-peace FW De Klerk Foundation of which he is the chairman. De Klerk is also chairman of the Global Leadership Foundation headquartered in London, which he set up in 2004, an organisation which works to support democratic leadership, prevent and resolve conflict through mediation and promote good governance in the form of democratic institutions, open markets, human rights and the rule of law. It does so by making available, discreetly and in confidence, the experience of former leaders to today's national leaders. It is a not-for-profit organisation composed of former heads of government and senior governmental and international organisation officials who work closely with heads of government on governance-related issues of concern to them.

In 2004 while giving an interview to a US journalist de Klerk was asked whether South Africa had turned out the way he envisioned it back in 1990. His response was:

There are a number of imperfections in the new South Africa where I would have hoped that things would be better, but on balance I think we have basically achieved what we set out to achieve. And if I were to draw balance sheets on where South Africa stands now, I would say that the positive outweighs the negative by far. There is a tendency by commentators across the world to focus on the few negatives which are quite negative, like how are we handling AIDS, like our role vis-à-vis Zimbabwe. But the positives – the stability in South Africa, the adherence to well-balanced economic policies, fighting inflation, doing all the right things in order to lay the basis and the foundation for sustained economic growth – are in place.

After the inauguration of Jacob Zuma as South Africa's president in May 2009, de Klerk said he was optimistic that Zuma and his government can "confound the prophets of doom".

Upon hearing of the death of Mandela de Klerk said: *He was a great unifier and a very, very special man in this regard beyond everything else he did. This emphasis on reconciliation was his biggest legacy.*