



From darkness, light.

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## **HMH to host U.S. Premiere of Mandela: Struggle for Freedom**

**--Exhibition showcases the human rights movement that rocked the world--**

**HOUSTON (July 16, 2020)**... Holocaust Museum Houston (HMH) announces the U.S. premiere of *Mandela: Struggle for Freedom*, a rich sensory experience of imagery, soundscape, digital media and objects used to explore the earthshaking fight for justice and human dignity in South Africa – and its relevance to issues of today. On view September 11, 2020 through January 3, 2021 at HMH's Lester and Sue Smith Campus located at 5401 Caroline St., visitors can experience the tiny cell where Nelson Mandela spent 18 of his 27 years in prison, take a stand in front of a giant 22-foot long by 9-foot tall armored vehicle, make a virtual protest poster on a digital light table, or enter a secret apartment for freedom fighters forced underground.

Among its many dramatic visual features, the exhibition replicates Mandela's eight-foot by seven-foot prison cell. When entered, the cell becomes a digital theatre whose walls tell a story of repression and resilience. Other exhibition highlights include a 16-foot high "wall of laws" based solely on skin color, and original artifacts including police riot gear, tools of hard labor, letters written by Mandela, segregated swimming and toilet signs, and more.

Mandela's unbreakable will inspired people around the globe to mobilize for human rights. Born 102 years ago this week (on July 18), he was one of the most famous human rights defenders of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the face of a movement against racial injustice that rocked the world. Mandela was released from prison on February 11, 1990 and continued the fight to abolish apartheid. Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 jointly with South African President F.W. de Klerk, Mandela was elected South Africa's president the following year during the country's first democratic elections.

"We've waited nearly two years to host this extraordinary exhibition," said Dr. Kelly J. Zúñiga, CEO of Holocaust Museum Houston. "The fight for social justice and human rights is not over, as witnessed from recent unrest in the U.S. and around the world. While many young people have never heard of apartheid, the movement behind Mandela spread across nations. This exhibition shares an important piece of global human rights history, so its lessons can reverberate today with a new generation."

*Mandela: Struggle for Freedom* was developed by the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR) (Winnipeg, Canada) in partnership with the Apartheid Museum (Johannesburg, South Africa). Tour management services provided by Lord Cultural Resources. The CMHR is grateful to The Asper Foundation, Travel Manitoba, TD Bank Group and Air Canada for supporting this international tour.

The exhibition in Houston is sponsored by Wells Fargo. United Airlines is the official airline of Holocaust Museum Houston. For more information, visit [hnh.org/Mandela](http://hnh.org/Mandela).

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### Backgrounder

*Mandela: Struggle for Freedom* is on view at HMH September 11, 2020 through January 3, 2021. Among its highlights:

- **Five zones – Apartheid, Defiance, Repression, Mobilization and Freedom** – house interactive exhibits, artifacts and objects, oral histories, video and art. Each zone corresponds to a different color of the South African flag, adopted with the first democratic elections of 1994 to symbolize unity. Visitors start with the stark black-and-white of apartheid oppression and end in the full living color of freedom.
- **A 16-foot high “wall of laws”** is covered with signs and laws, based solely on skin color that dictated how people had to live their lives, including where they could go and what they could do under South Africa’s former system of apartheid. Apartheid was used as a system of racial segregation and labor exploitation, imposing control on all aspects of life – as evidenced by the number and diversity of laws.
- **The scene of young Mandela’s famous first TV interview** in 1961 in a clandestine apartment location is recreated in front of the actual film footage (the Widlake interview). At this time, freedom fighters are moving underground. A “covert” area in this gallery zone features hidden objects, peepholes and coded phone messages.
- **A tiny prison cell** with rear-projection scrim walls comes alive with silhouettes of Mandela moving about in his daily routine, then relays a story of continued resistance in the face of repression. Visitors are exposed to the dehumanizing conditions of Robben Island, the tools of hard labor, the censored letters, the meager contents of the cell, and a little-known plot to escape.
- **Tanks against trash-can lids:** Music, rhythmic toyi-toyi dancing, and rich “shwe-shwe” fabrics enliven the story of action and uprising. A massive, tank-like truck emerges from one wall, where visitors can grab a trash-can lid as their only protection, like students in the Soweto uprising.



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- **Original artifacts** include a battered ballot box used in the country's first democratic elections in 1994 when Mandela became president; a letter in Mandela's own hand, sent from prison to a leader of anti-apartheid mobilization; a notepad Mandela used during negotiations for democracy; and a message Mandela wrote in the Canadian Senate during a visit shortly after his release from prison in 1990.
- **In-gallery activities include a virtual poster-making station** on a digital touchscreen table, with the ability to project your poster among others displayed in the exhibit. Poster-making was a major part of the South African community resistance. People with few resources would gather to make inspiring posters that called people to action and solidarity in the struggle. Hundreds of examples still exist.



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