

Comments Addressed to the Student Body of St Chad's College to Accompany Presentation of the Mandela Lithographs

I owned these lithographs from the moment they became available for public purchase in 1996. Now they all belong to Chad's. I could not be more pleased to pass them on, as they could not be better presented or in a better place. My hope is that the value of a direct association between the pictures and the man, who changed the political landscape of South Africa and became an icon across the world, will be especially felt by all who come to work and study at Chad's.

The scenes painted by Mandela in typical African primitive high colours, were his entire life for 27 years of incarceration. You might wonder what deep emotions sustained him during those twenty-seven years. I do. Whatever they were, they could not be broken - until he learns that his wife and daughter have betrayed his chosen form of passive protest and instead have chosen criminal and bloody confrontation. That did, nearly kill him emotionally. How do we know that? Well we do know that, because his every conversation was taped and transcribed - so even more privation to be endured. And I imagine, thereafter, he must have felt utter desolation. By the end of Mandela's sentence, his wife Winnie Mandela was plainly contemptuous of him, and his daughter Zinzi preferred to side with her cruel mother.

In 1990, Nelson Mandela is released and in 1994 elected as President of his country, somehow contriving to appear wise, avuncular, and gracious, because he believed that was what his country needed to dampen down the embers of internecine hatred which would otherwise ignite and lead to further bloodshed. And I think he somehow found the strength to pursue his exceptional, benevolent influence whilst a part of his inner self remained utterly desolated.

Lesson. There's a lot to learn about human behaviour - others and yours. Some inspirational and some abominable. So attend to your characters. Don't waste time or opportunities to become virtuous. At present, I regret to say that presently the world is drenched in awfulness. With my background, it's probable I would say that wouldn't I? But I do know about war, and I do know about serious criminal behaviour and the horror and misery each brings. The hardest lesson to learn is that there is no ultimate arbiter to whom victims of either may appeal for protection and that even when people are in desperate peril, the cavalry frequently doesn't come. The United Nations has a wonderful Charter but is only as effective in delivering its Articles as its Member States allow it to be. The massacre of 3,000 men and boys in Srebrenica in 1995 is a terrible example of that. And today, I can list tyrannies that unimpeded are still torturing and killing. But weak and vulnerable people can be helped by people like you, because as virtuous citizens you won't put up with the behaviour that from the beginning leads to this dismal situation. Virtue and rectitude have become old-fashioned and almost meaningless qualities but unless they are constantly learned and upheld, societies become dissolute, rotten, and unruly. Crime continues to be organised across national boundaries and is frequently linked to warlords across the world who exploit weakness and fear. Why do they have this power? Because we allow them to have it. We allow them to exploit our weakness and our frailties. Human sex and personal intimacy has been debased by a swollen porn industry, and what it offers is becoming more damaging and addictive. My command at New Scotland Yard included responsibility for the Obscene Publications Squad and Paedophile Unit. I've seen enough images of depravity to be damaged by it. And it is damaging. Please don't try to prove me wrong.

So might Mandela persuade you to be forthright and steadfast with only your own principles to sustain you? As a virtuous individual be prepared for adversity, confrontation, weak betrayal, from people around you. If it gets hard, welcome it. Feeling lonely is frequently a price to pay for doing what you believe to be right and especially protecting others who are abused and intimidated.

However, you'll be surprised how your courage and example will draw the most unlikely people to support you and give you a renewed personal authority . Know when to grit your teeth and how to disagree with people you like or love - and when to offer compassion and a hug.

Your Principal loves you. All her staff love you. So take some of that love away with you and share it -especially with strangers. Treating individuals with reciprocal courtesy is a good first move. All my experience is in the past. All yours await you, so prepare yourselves. Do stuff well – and to the best of your ability - that means everything you do. That will build self-discipline and frequently the stitch that will save nine. Do stuff well and make things better. Choose the hard road. You're going to be outstanding individuals and when you take a hit, just think of the man who painted these pictures and the loneliness and desolation that he overcame.

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