



Knowing Mandela: A Personal Portrait

By John Carlin

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Equal parts freedom fighter and statesman, Nelson Mandela bestrode the world stage for the past three decades, building a legacy that places him in the pantheon of history's most exemplary leaders.

As a foreign correspondent based in South Africa, author John Carlin had unique access to Mandela during the post-apartheid years when Mandela faced his most daunting obstacles and achieved his greatest triumphs. Carlin witnessed history as Mandela was released from prison after twenty-seven years and ultimately ascended to the presidency of his strife-torn country.

Drawing on exclusive conversations with Mandela and countless interviews with people who were close to him, Carlin has crafted an account of a man who was neither saint nor superman. Mandela's seismic political victories were won at the cost of much personal unhappiness and disappointment.

Knowing Mandela offers an intimate understanding of one of the most towering and remarkable figures of our age.

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Knowing Mandela: A Personal Portrait By John Carlin Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Carlin was the first foreign correspondent to interview Mandela as president. As South African correspondent for the London Independent, Carlin covered Mandela's release from 27 years of imprisonment in 1990 and spent the next five years chronicling Mandela's presidency. The two men last met in 2009 as Mandela's health was failing. In this memoir, Carlin offers more than a news account of the presidency of an extraordinary world figure. He details the personal and political struggles of a man charged with holding together a fragile nation at the end of apartheid and coping with the heartbreak of his troubled marriage. Behind the scenes, Mandela was as gracious as he appeared in public, taking tea in the president's chamber in contrast to the petty rules of apartheid, when he would have been restricted to drinking from a tin cup. Mandela set the right tone, coping with fearful whites, angry blacks, and a political party worried that he'd been co-opted after so many years in prison. Carlin portrays a 71-year-old man of stunning charisma, disarming journalists, detractors, former jailers, parliamentary opponents, and world figures from Bill Clinton to Queen Elizabeth. Written with obvious affection and admiration, this is a moving portrait of a philosophical and visionary man who was also pragmatic enough to know that anger and revenge would destroy South Africa. --Vanessa Bush

Review

“...an intimate remembrance by a journalist who grew to love him...Carlin offers a thoughtful tribute to this unparalleled leader.” (Kirkus)

“[A] short, eloquent portrait...Carlin’s skill as a journalist is expertly applied and the result is a concise but thorough look at both the flaws and triumphs of one of the world’s most renowned leaders.” (Examiner.com)

“...thoughtful blend of biography and personal encounters...Carlin’s journalistic skills and his effort to be objective present a lively picture of a personally disciplined man of great kindness as well as a clear view of the vast challenges facing South Africa.” (Publishers Weekly)

“...wonderful new memoir...” (Huffington Post)

About the Author

John Carlin is an acclaimed journalist and author who was the *Independent*'s South Africa correspondent from 1989 to 1995. He has also written for the *Times*, the *Observer*, the *Sunday Times*, and the *New York Times*, among other publications. His previous books include *Knowing Mandela* and *Playing the Enemy: Nelson Mandela and the Game That Made a Nation*, which is the basis for the film *Invictus*.

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