



My View

Nelson Mandela..A Humble Leader

Recently Nelson Mandela died at the age of 95. Like many others, I have admired Mr. Mandela for years. In fact, I consider him to be one of the two or three most inspiring leaders of this century.

He brought the warring factions in South Africa together after years of conflict and apartheid.

I have been following Mr. Mandela's career for a long time, and I'm familiar with his toughness and his fierce devotion to his mission. But it wasn't until Mr. Mandela died that I became aware of how important his willingness to "be human" was to his ability to bring people together in South Africa.

In interviews after Mr. Mandela's death, his friends and colleagues mentioned his toughness, his media savvy and his skills as a "wily" politician. But what they emphasized most was that what made Mr. Mandela such an extraordinary leader was his "humanness." Those who knew him best spent most of their interview time describing his authenticity, sense of humor, flirtatiousness, mischievousness and humility.

As one friend of Mr. Mandela put it *"he refused to be a saint."*

Flirtatious and mischievous?!! I've read lots of books on leadership, and I don't think I've ever read about being flirtatious and mischievous as qualities of effective leaders. But those close to Mr. Mandela described these qualities and his willingness to be vulnerable with others as part of what made him a great leader who others followed.

Listening to Mr. Mandela's friends and followers talk about his humility, flirtatiousness, sense of humor, mischievousness and his down to earth interests has been a refreshing reminder to me as a leader. I'm reminded that if I want to influence others, I need more than skill and competence. Others need to experience me as a real person, warts and all.

I hope that these thoughts will serve as a reminder to all TIP Leaders (all of you who are trying to contribute to TIP by influencing others) that our leadership is not only about accomplishing all of the tasks we need to accomplish to keep TIP running. We need to do what we do with a sense of humor and by letting our unique (and yes, sometimes quirky) personalities shine through. As leaders, we need to lead as Nelson Mandela did with "a twinkle in our eyes."

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