

# Frederik de Klerk

South African history teems with conflict between the black Africans, the Dutch settlers, and the English who seized control of the country. After much conflict, the Dutch eliminated the British influence and formed the Afrikaner National Party government in 1948.

The Afrikaner National Party banned black African participation in government through *apartheid* (a policy of legal racial segregation that forced black Africans into jobs of cheap labor). Throughout the 1960s and 70s black activists protested the unfair policies, and many were jailed, including Nelson Mandela, a leader of the African National Congress (ANC). By 1984, demonstrations, protests, and riots filled the streets. Thousands of Africans died fighting for equal rights.

In 1988, President Botha suffered a stroke and resigned from his presidency. Frederik de Klerk was named the Afrikaner National Party president. De Klerk was an obvious choice to lead the party because his father had served as a leader. It seemed he would carry on the tradition of whites-only elections and apartheid.

On February 2, 1990, President de Klerk announced "a new South Africa" to the all-white parliament, and he removed the ban on the African National Congress. It is said that audible gasps filled the air. On February 11, 1990, Nelson Mandela, who had been imprisoned for 26 years, left prison a free man.

**Anger reigned on both sides after Mandela's release. The whites had lost apartheid, and the blacks continued to fight for their rights.** After extensive negotiation, they agreed to a new constitution that banned apartheid. Frederik de Klerk believed that a new way had to be forged in order for the country to survive. De Klerk stood for his principles through difficult relationships, hostile times, and **negotiations...an example of integrity.**

Ten years later, de Klerk reflected, "If we had not changed in the manner we did, South Africa would be completely isolated. The majority of the people in the world would be intent on overthrowing our government. Our economy would be nonexistent. We would not be exporting a single case of wine, and South African planes would not be allowed to land anywhere. Internally, **we would have the equivalent of civil war.**" (The Observer, 2010)

How did this man from apartheid roots come to lead the country in the abolition of apartheid?

- He was open-minded and wanted to find solutions for South Africa.
- He had a style that invited thinking WITH him, a good skill in negotiations.
- **He was interested in increasing South Africa's stature abroad.**
- De Klerk's brother founded the anti-apartheid Democratic party, which advocated for non-racial democracy.

Questions:

1. What influences moved de Klerk to support banning apartheid?
2. What caused de Klerk to advocate for a new South Africa?
3. What words, phrases, or actions in the text help you to see his integrity? (underline them)
4. How did his integrity assist him in achieving the abolition of apartheid?



5. What about his decision-making and negotiations skills contributed to his success?  
Extra credit: How do those skills assist him in remaining true to his principles (integrity)?

