***An Unknown Hero***

By Griffin S.

Martin Luther King Junior helped end segregation in the United States. With this huge feat, it is unsurprising Martin Luther King Junior is a name almost everybody in the United States of America knows. His birthday is even a national holiday. School districts throughout the country teach children about his great legacy. However, a name the majority of kids and adults don't know is a man named Nelson Mandela. Martin Luther King Junior and Nelson Mandela are alike in many ways. They're both black. They both faced unfair treatment just because the color of their skin. They both protested against the segregation laws in their native countries. However, Martin Luther King Junior and Nelson Mandela are also very different. For example, Martin Luther King Junior was born and raised in the United States. Nelson Mandela however, was born and raised in South Africa. What most people don’t know, is South Africa's segregation was much more brutal than the United States' segregation. Segregation in a nut shell is enforced separation of races in a community. Places such as restaurants were segregated. Most restaurants would only allow whites in the eating establishment. If you were colored, than you would need to find another place to eat. It was as if whites thought Africans had a viral disease. The segregation in South Africa, which is also know as the apartheid (a-par-tide) laws, was a system of racial segregation enforced by the National Party (NP), which governed the country during the terrifying reign of apartheid. Apartheid laws was sin-like, and they meant black South Africans would be forced to live in camps on the outskirts of South Africa. These camps were poverty-like, and didn't even have electricity. Apartheid was sickening to see, and terrifying to experience. Peaceful protesters that stood against Apartheid were even murdered by the white police force of South Africa. Back in the States however, segregation didn't rise to the level of slaughter in cold blood. Nelson Mandela didn't want any of his fellow South Africans to be killed. He wanted South Africa to have equal rights for all colors. Nelson Mandela in the end gave black South Africans the same rights as white South Africans. How did he do this? Nelson Mandela made black South Africans equal with white South Africans by peaceful protesting, armed resistance, and showing the world the horrible acts the South African government was doing to black South Africans.

If you know who Nelson Mandela is, the first thing that probably comes to mind is peaceful protest. Nelson Mandela joined the African National Congress (ANC) in 1944. The ANC was founded in 1912, and is a political party, which wanted and still wants a South Africa with true equality. Someone who treats someone like they were a filthy disgrace because of their of color, gender, or religion wouldn't be tolerated. Mandela joined the ANC for the battle for equal rights in South Africa. Even with an entire organization against the iron grasp of apartheid, it was still latched on to South Africa with a white knuckle grip. In addition to being an official member of the African National Congress, Mandela took part regularly took part in public protests. During some of these protests, Mandela gave speeches about apartheid, and how these racist laws made the black citizens of South Africa feel. These Gandhi-like protests firmly told the South African government "We are against apartheid." Although peaceful protesters weren't breaking the law, police forcefully stopped several peaceful protests. This just made people protest even more. Mandela continued regularly take part of public protesting, despite police treating these protest events like our police in the United States would treat a riot.

Nelson Mandela also ended apartheid's rule over South Africa by using armed resistance. Nelson Mandela co-founded this resistance group after the Sharpeville massacre. This historic event took place on March 21, 1960 near the Sharpeville police station. There was a legal peaceful protesting event going on outside of the police station, and the police were told to stop the protest going on using brute force. The officers filed out of the station. Then, a single bullet was shot out of an officer's gun, making a protester drop dead. What followed was gunfire ringing through the sky like thunder. Sixty-nine protesters were shot dead, even more were injured, and the police didn't lose a single man. Nelson Mandela was outraged about his fellow black South Africans being slayed for telling the South African government they wanted to be equal to the white South Africans, not inferior. After this horrible act of racism, Nelson Mandela realized ending apartheid couldn't be done by peaceful protest alone. Thus, he founded Spear of the Nation (Umkhonto we Sizwe in Afrikaans). Spear of the Nation was an armed resistance against apartheid. Some of the things this armed resistance did would be considered as terrorism today. However, these attacks were for a better South Africa. The Spear of the Nation did several bombings, such as the infamous Magoo's Bar Bombing, which was a bomb that went off in a bar and killed three white South Africans and injuring sixty-nine whites. Another infamous bombing happened outside a shopping mall. The bomb went off in a rubbish bin. The explosion took the lives of five civilians, and injured forty people. Spear of the nation also had an entire army, which was allied with other resistances such as the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army and the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola. The Spear of the Nation fought along these liberation armies in blood baths against the police of South Africa. The Spear of the Nation was, at times, incredibly violent, but it was for the good of black South Africans and South Africa itself.

The battle to end apartheid and gain equal rights for black South Africans didn't just stay in South Africa. Nelson Mandela took the fight for justice to other countries, and spoke to their governments and leaders about the horrible darkness that is apartheid. Nelson Mandela showed the horrors of what the government of South Africa thought of black South Africans. Mandela revealed to the world what the South African government allowed to happen to black South Africans because they had a different skin color. Naturally, Earth was disgusted by these horrible act of racism. Now that he had the attention of foreign governments, Nelson Mandela asked these foreign governments to cut off trade with South Africa. This tactic cut South Africa off from goods from around the world, weakening the country like a lack of food would do to an animal. Eventually, South Africa plunged into a financial crisis due to the fact no foreign was excepting their goods, thus they didn't get the goods from other countries. This then lead to nothing being sold in South Africa, causing a lack of money for the South African government. On top of a financial crisis, people from around the world put a one thousand weight on South Africa's shoulders to stop apartheid. Nelson Mandela had almost the entire world on his side. Finally, apartheid's grip on South Africa began to weaken.

South Africa's apartheid covered South Africa with a cloud of darkness from 1948 to 1994. During this dark era, black South Africans were treated like wild animals. Nelson Mandela ended apartheid, became president of South Africa, and gave black South Africans equal rights as white South Africans. Nelson Mandela had to resort to violence to tell the National Party black South Africans wouldn't tolerate this kind of racial treatment. Martin Luther King Junior only used peaceful protest against segregation in the United States. Martin Luther King Junior didn't have to face the kind of violence Nelson Mandela did. Even though Nelson Mandela faced more challenges than Martin Luther King Junior, they both ultimately met their goal. Nelson Mandela ended the rule of apartheid in South Africa, and Martin Luther King Junior put a stop to racial segregation in the United States. Martin Luther King Junior ended segregation using peaceful protest, and Nelson Mandela ended apartheid by using peaceful protest, armed resistance, and speaking out to the world about the horrors of apartheid. It seemed impossible to end segregation, but it was done. Thanks to Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King Junior, the United States of America and South Africa will forever be a better place.