

Le décès de Nelson Mandela, président charismatique de la république sud-africaine, en décembre 2013 constituait le point de départ ce dossier. D'une part il attire l'attention sur une quasi-déification du personnage par les grands leaders mondiaux ainsi que par toute la population de la « Nation arc-en-ciel » — blancs, noirs, métis, riches et pauvres — ce qui pourrait être un facteur d'union nationale ; et, d'autre part, il fait un bilan plus mitigé, marqué par une amélioration très contrastée de la situation économique des différentes communautés : alors que la situation des blancs et des asiatiques est toujours prospère, la condition des noirs et « coloureds » semble stagner après une phase de progrès de 1993 à 2000.

Il est important de souligner que l'enthousiasme unanime autour du leader charismatique (dont la critique est impossible, note le journaliste de l'*Observer*) ne pourra faire illusion longtemps et que le pays devra lutter contre ses contradictions (part excessive de la représentation de la communauté blanche dans certaines professions) et ses démons (corruption, risque de violences interethnique).

Proposition : **Tackling racial inequality: Mandela's unfinished business?**

Even before he died in December 2013, Nelson Mandela, the first black president of the Republic of South Africa, had left a durable imprint through his life-long fight and the sufferings he endured, on both the population of his beloved country and the world at large. Three contemporary articles, respectively from *The Telegraph* (Dec 7, 2013), *The Observer* (Dec 7, 2013), and *BBC News* (2012), together with the photograph of a mural (*The Guardian*, Dec 7, 2013) and a graph, will help assess Mandela's legacy and examine whether race still matters in South Africa today.

As the two girls suggest (doc.4) by laying flowers in front of a giant portrait of Mandela painted on a wall, respect for the man is unanimous; it comes from all communities, be they white or black (doc.2), rich or poor (doc.1). As N. Tweedie writes, Mandela is worshipped “as a kind of deity” who saved the country's cohesion and thousands of lives by avoiding a civil war when he was released from his 27-year stay in Robben Island prison. The man who became an icon for peace, promoted reconciliation (doc.1) and placated those who wanted to take revenge on the Afrikaners (about 9% of the population) for Apartheid.

Despite this unity of feeling many signs point to a deep-rooted racial divide pervading all three aspects of South African society: cultural, political, economic. Whites and blacks don't mix, and a significant minority of Afrikaners live in fear of violence and are bracing for assault (doc.2). In the opposition the Democratic Alliance condemns the use of affirmative action to redress the racial balance in some sectors or major companies (at South African Airways 85% of pilots are white), since it smacks of infamous discrimination (doc.3). Moreover, although black citizens' income improved markedly from 1993 to 2000, it has apparently reached a ceiling at 10,000 rands while the Whites' and Asians' income kept skyrocketing (doc.5).

Two paths seem to emerge in order to fight racial inequality further. One would be to capitalise on the South African leader's global image which attracts all politicians, whatever their opinions: for many world leaders, as *the Telegraph* points out, tongue-in-cheek, the late president's funeral was the place to be (doc.1). Improving the black population's living conditions requires drastic measures. Mandela did less for the black South Africans and coloureds than they expected, and as the laws promoting affirmative action or the Black Economic Empowerment are either ineffective or circumvented by the black-owned companies, solidarity should prevail over dubious practices (doc.3).

To conclude, even though Mandela's legacy is not the undivided achievement that some would like to portray, it still shines a light. Mandela's party, the African National Congress seems set to tackle the remaining racial and economic inequalities. (461 words)