

# UNITED IN THE STRUGGLE

## Portraits in Courage

"I came of age in the '60s but the regret of my life is I never met Dr. King or Malcolm X. I told my son today to be in the presence of Nelson Mandela was an honor.

"This makes me able to go back to the board, despite all the problems, and know that I can make a difference.... This man is an inspiration."

These words were spoken by Taraja Samuel, an administrator with the New York City Board of Education, who took her 15-year-old son Taiye to the City Hall ceremony during Nelson Mandela's New York visit.

When human beings want to achieve special goals, we look for role models in men and women who have struggled and overcome.

As we have seen, one of the major focuses of The Assault On Illiteracy Program (AOIP) is on enabling affiliated organizations, along with their members, to assume the responsibility of acting as role models so that our people will develop more positive images of self and community. AOIP enables these organizations to work together to make of our communities such "Oases of Hope" that all who live there will be motivated to learn, achieve and become a productive part of viable wholesome communities.

In a May 1990 interview with Mandela in *EBONY* magazine, when asked "Were you influenced by any of the great African-American leaders, such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey or Paul Robeson, before or during your imprisonment?", he replied, "I can't say that I was influenced by any particular international leader. But I cer-



Nelson Mandela

tainly have heard of, and admire greatly, these men. Also, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and Booker T. Washington were [African Americans] that I admire because of their work done in the interest of freedom. They are our heroes, too."

In subsequent speeches and interviews, Mandela also mentioned George Washington Carver, Rosa

Parks, Sojourner Truth and Adam Clayton Powell Jr. as persons whom he admired.

Nelson Mandela's life is truly an inspiration for us all. No human person—Black or White—can fail to be moved to admiration when faced with his witness to the courage and strength of the human spirit, to the lack of bitterness in his demeanor, to the show of stamina under a wearying tour

that kept him front and center on an international stage.

Here are profiles of some of the people whom Nelson Mandela greatly admires.

### SOJOURNER TRUTH

**I**SABELLA Baumfree was born a slave in Hurley, Ulster County, New York in 1797. She lived with her parents in the cellar of a hotel before she was sold to another master. When Isabella was 30 years old, New York was emancipated, but her master refused to set her free, so she ran away.

Isabella fought for her rights all her life. When her son, Peter, was sold into slavery, she went to court to get her son back. Once a White man accused her of murder without proof. Isabella sued the man for libel and won!

Isabella was always very religious. In 1843, she said she had a vision that told her to travel and speak out against slavery. She took a new name.

"The Lord gave me the name Sojourner because I was to travel up and down the land showing people their sins and being a sign to them.

"Afterwards, I told the Lord I wanted another name, 'cause everybody else had two names and the Lord gave me Truth, because I was to declare truth unto people."

Sojourner Truth quit her job as a

"Pulling Ourselves Up By Our Own Bootstraps"...A Series