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LONDON GRID FOR LEARNING

Nelson Mandela elected first black president of South Africa
10/5/1994

Publication: Guardian 1821-2000; Date: May 10, 1994; Section: Front page; Page: 1

South Africa's first democratic MPs unanimously elect Mandela as president

NELSON MANDELA, Albertina Sisulu, Winnie Mandela, Joe Slovo . . . Like a who's who of South Africa's liberation struggle they were summoned before the Chief Justice, Michael Corbett, and sworn in as members of the country's first democratic parliament.

When all the oaths were taken, they unanimously elected Mr Mandela as the country's president. His acceptance was greeted with cheers and applause from the house and the public gallery.

They had gathered in dazzling saris, flowing African robes, sombre three-piece suits with carnations, and spanking new hats — garden party accessories for one of the last formalities of the transition process.

All performed against the staggering Cape Town backdrop of Table Mountain, which witnessed the arrival of the first white settlers in 1652 and Mr Mandela's first speech after his release from prison four years ago.

On the way to the parliamentary chambers they passed a picture of the former president, P. W. Botha, and his cabinet of 1984; all white, all male and all gone, with the exception of a handful versatile enough to have adapted to the last decade of change.

In their places sat the representatives of what Archbishop Desmond Tutu yesterday called "God's rainbow people". Presiding over them was the country's first woman Speaker, Frene Ginwala, an Indian member of the African National Congress and the leader of the National Women's Coalition.

Given that the ceremony was 72 hours late because of delays in the election count, the proceedings were surprisingly punctual.

A starting bell prompted the entrance of President-elect Mandela and the National Party leader, F. W. de Klerk. They walked down the central aisle, shook hands, hugged and then went their separate ways: one to government, the other to opposition.

Behind them was a Tembu *imbongi*, or praise singer, who recalled Mr Mandela's life in a humorous chant.

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