

ELIAS' STORY

1 My name is Elias. I am a poor black worker in South Africa. The time when I first met Nelson Mandela was a very difficult period of my life. I was twelve years old. It was in 1952 and Mandela was the black lawyer

5 to whom I went for advice. He offered **guidance** to poor black people on their **legal** problems. He was generous with his time, for which I was grateful.

I needed his help because I had very little education. I began school at six. The school where I studied for

10 only two years was three kilometres away. I had to leave

because my family could not continue to pay the school **fees** and the bus fare. I could not read or write well. After trying hard, I got a job in a gold mine. However, this was a time when one had got to have a passbook to live in Johannesburg. Sadly I did not have one because I was not born there, and I worried about whether I would become **out of work**.

15 The day when Nelson Mandela helped me was one of my happiest. He told me how to get the correct papers so I could stay in Johannesburg. I became more **hopeful** about my future. I never forgot how kind Mandela was. When he organized the **ANC Youth League**, I joined it as soon as I could. He said:

20 *"The last thirty years have seen the greatest number of laws stopping our rights and progress, until today we have reached a **stage** where we have almost no rights at all."*

It was the truth. Black people could not **vote** or choose their leaders. They could not get the jobs they wanted. The parts of town in which they had to live were decided by white people. The places outside the towns where they were sent to live were the poorest parts of South Africa. No one could grow food there. In fact as Nelson Mandela said:

25 *"... we were put into a position in which we had either to accept we were less important, or fight the government. We chose to **attack** the laws. We first broke the law in a way which was peaceful; when this was not allowed ... only then did we decide to answer **violence** with violence."*

30 **As a matter of fact**, I do not like violence ... but in 1963 I helped him **blow up** some government buildings. It was very dangerous because if I was caught I could be put in prison. But I was happy to help because I knew it would help us achieve our dream of making black and white people **equal**.

