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GWU Professor Discusses Humble and Gracious Leadership of Nelson Mandela

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Office of University Communications

December 12, 2013

By: Matthew Tessnear; City Editor, The Shelby Star

He embodied the combined traits of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr.

He showed the world how to be humble and gracious.

And he served as a prime example of leadership.

That's how Dr. Michael Kuchinsky, associate professor of political science at Gardner-Webb University, describes Nelson Mandela, who died Dec. 5 at 95. Mandela led South Africa out of racial segregation after spending 27 years in prison for his opposition to apartheid.

“He would have to be seen as one of the 20th Century’s greatest figures in terms of human rights and what freedom in the modern world would mean,” Kuchinsky said. “You cannot find perhaps a modern public figure in today’s world, whether those who come out of governmental institutions or popular culture or civil society organizations or religious organizations, who gave the tremendous amount of positive formation and tremendous amount of gratitude in his life.

“It was also what he avoided doing. He built a country on reconciliation, when it could have been a response based on grievances and settling scores.”

Kuchinsky specializes in international studies, conflict and peace-building, as well as ethics in international relations. He’s visited South Africa a half-dozen times.

Mandela gave his country foremost and then the rest of the world life lessons when he spent 27 years in prison and did not emerge embittered, Kuchinsky said.

“He instead wanted to be at the forefront of his new community and engaged in community service,” Kuchinsky said. “The tremendous humility, even looking at his posture and the way he looked at others. He brought a leadership from within, a marvelous example of what true leadership actually means. In many ways, one can say he is a legitimate world figure and world mentor for many different countries, and his influence is almost incalculable.”

[Click here to visit this article at ShelbyStar.com.](#)

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Longtime professor and GWU School of Divinity Dean Emeritus Dr. Robert Lamb (retired) joined Jeff Powell in the WGWG studios to share thoughts and insight on the social and political climate in South Africa, its incredibly diverse culture, and how Nelson Mandela established a pattern of peace and non-violence within the country following his release from prison. Lamb and his family lived in South Africa in the mid-1990s as part of a professor exchange program.

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University offers a comprehensive academic experience that introduces students to the diverse world of ideas and to the people who think them, preparing them for career success and for engaged, responsible citizenship in their professional, civic, and spiritual communities.