



Manual Labor to Student Leader

Hauling bricks, mixing cement, bringing water to the work site. Nelson Mandela labored doing all these things while helping build a school. As it turned out, this was a school where he would eventually study.

Mandela had taken a break between primary and secondary school. He needed to support his family, after his father had chased them all away when he remarried a younger woman. Then, while working on the school, Mandela met a man who would sponsor his secondary education. Three years later Mandela graduated from Mwera Vision Secondary School.

It would be great if that was the hardest part of Mandela's life. Unfortunately, that is not where the challenges ended. After secondary school, Mandela didn't have the funds to go on to college. He had the grades, but not the money, so he went back to work. He continued to work to support his family, housing one younger brother and helping another one through secondary school. On top of all this, he contributed to his mother's many medical bills. A lifetime of restaurant cooking and inhaling the smoke from charcoal fires had finally taken its toll on her health.



Mandela worked for years, but continually found his lack of education holding him back.

After several years of not seeming to make it anywhere, Mandela finally received another break. He heard about Wesley College, started by the United Methodist Church in Mwanza. It was the same United Methodist Church where he and his brother were baptized. It was a huge blessing to receive a full scholarship which covered his tuition.

Mandela is now studying Community Development and learning the skills needed to help transform the lives of others in his community. He hopes that other youth and young adults will not have to endure the same challenges that he did -- just to grow up, get an education, and have a chance at life.

In fall 2019, Mandela participated in his first field placement – an opportunity for experiential, hands-on training, which is a cornerstone of Wesley College's mission. Placed at a government development office, Mandela had an opportunity to participate in many facets of his chosen career. He facilitated savings and loans groups, counseled youth about the hazards of truancy, and helped deliver sanitation training for restaurant cooks.

What did he think was most important? Here's what he has to say:

“While in the field we had a chance to teach a women's group about their rights, specifically about their rights to own land. It was a blessing to be able to empower the women to stand up for themselves and see that they, too, had something to contribute to the family. We helped them understand how to claim their rights for themselves.”

All this from a young man who – not many years ago – was supporting his family by hauling bricks, mixing cement, and carrying water to a construction site. Soon after joining Wesley College, he distinguished himself academically, socially, and as a student leader. By his second year, he was elected our Student Body President.

Nelson Mandela is just one of 160 enrolled students. Each of them has their own unique background and story. Each one is discerning his or her own future. **When you become involved with Wesley College, you help students overcome challenges and become what God intended them to be.**