Twitter Thread by Louis Jadwong

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■Start the year with a LONG READ!

■ The scene...

■■ Nelson Mandela, conducting his own defence in his 1962 trial.

■■ Presiding, is a 'white' magistrate

■■ Mandela starts with an application asking magistrate to recuse himself....

https://t.co/p7z9q6ArgT

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MANDELA: A judiciary controlled entirely by whites and enforcing laws enacted by a white parliament in which we have no representation, cannot be regarded as an impartial tribunal in a political trial where an African stands as an accused

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MAGISTRATE: After all is said and done, there is only one court today and that is the White Man's court. There is no other court. What purpose does it serve you to make an application when there is only one court. What court do you wish to be tried by?

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MANDELA: I feel oppressed.
It reminds me that I am voteless because there is a parliament in this country that is white-controlled. I am without land because the white minority has taken a lion's share. We are ravaged by starvation and disease....

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MAGISTRATE: I fully realise your position, Mr Mandela, but you must confine yourself to the application and not go beyond it. I don't want to know about starvation. That in my view has got nothing to do with the case at the present moment.

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MANDELA: Your Worship, I would say that the whole life of any thinking African in this country drives him continuously to a conflict between his conscience on the one hand and the law on the other. The conflict arises for men of conscience.....

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MANDELA: We have been conscious of our obligations as citizens to avoid breaches of the law, where they can be avoided, to prevent a clash between authorities & our people, where such a clash can be prevented, but we have been driven to speak for what is right

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MANDELA: Government violence can do only one thing, and that is to breed counter violence. We have warned repeatedly that the government, by resorting continually to violence, will breed in this country counter-violence amongst the people.

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MANDELA: Already there are indications in this country that people, my people, Africans, are turning to deliberate acts of violence and of force, in order to persuade govt, in the only language which this govt shows by its own behaviour that it understands.

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MANDELA: But there comes a time, as it came in my life, when a man is denied the right to live a normal life, when he can only live the life of an outlaw because the government has so decreed to use the law to impose a state of outlawry upon him.

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MANDELA: Whatever sentence Your Worship sees fit to impose upon me for the crime for which I have been convicted before this court, may it rest assured that when my sentence is completed I will still be moved, as men are always moved, by their consciences.

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MANDELA: When my colleagues and I received the invitation to attend the Conference of the Pan-African Freedom Movement for East and Central Africa, I did not apply for a passport because I knew very well that it would not be granted to me.

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MANDELA: The tour of the continent made a forceful impression on me. For the first time in my life I was a free man; free from white oppression, from the idiocy of apartheid, from police molestation. Wherever I went I was treated like a human being!

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MANDELA: I met Prime Minister Obote of Uganda, distinguished African nationalists like Kenneth Kaunda, Oginga Odinga, Joshua Nkomo, and many others. In all these countries we were showered with hospitality, and assured of solid support for our cause.

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MANDELA: I have done my duty to my people and to South Africa. I have no doubt that posterity will pronounce that I was innocent and that the criminals that should have been brought before this court are the members of the Verwoerd government.

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At the end of this trial, on 7 November 1962, Mandela was convicted and sentenced to three years' imprisonment on the charge of incitement and two years for leaving the country without valid travel documents.

ENDS ■

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