

Frederick Gordon Brownell

Born: 8 March 1940 (Bethlehem, Orange Free State, South Africa)

Died: 10 May 2019 (aged 79) (Pretoria, Gauteng, South Africa)



Brownell was born in Bethlehem, in what was then the Orange Free State province in South Africa. He matriculated from St. Andrew's School in Bloemfontein in 1957.

He undertook his voluntary military service at the Air Force.

Bachelor of Arts degree in History and Social Anthropology at Rhodes University in Grahamstown in 1961.

Honours degree in history at the University of South Africa in 1965. Awarded a Master of Arts degree (with distinction) from the same university in 1977.¹

He joined the Department of Immigration in 1962 as an Administrative Officer.

He then joined the Department of National Education (later Arts, Culture, Science and Technology) as Assistant State Herald in the Bureau of Heraldry in 1977. He was promoted to State Herald in 1982 and retired from that position in 2002.²

Brownell designed many coats of arms, badges and flags.

In 1993/1994, he designed the current South African flag (which was originally intended to be an interim flag but was received so enthusiastically that it was permanently enshrined in the final South African Constitution in 1996), and it was approved by former president Nelson Mandela and the previous president Cyril Ramaphosa.³ He also designed a South African coat of arms.

He later designed arms for the new provincial governments in South Africa.



Emblem of Namibia



Flag of South Africa



Emblem of SA

¹ Converging Colors: Frederick Brownell and the Flag That United a Nation, Katapila Kakkun, 2025. <https://www.katapilakakkun.co.za/frederickbrownell/>

² Converging Colors: Frederick Brownell and the Flag That United a Nation, Katapila Kakkun, 2025. <https://www.katapilakakkun.co.za/frederickbrownell/>

³ Fred Brownell: The man who made South Africa's flag, *BBC News*, 27 April 2014. <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-27155475>