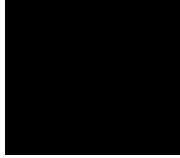


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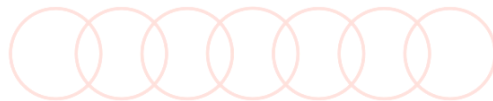
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Mandela: A Pan African Hero

**Statement by H.E. Dr. Nkosazana C. Dlamini Zuma
Chairperson of the African Union Commission at the
African Union Memorial for
President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela**

Au Conference Centre, Addis Ababa

8 December 2013



Mandela: A Pan African Hero.

Statement of AU Commission Chairperson, Dr. Dlamini Zuma at the AU memorial Service in honour of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, 8 December, Addis Ababa

A life shaped in struggle

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela's life must be understood in the context of the struggle of South African and African people, and indeed the struggle of oppressed peoples everywhere.

When Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was born in the village of Mvezo, Transkei on 18 July 1918, what was known during the First World War as the 'Africa Campaign' just ended a year earlier. This campaign affected Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, Uganda and the DR Congo in the east and on the west Namibia, Togo, Cameroon and Ghana. Its conclusion was yet another reshuffling of African territories by colonial powers after the Berlin Conference of 1884.

In Madiba's birth-place of South Africa, it was five years after the introduction of the infamous Land Act of 1913, an event which saw 80% of the population crammed into 13% of the country, making the majority of South Africans in the words of Sol T Plaatje, a pharisa in the land of their birth.

This world of colonialism and apartheid into which he was born, and the resistance of the peoples of this continent, are what shaped Mandela.

History is on the side of the oppressed

As one of the young militants of the ANC Youth League during the 1940's, along with Anton Lembede, Oliver Tambo, Bertha Gxowa, Walter Sisulu, Adelaide Tambo, Joe Matthews and others; Madiba and his peers knew that the South African struggles were closely linked to struggles across Africa, and indeed the world.

Addressing the 1951 Annual Congress of the ANC Youth League as its President, Mandela observed:

In common with people all over the world, humanity in Africa is fighting the forces (of colonialism).

In the Gold Coast a situation exists which is capable of being translated into complete victory for the people.

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[Events] in Nigeria are leading to a similar situation.

In French West Africa, the Democratic Rally of African People is leading the people into what is virtually open war against the French imperialists.

In Egypt the heroic struggle is being waged which must receive the support of all genuine anti-imperialist forces...

In Uganda the leaders of the Bataka Association who were condemned to fourteen years of imprisonment have had to be released as a result of the attitude of the masses.

In Central Africa the people saw through the tricks of the British imperialists who sought to foist a bogus federation scheme on them.

History is on the side of the oppressed.

The growing Pan African movement, the increasing number of independent African countries and the unflinching support and solidarity to the struggles of those still under the yoke of oppression was a further source of inspiration, as Madiba acknowledged when he addressed the Pan-African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa in Accra in 1962:

It is true that world opinion against the policies of the South African government has hardened considerably in recent years. The All African People's Conference in 1958, the Conference of Independent African States held in and the conferences at Casablanca and Monrovia last year, as well as the Lagos Conference this month, passed militant resolutions in which they sharply condemned and rejected the racial policies of the South African government.

It has become clear to us that the whole of Africa is unanimously behind the move to ensure effective economic and diplomatic sanctions against the South African government.

His addresss continued:

No less a danger to White minority rule and a guarantee of ultimate victory for us is the freedom struggle that is raging furiously beyond the borders of the South African territory; the rapid progress of Kenya, Uganda, and Zanzibar towards independence; the victories gained by the Nyasaland Malawi Congress; the unabated

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determination of Kenneth Kaunda's United National Independence Party (UNIP); the courage displayed by the freedom fighters of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), successor to the now banned National Democratic Party (NDP); the gallantry of the African crusaders in the Angolan war of liberation and the storm clouds forming around the excesses of Portuguese repression in Mozambique; the growing power of the independence movements in South-West Africa and the emergence of powerful political organisations in the High Commission territories. All these are forces which cannot compromise with White domination anywhere.

When Mandela was therefore send by the ANC in 1962 to mobilise support for South Africa's turn to armed struggle, he knew that as he travelled to Ethiopia, Algeria, Guinea and others African states, that he will find many homes. Indeed, over the next few decades of difficult struggles, our continent became home to freedom fighters from across Southern Africa, including myself.

The unflinching Pan Africanism of Mandela and his peers across Africa inspired generations, as Proffessor Thandikwe Mkandawire wrote on his blog yesterday:

The post-World War II era produced some memorable African leaders who grace the pantheon of champions of the African liberation struggle. There is little doubt that Nelson "Madiba" Mandela ranked among the best of these.

The late fifties was an era of trials and detentions in the colonies. The Treason Trial, which took place from 1956 to 1961, was closely followed by those of my generation largely through Drum Magazine. Mandela was one of 156 people arrested and tried for high treason.

During this period (other) leaders such as Jomo Kenyatta, Dr Hastings Banda, Kenneth Kaunda, Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo were in and out of courts, detentions centres or prison. Some, like Patrice Lumumba, were assassinated.

Prof Mkandawire also highlights how these leaders and movements influenced each other. He argues, for example that

"Important though... (Madiba's commitment to reconciliation) was in light of the racial animosity and fears that apartheid had generated, it was not unique to Mandela.

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From its original articulation by Jomo Kenyatta, “reconciliation” became the slogan of all the leading nationalist movements in white settler-dominated countries.

As the first democratic and non-racial President of South Africa, when the country took its place amongst the community of free African nations, Madiba addressed the OAU Summit of Heads of State and Government in June 1994, paying tribute to our common Pan African struggles:

We are here today not to thank you, dear brothers and sisters, because such thanks would be misplaced among fellow-combatants - we are here to salute and congratulate you for a most magnificent and historical victory over an inhuman system whose very name was tyranny, injustice and bigotry.

When the history of our struggle is written, it will tell a glorious tale of African solidarity, of African's adherence to principles.

It will tell a moving story of the sacrifices that the peoples of our continent made, to ensure that that intolerable insult to human dignity, the apartheid crime against humanity, became a thing of the past.

It will speak of the contributions of freedom - whose value is as measureless as the gold between the soil of our country - the contribution which all of Africa made, from the shores of the Mediterranean Sea in the north, to the confluence of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans in the south.

Africa shed her blood and surrendered the lives of her children so that all her children could be free. She gave of her limited wealth and resources so that all of Africa should be liberated. She opened heart of hospitality and her head so full of wise counsel, so that we should emerge victorious.

A million times, she put her hand to the plough that has now dug up the encrusted burden of oppression that had accumulated for centuries.

A universal struggle and icon

Many global headlines and statements since Thursday night spoke about how Madiba changed the world. The outpourings of grieve and solidarity from every corner of the world are testimony to the universality of the freedoms Madiba fought, stood and sacrificed for.

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He called attention to this global nature of the struggle against apartheid and colonialism during his acceptance address for the joint Nobel Peace Prize with President FW De Klerk in Oslo in 1993:

We stand here today as nothing more than a representative of the millions of our people who dared to rise up against a social system whose very essence is war, violence, racism, oppression, repression and the impoverishment of an entire people.

I am also here today as a representative of the millions of people across the globe, the anti-apartheid movement, the governments and organisations that joined with us, not to fight against South Africa as a country or any of its peoples, but to oppose an inhuman system and sue for a speedy end to the apartheid crime against humanity.

These countless human beings, both inside and outside our country, had the nobility of spirit to stand in the path of tyranny and injustice, without seeking selfish gain.

They recognised that an injury to one is an injury to all and therefore acted together in defence of justice and a common human decency.

Madiba returned to this theme when he addressed the United Nations General Assembly for the first time as President of South Africa in October 1994:

It surely must be one of the great ironies of our age that this august Assembly is addressed, for the first time in its 49 years, by a South African head of state drawn from among the African majority of what is an African country.

Future generations will find it strange in the extreme that it was only so late in the 20th century that it was possible for our delegation to take its seat in the Assembly, recognized both by our people and the nations of the world as the legitimate representative of the people of our country.

We stand here today to salute the United Nations Organization and its member states, both singly and collectively, for joining forces with the masses of our people in a common struggle that has brought about our emancipation and pushed back the frontiers of racism.

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The millions of our people say thank you and thank you again that the respect for your own dignity as human beings inspired you to act to ensure the restoration of our dignity as well.

We have together traversed a course which we are convinced has strengthened human solidarity in general and reinforced the bonds of friendship between our people and the nations of the world.

This dates back to the early days when India put the question of racism in South Africa on your agenda, to the moment when the world community, as represented here, could adopt consensus resolutions against apartheid, with none dissenting.

A new era for Africa

There is no question that the defeat of apartheid colonialism in Namibia and South Africa during the early 1990's, ushered in a new era in the history of our continent.

The mission of the founding generations of the Organisation of African Unity, to rid Africa of the yoke of colonialism and oppression, was, with the exception of Western Sahara, indeed completed.

Thus President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, implored the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government in June 1994:

If freedom was the crown which the fighters of liberation sought to place on the head of mother Africa, let the upliftment, the happiness, prosperity and comfort of her children be the jewel of the crown.

And indeed, during the years that followed, the upliftment, happiness, prosperity and comfort of Africa's children was his main pre-occupation, as President of a democratic South Africa and as an African.

At the OAU Ouagadougou Assembly of Heads of State and Government in 1998, after he announced that he will not seek a second term as President of South Africa, Mandela outlined the tasks that lay ahead:

As we were convinced when we established this Organisation 35 years ago, the successor generation can and must reaffirm this, that our countries and peoples are bound together by the reality of a common destiny for our Continent.

It must therefore deal in practical ways with the consequences of this fundamental determination.

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Among other things, it must win the war in terms of which victory we, as African countries, would not allow ourselves to be sucked into a fight among the powerless for power over one another.

None of us is a superstar and none can succeed without the success of the other.

That common destiny requires that we should treat the question of peace and stability on our Continent as a common challenge.

President Mandela lived up to this common challenge, with his involvement in the peace processes, not only in the Democratic Republic of Congo, but also in Burundi and Libya. In his words, “it is easy to break down and destroy. The real heroes are those who make peace and build.”

Madiba’s commitment to African development and prosperity was unwavering. In his speech to the Ouagadougou Summit in 1998 he therefore urged:

Again, none can gainsay the fact that our cooperation and integration is a fundamental precondition of the economic success of each of our countries, as is the pursuit of people-centred economic policies in each of our countries.

We must therefore build on the decisions we have taken about the African Economic Community as well as the reality of the regional economic units we have formed in various parts of our Continent.

Among the issues on our agenda ... (must) be the African debt, infrastructure development, capacity building and greater African participation in the world economy.

Tata Madiba through struggles came to recognize the important contribution of women. It was thus under his Presidency that the ANC introduced a quota of thirty percent for women.

Madiba also spoke about African participation in the information communications revolution:

The importance of the fact of African interdependence, and its practical recognition by ourselves, found expression in the Africa Telecom '98 Forum ... (that) emerged with a concrete, practicable and exciting programme to move our Continent onto the information super-highway.

Similarly, our Education Ministers have taken decisions to increase

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access by our youth to one another's institutions of higher education. This is another concrete initiative based on the fundamental concept of a common African destiny which we, as the political leaders of our Continent, must support practically.

We must also address the important question of exchanges among ourselves in the areas of science, technology and engineering and all other academic disciplines in general.

Among other things, we must attract back into the Continent the very many talented intellectuals who left Africa's shores to look for opportunities in the countries of the North, which offered them security and the possibility to advance their professional careers.

Similarly, we must work systematically to build people-to-people relations among our nations, to entrench the understanding that, as Africans, we are one people who share a common destiny.

Madiba continued,

Our common African culture allows me to say to those in this august Assembly, who are younger than the veterans such as Robert Mugabe, Sam Nujoma, Abdou Diouf and myself, that we charge you with the responsibility to lead our peoples and Continent into the new world of the next century - which must be an African Century -during which all our people will be freed of the bitterness born of the marginalisation and degradation of our proud Continent of Africa.

Let all of us repeat and commit ourselves to the perspective represented by the clarion call; The struggle continues and victory is certain! Our future as the ordinary masses of Africa is in your hands!

As we mourn and celebrate the life of this giant and hero of Pan Africanism, we recall the commitments we made at the 50th Anniversary Summit in our Solemn Declaration in May this year, to ensure an Africa that is integrated, people-centred, peaceful and taking its rightful place in the world.

We must therefore, as we concretise our Agenda 2063, accelerate progress on all those tasks entrusted by Madiba to our generations of Africans.

Fellow Africans and Peace-loving brothers and sisters of the world,

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Let me take this opportunity, on behalf of the African Union Commission, to thank everyone who wished Madiba well during his prolonged illness, including the medical team in South Africa who looked after his well-being.

We have been overwhelmed with messages of condolences and support from across our continent and the world.

As we remember Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, we take comfort from the words of Nikolai Ostrovsky when he said:

“Man’s dearest possession is life. It is given to him but once, and he must live it so as to feel no torturing regrets for wasted years, never know the burning shame of a mean and petty past, so live that dying he might say: all my life, all my strength were given to the finest cause in all the world-the fight for the liberation of mankind”

As the African Union Commission, we convey our sincerest condolences to the Mandela family, and thank them for lending him to the service of humanity.

President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, we thank you for the countless sacrifices you made, including graciously preparing us for a time when you will no longer be with us.

You have lived your life well. You bequeathed us with a better world than the one into which you were born.

You have now joined the galaxy of heroes, heroines and the founders of the Pan African movement such Marcus Garvey, Julius Nyerere, Oliver Tambo, WEB Dub Bois, Josina Machel, Mahatma Ghandi, Rosa Parks, Augustina Neto, Bishop Trevor Huddlestone, Malcom X, Che Guevara, Meles Zenawi, Ahmed Ben Bella, Kwame Nkruma, Amilcar Cabral, Eduardo Modlane, Toussaint Louverture, Miriam Makeba, Martin Luther King, Walter Sisulu. Thomas Sankara and many, many more.

You are joining those who founded the OAU 50 years ago, those who founded the Pan African Women’s Organisation (PAWO) 51 years ago and those who formed the African National Congress 101 years ago.

Hamba Kahle Tata Madiba!

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