

EDITORIAL

The Mandela-Obama effect: Legacies, divergences and convergences

Bob Wekesa: Researcher, Wits African Centre for the Study of the US

One of the major series of events in South Africa in 2018 was the commemoration of the centennial of Nelson Mandela's birth. At the peak of the event, former US president Barack Obama delivered the sixteenth annual Nelson Mandela lecture on 17 July, 2018. Thousands of South Africans braved the July chill in Johannesburg to listen to the then much-anticipated speech. Millions more around the world tuned in placing the commemoration among the mega global events of not just 2018 but the second decade of the 2010s.

The Wits African Centre for the Study of the United States saw it fit to organise two open forums to debate, deliberate and discuss the two giants of history before and after the annual lecture. Indeed, this was among the first public engagements of the then newly inaugurated Centre. The first forum, held on 10 July ahead of the annual lecture, was anticipatory in nature, teasing out the potential for contemplating the implications of the commemorations for the icons. The second forum, held on 27 July, reviewed Obama's annual lecture, again, gauging the appraisal of the event in South Africa and around the world.

The forums compared and contrasted the combined and separate personas of Mandela and Obama thus providing a canvass for reflections not just on Mandela's and Obama's traits but what they mean for Africa-US and global issues. The events brought together a diverse cast of academics and intellectuals to unpack the multiple viewpoints with the understanding that this would enrich our elucidating, extrapolating and interpreting as much the explicit as the symbolic themes thereof. The forums cross-cut three overarching sub-themes: the significance of Mandela and Obama for Africa, the US and the world; implications for foreign Policy, governance and diplomacy and

CONTENTS

- 1**
The Mandela-Obama effect: Legacies, divergences and convergences
Bob Wekesa
- 3**
Style form and substance in Obama's Mandela lecture
Nancy Okang'a and Bob Wekesa
- 6**
Comparing Mandela and Obama's approach to Africa
Christopher Williams
- 10**
Mandela, Obama and gender agenda
Michelle Small
- 13**
The Mandela-Obama legacies in comparative perspective and reflections on Obama's commemorative lecture
Francis A. Kornegay
- 17**
Obama's Mandela speech: democracy, human rights and civil liberties perspectives
Alice Brown
- 19**
Mandela and Obama in global peace and security
Michelle Small
- 22**
African media's discursive framing of Nelson Mandela's centennial celebrations
Nixon Kariithi
- 26**
Thoughts on comparing Mandela and Obama
J. Brooks Spector
- 28**
The portrayal of Mandela and Obama in Africa and American media
Andrew Meldrum
- 30**
Mandela and Obama: the convergences of legacies
Bob Wekesa
- 33**
Legacies under siege: a view from the Donald Trump and Ramaphosa presidencies
John Stremlau

representational perspectives drawing on media coverage. The think pieces in this policy brief are drawn from the presentations made during the forums. The broad objective is to record, document and sustain the discussion, nay debate on the impact, implications and significance of the legacies bequeathed by these global African greats. The pieces explore the intersections of Mandela and Obama as individuals and institutions and connect Africa and the US as well as the world rather than treating the two in distinct or separate ways. As intersections, a number of the pieces bear semblance no doubt borne of drawing on the similar if not the same sources and

narratives. They go well beyond the Mandela centennial into the past, the present and the future. Following on their presentations at the forums, the authors were afforded leeway to approach their topics with a style of their choice as reflected in the mixed voices, differing thematic thrusts and disciplinary interests. In the briefs, readers will interact with perspectives from scholars as well as practitioners thus offering variegated windows on the worlds of Mandela and Obama featuring personal accounts as well as detached analyses.

We thank the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD) for making this publication possible.



Style, form and substance in Obama's Mandela lecture

Nancy Okang'a: Social science researcher based in Nairobi

Bob Wekesa: Researcher, Wits African Centre for the Study of the US

Barrack Obama has come to be seen as one of the master public speakers of times. Indeed, his speechifying has been identified as one among other assets that lifted him to the oval office.

Closely following the plot of the speech delivered at the sixteenth Nelson Mandela Annual on 17 July 2018, this commentary piece focuses on the style of delivery that Obama used during his speech. There was warmth and flow for significant engagement in his words, voice and general demeanour. The introductory part of his speech was characterized by a sense of humour, gratitude, and humility. When beginning his speech, he announced that first and foremost he had “a correction” and “a few confessions” to make. In response to South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa who had invited him to the podium, he light-heartedly praised his “good” dancing skills but self-deprecatingly confessed his “poor geography” in not knowing that South African July is wintry - there was a burst of laughter and a bond was established at the outset. Indeed, in many other instances, he strategically paused to absorb the applause that followed from the audience.

The speech was powerful and persuasive in the use of simple and evocative language, touching on peoples' emotions. Obama achieved this by utilizing a combination of voice intonation and choice of words. In terms of the rhetorical accolades in service to Mandela's legacy, Obama grasped the role assigned him by his hosts. It was the celebration of a “life of one of history's true giants” of “a young black boy [who would] alter history” and one whose “light shone so brightly”, et cetera.

He invoked moments in Mandela's life as a rhetorical device to speak directly to the audience about Mandela's legacy: “you all remember”, “you'll recall”, “Madiba teaches us”, “he (Mandela) explained from the dock”, et cetera. History loomed large in the

delivery providing a broad canvas upon which Obama canvassed his ideological thought. “... Because history also shows the power of fear. History shows the lasting hold of greed and the desire to dominate others in the minds of men”, et cetera.

The structure and flow of the lecture was cleverly wrapped, weaved and mapped around the life of Nelson Mandela, thus providing turning points, context and themes. In the first phase, Obama took his enraptured audience back one hundred years to Mandela's 1918 birth. It is a period of: European colonial domination of Africa; the building blocks of apartheid are being put in place; the First World War has just ended; exploitation and poverty reign supreme and discrimination on racial, ethnic, class, religious and gender lines is the order of the day around the world. Obama painted a grim picture of the second decade of the twentieth century in which Mandela was born.

He signalled the transition to the second phase of the lecture with the phrase: “That was the world just 100 years ago”. Here, we saw Obama applying the rhetorical device of contrast between the pre-Second World War period in which Mandela was born and the post-Second World War in which he came of age. At the outset, he intoned: “it is hard ... to overstate the remarkable transformations that have taken place since that time” (the post-World War Two era). The world is on the march, with “self-determination, democracy and rule of law and civil rights and the inherent dignity of every single individual”. Union movements emerge; health, safety and commercial mechanisms are established; access to education is expanded.

The third phase of the lecture, going with the trajectory of Mandela's life as the basic framework, began with the release of Mandela. At that point in the late 1980s to early 1990s, the world had made “very real strides ... since that moment when Madiba took those steps out of confinement”. It coincided with “the fall of the Berlin Wall” and

a “wave of hope ... washed through hearts all around the world”. Obama implored his audience: “Do you remember that feeling?”

Rhetorical questions were spewed at the appropriate moments in the speech. Some were meant to make the audience to momentarily think. “Should we see wave of hope that we felt with Madiba’s release from prison, from the Berlin Wall coming down – should we see that hope that we had as naïve and misguided? Should we understand the last 25 years of global integration as nothing more than a detour from the previous inevitable cycle of history...?” he asked. He took us through the motions of Madiba’s chaperoning of the new South Africa: negotiations, reconciliation, democratic elections. Here, the reconciliation theme, expounded later in the speech, is particularly pronounced. He connected the dots globally by speaking of Mandela as a representative of a new international order in the post-Cold War era. Among other dynamics, we saw the “nuclear détente ... a prosperous Japan ... a unified Europe anchored in NATO ... the entry of China into the world’s system of trade ... dictatorships [begin] to give way to democracies”.

The fourth, final and core phase of the lecture is one in which unbridled globalization came in for Obama’s relentless upbraiding and berating. In this phase, Obama used straight argumentation on matters of his convictions. If we use Mandela’s life as the analytic template of the lecture, we can surmise that the fourth and dystopian phase of the lecture is after Mandela’s retirement from office in 1999; with the apogee as “the devastating impact of the 2008 financial crisis”. Obama argued that even with the progress made after the end of the Cold War, the superstructure of discrimination, inequalities and corruption never really fizzled out. In this phase, Obama is confronting the challenges that threaten Mandela’s legacy. The pace quickens and he begins to resemble an Obama on a campaign trail. “For far too many people, the more things have changed, the more things stayed the same”, he argued.

He enumerated some of the resultant challenges as: economic insecurity; rise of a small but influential elite class; religious fundamentalism; intolerance to racial and cultural diversity; free press under attack and social media promoting conspiracy theories; mass migration; climate change; pandemic diseases. Although Obama was careful not to name names, the allusions and inferences made it clear whom he was critical of. He is digging at his White House successor Donald Trump when he argues that “you can be proud of your heritage without denigrating those of a different heritage. In fact, you dishonour your heritage ... you’re a little insecure about your heritage if you’ve got to put somebody else’s heritage down ... [and] putting people down and puffing [yourself] up [shows you are] small-hearted, that there’s something [you are]

just afraid of.” Through words, Obama painted a picture of the current world’s state of affairs, evoked specific memories and in the end presented a vista of hope. Interesting to note is the manner in which, throughout, he largely posed as a speaker who is merely stating facts. To emphasize this, he urged his audience to “look at history”, “look at the facts” and “check the history books”.

In parts of the speech, he came out forcefully with regards to his convictions. “Let me tell you what I believe,” he said to his audience, “I believe in Nelson Mandela’s vision. I believe in a vision shared by Gandhi and Martin Luther King and Abraham Lincoln. I believe in a vision of equality and justice and freedom and multi-racial democracy, built on the premise that all people are created equal, and they’re endowed by our creator with certain inalienable rights.” In this regards, Obama essentially weds himself not just with Mandela, but with other great ‘legacy’ leaders. He alludes to ideological differences with African leaders when he said: “we have to resist the notion that basic human rights like freedom to dissent, or the right of women to fully participate in the society, or the right of minorities to equal treatment, or the rights of people not to be beat up and jailed because of their sexual orientation”.

He circuitously critiqued a number of South African leaders deemed racially intolerant when he said: “Madiba knew that we cannot claim justice for ourselves when it’s only reserved for some. Madiba understood that we can’t say we’ve got a just society simply because we replaced the colour of the person on top of an unjust system ... it’s not justice if [you revenge when] you’re on top”. He is repudiating the ‘Mandela-as-traitor’ discourse when he cites Mandela saying that “... make peace with an enemy ... and that enemy becomes one’s partner.” He took a dim view of Western leaders when he said: “[There] can’t be an excuse for immigration policies based on race, or ethnicity, or religion”, especially in the wake immigration debacles in the EU, UK and the US.

To offer solutions to major global challenges, Obama returned to Mandela again and again using the rhetorical strategy of repetition. For instance, “on Madiba’s 100th birthday, we now stand at a crossroads ... should we see that wave of hope that we felt with Madiba’s release from prison, from the Berlin Wall coming down – should we see that hope that we had as naïve and misguided?”. He advocated for “the liberal, progressive ideal” accompanied by “inclusive capitalism”, forged in “freedom and democracy” and seized of the need to protect the poor from the ill-effects of globalization. The lecture marked an important moment for the people of South Africa and Africa as a whole. As he reminded the people of Mandela’s legacy, the need for equality for all was at the core of this speech. He also intended to foster the mood of

‘audacious hope’. With these as the two agendas eminent in Obama’s speech, if the potential solutions that he offered were rather intangible, he ended with a call for pragmatism, in the form of the Obama Foundation’s work with young leaders across Africa. Notably, in the closing moments of the speech, he heavily relied on quotes from Mandela as an affirmation of his convictions.

He essentially wound down the delivery by making a clarion call to all – a call to love. Quoting the lines of one of Mandela’s popular quotes, “No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for

love comes more naturally to the human heart.” He appealed for a reaffirmation of equality and love as values that characterized Mandela’s passion during his lifetime.

A sense of urgency was evident in his choice of words and tone in the ‘homestretch’ phases of the lecture. At some point he declared that “we have no choice but to move forward; that those of us who believe in democracy and civil rights and a common humanity have a better story to tell.” Being a politician, Obama has courted opposition and criticism. Most observers would however disagree with the substance of his speeches but not the style. No less was the Obama’s Mandela speech.



Comparing Mandela's and Obama's approach to Africa

Christopher Williams: Postdoctoral Research Fellow, International Relations Department, the University of the Witwatersrand

This essay has two objectives. First, it reviews of some of the key principles that guided the Nelson Mandela administration's foreign policy in Africa. And second, it briefly assesses whether similar principles also animated former President Barack Obama's approach to the continent.

First, it is important to address what sources should *not* be used to assess Mandela's foreign policy principles. In 1993, an article ostensibly authored by Mandela was published in the American journal *Foreign Affairs* entitled "South Africa's Future Foreign Policy." In the twenty-five years since this article was published it has been widely quoted and often used to identify Mandela's foreign policy beliefs. There are two reasons why the *Foreign Affairs* article is a poor reference point if one is to understand Mandela's foreign policy. First, Mandela did not write the article. In fact, studies by two researchers who followed these matters – Matthew Graham and John Siko – reveal that ANC officials were not substantially involved in composing the document. Instead a number of academics including Peter Vale, Gary van Staden, Allen Hirsch, Rob Davies, and Anthoni van Nieuwkerk drafted the ANC's foreign policy position paper in 1993 upon which the article attributed to Mandela is based.

It has been argued that Mandela likely agreed with the document, and so it is acceptable to continue to cite him as its author. This makes little sense as agreement is not authorship. Mandela had no involvement in creating the article and it is unclear whether he reviewed a draft before it was published. Though Mandela likely approved of much the *Foreign Affairs* article had to say, if he had systematically laid out his views on foreign policy, his nuance, emphasis, and manner of expression may have been very different. Precision matters, and it is imprecise to attribute authorship of this document to Mandela. That the *Foreign Affairs* article continues to be cited as an accurate expression of Mandela's views indicates a

degree of intellectual inertia in the scholarship on South African foreign policy.

A second reason the ubiquitous *Foreign Affairs* article is a poor guide to understanding Mandela's foreign policy approach is that it was published before he took office. The document says nothing about the difficult dilemmas and decisions South African officials *actually* faced, and how foreign policy was *actually* implemented. We can learn more about foreign policy during the Mandela era by examining diplomacy in practice rather than evaluating previously stated principles.

If the *Foreign Affairs* article is not a suitable guide, then what tenets directed South African foreign policy during Mandela's tenure as president? Four principles stand out:

- A focus on African renewal
- An emphasis on achieving this renewal through multilateral initiatives
- An effort to encourage good governance that respects the will of the governed as part of the renewal, and,
- Because of a people-centered, rather than state-centered focus, a willingness to criticize invidious or inept leaders and push the bounds of the traditional notions of state sovereignty

Though Thabo Mbeki rightfully receives much of the credit for the African Renaissance idea, Mandela's own focus on the continent's renewal should not be ignored. In a speech at the Organization of African Unity (OAU) meeting in Tunis just a month after he became president in 1994, Mandela described the beginnings of what he termed an "African Renaissance." In this speech Mandela spoke of Africa's many contributions to civilization and extolled some of Africa's finest leaders.

Throughout his presidency, Mandela would return to the theme of an African revival, and relatedly, Africa's responsibility to spearhead this revival. For example, in 1997 Mandela was closely involved in efforts to strike a peace deal between Mobutu Sese Seko,

the longtime ruler of Zaire, and Laurent Kabila, who led the Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Zaïre (AFDL or the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire) resistance movement. In a media briefing on the crisis, Mandela told reporters: “Africa would like to feel that they are handling things themselves...not acting in response to suggestions that come from outside the continent.” A few months later in a speech to the Zimbabwean parliament, Mandela discussed continental efforts to make peace in Angola, Zaire, and the Great Lakes Region, and then emphasized:

The time has come for Africa to take full responsibility for her woes, use the immense collective wisdom it possesses to make a reality of the ideal of the African renaissance whose time has come.

To bring this African rebirth about, Mandela sought to work with friends and allies on the continent. Multilateralism is more traditionally associated with President Mbeki’s administration than Mandela’s. This association is partly attributable to the academic tendency to divide and categorize to gain analytic leverage, even when categorization may not be appropriate. One of former deputy foreign minister Aziz Pahad’s major criticisms of the scholarship on South African foreign policy is what he considers the artificial division between the Mandela and Mbeki administrations most scholars make. On the two issues of Africa’s revival and South Africa’s multilateral approach, his critique holds much merit. These were areas of continuity between the Mandela and Mbeki administrations, not points of division.

For example, Mandela strongly endorsed a multilateral approach in an interview with Time magazine just a few days after he was inaugurated:

...We don't want to be assertive and remind Africa of the days of apartheid. We would like to do things on a basis of equality with other African states and consult them on what role we should play...we have a problem in that we have to improve our image as projected during the days of apartheid. We have to be very, very careful not to create the impression that we want to dominate other African countries economically.

Mandela’s quote hints at one source of the new South Africa’s multilateral approach, namely, an effort to distance itself as far as possible from its predecessor. Other scholars have argued that the ANC’s tradition of deliberation and debate led the new South African government to take a more consultative approach on foreign policy matters. Both these factors likely contributed to the Mandela

administration taking consultation with African leaders and institutions seriously.

There are certainly those who argue Mandela’s foreign policy was not guided by multilateralism. They often cite his intervention in Nigeria after General Sani Abacha, the ruler of that country in the mid-1990s, executed a number of Ogoni activists including the writer-activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa. Mandela had been trying to persuade Abacha not to take such a step and believed he had assurances that Saro-Wiwa would not be harmed. When Mandela heard that Saro-Wiwa and his colleagues had been killed, he was furious, and sought to punish and ostracize Abacha. But both in Africa and internationally there was little eagerness to join South Africa in castigating Nigeria. Mandela’s stance left South Africa alone on the continent. In 1997 an ANC foreign policy document stated:

One of the very first test cases for us in the area of promoting democracy and human rights - Nigeria - highlighted the potential limits of our influence if we act as an individual country. This further highlighted the importance and need to act in concert with others and to forge strategic alliances in pursuit of foreign policy objectives.

From the above passage it seems many in the ANC thought Mandela’s actions a misstep that marginalized South Africa. But others in Mandela’s office believed their President had taken a principled stand that was appreciated by many Nigerians. And Wole Soyinka, the Nigerian Nobel Prize winning author, believed it was Mandela’s finest hour.

The Nigerian situation was an exception to Mandela’s multilateral approach rather than an indication of his more unilateral tendencies. It does, however, illustrate a tension between Mandela’s effort to cooperate with African allies and his penchant to openly criticize his colleagues on the continent when he believed they had strayed from the principles of good governance.

This was also exhibited in his 1994 OAU speech when he told assembled heads of state:

We surely must face the matter squarely that where there is something wrong in the manner in which we govern ourselves, it must be said that the fault is not in our stars, but in ourselves that we are ill-governed.

Mandela’s stature allowed him to make such criticisms of his fellow heads of state, but this did not necessarily win him friends on the continent.

His concern about the quality of governance in Africa also prompted him to question the previously sacrosanct principle of state

sovereignty. He opened the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) heads of state summit in Malawi in 1997 by stating that though considerations of sovereignty were important:

“...these considerations cannot blunt or totally override our common concern for democracy, human rights and good governance in all of our constituent states.”

The following year, at an OAU meeting in Burkina Faso, Mandela voiced even stronger support for conceptualizing the rights of people, rather than the states they lived in, as inviolable. He said:

...We must all accept that we cannot abuse the concept of national sovereignty to deny the rest of the continent the right and duty to intervene when, behind those sovereign boundaries, people are being slaughtered to protect tyranny. In all instances, this takes place with no regard whatsoever to the fact that the legitimacy of our governments derives from our commitment to serve the interests of the people on the basis of mandates given by the people themselves.

This is, in essence, an articulation of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine before the concept gained traction internationally.

Mandela sought to work cooperatively with African leaders on the project of African renewal, but, if necessary, he was willing to criticize them when he believed they strayed from this vision. How to balance the importance of continental unity against the imperative to push back against states that undercut African Renaissance goals remains one of the core challenges of South African foreign policy.

There are a few comparisons that can be made between Mandela’s approach to Africa and that of former President Barack Obama. First, Obama, like Mandela, was willing to be critical of African heads of state. For example, Obama championed the rights of sexual and gender minorities while visiting Kenya in 2015 despite knowing that his host, President Uhuru Kenyatta, did not share Obama’s views on the subject.

Another example is Obama’s forceful speech at the African Union (AU) headquarters the same year, which focused on the importance of leaders respecting term limits and not remaining in power indefinitely. This was a thinly veiled criticism of some of the leaders present that had clung to power for decades. In this speech Obama cited Mandela’s example of stepping down willingly after a single term in office. On an earlier trip to Africa in 2009, Obama memorably remarked, “Africa doesn’t need strongmen, it needs strong institutions”—an idea Mandela would very much agree with.

Another commonality between Mandela and Obama is their willingness to use military force to achieve political goals. This may seem strange—since this essay focuses on two leaders who won the

Nobel Peace Prize—but neither Mandela nor Obama was a pacifist. This is different, it is important to emphasize, than saying they were eager to deploy the military—they were not. Yet there are examples of the use of force during both their presidencies.

Mandela—though he was out of the country when South African troops intervened to calm a crisis in Lesotho in 1998—participated in and was fully supportive of the decision to deploy the South African National Defense Force. When justifying the Lesotho operation, Mandela said that South Africa possessed a “belief in peaceful solutions”, before adding, “but whether we’re going to continue with that policy indefinitely must depend on the reality on the ground.” He explained that the military intervention was required “to ensure that there is peace and stability so that the Basotho themselves can sit down and explore a political solution.” Though Mandela believed political solutions were ultimately required to end conflicts, he thought military force in some cases could help facilitate those political solutions.

Obama, similarly regarded terrorism in West Africa and the Sahel as a largely political problem. On a trip to Senegal he stated:

It is my strong belief that terrorism is more likely to emerge and take root where countries are not delivering for their people and where there are sources of conflict and underlying frustrations that have not been adequately dealt with... So I don’t start with the attitude of a military solution to these problems.

Obama added, however, that some extremist groups were unwilling to work through a democratic process or compromise—necessitating military force.

The expansion of the American drone program, particularly in Niger, during the Obama presidency as well as increased training exercises with African armies attest to the important role, in some circumstances, that Obama believed force could play. The commonalities between Mandela and Obama extend well beyond the two examples presented here, and include the charismatic influence and “soft power” both leaders possessed. These commonalities are addressed elsewhere in this volume.

To conclude, there is much we don’t know about President Mandela and his approach to Africa. The legend looms so large that it masks the policymaker, the president who governed and had to make hard choices. Yet as President Obama stated, at Mandela’s funeral in December 2013, he “was not a bust made of marble, he was a man of flesh and blood...and that’s why we learned so much from him, and that’s why we can learn from him still.” To learn from the man, not the myth—good historical research is required.

Fortunately, there are exciting opportunities to do deeper research on both Mandela's and Obama's approach to Africa. For example, the memoirs of several top Obama administration officials including Hillary Clinton, Robert Gates and Ben Rhodes discuss in detail the American decision to intervene in Libya in 2011.

President Obama's forthcoming memoir will undoubtedly shed more light on this important and controversial decision. Once records from the Obama administration become available through the Freedom of Information Act in 2022, researchers will be able to explore Obama's Africa policy in great detail.

Doing research on South African foreign policy during the Mandela era is made possible by helpful institutions such as the Mandela Centre for Memory, which houses a fascinating collection of Mandela's notes including some related to the international challenges he faced. There is much additional material to be found in the archives of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), the South African National Archives, and the ANC archives at the University of Fort Hare. Moreover, many of the officials that served in government during Mandela's presidency are open and willing to share their reflections from that period.

Through utilization of these sources we can move past a mythical and somewhat misleading understanding of Mandela, and the similar myths quickly growing around Obama's presidency, to better understand how these statesmen conceived of international relations and sought to address foreign policy challenges.



Mandela, Obama and the gender agenda

Michelle Small: Lecturer, Department of International Relations, University of the Witwatersrand

"Imagine if you have a team and you don't let half of the team play. That's stupid. That makes no sense," remark by Barack Obama, Nairobi, Kenya, July 2015.

The opening quote is drawn from a speech in which Obama outlined the logic and importance of equality, and importantly equity, between the sexes not only as a moral issue of "right and wrong", but also as a strategic forward-looking imperative underpinning the "success and failure" of societies, nations and the global economy. Mandela's position on the need to legislate equality between the sexes was similarly informed by forward looking notions of 'progress' as signaled in his 1996 Women's Day Speech when he argued that:

"... As long as outmoded ways of thinking prevent women from making a meaningful contribution to society, progress will be slow. As long as the nation refuses to acknowledge the equal role of more than half of itself, it is doomed to failure".

The two speeches, given two decades apart, stressed equivalence premised on two principles: "basic truths do not change" (as stated by Obama at his 2018 Mandela lecture), and the place of pragmatism in prosecuting the gender agenda. Drawing on the thoughts and practices of the two leaders, this piece reflects on what they did to advance gender issues during their tenures. The piece contemplates issues around quotas and appointments in governance structures, legal and policy mechanisms, and recognition schemes through national awards and medals in Mandela's and Obama's efforts to level the playing field for half the team.

The statement, 'the personal is political' is a succinct descriptor of the two leaders when it comes to understanding their outlooks on a range of social and political issues, though they were born in markedly different times. Mandela, first born son to Nkosi Mphakanyiswa Gadla Mandela, a chief and principal counsellor to the Thembu King, and Nonqaphi Nosekeni, one of four wives

married to Chief Nkosi, was raised in a traditional Xhosa culture that permitted polygamy and routinely practiced arranged marriage. In 1918 when Mandela was born, no woman, black nor white, had the right to vote in South Africa. Globally, women at this juncture in history, were largely relegated to the private domestic sphere, did not make up a significant part of the workforce, and were mostly absent from official political life. In 1961 when Obama was born, neither men nor women of colour had secured the right to vote; this would be realized in 1965. The 1960s 'decade of change' was momentous not only in terms of the civil rights movement but also in terms of the women's movement. During this decade, women in America fought for a whole variety of rights: the right to contraception, the right to credit, the right for equality in the workplace, the right to serve as jurors, and even the right of admission to Ivy League universities.

Historical context is significant in counter-poising Mandela's and Obama's outlook on gender issues. Mandela's private views and conduct towards women are cast in a competing light by the women in his life over time. As captured in a 2013 Mail and Guardian article entitled "Madiba the Flawed, Husband and Man", the legend was depicted as a husband and father who engaged in home-making and child-rearing, but who was also adulterous and absconded on his family, and on occasion was physically abusive towards his first wife Evelyn Mase. His second wife, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela spoke of Mandela as domineering and short-tempered, while Jesse Duarte, current deputy secretary-general of the African National Congress and one-time aide of Mandela, depicted him as a 'ladies' man' vocal in his appreciation of women's beauty often conveyed in his flirtatious behaviour.

By 1998 the Mandela who wed Graca Machel his third wife, was a 'new man' espousing values of non-sexism and gender equality, a man of the new democratic South Africa. All three women in Mandela's life were independent in their own right; Evelyn was a nurse who supported Mandela in his early days starting out as a

lawyer; Winnie was the first black female social worker at the then Baragwanath Hospital, renamed The Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in 1997. Winnie would become the 'mother of the nation' given her political activism in the youth and women's anti-apartheid movement. Graca Machel, widow of Mozambique's first leader, Samaora Machel, served as a soldier and minister of education in Mozambique, and global ambassador to the United Nations before marrying Mandela. Mandela's masculinity and orientation on gender issues when viewed within historical context, shifts him from polygamist to partner.

Obama contrastingly was born to Ann Durham, a white woman from Kansas, and Barack Obama Snr, a black man from Kenya, at a time in America when interracial marriage was still illegal across a number of states. Obama was raised mostly by his mother, who would become a single working mother, and his grandmother. His mother was in many regards a trailblazer of her time: she fell pregnant with Obama aged 17; married and divorced two men of two different nationalities, races, and religions; pursued a number of academic higher degree qualifications; worked as an anthropologist on blacksmithing and micro-credit; and lived in Indonesia, a conservative Muslim country. Her independence, fearlessness and commitment to work and community service are traits that significantly influenced Obama personally and politically. In *Dreams from My Father* Obama notes that, "The values she taught me continue to be my touchstone when it comes to how I go about the world of politics."

Obama married Michelle Robinson in 1992. Michelle was an academically gifted lawyer who had herself trail-blazed her way against racial and gender odds to graduate from Princeton and Harvard University *cum laude* in 1985 and 1988 respectively. She served as an associate at esteemed law firm Sidley & Austin; as the Assistant to the Mayor of Chicago; as Associate Dean of Students at the University of Chicago; and as Vice President for the University of Chicago Medical Centre. The stories of Ann and Michelle reveal the "improbable journey" as phrased by Michelle Obama at the Democratic National Convention in 2008, on the realization and claiming of rights, both in gender and racial terms.

Their personal stories also however reveal the ongoing struggle for gender *equity*: they as individuals did the bulk of child rearing alongside their busy work careers, and Michelle would later compromise her career aspirations, to allow Obama to realize his: becoming Senator, and then becoming the first black, and 44th President of the United States of America. Michelle in *Becoming* writes, "It had been painful to step away from my work, but there was no choice. My family needed me." Obama was attuned to the

challenges still faced by women in this regard. At the 2016 United States Summit on Women, he stated: "Progress is not inevitable. It's the result of decades of slow, tireless, often frustrating, unheralded work."

One way in which both Mandela and Obama sought to achieve gender parity and level the playing field, was by appointing more women into leadership and decision-making positions. In 1990 only 2.7% of parliament was represented by women in South Africa. Mandela used his office to push for a one third (1/3) representation of women in parliament, and the government portfolio, so that by 1994 parliament was composed of 27% of women. His appointment of Frene Ginwala as House Speaker made South African history as the first woman to hold that position in parliament.

Mandela's advocacy for gender parity was underpinned by his overall vision and goal of 'total freedom'. At the opening of parliament in 1994, he emphasized that, "Freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression... Our endeavors must be about the liberation of the woman...". Mandela's signing and ratification of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) in 1995 and the United Nations Convention to End All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), linked South Africa's commitment to uphold and promote women's rights domestically to the pursuit of freedom and equality for women internationally. In 1996, Act 39, the Gender Equality Act, was passed and with it a constitutionally mandated Chapter 9 institution, the Commission of Gender Equality (CGE) was established, housed in the President's Office.

Further promulgations such as the Choice on Termination on Pregnancy Act (1996), Domestic Violence Act (1998), Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (1998), Maintenance Act (1998), and the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination (2000), went far in legislating and institutionalizing mechanisms for advancing, promoting and protecting women's rights and gender equality but did little to systemically and systematically address the gendered triple burden of poverty, inequality, and unemployment that the majority of black women in South Africa face.

Similarly, Obama during his tenure, focused on passing enabling policies, laws, quotas and programs as a tangible way of levelling the playing field. Obama appointed twenty six African American women as district court judges, 10 women as federal court judges, and 2 as Supreme Court justices. In addition, during his presidency, Janet Yellen, the first woman to serve as chair of the United States Federal Reserve Bank, was elected. These gendered appointments were underpinned not only by efforts to redress inequities and promote gender parity, but also by the rationale that the

administration and adjudication on matters of justice would not change, unless the face of justice, and those adjudicating on judicial matters changed. Salary inequities were another area in which Obama intervened directly, recognizing that pay inequities are a significant impediment to women's emancipation and empowerment. A 2009 study carried out by the National Women's Law Centre found that a woman typically earned 77 cents to the dollar a man earned for doing the same job; this was even less for women of colour (between 55-64 cents). It is significant therefore that the first act Obama signed as President in 2009 was the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. The act legislated against pay discrimination, and equal pay for equal work. In 2009, Obama also established the White House Council on Women and Girls, and created a new ambassadorial post 'Ambassador at-large for Global Women's Issues', as mechanisms of advancing the rights of women and girls across government departments, and across the world.

On 'women's issues' both Mandela and Obama pushed forth gender specific programs. Mandela authorized for the introduction of free prenatal and postnatal care in the public health system; free contraception and abortions; and free healthcare under the age of six. These gender-sensitized policies recognized the specific challenges women face as mothers, and on the basis of sex. Similarly, Obama championed for the free provision of eighteen different types of birth control under the Affordable Care Act passed in 2010, and passed a number of executive orders to extend workplace protection to families and working mothers by raising for example the minimum wage, overtime pay and establishing the 'Head Start' child care program.

Both Mandela and Obama used their office and positions of power to elevate the profile, status, and contributions of women to society and humankind. Mandela's most notable deed was declaring the 9 August as Women's Day; making it an annually observed national holiday that saluted the role of women in society. This meaningful gesture recognized the post-facto role and impact that 20 000 women had played in 1956 when they marched to the Union Buildings, seat of the South African government to protest against passbooks. Obama used his office to issue a number of national service awards and medals of recognition to women who have made an impact on the course of history including Elouise Cobell, a Native American advocate who championed a lawsuit that resulted

in a historical financial settlement for tribal homelands; Melinda Gates, for her philanthropic work in health, education and development; Margaret Hamilton, a mathematician and computer scientist who led a NASA mission; Grace Hopper, a Rear Admiral who translated computer programming code and served as a programmer in World War II; and Maya Lin, an architect who designed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. According to McClellan, Devine and Kopko in their 2018 *Conversation* article 'What Trump's picks for the Presidential Medal of Freedom Says About Him', Obama awarded more Medals of Freedom to women than any other US president and to the most diverse recipients to date; 36% to women and 39% to people of colour.

By 're-tooling' each system through an enabling framework of gender focused policies, laws and appointments, Mandela and Obama actively made room for women to participate on their teams and level the playing field. Importantly, both men recognized that the emancipation of women must be aided through guaranteeing specific constitutional rights for women, alongside challenging socio-cultural norms and historical practices. While Mandela and Obama recognized the importance of using their positions and office to elevate and advocate for the emancipation and empowerment of one half of humankind, women's rights remain difficult to claim in everyday life. An area in which both Mandela and Obama failed to penetrate effectively given its confinement to the private realm is that of behavioural attitudes. As Obama reflected upon in a 2016 article in *Glamour* 'This Is What a Feminist Looks Like', "... the most important change may be the toughest of all – and that's changing ourselves." The continued prevalence of gender based violence in both South Africa and America represents areas where despite enabling policies, laws, norms, and role modelling, Mandela and Obama were unable to lever change. Re-negotiating, re-thinking and re-imagining masculinity and masculine behaviour is a much harder endeavor, one where norms can be legislated, but not necessarily accepted or embraced.



The Mandela-Obama legacies in comparative perspective and reflections on Obama's commemorative lecture

Francis A. Kornegay, Jr: Senior Fellow, Institute for Global Dialogue at UNISA and former Global Fellow, Woodrow Wilson International Centre of Scholars

This reflection on former US President Barack Obama's 17 July 2018 visit to South Africa to deliver the Nelson Mandela commemorative lecture combines two perspectives based on presentations at the University of the Witwatersrand before and after the event. The first section focuses on a critical reflecting of the Mandela and Obama comparative legacies; the second reflects on Obama's commemorative address and critical media reactions to it. Assessing the legacies of the two leaders is not a straightforward matter. Indeed, any effort to compare and contrast Mandela and Obama has to confront a major challenge of complexity. Apart from their sharing in common the fact that they are of African descent, one must come to terms with how both emerged on the world stage at different points in time and from markedly different vantage points and political contexts.

Another consideration is the challenge of legacy-critiquing both men. To do justice to such an exercise and to each of them, one has to try and approach how one evaluates them dispassionately and critically rather than contributing either to cultish hero worship on the one hand or the already prevalent temptations to tear them down. There is a tendency among many of us, including those of us who fashion ourselves as political analysts and who should know better, to approach the subject of Mandela and Obama as if we were political babes in the woods who, because either Mandela or Obama did not live up to our and everyone else's unrealistic expectations, become turned off or disillusioned, feeling that we have been betrayed.

In fact, we tend to betray ourselves because we failed to relate to these two men as imminently fallible politicians and complex

human beings. And of course, the core business of politicians is the practicing of politics and the nature of politics is the navigating and managing of contradictions under complex political circumstances. While there are great politicians and political leaders, politicians are not to be mistaken for Pope Francis or the Dalai Lama. All said, while both Mandela and Obama qualify as inspirationally iconic leaders, each in his own right, a major difference between the two must be borne in mind: One has passed into history having lived well into his 90s whereas the other is comparatively young as politicians go. After having spent eight years in The White House, Obama is still very much a 'work in progress' with chapters in his biography still to be written and about whom there remain more questions than answers.

To understand Madiba, as he was fondly referred to, we must revisit his life. For, Mandela was shaped and seasoned in decades of struggle and adversity against a mercilessly ruthless oppressor, leading the ANC into what would become a bitterly protracted armed struggle before finding himself locked away for 27 years off the coast of South Africa. During his incarceration and upon release, he had ascended to the status of a living world legend. He would then devote his presidency and the remainder of his life to the politics of reconciliation and the healing of divisions in the new nation. The Mandela generation was a leadership class far into the twilight of their lives, well past their prime.

There has recently emerged a critique of Mandela that instead of having truly liberated black South Africa, rather, he betrayed black aspirations. The criticism is that he did not negotiate the economic transformation needed to accompany and underpin the democratic

political transition. The view is that such a negotiation would have substantively empowered the black majority. Mandela overemphasized reconciliation at the expense of redemptive and empowering justice. These are allegations not to be summarily dismissed. They require a broader critique of the liberation movement, its transition into governance and the internal and external constraints during the closing decade of the last century.

Whether or not such a critique is a fair reading of Mandela is subject to what should unfold as an ongoing and open-ended discourse of reflection. Certainly, Mandela could not have overcome such formidable challenges on his own. Then again, within the leadership collective, there were paths not taken, some presciently suggested by Mandela himself but rejected by his peers. Mandela was well past his prime, at the political helm of South Africa for only one five year term. It may be argued that were it not for his deputy, Thabo Mbeki, he may not have achieved as much as he did, having to recover from more than two decades on Robben Island.

Nevertheless, a critical reflection on Mandela's legacy within the context of the rise to power of the collective leadership of the ANC and its alliance partners will remain fertile ground for students of South Africa's contemporary political history. One area where Mandela and Obama converge is in their transcending the deeply rooted racial divides in South African and American societies and the polarizing national politics emanating from them. Mandela was the apostle of post-liberation reconciliation whereas Obama inspired visions of an emerging post-racial future. Both sought to persuade their fellow citizens to live up to the highest ideals animating the popular self-imagination of America's national character. Mandela and Obama were "apostles of hope". Yet, perhaps in both the South African and US cases, Mandela and Obama were confronting differing but similar versions of the "impossible dream".

In Obama's case, questions of identity and ambivalence arise. We need to try and understand his complexity as an African-American politician of uniquely African immigrant descent and biracial identity. His upbringing in the Asia-Pacific region of America capped off by seasoning in the black politics and society of Chicago following his Ivy-League exposure should also be factored in. One is on safe ground in evaluating Obama to have been a good US president, perhaps the best so far in a still young 21st century. However he is not likely to go down as having been a great president in the vein of the transformative Franklin Delano Roosevelt who lifted the US from the Great Depression. Neither, does he compare favourably to the deeply flawed and tragic figure of Lyndon Baines Johnson who signed into law the civil and voting rights acts which

would have presented an uphill struggle for his assassinated young predecessor, John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

In truth of fact, Obama's presidency was the upstart phenomenon of a formidably talented but far from seasoned political personality. He may have emerged at the apex of national leadership well ahead of his time but, in so doing, triggered the reactionary whirlwind of the backlash we see today which, in its magnitude, we may be better off confronting now than later. This backlash can be arguably understood as a resumption the American Civil War in 1860s as reflected in the Trump presidency. This is a high stakes dynamic which brings with it aspects of an America facing what amounts to minority rule under a right-wing one-party dictatorship where the increasingly multiracial-multicultural majority is effectively shut out of power for decades. Moreover, this is happening in a world made ever more dangerous by White America's isolationist nationalism.

This predicament has to be taken in as part of Obama's legacy at a time when Black America is in the nadir of perhaps the most serious leadership vacuum ever experienced. Will Obama, in his post-presidency, address the magnitude of this crisis or shun the burden of engaging its challenges and dilemmas? Indeed, until Obama writes his presidency memoir, we may never be able to fully assess his historical and contemporary significance as we contemplate the future. In foreign policy terms, there are elements of his legacy's potential that may be discerned: his tentative repositioning of American grand strategy into a geo-economic paradigm that would have repositioned the US as epicentre of the west-to-east shifting global economy through his Pacific and transatlantic trade initiatives coupled with his opening up to Cuba.

However, in this calculus, Africa was pretty much left out of the unarticulated equation. For one of African immigrant descent, Obama's Africa policy was not about to enter us into the Black Panther World of Wakanda. And here, I suggest that if one were to do a comparative review of Obama's two works – *Dreams from My Father* and *The Audacity of Hope* – one may begin to understand his foreign policy-geopolitical orientation. An analysis of the two books indicates that his interests would be more inclined towards the Asia-Pacific region where he sojourned as a child than the East Africa of his parental heritage. Both regions converge on the potential of an Indian Ocean economy, yet, Obama's geopolitical imagination failed to discern and exploit this connection.

Despite his shortcomings, Obama remains a work in progress and one who continues to inspire the pride that Africans and African-Americans alike should invest in. This applies to Mandela in the

sense of the pride most of us hold for instance with regards to the commonality they both share in being the first black presidents of two of the world's most racially challenged countries. Indeed, there is no progress without struggle and the struggle ahead remains the challenge that inspired the sacrifices of Nelson Mandela who, in turn, inspired Obama.

The comparability of Mandela and Obama was reflected in the critical media reactions to his commemorative speech at the Mandela centennial commemoration. In the wake of the July 2018 address, there were two notable critiques of the memorial lecture worth citing as points of reference in revisiting the theme of comparatively examining the two figures and their legacies. One approach is to critique the critics. Writing in *South Africans Business Day*, Adekeye Adabajo, director of the Institute of Pan-African Thought and Conversation (IPATC) at the University of Johannesburg had this to say:

...whereas Mandela was a saint, spending 27 years in jail for his beliefs before acting as the black Moses in leading his people to the promised land of liberation, Obama in contrast was the sinner, sorcerer and false prophet Elymas, who led his people into a barren wilderness. Obama lacked the courage of his conviction and in effect became a servant of Empire...

The other critique, by Marc Wegerif, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Pretoria, noted that while Obama's delivery reflected fine oratory and was uplifting, nevertheless, it was one that: "...repeated an assumed linear path of progress that links liberal democracy, human rights, economic liberalisation, innovation and scientific breakthroughs" that, when combined with the well-known challenges the world faces, made for an alluring narrative, yet one devoid of substance or anything new in how these challenges are to be addressed.

So, now, where do these ideal-typical reactions to Obama's inspirational oratory in commemorating Nelson Mandela leave us in our effort to understand the legacies of both men? How do they converge and diverge in ways that have impacted their respective societies and the world? To be sure, the balance of critique is on Obama rather than Mandela in as much as Mandela is the commemorative icon who has passed into history whereas a still relatively young Obama, as noted previously, remains a 'work in progress'.

The fact that Obama's legacy is still being constructed and under assault by his White House successor, also sheds contextual light on Obama's commemorative address that neither critique makes mention of. Excluded are perspectives on how the current incumbent

in the White House served as the perfect foil for the remarks Obama made and against which he was able to pay tribute to Mandela. As such, the context of Obama's Mandela commemoration is worthwhile discussing. Coincidentally, the week in July 2018 during which Obama commemorated Mandela was marked by bizarre events involving America's right wing President. Trump played supplicant to Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki, Finland courting uproar from observers in the broader context of wreaking havoc on America's alliances and on the international trading system. That the coincidences were not grasped by some commentators is revealing of the shortcomings in how Obama tends to be misunderstood in terms of his record as president and in more substantive areas of assessing how he relates to 'Africaness'.

For, would Obama have hobnobbed with Putin in Helsinki as did Trump, criticism could have been much more blistering and perhaps game-changing with regards to his political fortunes in the US. Trump seems to have escaped this ideational fate and one can argue that this is because Trump may be excused as a white president where Obama would not because he is black. This forms a major part of his identity and how it informs Obama's approach – or non-approach – to Africa, the challenges confronting Africa and Africa's relations with the US.

Adebajo's saint-sinner dichotomy, in its judgemental and simplistic binary, tells us more about the shallowness of analysis in what passes for pan-African thought and conversation than it does about how convenient a point of reference Mandela is for Obama. A more discerning point is that Obama seems determined to evade articulating the African dimension of his personality in relation to Africa's challenges and to how this should inform Africa-US policy specifically and global US foreign policy generally. It is may indeed be fair to surmise that Obama has failed to confront the challenges faced by African-Americans in the US especially with regards to the extant leadership vacuum and that this may be broadened to his failures with regards to confronting leadership problems on the African continent too.

There is failure to understand the constraints to transformative presidential leadership confronting a liberal to left of centre democrat (Obama) compared to Trump's right wing ilk. Of course, one of the salutary outcomes of Trump's Manchurian candidate-like fixation with Putin as of July 2018 combined with the Russian investigation and the GOP's difficulty in coming to terms with Trump and Russia, is the total discrediting of Republican Party foreign policy-national security hard-line stance. Republicans will never again be able to intimidate American liberals and the left on Russia after Trump. In terms of how this relates to Obama, quite

naturally, American foreign policy was highly problematic before Trump. And the foreign policy establishment interacting with congressional constraints are factors that limited Obama's freedom of action that many a critic fail to appreciate. Obama openly chafed at 'The Blob' that confronted him on foreign policy. For instance, Muslims like to point to Obama's failure to close Guantanamo as if this is something he could dictate unilaterally by fiat – even though he did manage to transfer most of Guantanamo's prisoners out its confines.

In the final analysis, there are big difference between the American system of checks and balances and the Westminster parliamentary system that many African countries have inherited from Europe. Critiques of Obama fail to place his strengths and weaknesses within this fundamental context. However, Obama's

commemoration of Mandela was a perfect fit for him in as much as Mandela evoked a universal resonance transcending Africa and the 'African personality' which Obama seems to want to evade. Obama's quest for transcendence toward that post-racial, multicultural global future attempts to bypass the urgently needed pan-Africanist revival that propels Africa, including South Africa into what could be a Pax-Africana future where humanity returns to genus 'Homo' origins. This is pertinent for a continent on its way to becoming the demographic epicentre of the species. Obama appears oblivious to how his identity and the initiatives of the Obama Foundation might relate to this future. Might Obama and his foundation should consider entering into a strategic conversation on how this future might unfold?



Obama's Mandela speech: democracy, human rights and civil liberties perspectives

Alice L. Brown: Visiting Research Fellow, Wits African Centre for the Study of the US

In delivering the sixteenth annual Nelson Mandela Lecture, former US President Barack Obama spoke to a stadium of 15,000 and called upon us to keep alive the ideas that Mandela worked for including democracy, human rights and tolerance. Obama's speech drew on broad themes that included, amongst others, the denunciation of "strongman politics" and a condemnation of "the politics of fear, resentment and retrenchment". He lamented that today's politics often reject the concept of "objective truth" and he stressed the importance of facts. Obama also warned that the press is under attack, that censorship and state control of media is on the rise and that social media is being used to promote hate, propaganda and conspiracy theories.

It is against this background that an analysis of Obama's speech and its implications for the past, present and future implications for democracy, human rights and civil liberties can be considered.

From the outset, with regard to Obama's record on human rights and civil liberties, I must admit, I am of two minds. As a human rights attorney and activist, I condemn the use of drones and the extrajudicial killings that took place during Obama's presidency. I am not alone in this. For instance, as noted by The Washington Post's James Downie in a May 2016 article, "Obama's drone war [was] a shameful part of his legacy". An article in The Bureau of Investigate Journalism pointed out that "Obama embraced the US drone programme, overseeing more strikes in his first year than Bush carried out during his entire presidency". The article went on to state that according to reports logged by the Bureau, "a total of 563 strikes, largely by drones, targeted Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen during Obama's two terms ... [and] between 384 and 807 civilians were killed in those countries...."

Further, I remain dismayed that although Obama signed an executive order on 22 January 2009 mandating the closure of the Guantanamo Bay detention facilities within a year, eight years later in 2017, this prison for terrorism suspects was still open and holding

41 detainees. In another instance, I was and continue to be outraged that after the 2008 financial crisis that took place during Obama's term in office, only one banker was prosecuted and imprisoned for the consequences of their fraudulent, corrupt and criminal manipulation of the markets that caused tens of millions of people to lose their livelihoods, their homes and their pensions.

Yet, as an African American woman of a certain age and era, I was, and remain, proud of the intelligence and dignity that Obama brought to the Oval Office. Yes. I am still enthralled by the charm, charisma and class of the first African American president of the United States of America, much of which was on display in July 2018 when he delivered the Nelson Mandela Annual Lecture. Particularly in this day and age of the crassness, ignorance, arrogance and vitriol that emanates from the current occupant of the White House, I cannot help but to look back nostalgically on many aspects of the Obama presidency. In the context of human rights, social justice and civil liberties, which in my mind are key elements in the mix of democratic values, three efforts undertaken by Obama are particularly notable: the Affordable Health Care Act, which provided access to health care for 17 million previously uninsured people; the advancement of the recognition of the rights and dignity of LGBTI individuals and the beginnings of the dismantling of the 54 year old embargo against Cuba.

In some respects, with regard to the presidency of Obama, I believe that many of us were naïve and our expectations were far too high. The expectations, hopes and dreams that we invested in the America's first African American president echoed many of the expectations, hopes and dreams that we invested in Nelson Mandela, the first black president of South Africa. Yet, the political, cultural, and economic constraints these two "firsts" encountered were formidable, vast and not to be underestimated or minimized.

This brings me to the next observation that I would like to share, which centers on the importance of role models and trail blazers in

the context of promoting human rights and democratic values: The importance of these types of individuals may be hard to quantify but that importance must be acknowledged, and should not be dismissed or ignored. Role models and trail blazers have an impact on young people, and old folks, and those in between. Their rhetoric and, more importantly, their actions, can inspire, renew and ignite individuals, communities and movements in the struggle for human rights and social justice.

Personally, I can attest to the impact of the presence, or lack thereof, of role models: I was born and raised in Northern New Jersey in the US and, when I was young, I wanted to be a teacher. Why? To a great extent it was because in my segregated social, residential and educational context, the only black professionals I had ever come into contact with were the one black teacher in my predominantly black public elementary school and the two black doctors in my home town. But then, a few years passed and at the age of 14, I saw, for the first time, an African American attorney! His name was Heywood Burns and he was on the front cover of the New York Times. Why? Because he was standing next to my “shero” (that is, a female hero), Angela Davis, the African American political activist, academic, and author whom he was representing. She had just been captured by the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) for allegedly aiding in an attempted escape of three prisoners known as the Soledad Brothers. It was then that I declared that I would be a lawyer, and specifically, civil rights lawyer. It was the presence of Haywood Burns, a dedicated, brilliant human rights attorney who also happened to be African American, that widened my worldview and allowed me to understand that I had more options and possibilities than I had realized previously.

Yes, I can personally attest to the power of trail blazers and role models who stand for human rights and civil liberties. And so, I applauded when Obama called for people to keep alive the ideas that Mandela worked for including democracy and diversity, when he declared: “Let me tell you what I believe. I believe in Nelson Mandela’s vision....I believe in a vision of equality and justice and freedom and multi-racial democracy built on the premise that all people are created equal and are endowed by our creator with certain inalienable rights”. I believe that Obama encouraged and inspired many to continue to fight, or to join, the good fight. Moreover, I believe that an engagement in the good fight and the promotion of active citizenship has positive implications for democracy, human rights and social justice. In speaking to friends, colleagues and strangers who either were present at Johannesburg’s Wanderers

Stadium in July 2018 or who listened to Obama’s speech via the media, I was struck by the excitement and enthusiasm he inspired. People were reciting phrases like “There is only so much you can eat” and “It shows a poverty of ambition to just want to take more and more”. People were uplifted by Obama’s call for respect for human rights and other values currently under threat.

Even my dear friend, Marc Wegerif (see Francis Komegay’s piece in this volume), who, in his City Press piece critiqued Obama’s speech and opined that “....there was little substance and nothing new...” and who observed that it was “...very short on analysis of what drives accumulation and what blocked such initiatives in the past”.... even Marc admitted that he was inspired to clap and cheer for some of Obama’s well-made arguments.

Now, does all of this have a significant impact on the future of democracy, human rights and social justice? Well, I would say yes, it does. Can my assertion be measured and quantified through a statistically randomized study? Perhaps not. But, let’s not forget: As sociologist William Bruce Cameron said in his 1963 book entitled *Informal Sociology: A Causal Introduction to Sociological Thinking*, “Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts”. And, even though it may be hard to quantify this type of impact and its implications, I would argue that the presence of role models and trail blazers such as Mandela and Obama has positive implications for the continued struggle for human rights, civil liberties and social justice.

As many have already noted, the legacy of Obama is still unfolding. He is relatively young and, if he makes it to the life expectancy of the average American male, he may live to reach his ninth decade. So, Obama may have many years ahead to strengthen and improve his record on promoting and protecting democracy, human rights and civil liberties. Indeed, some may suggest that he still has time to repent and redeem himself of the sins of his past. Only time and his actions will tell.

Moving forward and beyond an analysis of the sixteenth Annual Nelson Mandela Lecture, we need to be cognisant of the fact that legacies are always open to interpretation and reinterpretation. They are always susceptible to new stories and new revelations. Legacies are not set in stone. This applies to Obama and to Madiba as well. How do we assess how these two “firsts” promoted or diminished democratic values, human rights and civil liberties? These matters are being continuously debated. Indeed, their stories are still being shaped and formed. It is not yet over, not for either of them.



Mandela and Obama in global peace and security: *“A common world that will rise or fall together”*

Michelle Small: Lecturer, Department of International Relations, University of the Witwatersrand

The quote in the title of this piece comes from Nelson Mandela’s, address to the United Nations General Assembly in New York in 1994. It is a poignant reminder of the universal values that also undergirded Barack Obama’s view of the world. In their tenures as presidents, Mandela and Obama were both acutely aware of the shared fate, destiny and potential of people, communities, societies and nations in constructing global peace, security and prosperity. For instance, in a speech at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, a year before he became president, Obama emphasized that “the security of the American people is inextricably linked to the security of all people”.

On a similar trajectory, Mandela observed in the 1994 address cited above that “the reality ... [is] that we live in an interdependent world which is bound together to a common destiny”. He would return to this theme in a 1998 address to the UN when he said: “... no people can truly say it is blessed with happiness, peace and prosperity where others, as human as itself, continue to be afflicted with misery, armed conflict and terrorism and deprivation.” It is in this vein that both leaders worked tirelessly to end conflict, establish durable peace, and construct a world order in which all could rise, rather than fall, together.

The world order that Mandela inherited in 1994, and the one that Obama inherited in 2008, were starkly different in terms of the security risks posed, and the security challenges each faced. Mandela’s primary challenge was avoiding a racial and ethnic war at home, while dealing with the security risks posed by an unstable continent. As peace and security scholar Dan Smith pointed out in 2004, 118 armed conflicts raged worldwide between 1990 and 1999, the vast majority being African and intra-state in nature. The Rwandan Genocide, which resulted in the deaths of between 500 000 to 1 000 000 people coincided with the year and month of Mandela’s inauguration as the first black President of South Africa.

In 1998, the tiny land-locked kingdom of Lesotho experienced a coup d’état, while fighting persisted not far off in Angola between the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and the People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). Protracted civil wars heightened during this period in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Zaire (later named the Democratic Republic of Congo).

Obama meanwhile inherited two ‘mission creep’ wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the task of fighting off and containing internationalized Islamic terror. He also acquired long-standing confrontations which required careful navigation such as those of Israel-Palestine, North Korea, Cuba, Libya and Iran. Obama’s most important challenge though was domestic. Following the 2007 financial crash and the resultant foreclosures, evictions, retrenchments and soaring unemployment, Obama had to work hard to bring about economic stability and security home. Sources indicate that by 2007, the US had spent an estimated \$368 billion on military operations in Iraq and \$200 billion in Afghanistan; the cost in ‘treasures’ in these two wars in the face of a declining domestic economic situation created a formidable domestic and security challenge for Obama. Further, by the time Obama took over as President, 4 221 US military personnel in Iraq, and 625 US military personnel in Afghanistan, had lost their lives.

Both Mandela and Obama aimed in the first instance for dialogue and diplomacy in dealing with their inherited security challenges. Both men were however not averse to employing force or coercion in what Obama characterized during his Nobel Prize acceptance speech in December 2009 as “not only necessary but also morally justified”. In Angola, Burundi, Zaire and Lesotho, Mandela engaged in extensive mediation efforts to bring conflicting parties to the table. In Burundi this had some success as it resulted in the Arusha Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in 2000, and the deployment of an African Union (AU) peacekeeping force. In

Lesotho, however despite extensive and ongoing mediation, Mandela would eventually authorize a military intervention in 1998. Mandela's willingness to employ force in the face of dialogue failing is also reflected in his initial reaction to the execution of Nigerian activist Ken Saro-Wiwa by General Sani Abacha's military regime with Mandela cautioning that, "Abacha is sitting on a volcano. And I am going to explode it underneath him", as captured in his memoirs published in 2017 and posthumously co-authored with South African writer, Mandla Langa.

Similarly, while Obama recognized the importance of dialogue, and of "painstaking diplomacy" that leaves "the choice of an open door", he argued that negotiations alone did not halt Hitler's armies nor would it bring Al Qaeda's leaders to lay down their arms. Through dialogue, he was able to secure the Iran Nuclear Deal in 2015, restore diplomatic relations with Cuba in the same year and lead efforts culminating in the Paris agreement on climate change in 2016. The insecurity generated by Al Qaeda, ISIS, Libya and Syria however could only be met with force. Obama's use of elite Navy Seal operations, drone warfare and targeted extra-judicial killing to eliminate for example Anwar Al-Awaki, and Osama Bin Laden represented not only a covert and lethal security strategy, but also a security strategy unsanctioned democratically or internationally. Here the suspension of democratic values to achieve security represented a trade-off that will cast a long shadow over Obama's presidency, in the same way that the military intervention into Lesotho is seen as the low-point in Mandela's Presidency.

In terms of freedom, democracy and prosperity, an emphasis on values was overwhelmingly central to both leaders in their quest for global peace and security, specifically, the pursuit of democracy and freedom. Speaking to delegates at the UN in 1994, Mandela opined that, "the empowerment of ordinary people of our world..." lay in a constructing a world, "... unhindered by tyrants and dictators." This was echoed by Obama in his Nobel Peace Prize Lecture when he reflected that, "peace is unstable where citizens are denied the right to speak freely or worship as they please; choose their own leaders or assemble without fear. Pent-up grievances fester, and the suppression of tribal and religious identity can lead to violence."

This conjoining of political, economic and social freedom as the basis of attaining global peace and security is a theme both presidents recurrently emphasized: Obama argued that "a just peace includes not only civil and political rights – it must encompass economic security and opportunity. For true peace is not just freedom from fear, but freedom from want". This echoed what Mandela had stressed a decade earlier, that "hundreds of millions of these politically empowered masses are caught in the deathly trap of

poverty, unable to live life in its fullness," ...that "the very right to be human is denied everyday ... as a result of poverty, the unavailability of basic necessities such as food, jobs, water and shelter, education, health care and a healthy environment." This emerging view of security embedded in the material conditions of human security also led both men to criticize international financial institutions and global capital for their roles in furthering insecurity.

In his ultimate United Nations General Assembly address in 1998, Mandela highlighted that the "... situation in which the further accumulation of wealth, rather than contributing to the improvement of the quality of life of all humanity, is generating poverty at a frighteningly accelerated pace." In his Nelson Mandela lecture of July 2018, Obama believed that such distortions and inequality were the defining challenge of our times, and that the "explosion of economic inequality [and] economic insecurity" posed a fundamental threat to mobility, betterment and humanity, echoing comments he had made earlier in 2013. Rather than a passive acceptance of this, and cognizant of the complex task of addressing structural capital and inequality, both men impelled individuals to action against these forces that are not pre-ordained, but rather man-made.

What does all this mean for the Mandela and Obama foundations and to the broader issues of active citizenship in a changing world? Their work in building global peace and security has not ended with their presidencies. An emphasis on individual agency and community endeavours in building institutions, trust, peace and security 'from the grassroots level up' is evident in the work of both foundations. The Nelson Mandela Foundation for example, advocates for work to be measured in acts of service, such as adopting a school, running education support programmes, growing food banks, planting trees, partnering with the Foundation to sponsor mathematics and science 'LEAP' education, or HIV/AIDS programmes, cleaning local schools, rivers, and parks. The rallying message to, "Free Yourself. Free Others. Serve Everyday", is enabled through volunteerism, and taking action against poverty in concrete deeds built around for example 'Mandela days'.

Importantly, in 2009 the Nelson Mandela Foundation linked up with the UN in declaring July 18 'Mandela International Day', to build a global movement for good along with NGOs, and celebrities around #Action Against Poverty and the #67 Minutes Campaign. Similarly, the Obama Foundation has sought to promote change and tackle global issues by working at the local level through undertakings of 'active citizenship', and by building a global community of like-minded individuals. Volunteerism in the form of hosting sports events, arts and cultural exhibitions and shows, after

school programs, town hall talks, parades, and cleaning up initiatives, underscore the importance of building cohesion and enabling change from the local level up. The Obama Foundation has also been active in sponsoring youth leaders across the world with academic scholarships, fellowships and training initiatives so as to enable these “everyday citizens with the skills and tools they need to create change in their communities”, and thereby the world.

A fitting conclusion to this piece draws on Obama’s words at the July 2018 Mandela centennial lecture: “Hope over fear, unity of purpose over conflict and discord.” In reviewing Mandela’s and Obama’s legacies in global peace and security, what is clear is that both men came into power during turbulent times. While both men strived towards peace, and tried to recreate a world order

underpinned by democratic values, economic freedom and dialogue, both were forced to employ coercive measures at times, as the guarantor of security. Obama observed in his final address to the United Nation’s General Assembly in 2016 that, “the world is by many measures less violent and more prosperous than ever before, and yet our societies are filled with uncertainty, and unease, and strife.”

Turbulence and violence have persisted: rights and institutions are under assault, strongmen and autocrats are on the rise, ethnic nationalism has surged and intergenerational inequality has deepened. Here, “hope over fear, unity for purpose over conflict and discord” serves as the guiding ethos that Mandela and Obama sought to follow in meeting global peace and security challenges, and it is the spirit in which their foundations continue to work.



African media's discursive framing of Nelson Mandela's centennial celebrations.

Nixon Kariithi: Senior Research Associate, Wits African Centre for the Study of the US and Tangaza Africa Media, Rosebank, South Africa

African media coverage of the Nelson Mandela centennial celebrations may be best understood through a number of discursive frames, reflecting both on traditional news reporting and specific contexts relating to the countries where the coverage originated. The emerging picture, even from a simplistic review of the coverage, is one that highlights Africa's complex geopolitical power relations, and the marginalization of pan-African discourses in a 21st century Africa trapped between global culture wars and intense internal national identity debates. In between, the coverage bore classic themes that embodied the critical appreciation of elements of African contemporary political culture such as governance, accountability and respect for human rights.

The media frames through which the centennial can be analysed fall into at least three categories: holistic-reflective, discursive-peripheral and geopolitical.

Firstly, reflective issue frames of Nelson Mandela's significance to different contemporary African contexts were dominant. In Egypt, Uganda, Nigeria and Kenya, media reports captured the significance of Mandela's anniversary as a moment of reflection. Numerous media outlets utilised an AFP wire story that quoted Graca Machel saying the world still had a long way to go to attain gender inequalities and quality education - freedoms that Nelson Mandela fought for.

In Uganda, the Daily Monitor asked whether Ugandans had learnt anything from Mandela's legacy. The cogent analysis, by renowned Ugandan academic, author, and political commentator, Prof Mahmood Mamdani, reflected on political legitimacy and the struggle for economic and social justice. These are two of the pertinent challenges that undergird Uganda's current tenor. Intolerance and selfless leadership were additional Mandela ethos that lacked in the ebb and flow of Uganda's current political life, according to Mamdani. He then used Mandela's apparent wit and foresight in stepping down after one presidential term weighed on

presidential term limits, one of Uganda's most divisive political issues:

Mandela was smart and strategic. He understood that if he stayed in office for more than a term, he would have to address the demand for social and economic justice, from the vast majority of South Africans ... He was modest enough to realize that it would be best for him to leave that task to the younger generation, and to live his remaining years as a respected elder. All of us need to learn from him to figure out what we can do and what is best left to others, when we must work and when we must step aside and let life move on.

Daily Monitor, 19 July 2018

Uganda's Matooke Republic news portal quoted former US President Obama's scathing lecture to make the point that much of African political contestation was tantamount to a mockery of Mandela's democratic ideals:

We have to stop pretending that countries that just hold an election where sometimes the winner somehow magically gets 90 percent of the vote because all the opposition is locked up – or can't get on TV, is a democracy.

Matooke Republic, 18 July 2018

The Daily News Egypt made a case for "the Nelson Mandela in us all":

Today, Mandela's ideals are running into a wall of egoism across the globe. Until recently, an entire presidential clan plundered the state coffers of his home country with impunity. From Ankara to Budapest, and Moscow to Washington, egocentric leaders are calling the shots. At the same time, the decades-old success model of a social market economy and representative democracy seems to

have lost its bearings, and social cohesion is crumbling as a result.

Numerous African media outlets utilised an Associated Press (AP) wire copy that advised enthusiasts keen to “trace Mandela’s footsteps 100 years after his birth” to start in Qunu and other villages in the Eastern Cape where he was born and raised, before proceeding to Apartheid Museum, Hector Pieterse Memorial and Museum, and Robben Island. The AP piece included a bitter-sweet sentiment lurking in the excursion:

For visitors, making a pilgrimage to places connected to Mandela’s life is both distressing and uplifting. While South Africa has come a long way, this young democracy still has a lot of work ahead, including improving living conditions and resources for its majority black population. A mobile app, Madiba’s Journey, created by South African Tourism and the Nelson Mandela Foundation, can help you trace the footsteps of the man who dedicated his life to freedom.

Writing in the *undispatch.com*, a portal for diverse opinion and comment by Africans in the diaspora, Zimbabwean native Mako Muzenda wrote that she was “living proof” of Nelson Mandela’s legacy to advance African unity.

Earlier this year, I became a Mandela Rhodes Scholar. I’m not a South African national. Born and raised in Zimbabwe, I always experienced Mandela through the television or odd newspaper. I was only a year old when he became president, the media frenzy around his release and election passing me by completely ... However, in everything I saw and read about him, I didn’t realise that Mandela was a South (African) and African and African statesman. His vision of inclusivity and equality didn’t just speak to South Africa’s reality. His legacy spoke to and included me too.

An op-ed in Algeria’s *El Watan* newspaper also highlighted a first-person experience of the Mandela legacy, drawn from Mandela’s perspective of challenging jurisprudence that contradicted social justice:

“Si autrefois, j’avais considéré la loi de façon idéaliste comme l’épée de la justice, aujourd’hui je la vois comme un outil utilisé par la classe au pouvoir pour façonner la société dans un sens qui lui était favorable. Je ne m’attendais jamais à la justice dans un tribunal même si je luttais pour elle et parfois je la rencontrais”

(I went from having an idealistic view of the law as a sword of justice to a perception of the law as a tool used

by the ruling class to shape society in a way favourable to itself. I never expected justice in court, however much I fought for it, and though I sometimes received it.)

An analysis of African media headlines on the centennial celebration further highlights the multiple perspectives evident in the discursive construction of the Mandela legacy. The celebratory frames focused on the calendar events and functions in major cities honouring Mandela’s achievements, including mentions of pertinent speakers or presentations as a sample of some demonstrates: “Uganda joins world to mark Mandela’s birthday” (Daily Monitor, Uganda); “Raila to give address on life and legacy of Nelson Mandela in South Africa” (The Star, Kenya), “Tributes as world leaders remember Nelson Mandela” (The Guardian, Nigeria).

In the second category of media coverage, a cluster of discursive frames related to a peripheral involvement in the celebration, through which the centennial event was framed as a South African affair. Media headlines and articles in this category focused predominantly on South Africa’s political history, Mandela’s death and contemporary socioeconomic issues. Several Kenyan and Nigerian publications highlighted this discursive frame in their headlines, for instance, “South Africans pay tribute to Mandela (The Standard, Kenya), “South Africa pays tribute to Mandela” (The East African, Kenya), “100 years since his birth, South Africa pays tribute to Mandela” (Daily Nigerian, Nigeria).

Discursive references to South Africa’s current social and economic strife were brusque and disparaging. Such coverage pulled no punches in its attempts to blame some of South Africa’s critical failures on its current crop of leaders. A lucid analysis by Matthew Graham, a lecturer at the University of Dundee, titled, “Blame politicians, not Mandela, for South Africa’s unfinished business” argued that ANC’s current troubles were self-inflicted:

The ANC appears to have lost its sense of direction. The political elite has been badly mired by scandals, most notably under the former presidency of Jacob Zuma. There is no doubt Mandela was a complex and flawed individual, but his vision still matters. What is required in this centenary year is for people from all sections of society to work together to embody Mandela’s values and convictions to keep the country moving forward to overcome the deeply ingrained legacies and injustices of the past.

The Conversation (Africa), 16 July 2018

An op-ed article in Nigeria labelled Mandela “the poster boy of African democracy” and postulated incredulously that he would

have orchestrated the death of xenophobia in South Africa had he still been alive:

The values Mandela preached [are] useless if South Africans cannot learn to peacefully co-exist with their fellow African brothers. If Mandela was alive, this devil in South Africa would have been buried a long time ago. After all, Mandela once said: "Peace is the greatest weapon for development that any person can have."

Sahara Reports, 18 July 2018

Writing in Nigeria's *This Day*, Kayode Komolafe, the newspaper's deputy managing director, enunciated "a post-truth world after Mandela", referring to tensions and spasmodic xenophobic attacks on black Africans by South African blacks that attenuated decades-old sense of solidarity with the apartheid struggle in many countries across the continent.

The hostility of South Africans towards other Africans is simply unjustifiable. Not even the objective factor of poverty of the majority of the black people would serve as a sufficient explanation. The subjective question of socio-political orientation is also important in trying to understand the ugly trend.

He added:

Forty years ago, Mandela celebrated his Diamond Jubilee in prison. In Nigeria it was a day of expression of solidarity by the government and people of Nigeria in support of the liberation struggle in southern Africa. You don't notice a similar ferment on the street or official circles anymore. Not with the killings of scores of Nigerians by some disoriented persons in South Africa who lack the sense of history of the solidarity and friendship between Nigeria and South Africa.

This Day, 16 July 2018

Music legend Yvonne Chaka Chaka's point in the *New African* magazine espoused deep-seated frustration among black South Africans over the stymied pace of change a quarter of a century after the portentous 1994 democratic elections.

I, for one, have stories to tell and so would my mum. In as much as I appreciate that Madiba preached forgiveness and reconciliation, I still have my wounds and my questions against the oppressors still remain unanswered. I still ask myself, why was I made to feel so inferior? Why did the colour of my skin make these people treat me so badly that they would set dogs upon me as a child? I still have the scars to remind me of that daily. And I don't think I got the answers for this horrific apartheid treatment.

New African Magazine, 16 July 2018

Ultimately, discursive frames of the centennial event focused on beneficial lessons for Africa and the world. Speaking at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), Prof Wole Soyinka presented a persuasive argument on why the world "can't let go of Nelson Mandela":

Till today, the world will not let go of Madiba. When he was battling with his life and one of his oldest friends said it is time to let him go, I said no, that friend did not understand the world; it is not the time to let him go. If he understood the world, he would not say that. And even after death, we cannot let go of him! ... While Mandela lived and related like every other human being, his self-sacrificing, courage and determination, among other features, stood him out and are the reasons why the world will never forget him...

Daily Trust, Nigeria, 18 July 2018

Thirdly, the framing took a geopolitical stance. Expectedly, pundits applied Mandela's philosophical stance during the dark moments of apartheid to current global political and development debates. Writing in the *African Portal*, Nigerian researchers, Chukwuka Onyekwena and Precious C. Akanonu saw useful lessons from Mandela's leadership for African development: prosperity, integration, peace and good governance. Face2face Africa a New York-based portal for pan-African issues said the world learnt five leadership qualities from the iconic Nelson Mandela: brave and humble in face of adversity, frank and thorough but not arrogant, non-violent in all engagements; effective communication, and optimistic (18 July 2018).

On social media, African celebrities commented on Mandela's influence on their lives and careers. Soccer stars Didier Drogba, Samuel Eto'o, Daniel Amokachi, Emmanuel Adebayor and Kevin-Prince Boateng posted congratulatory messages, with some including either personal pictures with Mandela or comments purportedly to them. Drogba tweeted on 18 July 2018:

How are you my son? A @fifaworldcup in Africa without you is not World Cup". What could have inspired more than the phone call and these words from Daddy Mandela, the Wisest man I've ever met?! Happy 100 birthday Madiba #gonebutneverforgotten #wiseman "Une Fifa World Cup en Afrique sans toi n'est pas une coupe du Monde," qu'est-ce qui aurait put m'inspirer plus que ce coup de fil de Papa Mandela, la personne la plus sage que j'eus rencontré! Joyeux 100eme Anniversaire Madiba!

Elsewhere, Ghanaian President Nana Akufo-Addo also saluted Mandela's distinctive contribution to the continent:

Nelson Mandela gave us an example of sacrifice, of dedication to principle, and of devotion to freedom that is without equal in the annals of Africa's modern history.

Twitter, 18 July 2018

In all, media discourses on the Nelson Mandela centennial celebration highlighted critical debates about African political

leadership and questions of collective African identities. While remaining aptly aware of the reasons undergirding the celebrations, media coverage ventilated substantive issues that have defined contemporary social, economic and political life in life over the past three decades. In the process, the media reports discursively unravelled deep-seated sensitivities, inviting audiences to self-reflection and scrutiny of social norms and behavior



Thoughts on comparing Mandela and Obama

J. Brooks Spector: Associate Editor, The Daily Maverick, retired American diplomat

In sharing thoughts on Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama, I will begin the discussion from the perspective of my encounter with the former and a near-encounter with the latter.

The first time I met Nelson Mandela was a few months after he had been released from prison, but several years before he became the first president of a non-racial South African government. On that occasion, the American ambassador to South Africa, William Lacy Swing, had invited Mandela to a private supper, so the two men could gain the measure of each other. I was part of the support team for the American Embassy when I was serving as the American cultural attaché and, among other things, was responsible for the live entertainment for the evening. I happened to be at the front door when Mandela arrived and when he entered, he had a courtly quality about him so many people have remarked upon over the years. He greeted the housekeeper who opened the door; he greeted the cook; he greeted the waiter before he sat down for the meal. I recall him as a very calm man - but formal in an old school kind of way.

Years before that encounter with Nelson Mandela, my first overseas assignment for the US Government was in Jakarta, Indonesia. As it turned out, I had a significant amount of work with the same English language teaching institution and cultural centre operated by the US Embassy where Barack Obama's mother, Stanley Ann Dunham, had worked for several years. I also taught a class there after my own regular work hours. If Obama and his mother had stayed there a year later, or if I had arrived a year earlier, I might well have known the future president when he was still a primary school pupil.

In response to the theme of comparing the two men – the image of the two men in the foreign media – I start with the observation that both men were above average in height, they were both athletic. Obama as a basketball player turned golfer; Mandela as a boxer then, quite suddenly, discovered he was a rugby fan once he became president. Professionally, they were trained as lawyers. In terms of character, they showed rebellious streaks as young adults; Obama in

spending time at universities – Occidental College, Columbia, Harvard – before settling down as a community organizer in Chicago, and Mandela running away from the University of Fort Hare to take a job in Johannesburg as a mine guard. And just by the way, they were both their respective nations' first black presidents. Despite their differences in age, upbringing, and life circumstances, there is a fascinating thread that runs between the two men. Recall that when Obama was an undergraduate at Occidental College in Los Angeles, the first overt bit of political activism on his part was participation in an anti-apartheid rally. If his own memoirs are to be believed, this was one of the key moments in the shaping of his political activism.

We can mark a great turning point in their respective political lives with a specific event. In Obama's case, when he decided to run for the presidency, he initially had met with considerable diffidence and hesitation towards him on the part of much of the African-American community. For many, he simply didn't seem like an African-American in the more usual sense of things, and many potential supporters held back from committing to him. It wasn't until his speech on race, delivered at the 2004 Democratic Party Convention in Philadelphia in the midst of that year's primary campaign that the switch went to "on" for him. I was in the US at the time, and I watched as popular opinion among black Americans turned from ambivalence and as they embraced him.

Obama had been pushed into speaking publicly about the unfinished agenda concerning race and his more personal feelings about the topic (and thus how he defined himself ethnically and racially) after a video of his church's minister, Jeremiah Wright of the Trinity United Church, was released that showed the minister uttering some extraordinarily harsh words towards the nation, and towards white Americans. Forced by circumstance to state his own case, Obama produced a carefully nuanced discussion of race in America that cemented the allegiance of the vast majority of black Americans to him, even as it also conveyed clearly to potential white

voters that he was not a “race man” and that he would discuss race in a way that was significantly different from what was the usual style of most black politicians. Americans were familiar with hearing. The Philadelphia speech defined his relationship to the nation’s racial conundrum in a way that was somehow a modern, post-racial, transformative figure and made him acceptable to a majority of the entire nation.

In something of the same way, in the first speech Nelson Mandela delivered on the day of release from incarceration, from a balcony of the Cape Town City Hall in February 1990, he essentially read a text that restated all the old rhetoric of his party such as the nationalization of the commanding heights of the national economy. This was perhaps largely without his recognition of the vast changes in the world economy, the global political landscape, and the way South Africa itself had been evolving over the years.

However, once he had had a few days to absorb the changed landscape on a first-hand basis, Mandela’s subsequent messages began to shift. He quickly embraced a rhetorical style designed to reassure a nervous nation. As he moved toward political authority, he was not going to engage in a quick, traumatic, and revolutionary upending of the national economic structure, even though the political changes would certainly be revolutionary ones, as the country moved towards a non-racial democratic society.

Personal, psychological characteristics also demonstrate ways in which the two men intersect. Both men could demonstrate a high level of empathy in personal and political terms. It is a very useful characteristic for a politician, but not all of them have this essential skill. These two men had this trait wired into their personas. Another way to describe this is to call that characteristic the ability to see something from the other person’s perspective.

Still, some of their respective critics believe they saw the two men as overly cautious moderates, rather than the transformative figures they actually were. Was that from the demeanour of their having the natural caution of being lawyers? That, in turn, has allowed critics from the left to see too much caution. The critique is that they could have gone further, but pulled back. Ironically, both men would watch successors seek to destroy much of their respective legacies; Obama with Donald Trump, Mandela with Jacob Zuma.

To examine how the international media saw Mandela, one has to look at how his first trip to the US was seen and reported. It is fair to say Americans saw him as a continuation and a culmination /capstone of their own civil rights revolution. In 1990, the frenzy

and near pandemonium during Mandela’s America visit, as reported in the press at the time (and near chaos in the background, city by city, as overall tour organizers as recounted later) demonstrated just how popular Mandela and his country’s impending revolution had become as a popular public issue in the US. Mandela had become, in the popular and media vision, a man who was rather larger than life – even if he could not necessarily cure the sick and afflicted. He was a salve for the emotional soul.

As for Obama and popularity globally, the Pew Research Center does frequent polling about the popularity of America and American leaders abroad. They found that Obama was consistently seen favourably in almost every country on the globe, save perhaps for Russia. Following Trump’s victory, the reverse has sadly become true. I don’t know that Pew ever did any specific surveys of Mandela’s popularity, but I suspect strongly that it would have been found to be very high, nearly universally.

The question of political and post-political careers led to a consideration of both men as global-style icons. The Mandela Lecture delivered by Obama on 17 July 2018 was thus an opportunity for Obama to stake out that territory, post-presidency. (As an aside, former President John Quincy Adams spent a quarter of a century as a congressman. From that period in his public life, he is probably best remembered and respected now for having served as the legal counsel before the Supreme Court on behalf of the Amistad slaves in their bid to be recognized as free men.)

In respect to a question for the audience about the visual history of the two men, I noted that Mandela had been lucky to have had his early life as a lawyer and “young lion” thoroughly documented by a group of gifted photographers such as Jurgen Schadenberg and Bob Gosani, among others, who took so many of those iconic photos we know now. Obama, by contrast, only became a photographic icon after he had become a presidential candidate, although there are numerous candid photos from his earlier days, included in the two books he wrote.

In a final comment, I noted in response to an audience question that in respect to Africa, perhaps Obama’s most remembered comment was back in 2009 when he made his first speech as president on the continent in Ghana. “The era of the big man (in Africa) is over”, he predicted. Will he build on that and extend that conversation in his post-presidency years? That will be an important question and something worth watching out for in the future.



The portrayal of Mandela and Obama in African and American media

Andrew Meldrum: Africa Editor, The Associated Press

In their lives and political careers, Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama have received considerable coverage and scrutiny by the news media. What comparisons and parallels can be made about how the press covered the two historic leaders? To a large extent, it depends upon what stage in their careers one looks at the media coverage. Both leaders proved to be successful in making compelling and strategic statements that defined how they were covered, rather than leaving it to the media to determine how they would be covered.

One common trait stands out: Both leaders are black. And the news coverage rarely failed to mention that they were black. In Mandela's case, news stories reported that he was a black African, anti-apartheid leader who succeeded in leading South Africa to full democracy. In Obama's case, most press coverage highlighted that he was a black or bi-racial politician who succeeded in rising to the pinnacle of the American political system and was president for two terms. Of course the histories of the two men are quite different, although both overcame considerable racism. Mandela was raised under a system of harsh minority rule which eventually became the apartheid system. He challenged the discriminatory, racist regime through the law and then through armed resistance, for which he was jailed.

During his lengthy imprisonment, for 27 years until his release in 1990, the South African press was not able to report on him freely. The international press did not have those restrictions, but had very little access to information about Mandela. Unable to report on the basis of what he would have had to say, the international press focused on the actions of his supporters, and the statements and actions of his wife at the time, Winnie Madikizela. There were just a handful of photographs they could use all from the days before and during his arrest and arraignment in court in the 1960s. And there was ringing nearly 11,000-word statement that Mandela had made before his sentencing at the Rivonia treason trial in Pretoria in 1964 for his leadership of the underground movement, Umkhonto We

Sizwe. A particularly bold quote from the statement would be replayed countless times:

I have dedicated my life to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons will live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal for which I hope to live for and to see realised. But, My Lord, if it needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.

Those moving words were quoted over and over again, and became a symbol of what Mandela stood for. That statement, which Mandela carefully crafted, became the words which defined Mandela in press coverage for 27 years while he was in prison and well beyond that. Mandela consciously wrote the speech to appeal and influence an international audience as well as South Africa's population. It is widely hailed as one of the most important speeches of the twentieth century. Of course, some press painted the imprisoned Mandela as a communist, Marxist and socialist firebrand. Others reported that he was simply determined to end apartheid and win equal rights for all South Africans.

When Mandela was released from Victor Verster prison in 1990, he spoke to a huge crowd in Cape Town. Once again he carefully chose his words to encourage a magnanimous vision of South Africa with rights for all. South African and global media covered media in a manner befitting one of the momentous happenings at the beginning of the last decade of the twentieth century. He said:

Our struggle has reached a decisive moment. We call on our people to seize this moment so that the process towards democracy is rapid and uninterrupted. We have waited too long for our freedom. We can no longer wait. Now is the time to intensify the struggle on all fronts. To relax our efforts now would be a mistake which generations to come will not be able to forgive. The sight

of freedom looming on the horizon should encourage us to redouble our efforts. It is only through disciplined mass action that our victory can be assured.

We call on our white compatriots to join us in the shaping of a new South Africa. The freedom movement is a political home for you too. We call on the international community to continue the campaign to isolate the apartheid regime. To lift sanctions now would be to run the risk of aborting the process towards the complete eradication of apartheid. Our march to freedom is irreversible. We must not allow fear to stand in our way. Universal suffrage on a common voters' role in a united democratic and non-racial South Africa is the only way to peace and racial harmony."

To conclude, Mandela then repeated the "I am prepared to die" words of his sentencing speech.

Today, we can see that those speeches, combined with Mandela's imposing physical presence and his gracious charm, succeeded in giving him the status of a secular saint - a figure who appealed to an extremely wide international audience. As a journalist, my favorite aspect of Nelson Mandela was the way he spoke. He pronounced each word with care and had a deliberate, halting cadence that was a gift to reporters. Even though my note-taking is slow, I was able to write down each and every word that Mandela spoke.

Barack Obama had a very different career as a politician. He never went to prison. He never led a struggle against a minority-rule regime. His critics tried to portray him as a radical revolutionary and even un-American, but he succeeded in staying on message and appealing to a wide range of people in the U.S. and, indeed, internationally. The speech that introduced him to many Americans was when he spoke at the 2004 convention of the Democratic Party in support of then presidential candidate, later secretary of state under his presidency, John Kerry. Not well known, Obama was campaigning to go one up from Illinois state senator to a federal senator, and his name, Barack Hussein Obama, sounded foreign and even threatening to many Americans grappling with the post-911 terrorism scares. Obama's genius was to address these apparent deficiencies head on in a speech praised as among the best in America's political history. He said his unusual background, with a Kenyan father and a mother from Kansas, was proof of America's greatness as a melting pot of many cultures and ethnic groups. He said he grew up with the belief that "in a tolerant America, your name is no barrier to success." He added that it was the exceptional opportunities in the U.S. that allowed him to forge a career in politics. "In no other country on Earth is my story even possible,"

he said to rousing applause. In that speech, Obama held up his "otherness", such as his race and name, as proof of America's strength.

Obama also used his oratory to bridge the political divisions in the country. "There's not a liberal America and a conservative America; there's the United States of America. There's not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America; there's the United States of America."

The speech was a tour de force that thrust him into the top ranks of the Democratic Party, and within a few short years he was the party's candidate for president. "Yes we can" became his defining words, not just in the campaign but throughout his presidency.

Obama, a Harvard-trained lawyer, also spoke carefully and said exactly what he meant and rarely had to retract or correct or apologize for his words. By the time he became president, the mainstream press did not focus so much on the fact that he was black, or a man of color, but that he was an intelligent and effective politician who succeeded in representing a liberal set of policies that appealed to a wide range of Americans and an international audience. Of course, America's more political press, especially the conservative press, strongly criticized Obama throughout his presidency, but he was widely acknowledged as an astute and skilful politician.

By the end of their political careers, press coverage of both Mandela and Obama concentrated not so much on the fact of their skin color, but in their success in winning followers from a broad spectrum of people in their countries and around the world. Both leaders succeeded in managing the media coverage of them, so that they were not portrayed as dangerous and threatening radicals. Instead, through well-written speeches and strategically chosen words, they succeeded in getting the mainstream media to portray them as successful politicians.



Mandela and Obama: the convergences of legacies?

Bob Wekesa: Coordinator, ACSUS Public Diplomacy Programme

The 2018 International Mandela Day on July 18 was perhaps the most defining one from past and future editions of annual commemorations. For many, the apex of the celebrations was on the eve of the 100th birthday celebrations with former US president Barack Obama's delivering of the sixteenth annual Nelson Mandela Lecture on July 17. Ahead of the event, the palpable anticipation was understandable given the apparently meticulous and extensive preparations marked by a pre-event buzz in South Africa and around the world.

The great expectations were to some extent orchestrated. The ruling party, ANC, earmarked 2018 as the year of Mandela. The Nelson Mandela Foundation launched a two-year programme of activities in February 2017 branded as NM100. The African Centre for the Study of the United States based at Wits University hosted a forum dubbed the *"Mandela-Obama Effect: legacies and soft power"* on July 10. There were events galore around the world.

Two factors reified the event: commemoration of the 100th birthday of Nelson Mandela and the choice of former US president Barack Obama as the keynote speaker. 100 years was the magic milestone for reflection on the centenary of the life of a global icon, who, left indelible footprints on the sands of time. The selection of Obama as keynote speaker elevated the commemorations as the former US president compares favourably to speakers at past annual lectures such as Bill Clinton, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Thabo Mbeki, Kofi Annan and Bill Gates. It can be argued that Obama had greater global brand capital and a connection with the Mandela brand than some if not most of the past speakers. Indeed, it was the genius of the Nelson Mandela Foundation to have mooted the idea of an annual lecture which essentially fused the ideals of Mandela with those of prominent like-minded leaders.

Obama's involvement in the Mandela commemorations invited questions on the place of the two great men in world politics. Media reporting on Obama's keynote speech rekindled debate; comparing, contrasting and assessing the personas of Mandela and Obama.

Some went so far as to conclude that the Obama was/is the heir to the Madiba mantle. This touched off a number of questions: Was Obama a worthy successor of/to Mandela? What are the intersections of their leadership traits, legacies and visions? How did their influences converged and diverged? Were their contributions to tolerance, equality and humanity under siege? Amidst the adulation of what they represent and symbolise, what were the connecting threads with regards to their failures and shortcomings? Were they, in fact, overrated? What was the impact of their joint-cum-separate impact on Africa-US relations and on the global stage?

Mandela and Obama are acclaimed as giants of not just the 21st century but all time history. Both strike a mystical, even messianic image in the eyes of their "fans", Mandela perhaps more so than Obama. In part, the reified visages are based on the eloquence, prophetic messaging and soaring speechifying in the course of pursuing difficult agendas in their respective countries as well as in tackling knotted global issues. Although both are Nobel Peace Prize laureates, some analysts have argued that while Mandela deserved his Obama's was based on the euphoria of his election and announced months into his presidency. Mandela's Nobel Prize was shared with former apartheid-era president FW de Klerk while Obama's was personal. Mandela is one of the most feted leaders of all time, the designation of the July 18 as the International Mandela Day by the United Nations being emblematic in these respects. It would appear that Obama is following in these footprints given the clamour for him to visit, speak and be honoured across the world.

The self-evident difference is that they lived in different epochs. Indeed, a comparative analysis of Mandela and Obama is a work in progress given that the latter is not only still alive but has recently embarked on the post-presidency phase of his legacy. Obama was born in 1961, the year Mandela and his comrades formed Umkhonto we Sizwe. Mandela spent 27 years in prison a fate that never befell Obama; thus, Mandela is seen as having sacrificed much more than

Obama. Obama's rise was meteoric in that he jumped many notches from being a junior senator straight to the oval office; Mandela's rise was over a longer arc much of it forged while he languished in prison. Mandela was already a global hero by the time he became president; Obama was virtually nondescript by the time he ran for the Illinois senate seat and eventually the US presidency in 2008.

Obama became president in 2009 at the age of 47 while Mandela became president in 1994 at the age of 77. Mandela died in 2013 at 95 as retired president and statesman, when a 51-year old Obama had just been re-elected for the second term. One of the peaks in Mandela's political career was reached at the height of the Cold War when he and his comrades were served life imprisonment in 1964; Obama's major peak was achieved in the post-Cold War era with election as US president in 2008. Interestingly, it is the divergences in age-based trajectories that inspire the thought that Obama has taken on the baton from Mandela. Obama's eulogy at the memorial service of Mandela on 10 December 2013 is seen not only as one of his finest speeches but also one that indicated his inheritance of the Madiba spirit.

From the social-cultural and identity perspective, Mandela was designated for a royal role in the AbaThembu royal court while Obama was a "commoner" raised by his mother, a stepfather and grandparents. Thus, Mandela's leadership style is much more "African" in orientation, while Obama's is much more "worldly". Even when we consider dissenting voices critical of their transformational impact in their countries and the world, it is indisputable that they rose to global fame. Although their "greatness" is based on political leadership, they compare favourably on the "fame" factor with figures such as Ludwig Beethoven in music or Muhammad Ali in sports (note that both are sportive – Mandela as a boxer, Obama as a basketballer).

The evident proximity in personas reclines on the fact that they both claim an African heritage and were the first black presidents of their race-challenged nations. We can speculate that it is for this reason that Mandela and Obama seem closer to each other than they are to other giants of history such as Abraham Lincoln or Mahatma Gandhi even though the four share civil rights campaigning stripes. Where Mandela shook hands with and embraced his jailers, Obama symbolised the closing of ranks between black and white Americans. On the whole, it can be argued that both Mandela and Obama are charismatic leaders who drove change at critical stages in their respective countries even as debate rages on the extent or value of their transformational impact on societies.

In the centennial tagline of "find the Nelson Mandela within", the organisers of the Mandela centennial were seeking to protect, enhance and sustain his legacy going. Similarly, the establishment the Obama Foundation shortly after his exit from the White House in 2017 is ultimately aimed at extending his legacy beyond his oval office days. Theoretically, every human being leaves behind a legacy of some sort. It is just that the legacies of Mandela and Obama are founded not just on "large" personalities, but also because they are institutionalised. Indeed, both exhibited leadership qualities early in their careers; Mandela in the ANC Youth League, Obama as president of the Harvard Law Review and as a community mobiliser in Chicago. It is therefore interesting that Obama's speech was framed as a continuation of the Mandela legacy. It is interesting because as Obama ramped up the Mandela legacy, he also boasted his own.

Thus, in July 2018, the Mandela and Obama legacies intersected, converged and coalesced in a manner that gave vent to the thinking that Obama is the heir-apparent to the spirit of Mandela. The "Siamesing" of Mandela-Obama legacies had in fact been for some time. Both penned glowing tributes to each other and Obama wrote the foreword to *Conversations with Myself*, Mandela's memoirs published 2010. Coincidentally, their defining autobiographies; *Long Walk to Freedom* and *Dreams from my Father* were published in 1994 and 1995 – a year apart – as acts of legacy building. It is against this background that the palpable similarities and confluence in the Nelson Mandela and Obama foundations in terms of objectives should be seen. Barring a couple of differences, both foundations are focused on children and young people issues, in other words, investing in the future.

As great men, Mandela and Obama are endowed with global reputational capital but their legacies are under siege. Received wisdom is that the significance of "average" national leaders recedes after they leave office, in a sense; to be out of sight is to be out of mind. For great men and women who are considered to belong to the ages, however, reputations keep growing from one generation to another. At this point in time, the ideals that Mandela and Obama stood for while in office still influence politics in their respective countries. But, will the legacies of Mandela and Obama endure well into the future as do those of all-time-greats such as Karl Marx, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, Mother Teresa, Abraham Lincoln, Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere among others?

It would appear that Mandela and Obama are on course to enter the global hall of fame. However, a number of factors threaten the inscription of lasting Mandela and Obama legacies in global consciousness. These are factors that suggest the erosion of

reputations in such a way that the legacies are diminished with the passage of time. For instance, in the wake of the death of Winnie Madikizela Mandela in April 2018, critics introduced a narrative of Mandela as a bitter former husband. Noticeably, Winnie was been eulogised as “mother of the nation”, an anomalous inscription given that she was no longer Mandela’s wife when he became president in 1994. Even though Obama’s marriage to former First Lady Michelle Obama remains intact, Mandela’s troubled marriages mirrors Obama’s own life as the union between his American mother and Kenyan father broke early in his childhood. Some have gone so far as to intimate that Obama appropriated Mandela as a symbolic father, a perspective that animates the Obama as successor to the Mandela legacy narrative. Indeed, it would appear that the Mandela-Obama relationship is more symbolic than it is realistic, given that they physically met only once and very briefly in 2005. The bigger question is whether or not the unconventional family dimensions of their lives would serve to ruin their legacies, especially so in the case of Mandela.

As the economic equality issues have risen, commentators have labelled Mandela as sell-out of the blacks, especially on matters of land ownership among other economic imperatives. Similarly, Obama’s legacy is seen as being wiped out by the successor administration in the US since early 2017 the White House, President Donald Trump. Signature policies of the Obama administration such as the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), the affordable health care deal and US rapprochement with Iran and Cuba have been rescinded. The Paris climate agreement championed by Obama has also been reversed. Obama’s reputation has been sullied by America’s intervention in Libya (under the UN-sanctioned NATO banner) as well as the drone attacks undertaken under his watch in the Middle East and eastern and northern Africa. Mandela’s good name was somewhat bruised for schisms with African leaders such as the late Sani Abacha of Nigeria, South Africa’s military intervention in Lesotho during his tenure and differences with Zimbabwe’s Robert Mugabe. Generally, criticism has levelled at both for putative “betrayal” in not challenging poverty and inequality, at least from the perspective of the constituencies they are seen as having represented: South African blacks/African Americans and Africans on the African continent and other African Diasporas. Both were trained as lawyers, but elected for leadership approaches steeped in making concessions and compromises rather than pursuing equality on the basis of legal parameters. Some applaud their reconciliatory mien; others hold that they should have prosecuted the social injustices that afflicted their racially-divided countries a little more vigorously.

In other words, some hold that both men went too far in embracing the ethos of negotiation and reconciliation while overlooking the down trodden. In some quarters, the perception is that Obama’s presidency was marked more by oratorical exploits in comparison to the perception of Mandela as much more a man of action. Some say Obama’s legacy is “soft” in the sense of being based on abstract symbolism rather than being forged in the “hard” realities such as changed laws or accords. Mandela led the promulgation of a new constitution, Obama’s legal and policy changes as observed in this essay have or are being obliterated. But generally, both are seen as having left behind divided, even traumatised societies, despite their efforts.

The qualities that underpin their leadership style are seen as forged by tolerance, inclusivity, democracy in a world that is increasingly turning nativist, exclusionary and populist. Mandela and Obama may have established strong ideals while in office only to see these ideals eroded once they relinquished instruments of formal power. For both, legacies have to be nurtured outside of formal statecraft, more so in the case of Obama, less so in the case of Mandela.

While Mandela would have approved of Obama’s efforts at the entente between the US, Western Europe on the one hand and Iran and Cuba on the other hand, he would have disapproved of Obama’s involvement in the assassination of Muammar Qaddafi and the whole Libyan debacle given the lifelong friendship between Mandela (and the ANC) and Qaddafi. On the Israel-Palestine conflict, Mandela would have wanted Obama to be more assertive in support of the Palestinian course rather than his equivocal stance.



Legacies under siege: a view from the Donald Trump and Ramaphosa presidencies

John Stremlau: Visiting Professor of International Relations, University of the Witwatersrand

This piece takes the Nelson Mandela centennial celebrations of 2018 as a springboard for comment on the implications of the presidencies of Donald Trump in the United States (US) and Cyril Ramaphosa in South Africa for the legacies of Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama. Donald Trump stirred up US presidential politics in 2011 as the one potential candidate to embrace conspiracy theorists claiming Barack Obama's presidency was illegitimate as he was born in Kenya. Disregarding official validation of Obama's birth certificate, Trump persisted with the racist smears for years. Not until September 2016, after he had secured the Republican presidential nomination did he grudgingly affirm the truth.

Trump and many of his Republican allies continue to demean, denigrate and disparage Obama, his presidency, and his legacy. These include substantial numbers of white ethnic nationalists convinced Trump's promise to "Make America Great Again" will primarily benefit them. Barack Obama espouses very different views. Congressional and Presidential elections between now and 2020 will test whether Trump's, or those who share Obama's views, prevail (note that this was before the congressional elections in late 2018). The result will resonate abroad, with lessons and warnings for other democratic experiments, and affect US relations with Africa and the rest of the world.

America must aspire, in Obama's view, to become more inclusive, as Mandela wished for South Africa: a country that belongs to all who live in it, united in its diversity. Obama prefers consensus over confrontation at home and multilateralism over unilateralism abroad. He advocates the power of hope, not fear; empathy not arrogance, and partnership not domination. Obama's views are closer to those of South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa, not those of former President Jacob Zuma, whose personal and leadership traits are more akin to Trump's.

The late Kenyan scholar Ali Mazrui once referred to the United States (US) and South Africa as the "world's first global nations." It is a phrase more reflective of the aspirations of Mandela, Obama, and Ramaphosa, than of Trump or Zuma. The contrasting views of the two incumbent presidents will be considered first.

The contrasts in the presidencies of Trump and Ramaphosa can help in shinning a light on their standing at home and in the international system. Trump's views and policies defy conventional analysis. During his first 600 days in office, according to fact-checkers at the Washington Post, Trump lied or made misleading statements over 5,000 times on public matters large and small. Trump's primary means of communicating his views to other governments and the public is via Twitter. During this same period, he tweeted over 3,000 times, blurring distinctions between his personal and presidential views, as all are 'on the record' and data for early assessments of his legacy. Those, tweets, appearing to be impulsive, ill-informed, mean, undignified, and amoral probably perplex Trump's friends and foes alike.

None of Trump's tweets targeted Africa, until Wednesday night 22 August 2018. Without warning or prior consultations, he attacked the South African government for allegedly seizing white-owned farms and alluded to already discredited reports of widespread killing of white farmers. This tweet may have pleased racist elements of his domestic base, and fringe groups in South Africa with whom they have ties. Majorities in both countries, however, would agree with the New York Times editorial branding it a "vile ploy."

President Ramaphosa's response to Trump's tweet revealed his different views and approach to presidential leadership and South Africa-US relations. His first public reaction was that Trump should focus on America's problems and he would deal with South Africa's, especially one as complex and tied to resolving South

Africa's historic injustices as land disposition. South Africans must and would solve their own problems themselves. In public remarks a few days later he reminded everyone that South Africa had resolved a more intractable and difficult problem, negotiating a peaceful end of Apartheid that surprised the world. He promised to emulate Mandela's consensus building approach in resolving the comparatively less daunting land issue.

The flare up over land also differs from the less public but mutually beneficial bilateral interaction between US President George H.W. Bush and Nelson Mandela in 1991. Bush voiced concern about reports of rising violence in South Africa and urged Mandela to invite then Secretary of State James Baker to mediate. Mandela thanked Bush but said success depended on South African ownership of the problem and its resolution. Ambassador, Princeton Lyman described in his memoir, "Partner to History: The U.S. Role in South Africa's Transition to Democracy", how mutual respect and understanding between Bush and Mandela, paved the way for a critical period of rapid improvements in US-South Africa cooperation. A similar degree of trust did not seem possible between Ramaphosa and Trump.

Were Trump's behaviour and views to be interpreted for South Africans, this task might best be done by the comedian and social critic, Trevor Noah. In November 2016 Noah presciently drew parallels to the leadership traits and faults between Jacob Zuma and Trump. Zuma may be more politically savvy and ruthless than Trump, but they aggressively attack the media that threatens to expose their misdeeds, disparage the judiciary that could indict them, placating populist bases with unmet promises and enriching themselves and their cronies at the public's expense. "Brothers of another mother" was how Noah summed up Trump and Zuma, a phrase that instantly went viral in America and South Africa.

Ramaphosa launched his presidency with a promise to the nation to emulate Mandela's views and virtues. On 11 February 2018, four days before becoming state President, he announced all government ministries and agencies would hold year-long Centenary Celebrations of Mandela's birth and legacy. Motivating the campaign was a commitment to rectify the damage done to Mandela's legacy during the years of escalating corruption, abuses of power, and state-capture by a small but powerful group of grifters, including President Jacob Zuma.

When Ramaphosa delivered the Annual Steve Biko Lecture at UNISA, on 14 September 2018, his Mandela-like views on national inclusion, economic equality and social justice were roundly applauded. ANC national polling results appeared in the press the following week and showed Ramaphosa's popularity at 72%

compared to 61% for the ANC. However, rowdy protestors shouting 'Azania women remember Marikana' briefly halted the Biko lecture proceedings. It was a jarring reminder of the 34 people killed in 2012 during a labour dispute at a platinum mine owned by Lonmin, when Ramaphosa was a company director and major shareholder. Between 2001 and 2014, Ramaphosa became one of the richest men in South Africa, and then served as Zuma's Deputy President until turning against him last year. Thus far neither appear to be serious political liabilities. Unlike Trump, Ramaphosa does not face serious competition from other party leaders. His foremost challenge was to reunify the ANC ahead of the 2019 presidential elections, which made his effort to focus the nation on Mandela's legacy politically shrewd and appropriate.

Interestingly, Zuma has not gone away from the public sphere with this causing some discomfort to the Ramaphosa presidency. This somewhat strikes semblance with the situation across the Atlantic in the US. This could be seen from the perspective of Obama's views as an antidote to Trump in US domestic and foreign affairs. During the first eighteen months of Trump's presidency Obama upheld US presidential tradition of not publicly criticizing a successor. On 17 July 2018 he re-entered the political area with the delivery of the Annual Mandela Lecture in Johannesburg, the first major address of his post-presidency. He delineated key attributes of Mandela's character – selflessness, empathy, dignity, honesty, decency, and fortitude, among others. All are character and leadership traits foreign to Trump, as US media reports of the address noted.

Obama also endorsed Ramaphosa as Mandela's confidant and worthy successor. President Mandela is believed to have preferred Ramaphosa to be his successor in 2001. Allusions to this were prominent during welcoming remarks for Obama prior to his lecture. The main thrust of his lecture was a strategy for advancing and entrenching democracy, building on Mandela's legacy, but also framed in ways that would have inspired and motivated his supporters in America. Two months later, on the mid-term elections campaign trail of 2018, Obama delivered a sequel to the Mandela lecture, more explicitly critical of Trump and his Republican enablers. And he repeatedly called upon his supporters to vote themselves and bring others to the polls, promising to do all he can to support candidates who would counter Trump.

From a demographic perspective, prospects for reviving the Obama coalition are promising. By mid-century America will be a "majority-minority" nation of African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians among others exceeding the number of Whites. US opinion polls in 2016 suggest this fuelled much of the resentment and

reaction driving many White voters across all income groups to support Donald Trump. American journalist-author, Ta-Nehisi Coates book on Obama's presidency, *We Were Eight Years in Power*, includes an epilogue on Trump, entitled "The First White President." Although this "nativist" phenomenon helped to elect him, his presidential performance is increasingly seen as so incompetent and malevolent that by mid-2018, Trump's approval ratings were the lowest ever recorded for incumbents at that stage of their presidency. These were lowest not only among minorities, but also White women, youth and many urban voters.

Arrests and convictions of Trump's former national security advisor, former campaign manager, his personal attorney, and several other Trump associates revealed fraud, money laundering, tax evasion, campaign collusion with Russia and obstruction of justice that increasingly implicate Trump. Prospects for reviving a diverse Obama coalition appear increasingly likely. If this happens then it is at least conceivable Obama's political heirs might finally be empowered to begin reforming America's deeply flawed democracy.

America's democratic deficits, however, are structural and rooted in the constitutional bargain of 1789. These will be extremely difficult to reform and have recently been reinforced by a Republican Party's bid to entrench and perpetuate minority rule. For although the South African and the US constitutions both begin with the identical words, "We the people..." the fundamental goals are different. South Africa's constitutional priority is to advance and entrench human rights and was adopted in 1996 with Ramaphosa one of the main architects. America's, however, privileges states' rights, "in order to form a more perfect union," initially among thirteen former colonies, now fifty states. Although America's founders are celebrated for having created the world's first large national republic, this did require preserving substantial 'sovereign' authority for the member states of this new federation.

To reassure the less populated states, greater powers were granted, primarily by creating a two-house federal legislature with the upper chamber comprised of two Senators from every state, the lower chamber reflecting relative populations. Presidents would be chosen by an electoral college composed of state delegations equal to their numbers in both chambers. Trump was able to win in the Electoral College because of over-representation of predominantly Republican southern and rural states, despite losing the popular vote by three million. Senior appointments to the federal judiciary and to the cabinet and other senior executives required Senate approval, again, given the Republican minority greater power.

Obama taught constitutional law at the University of Chicago and knows well its strengths and limitations, as well as the fundamental contradiction between the Constitution's privileging states' rights and founding human rights principle of America's 1776 Declaration of Independence, "the proposition that all men are created equal..." Although the US Constitution did not initially include a Bill of Rights, ten articles were quickly added but with a major concession to wealthy special interests: the right to private property would include African-American slaves. By the mid-19th century America's slave-dependent cotton industry had become the world's fourth largest economy, with the financial investment in those 4,000,000 slaves estimated at over \$10 trillion in today's money.

Such vast wealth bought power and until the Civil War assured the South's oligarchs of non-interference by the Federal Government, white power that was consolidated under "Jim Crow" segregation and one-party rule that leveraged federal protection until the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Party allegiances shifted after that with the Republican's 'southern strategy' contributing to several national political victories. Until 2016 the white racism inherent in that strategy was not so blatantly evident.

For Mandela's legacy to flourish, Ramaphosa and Obama will likely be among his most prominent, articulate, and persuasive advocates. Each of them, however, has immediate political challenges. Ramaphosa must first undo the damage done to his country during the misrule of Jacob Zuma, while also unifying his party, the ANC. Obama no longer enjoys the prerogatives of office, as he tries to rally and broaden the diverse coalition that twice elected him, to elect a new Democratic majority in Congress and President in 2020. If he succeeds the result will be a more receptive and responsive US partner for Ramaphosa, and perhaps even burnish Mandela's legacy.

President Ramaphosa has to redress the entrenched effects of colonial domination, racial oppression and exploitation while grappling with the urgent need to redress the political and economic damage due to corruption and other abuses of power during the 2009-18 administrations of President Jacob Zuma. On the other hand, Obama is using his considerable influence to help elect like-minded allies capable of containing and perhaps overturning Trump's many assaults on his legacy and, in a wider sense, the global legacy of Nelson Mandela.

The editors of this volume and the South African universities sponsoring it have issued an urgent reminder: Sustaining any democracy is too important to be left to politicians competing to lead it. Among Nelson Mandela's much-quoted beliefs was: "Education is the most powerful weapon, which you can use to change the

world.” Universities can do so in three ways: by empowering individuals, through the generation of new knowledge, and for their protection and promotion of universal democratic values of inherent equality, freedom and peace with justice. Obama reminded us during his Mandela lecture that we are all entitled to our own opinions but not our own facts, especially on vital and contentious issues within and among nations. Citing the example of climate change, he noted that reasonable people can disagree on policies to redress this problem. But we can no longer tolerate the close-mindedness and selfishness interests of those who claim the problem does not exist. Scientists everywhere tell us otherwise, citing credible data as their defence. In an era of ‘fake’ news and rising illiberalism, the contributions of research and training universities

can offer us the best available versions of truth on a host of vitally important scientific, economic, cultural and political issues vital to our individual and collective well-being. They also can inform, verify, and help hold accountable the programs and policies governments promise to pursue on our behalf. Ensuring universities fulfil this role surely will also honour the legacy of Nelson Mandela and those leaders who seek to ‘stand on his shoulders’ in South Africa, America, and throughout the world.

Acknowledgements

The Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD) would like to thank the African Centre for the Study of the United States (ACSUS) based at the University of the Witwatersrand for producing this Volume.



ABOUT IGD

The Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD) is an independent South African-based foreign policy think tank dedicated to the analysis of, and dialogue on the evolving international political and economic environment and the role of Africa and South Africa. It advances a balanced, relevant and policy-oriented analysis, debate and documentation of South Africa's role in international relations and diplomacy.

The IGD strives for a prosperous and peaceful Africa in a progressive global order through cutting edge policy research and analysis, catalytic dialogue and stakeholder interface on global dynamics that have an impact on South Africa and Africa.

3rd Floor Robert Sobukwe Building

263 Nana Sita Street

Pretoria South Africa

Follow Institute for Global Dialogue on Facebook and Twitter:

<https://www.facebook.com/Institute-for-Global-Dialogue-215168621838580/>

www.twitter.com/IGD_SA

Contact us:

+27123376082

info@igd.org.za

www.igd.org.za

All rights reserved. The material in this publication may not be reproduced, stored or transmitted without the prior permission of the copyright holder. Short extract may be quoted, provided the source is fully acknowledged.

Produced ACSUS and Published by IGD.