Nelson Mandela

Reflections on a Life Dedicated to the Spirit of Freedom, Justice and Equality

By Edwin Buggage

Nelson Mandela the Freedom Fighter

When one thinks of those rare individuals who are selfless leaders who fight for a cause bigger than themselves names like Gandhi, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X come to mind. But Nelson Mandela is another name that has come to symbolize the struggle for equality and has become the embodiment of the continued goal of making the world a better place for all. During his amazing life he took on the call to fight against injustice in South Africa’s Apartheid Government of White minority rule. Spending 27 years in prison before being released and becoming the nation’s first Black and truly democratically elected President. After choosing to serve only one term, he continued to fulfill his life’s work serving humanity and inspiring people around the world in the struggle against injustice.

Dorian Francis (center) is pictured above during his first trip as part of the New Orleans South African Connection (NOSACONN) earlier this year.

Cover Story, Continued on next page.
Mayor Marc Morial. “There are dent and former New Orleans National Urban League Presi- passing of Mandela including released statements on the civil rights community also said during his speech . moved a nation towards justice larger global impact, “Mandela He also spoke of Mandela’s involvement in civic activism was that one of his first times getting how Mandela inspired him and remarks Obama spoke about living U .S . Presidents . In his Obama along with three other tended his memorial service ers from around the world at- tended his memorial service who passed away on Decem- ber 5th at the age of 95. Lead- ers from around the world at- tended his memorial service including President Barack Obama along with three other living U.S. Presidents. In his remarks Obama spoke about how Mandela inspired him and that one of his first times getting involved in civic activism was when he was a college student speaking out against apartheid. He also spoke of Mandela’s larger global impact, “Mandela moved a nation towards justice and in the process moved bil- lions around the world,” Obama said during his speech. Leaders from the national civil rights community also released statements on the passing of Mandela including National Urban League Presi- dent and former New Orleans Mayor Marc Morial. “There are few men or women who leave such an indelible imprint and impact on the world that they are remembered, honored and celebrated by nations near and far for centuries after they de- part. There are few people for whom even all the words in ev- ery language fail to convey the magnitude and meaning of their lives. Without a doubt in mind or heart, I know that Nelson Mandela is one among a very select few.”

Damon Batiste’s New Orleans South African Connection (NOSCONN) brings New Orleans and South Africa Together

Mandela’s life is one that’s impacted people and inspired many. One such person is Da- mon Batiste, who has for over a decade been bringing groups of people over to South Af- rica through his New Orleans South African Connection (NOSCONN), that is a non- profit 501 (c) 3 organization, comprised of business, civic, community and entertainment industry leaders, both in New Orleans and in the Republic of South Africa. Since 1998 they have produced special events in the City of New Orleans and the Republic of South Africa, these activities have allowed our or- ganization to serve as pioneers of presenting art, culture and tourism as the forefront of eco- nomic development. “I had the opportunity to meet Mr. Man- dela briefly at his 80th Birthday Celebration when he was then President and although our conversation was brief with him encouraging me to keep doing what I am doing it was some- thing that has stayed with me and keeps me motivated in the work that I am doing especially with young people,” says Batiste of his meeting with Mandela.

As he continues his work as one of the Founders of the Ba- tiste Cultural Arts Academy re- cently receiving a “Turnaround Arts Commission,” a grant from President Barack Obama’s Committee on Arts and Hu- manities. Students were invited to a special screening of Beasts of the Southern Wild with film- makers, leading actress and the film’s star, Quvenzhané Wallis, and First Lady Michelle Obama at the White House. “Mandela always spoke of the children and making things better for the next generation in addition to planting imparting the spirit of activism in them where they too would live to serve others. And what we are doing is looking to groom the next Mandela who would lead the fight in our City for a better life for all our citi- zens,” says Batiste of his work and how Mandela inspired him to work to empower the youth.

Jerome Smith: The Importance of Knowing Your History and Continuing the Struggle

As Nelson Mandela was fight- ing against Apartheid in South Africa, in the United States this country was embroiled in a fight against segregation in the southern U.S. and against White repression across the nation. In New Orleans many fought, struggled and died alongside many of those who have come to be part of the lore of Ameri- can History. One of the people who stood on the frontlines was Jerome Smith, who today is still working with young people through his Treme’ Based Tam- bourine and Fan that teaches young people about culture and working to better their commu- nity. “We have always taught our kids about Nelson Mandela and Apartheid, we also taught them what his life and struggle stands for and teach about the importance alongside Malcolm X and Mar- tin Luther King Jr.,” says Smith. Smith has lived through a lot and has many stories that are sometimes not in the history books. He speaks of a time dur- ing the Civil Rights Era, that in Chicago a group that included Martin Luther King Jr., Harry Belafonte and others from the U .S . planned to go to South Africa, but the trip was called off,” he says speaking of the awareness of those involved in the Civil Rights Movement to the Apartheid regime and seeing the parallel struggle for Blacks in the U.S. and in South Africa. He also spoke of many from New Orleans who went to see Mandela in Atlanta when he was first released from prison, in addition to the kids of Tambourine and Fan meet- ing Winnie Mandela when she came to visit New Orleans.

Dorian Francis: Africans Unite

Every year Damon Batiste through his New Orleans South African Connection brings groups to the mother-land for what is a life changing experience. This was the case for Dorian Francis, who went earlier this year. “I have to say that since going there the way I look at myself will never be the same,” says Francis, a Program Manager and Community Ad- vocate who works with youth. Continuing he says, “As I looked around and saw so many people who looked like me and many of the things they did reminded me so much of New Orleans, it made me feel like I’d returned home and it made me realize that it is true when they say New Orleans is the most African City in the U.S. and that you can take Africans out of Africa, but you cannot take Africa out of the Africans.”

Dorian says because of Man- dela they were able to do the amazing things as far as cul- tural exchange and the opening up of South Africa. He also feels that he was able to make valu- able connections and feels that some should consider looking at opportunities to do business and get to know more about South Africa and the continent, in general. In a lighter moment he talks about how he learned that one of the poses Black men sometimes do squatting down, the South Africans do the same pose as well. And as a song- writer and performer when do- ing their song God Bless New Orleans, he brought up some young ladies and changed New Orleans to Soweto and now they have adopted the song as their own.

Nelson Mandela’s Legacy and Life Lessons for Future Generations

Nelson Mandela was a man who inspired so many with his courage and resilience and in his transcending this life his spirit of conviction to a larger cause lives on. And while it takes a unified push to move the mountain of some of the injustices in society. On some level change begins
New Orleans Remembers Larry McKinley

Legendary Radio Host, Record Producer & Jazz Fest Fixture, Dies at Age 85

Larry McKinley, a charismatic and beloved radio personality, music promoter, and record business impresario passed away at his home on December 8, 2013, due to complications related to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). He was 85. Known as “Friendly” Larry McKinley, he was a key figure in the overlapping histories of New Orleans rhythm and blues/rock and roll and the city’s radio industry. His sonorous voice was well known in New Orleans from his career as a radio announcer and, later, through his voiceover work on numerous television and radio advertisements, most notably those for the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival.

McKinley was born in Chicago, Illinois on December 13, 1927. After attending Columbia College of Broadcasting, he moved to New Orleans in September 1954 for an internship at radio station WMRY, which later changed its call letters to WYLD-AM. The station’s program director, deejay Jack “The Rapper” Gibson, a local record-business veteran. He also promoted local concerts by national R&B superstars, including James Brown, Sam Cooke, Jackie Wilson, and The Jackson 5. New Orleans musicians often opened the shows, many of which took place at the Municipal Auditorium, giving homegrown performers a prime opportunity to broaden their exposure and ascend in the music business.

In 1970, McKinley embarked on a long and productive relationship with the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, serving on the board of the festival’s foundation, recording promos and commercials for the festival, and later presiding as master of ceremonies at the annual Foundation Gala. He returned to radio in 1975 to host a show on WNNR-AM and to serve as the station’s program director. He later became a leader in political and public relations campaigns for various candidates and clients. Along with longtime friend Judge Eddie Sapir, he hosted an interview show on local cable-access television. Many of their guests were former colleagues of McKinley’s from his early days in the industry.

In addition to his induction into the Black Radio Hall of Fame, McKinley was awarded an Off-Beat Magazine Best of the Beat Music Business Award in 2005, and he was inducted into the Louisiana Music Hall of Fame in 2010. Larry McKinley is survived by his four daughters, Melody McKinley (Edward) Watters of New Orleans, Joy McKinley (Kenneth) Chancellor of New Orleans, Glenda McKinley English of New Orleans, and Dana McKinley (Lloyd) Landburg of New Bern, North Carolina; six grandchildren, Navis Hill Robinson, Blaire Brown Zeigler, Shon Cockerham, Ernest McKinley English, Maya Sophia English, and Catalyn Ann-Marie Kelly; ten great-grandchildren; his long time companion Betty A. McLin; and a host of family, friends, and admiring New Orleanians.

He is preceded in death by his father, the late Jesse McKinley; his mother, the late Ester Fontaine Jordan, and an only brother, the late Kenneth McKinley.

The public is invited to a memorial celebration on Monday, December 16, beginning at 6:00 p.m. at the Lawless Memorial Chapel at Dillard University, located at 2601 Gentilly Boulevard in New Orleans. Visitations will be held from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. at the same location. A private burial will be held on Tuesday, December 17, 2013. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made in Larry McKinley’s name to the George and Joyce Wein Jazz and Heritage Education Center, 1205 N. Rampart St., New Orleans, LA 70116, www.jazzandheritage.org.

Services are entrusted to D.W. Rhodes Funeral Home.

In 1959, McKinley co-founded Minit Records at the behest of Joe Banashak, a local record-business veteran. He also promoted local concerts by national R&B superstars, including James Brown, Sam Cooke, Jackie Wilson, and The Jackson 5. New Orleans musicians often opened the shows, many of which took place at the Municipal Auditorium, giving homegrown performers a prime opportunity to broaden their exposure and ascend in the music business.

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Rush Extend Poll Streak
It’s the Longest in NAIA-D

The Gold Rush (7-3) are in the top 25 for the 26th consecutive time — that’s the longest active streak in this division — and the 39th time in the last 40 polls. This is the first poll of the regular season; Xavier ranked 19th in the preseason.

Xavier’s most notable victory this season was 90-80 in overtime at home against then-10th-ranked William Carey one week ago. The Gold Rush erased a 16-point second-half deficit to give the Crusaders their first loss of the season.

For the first time since Feb. 15, 2010, there are three Gulf Coast Athletic Conference teams in the top 25. Talladega (11th) and Philander Smith (14th) joined Xavier in the rankings. It’s the first time since Jan. 25, 2010, that the GCAC has two teams in the top 14.

First NBC Bank recognizes that a community based financial institution grows when it has professional and caring employees. We strive every day to supply the best banking services to each of our customers.

First NBC Bank
Vice Chairman
Dr. Charles C. Teamer

Majority local ownership allows us to cut through red tape and make decisions quickly when responding to our customers’ financial needs. The Bank’s flexible organizational structure affords our clients access to highly skilled and empowered bankers who are valued as trusted financial partners. And because we believe in open communication with customers, we will always encourage you to discuss your financial objectives and look for ways to implement them. First NBC Bank never stopped lending even during days of market instability. We’re recognized as one of the top lending and service related banks throughout the Crescent City and the Metropolitan Area. So, if you want to work with a bank that makes client services its primary concern, you know who you can turn to—First NBC Bank.
A new nightspot opened in Gretna on November 21st. Club Hawaii was the place to be. Patrons who came out to celebrate the Grand Opening, had a great night and of course, Data was there too!

Visit www.ladatanews.com for more photos from these events
Decking Your Garden for the Holidays

By MG Calla Victoria

You do not have to wait for nightfall, when the holiday lights come on, to make your garden look festive. Colorful plantings for the season will make your garden look beautiful throughout the daytime hours. Consider planting drifts of chrysanthemums in coordinating colors. If you are not living in a “White Christmas” zone, create the most fragrant snowdrift around with sweet alyssums. Poinsettias will make a splash anywhere in your garden as well as bromeliads. Also consider planting in geometric shapes with pansies for some whimsy!

Check out my “Gardening Tip of the Week” at www.thegardeningdiva.com

Remember, never get too busy to stop and smell the beautiful flowers.
Mandela’s Road to Freedom

If I close my eyes, I can remember 1984. I am among those running from meeting to meeting working to pass Proposition J, the San Francisco ballot initiative that required the city to divest pension funds from companies doing business in South Africa. The ballot initiative had to get two-thirds of the vote because it dealt with money, and even in progressive San Francisco, some thought getting votes out might be challenging. But a cross section of activists committed to divestment worked our tails off, and prevailed. San Francisco became among the first, and one of the largest, of our nation’s cities to divest public pension funds.

I wish I could distill the energy that came from those rallies and community meetings. I can remember, with just one eye shut, the chants and songs, “South Africa will be free, South Africa will be free, Will be free South Africa.” Students were among those to put themselves on the line for divestment, confronting their college and university leaders about the status of investments. The Free South Africa Movement was not a student movement, not a grass roots movement. It was simply a movement for justice that succeeded because many elements of our nation were involved.

Those of us who favored divestment were following the lead of the African National Congress, who asked allies around the world to make South Africa “ungovernable.” If massive divestment could stop the flow of dollars to South Africa (dollars that could be used to step up military action against innocent civilians), that would place pressure on the South African economy to make choices with dwindling resources. Would fighting to maintain apartheid be one of those? Divestment might make apartheid too expensive to maintain, or so we hoped. The divestment efforts contrasted sharply with the Sullivan Principles, crafted by the late Leon Sullivan, who asked US companies to stay in South Africa but only under certain conditions that dealt with fair pay and working conditions. Those American corporations doing business with South Africa were getting lots of flack for choosing oppressors as their business partners.

The death of Nelson Mandela causes these memories to rush back, memories of activism, of social change, of the conviction that change was coming. The Free South Africa Movement wasn’t a Black movement, or a White one; it was a movement for justice. The Free South Africa Movement, in Washington, D.C. and around the United States, had an uncommonly positive energy, even in the cynical Reagan era.

Nelson Mandela was freed from prison in 2000, went on to be elected president of South Africa, to dismantle apartheid, and to begin the social and economic transition of South Africa. The rest of the story is history. When people speak of Mandela they will inevitably speak of his spirit of forgiveness, of the fact that even after having been unjustly jailed for 27 years, he was committed to reconciliation in South Africa.

Nelson Mandela projected a humble and forgiving spirit. His appearance of gentility was reassuring to many who expected someone formerly described as a “terrorist” to have little tolerance for the status quo. Still, a spirit of forgiveness is not a spirit that accepts social and economic inequality. President Mandela’s gentle spirit was a forgiving one, but not a forgetful one. As president, he managed to juggle competing constituencies, but he never retreated from his demand that justice be served.

It is not clear when the economic gap in South Africa will be closed, or even narrowed. In
Cracking Down on Payday Lenders

By Charlene Crowell

Just in time for the holiday season, three federal regulators have taken two separate actions against payday lending. One seeks to remedy outrageous wrongdoing by refunding money to past customers. The other will protect existing or new borrowers from further financial exploitation. By actively righting wrongs and implementing common-sense reforms, these regulators offer consumers prospects for a happier holiday season.

On November 20, in its first enforcement action against a payday lender, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) secured an agreement from Cash America International, Inc., to reimburse $14 million to approximately 14,000 consumers. The refunds are a result of “robo-signing” debt collection documents and also overcharging on payday loans given to members of the military or their families. Affected consumers will receive a full refund. Additionally, Cash America will also pay a $5 million fine for those violations and other misconduct.

CFPB’s regulatory action is particularly significant because Cash America is one of the largest and most influential in the industry. In fact, Dan Feehan, its CEO, said at a 2007 Jeffries Financial Services conference, “[T]he theory in the business is [that] you’ve got to get that customer in, work to turn him into a repetitive customer, long-term customer, because that’s really where the profitability is.”

November 21, the next day, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) and the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) issued supervisory guidance to rein in payday lending by banks. These two regulators will now require banks making payday loans to assess a borrower’s ability to repay the loan and establish a clear limit on repeat loans.

“Every year, abusive payday loans strip billions of dollars of wealth from African-American and Latino families and we applaud the CFPB for the enforcement action taken against Cash America,” said Hilary Shelton, who holds the dual roles of director of the NAACP Washington Bureau and its senior vice-president of policy and advocacy. “We also commend the FDIC and the OCC for their guidance on payday loans as we move one more step forward in advancing economic justice for all.”

The Center for Responsible Lending (CRL) also commented on the regulatory actions, saying: “We applaud the FDIC and OCC for recognizing the harms caused by this type of lending and sending a clear message to the banks they supervise. We urge the Federal Reserve to do the same with regard to Fifth Third Bank and Regions Bank, as both of these banks continue to push payday products. And we hope the CFPB will continue its work on payday lending by promulgating a rule that stops any payday lender from trapping borrowers in debt.”

Indeed, further regulatory action is needed. Research has long shown that many payday loan borrowers soon become mired in a turnstile of debt that worsens with every repeat loan.

Earlier this year, Rebecca Borne, CRL’s senior policy counsel, testified before the Senate Special Committee on aging, advising how more than 13 million older Americans struggling to live on $21,800 a year or less are often caught into payday lending’s debt trap.

Pay Day Loans,
Continued on page 10.

Book Review

Dusk

By The Bookworm Sez

This time of year, one of your favorite things to do is to look at lights. Your entire neighborhood is filled with all kinds of them. Lights on houses, lights on trees, lights on bushes, wire, decks, and steps. You might see them on boats, in the park, on a statue, or made into shapes in someone’s front yard. And you might even have them inside your own house, on a tree or in a window.

They’re twinkly. They’re bright. And you can’t stop looking at all the lights. So let’s take a walk to see the lights in “Dusk” by Uri Shulevitz.

“Dusk” tells a story of an evening stroll on a cold night and he does it with a handful of words; some pages, in fact, hold just a half-sentence. That forces you to take a slower, ambling pace in reading – somewhat like a leisurely walk.

And maybe because those words are so sparse, it’s easy to focus on the illustrations here – which are, perhaps, what you should be doing anyhow. Shulevitz’ drawings are done in gorgeous color, evoking the night chill and the warmth of the lights.

If you’re looking for a Kwanzaa-Christmas-Hanukkah book that will dazzle your 2-to-6-year-old, this one’s it. Read it, and “Dusk” could become one of her favorite things.

By Uri Shulevitz
c.2013,
Farrar Straus Giroux
$17.99 / $19.99
Canada 32 pages

“Dusk” by Uri Shulevitz

“Dusk,” then, because this book won’t take long. Author Uri Shulevitz tells a story of an evening stroll on a cold night and he does it with a handful of words; some pages, in fact, hold just a half-sentence. That forces you to take a slower, ambling pace in reading – somewhat like a leisurely walk.

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Senator JP Morrell Announces Holiday Essay Contest

Dear Friend:

I am excited to announce a holiday essay contest, open to all elementary, middle, and high school students of Orleans, Jefferson, and St. Bernard Parish schools. The holiday season is a time for family, celebration, and joy for people all around the world. I encourage students from across District 3 to submit essays answering the following question:

What makes the holiday season so important to you? In your essay, explain why your holiday traditions, experiences, and/or favorite memories make your holiday season special.

Two contest winners from each parish will be selected, one from Grades 1-6 and one from Grades 7-12. The six winning students will receive a Kindle Fire for their hard work and accomplishments.

Sincerely,
JP Morrell
State Senator, District 3

How to Enter

All entries must be submitted no later than Friday, December 20th. Email your entry as a document attachment to MorrellHolidayContest@gmail.com. With your email submission, please provide the following information in the body of your email:

Name
Date of birth
Telephone number
E-mail address
School name
Grade level

If you are not able to email, call my office for assistance at (504) 284-4794. I look forward to reading about your students’ different traditions and celebrations, and I wish you all a very happy holiday season.

St. Mary’s Academy Pre-K4 Students Celebrate The Life Of Nelson Mandela

As people around the globe mourn the passing of Nelson Mandela, St. Mary’s Academy’s Pre-K4 students celebrated the international icon’s life. Donning African garments made by their teacher Barbara Carlton and her sister Annie Williams, students learned about the freedom fighter’s life and impact of his work around the world.

“Nelson Mandela was a great man who stood for love, peace and forgiveness,” said Carlton adding that it is vitally important to teach children at an early age about the sacrifices that were made by others on their behalf. “Education is the most powerful tool that we can give our youth so that they too can become world changers like Mandela.”

Cover Story/ Continued from page 3.

with self, “When I think of Mandela, although he was part of a movement he had to be a man of courage and look at himself first and what he was willing to sacrifice. The power to change starts with the man in the mirror. One must go through a real self-assessment and know that it will take not just heart, but a bigger heart to become a community servant and advocate,” says Dorian Francis.

Living a life with a greater purpose is what Mandela embodied. Jerome Smith is a kindred spirit, giving his life to make the City a better place for the citizens of New Orleans. In his many years of being an activist and advocate of uplift he oftentimes looked to Mandela as inspiration. “I have been involved in the fight for human rights my entire life and there have been times when I have been placed in jail during protesting against injustice and it is the spirit of Mandela that carried me and many others through.”

On his many trips and speaking with many associated with Mandela, the one thing Damon Batiste has heard over and over again is passing on the tradition of fighting for freedom to young people. “Today the struggle is for us to build future leaders from the ranks of our young. But today it is not just about only Black kids, but young people from around the globe to embody the spirit of Nelson Mandela and look at the incredible things he was able to do. And look at the many steps he took in his life in becoming an inspiration for all people, and if we are able to do that we can make the world a better place for all. Today I say the world has suffered a great loss, but we celebrate a man of great courage, resilience and sacrifice, whose life is a lesson for greatness for future generations.”

Malveaux/ Continued from page 8.

many ways, Black South Africans control the political sphere, while the white business establishment control the money, just as is the case in several cities in the U.S. South. People speak of Mandela’s “forgiveness” much as they speak of Dr. Martin Luther King’s “dream.” Can forgiveness be poured from a can of themed milk to comfort the hungry child in the shanty? Is forgiveness a simple rhetorical term for those South Africans who are moving on up, and a broken promise for those who remain down here on the ground?

Nelson Mandela left us much to celebrate, and also much to ponder. Where does the movement for freedom and justice go from here, both in South Africa and in the rest of the world? Which young people have ideas innovative enough to get us past freedom to equality of opportunity? How does one ameliorate an imposed inequality from the decades-old system of apartheid, and is there a desire to do so?

And two decades ago, the idealists sang, marched, and chanted – “South Africa will be free. South Africa will be free. Will be free, South Africa.”

Achew! Madiba. Thank you for your ferocious forgiveness and for your persistent pursuit of justice.

Julianna Malveaux is a Washington, D.C.-based economist and writer. She is President Emerita of Bennett College for Women in Greensboro, N.C.

Pay Day Loans/ Continued from page 9.

trap. In two states – Florida and California – one in five payday borrowers is age 55 or older. Similarly, other research has shown that more than one-quarter of bank payday borrowers are Social Security recipients and are 2.2 times as likely to have a bank payday loan as other bank customers. Further, to repay bank payday loans, an average of 53 percent of retirees’ next Social Security check is taken.

Don’t let your holiday season become a financial nightmare. Every day, but particularly at this time of year, consider these facts on payday loans:

- The typical payday borrower remains in debt for 212 days.

- The average payday borrower has nine transactions per year.

- Ninety percent of the payday lending business is generated by borrowers with five or more loans per year; and

- More than 60 percent of business is generated by borrowers with 12 or more loans per year.

This year and every year, avoid any financial product or loan that leaves borrowers with more problems than before. Whether from a storefront or from a bank, a payday loan is nothing more than a debt trap by design.

Charlene Crowell is a communications manager with the Center for Responsible Lending. She can be reached at Charlene.crowell@responsiblelending.org.
Obama Praises Mandela as ‘Great Liberator’

By George E. Curry
NNPA Editor-in-Chief

SOWETO, South Africa (NNPA) — President Barack Obama described Nelson Mandela, South Africa’s first Black elected president, as “the last great liberator of the 20th century” and thanked the grieving nation for sharing their beloved former leader with the rest of the world.

Speaking Tuesday at a rain-soaked memorial service here attended by nearly 100 current and former international leaders, Obama said, “It is a singular honor and former international leaders, leader with the rest of the world.

“To the people of South Africa, people of every race and walk of life – the world thanks you for sharing Nelson Mandela with us. His struggle was your struggle. His triumph was your triumph. Your dignity and your hope found expression in his life. And your freedom, your democracy is his cherished legacy.”

Mandela died last Thursday at the age of 95 after a long illness.

Coincidentally, the memorial service fell on United Nations Human Rights Day. Obama used the occasion to deliver stern words to leaders who repress their own people yet profess to admire Mandela, whom Obama mostly referred to as Madiba, the former president’s Xhosa tribal name.

“There are too many people who happen to embrace Madiba’s legacy of racial reconciliation, but passionately resist even modest reforms that would challenge chronic poverty and growing inequality,” President Obama said. “There are too many leaders who claim solidarity with Madiba’s struggle for freedom, but do not tolerate dissent from their own people. And there are too many of us on the sidelines, comfortable in complicity or cynicism when our voices must be heard.”

Like many U.S. civil rights leaders, Obama drew a parallel between Mandela’s struggle for majority rule in South Africa and African-Americans’ struggle to overcome slavery and Jim Crow laws that treated Blacks as second-class citizens.

“We know that, like South Africa, the United States had to overcome centuries of racial subjugation. As was true here, it took sacrifice – the sacrifice of countless people, known and unknown, to see the dawn of a new day. Michelle and I are beneficiaries of that struggle,” Obama said to applaud. “But in America, and in South Africa, and in countries all around the globe, we cannot allow our progress to cloud the fact that our work is not yet done.”

Mandela, a former amateur boxer, gave his last public speech in the soccer stadium where the tribute was held. Fittingly, the stadium is located in Soweto, a township which Blacks were forced to live under apartheid and where Mandela and Bishop Desmond Tutu have homes.

Accompanying Obama on Air Force One were former president George W. Bush and his wife, Laura, and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Former presidents Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter arrived in South Africa on separate aircrafts.

Like many international gatherings, journalists observe every detail, including whether adversaries shake hands.

Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro shook hands but, White House officials were quick to note that it amounted to no more than an exchange of pleasantries.

“Nothing was planned in terms of the president’s role other than his remarks,” Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes told reporters traveling with Obama. “He really didn’t do more than exchange greetings with those leaders on his way to speak, it wasn’t a substantive discussion.”

The fact that Obama and Castro were at the same event demonstrated the breath of Mandela’s impact on their world.

“He was more than one of the greatest leaders of our time. He was one of our greatest teachers,” U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon told those in attendance. “His baobab tree has left deep roots that reach across the planet.”

Following in the footsteps of Mandela is a tough act to follow, as South African President Jacob Zuma has already discovered. He and the ruling ANC Party are unpopular because of a poor economy and record economic inequality. When Zuma rose to give the keynote speech Tuesday, he was widely booed. Some gave the thumbs down sign or rolled their wrists, a soccer gesture for substitution.

“There is no one like Madiba. He was one of a kind,” Zuma said, as the boosing subsided. “Mandela believed in collective leadership. He never wanted to be viewed as a messiah or a saint. He recognized that all of his achievements were a result of working with the A.N.C. collective.”

President Obama relayed how Mandela’s fight for freedom impacted him personally.

“Over 30 years ago, while still a student, I learned of Mandela and the struggles in this land. It stirred something in me. It woke me up to my responsibilities – to others, and to myself – and set me on an improbable journey that finds me here today. And while I will always fall short of Madiba’s example, he makes me want to be better. He speaks to what is best inside us.”

Gen. Thanduxolo Mandela, a relative who offered one of the eulogies, said: “I am sure Madiba is smiling from above as he looks down at the multitude of diversity gathered here, for this is what he strove for – the equality of man, the brotherhood of humanity.”

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Odds of a child being diagnosed with autism: 1 in 88

Some signs to look for:

| No big smiles or other joyful expressions by 6 months. | No babbling by 12 months. | No words by 16 months. |

To learn more of the signs of autism, visit autismspeaks.org