

**ADDRESS BY H.E. SIBONGISENI DLAMINI-MNTAMBO, HIGH
COMMISSIONER OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA, AT THE
CANADIAN MUSEUM FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
“MANDELA: STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM” ON 04 JUNE 2018**

“We are made better human beings by the fact that you have reached out from across the seas to say that we too, the rebels, the fugitives; the prisoners deserve to be heard.”

Rt. Honourable Brian Mulroney

Honourable Peter Mansbridge

Special guests,

Ladies and gentlemen, Good Evening, Sanibonani

I stand before you, Ladies and Gentlemen, in this the centenary year as we pay tribute to one of Africa’s greatest sons Nelson Rholihlahla Mandela. As the South African High Commissioner to Canada, a diplomat in the post-apartheid era, I am humbled and honoured to have been given this opportunity as a result of the role this icon played in the struggle for South Africa’s liberation.

At the same time, I am grateful and recognise the role Canada played, in South Africa’s fight for justice and for freedom. We recognise the

crucial leadership role by leaders with integrity like the Rt. Honourable Mulroney, who refused to tolerate the crimes against humanity that apartheid was.

South Africa has a unique and inspiring story to tell, a story filled with tragedy and triumph, a story of horror and humility.

Ladies and gentlemen, our history is a wrenching pain and sheer disbelief that unethical, immoral acts of cruelty and discrimination by one race over another were institutionalised and passed as laws. It is even more alarming and ironic that the custodians of these laws, were settlers or immigrants and they imposed them on the citizens of the country.

The indigenous people were stripped the right to own land and effectively 90% of South Africa's land was given to 20% of the population. The indigenous people were shoved to the 10% of land which was neither arable nor had any known mineral deposits.

Racial segregation and white supremacy became central aspects of the South African policies. The apartheid, a system whose goal was not only to separate South Africa's white minority from its non-white majority, but also to separate non-whites from each other, and to divide black

South Africans along tribal lines in order to decrease their political power become law.

The system, presented blacks in the world as sub-human beings incapable of “assimilating to civilization”, excluding them from the economy. The oppression of the indigenous population become entrenched and deeply systemic.

Many of our people were exiled, some jailed. Murders were committed by the agents of state with impunity, and some of our people even to this day cannot be accounted for.

We remember and appreciate how our humanity was recognised by so many of our African neighbours and countries across our great continent. African countries who sheltered our liberators when others called them criminals or terrorists. For this South Africa is forever indebted to you.

We appreciate the role that was played by some countries abroad especially this country Canada.

It was not a coincidence that immediately after his release from prison, Nelson Mandela listed Canada as one of the priority countries to visit.

And indeed Ladies and gentlemen in June 1990, four months after 27 years of imprisonment, Nelson Mandela, a non-head of state addressed a joint session of the House of Commons and the Senate here in Canada. In his address he said <and I quote>

“We are made better human beings by the fact that you have reached out from across the seas to say that we too, the rebels, the fugitives; the prisoners deserve to be heard.” <end quote>

Canada’s fight and involvement stretched to over 3 decades, notably from when the then Prime Minister Diefenbaker made his stance known at the Commonwealth gathering in 1961. Diefenbaker told the gathering that *“Canadians as a whole unequivocally deplore the practice of apartheid and believed that... the principles of equality without regard to race or any other considerations must be generally acceptable to all the member nations”*.

We recognise also the efforts of your former Prime Ministers like Clark, Mulroney and Trudeau. Clark often engaged with the anti-apartheid movements in South Africa in enforcing sanctions. In the 80’s Prime Minister Trudeau reaffirmed Canada’s opposition to apartheid saying

that racial discrimination was an insult to mankind and could not be acceptable

The South African presidency acknowledged that Prime Minister Mulroney's firm anti-apartheid stance at times put him at odds with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

After a particularly critical August 1986 meeting in London which left an isolated Britain on the side-lines, Canada moved with other Commonwealth nations on 11 additional sanctions.

Even after the release of political prisoners, now under Prime Minister Jean Chretien, Canada ensured that sanctions were not lifted until just before the first democratic elections.

In 2004, Mandela sent a letter in which he said Mulroney had provided strong and principled leadership in the struggle against apartheid. He also said this was not a popular position in all quarters, but South Africans today acknowledge the importance of his contribution to South Africa's eventual liberation and success.

As a symbol of our appreciation to Canadians, the South African Government awarded former Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney

with the Order of the Companion of OR Tambo in Gold on 8 December 2015.

Ladies and gentlemen, South Africa today is grounded in its Constitution, lauded as one of the most progressive constitutions in the world. This is probably due to lines like these from our bill of rights which states that *</i quote>*

“The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.” <end

This year 2018, we are celebrating Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela’s life and legacy. A reminder to each of us to remain true to the ideals that he espoused. We remember Nelson Mandela as the struggle stalwart, freedom fighter and first democratic president of South Africa.

In celebrating the centenary of Madiba’s life we remember his unwavering commitment to justice, equality and a non-racial South Africa.

On behalf of the Government of South Africa and its people, I would like to thank the organisers of this event, all those who worked tirelessly to put the exhibition together. The apartheid museum of

South Africa and Canada Museum for Human Rights, especially President Young for this honour, thank you. We thank you for presenting our history in a dignified manner and for continuing to walk with us as we promote freedom and defend our democracy in honour of Madiba's life-long commitment to these ideals.

Our lives have been made better by your continued friendship and our common values of human rights and dignity.

To Brain Mulroney, we can never thank you enough

NGIYABONGA