

For Immediate Release:
December 5, 2013

Contact: Dan Roth
[\(202\) 225-7084](tel:(202)225-7084)
dan.roth@mail.house.gov

Passing of South African President Nelson Mandela

Today, Congressmember Karen Bass (D-Calif.), Ranking Member of the House Subcommittee on Africa, released the following statement on the passing of former South African President and global leader, Nelson Mandela.

“Today I join my fellow members of Congress and the intentional community in mourning the loss of a great global leader and icon President Nelson Mandela. President Mandela’s struggle and sacrifice taught us that injustice and oppression must be extinguished no matter where it may exist and that protest, dialogue, forgiveness and reconciliation are fundamental and necessary to ourselves and society.

“President Mandela’s fight for freedom was a personal inspiration for me. I joined countless other Americans in fighting for his freedom and for ending apartheid in South Africa. During the 27 years he spent imprisoned on Robben Island, he never lost hope and never lost his humanity. I visited Robben Island and saw the 8-by-7-foot cell he lived in. In the 1970’s and 1980’s, President Mandela’s example taught me that although the struggle for social and economic justice might take many years, it was my responsibility to continue that fight, and if he could keep his focus on these values, then I certainly can also.

“For decades, President Mandela’s grace, his humility and self-sacrifice showed to the world his great depth and strength of character. He exemplified and left no doubt that forgiveness can be transformative beyond all measure. Nelson Mandela’s struggle embodied what was at stake, that his country, deeply divided

over the oppressive and brutal policies of apartheid, had no choice but to change.

“In life President Mandela taught us what it means to forgive and in death, he reminds us that the struggle for justice, freedom and peace must continue until all people no matter where they are born, or their economic status, their religion, their sexuality, or their ethnicity must be free live from persecution, intimidation, and violence.

“President Mandela will remain an inspirational figure, to me and a generation of us who, though far from South Africa, took up the cause to fight against apartheid to ensure our nation played its part to ended policies that supported South Africa’s oppressive government.

“In the days, weeks and years ahead, let us celebrate President Nelson Mandela’s life, draw strength from the many lessons he taught us through his sacrifice and leadership and let us forever be reminded that his struggle, South Africa’s struggle is our global struggle.”
