

These are my remarks from the US National Memorial in honor of Nelson Mandela on December 11, 2013, at the National Cathedral.

Mandela,

Madiba,

We mourn.

We remember.

We honor his legacy.

But what does his legacy mean for someone like me, who was only 13 years old when he was freed?

Or for younger generations as they find their own place in history?

The triumph of Mr. Mandela inspired a new generation of advocates to carry on traditions found in civil and human rights movements all over the world.

Indeed, Mandela matters as do all those known and unknown who were bound by the shackles of oppression and in turn offered a forgiving hand and the wisdom that only struggle brings, rather than the cold disdain of indifference or the wrath of a gun.

He stands as the embodiment of promise and his legacy calls all of us, young and old, out of complacency into urgent action.

Because, while apartheid in South Africa was defeated, Nelson Mandela recognized we face a rising global apartheid where so many of our brothers and sisters live perilous lives despite a world of wealth and excesses.

Madiba didn't stop with South Africa. He did not play it safe. He recognized that the destiny of all people no matter where they are found or what they possess are inextricably intertwined.

Simply put, if we want to fulfill Madiba's legacy, it is not enough just to come to a memorial. Nor is it enough to "like" Mandela on Facebook.

A torch so important must be picked up deliberately and with both hands. We must summon that still small voice, the Nelson Mandela spirit that can be found in every one of us.

Recognizing that one person can make a difference when working for a collective good

Summoning the courage to take on the most powerful forces on the planet ...

And fighting tenaciously for the victims of global apartheid, whether in Soweto, Port au Prince, the barrios of East Los Angeles or the blighted neighborhoods of Detroit.

Sisters and brothers, this is how we honor ... and fulfill ... Madiba's legacy

Thank you.

-Nicole Lee, Esq, President TransAfrica