

FORUM

Finally!! They freed Mandela



Nicole Lee
Guest Columnist



The legendary Nelson Mandela.

Though the world celebrated in late June, this July 18, Nelson Mandela will turn 90. For any human being, reaching the age of 90 is a monumental feat. For a man who was imprisoned for almost 30 years, it is virtually a miracle.

Mandela is a worldwide symbol for freedom. A Nobel Prize winner and the first president of a multi-racial democratic South Africa, he has been a constant warrior in the pursuit of truth and justice.

Yet, the U.S. government did not take him off the terror watch list until June 27, 2008. Yes. The U.S. government considered Nelson Mandela and the freedom fighters of the African National Congress terrorist until June 27th of this year.

In and out of office, Mandela has spoken truth to power and worked tirelessly to resolve conflicts within the African continent. Whether in leading the struggle against apartheid regime or championing the cause of people with HIV/AIDS, Mandela has consistently challenged the great powers of the globe. For him, leadership means representing the poor and disenfranchised, not the rich and connected.

I like talking with school-aged children about Nelson Mandela. Their faces light up as I talk about his presidency and the values of multiculturalism. For them, Mandela has always been a hero. They were not

exposed to the propaganda we were dealt prior to a free South Africa.

Remember the good/bad ol' days? The Reagan era? Countries were categorized based on their allegiance to one Super Power (the U.S.) or the other (Soviet Union), while African countries and their people were just pawns in the Cold War chess game.

Mandela played a key role within the African National Congress (ANC) and Umkhonto we Sizwe, its armed wing formed in 1960 after the Sharpsville Massacre. The ANC party, now the majority party in South Africa, was banned by the apartheid government in 1960; remaining an outcast political party until 1990.

For decades, Nelson Mandela and high level government officials from the ANC party have remained on the US terror watch list. Stricter legal

measures put into place after 9/11 solidified the ANC's categorization as a terrorist organization, and even required the South African ambassador to the U.S. to obtain special permission to enter the U.S. Certainly the Reagan and Bush I Administrations had no love for the Southern African Liberation movements.

Reagan's constructive engagement policy was a complete ruse to allow 'business as usual' in apartheid South Africa. As late as 2000, Dick Cheney, who was in the Senate at the time, defended his vote against economic sanctions on the apartheid regime.

But recently Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and officials in the Justice Department have all vocalized their support for his removal and now, the 148th session of Congress has worked to ensure that the U.S. is now on the right

side of history. Finally!

On June 27, 2008, the U.S. Senate passed legislation to protect ANC members from being denied visas to enter the United States.

According to reports, for years the Senate based its decision on the ANC members' anti-apartheid activities. In passing HR 5690, we see that the arcane and unfair characterizations of the ANC members has given way to a more fair and unbiased view towards their anti-apartheid activities.

To be sure, state sponsored violence and armed attacks against black citizens were a part of apartheid South Africa.

But far too often, those struggling for freedom are demonized as an excuse to continue the repression. Freedom fighters looked like terrorists from the perspective of an evil empire, and no doubt this was true in South Africa.

Wounds are still healing from this painful period in South African history and Mandela has played a vital role in the healing process.

For decades, Mandela has shown us that no obstacle is too great in the quest for fairness and freedom. He has been a shining beacon for liberation movements around the world, and stands shoulders above most of the men and women who claim to be the voice of the people. He was able to forgive his oppressors while leading a revolutionary movement, and we have finally taken the first step towards showing him the respect his legacy of visionary sacrifice deserves.

Nicole C. Lee is the Executive Director of TransAfrica Forum.

Juneteenth & the n-word



H. Lewis Smith
Guest Columnist

Juneteenth has come and gone, but while the scent of this day of celebration still lingers fresh in our noses and sits atop our foremost thoughts, now is the most opportune time to pause and reflect on the meaning and significance of this great occasion. Most certainly, Juneteenth is the oldest known celebration marking the "official" end of slavery—when, on June 19, 1865, the enslaved individuals of Galveston, Texas, were the last to be informed of the Emancipation Proclamation signed in 1863.

Enough can't be said for the tremendous efforts put forth in acknowledging and giving much-deserved recognition to the tremendous travails, struggles and sacrifices experienced by our subjugated ancestors.

However, there does seem to have been one lacking factor: We are allowing a golden opportunity to slip by in not using this date to remind proponents of the n-word as to why the term needs to be banned, abolished from the vocabulary of all black African

Americans, never again to flow from the lips of blacks towards other blacks—to be buried forever.

Before we were humanized, we were categorized as "n**gers": a sub-human, three-fifths of a human being. Thus, this categorizing justified the dehumanizing, butchering and slaughtering of our ancestors. They were looked upon as innately inferior—a thing to be despised and disrespected; branded as bestial and savage, fit by nature for involuntary servitude; and considered ordained by God Himself for perpetual enslavement.

Proponents of the n-word are unknowingly spitting on the graves of their ancestors, slapping them in the face by defiling their sacred memories through embracing a word that embedded terror, fear, and total and complete chaos into their hearts and minds.

On Juneteenth, I heard one young man holler to another, "Happy n**ger day" in a jovial tone. When I heard the young man make this comment, a fire bolt of disgust boomeranged from point to point throughout my body. I was not completely removed by the fact that he used the term, although that was a fast-following second point of contempt, my primary issue was the fact that he could refer to such a day that earmarks almost four hundred years of struggle and scorn as

if it's okay and acceptable.

No race of people on the face of this earth fit the n-word description — nor has there ever been, and for any black person who finds this term acceptable to themselves and their progenitors is nothing short of certifying that the brainwashing job the white world perpetuated on the minds of many members of the black race was a resounding success.

Embracing the n-word is comparable to supporting and sanctioning all the brutal beatings, raping, slaughtering, butchering and heinous killings carried out on our subjugated forefathers. For every lash of flagrant punishment—physical and mental—struck upon our progenitors' backs, for every rope of hate looped around their necks, for every woman and child unrightfully violated and molested, for each man mercilessly sodomized with hot poker, and to each and every man and woman burned and boiled to the core while still breathing, proponents who have embraced the n-word have unknowingly and by proxy placed their stamp of approval on all of these malevolent and heinous acts.

Clearly, there are many who may support and participate in Juneteenth celebrations, yet think nothing of using the n-word. In such an instance, that act is nothing more than an effrontery to the hallowed and

revered memories of our forefathers. And, the greatest travesty of all: We acknowledge and celebrate Juneteenth, June 19, 1865, as the date that the last of the slaves were finally set FREE. But yet, 143 years later, we are still mentally enslaved to a word that was a symbol of oppression, defilement, inferiority, degradation, and immorality — N**GER.

Juneteenth, with all that it signifies, is an excellent time to demonstrate and rejoice in our true FREEDOM—or, on the contrary, exhibit our continued acceptance of mental ENSLAVEMENT. We have a full year to reflect on this enigma and determine how to best proceed toward its resolve. Juneteenth is a day to reflect on the memories of our ancestors, embody the spirit of perseverance and victory, and do all that we can to walk in the path of dignity, respect, and honor our forefathers dreamed of, relentlessly fought and gave their lives for. How will you celebrate your next Juneteenth?

H. Lewis Smith is the founder and president of the United Voices for a Common Cause, Inc., and author of "Bury that Sucka: A Scandalous Love Affair with the N-Word." Visit UVCC online at <http://www.theunitedvoices.com>

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The Chronicle was established by Ernest Pitt and Ndubisi Egemonye in 1974, and is published every Thursday by Winston-Salem Chronicle Publishing Co., Inc.

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