



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THE U.S.A.

COMMUNICATION UNIT

475 Riverside Drive, 8th Floor, New York, NY 10115-0050, 212/870-2227

The Very Rev. Leonid Kishkovsky, President

James Hamilton, General Secretary

J. Martin Bailey
Acting Associate General
Secretary for Communication
(212) 870-2048

Carol J. Fouke
Director
News Services
(212) 870-2252

Mary Byrne Hoffmann
Consultant
Network Liaison
(212) 870-2574

Constant H. Jacquet, Jr.
Staff Associate for
Information Services
(212) 870-2566

Roy T. Lloyd
Consultant
Broadcast News Services
(212) 870-2227

Dave Pomeroy
Director
Media Resources
(212) 870-2574

Sarah Vilankulu
Director
Interpretation Resources
(212) 870-2228

Fax Machine
(212) 870-2030

June 25, 1990

Dear Religious Leader:

My office prepared the enclosed news release about the religious leaders' meeting with Nelson Mandela on June 21, and about the festive interfaith service that followed.

We have mailed the release, along with a list of participants, to many national secular and religious publications including Christian, Jewish and Muslim periodicals and Native American publications.

We encourage you to use the five news copies enclosed in your own contacts with your local, regional and national "hometown," religious and other appropriate media. We have found that a very effective way to get coverage is for the person who participated in an event to contact his or her media directly.

This news release should be a helpful to "introduce" you and the event to the print and broadcast media you choose to contact.

We hope you will make that contact yet this week while the news of your participation in the meeting with Mr. Mandela is still fresh!

You also might like to know that we had a photographer at the meeting with 130 religious leaders and at the service. If you're interested in ordering photos from him either for publication or for your own use, you may contact him directly: Rick Reinhard -- 202-462-9294.

Sincerely,

Carol J. Fouke

Carol J. Fouke



OFFICE OF INFORMATION/Room 850/475 Riverside Drive, N.Y., NY 10115/(212) 870-2227

40NCC6/21/90

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MANDELA PRAISES RELIGIOUS EFFORT AGAINST APARTHEID; ASKS CONTINUED SANCTIONS

NEW YORK, N.Y., June 21 ---- Nelson Mandela received a cheering, clapping, shouting, foot-stomping welcome from the U.S. religious community today, and returned the warm embrace with thanks that "during these long years when we were in prison you did not forget us, neither did you abandon our struggling people."

He called on people of faith to continue to stand firm against apartheid during this "final phase of our struggle," and in particular to keep up pressure for "continued application of sanctions" against the South African regime "as long as apartheid is still in place."

And he asked financial support for the African National Congress, which is working to reestablish itself inside South Africa and which is facing the daunting task of repatriating as many as half a million refugees, many of them ANC exiles who "need to come home to play their rightful role in the creation of a new South Africa."

Mandela, the deputy president of the African National Congress, on the second morning of his 10-day U.S. itinerary met with about 130 U.S. religious leaders, then addressed 3,500 persons in a festive interfaith service at The Riverside Church. Both events were sponsored by the Religious Committee of the Nelson Mandela New York Anti-Apartheid Welcome Committee, which coordinated Mandela's schedule in New York City.

NCC HOSTS MEETING WITH RELIGIOUS LEADERS

The National Council of Churches, through its Africa Office, hosted Mandela's meeting with a broad cross-section of the U.S. religious community, including Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Evangelical Christian; Jewish, Muslim and Native American religious leaders.

Participants gathered at The Interchurch Center, where they adopted "The New York Declaration" committing themselves to "keep the pressure on" against apartheid through continued support "for mandatory sanctions by the United States government until apartheid is dismantled."

Then they processed two-by-two across the street to The Riverside Church, where they waited for Mandela in the church's intimate Christ Chapel. When Mandela arrived at the back of the chapel with his wife, Winnie, and their entourage, they stood to greet them with warm applause. Mandela made his way up the narrow aisle, shaking many hands before taking his place in the front.

Brief preliminary presentations included the gift of a check for \$200,000, collected from many of the faith groups represented at the meeting. The money is for the Mandela Freedom Fund, which aids organizations in South Africa to meet educational, medical, housing and sustenance needs of South Africa's Blacks, including refugees in neighboring countries.

Mandela began his words to the religious leaders with thanks for their role in the struggle against apartheid. "The churches are right in the frontline of the struggle, and they have been in the frontline of the struggle ever since I can remember," he said. "You are our comrades in arms. You are our brothers and sisters. We feel perfectly at home with you."

"A lot of propaganda has been made to discredit the African National Congress," he continued, "and yet this is an organization which has been brought up in the atmosphere of religion. The religious influence in the African National Congress has been strong right from the beginning."

Mandela noted that Dr. John Langalibalele Dube, the ANC's first president, was a well-known religious leader, and that Christian, Muslim and other religious leaders have always played leading roles in the organization. He commented that last month a prominent Muslim leader blessed the ANC delegation before its meeting with a South African government delegation.

Further, he said, "I spent a great deal of my time in prison writing to the heads of the religious organizations in our country because of the key role which they are playing in our country."

Mandela went on to challenge the U.S. religious community to continue its support for sanctions against the South African apartheid regime. "We are not saying so because we want to destroy the economy of our country," he said. "We want a healthy and vigorous and vibrant country so it can provide full employment to our people, so that it can provide maximum production, so that it can attend to questions of social justice."

But sanctions are "the best way of inducing the government to bring about the changes that we demand," he said. "We are prepared to adopt any action even though it might hurt our economy if by doing so it will help achieve the greater goal of liberating the people of South Africa. As long as apartheid is still in place, we will continue to ask the world to apply sanctions."

Alluding to his recent release following more than 27 years in prison, the unbanning of the ANC and the lifting of the state of emergency in most of South Africa, Mandela said, "These changes that have been made, as much as we like them, do not touch the fundamental question of one person, one vote. Apartheid is still in place."

SERVICE IN RIVERSIDE CHURCH FILLED WITH SOUND, MOTION

Mandela was escorted into The Riverside Church nave by the percussion of Olamntunji and his African Drummers, and by the clapping and shouting of those present. The congregation offered spontaneous "amens" in response to songs, proclamations and prayers, including a Muslim leader's call to worship, a Jewish cantor's singing of Psalm 100, and the Rev. Jesse Jackson's prayer that "the walls of apartheid come tumbling down."

"We have not done enough," Jackson prayed. "The CIA of our government joined with South Africa to arrest our brothers and to expose them to the beast. Forgive us for the sins of our government. Our government conspires with South Africa to kill and maim in Angola. 600,000 have been killed in a decade. We are ashamed. Forgive us for our sins."

New York City Mayor David Dinkins, welcoming Mandela, said, "We know that despite the hope of progress and the signs of change, South Africa remains an evil empire of discrimination, depravation and oppression based on race." He promised, "We in New York will fight for tougher sanctions against apartheid."

Then Dr. Gardener C. Taylor of Concord Baptist Church introduced Mandela, calling him "the standard bearer of liberty's call, the drum major in the music of freedom." When Mandela stepped to the pulpit, he was met with a roar of applause, shouts and stomping of feet. Beaming, he waved his greeting to the crowd, which waved back, quieting only when he gestured to them to sit.

In an address met at many points with applause, Mandela saluted the religious community for its longstanding and "resolute contribution" to the anti-apartheid struggle, even "when our cause was not a popular cause in the corridors of power of Western nations." He expressed confidence that soon that effort "will contribute to the realization of the non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and united South Africa of our joint aspirations."

"We are now closer to this goal than at any time," he said. "In the words of the prophet Isaiah, we have risen up as on the wings of eagles, we have run and not grown weary, we have walked and not fainted, and finally our destination is in sight." He said that "to reverse sanctions now before we have seen profound and irreversible change in apartheid would be a serious political error."

In response to Mandela's message, the congregation stood for the singing of "Nkosi Sikelel'i Afrika," the African national anthem, then many spilled into the aisles to dance the celebratory toyi-toyi in Mandela's honor.