



President Zuma
Excellencies
Board of Trustees
Honoured Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

I will not detain you long. Already you have listened to a number of speeches, and I must not stand between you and the main address of the evening by President Zuma.

I'd like to reflect briefly on what it is that makes the Nelson Mandela Foundation important, and within it the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory. The Centre stands as a site of continuous reflection on the life and times of one acknowledged to be among the greatest leaders our world has ever seen: Nelson Mandela. It is designed to explore and interpret his broad and complex legacy, which has left few untouched here at home and around the world.

Last month our board of trustees completed discussion on the core objectives of the Centre for the next five years. These are, to be

- the trusted voice on the life and times of Nelson Mandela
- the preferred convenor of dialogue on critical, especially intractable, social issues
- self-sustaining rather than donor-dependent, but with substantial resource mobilisation capacity for programmes
- an organisation with a corporate brand identity established in popular perception and imagination, and firmly connected to the Nelson Mandela Foundation's physical home (this building we are in tonight)
- the custodian of the Nelson Mandela Annual Lecture and the Nelson Mandela International Day campaign, with an ever-expanding international reach

Only last week we hosted here in our building the first of three international dialogues on post-oppression memory work: the Nelson Mandela Dialogues. Twenty-seven people from 11 countries gathered here. Comprising judges, activists, parliamentarians and community elders, they came from Argentina, Bosnia, Brazil, Canada, Cambodia, Croatia, Germany, Kenya, Serbia, Uruguay and South Africa. They came to interrogate and dialogue what it is Nelson Mandela's legacy offers people struggling with issues of identity, history, collective trauma and citizenship.

I believe we inspired them and gave them hope, because from the example of Madiba we learned to be honest about both our frailties and our immense possibilities. "A saint," said Madiba, "is a sinner who keeps on trying." We were willing to say the unsayable; to expose our difficulties and to express our passion for our nation and our people, and to be able to tell positive stories without a 75% quota of good news.

A week or two earlier, Goldman Sachs released its study of South Africa's achievements and challenges of the first 20 years of our democracy.



A little further back we brought together in this building National Intelligence operatives and freedom of information activists to work out how to balance freedom and security in a vibrant democracy.

We actively participated in the ANC centenary committee in 2012, and in the same year co-convened a workshop of the Save our SABC campaign.

Such is what we have done and will continue to do: to confront, unravel and endeavour to work with others to solve tough social problems. It is for this reason that we carry a mandate from Madiba to promote his legacy.

If a legacy is something you leave behind, there is also something very special about it. It also demands of you to visualise *in the future* the impact of what you wish to leave behind. This means you also have to have a memory of the future. For memory is not only about the past – it is also about visualising the future and then retaining a memory of that future so that you can get to it. So we have as a people attempted through the National Development Plan to visualise our future. The memory of that future must then enable us to focus on how we will get to it.

We cannot get to it, that future, without rigorous work in the present. The present is not magic; more often than not, it is hard work, skill and persistence. And so we are called upon to master the rigours of hard work, otherwise slide into a dependence on inherited instant riches. Such riches never last, and are even more likely to evaporate in conflicts over acquiring them, often illegally. Without a memory of the struggles of how the instant acquired riches were made, those that have acquired them do not know how sustain them. They have no experience, no knowledge, of how they were created.

Nelson Mandela, through the Centre of Memory at his Foundation, gave institutional character to the legacy he sought to leave behind. In doing so, he stands out as one who, to borrow from the title of a book, will be remembered as a worthy ancestor. What a wonderful title of a book! If we honour ancestors so much, as we do in communities across the land, should we not all make a special effort to be good ancestors? We may think of him now, Madiba, gazing at the horizon of ancestorship.

We feel strongly accountable to Madiba and to you all, and carry the responsibility he has placed on our shoulders through a Centre of Memory he mandated us to establish. We give tribute to trustees that have gone before us, and we remember with fondness our founding chairman, Jakes Gerwel.

All this is why it is that the President of the Republic of South Africa is here to open Madiba's new legacy institution. In the office of the President is embodied our best aspirations. The legacy of Madiba is the legacy of the state; of the movement of the struggle that made him; of the family and courtly life that nurtured him; of the women and the children he has loved; of the schools from which he learned, and the ideas that shaped his thinking; of a country, a continent, he has inspired; of the world whose possibilities he made real; and of those in South Africa and beyond who, such as those we have honoured tonight, have made resources available to us to promote Madiba's legacy.



Please feel and enjoy the spirit of the legacy in this building as you move around tonight, but then come back again.

Mr President, thank you for being here. I cannot resist the memory of our meeting a few days ago at Mahlamba Ndlopfu and our joint commitment to keep the channels of communication open. It is my turn to welcome you to the Foundation.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in inviting the President to deliver his address.

**Njabulo S Ndebele
Chairman
Nelson Mandela Foundation
18 November, 2013**