



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on December 11, 2013

## Obama Praises Mandela, Shakes Castro's Hand, at Memorial

President Obama took to the stage to lavishly praise the recently deceased South African revolutionary Nelson Mandela at a December 10 memorial service in Johannesburg. But before doing so, he extended a welcome handshake to Cuban President Raul Castro.



[During his speech](#) at the memorial service, President Obama compared Mandela to Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Abraham Lincoln, and even “America’s Founding Fathers.”

Continuing to heap praise on Mandela, Obama said, “Given the sweep of his life, the scope of his accomplishments, the adoration that he so rightly earned, it’s tempting I think to remember Nelson Mandela as an icon, smiling and serene, detached from the tawdry affairs of lesser men.”

Lost amid all of the adulatory accolades bestowed upon Mandela since his death is his leadership role in the African National Congress (ANC) — an organization that had open Communist support and that engaged in wanton violence against the very Black Africans it purported to “liberate.”

During its campaign of violent intimidation to silence all opposition to its power grab, the ANC became infamous for its practice of “necklacing” its opponents — placing gasoline-soaked tires around the necks of victims and setting them afire. Nelson Mandela’s second wife, Winnie, has been widely quoted for a statement she made in Munsieville, South Africa, on April 13, 1986: “With our boxes of matches and our necklaces we shall liberate this country.”

Such brutality is not unusual among communist “liberation” movements and the ANC’s status as a communist group is undeniable.

As [The New American noted](#) on December 8, shortly after Mandela’s death on December 6, the South African Communist Party released a [statement](#) admitting: “At his arrest in August 1962, Nelson Mandela was not only a member of the then underground South African Communist Party, but was also a member of our Party’s Central Committee.”

The statement went on to praise Mandela and the ANC: “To us as South African communists, Comrade Mandela shall forever symbolize the monumental contribution of the SACP in our liberation struggle.... The contribution of communists in the struggle to achieve the South African freedom has very few parallels in the history of our country.”

Obama’s handshake with Raul Castro received widespread attention. Raul is the younger brother and successor to Fidel Castro, who led the Communist revolution that brought him to power in Cuba on January 1, 1959. Like his brother, Raul Castro was a key leader of the revolution, and was photographed in 1958 with his arm around fellow revolutionary Ernesto “Che” Guevara.

Mandela and Fidel Castro were on cordial terms; Mandela visited Castro in Cuba in 1991, joining him



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for the 26th of July celebrations (named after the revolutionary movement led by Castro and Guevara).

The [Los Angeles Times reported on July 28, 1991](#) that Mandela ended his Cuban visit “after an unhesitant embrace of Cuban President Fidel Castro’s Communist revolution, which he called ‘a source of inspiration to all freedom-loving people.’ ” The *Times* headline was quite frank: “Mandela Lauds Castro as Visit to Cuba Ends: Diplomacy: ANC leader cites the Communist revolution and says, ‘We, too, want to control our own destiny.’ ”

“We admire the sacrifices of the Cuban people in maintaining their independence and sovereignty in the face of a vicious, imperialist-orchestrated campaign,” the *Times* quoted Mandela as saying.

Mandela invited Castro to his presidential inauguration on May 10, 1994 and the Cuban dictator attended. During a [news conference](#) following the inauguration, Castro told reporters about Cuba’s relations with Mandela and the ANC: “We have more than diplomatic relations. We have had close ties of brotherhood for many years. I believe we are family.”

Given these historic ties between the elder Castro and Mandela, it was to be expected that Raul Castro would pay homage to the deceased South African revolutionary. Less expected, however, was President Obama’s friendly gesture to the younger Castro brother, who was photographed in 1958 blindfolding a political enemy prior to his execution by firing squad.

AFP reported that the Cuban government praised the Obama-Castro handshake as a hopeful sign, writing on its website, “May this... be the beginning of the end of the US aggressions.”

The event prompted immediate commentary from U.S. political figures.

“It gives Raul some propaganda, to continue to prop up his dictatorial, brutal regime,” Senator John McCain (R-Ariz.) told reporters in Washington. “Why should you shake hands with somebody who is keeping Americans in prison?” McCain continued.

Another critic was Senator Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), whose parents immigrated from Cuba. “If the president was going to shake his hand, he should have asked him about those basic freedoms Mandela was associated with that are denied in Cuba,” said Rubio.

“It remains clear that Cuba is the same totalitarian state today that it has been for decades. This totalitarian state continues to have close ties to terrorist organizations.”

While Rubio’s objections to Obama’s action raise legitimate concerns, the Florida senator did not specify which “basic freedoms” Mandela was “associated with.” Though Mandela is widely praised for his campaign against South Africa’s previous system of apartheid (racial segregation), less attention is given to the violent methods he advocated prior to the nation’s change of government. He co-founded *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (“Spear of the Nation” — abbreviated as MK) the ANC’s armed wing that began launching guerilla attacks against government installations on December 16, 1961.

Mandela was imprisoned for his violent behavior, and was repeatedly offered the opportunity by the South African government to leave prison if he would renounce violence. However, he consistently refused to do.

Another senator reacting to the presence of Raul Castro was [Ted Cruz](#) (R-Texas), whose father came from Cuba. Cruz walked out of the service during Castro’s speech.

“Senator Cruz very much hopes that Castro learns the lessons of Nelson Mandela,” his spokeswoman, Catherine Frazier, said.



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“For decades, Castro has wrongly imprisoned and tortured countless innocents. Just as Mandela was released after 27 years in prison, Castro should finally release his political prisoners. He should hold free elections, and once and for all, set the Cuban people free.”

While Senator Cruz is obviously aware of the tyranny present in the Cuban regime, like Rubio, he has an apparent blind spot concerning Nelson Mandela’s violent past and close relationship with Fidel Castro. In fact, it is a puzzle why a senator with a strong conservative record would even attend a tribute to a violent revolutionary.

While Obama’s handshake with Raul Castro prompted strong criticism, no U.S. political figure publicly objected to his shaking hands with Zimbabwe’s brutal ruler, Robert Mugabe, who, upon seizing power, engaged in a ruthless war against the white population and his political opponents of all colors. His regime butchered tens of thousands of victims, and it is estimated that millions died as a direct result of Mugabe’s Marxist policies. Whites who refused to leave their property during the “redistribution” were often tortured and killed by the regime or its death squads.

*Photo of President Barack Obama at the memorial service for Nelson Mandela: AP Images*

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