

Congresswoman Maxine Waters statement on the transition of apartheid activist and icon, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela



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U.S. Congresswoman Maxine Waters (CA-43), Ranking Member of the House Financial Services Committee, issued the following statement on the death of the former wife of Nelson Mandela and anti-apartheid activist and icon, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela:

“I am deeply saddened by the passing of the former wife of Nelson Mandela and anti-apartheid activist and icon, Winnie Mandela. Winnie Mandela is world renown for her efforts to shine a light on the plight of Nelson Mandela, who was unjustly imprisoned for 27 years. In conjunction with the African National Congress and leaders around the world, she courageously led the efforts to fight for his freedom and end apartheid in South Africa.

“In addition to her activism that inspired and motivated the international community to join the struggle to end apartheid, Winnie Mandela especially empowered and galvanized women to rise up and speak out against the abuses of the apartheid regime in South Africa. Winnie Mandela popularized the statement, ‘When you strike a woman, you strike a rock,’ which indicated that women were firmly planted in their efforts to end apartheid and became an international slogan for the strength and fortitude of women who could not, and would not, be moved.

“When I reflect upon my own career in public service, I am among the generation of anti-apartheid activists who were inspired by Winnie Mandela’s courage, dedication and wisdom. I was one of the national leaders in the Free South Africa Movement, and I still consider my work in the California State Assembly, where I authored the legislation that divested California state pension funds from South African businesses, as one of the defining moments of my life and career.

“I will forever cherish the time that I spent with Winnie Mandela, both in South Africa and in the United States. In 1990, when Winnie Mandela accompanied her then-husband Nelson Mandela to Los Angeles following his release from prison, I chaired the Los Angeles welcome committee, and I helped organize a concert and rally that filled the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum to capacity. I will never forget the roar of the more than 90,000 people gathered when Nelson and Winnie Mandela appeared on stage.

“Despite controversies surrounding her life and career, Winnie Mandela’s unwavering commitment to ending apartheid and securing Nelson Mandela’s freedom is recorded in history. She will forever be remembered as one of the world’s most courageous leaders and heroes. I join the world in offering my sincere condolences to her two daughters, Zenani and Zindiswa Mandela, her relatives, friends, and the people of South Africa.”