



Tacoma's religious, civic leaders remember Nelson Mandela
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By Steve Maynard

Current and former Tacoma leaders remember Nelson Mandela as a person who lived out the principles of nonviolence, social justice and forgiveness.

Harold Moss, former Tacoma mayor



Moss equated Mandela with Mahatma Gandhi and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Rather than turning to violence in the face of oppression, Moss said, “these are people who recognized the greater weapon is peace and nonviolence.”

Moss, also a former Pierce County councilman, recalled seeing Mandela with the Seattle Symphony as guest conductor during his visit to Seattle in 1999. Mandela led the symphony as it performed the South African national anthem.

Moss recalled “just the privilege of being there” at the event with Mandela.

“He is an enormous person in my life,” Moss said. “To me, he is rolled up in all the men and women who have struggled for their right to exist equal to another human being.”

Thomas Dixon, former president of Tacoma Urban League

Dixon, like Moss, sat in the audience that saw Mandela with the Seattle Symphony in 1999. Like King, Mandela meant “everything,” Dixon said.

“The two of them changed the world in terms of equality, freedom and justice for all,” said Dixon, now president emeritus of the Tacoma Urban League. “As one was changing America, the other was changing South Africa and therefore impacting the universe in what they helped to accomplish.”

Victoria Woodards, current president of Tacoma Urban League

Woodards said Mandela's impact was global.

"On a global scale different than Martin Luther King, Mandela showed how injustice could be fought everywhere," said Woodards, also a Tacoma city councilwoman. "It's kind of like he renewed people's ability to fight for injustice.

"I think Mandela embodies the phrase 'social justice,'" she said.

Rev. Arthur Banks, president of Tacoma Ministerial Alliance

Banks described Mandela as a model of forgiveness.

"He did not allow his circumstances to make him hate," said Banks, pastor of Eastside Baptist Church. Instead, he became part of the movement to eliminate apartheid and showed people that nonviolence can work.

"He's the epitome of forgiveness," Banks said.

To share memories

A memorial book for the public to write messages that will be shared with Nelson Mandela's family and constituents will be available from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. daily until Dec. 31 at Mountain View Funeral Home in Lakewood, 4100 Steilacoom Blvd.

<http://www.thenewtribune.com/2013/12/10/2941069/tacomans-religious-civic-leaders.html>