

Obama Ties To Mandela Loom

BY JULIE PACE
AP White House Correspondent

JOHANNESBURG — Inspired by Nelson Mandela's struggles in South Africa, a young Barack Obama joined campus protests in the U.S. against the racist rule that kept Mandela locked away in prison for nearly three decades.

Now a historic, barrier-breaking figure himself, President Obama arrived in South Africa Friday to find a country drastically transformed by Mandela's influence — and grappling with the beloved 94-year-old's mortality.

It was unclear whether Mandela's deteriorating health would allow Obama to make a hospital visit. The former South African leader is battling a recurring lung infection and is said to be in critical condition at a hospital in the South African capital of Pretoria.

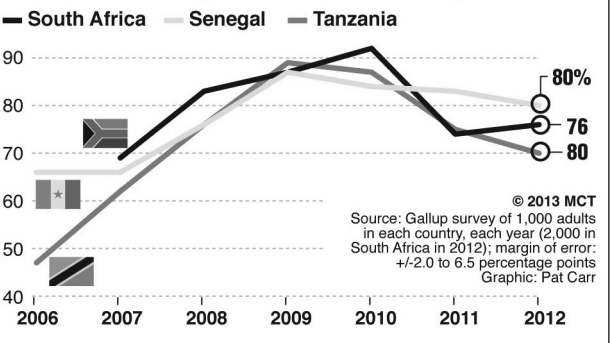
Speaking to reporters on Air Force One as he made his way to Johannesburg, Obama said he would gauge the situation after he arrived.

"I don't need a photo-op," he said. "And the last thing I want to do is to be in any way obtrusive at a time when the family is concerned about Nelson Mandela's condition."

Obama's visit to South Africa is seen as something of a tribute to the man who helped inspire his own political activism. The president will pay homage to Mandela at Robben Island, the prison where he spent 18 of his 27 years in prison. And with South Africa's ruling party, the African National Congress, facing questions about its effectiveness, Obama will urge the government and the South African people to live up to the democratic example set by their first black

Views from Africa

African approval of U.S. leadership surged when President Barack Obama was elected in 2008, but enthusiasm has since waned. Trend in approval rating in nations Obama is visiting:



president.

"He's a personal hero, but I don't think I'm unique in that regard," Obama said during a news conference Thursday in Senegal, the first stop on his weeklong Africa trip. "I think he's a hero for the world. And if and when he passes from this place, one thing I think we'll all know is that his legacy is one that will linger on throughout the ages."

Obama and Mandela have met just once, a hastily arranged meeting in a Washington hotel room in 2005 when Obama was a U.S. senator. A photo of the meeting hangs in Obama's personal office at the White House, showing a smiling Mandela sitting on a chair, his legs outstretched, as the young senator reaches down to shake his hand. A copy of the photo also hangs in Mandela's office in Johannesburg.

Since then, the two have spoken occasionally by telephone, including after the 2008 election, when Mandela called Obama to congratulate him on his victory. The U.S. president called Mandela in 2010 after the South African leader's young granddaughter was killed in a car accident. Obama also wrote the introduction to

Mandela's memoir, "Conversations With Myself."

Despite the two men's infrequent contact, people close to Obama say his one-on-one meeting with Mandela left a lasting impression.

"He is one of the few people who the president has respected and admired from afar who, when he met him, exceeded his expectations," said Valerie Jarrett, Obama's senior adviser and close friend.

Obama's own political rise has drawn inevitable comparisons to the South African leader. Both are Nobel Peace Prize winners and the first black men elected to lead their countries.

But their paths to power have been vastly different. While Mandela fought to end an oppressive government from the confines of a prison cell, Obama attended elite schools and rose through the U.S. political system before running for president.

"President Obama would believe that the challenges he has faced pale in comparison to those faced by President Mandela," Jarrett said.

Mandela had already shaped Obama's political beliefs well before their first encounter. As a student at Occidental College in Los An-

geles, Obama joined protests against the school's investments during South Africa's apartheid era. In 1981, Obama focused his first public political speech on the topic.

"It's happening an ocean away," Obama said, according to a retelling of the story in his memoir "Dreams From My Father." "But it's a struggle that touches each and every one of us. Whether we know it or not. Whether we want it or not."

More than 30 years later, as he traveled through the African continent, Obama recalled the influence Mandela had had on him during that period of his life.

"I think at that time I didn't necessarily imagine that Nelson Mandela might be released," Obama said Thursday. But the president said he had read Mandela's writings and speeches and understood him to be a man who believed in "treating people equally and was willing to sacrifice his life for that belief."

Following his release from prison, Mandela was elected president in 1994 during South Africa's first all-races elections. He served just one term, focusing in large part on racial reconciliation in the post-apartheid era, and retreated from public life several years ago.

The most recent images of him depict a frail man apparently approaching the end of his life. While South Africans have long been loath to talk about Mandela's inevitable death, there is now a growing sense in the country that the time is near. Well-wishers have delivered flowers and messages of support to the Pretoria hospital where he is being treated, and prayer sessions have been held around the country.

Neighbor Testifies In Zimmerman Trial

BY MIKE SCHNEIDER AND
KYLE HIGHTOWER
Associated Press

SANFORD, Fla. — Two neighbors and a police officer gave accounts Friday in George Zimmerman's murder trial that seemed to bolster the neighborhood watch volunteer's contention that he was on his back and being straddled by Trayvon Martin during their confrontation.

Neighbor Jonathan Good said it appeared the unarmed teen was straddling Zimmerman, while another neighbor, Jonathan Manalo, said Zimmerman seemed credible when he said immediately after the fight that he had shot Martin in self-defense. Officer Tim Smith testified that Zimmerman's backside was covered in grass and wetter than his front side.

All three were called as witnesses for prosecutors who are trying to convict him of second-degree murder.

Good, who had perhaps the best view of any witness, said he did not see anyone's head being slammed into the concrete sidewalk, as Zimmerman claims Martin did to him. Good initially testified that it appeared "there were strikes being thrown, punches being thrown," but during detailed questioning he said he saw only "downward" arm movements being made.

Zimmerman has claimed that he fatally shot 17-year-old Martin last year in self-defense as the Miami-area teen was banging his head into the concrete sidewalk behind the townhomes in a gated community.

Under prosecution questioning, Good said he never saw anyone being attacked that way during the fight between Zimmerman and Martin.

"I couldn't see that," Good said moments later while being cross-examined.

Good said he heard a noise behind his townhome in February 2012, and he saw what looked like a tussle when he stepped out onto his patio to see what was happening.

He said he yelled: "What's going on? Stop it."

Good testified he saw a person in black clothing on top of another person with "white or red" clothing. He said he couldn't see faces



POOL PHOTO BY JOE BURBANK/ORLANDO SENTINEL/MCT
Prosecutor Bernie de la Rionda, left, and defense attorney Mark O'Mara confer during the 15th day of the George Zimmerman trial in Seminole circuit court in Sanford, Florida, Friday. Zimmerman is accused in the fatal shooting of Trayvon Martin.

but it looked like the person on the bottom had lighter skin. Martin was black and was wearing a dark hoodie. Zimmerman identifies as Hispanic and was wearing a red jacket. Good was back inside calling 911 when he heard a gunshot.

"It looked like there were strikes being thrown, punches being thrown," Good said.

Later, under cross-examination, he said that it looked like the person on top was straddling the person on bottom in a mixed-martial arts move known as "ground and pound." When defense attorney Mark O'Mara asked him if the person on top was Martin, Good said, "Correct, that's what it looked like." Good also said the person on the bottom yelled for help.

Zimmerman, 29, could get life in prison if convicted of second-degree murder. Zimmerman followed Martin in his truck and called a police dispatch number before he and the teen got into a fight.

Zimmerman has denied the confrontation had anything to do with race, as Martin's family and their supporters have claimed.

Manalo, whose wife had testified earlier in the week, was the first neighbor to step outside and see what happened with his flashlight after he heard a gunshot. He took cellphone photos of a bloodied Zimmerman and Martin's body, and those photos were shown to jurors on Friday. Manalo also described Martin's hands as being under his body.

Manalo said Zimmerman

didn't appear shocked and acted calmly. After police officers arrived and handcuffed Zimmerman, the neighborhood watch volunteer asked Manalo to call his wife and tell her what happened.

Manalo started to tell Zimmerman's wife that her husband had been involved in a shooting and was being questioned by police when "he cut me off and said, 'Just tell her I shot someone,'" Manalo said.

Under cross-examination, Manalo said when he asked Zimmerman what happened, the neighborhood watch volunteer told him, "I was defending myself and I shot him."

"From what you could tell at that moment, that seemed completely true?" asked defense attorney Don West.

"Yes," Manalo said.

Smith, the police officer, testified that when he saw Zimmerman after the shooting, the neighborhood watch volunteer's backside was covered in grass and wetter than his front side, bolstering defense attorneys' contention that Martin was on top of Zimmerman.

As he walked to the

squad car after he had been handcuffed, Zimmerman told the officer that "he was yelling for help and nobody would come help him," Smith said.

"It was almost a defeated ... a confused look on his face," Smith said.

Smith said Zimmerman described himself as "light-headed" during the drive to Sanford Police Station but declined an offer to take him to a hospital.

The physician's assistant who treated Zimmerman the next day said that Zimmerman complained of feeling nauseated upon reflecting what had happened. But Lindzee Folgate attributed that to psychological factors rather than any physical condition. She also said it appeared his nose was broken, but it was impossible to say for sure since no X-rays were taken. She recommended he see an ear-and-nose doctor and a psychologist.

When O'Mara asked if abrasions on his head were consistent with someone who had his head slammed into concrete, Folgate said, "it could be consistent, yes."

She also testified that Zimmerman had written on a form reciting his medical history that he was exercising three times a week by doing mixed martial arts, a statement that prosecutor Bernie de la Rionda asked her to repeat.

Paramedic Stacy Livingston, who responded to the shooting scene, testified Zimmerman had a swollen, bleeding nose and two cuts on the back of his head an inch long. When O'Mara asked if Zimmerman should have been concerned with his medical well-being because of his injuries, Livingston said, "Possibly."

When photos of Martin's body were shown on a courtroom projector during Livingston's testimony, Martin's mother, Sybrina Fulton, looked away and blinked back tears.

Obama Yet To Leave Legacy On Africa

CENTURION, South Africa (AP) — President Barack Obama is receiving the embrace you might expect for a long-lost son on his return to his father's home continent, even as he has yet to leave a lasting policy legacy for Africa on the scale of his two predecessors.

Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush passed innovative Africa initiatives while in the White House and passionately continue their development work in the region in their presidential afterlife. Obama's efforts here have not been so ambitious, despite his personal ties to the continent.

His first major tour of Africa as president is coming just now, in his fifth year, while Bush and Clinton are frequent fliers to Africa. Bush even will be in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, next week at the same time as Obama, although they have no plans to meet. Instead, their wives plan to appear together at a summit on empowering African women organized by the George W. Bush Institute, with the former president in attendance.

For Obama, one potentially memorable aspect of this trip — a meeting with former South African president and anti-apartheid leader Nelson Mandela — remained in doubt. Mandela is hospitalized in Johannesburg in critical condition. Obama arrived in South Africa Friday after visiting Senegal.

Speaking to reporters aboard Air Force One, Obama said it was uncertain whether he would get an opportunity to see the 94-year-old Mandela, a personal hero to the president.

SCOTUS Rulings Energize Both Sides

Across the country, this week's landmark Supreme Court rulings on same-sex marriage have energized activists and politicians on both sides of the debate. Efforts to impose bans — and to repeal them — have taken on new intensity, as have lawsuits by gays demanding the right to marry.

The high court, in two 5-4 decisions Wednesday, opened the way for California to become the 13th state to legalize gay marriage, and it directed the federal government to recognize legally married same-sex couples.

But the rulings, while hailed by gay-rights activists, did not declare a nationwide right for gays to marry. Instead, they set the stage for state-by-state battles over one of America's most contentious social issues. Already, some of those battles are heating up.

In Pennsylvania, the only Northeast state that doesn't legally recognize same-sex couples, gay state Rep. Brian Sims, a Philadelphia Democrat, says he will introduce a bill to allow same-sex marriages. The bill may flounder in the GOP-led Legislature, but the issue is likely to be volatile in next year's gubernatorial race, pitting GOP Gov. Tom Corbett, an opponent of gay marriage, against any of three Democrats who favor it.

In Arizona, gay-rights supporters have begun circulating petitions aimed at repealing the state's 2008 ban on same-sex marriage by way of a ballot measure next year. With California's ban in the process of being quashed, Arizona is now among 29 states with constitutional amendments that limit marriage to one-man, one-woman unions.

Heat Wave Strikes Parts Of Western US

PHOENIX (AP) — A blazing heat wave expected to send the mercury soaring to nearly 120 degrees in Phoenix and Las Vegas settled over the West on Friday, threatening to ground airliners and raising fears that people and pets will get burned on the scalding pavement.

The heat was so punishing that rangers took up positions at trailheads at Lake Mead in Nevada to persuade people not to hike. Zookeepers in Phoenix hosed down the elephants and fed tigers frozen fish snacks. And tourists at California's Death Valley took photos of the harsh landscape and a thermometer that read 121.

The mercury there was expected to reach nearly 130 on Friday — just short of the 134-degree reading from a century ago that stands as the highest temperature ever recorded on Earth.

"You have to take a picture of something like this. Otherwise no one will believe you," said Laura McAlpine, visiting Death Valley from Scotland.

The heat is not expected to break until Monday or Tuesday.

Syrian Rebels Capture Major Army Post

BEIRUT (AP) — Rebels captured a major army post in the southern city of Daraa Friday after nearly two weeks of intense fighting, as battles raged between troops and opposition forces in the province that borders Jordan, activists said.

Daraa, the provincial capital of a region that carries the same name, is the birthplace of the uprising against President Bashar Assad that started 27 months ago. Rebels hope to one day launch an offensive from the area to take the capital, Damascus.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which has a network of activists around the country, said Islamic militants led by members of the al-Qaida affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra, or the Nusra Front, captured the checkpoint after a two-week siege.

It said rebels blew up a car bomb Thursday killing and wounding a number of soldiers then stormed the post, made up of two of the highest buildings in the city.

"This post is very important because it overlooks old Daraa," said Rami Abdul-Rahman, who heads The Observatory. He added that the capture opens the way for rebels to take the southern neighborhood of Manshiyeh that is close to the Jordanian border.

Girl Doing Well After 2nd Lung Transplant

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A 10-year-old Pennsylvania girl who underwent a double-lung transplant amid a national debate over the organ allocation process has undergone a second transplant after the first failed and is now taking some breaths on her own, the girl's parents said Friday.

Sarah Murnaghan's mother said the first set of lungs failed within hours after the June 12 transplant at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and Sarah was placed on machines. She was placed back on the lung transplant list the night after her surgery and received a second set of lungs on June 15.

"We were told ... that she was going to die," the suburban Philadelphia girl's mother, Janet Murnaghan, said at a news conference Friday afternoon in explaining why Sarah's second transplant was not publicly disclosed. "We weren't prepared to live out her dying in public."

Sarah initially received lungs from an adult donor after her parents sued over national rules that place children behind adolescents and adults on the list for adult lungs.

Janet Murnaghan said Sarah's condition began to "spiral out of control" shortly after the first surgery. A second set of lungs was found and were transplanted though they were infected with pneumonia, making the surgery extra risky.

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