



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

ODG/CRP/1992/ PI/3  
UNESCO, Paris, February 1992  
Original: English

**Award Ceremony of the  
Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize  
UNESCO, 3 February 1992**

**Address by Dr Henry A. Kissinger  
President of the Jury**

President De Klerk,  
President Mandela,  
Mr Director-General,  
President of Senegal,

The role of every great leader is to take his people from where it is to where it has never been. No two contemporary leaders symbolize this task more than our honorees today. Nelson Mandela, imprisoned for nearly three decades, has taken his people towards a negotiation on equality and participation in government without rancour and without bitterness, realizing the importance of shared values and common objectives. And President De Klerk has taken a people imprisoned - not in the concrete, but by its own concepts and traditions of 300 years - on to the painful road of accepting the reality of the shared dignity of all the peoples of the great and beautiful country in which they live. And in going on this often lonely journey together, they are contributing not only to the salvation and the greatness of their country, but to the future of democracy, which has so far prospered in societies that were quite homogeneous but now has to be applied to an environment of many ethnic and linguistic differences. It is a journey of great significance to a continent that has suffered so enormously from foreign imposition, but where an example may now be set of how different peoples can live together. It is an experiment in peace and progress and it must be achieved among groups that, by all historic standards, should have been divided by an insurmountable gulf, but which have demonstrated their capacity for, not just reconciliation, but for goals that transcend anything either group has ever experienced.

I think that rather than having me describe our honorees' views, I might quote from what they have themselves stated. I first took notice of Nelson Mandela shortly after my initial visit to South Africa, nearly 30 years ago, when he was on trial. I remember reading with great interest the speech with which he addressed the court, and thinking it was one of the noble documents of our period. I would now like to quote a few sentences from it: "We want equal political rights, because without them, our disabilities will be permanent. I know

this sounds revolutionary to the Whites in this country, because the majority of voters will be Africans: this makes the white man fear democracy, but this fear cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the only solution which will guarantee racial harmony and freedom for all. It is not true that the enfranchisement of all will result in racial domination. Political division based on colour is entirely artificial and when it disappears, so will the domination of one colour group by another. The ANC has spent half a century fighting against racialism; when it triumphs, it will not change that policy". And President De Klerk has said: "We want to make all South Africans proud; we want to build a South African nation in which, yes, all the various composite parts can feel safe, in which there will be acceptance of joined and common goals, in which there will be just class A citizenship, and not a class B and a class C citizenship. A new vision for our country is crystallizing, a vision of justice, fairness, equality and democracy".

No one who knows anything about South Africa would have thought possible that these two prisoners of the past, one physically and one philosophically, could have transcended their histories, and met and defined a goal worthy of the suffering and worthy of the aspirations, not just of their country, but of their continent. Thereby they have inspired all of mankind, and, therefore as Chairman of the Committee of the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize, I consider it is a great privilege that this first award should be given to two remarkable men who have been such an inspiration to our time.

There was some discussion within our panel whether we should perhaps wait until they had succeeded in their task, but I think we all came unanimously, and enthusiastically, to the conclusion that our awardees have already made a tremendous contribution to mankind by the very effort they are undertaking.

All great achievements were dreams before they became reality. Cynics do not build great monuments. Our awardees have already contributed the dream; we are lucky that they are still with us to implement it; and, after the faith they have shown, it did not take very much for our Committee to honour them for what they have already achieved, and for what we know they will yet accomplish for their people, for their country, for their continent - for mankind.

And now, if Mr Mayor will join me, President De Klerk and President Mandela, please step forward to receive your award.