

Nkosi Mandela speaks on apartheid and the Nakba

written by Lallan Schoenstein
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Front: Chief Nkosi Mandela, Clarence Thomas, Monadel Herzallah and Sanyika Bryant. Rear: Dr Rama Ali Kased. San Francisco State University, May 19. Photo: Delores Lemon Thomas

Upholding the legacy of Malcolm X and commemorating the Palestinian Nakba, Nkosi Zwelivelile Mandela — grandson of Nelson Mandela — spoke to a gathering at San Francisco State University on May 19.

Mandela was on a tour of the U.S. commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Nakba. Nakba is an Arabic word meaning “catastrophe” that refers to the 1948 expulsion of 750,000 Palestinians from their homes upon the formation of the settler-colonial state of Israel.

Today, nearly five million Palestinian refugees continue to demand their right to return to the homes and lands from which they were exiled.

To commemorate the Nakba, the U.S. Palestinian Community Network (USPCN) and the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression (NAARPR) arranged the U.S. tour.

The tour’s keynote speaker was political activist Nkosi Zwelivelile Mandela, an elected member of the South African National Assembly and chief of the Mvezo Traditional Council.

In an interview before speaking at a tour event in Milwaukee, Mandela said, “As South Africans, we have been in the struggle against colonialism for hundreds of years and 60 years against a brutal apartheid regime. We have been able to gain our freedom ... with support from the global community.

“We have been able, through the United Nations, to declare apartheid a crime against humanity. That should mean there would be no other apartheid state anywhere.”

He said his grandfather’s cause “that’s very close to me is being a voice for the oppressed. In 1995, on his visit to Gaza, Nelson Mandela said to the Palestinians that our freedom in South Africa is incomplete without the freedom of the

Palestinians.”

Mandela continued: “In my visit to the West Bank in 2017, I witnessed the daily lives lived by Palestinians under occupation. I could not look away from the clear evidence of the violence and atrocities made against ordinary men, women and children, political prisoners in detention without trial. I came away from that experience with the realization that Palestinians are witnessing the worst apartheid regime we’ve ever seen.”

Another featured speaker on May 19 was Clarence Thomas, a retired International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10 member in San Francisco.

In 1968, Thomas was a student at San Francisco State and a member of the Black Student Union Central Committee. They initiated the longest student strike in U.S. history and established the first Black Studies Department and a School of Ethnic Studies.

When Thomas spoke, he said, “The longshore workers are responsible for loading and unloading maritime cargo. We are some of the most important workers in the global supply chain. There is no labor union in the world that has provided more solidarity support for sisters and brothers of Palestine than ILWU Local 10.

“In 2010, following the Israeli commandos’ attack upon the Gaza flotilla Mavi Marmara, a labor-community picket line prevented the working of a vessel from Zim, an Israeli shipping line. For 24 hours, longshore workers refused to work that ship in protest of the murder of humanitarian activists on their way to Gaza.

“In 2014, the ‘Block the Boat’ coalition kept the Zim ship Piraeus from unloading maritime cargo for four days. The Zim integrated shipping services website indicated that there were no more Zim dockings in Oakland beyond that date.”

Thomas continued, “Local 10 has been on the front lines in defending our sisters and

brothers in Palestine. In June 2021 'Block the Boat 2' took place at the Port of Oakland, and for several days, Local 10 dock workers refused to unload cargo from another apartheid Israel Zim ship.

"The Arab Resource and Organizing Center posted the following message: 'After two blockades honored by ILWU Local 10, we have successfully turned away the apartheid profiteering Zim shipping line from the Port of Oakland. The international week of action continues to ensure that Zim is turned away everywhere!'

"That is the power of the working class at the point of production. An injury to one is an injury to all!"

IN UPHOLDING THE LEGACY OF MALCOLM X AND COMMEMORATING
75 YEARS OF NAKBA, USPCN & NAARPR WELCOME

NKOSI ZWELIVELILE MANDELA

GRANDSON OF NELSON MANDELA

NAKBA
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