

OBAMA PRAISES MANDELA AS AN INSPIRATION (1ST JULY, 2013)

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U.S. President Barack Obama has hailed Nelson Mandela as a personal inspiration while on a visit to South Africa. Mr Obama declined to visit Mr Mandela due to the former South African president's poor health. A White House statement explained: "Out of deference to Nelson Mandela's peace and comfort and the family's wishes, [the Obamas] will not be visiting the hospital." Obama made it clear to reporters on Air Force One that he had no intention of putting Mr Mandela's health any further at risk, saying: "I don't need a photo op...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."

President Obama called Mandela a "personal hero" and that Mandela's sacrifices to achieve equal rights helped inspire his own political career. While flying to South Africa, Obama told reporters: "The main message we'll want to deliver...is simply a profound gratitude for his leadership all these years, and that the thoughts and prayers of the American people are with him and his family and his country." Obama later told university students in Pretoria to learn lessons from Mandela's strength while he was in prison for 27 years. He said: "Think about the hardships and the struggles and being away from family and friends. There were dark moments that tested his faith in humanity, but he refused to give up."

SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article.

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| 1. hailed | a. in danger |
| 2. deference | b. mankind |
| 3. at risk | c. praised |
| 4. achieve | d. heartfelt |
| 5. profound | e. respect |
| 6. humanity | f. bring about |

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why didn't Barack Obama visit Nelson Mandela?
2. Who issued a statement on Obama's behalf?
3. What did Obama say he wasn't interested in?
4. What helped shape Obama's career?
5. What did Obama want to thank Mandela for most?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What do you know about Nelson Mandela?
2. Who is the most inspirational person you know?
3. Who are your personal heroes?
4. What other former world leaders are loved as much as Nelson Mandela?
5. What questions would you like to ask Nelson Mandela if you would meet him?