AFRICA'S PEACEMAKERS
Nobel Peace Laureates of African Descent

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AFRICA’S PEACEMAKERS
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PART ONE

INTRODUCTION
The political liberation of Africa was complete in May 1994 when Nelson Mandela became president of a democratic South Africa. In a speech to the US Congress five months later, Mandela quoted his fellow Nobel peace laureate Martin Luther King Jr’s famous words from an old Negro spiritual, uttered during his 1963 speech commemorating the March on Washington DC: ‘Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty we are free at last!’ Two of the twentieth century’s greatest pan-African struggles – the civil rights and anti-apartheid battles – were thus inextricably linked. Both of these liberation struggles, in Africa and the United States, focused on combating racial injustice and social inequality. The black ghettos of the American civil rights struggle mirrored the black townships of the anti-apartheid struggle as the major cauldrons of these battles.

In 2013 the African Union (AU) commemorated fifty years since the birth of its predecessor, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which embodied the quest for pan-African unity. The AU has also designated the African diaspora a sixth subregion (along with Southern, Central, West, East and North Africa), thus recognising the continuing relevance of this historical relationship in which towering figures of the pan-African movement, like America’s W.E.B. DuBois, Trinidad’s
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Henry Sylvester-Williams and George Padmore, Jamaica’s Marcus Garvey, and Martinique’s Frantz Fanon played a major role1 (see Mazrui, Chapter 2 in this volume.) The continent has also embarked since 1960 on a quest for what Kenyan scholar Ali Mazrui famously described in 1967 as a ‘Pax Africana’: creating and consolidating an African-owned peace.2 The thirteen Nobel peace laureates examined in this volume are thus, in a real sense, prophets of Pax Africana.

This volume seeks to draw lessons for peacemaking, civil rights, socio-economic justice, environmental protection, nuclear disarmament and women’s rights, based on the rich experiences of the thirteen Nobel peace laureates of African descent who won the prize between 1950 and 2011. These Nobel laureates come from diverse backgrounds, but have waged similar struggles for peace, justice and freedom. This collection of lucid, jargon-free essays, written by an interdisciplinary team of fourteen prominent African and African American scholars and practitioners, is the first book comprehensively to address this important topic.

African Americans like Nobel peace laureates Ralph Bunche (who won the prize in 1950) and Martin Luther King Jr (1964) played an important role in the pan-African struggle, with Bunche leading the creation of the United Nations Trusteeship Council by 1947 and King championing decolonisation efforts. Both attended Kwame Nkrumah’s independence celebration in Accra in March 1957. South Africa was the last African country to gain political independence from colonial rule, in 1994, in this thirty-year struggle, and it is appropriate that four of its citizens have won the Nobel Peace Prize: Albert Luthuli (1960), Desmond Tutu (1984), Nelson Mandela (1993) and Frederik Willem de

1. I thank Kaye Whiteman, Chris Saunders and Ken Barlow for very useful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.


Ghana, which produced one of the greatest prophets of Pax Africana in Kwame Nkrumah, has been honoured with the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Kofi Annan (2001), the UN Secretary General between 1997 and 2006. Kenya, the site of one of Africa’s greatest indigenous anti-colonial struggles, the Mau Mau resistance to British rule of 1952–1960, has produced a Nobel peace laureate in Wangari Maathai (2004), who devoted her life to environmental campaigning. Liberia, one of Africa’s oldest republics, founded in 1847 by freed American slaves, has produced the two most recent African Nobel peace laureates: Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Leymah Gbowee (both in 2011) for their role in the struggle for women’s rights.

The first American president of African descent, Barack Obama (whose father was Kenyan), won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009, and his career was inspired by Martin Luther King Jr’s civil rights struggle. Obama was also the direct beneficiary of this struggle, waged by King as well as Ralph Bunche. As a young student in the United States, Obama first became politically active when he engaged in the anti-apartheid struggle that sought to impose sanctions on the racist albinocracy in South Africa. He started a second and final presidential term in January 2013 in which he was expected to show more engagement with his ancestral continent. Obama therefore visited South Africa, Tanzania and Senegal six months into his second term.

This book will thus examine the contributions of three prominent African Americans, four South African priests and politicians, three peacemakers from Egypt and Ghana, and three women activists from Kenya and Liberia.

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The Nobel Peace Prize was established, ironically, by Alfred Nobel (1833–1896), the Swedish inventor of dynamite, who willed his fortune to the endeavour for peace in 1895. The first Peace Prize was awarded in 1901 (other prizes are awarded for literature, medicine, physics, chemistry and economics). Five individuals chosen by the Norwegian parliament elect the annual winner, based on nominations from previous Nobel laureates; current or former members of the Nobel Peace Committee; members of national assemblies and of organisations such as the International Court of Justice, the International Court of Arbitration and the Inter-Parliamentary Union; and university professors of political science, law, history and philosophy.4 The decision is announced in October each year, and the award is presented in Oslo in December. India’s politico-spiritual leader Mohandas ‘Mahatma’ Gandhi was nominated for the prize five times and shortlisted three times, but was controversially never awarded it due to the political clout of the British Empire (Britain has had close ties to Norway), against which he waged a successful liberation struggle.5 Gandhi’s non-violent struggle, however, served as an inspiration to eight of our thirteen Nobel peace laureates of African descent: Ralph Bunche, Albert Luthuli, Martin Luther King Jr, Anwar Sadat, Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela, Barack Obama and Leymah Gbowee (see also Mazrui, Chapter 2 in this volume.)


Outline of the Book

The book begins with two introductory essays. The first, the present chapter, seeks to explain how the struggles for civil rights, peace-making, environmental protection, nuclear disarmament and women’s rights link together, as well as identify the achievements of the thirteen Nobel peace laureates of African descent who led these struggles. The second framing chapter, by Kenyan scholar Ali Mazrui, explains the significance of Barack Obama being awarded the Peace Prize in the context of Mahatma Gandhi and the twelve Nobel peace laureates of African descent who came before and after him.

Next, in Part Two, three chapters by African American analysts Pearl Robinson (Chapter 3) and Lee Daniels (Chapter 5) and Sierra Leonean scholar-diplomat James Jonah (who was mentored by Ralph Bunche at the UN, Chapter 4) assess the three African-American Nobel peace laureates: Ralph Bunche, Martin Luther King Jr and Barack Obama. Both Bunche and King were involved in America’s civil rights struggle, though Bunche won the prize chiefly for his peacemaking role in the Middle East with the United Nations. Connections between these struggles are made, while one of the chapters – by Pearl Robinson – innovatively compares and contrasts the perspectives of Bunche, King and Obama on war and peace, using their Nobel Peace Prize speeches and other sources.

In Part Three, the anti-apartheid and peacemaking legacies of four South African Nobel laureates are examined by four South African authors – Chris Saunders (Chapter 6), Maureen Isaacson (Chapter 7), Elleke Boehmer (Chapter 8) and Gregory Houston (Chapter 9). Albert Luthuli, the president of the African National Congress (ANC) between 1951 and 1967 and a traditional chief and former lay preacher, was the first African Nobel peace laureate, in 1960. In 1984, another ‘troublesome priest’, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, won the prize. Like Luthuli, Tutu used the Nobel platform in Oslo to protest against the repression of the racist government in Pretoria. Thus Saunders and Isaacson richly analyse the struggles of both Luthuli and Tutu.
Nelson Mandela, another ANC chieftain, became one of the twentieth century’s greatest moral leaders. Boehmer’s eloquent essay examines Mandela’s use of oratory in waging the anti-apartheid struggle, offering a rich comparison with Barack Obama. Apartheid’s last leader, Frederik Willem de Klerk, was a ‘pragmatic peacemaker’ who controversially shared the Nobel Peace Prize with Mandela in 1993. Houston’s historical essay traces de Klerk’s peacemaking contributions to South Africa’s transformation into a democratic state by 1994.

In Part Four, two Egyptian authors – Boutros Boutros-Ghali (Chapter 10) and Morad Abou-Sabé (Chapter 11) – examine the legacy of the two Egyptian Nobel peace laureates. Boutros-Ghali, former Egyptian minister of state for foreign affairs and former UN Secretary General (1992–96), explains the significance of President Anwar Sadat’s historic trip to Jerusalem in 1977, which led to his assassination four years later, having won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1978.6 Egypt’s second Nobel peace laureate, in 2005, was Mohamed ElBaradei, who headed the UN’s International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) between 1997 and 2009, and has more recently been involved in civic struggles to promote democratic governance in Egypt, efforts that are analysed by Abou-Sabé in his essay.

Part Five assesses the environmental and peacemaking efforts of two Nobel laureates. South African scholar Janice Golding assesses the contributions of Kenyan environmental campaigner and ‘Earth Mother’ Wangari Maathai, who became the first African woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, in 2004 (Chapter 12). Another African-American scholar, Gwendolyn Mikell, examines the peacemaking legacy of Ghana’s Kofi Annan, who served as UN Secretary General between 1997 and 2006 (Chapter 13).

Concluding the book, Part Six examines the two Liberian women who were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011: President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, dubbed the ‘Iron Lady’; and civil society activist Leymah Gbowee, described as ‘the prayerful peace warrior’. Both

6. See also Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Egypt’s Road to Jerusalem: A Diplomat’s Story of the Struggle for Peace in the Middle East (New York: Random, 1997).
fought actively for women’s and civil rights in Liberia, and the two chapters here, by Nigerian analysts Adekeye Adebajo (Chapter 14) and Rosaline Daniel (Chapter 15) respectively, chronicle these struggles. Adebajo, however, is critical of Sirleaf being awarded the Peace Prize, due partly to her ambiguous role in Liberia’s first civil war between 1989 and 1997.

**Connections and Contrasts**

These fifteen essays seek to make connections between the struggles for peace, justice and freedom and the thirteen individuals of African descent who have won the Nobel Peace Prize. Ralph Bunche and Martin Luther King Jr marched together during the civil rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s; Albert Luthuli and King issued a joint declaration against apartheid in 1962; Luthuli and Nelson Mandela worked together against apartheid within the ANC in the 1950s and early 1960s; Mandela appointed Desmond Tutu head of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which submitted its report in 1996; Luthuli and Tutu were both priests who were forced into politics by the inequities of apartheid; King, Luthuli, Tutu and Mandela were all skilful performers who understood the importance of dramatic speeches and gestures; while F.W. de Klerk, as a young apartheid-supporting student leader, invited Luthuli to address fellow students at South Africa’s Potchefstroom University in 1961.

There are other interactions and connections between our thirteen Nobel laureates. Barack Obama met Tutu in South Africa as a US senator in 2006, and as president honoured Tutu with America’s Medal of Freedom in August 2009; Obama and Mandela both embodied a charismatic leadership style in pursuing their goals (see Boehmer, Chapter 8 in this volume); Kofi Annan and Mohamed ElBaradei were both self-effacing technocrats rather than politicians, who rose up the ranks to head their respective institutions, seeking to serve as a ‘force for good’ in the world and embody the principles of their organisations; Wangari Maathai, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Leymah
Gbowee all courageously pursued women’s rights through methods that directly confronted authority; Maathai worked with fellow Nobel laureates Annan and Tutu to promote environmental issues. In 2006, then-senator Barack Obama planted a tree with Maathai in Nairobi’s Uhuru Park. Both ElBaradei and his fellow Nobel peace laureate Maathai were involved in unorthodox struggles that sought to link nuclear disarmament and environmental protection to global security in a new framework of human security. Both became involved in domestic democracy struggles, in Egypt and Kenya respectively. Both ElBaradei and Obama shared the desire to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

Over two centuries ago, Jesus Christ had famously noted that ‘A Prophet has no honour in his own country’ (John 4:44). Six of our Nobel laureates who served as international civil servants or pursued global and regional issues suffered this fate. Ralph Bunche was recognised more in international circles than he was in the USA; Anwar Sadat was revered in the West, but shunned and isolated in the Middle East and Africa; Mohamed ElBaradei struggled in his bid to play a more prominent political role in Egypt after retiring from the UN in 2009; Ellen Johnson Sirleaf failed disastrously in her first bid to become Liberia’s president in 1997; Kofi Annan spent only two years (1974–76) as head of the Ghanaian tourist board before returning to the UN; while Wangari Maathai’s environmental activism was recognised more abroad than in Kenya. Five of our subjects – Sadat, de Klerk, Mandela, Sirleaf and Obama – were also heads of state burdened by state power, who sometimes took difficult decisions that did not always accord with the principles of the struggles they were waging.

Studies like these are naturally somewhat subjective by their very nature. Though these fifteen essays largely celebrate the heroic struggles waged by the thirteen Nobel peace laureates examined in this book, we have sought to avoid hagiography. The rest of this introduction thus provides an assessment of our Nobel peace laureates that diverges, in several cases, from the analyses of the chapter authors. Such differences will hopefully enrich the study and provide readers with a more rounded picture of our subjects.
Three African Americans

RALPH BUNCHE AND MARTIN LUTHER KING JR

Two African Americans won the Nobel Peace Prize before Obama: Ralph Bunche and Martin Luther King Jr. Both were involved in America’s civil rights struggle, which they linked to Africa’s independence struggles. Bunche, the ‘scholar–diplomat’, was the first black person to win the prize, in 1950. His skilful mediation in the Middle East won him the award, and he served the UN for another two decades, contributing to peacemaking efforts in the Suez (1956) and Congo (1960–64) crises, though he had a terrible relationship with another pan-African icon, Patrice Lumumba, and was accused by some pan-Africanists as having pursued parochial American foreign policy interests in the Congo. Bunche was also instrumental in establishing and directing the UN Trusteeship Council, which pushed for the liberation of Africa, beginning in 1947. Significantly, in the 1950s he marched with the ‘great provocateur’ Martin Luther King Jr during America’s civil rights struggle. King became the youngest winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, at the age of 35. Bunche and the civil rights establishment opposed King’s anti-Vietnam stance, which they felt would harm the civil rights struggle, but they eventually agreed to disagree on this issue (see Robinson, Chapter 3, and Daniels, Chapter 5, in this volume). King famously noted – as quoted by Obama during the ‘Arab Spring’ of 2011 – that ‘there is something in the soul that cries out for freedom’. His personal life, however, was somewhat besmirched by reported adulterous affairs, and Lee Daniels notes in his essay that King was killed at ‘precisely the right moment’ to ensure his martyrdom.


10. Martin Luther King Jr, ‘Birth of a New Nation’, sermon delivered at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Montgomery, Alabama, 7 April 1957 (www.modernghana.com).
BARACK OBAMA

As the first African-American US president was preparing to send more troops to wage war in Afghanistan, word came through in October 2009 that Obama had won the Nobel Peace Prize. Some of his early foreign policy actions unfortunately followed in the hawkish footsteps of his predecessor, George W. Bush: Obama’s first military action as president, within days of taking office, was to sanction two missile strikes in Pakistan, which reportedly killed twenty-two people, including women and children. Three more US missile strikes a month later, in February 2009, killed another fifty-five people, drawing the ire of Pakistani officials.\(^\text{11}\) In his first three years in office, Obama ordered targeted assassinations of suspected terrorists through an average of one drone strike every four days, compared to George W. Bush’s average of one strike every forty days.\(^\text{12}\) While Bush ordered about 50 drone strikes in eight years, Obama had ordered 375 strikes in four and a half years. These actions have mostly been conducted in the border area between Pakistan and Afghanistan, and by May 2013 had killed an estimated 3,500 people, including hundreds of innocent civilians, who accounted for an estimated 10–15 per cent of fatalities.\(^\text{13}\) Obama also ordered the assassination of Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan, the alleged ringleader of an al-Qaeda cell in Kenya in southern Somalia, by American commandos in September 2009.\(^\text{14}\) As a consequence of these actions, some have been forced to ask whether Obama’s foreign policy could come to represent ‘Bush with a smile’.

Upon receiving news of the Nobel Peace Prize, Obama – in office for barely nine months at the time – seemed himself to admit that his award was more for aspirational rhetoric than for concrete accomplishments.


The jury is still out on whether Obama can live up to the ideals of the prize. His Nobel acceptance speech in Oslo in December 2009 was disappointing, showing more of the pragmatic politician than the idealist prophet. He fittingly acknowledged the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr and Gandhi, noting: ‘I am living testimony to the moral force of non-violence.’ But in much of his speech – delivered in the shadow of two American foreign wars, in Afghanistan and Iraq – Obama explained why it was ‘necessary’ to use force to bring about peace. A celebration of peace thus turned into a justification for war. Obama used the concept of ‘just wars’ to explain why he could not be guided by King’s example alone, since non-violence could not have halted tyrants like Adolf Hitler. In stark contrast to his earlier recognition of the historical imperial actions of the United States, he glorified his country for having ‘helped underwrite global security for more than six decades … and enabled democracy to take hold in places like the Balkans’.

Obama went on, rather inappropriately in the context of a Nobel speech, to criticise Iran’s and North Korea’s nuclear ambitions, while reserving his own country’s right to act unilaterally, echoing Bush’s doctrine of ‘pre-emptive’ use of force. (For another perspective on the speech, see Robinson, Chapter 3 in this volume.)

The African references in Obama’s Nobel speech also perpetuated negative stereotypes of the continent, with the Kenyan–Kansan referring to Somalia as a ‘failed state’ of terrorism, piracy and famine, as well as talking of genocide in Darfur, rape in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and repression in Zimbabwe (though referring to the bravery of citizens in resisting it). This speech was, unsurprisingly, well received in the United States, with Obama clearly trying to avoid charges that he was pandering to an international global audience who had had no hand in his election as president in 2008. In the same Nobel speech, Obama also controversially referred to fellow Nobel

17. The quotations in this paragraph are from Barack Obama’s Nobel Peace Prize speech delivered in Oslo on 10 December 2009 (www.nobelprize.org).
laureate Albert Schweitzer (who won the prize in 1952) as among the ‘giants of history’, alongside previous peace laureates Martin Luther King Jr, Nelson Mandela and American war hero General George Marshall. Schweitzer was a French–German doctor who had set up a mission hospital in Gabon in 1913 to help the local population cure diseases and convert African ‘pagans’ to Christianity. He worked tirelessly in Gabon – with some spells in Europe – until his death in 1965.

Schweitzer, however, is widely viewed as a racist who referred frequently to black Africans as ‘primitives’ and ‘savages’. As he put it: ‘The native moves under patriarchal authority. He does not understand dealing with an office, but dealing with a man.’ Schweitzer also despised Islam – the religion of Obama’s grandfather, which Barack sought as president to reach out to – dismissing it as having ‘never produced any thinking about the world and mankind which penetrated to the depths’.

Despite the pretty poetry heard during the 2008 US presidential campaign by the most cosmopolitan and worldly of the forty-four individuals to occupy the White House, Obama has ruled in pragmatic prose. He is very much a dyed-in-the-wool politician, cut from the same cloth as his Democratic Party predecessor, Bill Clinton. Both men consistently demonstrated a willingness to sacrifice core principles at the altar of political survival. A line in Obama’s Nobel speech may unwittingly provide what could well become the epitaph to his own presidency: ‘Even those of us with the best of intentions will at times fail to right the wrongs before us.’ Obama’s instincts to be a force for good in the world have often been diverted by his country’s imperial temptations, as again underlined by the 2011 intervention in Libya led

by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). After all, the road to hell is famously paved with good intentions.

Obama’s Africa policy has comprised four pillars: to support democratic governance, to foster economic growth and development, to increase access to quality health and education, and to help manage conflicts. However, he has continued several of the truculent George W. Bush’s most egregious policies. These have militarised American engagement with Africa, despite Obama’s pledge during a July 2009 speech in Accra to promote ‘strong institutions, not strong men’. ‘Extraordinary rendition’ of suspected terrorists abroad continued, with reports of torture; 1,500 American soldiers remained in Djibouti to track terrorists; autocratic regimes in oil-rich Gabon and Equatorial Guinea remained staunch US clients; and officials of America’s Germany-based Africa Command (AFRICOM) still roamed the continent in search of ‘mad mullahs’. The Obama administration also dispatched drones to Somalia and Mali, missiles of death that have notoriously killed scores of innocent civilians wherever they have been deployed. Washington, however, provided $355 million to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), though many African armies continued to complain that they needed more logistics and equipment, and not counterterrorism training. Obama drastically cut AIDS funding to Africa by $200 million in 2012, one of the few successes of US policy towards the continent under George W. Bush. It is important to note that Obama was obstructed at every turn by Republican opponents who vowed from the start to make him a ‘one-term president’. The racism that still afflicts American society scarcely dissipated with the historic election of the country’s first black president. However, despite Obama’s sporadic diplomatic safaris to Africa, his Africa policy represented more continuity with, rather than change from, a discredited past.

Four South African Priests and Politicians

Four South Africans have won the Nobel Peace Prize; three of them contributed to promoting socio-economic justice, while all were peace-makers. While Albert Luthuli, Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela all shared the same Christian education and were titans in the anti-apartheid struggle, F.W. de Klerk was in many ways the very antithesis of this struggle. De Klerk was instead the very embodiment of the very apartheid system he helped to destroy in a pragmatic act of politicide.

ALBERT LUTHULI

The president of the African National Congress, Albert Luthuli was the first African peace laureate, in 1960 (he received the prize in December 1961). Coming shortly after the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa, the award was an attempt to highlight apartheid’s brutalities. Luthuli – the ‘Black Moses’ who titled his autobiography Let My People Go – was president of the ANC from 1951 until his death in 1967. This title was taken from a civil rights-era American Negro spiritual: ‘Go down, Moses, Way down in Egypt’s land; Tell old Pharaoh to Let My people go!’ (quoted in Saunders, Chapter 6 in this volume.) Luthuli was a traditional chief from rural KwaZulu-Natal who uniquely was able to bridge the divide between the urban and rural masses of Africa’s oldest liberation movement. He was involved in the Defiance Campaign of 1952 and led several acts of civil disobedience, for which he was jailed and ‘banned’. However, he stuck doggedly to his principles of Gandhian non-violent passive resistance (though he noted that he was not a pacifist), advocated economic sanctions against the apartheid regime, and consistently pushed for the inclusion of whites, Indians and ‘Coloureds’ (mixed-race populations) in the struggle to ensure democratic majority rule and an end to apartheid. For Luthuli, who was steeped in Christian religious beliefs, the road to freedom lay through the cross, and sacrifices and suffering would be required in order to translate Jesus’ love ethic into concrete achievements. The cross thus had to come before the crown. Like Gandhi, the point of the
struggle for Luthuli was to transform the enemy’s hatred through love and human dignity. As Chris Saunders notes in his essay, Luthuli and Nelson Mandela disagreed on the ANC’s approach to armed struggle, with the priest showing understanding for the cause, but personally maintaining a commitment to non-violence.

Luthuli’s Nobel speech in Oslo in December 1961, titled ‘Africa and Freedom’, was one of the most powerful statements ever delivered in this forum. It was an elegant, dignified and defiant speech that exposed the evil criminality of apartheid, citing examples of the shooting of protestors, oppressive pass laws, bannings and prohibitions, imprisonment and land dispossession. Luthuli described apartheid as a ‘museum piece’, a sort of giant Jurassic Park of massive injustice full of political dinosaurs who would ultimately become extinct. It was a speech that Martin Luther King Jr could have delivered about apartheid America; both prophets shared an undying belief in non-violent struggle, as well as in the ultimate triumph of the human spirit over oppression. Luthuli’s magnanimity towards his oppressors, his continued calls for reconciliation, and his building of bridges with progressive white South Africans were the torch that his fellow ANC chieftain and Nobel laureate Nelson Mandela would take up four decades later in liberating his country from the bondage of white apartheid pharaohs.

This speech was also the cri de cœur of a committed pan-African prophet linking Africa’s independence struggle to that of apartheid South Africa and calling for a united continent that must abandon its oppressive past and build democratic societies based on humane values. Luthuli demonstrated that his Christian faith was the foundation for all his political actions, employing evocative biblical allusions and calling for churches across the globe to join the anti-apartheid struggle. He appealed to his European audience in Oslo and beyond to see the world as one humanity in the spirit of ubuntu – the gift of discovering our shared humanity – and cited examples from Europe’s blood-strewn history to win support for Africa’s liberation. In the words of one of

Luthuli’s favourite poets, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the ANC stalwart left his ‘footprints on the sands of time’.

**DESMOND TUTU**

In 1984 the Anglican archbishop of Cape Town, Desmond Tutu, a ‘troublesome priest’ like Luthuli, won the Nobel Peace Prize for his quest for socio-economic justice in apartheid South Africa. Tutu was a fearless anti-apartheid activist who not only challenged the evil system but also waded into crowds in his purple cassock in volatile black townships to save alleged apartheid collaborators from being burnt alive through ‘necklacing’. Like Luthuli, Tutu preached non-violence, though both men sympathised with the armed struggle’s ultimate objectives of freedom and justice. Like Luthuli’s Nobel speech, Tutu’s was also a searing indictment of apartheid, which he compared to Adolf Hitler’s treatment of Jews in Nazi Germany. Like Luthuli, Tutu decried the injustices of curfews and bans, and of the killing of more than 500 black schoolchildren during the Soweto uprising of 1976. Some believe that Tutu’s Nobel Prize helped to galvanise the global sanctions movement between 1985 and 1989. His cause was also pan-African: he travelled to Mobutu Sese Seko’s Zaire to preach a liberation theology against oppression; he visited and criticised Marxist governments in Ethiopia and Angola; and he would later criticise human rights abuses in Robert Mugabe’s Zimbabwe and General Sani Abacha’s Nigeria. Tutu also visited Rwanda shortly after its 1994 genocide to preach a sermon of forgiveness and reconciliation. Fellow Nobel laureate Kofi Annan described Tutu as a ‘voice for the voiceless’.

After South Africa’s independence in 1994, Tutu became the ‘face’ of the country’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which he chaired. The TRC sought – through the testimony of victims and perpetrators – to uncover the truth about apartheid. But some criticised Tutu for Christianising the process, and noted that neither blacks nor whites felt

that the commission had delivered justice. Tutu’s ‘rainbow nation of God’ depiction of South Africa has also often been ridiculed as naive. The ‘Arch’ himself has sometimes taken controversial positions. He compared the struggle against apartheid to that against Communism and Nazism, seemingly ignoring the incredible role that such Communist Party stalwarts as Chris Hani and Joe Slovo had played in the ANC’s liberation struggle. Tutu also often displayed a strangely obsessive need for publicity, even signing up with a lucrative American speakers’ agency. He has sometimes shown signs of being an unguided missile, as when he threatened to pray against the democratically elected South African government – which had denied Tibet’s spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, a visa to attend Tutu’s eightieth birthday in October 2011 – noting histrionically that the ANC-led government was worse than the apartheid regime. Critics have also highlighted Tutu’s celebration of the cult of celebrity, hobnobbing with stars like Bono (who serenaded the ‘Arch’ during his eightieth birthday) who patronise and trivialise African causes. (For another view of Tutu, see Isaacson, Chapter 7 in this volume.)

Nelson Mandela, another ANC chieftain like Luthuli, emerged from twenty-seven years in jail preaching a message of reconciliation with his former enemies. The ANC consciously used Mandela to represent the face of its struggle. ‘Madiba’ (Mandela’s clan name) personally embodied his people’s aspirations for a democratic future. Like an ‘avuncular saint’, he emerged from prison without any apparent bitterness towards his former enemies, and tirelessly promoted national

27. Allen, Rabble-Rouser for Peace.
reconciliation. As president, he came to symbolise his country’s racial reconciliation. The charisma of this ‘founding father’ helped South Africa’s young democratic institutions to flower between 1994 and 1999, and gave the country an international stature of which a former global pariah could never have dreamed. In contrast to Africa’s other post-independence ‘founding fathers’, such as Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah, Zambia’s Kenneth Kaunda, Kenya’s Jomo Kenyatta, Senegal’s Léopold Senghor and Tanzania’s Julius Nyerere, Mandela bowed out gracefully at the end of his first presidential term in 1999, setting a standard for future African leaders aspiring to greatness.

One of Madiba’s lasting legacies will be his efforts – not always successful – at promoting national and international peacemaking. He tirelessly reached out to his former enemies at home, and led peacemaking efforts in Burundi, the DRC and Lesotho. During his presidency from 1994 to 1999, South Africa largely shunned a military role for fear of arousing allegations of hegemonic domination, since the apartheid army had been particularly destructive in Southern Africa, causing an estimated 1 million deaths, as well as $60 billion of damage in the 1980s alone. A botched intervention in Lesotho in 1998 – led by a former apartheid officer – revived unpleasant historical memories of this past. However, in what came to be known by some as the ‘Mandela Doctrine’, the Nobel laureate told his fellow leaders at the OAU summit in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in 1998:

Africa has a right and a duty to intervene to root out tyranny…. [W]e must all accept that we cannot abuse the concept of national sovereignty to deny the rest of the continent the right and duty to intervene when behind those sovereign boundaries, people are being slaughtered to protect tyranny.  

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Critics have noted, however, that Mandela may have ended up doing more long-term damage as president by papering over racial differences and not forcing whites to show more contrition to their largely black victims of apartheid. Many of South Africa’s 5 million whites continue to enjoy their privileged lifestyle, while the national high priest, Madiba, appears to have absolved them of their sins without proper confession and penance. Mandela’s legacy in liberating his country is secure, but the success of his efforts at national reconciliation will only endure if rapid progress can be made to narrow the grotesque socio-economic inequalities in the most unequal society on earth. Also requiring comment is the controversial co-joining of two very different historical figures under the Mandela Rhodes Foundation in 2002: nineteenth-century imperialist Cecil Rhodes and twentieth-century liberation hero Nelson Mandela. Surely Jews would not have created a Herzl (founder of the Zionist movement) Hitler Foundation – so why have Africans accepted this monstrosity? Has Mandela perhaps taken reconciliation too far, in rehabilitating a malevolent figure that Africans really should have condemned to the pit-latrine of history?32

FREDERIK WILLEM DE KLERK

In a television interview with Christiane Amanpour on the Cable News Network (CNN) in May 2012, apartheid’s last president, F.W. de Klerk, caused widespread outrage when he appeared to defend the apartheid system which had legalised racism in South Africa between 1948 and 1990 and been condemned by the United Nations as a ‘crime against humanity’. South African cartoonists lampooned him as a political dinosaur, while other critics called on him to return the Nobel Peace Prize he had won alongside Mandela in 1993. On closer inspection, the greater outrage may actually be that so many people were so surprised by de Klerk’s comments, much of which he had consistently put on the public record for decades. A close reading of this history shows that repudiating apartheid would have represented an act of political

parricide for de Klerk, as his entire family history was based on the implementation of this ideology. De Klerk did not help end apartheid because it was morally repugnant, but because – in his own words – ‘it failed’ as a system of political control and socio-economic engineering. One of the most famous conversions since Saint Paul tumbled off his horse on the road to Damascus was thus undertaken more out of political pragmatism than moral conviction.

During the 2012 CNN interview, de Klerk acknowledged that the fact that apartheid trampled human rights ‘was and remains morally indefensible’, but then noted that he could only say in ‘a qualified way’ that apartheid had been morally wrong. He argued that the idea of the black majority being herded into Bantustans was ‘not repugnant’ and was historically inaccurate since, in his view, the homelands had always been there. He then fatuously compared the Bantustans favourably with the democratic ‘velvet divorce’ of Czechoslovakia in 1993, and further noted that blacks ‘were not disenfranchised, they voted’. By this jaundiced view of history, a system that had reserved less than 15 per cent of land for 80 per cent of South Africans, restricted the freedom of movement of blacks, and stripped them of their human dignity was somehow defensible. The black majority must also have been consistently electing racist rulers to oppress themselves between 1948 and 1990. Sensing the outrage caused by his comments and the immense damage it had done to his reputation, de Klerk sought to backtrack, claiming that his statements had been ‘misinterpreted’. His record, however, suggests otherwise.

De Klerk was the scion of a conservative Afrikaner family and a dyed-in-the-wool National Party (NP) member. Both his father and his grandfather had been senators for the party of apartheid, and his father had actually served in the government of apartheid’s ‘grand wizard’ and architect, Hendrik Verwoerd (1958–66). F.W. de Klerk held seven ministerial posts before becoming president in 1989, but never showed any signs of a commitment to reforming the evils of the apartheid system. He was a staunch defender of white privilege who, as education minister in the 1980s, pushed to introduce a quota system
to limit the number of black students in universities. Even as late as November 1989, de Klerk opposed common political institutions for all South Africans. He embarked on a remarkable political reversal three months later – releasing Mandela from twenty-seven years of incarceration – under the pressure of continuing black protests and a plummeting economy wracked by increasingly devastating economic sanctions. However, de Klerk does deserve some credit for his role in South Africa’s democratic transition.

Much to Desmond Tutu’s annoyance, de Klerk refused to take proper responsibility for the crimes of apartheid governments in which he had served. In his perversely self-justifying 1999 memoir *The Last Trek – A New Beginning*, de Klerk sought to portray the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a witchhunt against Afrikaners, and dismissed apartheid’s crimes as having been committed by a small group of securocrats without the knowledge of most National Party politicians. He refused to acknowledge that one side’s struggle had been morally superior in the conflict, describing the ANC’s armed struggle as ‘unnecessary and counter-productive’. He insultingly sought to portray his party as reformers spawned by the ANC, claiming disingenuously that the National Party had accepted the vision of a united South Africa by the time the ANC accelerated its armed struggle in the early 1960s. De Klerk also incredibly claimed that most of the politically related deaths in South Africa had not been committed by apartheid’s securocrats.33 In a reckless abdication of responsibility, this was a stout defence of the apartheid system that de Klerk had never unambiguously repudiated.

One wonders in retrospect whether Mandela should perhaps not have rejected the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 rather than accepting a moral equivalence between a pragmatic politician of apartheid and the political prophet who ensured its destruction. As Maureen Isaacson notes in her essay (Chapter 7), Desmond Tutu expressed regret at having nominated de Klerk for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Three Peacemakers from Egypt and Ghana

Anwar Sadat, Mohamed ElBaradei and Kofi Annan were all active peacemakers. Where Sadat was a head of state, ElBaradei and Annan were American-trained international civil servants who both fell foul of their former US patron after disagreeing over how to deal with Iraq and Iran. All three men were idealists, with Sadat and Annan sometimes displaying a naive faith in the goodness of Uncle Sam. Washington was instrumental in the election of ElBaradei and Annan to the head of their organisations before later turning against them. Sadat died a martyr to his cause in 1981, while Annan suffered a political crucifixion by his former American patron.

ANWAR SADAT

The president of Egypt from 1970 to 1981, Anwar Sadat,34 – the ‘tragic peacemaker’ – whose mother was the descendant of a black African slave and who as a child dressed himself up like Gandhi and meditated on the roof of his home in Cairo, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize after his historic trip to Jerusalem in 1977. Following this visit, Sadat made peace with Israel in a series of meetings with its prime minister, Menachem Begin, at Camp David, in a process facilitated by US president Jimmy Carter. (Sadat felt that Carter should also have been awarded the prize in 1978, but the American president had not been nominated; Carter would eventually win the prize in 2002 after years of transparently campaigning for it.) In his essay (Chapter 10), Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Sadat’s minister of state for foreign affairs during this period, provides a balanced but candid first-hand portrait of Sadat during these negotiations.

Sadat had gambled that going to war against Israel in 1973 would secure peace. He thus paradoxically waged war to promote peace. When he made his historic visit to Israel in 1977, he drew from his experiences of traditional leaders in Egyptian villages sitting together to eat and resolve issues. True to his peasant roots, he felt the need

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to break bread with the enemy and talk. Sadat was single-minded and stubborn. He took risks for peace, but his arrogance, naivety and exaggerated trust in Washington sometimes turned out to be reckless. A US-mediated peace agreement was eventually reached in 1979 in which Israel returned the Sinai to Egypt. Sadat’s rapprochement with Tel Aviv led to his diplomatic isolation in the Arab world, and eventually resulted in his assassination by Islamist extremists (domestic opponents he had treated harshly) in October 1981. Sadat and Begin were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, an act that some considered to be as controversial as Mandela and de Klerk being jointly nominated in 1993.

MOHAMED ELBARADEI

Egypt’s second Nobel peace laureate, in 2005, was Mohamed ElBaradei – the ‘Rocket Man’ – who was director general of the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency between 1997 and 2009. The agency was founded in 1957 to inspect nuclear facilities and ensure that peaceful nuclear activities were not used to develop weapons of mass destruction. ElBaradei consistently called for the peaceful use of atomic energy and a nuclear-free world, and worried incessantly about nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorist groups. In stark contrast, Alfred Nobel himself had hoped to rid the world of war by developing advanced weapons.

ElBaradei showed himself to be a man of great integrity and independence. As head of the IAEA, he repeatedly noted that he had found no evidence of Saddam Hussein’s Iraq restarting a nuclear weapons programme. The warmongering George W. Bush administration – bent on ‘regime change’ in Iraq – sought, however, to ignore the truth, and attempted to discredit ElBaradei, criticising him for being too soft on Iran and too hard on Israel. In his 2011 memoir The Age of Deception ElBaradei noted how the IAEA exposed American deceit in seeking to use forged documents to prove that Saddam Hussein had sought to purchase uranium from Niger. The Egyptian technocrat criticised Washington’s belligerent approach in refusing to negotiate with Iran while seeking domineeringly to set the terms of a solution. He also
exposed the twisted logic in the irrational American approach: attacking a country (Iraq) without nuclear weapons, and vacillating while another (North Korea) acquired them.\textsuperscript{35}

The Egyptian doggedly fought and won a third term as head of the IAEA in 2005 in the face of strong and petty opposition from Uncle Sam, reminiscent of the vindictively prejudiced American campaign that had denied ElBaradei’s compatriot Boutros Boutros-Ghali a second term as UN Secretary General in 1996.\textsuperscript{36} A few months later, ElBaradei and his IAEA won the Nobel Peace Prize for ‘their efforts to prevent nuclear energy from being used for military purposes’. In his Nobel Prize speech, the Egyptian technocrat sought to link the nuclear threat to problems of poverty and underdevelopment. He warned against the nuclear hypocrisy of certain countries arrogating to themselves the right to possess weapons that they sought to deny to others, and argued that global nuclear disarmament was the only viable solution to this problem: the nuclear genie could clearly not be put back in the bottle. Following his retirement from the IAEA in 2009, the Egyptian technocrat returned home to play an important role in pro-democracy efforts, as described by Morad Abou-Sabé in his essay (Chapter 11).

The fact that ElBaradei agreed to serve an illegitimate military-installed interim regime in Egypt as vice president following a coup against the elected government of Mohamed Morsi in July 2013, however, spoke volumes about the opportunism of Egypt’s political class. His call for the ‘rectification of the revolution’ echoed the language employed by the head of state of Burkina Faso, Blaise Compaoré, following his brutal 1987 coup that assassinated the charismatic military ruler Thomas Sankara. ElBaradei’s plea for the international community to provide aid was heeded by autocratic sheikhdoms such as Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which offered $12 billion. Following

the killing of about 1,000 pro-Morsi demonstrators by security forces, ElBaradei resigned from his post in protest in August 2013.

**KOFI ANNAN**

Ghana’s Kofi Annan served as UN Secretary General between 1997 and 2006, and shared the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize with his organisation. During his ten-year tenure, Annan courageously, but perhaps naively, acted as a ‘secular pope’ in championing the cause of ‘humanitarian intervention’. After a steep decline in the mid-1990s, UN peacekeeping increased again by 2005 to around 80,000 troops with a budget of $3.2 billion. African countries like Sudan, the Congo, Liberia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Côte d’Ivoire were the main beneficiaries. Annan also dislodged the UN bureaucracy from its creative inertia to embrace views and actors from outside the system. He reached out for advice from civil society groups, organising seminars with policy institutes and encouraging the United Nations to work more with these actors in the field. Annan also promoted the cause of women in UN institutions, appointing Canada’s Louise Fréchette as his deputy, and Ireland’s Mary Robinson as his High Commissioner for Human Rights. 37

One lingering accusation that Kofi Annan has not quite been able to shake off is that, while serving as UN Undersecretary General for Peacekeeping in 1994, he did not respond appropriately to a cable warning of an impending genocide in Rwanda. Much controversy still remains over his failure to report the contents of this cable – sent three months before the massacres begun in January 1994 from Canadian UN force commander General Roméo Dallaire, who asked for authorisation to take military action to forestall the impending genocide – to both UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and the Security Council. A subsequent UN inquiry report published in December 1999 criticised Annan and his deputy, Iqbal Riza, for this shortcoming. 38

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37. See ibid.
Right-wing British politician Enoch Powell once famously noted that all political careers end in failure. This appeared to be particularly apt as one observed the tragic twilight of Annan’s tenure as UN Secretary General. (Gwendolyn Mikell’s essay, Chapter 13 in this volume, offers a kinder verdict on Annan’s tenure.) In retrospect, the 2001 Nobel citation that praised the Ghanaian technocrat for being ‘pre-eminent in bringing new life to the organisation’ sounded anachronistic by 2006 in light of the Rwandan genocide, the oil-for-food scandal in Iraq (in which Annan’s son, Kojo, was implicated in questionable business dealings), and the failure of UN reform in 2005. The Ghanaian failed fundamentally to transform the UN or to achieve a durable legacy. Annan’s troubled exit from the post could yet transform him, in the hands of future historians, into a prophet without honour, embroiled in scandal during his final years and rendered a lame duck by the USA – the country that had done the most to anoint him UN Secretary General in 1996. Annan finally and painfully discovered the ancient wisdom: that one needs a long spoon to sup with the devil.

Three Women Activists from Kenya and Liberia

Wangari Maathai, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Leymah Gbowee all fought for the emancipation and equality of women in Kenya and Liberia. All three had prophecies and watershed moments that seemed to push them towards their destinies. All three strong-willed women separated from their partners due to abuse. Maathai and Gbowee largely waged their struggles through acts of civil disobedience involving civil society groups, while Sirleaf fought her battles first as a senior civil servant, and then in various political formations before becoming Africa’s first elected female leader in 2006.

KENYAN environmental campaigner Wangari Maathai died from cancer at the age of 71 in September 2011, a month before two African women joined the elite ranks of Nobel peace laureates. She was born in the village of Ihithe against the backdrop of the cloud-covered majesty of Mount Kenya. She drank water from the stream, but became conscious at an early age of the destruction of the country’s forests by commercial plantations. As if by a prophetic vision, she resigned her professorship at the University of Nairobi in 1977 in a bid to save the country’s forests and fight for the plight of rural women. She would eventually lead the Green Belt Movement to plant 30 million trees across Africa. Since deforestation and soil erosion were making it difficult for women to find firewood, the Green Belt Movement paid them to plant trees. Wangari fought consistently for women’s and human rights, developing a citizen education programme. Her husband, however, left her for being ‘too educated, too strong, too stubborn, and too hard to control’. She was head of Kenya’s National Council of Women, and successfully protested the corrupt and autocratic regime of Daniel arap Moi’s effort in 1989 to build a high-rise office park in the green belt of Nairobi’s Uhuru Park. As she defiantly noted: ‘Our forefathers shed blood for our land.’ The government harassed and jailed Maathai during the 1990s as she extended her battle to advocating for the release of Kenya’s political prisoners. Throughout these struggles, the tree remained the symbol of democratic contestation and conflict resolution.

Maathai became the first African woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, in 2004, for her contributions to ‘sustainable development, democracy and peace’. Many found it odd that an environmentalist could be awarded the prize, but this victory helped to reinforce the link between the environment, poverty, governance and conflict.

Remarkably, only twelve of the 116 Nobel peace laureates had been women at the time of this award. Wangari identified totally with Africa. At the traditional waving to the crowd on the balcony while receiving the Nobel Prize in Oslo, she danced a joyous African dance. At her Nobel lecture, she was resplendent in an orange and black African dress with headgear to match, saying: ‘I am especially mindful of women and the girl child. I hope it [the prize] will encourage them to raise their voices and take more space for leadership.

In 2002, Wangari was elected to the Kenyan parliament, and a year later became assistant minister for the environment. In 2005 she became the first president of the African Union’s Economic, Cultural and Social Council (ECOSOCC). This was a controversial appointment, as Wangari was a Kenyan politician, purportedly representing the main civil society organ of the continental body. She also had her critics, who accused her of lacking intellectual gravitas and lambasted her for a statement that the AIDS virus may have been created in Western laboratories as a ‘biological weapon’ to annihilate African populations, a statement that Wangari denied having made. As Maathai noted in her Nobel peace lecture in 2004: ‘We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds.’ With her life’s struggles complete, the world bid farewell to Africa’s indomitable ‘Earth Mother’ in 2011.

ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF

Two Liberian women were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011: President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and civil society’s Leymah Gbowee (Yemeni activist Tawakul Karman also shared the award). The awarding of the Peace Prize to Sirleaf for championing women’s rights, in October 2011, four days before a presidential election, must, however,

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44. See Judith Hicks Stiehm, Champions for Peace: Women Winners of the Nobel Peace Prize (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).
48. See Wangari Maathai’s Nobel Peace Prize speech.
count as one of the most political acts in the history of the prize. It would be hard to imagine the prize being awarded to a sitting American or European leader less than a week before an election. This prize also demonstrated the enormous gulf between international perceptions of Liberia’s ‘Iron Lady’ and the more critical view that many Liberians and West Africans had of Sirleaf based on her six years in office and past political record.

Under the leadership of the 75-year-old ‘Ma Ellen’ – one of Africa’s most accomplished technocrats – Liberia made some impressive progress. The country’s external debt of $5.8 billion was largely forgiven. About $16 billion in foreign direct investment flowed into the country. Some infrastructure was repaired. An inherited budget of $80 million was quadrupled. Yet many of Sirleaf’s domestic critics questioned her somewhat messianic and sometimes selectively ruthless approach to leadership. In what was clearly the biggest misjudgement of her career, Sirleaf helped raise $10,000 to support Charles Taylor’s National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebel movement, which launched a war against Samuel Doe’s brutal regime in December 1989. She went to visit the warlord in his bush hideout in 1990. Taylor, who was tried between 2008 and 2012 for alleged war crimes committed in Sierra Leone (and jailed for fifty years), later claimed that Sirleaf had been the international coordinator of his movement between 1986 and 1994.

The problems inherited by Sirleaf’s administration clearly overwhelmed her. Unemployment stood at 95 per cent six years into her presidency, while foreign aid of $425 million exceeded the country’s $370 million annual budget. Former combatants were not being provided with jobs quickly enough, leading to instability and crime. In December 2010, Berlin-based Transparency International, in its Global Corruption Barometer, named Liberia the most corrupt country in the world. As African governments vociferously opposed the presence of an American military Africa Command on their territory, Sirleaf, as president, uniquely called for the Command to be located in her

country, opportunistically and short-sightedly demonstrating greater faith in American arms than in Liberian institutions. The slow pace of change in the eight years of her presidency made Liberians wary of Sirleaf’s lofty rhetoric. She broke her promise to serve only a single term, thus spurning the example of her professed hero and fellow Nobel laureate Nelson Mandela. Given the timing of this award and her political track record, the ennobling of Liberia’s ‘Iron Lady’ must count as one of the most controversial acts in the history of the prize.

LEYMAH GBOWEE

Leymah Gbowee, a 41-year-old Liberian former social worker, has been a key figure in West Africa’s women’s movement. Citing Gandhi and fellow Nobel laureate Martin Luther King Jr as among her key influences, Gbowee served until December 2012 as the executive director of the Accra-based Women Peace and Security Network (WIPSN–A), which works across the West African subregion in Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Côte d’Ivoire to promote peace, political participation and literacy. She previously coordinated the Women in Peacebuilding Programme/West African Network for Peacebuilding (WIPNET/WANEP). She also served on Liberia’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission and was a staunch supporter of fellow laureate Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, helping to mobilize Liberian women to vote for her in presidential elections in 2005 and 2011.50 This relationship spectacularly soured in 2012 when Gbowee resigned as head of the Commission, charging Sirleaf with nepotism and with neglecting to address the widening gap between rich and poor. Gbowee made a name for herself during Liberia’s second civil war in April 2003 (based apparently on a dream in which she heard a voice urging her to rally the women of her church to the cause of peace) when she mobilised Liberian women – across religious and social backgrounds – to push then warlord-president Charles Taylor

and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) rebels to sign a peace accord in Accra.

These events were well captured in the 2008 documentary *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* and passionately recounted in Gbowee’s 2011 memoir *Mighty Be Our Powers*. Galvanised by radio messages, thousands of Liberian women protested every day near an open-air fish market in Monrovia, praying, picketing and fasting for peace. They eventually forced Taylor to meet with them, with Gbowee presenting a petition as leader of the group and demanding an end to the war. She then led about 200 women to occupy the negotiation hall in Accra in July 2003, acting as their eloquent and determined spokeswoman in demanding that a peace deal be signed. Her protest methods were sometimes unorthodox: threatening to strip naked in the negotiation hall, and urging women to embark on a ‘sex strike’ to pressure their husbands to support peace efforts. The women also contributed to disarmament efforts, sometimes winning the trust of child soldiers, who regarded them as their ‘mothers’.

Though Gbowee and her courageous female activists clearly made a significant contribution to peace efforts through their ‘mass action’ in Liberia over a period of two and a half years, it is important not to exaggerate this role – as some have done, for example, in the documentary *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* – as having directly halted the conflict. Such an interpretation would ignore more important variables such as the military successes of the LURD rebel movement; Taylor’s indictment for war crimes in June 2003 and subsequent departure into Nigerian exile three years later through assurances from regional leaders; and American pressure on the warlord-president to leave power on account of allegations of a link with al-Qaeda through diamonds sold by Sierra Leonean rebels.

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Concluding remarks

It is worth briefly noting the irony that the first African Nobel Peace Prize went to a country – South Africa – that would be the last to gain its independence, in 1994. The most recent Nobel peace laureates, in 2011, went to two remarkable women from a country – Liberia – that had enjoyed freedom from foreign rule since 1847.

US president Barack Obama followed in the footsteps of ten illustrious laureates of African descent, while two African women have been awarded the prize since his 2009 nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize. Obama’s own achievements will be measured by how he builds on the legacy of those who came before and after him: from the civil rights struggle of Bunche and King to the anti-apartheid struggle of Luthuli, Tutu and Mandela; from the peacemaking of Sadat, Annan and de Klerk to the environmental activism of Maathai, the nuclear disarmament of ElBaradei and the women’s rights struggle of Sirleaf and Gbowee.

None of Obama’s ten Nobel predecessors of African descent, nor the two that came after him, were in a powerful enough position to secure world peace. The young ‘Afro-Saxon’\textsuperscript{52} president of the most powerful nation on earth is the first Nobel peace laureate of African descent who has a chance to leave an indelible mark on global peace and security: supporting UN and regional peacekeeping efforts in Africa, securing peace in the Middle East, promoting nuclear disarmament, confronting domestic and international racism, and championing environmental and women’s rights. The most deserving Nobel peace laureate not to have won the prize, Mahatma Gandhi, noted in 1936 that it was ‘maybe through the Negroes that the unadulterated message of non-violence will be delivered to the world’.\textsuperscript{53} Through the example of the thirteen prophets of Pax Africana examined in this book, could this prophecy yet be fulfilled?

\textsuperscript{52} This expression is borrowed from Ali Mazrui.

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