



THE MANDELA RHODES
FOUNDATION

REMARKS BY MRF FOUNDING PATRON NELSON MANDELA

On the occasion of the donation of The Rhodes Building as the new headquarters of The Mandela Rhodes Foundation
Cape Town, 2003

‘We are sometimes still asked by people how we could agree to have our name linked to that of Cecil John Rhodes in this Mandela Rhodes initiative. To us, the answer is easy and we have explained the logic of our decision on a number of occasions. We have referred to our Constitution’s injunction for us to come together across the historical divide, to build our country together into a future equally shared by all. The event of this morning gives a further concrete answer to that question. The erstwhile company of Cecil John Rhodes, in which members of the Oppenheimer family were such illustrious and great South African successors, has today once more demonstrated its commitment to transformation and, in fact, reparation.

‘We see The Mandela Rhodes Foundation as a significant initiative within that broader framework of South Africans taking responsibility for the transformation of their society, so grievously skewed by a history of colonialism and apartheid. We shall once more take hands across historical divides that others may deem unbridgeable ...

‘This building in which we stand today was commissioned by Cecil John Rhodes. It is an historical landmark in this city. The announcement of a new period in the use of the building marks another symbolic and substantive step on the long road of South Africans reshaping their future. We look forward to The Mandela Rhodes Foundation contributing to that making of the new South African history. May the Foundation’s work be worthy of the magnificence of these premises.’

Remarks by MRF Founding Patron Nelson Mandela
on the occasion of the Centenary of The Rhodes Trust
and the establishment of The Mandela Rhodes Foundation
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‘This evening reminds us of the dramatic changes as well as the themes of continuity in the course of the history of our beloved country. That rogue governor from the early Dutch settlement of the Cape; the imperialist, so-called robber baron from the British colonial period; the political prisoner turned President of democratic South Africa ... we represent radically different eras in the history and development of our country; epochs and approaches in fundamental historical opposition and contradiction to each other.

‘At the same time, as we stand here at the start of the 21st century, contemplating the daunting challenges of our future, we can look back and point to ways in which those men, and what they represented, were part of shaping what present-day South Africa turned out to be.

‘We have on more than one occasion pointed to those two phrases in the Preamble of our Constitution, placed next to one another in order to remind us of change and continuity as we take



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from our past to build a better future. Allow me to quote more fully from the Preamble, including those two phrases.

“We recognise the injustices of the past, honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land, respect those who have worked to build and develop our country, and believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.”

‘The Preamble then enjoins us to “heal the divisions of the past, and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice, and fundamental human rights, and to improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person.’

It is in that spirit of our Constitution that we tonight ... take such pride in the establishment of the new Mandela Rhodes Foundation ... We are confident that in another hundred years, others will gather here to triumphantly celebrate a centenary of work done by the Mandela Rhodes Foundation, and do so in a South Africa that is prospering in significant degree due to the work of the Foundation.’