

COMMUNITY CELEBRATES MORAL LEADERSHIP – IN THE LIFE OF NELSON MANDELA

Subang Jaya - Sunday, 5 January 2014

Young and old, friends and neighbours joined the Baha'i community of Subang Jaya who organised a programme to celebrate the life of President Nelson Mandela who passed away a month earlier. The gathering was honoured by the presence of H.E. Mr T D Mseleku, the High Commissioner of the Republic of South Africa and YB Hannah Yeoh, Speaker of the Selangor State Assembly. The theme of the programme was "Ubuntu", an African saying which means, "I am because of you" – a saying, the Africans believe was personified by Nelson Mandela.

The Chairman of the Local Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Subang Jaya, Dr Leong Yow Peng said in his welcome address that, "Mr Mandela embodied qualities and virtues so fundamentally vital for the prosperity of humanity; his actions and deeds touch our hearts and beckon us to reflect on what is needed in this new era of service to humanity". Mr Mandela's attributes of justice, love, forgiveness and service are he added "enshrined in the teachings of the Baha'i Faith" The Baha'i Faith asserts that individuals have a two-fold moral purpose; that is, to develop their inherent capacities and contribute towards the transformation of society.



This was reiterated by Hannah Yeoh who added that as a young politician she has learned much from the life of Mandela. His greatness, she added is in the fact that "he impacted not only the people of South Africa but also the people of Subang Jaya, a small suburban city in Malaysia". She asserted that "Mandela cannot be an exception in our generation - we should all aspire to be like him". "The greatest lesson we can learn from his life", she added, is that, "regardless of which country we are born in, we can change the destiny of our nation". Hannah encouraged the Baha'is to continue holding this commemoration annually.



H.E Mr Mseleku, shared glimpses of the transformative power of Mandela's leadership - a leadership governed by principles of humility, selfless service and dignity. He recalled Mandela's words, "I am shaped by the experiences of the people who have allowed me to lead them – I am just helping communities". The High Commissioner, thanked the Baha'is for recognizing and celebrating Mandela's life. He said that, "what we celebrate are the qualities that we all have in our humanity, ones which were embodied in the life of Mandela"; a leader who time and again emphasized that "peace is the only option". He added that the aspiration of people to want to emulate the values

lived by Mandela "can spread like wildfire" – values that Madiba (Father), as he was fondly referred to, "was prepared to die for".

The short and inspiring programme included prayers and readings from the Baha'i Writings. The spirit of the gathering of 140 people was further uplifted by the delightful voices of the Baha'i children and youth choir who presented African songs in both Swahili and Zulu.

