

# Nelson Mandela refuses to pander to Western politics

---

*November 14, 1997   Publication: The Washington Times   Page: A22   Word Count: 515*

Todd Pitock's Nov. 4 Op-Ed column, "Nelson Mandela's 'dear brother leader,' " epitomizes the arrogance of the superpower mentality.

He begins by praising President Mandela for steering South Africa to become a multiracial democracy. Mr. Pitock marvels at, and perhaps is relieved by, the fact that Mr. Mandela has not stooped to taking revenge upon his former oppressors. Nevertheless, Mr. Pitock expects Mr. Mandela to maintain a shameless, hypocritical allegiance to foreign powers that cared more about their economic exploits than the moral bankruptcy and human indignity of apartheid.

Mr. Pitock characterizes Mr. Mandela's visit to Libya as either "naive and irresponsible" or "savvy and unprincipled." Both depictions are absurd.

Over the years, Mr. Mandela has maintained a consistent approach toward global alignment and has refrained from engaging in unethical or immoral acts of political prostitution. His dealings with Libya, the Palestinian Authority and Cuba (and his subsequent dismissal of the unilateral impositions of the United States) display a rare fortitude that is sorely missing in global leadership.

I agree with Mr. Pitock that Mr. Mandela "threw good politics to the wind" by embracing Libya's Col. Moammar Gadhafi. In so doing, Mr. Mandela seized the moral high ground by refusing to pander to "good politics."

Mr. Mandela does not need to qualify or apologize for his positions toward Libya, Cuba or any other nation. Where were all the "concerned" nations in the early and critical days of Mr.

Mandela's 27 years in jail, when the African National Congress and indigenous Africans wallowed in hopelessness? And how dare America or Britain rear its head as a moral arbiter?

Mr. Pitock further accuses Mr. Mandela of harboring "residual bitterness" and derides him for declining to answer a question concerning prospects of nationalization in a 1993 meeting with U.S. investors in New York City.

Accordingly, Mr. Mandela lost an opportunity to appeal, woo and appease the very investors he was supposed to court. Mr. Pitock, it seems, cannot fathom that a Third World leader, let alone an African, would refuse to bow to the altar of money or subject his independence to the whims of a superpower.

Mr. Pitock then claims that Mr. Mandela is forfeiting his political capital by allowing assorted "villains" to bask in his "great man's glow." Who is Mr. Pitock to define another nation's friend or villain? His attempt to lecture on Mr. Mandela's role in African matters should be repudiated by Africans.

Upon his visit to Libya, Mr. Mandela hugged Col. Gadhafi. Mr. Pitock says that act was unbecoming of a "saint of our times." That's ridiculous.

Mr. Pitock is injecting self-serving passion into a case of practical reasoning. The fact is, Mr. Mandela made two public trips within a week to Libya. What does it matter how he greets Col. Gadhafi?

Finally, Mr. Pitock says that by exercising his prerogative to determine whom to call a friend, Mr. Mandela has "diminished" his accomplishments and made himself "seem suddenly old and foolish." If anything, Mr. Mandela's ability to shun the avarice of politicking makes him look wise. That wisdom may have come from the age of his experience.

EVELYN JOE

Executive director

International African Foundation

Washington

---

**The Washington Times**

**Date:** November 14, 1997

**Page:** A22

Copyright 1997, 1998 News World Communications, Inc.