

Tens of Thousands Honor South Africa's Mandela

Tens of thousands paid tribute Tuesday to anti-apartheid revolutionary Nelson Mandela at a massive memorial service in South Africa.

Mandela was remembered as a symbol of reconciliation and a man with a "mighty power of forgiveness."

The pouring rain didn't stop mourners from streaming into the 95,000-seat World Cup soccer stadium near Johannesburg early Tuesday.

Mandela's memorial was a time to celebrate his life and achievements and the crowd sang and danced to his name.

"We are obviously very touched. It's just a small, very tiny gesture. We thank people for all their love, support, the prayers," his daughter Zenani Mendala-Dlamini said.

More than 90 countries flew in representatives. U.S. President and first lady Obama attended the memorial, as did former president George W. Bush, his wife, Laura, and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. They joined the president on the 16-hour flight from Washington.

Former presidents Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter also made the trek to South Africa. Carter said he had fond memories of Mandela.

"Even in the company with former presidents and secretary generals we had one leader there to whom we look with admiration and respect and that was Nelson Mandela," Carter said.

President Obama was one of several invited to eulogize the anti-apartheid icon.

"It is hard to eulogize any man, to capture in words not just the facts and the dates that make a life, but the essential truth of a person—their private joys and sorrows; the quiet moments and unique qualities that illuminate someone's soul," Obama told the crowd. "How much harder to do so for a giant of history, who moved a nation toward justice, and in the process moved billions around the world."

"Mandela taught us the power of action," he continued. "But also ideas, the importance of reason and arguments, the need to study not only those you agree with, but those you don't."

"Nothing he achieved was inevitable," Obama said. "In the arc of his life, we see a man who earned his place in history through struggle and shrewdness, persistence and faith. He tells us what's possible not just in the pages of dusty history books, but in our own lives as well."

"Nelson Mandela spoke to our hearts, his mighty power of forgiveness sustained us... [it] saved our country from the pit of prejudice and injustice," South Africa's Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein said.

Those unable to attend the memorial will still have a chance to pay their respects to Mandela. His body will lie in state for three days and then he'll be buried in his home village on Sunday.