



 Eyerusalem Adugna Jirenga. The City of Saints VII, 2017 Courtesy: Steven Kasher Gallery

AN EXHIBITION IN NEW YORK SEEKS TO RE-CONNECT A MULTITUDE OF BLACK HISTORIES AND IDENTITIES





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Refraction: New Photography of Africa and Its Diaspora, a photo exhibition presenting a generation of photographic artists of African descent born in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s premiers today at Steven Kasher Gallery (<http://www.stevenkasher.com/exhibitions/refraction-new-photography-of-africa-and-its-diaspora?view=slider#7>) in New York.

The exhibition, which features 12 artists residing in Luanda, Paris, Philadelphia, Addis Ababa, New York and beyond, aims to portray black bodies in acts of cultural meditation, and revive the traditional African rites of masking, costuming, quilting, body ornamentation and invocation of spirits through works of art.

“They refract those rituals through the lenses of contemporary art practices such as performative self-portraiture, collage, montage and digital manipulation,” the Gallery’s press release states. “They merge cultures past and present, looking towards a more inclusive, harmonious future.”



(<https://i1.wp.com/thenerveafrica.com/nerve/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/11.jpg>)

Stan Squirewell, King Kane, 2017. Courtesy: Steven Kasher Gallery

“Refraction is an ocular cleanse. The work of these artists bridges the gap between Black stereotypes and Black reality. The photographs in the exhibition navigate the complex relationship between innate identities and identities evolved from social, political and cultural influences. On a technical level, these artists are heralds of new dimensions in photography, bending, transmuting and pushing the medium.” the Gallery says in their curatorial statement.

Cultural anthropologist and independent curator Niama Safia Sandy co-curated *Refraction* with Steven Kasher Gallery director Cassandra Johnson. Sandy says the aspect of the exhibit’s name, “new photography of Africa and its diaspora,” was intentional, as they wanted to authentically include the African diaspora when one hears of it in the art market, especially.



(<https://i1.wp.com/thenerveafrica.com/nerve/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/10.jpg>)

Adama Delphine Fawundu, *The Sacred Star of Isis*, 2018. Courtesy: Steven Kasher Gallery

The works curated for *Refraction* range from Afro-futurism to Afro-documentary, some navigating this world and others inventing new ones with an eye to the conceptual, even fantastical. Blending fact and allegory, the real and the imagined, the present and the future, their language is a mixed vocabulary of photography, sculpture and performance as the photographs seek to reclaim and re-connect a multitude of Black histories and identities.

Documentary styles of Girma Berta, an award winning young artist based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and Eyerusalem Adugna Jirenga also based in Ethiopia, both under 30, will provide contemporary outlooks on the urban African environment. While Hakeem Adewumi, Emilie Regnier and Zarita Zevallos make portraits that examine cross-cultural signifiers, such as leopard print, with a charged cinematic beauty.

Adama Delphine Fawundu, a Sierra Leonian photographer based in New York, and Ivan Forde, a Guyanese born Harlem raised photographer, use sewn collage and cyanotype with elaborate, dreamlike compositions to create modern representations of spiritual icons and ancient myths like Mami Wata and the Epic of Gilgamesh.







(<https://i1.wp.com/thenerveafrica.com/nerve/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/15.png>)

Adama Delphine Fawundu, *Passageways #2: Secrets, Traditions, Spoken and Unspoken Truths or Not*, 2017. Courtesy: Steven Kasher Gallery

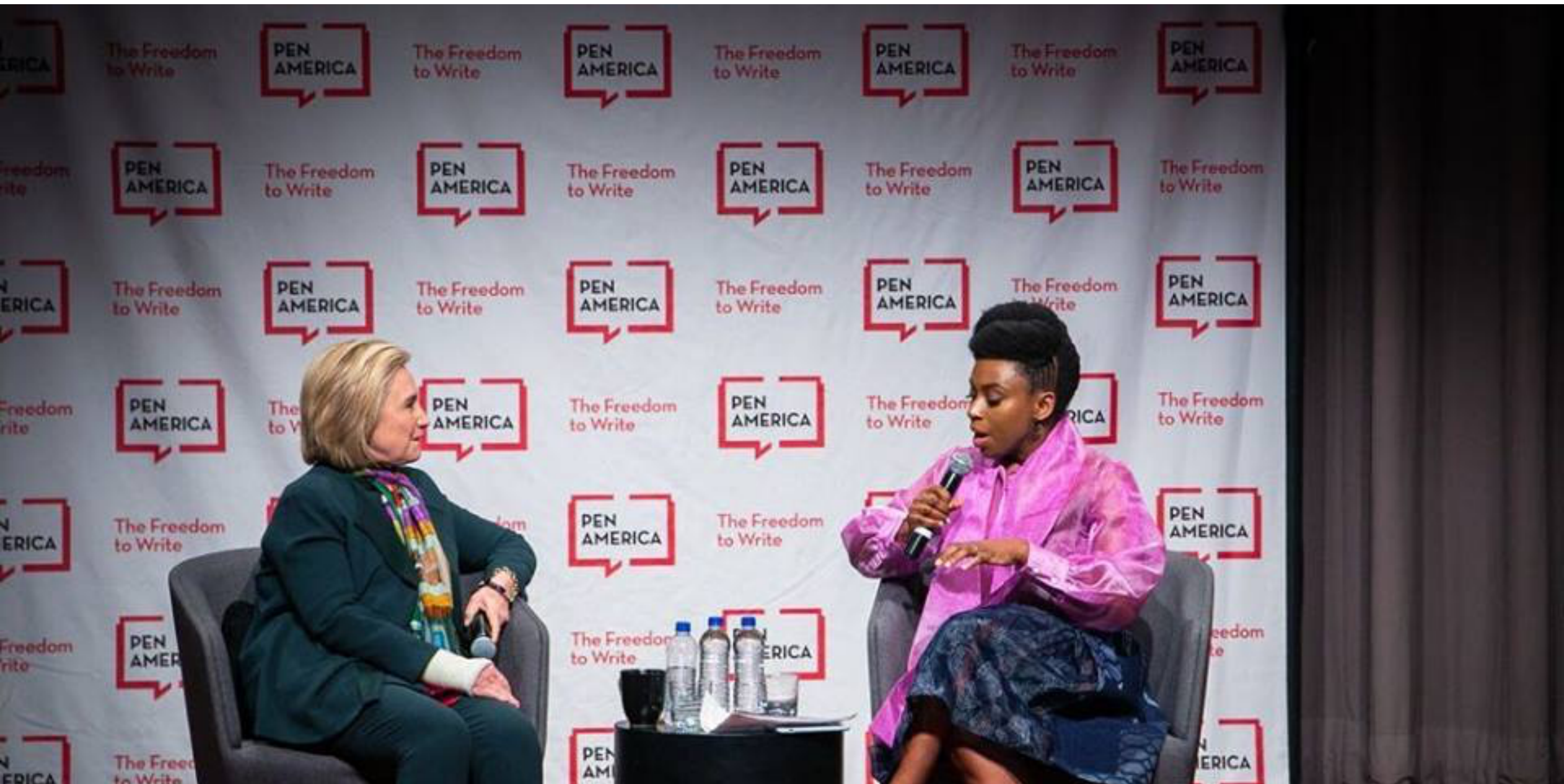
“These images act as flares in our cultural consciousness. They confront and expose existing narratives as social constructs that will never be more than approximations of a more complex reality” the Gallery says in the statement. “As Sarah Lewis says, “How many movements began when an aesthetic encounter indelibly changed our past perceptions of the world?” The imagination inspired by aesthetic encounters can get us to the point of benevolent surrender, making way for a new version of our collective selves.”

The exhibition will be on view April 19th – June 2nd, 2018 in New York.

In Culture Currents (<http://thenerveafrica.com/in/culture-currents/>)


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📷 Hillary Clinton with Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie at the PEN Voices Festival. Courtesy: Julian Hom

IS THE UPROAR ABOUT CHIMAMANDA ADICHIE’S INTERVIEW WITH HILLARY CLINTON JUSTIFIED? ([HTTP://THENERVEAFRICA.COM/17540/UPROAR-CHIMAMANDA-ADICHIES-INTERVIEW-HILLARY-CLINTON-JUSTIFIED/](http://thenerveafrica.com/17540/uproar-chimamanda-adichies-interview-hillary-clinton-justified/))

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Award winning novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has fired up yet another storm after former US presidential candidate, Hillary Clinton sat down to an interview (<https://www.harpersbazaar.com/uk/celebrities/news/a19887342/chimamanda-ngozi-adichie-asked-hillary-clinton-why-her-twitter-bio-starts-with-wife/>) with the novelist on Sunday after a lecture at the PEN World Voices

festival. Clinton (<https://twitter.com/HillaryClinton>), whose bio reads ‘Wife, mom, grandma, women+kids advocate, FLOTUS, Senator, SecState, hair icon, pantsuit aficionado, 2016 presidential candidate,’ was asked why the title “wife” was put up first despite other achievements, and its absence on her husband’s page.

Clinton deftly replied that women should be free to celebrate their professional successes as well as their personal achievements. This she added after saying, ” When you put it like that, I’m going to change it.”

Adichie (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg3umXU_qWc) has been forthright with her views on politics, women’s rights and gender equality, refusing to shy away from topics that cause backlash in societies that have adopted patriarchal norms. Disagreements with the novelist’s comments are therefore not uncommon, and many routinely air their opinion of her on social media, especially back in Nigeria, where some have even written open letters to express their thoughts on this new ‘issue’.

According to many, the question contradicts the argument for feminism that the novelist has advocated in her books and public engagements. If feminism is about freedom of choice then some women should respect other women’s choice to identify as wife, they say. A sentiment Blessing Abeng elaborated on in an open letter to Adichie (https://twitter.com/Ms_Einsteinette/status/988407909099954177), where she said, “Being a housewife is a job in itself! It is a strong role ... I believe that if a woman chooses to be a housewife, she should not be dragged.

“If she wants to put wife in her bio, we can respect it. Mother is fine too. Obama did it too. I think it’s Hillary’s choice to arrange the order of her roles how she deems fit. In all, she is Hillary, she is all of those things and she is still powerful,” she said.

While all of these things are fine and there’s nothing wrong with stating the spaces one occupies outside of career environments, a closer look at the fuller text of Chimamanda’s speech shows some disconnect between what is implied and what is being reacted to, as is the case with many debates carried out in the era of quick dissemination of information.



(<https://io.wp.com/thenerveafrica.com/nerve/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Chimamanda-Ngozi-Adichie-014-2000x1200.jpg>)

Novelist, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Here, once again, most people fail to see that the question in itself wasn’t condescending but one that seeks understanding and clarity from a place of concern.

Understanding, given that as a global leader and the first woman to secure a major party’s nomination for the President of the United states, Clinton holds a platform that many young people look up to. And Clarity, knowing that the politics that come with gender often require a woman, often in relations that involve a man—intimate or otherwise, to take up domestic roles or titles or to de-hype their

accomplishments in order not to seem like she has passed the level where she cannot be subdued.

As stories of women continue being shared on social platforms, we see examples (<https://twitter.com/ozzyetomi/status/973172858863185921>) where a woman invited for a meeting is more often than not, regarded as more suitable to serve beverages to her colleagues whom she may be on par with or even more accomplished than.

It doesn’t matter whether one is with colleagues, family members, or random strangers, the job of domestic work presents itself time and again in forms including cutting cakes, sharing food and serving guests.

This isn’t to say that the act of cleaning or cooking or any domestic work in itself should be condemned, but the politics whereby its relegation is seen as something beneath the male gender is, as expected, lost on the majority.

Did Clinton, one of the world’s most powerful women, still subscribe to this restrictive ideology that requires a woman, no matter how accomplished she is, to show her femininity for the world to see and validate that yes, she is indeed still a woman, no matter all her accolades, who knows her place and caters to her husband and children?

Following Adichie’s comments during the interview (https://web.facebook.com/chimamandaadichie/?hc_ref=ARRZh1AB-TLWiX2saLo83hEFsGrwa_wc6GnI6lbnnN8iMnddHzWE9UjosCmyHegRRVc&fref=nf) at the PEN World Voices festival, she expressed (<https://www.vox.com/culture/2018/4/24/17271638/hillary-clinton-chimamanda-ngozi-adichie-arthur-miller-freedom-write-pen-america-world-voices>) how invested she was in the life of the former Secretary of State, and her irritation for reactions to her personal life from the media.

You’ve made many choices for love. In reading about your life, I was thinking about what if you hadn’t gone to Arkansas very very young.

I should say that I spend lots of time being very protective about you, and in my mind I call you my auntie. I get very protective of my Auntie Hillary, and when people talk about your personal life, I find it very irritating. And having read quite a bit of your own writing about your personal life, I think that you have a remarkable love story. I really do. It seems to me that you have this wonderful friendship.

However, I have to say that I’m guilty of being very interested in your personal life. And the one question I have about that is about your Twitter account.

So your Twitter account first of all describes you as a wife. And then it’s mom, and then it’s grandmother. And when I saw that, I have to confess that I felt just a little bit upset. And then I went and I looked at your husband’s Twitter, and the first word that he used to describe himself was not “husband.”

I wanted to ask if this was your choice, if it was something that you wanted to do, or maybe something that somebody thought would be good for the campaign. And if it’s your choice, whether you think it’s fair for me to have been a little bit annoyed by this,” the author concluded.

The “if a woman want to be a wife, let them be” refrain, now seems far fetched considering the clarification being requested.

Back tracking a bit to Coachella (<https://edition.cnn.com/2018/04/15/entertainment/beyonce-coachella-performance/index.html>) where Beyoncé headlined as the first black woman on the show, dissatisfied responses mixed with sarcasm to Jay’s presence showed that Beyoncé’s choice to remain with her husband after his infidelity still doesn’t sit well with some regardless of the fact that she is still revered.

Considering the fact that more women than men tolerate cheating in their partners, and the fact that the onus of fixing up a marriage has long settled on the neck of the woman-partner, although it would be personal as she is not obliged to explain or defend her decision to anyone, it wouldn’t be far fetched to ask, in an interview with Beyoncé, why she made her choice.

Hilary’s response highlights that choice of wanting to depict what matters to her heart as achievements, which is great and what Adichie was probably hoping for.

She continued by saying she loved the picture of Sen. Tammy Duckworth (<http://time.com/5247060/tammy-duckworth-vote-baby-senate-floor/>) coming onto the floor of the Senate with her baby. “She is both: She’s a mom, she’s a senator, she’s a combat veteran,” Clinton said. “She is somebody who’s trying to integrate all the various aspects of her life. That’s what I’ve tried to do for a very long time, and it’s not easy. But it is something that I’ve chosen to do, and I think is best for me, so I’m going to keep doing it.”

Adichie has replied to some of the comments (https://web.facebook.com/chimamandaadichie/?hc_ref=ARRZh1AB-TLWiX2saLo83hEFsGrwa_wc6GnI6lbnnN8iMnddHzWE9UjosCmyHegRRVc&fref=nf), expressing her disappointment at how her words have been misconstrued. “I am tired of Nigerians who read a headline and, without bothering to get details and context, jump on the outrage bandwagon and form lazy, shallow opinions,” she said. “Feminism is indeed about choice. But it is intellectually lazy to suggest that, since everything is about ‘choice,’ none of these choices can be interrogated.”

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BARACK OBAMA SET TO DELIVER THIS YEAR’S NELSON MANDELA LECTURE IN JOHANNESBURG ([HTTP://THENERVEAFRICA.COM/17518/BARACK-OBAMA-SET-DELIVER-YEARS-NELSON-MANDELA-LECTURE-JOHANNESBURG/](http://thenerveafrica.com/17518/barack-obama-set-deliver-years-nelson-mandela-lecture-johannesburg/))

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Every year, the Nelson Mandela Foundation (<https://www.nelsonmandela.org/>) invites prominent figures to Johannesburg to discuss and drive debate around pressing social matters affecting the global community.

For its 16th annual Nelson Mandela Lecture this year, which is just one of the many events planned to mark what would have been Madiba’s 100th birthday, the foundation invited former US president Barack Obama.

Obama is now expected to speak at this year’s event with the theme, “Renewing the Mandela Legacy and Promoting Active Citizenship in a Changing World.” The lecture will focus on “creating conditions for bridging divides, working across ideological lines, and resisting oppression and inequality,” said the foundation in a statement.

The Obama announcement was made by the Nelson Mandela Foundation at Constitution Hill in Johannesburg on Monday morning and shared on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/NelsonMandela/status/988352919413157891>).

Previous speakers since the lecture’s inception in 2003 include former US president Bill Clinton (<https://www.nelsonmandela.org/content/page/annual-lecture-2003>) who delivered the first Nelson Mandela Annual Lecture, Archbishop Desmond Tutu (<https://www.nelsonmandela.org/content/page/annual-lecture-2004>), former president Thabo Mbeki (<https://www.nelsonmandela.org/content/page/annual-lecture-2006>), Chilean-American author and human rights activist Ariel Dorfman (<https://www.nelsonmandela.org/content/page/annual-lecture-2010>), Nobel laureate Wangari Maathai (<https://www.nelsonmandela.org/content/page/annual-lecture-2005>), former UN secretary-general Kofi Annan (<https://www.nelsonmandela.org/content/page/annual-lecture-2007>), Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf (<https://www.nelsonmandela.org/content/page/annual-lecture-2008>), former Irish president and philanthropist Mary Robinson (<https://www.nelsonmandela.org/content/page/annual-lecture-2012>), philanthropist Mo Ibrahim (<https://www.nelsonmandela.org/content/page/annual-lecture-2013>), Microsoft founder and philanthropist Bill Gates (<https://www.nelsonmandela.org/content/page/annual-lecture-2016>), and United Nations deputy secretary-general Amina Mohammed (<https://www.nelsonmandela.org/content/page/annual-lecture-2017>).



(<https://i1.wp.com/thenerveafrica.com/nerve/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/BillGates.jpg>)

Bill Gates at the 14th Nelson Mandela Annual lecture.

“This year we thought: who can [better] represent the legacy of Madiba than the person whom we believe took ... the baton when he became president of his own country.... Who can respond to the challenge? We then kept on asking ourselves who would be able to deal with issues of democracy in a world that is ravaged by corruption, and it is the very thing that he was trying to fight against,” Nelson Mandela Foundation CEO Sello Hatang explained.


Hatang also said the theme for this year was developed in recognition of the recent the death of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, and around renewing the Mandela legacy and promoting active citizenship in a changing world.


The lecture is a way to celebrate both men’s outstanding legacies. “We hope that it will again be a significant moment for the two legacies to join,” added Hatang.


Obama will deliver his lecture on July 17 at the Ellis Park Arena in Johannesburg, just one day ahead of what would have been Mandela’s 100th birthday.

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