



Mandela Washington Fellowship Summit

AUGUST 3-4, 2021 | VIRTUAL

Leadership for the Future: Resilience and Inclusion

Message From Special Guest Transcript for Message from Special Guest

Speakers

- Yolanda Sangweni, Senior Director of Programming, National Public Radio

Session Transcript

Yolande Sangweni: Welcome back! In this segment of our Summit, we are going to focus on you. The Fellowship Alumni Network is growing by 700 Fellows, bringing our total to nearly 5,000 Fellowship Alumni spread across 49 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The Young African Leaders Initiative, including the Mandela Washington Fellowship, was established by the Obama Administration. It is fitting to share with you a letter from former President Barack Obama to the 2021 Cohort, congratulating you on your successes and completion of the Fellowship. I will now read this letter from President Obama. He writes, “Dear 2021 Mandela Fellows. I am honored to welcome this class of Mandela Fellows. As president, one of my proudest achievements was starting a Young African Leaders Initiative. I did this because of how much I believe in the youth of Africa. You are the future of the African continent, and over the years, I have been so impressed by your energy, passion, and capabilities, whether you are working in civil society, public service, or social entrepreneurship. You are making a difference, and I believe that you will reach new heights if you are better connected with one another and with the American people. You are joining a program named after Nelson Mandela, a hero of mine. Madiba understood that Africa's young people had to carry forward this legacy and that is the work that you have been able to do. I wish you the best in all your work and I want you to know that I believe in you and the change that you can make. Sincerely, Barack Obama.”

Wow, what an inspiring message. Upon successful completion of all program requirements, we are pleased to share that you will receive certificates by President Biden and Secretary Blinken, as well as a copy of the letter I just read. And President Obama is not the only one who would like to congratulate you. We now have a message from Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield to the 2021 Fellows. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield is a U.S. Representative to the United Nations and a member of President Biden's cabinet. She served as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Director General of the Foreign Service, and Director of Human Resources and Ambassador to Liberia, among other postings during her 35 years in the Foreign Service. She holds a bachelor's degree from Louisiana State University and a master's degree from the University of Wisconsin where she also did work towards a doctorate.





She received an Honorary Doctorate of Law degree from the University of Wisconsin and, in May 2018, an Honorary Doctorate of Philosophy from the University of Liberia in May 2012.