

Carlottia Scott

Chief of Staff, Representatives Ronald V. Dellums and Barbara Lee of California

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Welcoming Nelson Mandela

Carlottia Scott explains working with the African National Congress (ANC) to coordinate Nelson Mandela's first U.S. visit.

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The first U.S. tour was set up for Mr. Mandela to thank the supporters in the U.S. who had helped to push for the legislation, and to raise money for the ANC, and to appeal to the foreign governments to forgo relaxing sanctions on South Africa. It was Roger Wilkins, Randall Robinson. Randall coordinated the U.S. tour. Like I said, the tour was to get the message out about the current state of politics in South Africa, and the nature of the ANC struggle that continued in South Africa. It was basically like running a campaign. We did it on a crash basis, and it was simultaneously like running a campaign and like trying to prep at the level of a head of state. We had to work very closely with the State Department, because they handled the security, but the rest of the logistics were handled by this committee that worked with the ANC reps that were in the U.S., and with Randall and his team. It was hard. But it was well worth it. You know his first visit was part of a 13-nation tour. It was massive, trying to coordinate dates and times and cities and dignitaries and electives. Because he landed in New York, so Mayor Dave Dinkins was on that coordinating team for New York, and then Boston was another whole team. It was an intricate communications effort. Like I said, execution on the ground was like running a campaign.