

**Congressional Testimony of Patrick H. Gaspard  
Ambassador Designate to the Republic of South Africa  
Before the Committee on Foreign Relations  
United States Senate  
July 24, 2013**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I am honored and humbled to appear before you as President Obama's nominee to serve as the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of South Africa. I am deeply appreciative of the trust placed in me by President Obama and Secretary of State Kerry at this critical juncture in our bilateral relationship. Please allow me a pause to acknowledge and thank my son and daughter, Indigo and Cybele, and my wife, Raina, who has worked as an educator and who takes to heart our obligation to provide opportunity for all young people.

South Africa has long occupied a central place in my political development. My forays into the anti-apartheid movement as a young activist and the success of that movement in raising the consciousness of the world gave me an early sense that justice can be attained by ordinary people who labor with aspirational urgency. I was blessed to travel to South Africa shortly after the release of Nelson Mandela and immediately developed an abiding affection for its spirited people and culture. Should I be confirmed, it will be my great fortune to represent the United States in our efforts to partner with the South African government as it strives to improve

the economic conditions of its citizens and as it helps to lead efforts throughout the continent to increase security and prosperity for all.

The President's recent trip to South Africa highlighted opportunities and ongoing challenges. Most importantly, the President expressed the reality that Americans have a shared interest in these outcomes. As I consider the arc of the continent of my birth, I'm excited to take on this mission at a moment when South Africa is helping to shape a region that is finally close to receiving more foreign investment than foreign aid. Should this venerable committee recommend my confirmation, my experiences in government, politics, and the trade union movement will all make me a successful envoy at this transformative crossroads. My management experience and leadership in both grassroots and national politics, my leadership position on the President's Transition Committee and my years as an officer with the largest local union in America, have all equipped me with an appreciation for operational efficacy which is essential for the principal manager of one of the largest missions in Africa. Furthermore, my service at the White House and with the healthcare workers union allowed me to engage in public policy that had a clear and discernible impact on the lives of average Americans and disadvantaged communities. This knowledge would be employed in my diplomatic career in a country that is negotiating the relationship between labor and industry while tackling stubborn income disparities.

South Africans are rightly proud of the progress they have made in their two decades of post apartheid governance. They have tackled innumerable problems with unmatched resolve. The much-documented crisis in HIV care, sustainable housing and widespread poverty have galvanized the nation into noteworthy social accomplishments. South Africa is currently administering antiretroviral treatment to a staggering 1.6 million people. Delivery capacity has been improved to the remotest regions of the country. And the government has risen to take responsibility for PEPFAR care and treatment programs in the next five years. On the housing front, the government has built over 3 million homes to provide shelter for over 13 million people. Entrenched poverty is a persistent drag, but the country has developed institutions that routinely deliver support grants for children and pensions for millions. There is much that needs improvement but there is a foundation for lasting change.

The United States has an ongoing vital role to play in President Zuma's efforts to improve the quality and accessibility of education; the struggle to combat high unemployment and by extension the epidemic in crime; and the challenge of income inequality. Beyond our aid assistance and technical expertise, our greatest contribution will be in stimulating private sector investment and trade. This will be a major priority for my mission if I am confirmed. I am pleased that more than 600 American companies are already based in South Africa and I will work to see

that number grow. As we move towards negotiations on the renewal of the African Growth and Opportunity Act we must work with our South African partners to enact policies that benefit workers and businesses on both sides of the Atlantic.

South Africa has a leadership influence that extends throughout the continent, playing a key role in Madagascar, the DRC, Sudan and South Sudan and in ensuring that Zimbabwe's upcoming elections are peaceful and credible. We will continue to partner with South Africa to resolve conflicts, to enhance our counter-terrorism cooperation, to encourage nonproliferation, to combat wildlife trafficking, and to facilitate intra-regional trade. South Africa's reach is indeed global in scope as they advance policies at the UN, AU, G20 and the BRICS. As the world has collectively focused on Nelson Mandela's legacy, and he is in all of our hearts right now, it's altogether right to pause to take in the vista of progress but to then determinedly press on knowing the summit is attainable. In that spirit, we must work with South Africa to engage the next generation of leaders as is the focus of President Obama who of course hosted the Young African Leaders Institute in Johannesburg.

Mr. Chairman, Committee Members, thank you for this opportunity to address you today and thank you for your thoughtful consideration of my nomination. If I am confirmed, I look forward to working with you all to

strengthen this important bilateral relationship. I look forward to answering your questions.