Twitter Thread by Andy Kim



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At my office in Congress I have an original ballot of Mandela’s election as reminder to never take democracy for granted. After yesterday’s senate vote, I turn back to Mandela’s first speech when released from prison 31 years ago this week. Here’s what we can learn (THREAD)



GRACE: “I greet you all in the name of peace, democracy and freedom for all.”

Robbed of 27 years of his life, no one would have faulted Mandela if he emerged from prison with anger. But instead, with his first words of his first speech in decades, he chose grace. 2/13



HUMILITY: “I stand before you not as a prophet but as a humble servant of you, the people.”

Mandela was revered by millions as a leader of conscience. But in his second sentence, he made sure to set the tone for humility and service. No individuals stand above the people. 3/13



SOLIDARITY: “I salute the working class...religious communities..the endless heroism of youth.. the mothers and wives and sisters of our nation”

He focused on the contributions of the many and showed respect to those often overlooked. He showed the vitalness of coalitions. 4/13



URGENCY: “Our struggle has reached a decisive moment.”

Mandela used the speech to set the tone for the work ahead. His release was not the climax, but instead just the possibility of change. No assumptions could be made of what comes next. 5/13

AGENCY: “We call on our people to seize this moment so that the process towards democracy is rapid and uninterrupted.”

He underscored the urgency of now and showed who was empowered to make this decision. It would be “our people” who would seize this moment. 6/13

ORGANIZATION: “It is only through disciplined mass action that our victory can be assured.”

The vision for change that Mandela presented wasn’t one of elites in power. Change would happen “only” through mass action. He also noted that these actions must be “disciplined.” 7/13

COURAGE: “Our march to freedom is irreversible. We must not allow fear to stand in our way.”

It must have been powerful to stand in that crowd in Cape Town and hear a man who was imprisoned for 27 years to say we cannot subject ourselves to fear. 8/13

VISION: “I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities.”

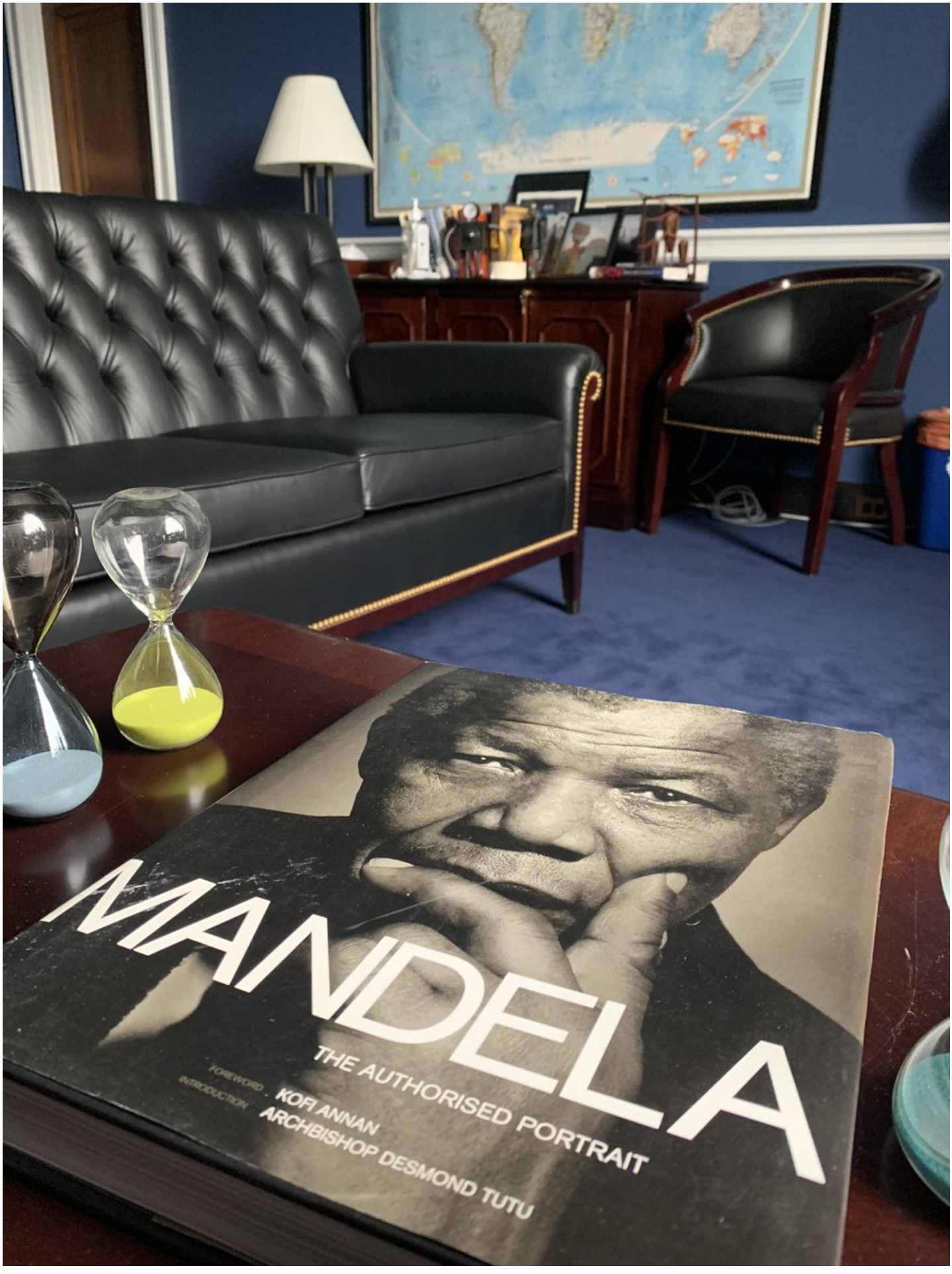
Mandela ended with a positive vision to show that what they were fighting for was bigger than him, bigger than all. 9/13

I know there's a lot of frustration after yesterday's vote in the Senate, but Mandela's story shows us hope. He told us to "seize this moment so that the process towards democracy is rapid and uninterrupted." Democracy may have taken a hit, but his words ring true today. 10/13

Accountability and justice for the insurrection on January 6th failed in the Senate, but just because 43 Senators failed to use their vote to protect our democracy doesn't mean you can't. 11/13

Mandela, in his speech, said, "Our march to freedom is irreversible. We must not allow fear to stand in our way." We can't and we won't. Not as long as we all pledge to seize this moment and work towards justice. 12/13

I hope it's a pledge you'll take with me - to do as Mandela said and 'redouble our efforts'. It's a pledge that is never far from me in my office, and one that continues to fill me with hope even in these days of disappointment and despair. 13/13


MANDELA
THE AUTHORISED PORTRAIT
FOREWORD KOFI ANNAN
INTRODUCTION ARCHBISHOP DESMOND TUTU