

Statement of Lana J. Marks
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of South Africa
Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Wednesday, July 17, 2018, 2:30 p.m., Senate Room SD-419

Mr Chairman, Ranking Member, Distinguished Members of the Committee:

I am honored to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of South Africa. I am thankful to the President and to Secretary Pompeo for the confidence and trust they have placed in me through my nomination to this very important role.

My family is here with me today, and I would like to thank my husband, Dr. Neville Marks, who has stood by my side for 43 years of marriage; my son, Martin Marks, for his tireless support throughout this process; my amazing daughter, Tiffany Isaacs; my son-in-law, Simon; and my grandchildren, Asher, Skyla, and Mia.

I am blessed in my family. For many reasons, we represent the American Dream, one that has been achieved through hard work, determination, and perseverance.

My father was a good and fair man. He escaped the antisemitism of Lithuania in the 1930s, and emigrated to South Africa, where he worked his way through university, earned a degree in engineering, and then went into real estate development. When the apartheid laws came into effect, he realized that the values of his adopted country did not match the values he held dear.

I married my husband when I was 22 years old, and we moved to Bermuda, where he established himself as a psychiatrist. When my husband was offered a professorship in America, we decided to leave everything behind for our new home. We settled in Miami, where I started a small, artisanal handbag business from the kitchen table of our two-bedroom apartment. In the last 15 years, I visited 110 countries as I grew that business into a global brand. I am honored to have served as a member of Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government's Women's Leadership Board, as a distinguished speaker for Georgetown University's Women's Leadership Initiative, and to have represented the United States in Helsinki for the Women Business Leaders Summit.

In 1994, I became an American citizen. By coincidence, this was also the year that Nelson Mandela became president of South Africa. In just 25 years, the country of my birth has undergone a miraculous transformation through its peaceful transition away from the brutal apartheid regime, and now stands as a pillar of democracy. It fills me with great personal pride to witness the legacy of Nelson Mandela in this remarkable evolution of South Africa.

South Africa has joined the ranks of the G-20 group of the world's most important economies, and it currently sits on the United Nations Security Council as an elected member. It has not only become an engine of economic growth for Africa and beyond, but also leads by example in the region, including by contributing over 1,000 troops to peacekeeping operations in the

Democratic Republic of the Congo. If confirmed, I will work to encourage the government of South Africa to continue its leadership in the region, including by promoting respect for human rights and good governance.

If confirmed, my top priority would undoubtedly be the safety and security of all Americans in South Africa, a priority well-enunciated by Secretary Pompeo. I would also work to further cultivate the already robust relationship the United States enjoys with South Africa, deepening both our government dialogue and our important trade and investment ties. South Africa is our most developed trading partner in sub-Saharan Africa; deepening those ties would directly support one of the Administration's key objectives in the Africa Strategy. Considering that American firms already contribute about 10 percent of South Africa's GDP and employ about 200,000 South Africans in direct and indirect positions, I will work tirelessly to expand markets in South Africa for American exporters and ensure our businesses and products are treated fairly.

The ongoing battle against HIV and AIDS, which affects more than seven and a half million South Africans, is one that we can win. Since 2004, Congress has appropriated more than \$6 billion in funding through the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or PEPFAR, just in South Africa. We should use the momentum of this generous funding and continued bipartisan support to put an end to the scourge of HIV and AIDS once and for all. If confirmed, I will work intensively with our PEPFAR team and our South African partners and the government to ensure our funding is applied in the most efficient and effective ways possible to reach epidemic control by 2020.

The issues of women's and youth empowerment, entrepreneurship, and economic opportunities are ones that I personally hold dear. The future of South Africa can be seen in the faces of its young citizens, and I will work tirelessly, if confirmed, to ensure that the prospects every person deserves should not be out of reach for any South African.

I have witnessed both the struggles and the triumphs of the land that Archbishop Desmond Tutu called "the rainbow nation." After centuries of hardship and colonialism, South Africa has embraced democratic ideals, and serves as a beacon of hope for the rest of Africa. It is further heartening to see the recent election of President Ramaphosa. In this renewed era of democracy, we must reinforce our message to the South African people that we are true partners on the road ahead.

There are deep, long-standing, and genuine ties of affection that bind Americans and South Africans. If confirmed, I would be deeply honored to use my knowledge and skills to strengthen these ties.

Thank you for the honor and privilege of allowing me to appear before the Committee today. I welcome your questions.