

Who Speaks For Nelson Mandela?

By **JOHN D. BATTERSBY**, Special to **The New York Times**

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JOHANNESBURG, July 29 — Nelson Mandela, speaking through his lawyer, today repudiated a claim by a public relations consultant from North Carolina who said he had been given power of attorney to represent the Mandela family interests and prevent “the rip-off” of the imprisoned anti-apartheid leader’s name.

The statement attributed to Mr. Mandela appeared to bring into the open a dispute between his wife, Winnie Mandela, and the African National Congress, the exiled anti-apartheid movement that he leads, over who has the authority to authorize use of the Mandela name and control the disbursement of proceeds from concerts, movies, T-shirts and buttons.

To the extent that there has been such a conflict, Mr. Mandela was plainly siding with his movement and not his wife.

Mrs. Mandela was at the side of Robert J. Brown, the North Carolina consultant, when he announced last week that he had been given power of attorney to prevent financial exploitation of the Mandela name. Mr. Brown, a conservative Republican, came to attention here two years ago when it became known he was President Reagan’s choice to be the first black ambassador from the United States to South Africa.

Before the nomination could be formally made, reports emerged about Mr. Brown’s close ties to a Nigerian politician, Umaru Dikko, who is accused by the present authorities in Lagos of having absconded with hundreds of millions of dollars. There were also accusations, vehemently denied by Mr. Brown, that his concern in High Point, N.C., engaged in anti-union activities. The nomination did not go forward.

When he announced his arrangement with Mrs. Mandela, Mr. Brown was standing outside Pollsmoor Prison, near Cape Town, where the two had just visited Mr. Mandela, who recently marked his 70th birthday there.

The announcement spread consternation among Mr. Mandela’s supporters, who voiced the fear that his moral authority, based on the reputation for selfless sacrifice his 26 years in jail have earned him, might be eroded if the impression spread that his family was prepared to profit by his name.

“We are terribly embarrassed by all this,” an exile who speaks for the African National Congress declared. “Mandela is a public figure. His name does not belong to the

family but to the movement.”

In the statement he dictated to Ismail Ayob, a Johannesburg lawyer who has represented Mr. Mandela since 1972, Mr. Mandela insisted that the congress was his legitimate representative.

Mrs. Mandela, who is staying with friends in Soweto, refused to speak to reporters tonight.

But Mr. Brown said from his Johannesburg hotel that he stood by his statement that he had been granted power of attorney and said that Mr. Ayob had no one to corroborate his version of Mr. Mandela’s view.

Mr. Ayob said in an interview tonight that he had been urgently summoned to Pollsmoor Prison by Mr. Mandela on Thursday and had drafted the statement at his request.

Mr. Ayob said he had conveyed the content of Mr. Mandela’s statement to Mrs. Mandela at a meeting in Soweto Thursday night at the house of friends where she is staying.

Mr. Ayob said that Mr. Brown had been visiting Mrs. Mandela at the time and that he asked Mr. Brown to leave the room so he could speak to Mrs. Mandela.

Mrs. Mandela, he said, had told him that Mr. Brown had been misquoted as saying that Mr. Mandela had agreed that he should have power of attorney for the Mandela family.

Mr. Mandela’s statement said that any matter related to the family should be dealt with only by the African National Congress and that Mr. Brown’s request should be put to Oliver R. Tambo, the congress’s exiled president, whom Mr. Mandela described as his “closest friend and colleague.”

Mr. Mandela said he had told Mr. Brown that he would consider any decision made by the congress to be in the best interests of the family.

The statement from Mr. Mandela was supported by a statement issued by the African National Congress today in London and Lusaka, Zambia.

The congress said Mr. Brown’s claim had been proved false and then quoted in full the statement issued by Mr. Mandela’s lawyer in his name.

Mr. Ayob said in the statement, “Mr. Mandela was of the view that if the family name needed protection it could only be protected by the African National Congress with its worldwide infrastructure and only the African National Congress is authorized to act on his behalf.”

Mr. Brown said he had been asked by Mrs. Mandela to assist in preventing the “rip-off” that was occurring by people exploiting the Mandela name for their own financial

gain.

“I think it is a great tragedy that a family that has given as much as the Mandelas should be treated in this way,” he said, adding that Mrs. Mandela was “literally destitute.”

He said the situation was even worse since Mrs. Mandela’s house in Soweto was burned down by black youths Thursday.

But there appeared to be no connection between the burning of Mrs. Mandela’s house and the controversy over legal control of the Mandela name.

The Mandela house appeared to have been burned down after a clash between youthful members of the Mandela United Football Club, a group of radical black youths who act as Mrs. Mandela’s bodyguards, and other black youths who resent the power they wield in the community.

Mr. Ayob said tonight he was still acting on Mrs. Mandela’s behalf.

He denied that she was “destitute,” but he agreed that she was “utterly devastated” by the destruction of her house.

Mrs. Mandela, who has endured internal exile, banning and almost constant harassment over the 26 years her husband has been in prison, has increasingly become an object of controversy within the congress and the anti-apartheid movement.

Some eyebrows were raised, especially in Soweto, when a spacious \$350,000 house was built for the Mandelas there last year.

Mr. Brown said Mrs. Mandela would not move into the mansion until Mr. Mandela is released from prison.

Mr. Brown has opposed economic sanctions against South Africa and has been a controversial figure among anti-apartheid campaigners in the United States.

“I find a Mandela-Brown arrangement strange and difficult to believe,” said Randall Robinson, executive director of TransAfrica, a Washington-based group that opposes apartheid and has organized many protests against it.

“In the first place,” Mr. Robinson added, “how can anybody control the use of anybody’s name?”

Mr. Brown said he had not spoken to Mr. Tambo since his meeting with Mr. Mandela.

When asked whether Mr. Mandela had agreed that Mr. Brown would represent the family interests, Mr. Brown said:

“Mr. Mandela said it was a very sensitive issue and that I should double-check with Oliver Tambo about any moves I was making.”

Mrs. Mandela said in a statement issued by Mr. Brown on July 22 that she had granted power of attorney to Mr. Brown “because people around the world are using the

painful history of the Mandela family to benefit themselves.”

“This situation has reached scandalous proportions and must be handled in a firm manner,” Mrs. Mandela said.