**Consul General Nomvume Magaqa’s Remarks at the ‘Freedom Day Series: Roundtable Discussion’, April 23, 2012, at the South African Consulate General in Chicago**

Professor Harold Rogers, Chair of the Department of African American Studies at the City Colleges of Chicago, Chairman Emeritus of the Midwest ANC Centenary Committee and the moderator of today’s roundtable discussions,

Professor Prexy Nesbitt, of Columbia College and Member of the Midwest ANC Centenary Steering Committee,

Doctor Lisa Brock, Academic Director of the Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership at Kalamazoo College and member of the Midwest ANC Centenary Committee,

Mister Basil Clunie, esteemed international activist and member of the Midwest ANC Centenary Committee,

Students, Activists and colleagues,

I would like to acknowledge the presence of: Dr. Clement Adibe, Professor E.J. Alagoa, and Dr. Ogenga Otunnu of DePaul University, and Mr. Andrew Greta and Dr. Robert Valley of the University of Illinois.

Greetings and welcome to the Freedom Day Roundtable Discussion at the South African Consulate General in Chicago.

Today, as part of the South African Consulate’s Freedom Day Celebrations, we commemorate the first democratic elections held in South Africa on 27 April 1994. These celebrations serve as a reminder of the struggle for a free, just and democratic South Africa. It is an occasion where we reflect deeply on our transition from apartheid to an inclusive democracy. On this occasion we recommit ourselves to heal the divisions of the past and firmly establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and respect for fundamental human rights.

2012 is an especially significant year for South Africa as it marks one hundred years since the formation of the African National Congress, the party that succeeded in turning the tide of oppression in South Africa. Particularly important to highlight is the role that the Midwest and Chicago played in solidarity with the people of South Africa, in support of our liberation led by the African National Congress. Defeating apartheid without this international solidarity and generosity would have been a much more daunting task, and for this show of solidarity we are indebted to you and to all the people of the Midwest.

It is with this in mind that I introduce the theme of our discussion this afternoon, “The Role of the United States in the Liberation Struggle of South Africa”.

The goal of this discussion series is to promote the awareness of the common areas of interest between the USA and South Africa in relation to the issues of social justice, freedom and democracy. We highlight the role played by the U.S. in the liberation struggle of our people in South Africa, we hope that the younger generations, particularly students, can be enlightened by the impact of the ANC and of all the struggles of the oppressed masses the world over. It is important that academic institutions in both countries never forget the meaningful role played by the citizenry in the USA, and we hope that a common vision can be crafted by this roundtable that will lead to furthering the development of university curricula as it pertains to social justice, freedom and democracy in our country.

I now welcome to the podium Professor Harold Rogers to introduce himself and the three panellists.