



By Reuters

Published: April 22, 2013

Words of Nelson Mandela take over Times Square's billboards



for a few minutes every night for the month of April.

The short film was commissioned by the Tribeca Film Institute, an arts organization co-founded by actor Robert De Niro. It is being played shortly before midnight across many of Times Square's glowing screens for the rest of the month.

"We're in the crossroads of the world, it's all about the glitz and the glamour, and all of a sudden you're seeing this man to remind us of our humanity," Ndaba Mandela, a 30-year-old grandson of the anti-apartheid leader, said at a special screening of the film on Friday night.

De Niro also attended the event at a Times Square hotel and posed for pictures with Ndaba and Kweku Mandela, another grandson, but did not make any remarks.

The two grandsons worked with filmmakers Nabil Elderkin, Andrew van der Westhuyzen and Gregory Stern to choose inspiring quotes from Nelson Mandela's speeches to honor his 95th birthday in July.

Mandela spent 27 years on Robben Island and in other jails as a result of his struggle to end apartheid in South Africa before becoming the country's first black president in 1994.

His words have been animated to dance across screens that normally advertise clothing, movies and corporations. About a dozen electronic billboards, including one on Thomson Reuters' Times Square building, are participating, organizers said.

Mandela, who stepped down from office in 1999, has had health problems recently and spent more than a week in the hospital with pneumonia this month.

"He's doing much better," Ndaba Mandela, who said he lived with his grandfather in Johannesburg, said in an interview. "I would say he is about 80 percent."

He added that his grandfather had offered his approval upon learning that his words would be projected in Times Square. "If he doesn't support something, he'll let you know," Mandela said.