

THE PULSE, THE LEAGUE, AND THE PEOPLE:

**A PROGRESS JOURNAL
ON THE PEOPLE PROGRAMME/
BUFI COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS
ON INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

Summer 2006



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Prepared and Edited by Dr. Alice Palmer, Co-Director and
D.B. Robinson
Sr. Administrator/Editor
PEOPLE Programme

Acknowledgements

It takes many people working together to put together a volume such as this, and we would like to thank everyone who had a hand in this effort. Please accept my apologies in advance if I failed to recognize anyone whose labor or input may have been overlooked.

For her guidance and uncompromising excellence, I wish to thank Dr. Alice Palmer. None of this would have been possible without her. For his unwavering commitment and encouragement, Buzz Palmer is owed much gratitude. For his incomparable teamwork, Mr. Henry English is to be congratulated. Our resident info-tech and public opinion expert, Dr. Cedric Herring also deserves glowing recognition. Acknowledgements are also due to the Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy at the University of Illinois and Howard University. I would also like to mention several others without whose contributions this document would be woefully shallow. They are: Dr. Frank Morris, Dr. Bobby Austin, Mr. John Casey, Professor Christopher Wambu, Dr. Robert Cummings, Mr. Myk Snider of Sphere Public Relations Group, Mrs. Susan Tilney of MouseMaster, Inc., Dr. Brenda Gayle Plummer, Mr. James Dodson, Mr. Stephen Alexander, Mr. Christopher Herring and a host of others whom I have not yet had the pleasure to meet.

Finally, the entire team would like to extend thanks to the Ford Foundation for their vision and commitment to this project.

If you wish to contact us please call (773) 324-6678 or visit our website: www.peopleprogram.com.

Enjoy.

A welcome note from the editors:

“[As] the old premises of our global order fall away, we court the danger of instability, disintegration and chaos unless we erect the new order in time. It is, alas, a danger that is upon us. The old order is passing and the new one is not here yet.”—S.R. Ramphal

This declaration, made over a decade ago by the former Secretary General of the British Commonwealth, is both ominous, and sadly, increasingly true today. Core issues such as hunger, unfair trade and labor practices, human rights abuses, and the absence of sustainable development of many kinds continue to plague all but a small percentage of the world’s population. Globalization has driven the reordering of economic and resource development at every level. The information technology explosion has made it possible to reach across vast bodies of water and land with the touch of a button. And yet, we have inched further and further away from the capacity to self-determine our condition.

Furthermore, the relatively strict divide between foreign and domestic policymaking that existed just a half century ago has been closed. Governing bodies everywhere must consider a myriad of international forces when crafting local legislation. In the U.S., as everywhere else, goods and services such as the price and availability of fuel, the value of currency, domestic production, food supply and even education and housing are all impacted by events in other parts of the world. Taken collectively, ignorance in matters such as these is far from bliss.

As difficult and complicated as conditions may appear, we at the PEOPLE Programme do not take an alarmist position on the state of the world, and our responsibilities therein. Rather, we soberly welcome the opportunity to enjoin the struggle for the shaping of the ‘new order’ as our community did most recently during the Vietnam War and the Free South Africa movement. Our mission is to provide a path to understanding and knowledge of world affairs for our community, then evolve that knowledge into action that can have positive impact on foreign policy decisions, which we have noted, shape conditions at home. After all, we are, each of us, descendents of peoples from quite far away, possessed of a culture unique and variant. We have historically grappled with the challenges of cultural cross-fertilization from the time the first merchant ships landed here and in the West Indies. And our struggle continues. W. E. B. Du Bois stated the case of our past success in international affairs and our current neglect of the same quite brilliantly:

“The most magnificent drama in the last thousand years of human history is the transportation of ten million human beings out of the dark beauty of their mother continent into the new-found Eldorado of the West. They descended into Hell; and in the third century they arose from the dead, in the finest effort to achieve democracy for the working millions which this world had ever seen. It was a tragedy that beggared the Greek; it was an upheaval of humanity like the Reformation and the French Revolution.

Yet we are blind and led by the blind. We discern in it no part of our labor movement; no part of our industrial triumph; no part of our religious experience...And why? Because in a day when the human mind aspired to a science of human action, a history and psychology of the mighty effort of the mightiest century, we fell under the leadership of those who would compromise with truth in the past in order to make peace in the present and guide policy in the future.” —W. E. B. Du Bois

The information contained in this volume is representative of the many tools we shall use to achieve our mission. We hope that you will enjoy this journal and use it as a resource. We encourage you to share its contents with your colleagues and constituents so that the attendant dialogue can lead to positive change for all people. As always, we invite your comments and suggestions on this and future efforts.

“You must be the change you want to see in the world.”—Mahatma Ghandi

Sincerely,

Dr. Alice Palmer
D.B. Robinson

The PEOPLE Programme: a Summary

Our Overall Mission:

There is a popular adage that states, “Think globally, act locally.” We at the PEOPLE Programme strive to ‘think *and* act globally on *behalf* of people locally.’

The PEOPLE Programme (Public Elected Officials and others for Policy Leadership and Exchange) brings about international exchange of elected public officials, scholars, journalists, business leaders, labor leaders, foundation officers, policy and leadership students, and others from communities in Europe, the United States, and Africa. The purpose of this unique exchange process is to foster greater understanding of the way alternative governments, labor, industry, media and education systems operate. PEOPLE Programme administrators then help use this information to craft program and policy innovations that help foster greater cooperation among institutional systems and affected citizens from various nations. Our primary focus is on identifying ways in which residents of inner city communities can forge relationships with people from other nations to advance mutually beneficial programs and policies.

PP Major Programmatic Achievements:

April, 2002

The Transatlantic Conference on Race and Xenophobia

This long term project consisted of two programs and venues, one in Chicago in partnership with the IGPA at the University of Illinois, followed immediately afterward with a program at Howard University in Washington, D.C. Numerous distinguished officials from Europe and Africa participated including: European Union Ambassador to the UN John Richardson; Glyn Ford, a senior member of the European Parliament and past chair of its Committee on Racism and Xenophobia; MEP Harlem Desir, a European Union parliamentarian from France; Ambassador Gunter Burghart, the European Union representative to the United States; Dr. Dieter Detke, Director of the Fredrich Ebert Foundation; Dr. Manfred Stassen, former director of the German Academic Exchange Service; Dr. Maria Dietrich, University of Munster and founder of the Colloquium on African American Research; and Sukhvinder Stubbs, Executive Director of the Cadbury Foundation in Europe.

A second important initiative has been the exposure of African American leaders to the leadership and workings of the United Nations. This undertaking has been co-chaired by Buzz Palmer and Ambassador Robin Duke, former Ambassador to Norway, philanthropist and member of major corporate boards of directors. There have been three groupings of African American leadership who have thus far participated: journalists, business leaders, and civic leaders. UN Under Secretary General for Public Affairs Shashi Thoroor has been the prime mover on the United Nations side in close cooperation with Buzz Palmer who identifies those African American leaders who should be involved.

The first gathering in 2003 included 45 African American print and on-air journalists, including three Pulitzer Prize winners. They received briefings from UN agency and department heads with opportunity for dialogue and questions. Secretary General Kofi Annan and Mrs. Annan joined the group for lunch, and Mr. Annan gave noteworthy and supportive remarks.

November, 1996

Policy Exchange and Discussion

Facilitated a small conference between participants from Midwest area universities and policy scholars from universities in Hamburg, Germany. The conference yielded comparative research on the operation of empowerment zones, housing policy, environmental policy, education and vocational policy, among other things.

May, 1996

Shaping Public Policy from the Bottom Up

Working with the Institute for Research on Race and Comparative Public Policy at the University of Illinois, gathered community activists, elected officials, journalists and scholars to present ideas on addressing the paradox about public policy and changing racial stratification in the US and abroad.

September, 1995

Urban Insecurity and Crime Management

Teamed up with the University of Illinois Center for Research in Law and Justice to host a conference investigating and promoting international policies on preventing urban insecurities and the management of crime.

June, 1994

Employment and Technology

Co-hosted a major seminar on employment and technology issues in Europe and Africa with University of Illinois' Institute for Government Policy and Foreign Affairs. Developed recommendations that were presented to specific media and presented to members of the European Parliament and the ACP, a multi-nation African policy council based in Brussels, Belgium.

Senior Program Administrator **D.B. Robinson**, who helped facilitate many of the programs, is also working with the UN staff to help develop youth leadership initiatives for urban high school and college students as well.

Youth Specific Projects:

The Chicago Area Health and Medical Careers Program

In the mid eighties, Buzz Palmer and David Robinson, working with the University of Illinois and the Illinois Institute of Technology, developed an exchange program for third

year African American college students considering entering the medical field. Selected students were given an opportunity to study abroad for two months at either Aalborg or Heidelberg Universities.

Model UN Program

In the early nineties, Dr. Alice Palmer as director of the Cities in Schools program, organized a highly successful model UN program. The effort drew participants from the Chicago Public School System and immersed them in a mock UN scenario where they learned research, presentation and debate skills, negotiation and conflict resolution skills, and the policy analysis and development process.

People's Assembly Global Youth Troupe

Through a grant from the Ford Foundation, James Dodson and David Robinson are currently consulting with the YouthMedia organization to train high school age students about foreign affairs. Students will learn how to conduct research, analyze and propose policy suggestions, create presentations, and manage discussions and debate formats. They will also create a global youth newsroom on the PEOPLE Programme web site. The students will also develop a traveling team to share their work with other young people. In addition, the most skilled of the team will accompany Robinson and other senior staff on missions to the UN, The European Union, the Congressional Black Caucus, and other high-level venues.

Who we are:

Dr. Alice Palmer.

Co-Director, PEOPLE Programme.

Educator.

Former Dean of Students, Northwestern University

Author of two adult learning books.

Past Vice President of International Organization of Journalists

IL President of the Free South Africa Movement

Former Illinois State Senator

Member of 100 Black Women

Boulaise of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority

E.L. "Buzz" Palmer

Founder and Co-Director, PEOPLE Programme

Former chair of the US Senate Advisory Committee on Southern Africa

Founding Director of Chicago Sister Cities program

Involved in International Affairs for over 40 years

Dr. Frank Morris.

PEOPLE Programme Sr. Advisor

Former Director of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation

Former Dean of Morgan State University

Retired Sr. Foreign Service Officer
Numerous citations and awards for excellence in program and policy development

John Casey

PEOPLE Programme Sr. Advisor

Past Secretary General of World Alliance of YMCA's (Geneva, Switzerland)
President of metro Chicago YMCA for a decade
Executive Director Legislative Advisory Committee on Public Aid

Mr. Henry L. English

Partner and Fiscal Agent

CEO Black United Fund of Illinois

Mr. Homer Franklin

Sr. Advisor

Former President of Olive-Harvey College

Professor David Johnson

Sr. Advisor

History professor at South Suburban College
Former Mayor of Harvey Illinois

D. B. Robinson

Sr. Administrator/Editor, PEOPLE Programme.

Former journalist and radio talk show host
Award winning policy and program developer
Essayist and story author

Glossary of Terms Specific to this Project

International affairs, like law, or business, or even football, has its own unique terminology. Mr. Stephen Alexander took the time to develop the following primer to familiarize readers on the meanings of some of the words and related ideas they are likely to come across in this document and in subsequent discussions around this project.

CIVIL SOCIETY LEAGUE DEFINITIONS AND THEORIES

From Stephen Alexander

December 2, 2005

Human Development:

The basic philosophy of human development policy is that it is seen as the end—with economic growth being the means. Therefore, the purpose of economic growth is to enrich people's lives. However, much too often economic growth policies are not structured to produce human development, and it is important to be aware that there is no automatic link between economic growth and human development. And even when links are established, they may be gradually eroded—unless regularly fortified by skillful and intelligent policies (Human Development Report, 1996).

To ensure that these links work efficiently and effectively to make sure growth contributes to human development some important determinants should be included in the policy such as: equitable distribution of economic opportunities, access to productive and well-paid work, access to productive assets, appropriate allocation of public revenue into high-priority social expenditures, and fairer opportunities for women and persons of color (Human Development Report, 1996).

Sustainable Development:

Sustainable development theory is based on the vision of sustainable and livable communities, where families from all cultures, races, and backgrounds live in a dignified, peaceful, and equitable existence. Sustainable communities must be supported by a growing economy that provides equitable opportunities for satisfying livelihoods and a safe, healthy and high quality of life for current and future generations. To achieve these goals the nation and its regions must protect its environment, its natural resource base, and the functions and viability on which all life depends. Additionally, our vision is of families and communities of color acquiring decent paying and safe jobs; quality schools and recreation; decent housing and adequate health care; democratic decision-making and personal empowerment; and communities free of violence, drugs, and poverty (The President's Council on Sustainable Development, 1999). Principles and beliefs are as follows:

Consistent progress in reducing disparities in economic status—especially access to property ownership, educational attainment, and health and environment within society is essential to economic growth, environmental health, and social justice.

A new collaborative process is needed to create better decisions, more rapid change, and sensible use of human, natural, financial resources to achieve goals outlined above.

Federal, state, and local policies must be designed to strengthen all communities and enhance their role in decisions about the environment, social equity, natural resources, and economic progress so that individuals and institutions most immediately and directly affected can participate with others in the decision-making process.

Since economic growth, environmental protection, and social equity are linked, policies must be integrated in order to achieve national and local goals.

A growing economy, healthy environment, and livable and sustainable communities are essential to national and global security.

A knowledgeable public, the free flow of information, and opportunities for review and redress are critically important to open, equitable, and effective decision-making.

Achievement of equitable and sustainable development will require some things to grow—jobs, productivity, wages, capital and savings, profits, information, knowledge and education—while at the same time others such as pollution, waste, poverty, and discrimination—must not.

Residents must have access to high-quality and lifelong formal and non-formal education that enable them to understand the interdependence of economic prosperity, environmental quality, and social equity—and prepare them to take action that supports all three (The President’s Council on Sustainable Development, 1999).

Economic Development:

Economic development can be defined as a process for mobilizing **human**, capital, physical, financial, natural, **and political** resources to produce social and marketable goods and services, **revitalize distress communities, and improve the economic status of low and moderate-income families.** Essentially, it is a process or practice for creating “quality” jobs and expanding business development, increasing incomes, and expanding access to wealth creating assets—for those who need them the most (Bingham, Hill & White, 1990). Additionally, it is a practice that is necessitated when conditions of market failure and/or externalities exist such that jobs, income and wealth for those with the greatest need are not being addressed by free-market activities. Thus, economic development is a public policy response to market failures and critical public investment needs. Finally, in order to operationalize economic development policy, financial resources need to be mobilized from public, private, and foundation sources.

Environmental Equity Environmental Justice:

Environmental equity refers to the equal protection of environmental laws. For example, it has been documented that, under the Superfund clean-up program, abandoned hazardous waste sites in communities of color take 20 percent longer to be placed on the national priority action list than those in white areas. Environmental justice is broader in scope than environmental equity. It refers to those cultural norms and values, rules, regulations, behaviors, policies, and decisions to support sustainable communities, where people can interact with confidence that their environment is safe, nurturing, and productive. Environmental justice is supported by decent paying and safe jobs; quality schools and recreation; decent housing and adequate health care; democratic decision-making and personal empowerment; and communities free of violence, drugs, and poverty. These are communities where both cultural and biological diversity are respected and highly revered and where distributed justice prevails.

Bingham, Richard D., Edward W. Hill, and Sammis B. White (1990) *Financing Economic Development*. Sage Publications, Newbury Park, California.

Bryant, Bunyan. (1995). *Environmental Justice*. Island Press, Washington, D. C.

The President's Council on Sustainable Development (1999). *Towards A Sustainable America: Advancing Prosperity, Opportunity, and a Healthy Environment for the 21st Century*. Washington, D.C.

United Nations Development Program. (1996). *Human Development Report 1996*. Oxford University Press. New York, N.Y.

FAIR TRADE THEORY AND POLICY

Many mainstream economists believe that in theory, international trade should be based on comparative advantage and free trade. In practice, however, every nation protects its own domestic producers to some degree from foreign competition. Behind the barriers to trade are workers whose jobs and incomes and communities are at stake and, as a consequence, they petition their governments for protection.

Important Definitions:

Free trade: The flow of goods between countries without restrictions or special taxes.

Protectionism: The government's use of embargoes, tariffs, quotas, and other restrictions to protect domestic producers from foreign competition.

Embargo: A law that bars trade with another country.

Tariff: A tax on an import.

Quota: A limit on the quantity of a good that can be imported.

Import: A good produced in another country for sale in the domestic market.

Export: A good produced in the domestic country and sold abroad.

Economic Arguments for Protection

The Infant Industry argument is that a new domestic industry—usually in a developing country—needs protection because it is not ready to compete with established foreign competitors.

The National Security argument is that certain defense-related industries must be protected with embargoes, tariffs, and quotas to ensure national security.

The Employment argument suggests that restricting imports increases domestic jobs in protected industries. According to this argument, allowing countries to sell imported good comes at the expense of its domestically produced counterparts. This lowers domestic output and leads to higher domestic unemployment.

The Fair Trade argument is based on the inability to compete against cheap labor. For example, many firms in the U.S. pay their workers \$10.00 per hour and more, while many firms in developing countries pay as little as \$1.00 per hour. Without protection U.S. wages, and the standard of living, will be driven down.

The Pulse, the League, and the People

The following section is a copy of the document that has been used to help familiarize interested parties in the basic concepts and goals of the project. It is a comprehensive description of each of the three components of the program and the mission therein.

Program leaders converted this document into a Powerpoint™ presentation which they delivered to invitees in Chicago in November of 2005 and Washington D.C. in January of 2006.

The Pulse of Black America Survey, the Civil Society League, and the People's Assembly Program:

The Action Summaries: Part I

A PEOPLE Programme Project

D. B. Robinson

The Action Summaries: Part I

Introductory Statement:

This series of summary documents, beginning with a focus on participants in the Civil Society League and People's Assemblies, aims at providing practical information. The intent of the program is to facilitate the evolution of concept into action. Civil Society League members can use these worksheets to succinctly inform both colleagues and constituencies about the program, then shape the unique manner in which they generate support for and participation in the program among those key groups. We encourage copying and distributing this, and future installments, as each group sees fit. The PEOPLE Programme can also be helpful in providing supporting media and historical references to help gird participants efforts.

Program Purpose:

The PEOPLE Programme (**P**ublic **E**lected **O**fficials and others providing **P**olicy **L**eadership and **E**xchange) obtained a grant from the Ford Foundation to launch a program aimed at better informing and empowering African Americans on foreign policy issues that are increasingly relevant and repercussive here at home. Reminiscent of the methodology employed by W.E.B. Du Bois, a three-pronged approach will be employed to share information and coordinate action. The three components, which will be addressed in greater detail later in the document, are:

1. The Pulse of Black America Survey.
2. The Civil Society League, and
3. The People's Assembly.

These three mutually reinforcing components will serve as a continuing platform for promoting civic engagements and democratic participation among African Americans on international policy issues with regard to three areas of US foreign policy that are of concern. They are:

- Human development
- Fair trade
- Sustainable development

Why is this so important: or WIFU (What's In It For US)?

Here are just a few examples of how engaging in foreign policy has impacted our community:

- The thousands of slaves who fought with the British in the Revolutionary war which colored the colonist's notions on developing a "free" nation.
- Frederick Douglass's passionate and eloquent anti-slavery speeches here and in London forced the US to respond to its policies on a world stage, which eventually influenced Lincoln's decision to enact the emancipate proclamation.
- The favorable relationships African American WWI soldiers forged with the French led to organized challenges against racist domestic policies upon their return from abroad.
- W.E.B. Du Bois, A. Philip Randolph, Mary Mcleod Bethune, Will Pickens, Paul Robeson, and many others influenced US policy on the Spanish-American War, policy toward Germany, Russia and Ethiopia in addition to race and labor policies in the US.
- Dr. Martin Luther King's visit to India where he studied the life and teachings of Ghandi. That experience led to the development of the non-violent civil rights strategy and later, Dr. King's condemnation of the Vietnam War.
- Malcolm X visited Northern Africa and he too, began to envision domestic change through a worldview.
- Randall Robinson, former Director of TransAfrica, challenged the US policy toward South Africa, and seeded a movement led by Black people from all walks of life which forced the US to call an end to apartheid and release Nelson Mandela from prison.

Currently, our collective voice on key foreign policy issues is essentially mute. The Congressional Black Caucus is silent, our ability to generate media coverage on these issues is woefully inadequate, and the traditional race advocacy organizations seem to be struggling for clear direction. Through this program, however, we could once again impact US foreign policy on key issues such as; natural resources, energy, labor, health, and education, all of which are sub-categories of the three policy thrusts of human development, fair trade and sustainable development.

Your active participation is the key to our joint success.

The Three Program Components:

The Pulse of Black America Survey

The Black Pulse Survey is an ongoing, web-based public opinion survey of the African American general public and others about international affairs and current events. The Black Pulse Survey also collects demographic information on respondents including their race, sex, age, education, marital status, income, occupation and industry.

We will also poll African Americans on foreign affairs issues. This tool will provide the ability to make comparisons between African American opinion leaders, members of the African American community at-large, white opinion leaders, members of the American general population, and Europeans.

Benefits and uses:

- Up-to-date insights and information about the attitudes and behaviors of African Americans and others including voters, consumers, community residents, family members, business owners, etc. These profiles can help policy makers and planners shape effective, on-target strategies.
- Surveys on foreign affairs will provide the ability to make comparisons between African American opinion leaders, members of the African American community at-large, white opinion leaders, members of the American general population, and Europeans. This tool will help inform and prepare legislators, planners and the media to better represent the pulse of Black America.
- Use of web-based technology provides greater flexibility. Questions can be changed quickly and surveys can be customized depending on the respondents' characteristics. Internet technologies also make the sharing of findings easier and quicker.
- The surveys also help broaden the outreach capacity of the PEOPLE Programme and each of its collaborators.
- The polls will be released on a set schedule so that they are anticipated and reported as regular features in the media.

Civil Society Leagues

A key outreach strategy for the program includes establishing Civil Society Leagues in major cities throughout the U.S. These groups will be made up of prominent opinion leaders and activists. They will represent organization and community constituencies.

Each League will design an outreach plan to promote community-based discussions about how international affairs and U.S. foreign policy affect the community. The plan will be designed to bring this information to church basements, school boards and classrooms, union halls, community centers and other such gathering places in order to generate public engagement and action around this issues.

The PEOPLE Program, along with the Black United Fund, will create local media plans to aggressively promote maximum media coverage of all of the Leagues' events and activities. This media plan will include appearances on regional television and radio talk shows, meetings with editorial boards, and written articles submitted to relevant publications.

The program will be launched with two local Civil Society Leagues, first in Chicago, then in Washington DC. The Chicago League Development Partners are: the Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy at the University of Illinois, the ShoreBank Corporation, the Black United Fund of Illinois, and community opinion leaders.

The process for developing the League in Chicago will be refined and duplicated in Washington DC.

Benefits and uses:

- Provides a familiar, non-threatening medium to begin the international affairs dialogue.
- Allows for effective media generation.
- There is safety in numbers.
- Provides a platform for building a sustainable network of informed, engaged representatives—a quite powerful force.

The People's Assembly

The People's Assembly is focused on educating the average African American citizen on international affairs and their local impact. It will be the job of Civil Society Leagues, in cooperation with local Black Unite Fund organizations, and PEOPLE Programme contacts, to organize the People's Assemblies.

The Assemblies will be public forums that engage rank-and-file African American citizens on international issues. Based on a successful prototype at a college in Chicago's south suburbs, the forums may include speakers and panelists and will be web-cast, re-produced in print and web-based educational materials, and the dialogue will be used to inform and help develop future Assemblies.

The PEOPLE Programme will also create a think-tank study group to prepare useful and accessible materials for the groups.

Benefits and uses:

- Helps create a neighbor-to-neighbor buzz about the forums and about international affairs.
- Will give people greater confidence in presenting opinions on these issues.
- Over time, can begin to attract younger participants who can help sustain an informed, engaged population.
- Will help challenge local media to pay attention.
- Could have an influence on school curriculum and educational choices.

Conclusion

Together, the Pulse of Black America Survey, the Civil Society Leagues, and the People's Assembly form a holistic worldview, and they will lay a foundation for active participation by African Americans in international affairs in the coming decades.

Guest Contributor—C.K. Wambu

In each edition of the PEOPLE Programme Journal we will feature one or more speeches, essays or literary excerpts we feel would add value to the mission of the PEOPLE Programme.

The following paper was presented to the United Nations by one of the PEOPLE Programme's senior contributors, **Professor C.K. Wambu**. In this document, Wambu demonstrates that African Americans have been and continue to be involved in international affairs, and that in each of the longstanding bedrock centers of our culture such as the Black church, we exercise immense political influence.

African American Civil Society and International Politics

United Nations, October 7, 2003 New York City

By C.K. WAMBU

(Professor C.K. Wambu is a member of the Department of Africana Studies at Hunter College. He holds a B.A. degree in Economics and Political Science from the University of Illinois, and an M.A. in Development Studies, with a concentration on Africa, from Ohio University. He has also studied at Syracuse University. Professor Wambu was born in Kenya, and he continues to take a deep interest in Kenya's social conditions, even as he participates in all aspects of political struggles facing African Americans, among whom he has lived for the last 30 years. He was educated in this community, and in turn has become an educator in the same community as both a college professor and a public school teacher. His opinions, as expressed in this article, developed as a result of his participation in and observation of Black life and struggles in America.)

On October 7, 2003, a very significant forum took place at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The forum's purpose was to brainstorm about how leaders of African America's civil society and the United Nations can collaborate in support of the UN's programs for world peace, human rights; sustainable and balanced development; accessible, affordable health; education and all other areas of international interest. The forum was based on an understanding that all domestic politics are now international and all international politics are now domestic.

African Americans are not new to international affairs or organizations. The early giants—W.E.B. DuBois, Ralph Bunche, Paul Robeson—were all classic examples of progressive internationalists. They were supportive of and critical to the founding of the modern United Nations. They were vanguard thinkers about issues dear to the U.N. like colonialism, human rights, racism, imperialism and apartheid.

Recently, African Americans have put more emphasis on domestic political matters, perhaps because of the great need in the U.S. to redress eroding civil rights, increasing economic inequalities, and the resurgence of racial polarization. Yet not too long ago, African Americans played central, effective roles in the movements that helped to end apartheid and colonialism in many parts of the world despite the tendency of America's power elites to disparage, marginalize or become alarmed by African Americans who question or offer alternatives to US foreign policies—as if international affairs were outside their province. One is reminded, for example, of the firestorm in public opinion that followed Dr. Martin Luther King's forthright sermon at Riverside Church in New York City condemning America's role in the Vietnam war. African Americans are expected to deal with only one domestic issue *i.e.*, civil rights; and to leave economics and diplomacy, foreign or domestic, to the White establishment.

During the latter part of the 20th century, the reactionary policies of the mainstream elites who came to power during this period compelled Black Americans to narrow their focus to domestic politics, so it should be no surprise that the most common misconception among Black people is that domestic issues deserve priority over international issues.

In fact, Blacks have already grown from being the vanguards of civil rights crusades to being in the vanguard of political and economic establishments. The United States is a far different place today than it was just 20 to 30 years ago. Blacks have risen to real positions of political power and influence as high-ranking government officials at all levels of government, corporate directors, Hollywood superstars, and sports moguls—even if their political platforms may differ. The math is self-explanatory: there is now a critical mass of influential African Americans across the United States. And there is a steady growth curve that is no longer dictated by seasonal politics but instead represents successes of past struggles, which have culminated in rights and privileges that others have for so long allocated for themselves to the exclusion of Black Americans.

Thus it would be a travesty if the majority of African Americans assessed the presence of individuals like US Secretary of State Colin Powell or his colleague National Security Advisor Condeleeza Rice as temporary phenomena dictated by quixotic Republican politics. African Americans need to see these individuals the way the rest of the world sees them. They are seen as representing the United States; and the fact that they are Black simply tells the rest of the world that Black Americans are major participants in both domestic and international affairs. The fact that they are Black can only increase positive impressions of Blacks and help erase the belief that Black Americans are marginal citizens.

The presence of Blacks in high positions in the US, which is presently the hegemonic power in the world, sets a trend that suggests a time in the future when qualifiers, *e.g.* “first Black,” “only Black,” will not be needed every time a Black person reaches a threshold of power, a time when Black people could be less often racially pigeonholed.

Although many African Americans may differ ideologically with Blacks such as Powell and Rice, and they should, their presence in key positions of power ought to galvanize the

Black community into recognizing that they are no longer considered merely insurgents in domestic and international affairs, at least outside the U.S.

Unfortunately, many African Americans have invested so much emotional capital in victimhood that, instead of rejoicing over some of these successes, many seem to frown on them and perhaps even consider them aberrations that are merely exceptions to the historical traditions of racial politics, and quite temporary, not the start of a new trend.

Yet the evidence on the ground is manifest that African Americans are not merely victims. Every Sunday, hoards of tourists invade Harlem's cultural and religious institutions. It is conceivable that Black Americans do not associate this attention with political power. But the fact that many Europeans choose to visit Abyssinian Baptist Church instead of St. Patrick's is a political asset. It is part of a larger precept that defines Black people's significance on the world stage.

Many international dignitaries have trekked to this historical Black institution and used its pulpit to speak to the world. Fidel Castro of Cuba, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, as well as various African and European heads of state have been accorded this platform to address America and the world. Dr. Calvin Butts, the senior pastor of Abyssinian Baptist Church, now occupies a larger and much more universal pulpit than before, a fact that he seems to be aware of, as was his distinguished predecessor, Reverend Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, son of Abyssinian Baptist Church's legendary pastor of the same name. This "bully-pulpit" phenomenon is continually replicated all over the country in other Black churches, at historically Black colleges and universities, in cultural institutions, and at national professional and fraternal conferences where African Americans are called upon to project a force beyond the United States' borders.

What can African Americans bring to the table? In a fragmented world Black Americans could, if audacious enough, be a voice of reason, balance and advancement in a public arena which has become vulgarized and polarized across the board by right-wing ideologues who have captured center stage. Many overarching African American values wrought from their historical experiences confronting disparities in the US often connect more with the rest of the world than do the values and concerns of conservative White Americans. Undoubtedly African Americans are not monolithic; but the contradictions in American life are profound, and African Americans continue to be disproportionately affected by the disparities.

Add to that, there is no known political resentment towards African Americans as a group outside the USA. While the rest of the world sees most of America's besetting sin as snobbery, very little antipathy is applied to Blacks, though people outside the US are struck by what seems to be an American-nurtured, limited knowledge about the world outside the USA.

Further, having long been societal and economic underdogs, African Americans are well positioned to translate and address America's moral and immoral concepts. Black Americans do not have to condone terrorism and religious chauvinism in order to be fair-minded when evaluating current anti-American currents in the world. In some ways,

Black Americans possess a much more refined and legitimate moral clarity about these and other similar issues than any other group. Black Americans have rarely participated, on a global scale, in those activities that seem to attract political hostilities abroad.

Black Americans are also better situated to discuss poverty, given their firsthand experience with an economic and social distortion that plagues much of the world's peoples. Americans talk a good game about wanting to alleviate poverty in the world, but when economic policies, such as opening its borders for "truly fair trade," seemingly threaten its current unfair world-wide trade advantage, there is an outcry.

Even close to home there was never a serious effort during the time when the North American Free Trade Agreement was being negotiated to alleviate the economic imbalances between the US and Mexico, for example, which inevitably heightened disparities in Mexico. Blacks in the U.S. have experienced poverty and the negative consequences of unfavorable terms of trade, including the decimation of local manufacturing, lost jobs, fallen wages, neighborhood erosion, poor education, costly and inaccessible health care and housing, and generations of family members unable to climb out of impoverishment.

Looking at the USA today, the conservative elites appear to suffer from a perception gap. They purposely maintain extremely selective and narrow practices supported by their narrow perceptions. They are indoctrinated with moral and political chauvinism, reinforced by a lack of curiosity about the rest of the world, believing wrongly that America's hegemonic self interests and narrow world view represent an elemental common denominator, and all the world should subscribe to these principles. This suggests a sort of willful ignorance perhaps driven by misguided moral concerns and provincial politics. This line of moral punctiliousness is always selective and often economically and politically driven.

As we begin to construct solutions or ways to effectively address and evolve away from these practices, African Americans who are just as religiously observant could help to reduce the antipathy toward America because they are less doctrinaire. They could help to reduce the uneasy feelings Europeans have about American foreign policy, which they see as driven by a messianic zeal that is dangerous because it is anchored not in facts but on faith, not by truth, but on ideology. African Americans have great faith in God—but they also have a deep appreciation of human equality and freedom and respect for reason. They are more politically tolerant and less vitriolic in disagreements.

Blacks and other progressives should seriously seek to invalidate the right-wing's hostilities towards the rest of the world. Each of us is entitled to a say, but the all-out attack on the United Nations, for example—the only world body—requires a sober response. There is a need in America to mediate the incongruity of how the world sees America and how America sees herself. It is a tragedy to disregard the rest of the world. If America chooses to leapfrog back to isolationism in international affairs—well fine, but the world will move on, albeit without America's approval.

African Americans need to write papers that make known their views about international affairs and recommend new American strategies for national security and peace. They also need to reappropriate national symbols, and insist that their critiques and contributions are also patriotic and in the best interests of America's future.

African Americans need to address the negative effects of unilateralism, now commonly practiced by the Bush administration. They need to challenge America's doctrine on the pre-emptive use of force; its preference for temporary, one-issue oriented, short-term coalitions when the need is for long-term alliances based on long-term constructive interests.

African Americans need to construct messages that tone down the current Administration's belligerent approach to the so called "axis of evil," which is counter-productive because of its ability to trigger energized pursuits of nuclear weapons out of fear of invasion.

Africa is experiencing a decade of democracy that is sweeping the continent, but there is an ingrained unrealistic public expectation, particularly in the US, that democracy will take hold immediately, against a backdrop of serious long-term social and economic inequalities on the continent. African Americans could assist in solidifying these long overdue democratic gains while encouraging the U.S. government to enter into a constructive engagement with African countries that goes beyond the conservative view of the world as Black or White.

African Americans can assist in molding a constructive image of international organizations like the United Nations, which in the past have been dismissed by American conservatives. They can help in building partnerships between international organizations and domestic economic, political and cultural institutions.

There are many endeavors that could benefit from collaborations between the UNO's (United Nations Organizations), Black churches, universities and colleges, national and local elected officials, business and professional organizations, and cultural institutions. Black Americans have built a formidable phalanx of institutions that could be used to contribute to the world through UNO partnerships. Black Americans have skilled manpower, financial resources and they are media savvy and bold. They could assist the UNO's, Africa and the world to navigate the tumultuous current of American politics.

Conclusion

In the United States, every ethnic group, except African Americans and American Indians, is expected to have an opinion about and input into that part of international affairs that interests them. Even corporations and NGOs are allowed to have opinions that are both domestic and global in scope.

African Americans need to overcome this state of political paralysis, inertia in diplomacy, and their overarching view of themselves as victims. We are aware of past constraints,

legal and extra-legal, that fostered the Black community's political impotency in international affairs. Unquestionably, there have been threats, ridicule, disparaging responses, silence and worse whenever African Americans dared to contribute to or engage in world affairs.

But Black Americans cannot afford to be an auxiliary force in foreign affairs. There is great need for more pluralism in U.S. foreign policy. The incongruity of American foreign policy, especially its relationship with international organizations, could use a corrective from African Americans because, as experience demonstrates, that policy now suffers from distorted misconceptions about the world dictated by xenophobic strictures.

African Americans are well situated to figure out the necessary permutations to aid and improve relations between the U.S. and the rest of the world, to improve and assist the functions of the UNO's, to aid in reversing negative images of the UN in the US, and, finally, to help extirpate the bad feelings that seem to exist between the U.S. and international organizations. Black Americans could coordinate the current negotiations between American pharmaceutical industries and the third world over the pricing of AIDS drugs, for example. They could assist in addressing debt issues that have paralyzed third world economics. Above all, they, alongside the UNO's, could be partners in assuring skeptical Europeans, Asians, and Africans that the whole of the U.S.A does not subscribe to cowboy unilateralism in diplomacy. With United Nations Organizations, African Americans could promote democracy as an end in itself, a means to foster peace and solidarity among world nations.

The Pulse of Black America
(Survey Excerpt)
Dr. Cedric Herring

The following excerpt was prepared by Dr. Herring on opinions regarding international affairs. It reflects the breadth and obvious utility of such an instrument. The version we have attached is one of his preliminary, unpublished drafts and may include some grammatical or design flaws. For the complete published survey, and for any additional work completed by Dr. Herring, please contact him through the PEOPLE Programme website at www.peopleprogramme.org.

Partner Organization Profile

Featured Community Partner: *BUFI*

It's the people that make the difference. We believe this sentiment deeply, so in each quarterly journal we will present a person or organization that is performing an outstanding and vital service to the community, and is also among our working partners.

In this issue, we will feature an interview with **Henry English**, the CEO of the **Black United Fund of Illinois**.

BUFI History:

In 1986, the Black United Fund of Illinois (BUFI) became the sixteenth independent affiliate of the National Black United Fund (NBUF). BUFI has continued to develop the idea of charitable fundraising in African American communities; an old and honorable tradition dating back to the Prince Hall Masons.

The current President/CEO, Henry L. English, is supported by its Chairman, Dr. Robert Starks. The board represents a cross section of the African American community.

Q: What is BUFI?

A: BUFI is an organization that helps people help themselves. We try to help people invest their resources such as time, money and knowledge into projects and services that are useful to people in the community. The Clara House Shelter is a prime example of the kind of projects we try to assist.

Q: The Clara Shelter House. Tell me about that.

A: It is a shelter, a full service facility really, that takes in battered and or abused women with children. It serves a vital need in our community.

Q: Excellent. What other organizations are affiliated with BUFI?

A: There are a host of them, but some of the more familiar ones include the ETA theater and arts education complex and AFSME (American Federation of State and Municipal Employees).

Q: How do you work together with them?

A: Their employees and members contribute a small portion of their incomes to a savings account that we manage and then we work together to apply the funds to useful community projects.

Q: That's outstanding. Tell me about a project where you teamed up.

A: Well, again, Clara's House is a good example. They had numerous volunteers but they weren't having much success procuring money and other needed resources to grow the project. BUFI and AFSME combined resources to help out. In the early stages, we actually had to pass the hat around to raise money—the nickels and dimes eventually added up and other donor organizations took note. The resource mechanics are all in place now and the project has helped a lot of people.

Q: How did you personally get involved with BUFI?

A: More than twenty years ago the South Shore Cultural Center (which was then called the South Shore Country Club) was in danger of being sold and possibly made inaccessible to the community. A group of volunteers organized to save the facility and the golf course. We had a tough time raising money so we decided to host a concert with major entertainment to highlight the facility.

Q: The event is a big deal now days.

A: Yes. But back then it was hard going. We pulled it off but we all realized that there was no permanent vehicle for fundraising in the community. There are any number of good people and good projects but they don't qualify for the typical foundation or corporate grants. That's when Alice and Buzz Palmer suggested that we develop an affiliate of NBUF here in the community.

Q: Alice and Buzz stirring things up again.

A: That's what they do. Anyway, there wasn't much money to begin with until Bell Labs looked at the project possibilities in the community and increased their commitment from \$9,000 to \$80,000.

Q: That's significant. What's your background?

A: I've always been active in the community, but I guess for the record, I earned my AA from Malcolm X College, got a BA from the University of New Hampshire and got a masters in marketing and hospital administration from Cornell University. I met Alice and Buzz and many of the people still active in the community at Malcolm X.

Q: Yes, I understand that there was a lot of groundbreaking activity going on at Malcolm X in the 70's. What makes BUFI so valuable to the community?

A: We're a vehicle for pooling resources and raising funds for that help improve the quality of life for people in the community.

Q: I see. You help people help themselves and in doing so, they help the larger community—and the resources tend to cycle within the community.

A: *That's right.*

Q: What is your vision for BUFI's future?

A: *Twenty years ago it was all about institutionalizing the organization. I think we are nearly there. Now I'd like to endow the organization, perhaps in the \$10 million range.*

Q: Hang on, let me get my checkbook. Seriously, do you accept money from any source, or are there restrictions?

A: *Generally, if a donor believes in what we are doing and is willing to contribute, we'll take the money. If there's a question, we'll get the board together and make a determination.*

Q: How can people get involved, especially community people who want to launch projects?

A: *It's pretty straightforward. They should write a letter on their stationary describing the scope and intended outcomes of the program—it only needs to be a couple of paragraphs long. Then we'll look over the concept and if it's good, we ask them to develop a more formal proposal.*

Q: What's a typical grant amount for a community project?

A: *Our average grant is around \$5,000 and is usually for small start-up projects. What we've found that once BUFI has funded these smaller ideas, it is much easier for the organizations to find additional money down the road if they are planning a bigger project.*

Q: That's great. I have a few ideas. How can you be reached?

A: *We're in the neighborhood at 1809 E. 71st Street. Our phone number is (773)-324-6678. You can also visit our website at www.bufi.org.*

Q: Thank you and continue the great work.

A: *Thank you.*

The Peoples Assemblies

The People's Assembly (excerpted from earlier in the document)

The People's Assembly is focused on educating the average African American citizen on international affairs and their local impact. It will be the job of Civil Society Leagues, in cooperation with local Black Unite Fund organizations, and PEOPLE Programme contacts, to organize the People's Assemblies.

The Assemblies will be public forums that engage rank-and-file African American citizens on international issues. Based on a successful prototype at a college in Chicago's south suburbs, the forums may include speakers and panelists and will be web-cast, re-produced in print and web-based educational materials, and the dialogue will be used to inform and help develop future Assemblies.

The next page is a copy of an actual flyer used for the very first assembly in Chicago. Four additional assemblies have been hosted in Chicago and in Washington D.C. since the time of this printing. They will be reviewed in the next journal edition.

Also attached is a copy of a petition that was distributed at the assembly.

PEOPLE’S ASSEMBLY #1
*The People’s Assembly on Race and
International Affairs in Post-Katrina America*

Sponsored by the PEOPLE Programme, the Black United Fund of Illinois, and the
Institute of Government and Public Affairs at the University of Illinois
UIC campus—Student Center-East Campus
10 November 2005, 6:30pm to 8pm

PROGRAM

Moderator

Mr. Henry English, CEO and President of the Black United Fund of Illinois

Overview of the project: The Pulse of Black America Survey, the Civil Society League, and the Peoples Assembly

Dr. Alice J. Palmer, Co-Director of the PEOPLE Programme

Remarks about the Civil Society League

Dr. Robert Starks, Director of the Harold Washington Institute, Northeastern University

Presentation of findings from the Pulse of Black America Survey

Dr. Cedric Herring, Professor of Political Science and the Institute of Government and Public Affairs, U of IL

Keynote Speaker

Mr. Glyn Ford, Member of the European Parliament of the European Union, from the United Kingdom

Questions and Answers

Closing

People's Assembly Petition

Whereas the earth and its abundance belong to all of humankind, so too the products of our inventive minds;

Whereas poverty, ignorance, prejudice and greed obstruct humankind's capacity to be fully realized; so

Therefore, the People's Assembly calls upon citizens and our governments of all kinds, specifically and generally, to act as advocates for and stewards of human development, sustainable development and fair trade, values and standards of human interaction which, when enacted into law and put into practice, can enable all peoples to become productive, responsible, and fully realized world citizens.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____