

Excerpts from remarks by  
Governor G. Mennen Williams of Michigan  
Africa Freedom Day Meeting  
American Committee on Africa  
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Good evening Friends and Fellow Americans.

Tonight I come to you certainly not as an expert on Africa but nevertheless as one who has visited both Egypt and Africa below the Sahara. Not as an expert but as one who has seen and felt the warmth, the promise and the problems of a great continent.

As a result of my observations, I have the feeling that Africa is undergoing a great and new exciting experience. There is a promise of manifest destiny for her people alive in the air. There is a new day coming for Africa's people, and by and large, it is the people of Africa who will make it come.

Every day, with every move of life in Africa, the new spirit is imparted to more and more Africans, spreading deeper and deeper into the bush, until soon no African will be without this new Spirit - this surge of contagious expectation and enthusiasm.

It is my sincere conviction that this new spirit is fed by three flames. The first is a burning desire on the part of Africans for freedom to control their own destinies. The second is fired by the revolution of rising expectations, and expressed in a determination to enjoy freedom from want -- one of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Four Freedoms. The third is the overwhelming compulsion to achieve racial equality - a compulsion so strong in areas of severe repression that it sometimes understandably breaks out into its own expression of racism.

To be both realistic and helpful, the policies of the United States must be responsive to the deep desire of the people of Africa for self-government, for economic opportunity, and for the dignity of racial equality.

Fortunately, such policies are clearly in line with our fundamental American beliefs and traditions. Unfortunately, our record in African policies in the recent past has not always been completely consistent with what is basic and true in ourselves. But when we live up to our best beliefs and better selves, we are to that degree a better nation, and I have every hope that the United States can, and will, be helpful to the Africans in their development of their destinies.

It is not going to be easy to implement such effective policies for Africa, nor is it going to be easy to keep such policies in step with the great changes taking place in that continent.

As one would expect in a place as large as Africa, with the many diverse geographical and historical conditions which prevail there, the problems are by no means simple or all alike. But the fact that the challenge is immense is no excuse for not trying to meet it. The United States can do it when we make up our minds that we really want it done.

Fortunately, there have been, and are leaders, who recognize what has to be done and are doing something about it. A number of them are here. I want particularly to express my pride and confidence in the work of a personal friend and fellow citizen from Michigan, Congressman Charles Diggs. Incidentally, he is the first negro member of the powerful House Foreign Affairs Committee. In this important position he can, and is doing a lot to advance America's relations with Africa.

Turning then to the development of an American policy responsive to the realities of Africa, the first challenge is Africa's desire for freedom to control its own destinies.

In this day and age, there can be no question at all but that the people of Africa are entitled to self-government. On this point, the United States should have not the slightest doubt or hesitation.

From the time of our Declaration of Independence, we have recognized that all men are endowed with certain unalienable rights, that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. We should always stand forthright and firm on that solid foundation of fundamental principle.

Mindful of all this, I would propose that American policy have as its stated objective the recognition of the principle of African majority rule. I believe that in general, this is the underlying policy of most countries, including our allies. Where this principle is not recognized, or to the extent it is not recognized, we should urge the recognition of the principle of African majority rule by all countries, and we should seek the earliest reasonable implementation of this principle.

With respect to trusteeships where we have a special responsibility, the United States should bring its influence to bear to assure more substantial progress toward self-government.

Wherever the United States can properly be of assistance economically, or otherwise, it should not hesitate to render such support as it can. Naturally the given circumstances will be a factor in determining what we can do and how we can do it.

This brings me to Africa's revolution of rising expectations and to the second challenge - Africa's desire for freedom from want. Here there is much that America can do to help Africa now and thereby help create a stable and peaceful world.

During the ten year span between 1944 and 1955, our world foreign aid totaled more than \$45 billion dollars, but of this amount only 1.5 per cent went to Africa, according to Congressman Diggs.

In 1958, as a further example, of the \$3.3 billion dollars in foreign aid, the United States sent only \$77 million to Africa, most of which went north of the Sahara. Obviously, this amount does not represent a serious recognition of the problems the Africans face, nor a comprehensive effort to help solve these problems.

Economic aid for Africa should be constantly increased in scale with Africa's ability to absorb it. I propose that economic aid for Africa be increased up to as much as \$1.5 billion a year.

This sum has been estimated by experts to be the amount needed to provide a real growth in wealth equivalent to a net increase of 2 per cent in output per head per year.

The combined investment in Africa from its own resources, and from public and private resources outside, figures to about \$1.2 billion in 1957, not enough to keep up with the increase in population. An additional \$1.5 billion over the \$1.2 billion is needed and should be supplied as rapidly as Africa can utilize it.

Last week, I proposed in Toronto that the industrialized free nations of the world undertake a \$5 billion a year foreign aid program through the United Nations. I proposed that the cost of this be shared in proportions of about \$3 billion dollars from the United States, and \$2 billion from the other countries participating. This would provide Africa with the dimensions of economic aid it needs, economic aid up to the \$1.5 billion in accordance with Africa's ability to absorb it usefully.

My proposal to utilize the instrumentality of the United Nations would convince the Africans that we want to guarantee the integrity of purpose of the programs and to avoid any suggestion of political exploitation or domination.

The self-interest of the United States and the participating nations is served by the creation of stable self-governing States with viable economies. Such States are less likely to be induced to league against us or to disturb world peace.

Africa's third desire is for human dignity and racial equality. For us of the Judeo-Christian tradition, this certainly presents no problem of principle. Both the Old and New Testaments enjoin upon us the commandment "to love our neighbor as ourself." In the Phillips translation of the Letter of James, it is put felicitously for our purpose here:

"If you obey", James said, "the royal Law expressed by the Scripture 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself' all is well. But once you allow invidious distinctions to creep in, you are sinning, you have broken God's law."

Our Judeo-Christian heritage was incorporated in our American Declaration of Independence, in which our forefathers said for us:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights."

If our forefathers did so, can we morally do any less?

It would therefore seem to me that the United States must assert leadership in the United Nations for the recognition of equal human rights in Africa.

We should vigorously oppose the policy of apartheid in the Union of South Africa, but we should not stop there. We should, acting in the United Nations, work to bring about a reversal of that policy by whatever means can sensibly be applied.

And in this regard, let us be mindful of our own shortcomings in this area, and be determined to continue to strive to set things right - North, South, East, and West - wherever the problem exists.

In summary then, I propose that the United States declare its full recognition of the principle of African majority rule; that the United States initiate through the United Nations an economic aid program of the size that Africa needs, as much as \$1.5 billion yearly as Africa becomes able to absorb it usefully; and that the United States exert leadership against the policy of apartheid, or racism in any form.

America should help the people of Africa because they need our help, and they deserve to have it. Let's give them the kind of economic aid they need to help raise the material standard of their lives. Let's support them consistently and vigorously in the fulfillment of their rightful dignity as men and women.

We in the United States believe in freedom, we believe in self-government, we believe in working for the material and spiritual advancement of people everywhere. Let's practice our beliefs through our policies and programs for Africa.

Let's roll up our sleeves and go to work. Whatever we do for Africa, we do for the future of western civilization.

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