

**Lecture**

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***THE FULBRIGHT FOREIGN SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM AND AFRICA  
DURING PRESIDENT OBAMA'S ADMINISTRATION***

Excellencies, Government Officials, Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, Faculty, Staff and Students of Makerere University, Members of the Planning Committee for the 2012 Black History Month Celebration, Special Guests, Colleagues and Friends, I bring you greeting from the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board and from the United States of America where Black History Achievers are being celebrated at the local, state and national level via social, corporate and public media every day of this month.

I am honored to participate in Makerere University's annual celebration of Black History Month. This gathering of diplomats, educators, political and traditional leaders, former students, friends and acquaintances is probably the largest Black History Celebration that I have attended since my high school celebrations in the 1950s. I am also pleased to be in Uganda in the year of East Africa's Golden Independence Jubilee. Please accept my congratulations and best wishes for a wonderful celebration throughout the East African Community. Incidentally, 2012 is also the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my 1962 arrival in Uganda.

I wish to thank Chancellor Kagonyera and Vice Chancellor Baryamureeba for inviting me to serve as the third lecturer in the revived Africa Lecture Series at Makerere University, the oldest and most prestigious university in East Africa. It is important to note that beyond being East Africa's premier higher education institution, Makerere also has a global reputation for academic excellence, creativity and integrity.

My heartfelt thanks to Ambassador Lanier, the Public Affairs staff of the U.S. Embassy, and staff of the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board for supporting my trip to Uganda. Very special thanks go to HRH Moses Owor, Kwar Adhola of JoPadhola for consenting to a naming ceremony that gives me a place of honor in his Kingdom. I look forward to meeting my future JoPadhola brothers and sisters.

I don't know how to thank Catherine Kanabahita, Director of the Gender Mainstreaming Division, for her pivotal role in planning this event, and Camile Alier, Dr. George Piwang-Jalobo, Tororo Old Girls, and many, many others who assisted in planning and coordinating this elaborate and delightfully overwhelming program. Your success is truly laudable. Finally, my sincere thanks to the wonderful people of Uganda for the warm welcome and embrace that I received in 1962; for the graciousness and generosity extended to me on my visits in 2003 and 2010; and for welcoming me back "home" for this amazing celebration.

The topic that I have been asked to address is *The Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Program and Africa during President Barack Obama's Administration*.

There are a number of moving parts in this topic. Pulling all of them together will not be an easy task, but I fully understand that those of you who have come out this afternoon are genuinely interested in how the parts relate.

Let me begin with an important caveat: I cannot and do not speak for President Obama. I worked hard to get him elected and I am honored that he appointed me to the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board. The work that I do on the Board is both meaningful and rewarding. It enables me to help carry out some of the President's policy objectives in the areas of education and people-to-people diplomacy. I believe that my work touches scholars, students and their families and communities across the globe and has significant long-term impact on their lives. Practically every Fulbrighter who I have encountered proudly proclaims that Fulbright changed her or his life. But, alas, this appointment and my work on the Fulbright Board do not place me in the President's inner circle.

I can say with certainty, however, that President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama are pleased to know of the esteem in which the people of Uganda hold them. I can also say that it is fitting and proper to view their achievements within the context of historic Black achievements. The President is a product of the Black liberation struggle and is always mindful of the fact that he stands on the shoulders of giants and countless unnamed heroes who gave their lives so that this generation of African descendants in America could become major Black achievers. Like those who have gone before, he is guided by two profound beliefs, namely, "we did not come this far to turn back now" and "we shall overcome."

While we are on the subject of achievements and overcoming odds, as a Political Scientist I venture to predict that despite the drama and the opposition and challenges that he faces, President Obama will win the 2012 Presidential election. He will not be a one-term president.

The remarks that I have prepared for this occasion are divided into four (4) parts. Part 1 is an overview of Black History Month and how President Obama fits into its legacy. Part 2 provides background on the 65-year-old Fulbright Program and the role of the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board. Part 3 is about Fulbright in Africa with a focus on Uganda. Part 4 is an effort to bring the strings of this discussion together with a few comments on the historical involvement of African states in the Fulbright Program and options for transforming past relationships into a partnership that will contribute to national development goals and to the ultimate goal of an African renaissance.

## Part 1: President Obama and Africa within the Context of Black History Month

Dr. Carter G. Woodson (1875-1950), the son of a slave, is the architect of Black History Month. He began high school at the age of 20 and then proceeded to study at Berea College, the University of Chicago, the Sorbonne and Harvard University, where he earned a Ph.D. in 1912. Dr. Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1915 and the **Journal of Negro History** in 1916, both of which are alive and well today. Having put these two vehicles together to generate and disseminate information about Black achievements, he founded *Negro History Week* in 1926, choosing the second week of February between the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. Negro History Week evolved into Black History Month in 1976.

In his 1933 book, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, Dr. Woodson discusses the reasons why he founded Negro History Week. He said: “If a race has no history, if it has no worthwhile tradition, it becomes a negligible factor in the thought of the world, and it stands in danger of being exterminated.” Essentially, he laid the foundation for making Black history an undeniable part of American history in a way that deconstructed and transformed the educational process in the United States and around the world.

Dr. Carter G. Woodson was a Black History Achiever!

As you are aware, the 2012 theme for Black History Month is “*Black Women in American Culture and History*.” Given this theme, it is important to point out that powerful Black women were major contributors to the success of Dr. Woodson’s Black History initiative. For example, Ms. Mary McCloud Bethune served as President of what is now called the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History for 15 years, from 1926, the year it was founded, to 1951 - one year after Dr. Woodson’s death.

In addition to promoting Negro History Week, Ms. Bethune had remarkable achievements of her own. She was the founding President of Bethune-Cookman College, an HBCU. She founded the National Council of Negro Women in 1935, bringing together 28 organizations to form a council to facilitate the improvement of the quality of life for women and their communities. She became a member of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Black Cabinet (sometimes called his Kitchen Cabinet). She is the person who shared the concerns of black people with the Roosevelt administration while at the same time spreading his message to blacks, who had traditionally been Republican voters. Additionally, as an NAACP representative, Mary McLeod Bethune was the only black woman present at the founding of the United Nations in San Francisco in 1948.

In her last presidential address to the Association in 1950, she called on all scholars and leaders to take up the charge given by Dr. Woodson and outlined a number of ways that this could be done. The title of her speech was: *The Torch is Ours*. I will read a short quote from that speech:

“When Carter Woodson passed on, last April, he left behind the strongly burning torch of his hard-won and ever-increasing knowledge of our past, and his courage and steadfastness in adhering to the truth. He struck that torch high into the crevice between the rock of prejudice and discrimination....”

Mary McLeod Bethune was a Black History Achiever!

It might interest you to know that an ornament of Carter G. Woodson has been hung on the White House Christmas tree each year since Ms. Bethune proposed the practice to President Roosevelt. The quote on the ornament is the one that I read earlier, but it merits repeating: “If a race has no history, if it has no worthwhile tradition, it becomes a negligible factor in the thought of the world, and it stands in danger of being exterminated.” I am certain that President Obama and the First Lady point to the ornament with pride, knowing that Sasha and Malia will grow up to become strong black women, carrying the torch that both Carter G. Woodson and Mary McLeod Bethune stuck high into the crevice between the rock of prejudice and discrimination.

I am delighted to say that the torch burns brightly and steadily at Makerere University and I am privileged to be reflected in that light. The burning torch is also held aloft by President Obama and I am also privileged to be reflected in his bright light.

*President Obama acknowledges openly and often that his rise to what is arguably the most powerful political office in the world is the outcome of the struggles of tens of thousands of torch bearers in Africa and the African Diaspora. And while the legacy of these struggles is only a part of the portrait of President Obama, it provides important context for analyses of his presidency.*

During his July 2009 official visit to Ghana, President Obama said this: “I do not see the countries and people of Africa as a world apart; I see Africa as a fundamental part of our interconnected world – as partners with America on behalf of the future we want for all of our children...” He also said that real partnerships must be grounded in mutual responsibility and mutual respect. The President believes that the true sign of success is not whether the United States is a source of aid that helps people scrape by – rather, it is whether we are partners in building the capacity for transformation and change.

Since taking office, the President’s major areas of focus in Africa have included women’s rights, good governance, youth and leadership, trade opportunities, (AGOA), health, education and food security. He has not hesitated to include women in this work. First Lady Michelle Obama (and Sasha and Malia) attended the Women’s Leadership Forum in South Africa last year

and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton attended the inauguration of President Johnson-Sirleaf in Liberia last month, recognizing and honoring an African woman who proudly holds the torch aloft.

President Barack Obama is a major Black History Achiever who recognizes President Johnson-Sirleaf as a major Black History Achiever!

## **Part 2: Brief History and Structure of the Fulbright Program**

The Fulbright Program is the U.S. government's flagship international exchange program. It is designed to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries. Fulbright participants have the opportunity to study, teach and conduct research in six (6) regional areas: Sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia and Pacific, Europe and Eurasia, the Near East, South and Central Asia, and the Western Hemisphere.

The core principals of the Fulbright Program are:

- Bi-Nationalism
- Bilateral support
- Open competition based on merit and bi-national priorities
- Transparency of the selection process
- Diversity, and
- Supporting leadership potential as a means of advancing mutual understanding

Senator J. William Fulbright of Arkansas drafted the Fulbright Act of 1946. He believed that educational and cultural exchanges were essential to advancing peace, freedom, and international cooperation. He envisioned, and I quote, "a modest program with an immodest aim."

Before the final passage of the Fulbright Act, two points impressed him: 1) domestic politics might influence selection of American Fulbright participants, and 2) short-term foreign policy goals might come to determine the character of the program. So he attached to the Bill, as an amendment, a provision for a Presidentially appointed Board. The intent was to establish an impartial, independent body that could assure the respect and cooperation of the academic world in the educational exchange program, particularity in the selection of grantees and educational institutions qualified to participate.

The Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 (known as the Fulbright-Hays Act), consolidated and enlarged the authority of the Board. In addition to exercising final responsibility for approving the selection of participants in educational exchange programs, the Board was given statutory responsibility for supervision of the programs at home and abroad, to determine if the activities and projects approved for support met sound academic criteria; satisfied rigorous standards of excellence; contained a broad multiplier effect; and had a mutual exchange component.

Currently, the Fulbright Board consists of 12 members, citizens from all walks of life who are nominated by a variety of individuals and groups, vetted by White House staff and recommended for Presidential appointments. When the 12-member Board was established, approximately 800 Fulbright awards were made each year. In 2011, over 8,000 awards were made to participants in 155 countries. This volume of applications ensures that the Fulbright Board is truly a *working* Board. Each year the Board seeks to develop practices and procedures that improve the Program and support the integrity of the Fulbright brand.

During the early days of the Fulbright Program, bi-national commissions were created to coordinate national programs. Each commission has an Executive Director and a Board composed of citizens of the participating nation and Americans citizens. Currently, there are 50 nations that interact with Fulbright through their bi-national commissions or foundations. In countries without commissions the Public Affairs section of the U.S. Embassy develops and supervises the Fulbright Program.

Since 1946, over 300,000 participants from across the globe – chosen for their academic merit and leadership potential - have been provided Fulbright support to study, teach and conduct research, exchange ideas and contribute solutions to shared international concerns. These former Fulbrighters hold, or have held, leadership positions in over 100 countries and scores of international agencies, universities, NGOs and philanthropic foundations around the world.

The Fulbright Program is managed by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) within the U.S. Department of State. Under guidelines established by the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board, ECA administers the program with the assistance of the bi-national commissions, U.S. embassies, and cooperating agencies such as the Institute of International Education (IIE), the Council for the International Exchange of Scholars (CIES) and others that perform the day to day activities of recruiting, processing and vetting applications, handling payments and placements, providing enrichment activities and documenting and highlighting the achievements of participants. A dedicated staff assists the Fulbright Board with quarterly meetings, research, media support, travel, regional review assignments and other activities.

Congressional appropriations are the major source of funding for Fulbright policy and programs. However, contributions from Bi-national Commissions, participating governments, host institutions, corporations and foundations in foreign countries and in the United States provide direct and indirect support for the Fulbright Program. Total expenditures for the program are now approximately \$400 million per year.

Nations with Bi-national Fulbright Commissions or cost-sharing agreements generally have greater interaction with Fulbright Programs than do non-commission nations because they have permanent institutions to support and represent them as equal partners in jointly sponsored

educational and cultural exchanges. The nations without Commissions or cost-sharing agreements do not have the types of partnerships that President Obama envisioned.

Fulbright Programs are both long-term and short term. They include opportunities for students and senior scholars, classroom teachers, researchers, mid-career professionals. Fulbright wades across almost every academic discipline, except MBAs and Medical degrees. Recently, new programs for engaging on public policy issues in government ministries and collaboration on research over several years have been established. These programs reflect Fulbright's ability to adapt to needs and changing conditions across the globe.

In order to assure diversity in Fulbright programs, priorities that apply to all participating countries, including the United States, have been adopted. These include:

1. Promoting diversity in many areas — cultural, gender, geographic ethnicity, race, religion, geographic location, social-economic status, and disabilities — through:
  - Recruiting from a diverse field of applicants
  - Ensuring that visiting Fulbrighters are placed in diverse institutions across the United States
  - Expanding outreach to wider audiences using current communications resources and technologies. To this end, the Fulbright Board now has a Twitter feed (**@Fulbright Board**) and will soon launch a Facebook page, along with its broad Internet presence.
2. Reducing repeat grant recipients, giving preference to applicants without significant overseas educational experience and with no previous Fulbright awards;
3. Employing a systematic approach to program planning and information exchange among the Board, the Bureau, and commissions and posts;
4. Re-emphasizing partner government contributions;
5. Ensuring that grantees are aware of Fulbright's distinguished history;
6. Encouraging Fulbrighters to be cultural ambassadors abroad and involved alumni upon returning home; and
7. Encouraging community involvement by U.S. and international grantees.

An example of the latter is the involvement of the Fulbright Board and over 120 international Fulbright Enrichment Seminar participants in Saturday tutoring programs in three primary schools during our Board meeting in Atlanta two weeks ago. I asked a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade student how he felt when he saw people from many different countries coming to his school to support him and his classmates. His answer was, "nervous" and "excited."

The Board also held a panel discussion at its public session on *Diversity in the Fulbright Program: Challenge and Opportunity*. The panel included an U.S. Department of State official, a Japanese Foreign Language Teaching Assistant, a Fulbright alumnus, an international programs officer and a key administrator from the Atlanta University Center, a consortium of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). They concluded that some progress has been made in the area of diversity but a lot more work is needed to achieve Fulbright diversity goals.

It is important to note that while the Fulbright Program is primarily educational and cultural, it seeks to achieve diplomatic and development goals and operates in a global political environment. So, at its core, the Fulbright Program is a foreign policy initiative that Senator Fulbright concluded was probably the most important and potentially rewarding of America's foreign-policy initiatives.

With that statement, I want to pivot to the Africa Fulbright Program

### **Part 3: Fulbright and Africa**

The Fulbright Program is the leader within a broad range of international educational exchanges. This broader context is important to consider. According to Open Doors, in 2011 a total of 723,277 non-sponsored international students studied in the United States. The leading nations of origin were: China with 157,558 and India with 103,895. The only African nations in the top 25 are Nigeria with 7,148 and Kenya with 4,666.

The Sub-Saharan Africa Fulbright Program is a regional program that is administered in 34 countries by the Fulbright Africa Program Branch in collaboration with U.S. embassies in the region. The program has a regional budget that covers all Sub-Saharan African programs, except for South Africa which has a country budget - due in part to ongoing private sector funding. United States-Africa policy and conditions on the ground determine which countries participate in the program. Generally, programs are implemented in countries deemed significant to U.S. interests and where infrastructure can ideally support two-way exchanges. Although there are countries where security issues prevent placement of U.S. grantees, recruits from these countries are still placed in U.S. universities.

The African Fulbright Program supports both educational and global issues affecting the region, including HIV/AIDS and conflict resolution, and continues to be responsive to newly launched initiatives, such as food security, an issue of significant importance in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The Student Program is the most active element of the Africa Fulbright Program, bringing African students to the United States each year for masters or doctorate degrees and sending U.S. graduate students to African countries primarily to conduct dissertation research in a wide range of fields.

The Scholar Program is also important. U.S. scholars receive Fulbright awards to teach at African institutions and/or to engage in research in African countries. The exchange component brings senior African scholars to the United States to conduct research under the African Research Scholar Program and supports junior scholars for post-graduate degree programs.

In 2010-2011 the Sub-Saharan regional program made 350 Fulbright awards. The top five grantee countries were: #1 South Africa - 52; #2 Nigeria - 26; #3 Burkina Faso - 18; #4 Ghana - 17; and #5 Senegal - 15.

The most popular fields of study for African students are Business and Management, Engineering, Mathematics and Computer Science and Physical and Life Sciences (totaling 59%).

California is the leading host state, followed by New York and Texas. You will be pleased to learn that women receive approximately 52% of African Fulbright awards.

Uganda is a popular country for U.S. scholars. Makerere University has historically been the primary host institution, but in recent years, grantees have also affiliated with Gulu University and Mbarara University of Science and Technology. In 2011, the award count for Uganda was 17: 4 U.S. scholars, 3 Ugandan scholars, 2 U.S. students and 8 Ugandan students.

The list of Ugandan Fulbrighters and Ugandan black history achievers is long and distinguished, but I will highlight three (3) of the earliest Ugandan Fulbrighters:

**Professor Senteza Kajubi** (Fulbright Visiting Student, 1952, University of Chicago). He was Uganda's first Fulbrighter. I am certain that you are aware of his many achievements, including the Distinguished Order of the Nile and serving twice as Makerere University's Vice Chancellor. He was principal at what is now Kyamboga University, Vice Chancellor of Nkumba University and was the Kyadondo North elected representative to the Constituent Assembly that debated Uganda's 2005 constitution. He also led the commission that introduced Uganda's Universal Primary Education (UPE).

Professor Kajubi is a Black History Achiever!

**Joyce Mpanga** (Fulbright Visiting Student, 1961, Indiana University). She was one of the first women elected to the Ugandan Parliament. During her first term, she initiated legislation and policies for the advancement of women and was appointed Minister for Women and Development in 1987. She also served as Minister of State for Primary Education from 1989 to 1992. Ms. Mpanga continues to be a dedicated civil rights advocate through her involvement with the Kabaka Foundation and other non-profit initiatives.

Ms. Mpanga is a Black History Achiever!

**Olara Otunnu** (Fulbright Visiting Student, 1977, Harvard Law School) was Uganda's Ambassador to the UN from 1980 to 1985; the Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1985 to 1986; President of the International Peace Academy from 1990 to 1998; and UN Under-Secretary General and Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict from 1997 to 2005.

Olara Otunnu is a Black History Achiever!

#### Part 4: Obama, Fulbright and Options for Africa

Significant progress has been made in President Obama's policy initiatives for Africa. During his administration, the United States has contributed to democratic transitions in [Côte d'Ivoire](#), [Guinea-Conakry](#) and [Niger](#); successful elections in [Nigeria](#); and a referendum that led to the independence of [South Sudan](#). President Obama continues to promote African economic development through annual Africa Growth and Opportunity Act ([AGOA](#)) Forums, he is working hard to end sexual and gender-based violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo ([DRC](#)) and to eliminate the atrocities perpetrated by the Lord's Resistance Army throughout Central Africa.

Additionally, [Feed the Future](#), the U.S. government's global food security initiative, focused on 12 African countries, and the U.S. [Global Health Initiative](#) is investing \$63 billion over six years to help partner countries improve the health of women, newborns, and children. The Obama Administration is also working with African counterparts all across the continent to provide food to drought-stricken populations in the Horn of Africa, to assist refugee populations, to curtail drug and arms smuggling, and to mitigate the effects of global climate change.

Fulbright academic exchanges during the Obama Administration have led to the introduction of new fields of study, enrichment of curricula, creation of research centers, joint publications, and the establishment of long-term relationships beyond Fulbright funding.

Among the challenges faced by Sub-Saharan African nations with regards to the Fulbright Program are:

1. Applicants far outnumber the grants funded under its Regional Budget.
2. Limited cost-sharing for U.S. and African grantees on the part of African governments and institutions.
3. Political and social unrest that often results in the suspension of programs. Currently, U.S. Fulbright programs in Cote d'Ivoire and Madagascar are suspended and ongoing uncertainty in Mauritania and Chad have prevented placement of U.S. grantees for a number of years. However, this does not preclude the placement of students and scholars from these countries in U.S. institutions.

Except for the issue of leadership, it is difficult to understand why cost sharing is such a big problem, especially in oil- and gem-rich African nations. While understanding that these are complex matters, we should begin to peel away some of the layers of complexity.

At the moment, no Sub-Saharan African nation is among the 50 Bi-National Fulbright Commission countries. Liberia and South Africa established Bi-national Fulbright Commissions in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but Liberia's commission lapsed decades ago and the South Africa Commission ended in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In the absence of commissions or cost-sharing agreements in Sub-Saharan Africa, Fulbright programs will continue to be constrained by a *regional budget* that affects the number, types and priorities for Fulbright awards. African states are also constrained by the absence of national agency, meaning, the absence of representation in the form of an institution dedicated to promoting national priorities and national scholars and seeking funds from the government and the private sector to support them. They have no system for keeping up with and even initiating opportunities with the Fulbright establishment.

Looking forward, African states should be able to establish relationships with the United States that reflect President Obama's vision of partnerships grounded in mutual responsibility and mutual respect.

I am hopeful that African scholars will begin organizing from the ground-up, building non-governmental institutions that promote and support partnerships and priority-setting through bi-national and multi-national exchanges. Scholars can work with university leaders to increase institutional contributions, especially in-kind contributions, such as housing and in-country travel for researchers that do not involve cash outlays. Housing for one or more Fulbright scholars translates into tens of thousands of dollars of cost-sharing each year. In the United States, universities enhance cost-sharing with tuition assistance and housing. The importance of these types of in-kind contributions should not be underestimated.

At the end of the day, a cost-sharing partnership at the national level provides many benefits. Since the United States generally matches partnering contributions – effectively doubling the value of national contributions - this alone should be an incentive for African countries. Moreover, with a full-time professional Executive Director devoted to fund-raising and negotiating with Fulbright, universities, governments, NGOs, and private sector corporations and individuals, educational exchanges and opportunities for advancement of national priorities are enhanced, and do not depend on which party is in power.

In sum, a major return from an Obama-type partnership is a professional institution dedicated to national priorities, providing technical support and monitoring quality and diversity among applicants, coordinating educational exchanges across universities, serving as a negotiator for domestic, Fulbright and multi-lateral forms of international support, and developing and managing an electronic data bank on scholars, institutional expertise, and national strengths and deficits - identifying the voids and addressing them systematically.

In his speech in Ghana, President Obama said “I can promise you this: America will be with you. As a partner. As a friend. Opportunity won't come from any other place, though - it must

come from the decisions that you make, the things that you do, and the hope that you hold in your hearts.”

As a political scientist who taught graduate courses on Education and Development and the Politics of Education in the 1980s, I want to remind all of us that education is always political because it is connected to the acquisition of agency. *Henry Giroux: Rethinking the Promise of Critical Education Under an Obama Regime* suggests that as a political project, education should illuminate the relationships among knowledge, authority and power.... It should also illuminate how knowledge, identities and authority are constructed within particular sets of social relations. ...Educators need to combine a discourse of critique and resistance with a discourse of possibility and hope. Such optimism can both recall and seek to reclaim consciousness of the **public** and **democratic** role of higher education, which raises fundamental questions about how knowledge can be emancipatory and how an education for democracy can be both desirable and possible.

Senegal is the only African nation that I am aware of that is actively moving towards the establishment of a permanent institution to support educational and cultural exchanges. President A. Wade issued the call for collaborative partnerships at the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Festival of Black Arts and Culture, Dakar, 2010. Since then, planning meetings have taken place in Senegal and the United States. I was asked to draw up the design for setting up these academic partnerships. They are a step towards the Obama-style partnerships and are designed to create an African Renaissance.

My final point is this. Mary McCloud Bethune said, “The torch is ours.” As we celebrate Black History Month and East Africa’s Golden Independence Jubilee, let us resolve to continue to recognize and celebrate our history and our legacy and let us remember the words that motivated the struggles of those who came before us: “We have come too far to turn back now.” We must organize ourselves to move forward with dignity and purpose. We must continue to raise the torch high and keep the flame alight. We must become the Black History Achievers that ignite the African Renaissance.

-End-