

A few years ago former US Congressman J.C. Watts sent out a flyer that he was embarking on a trade mission to Africa and solicited participants. It sounded interesting to me so I registered for the trip. Shortly thereafter his Chief of Staff called me and asked if I could go as an individual, not as a principal of the National Black Chamber of Commerce. In addition to charging a fee that was twice the actual cost (so that participants could pay for their own way plus that of the government employees) they wanted us to go as neutrals - without portfolio or mission. I told him I was insulted and now realize it was all about his boss "profiling" instead of doing something for Africa. "Good bye and never mind";.

Such is the plight of Africa. So many African Americans profiling and claiming to care but when you get right down to it they are looking for a new place to party. Too few appear to be serious.

This is what is immediately needed in Africa:

1. Darfur, Sudan is the latest in a long line of genocides. If Martin Luther King was in Congress right now he would jam it up with filibuster and obstruction until this nation would act affirmatively. Just like Rwanda we have a leadership that just goes to sleep on this. We must wake up or shock Congress and this Administration into quick and strong action. No one group should be allowed to perform genocide on another right before our eyes. With 42+ Black elected officials one would think there would be some courageous fighters against this evil. Getting arrested in front of the Sudan embassy and posting immediate bail doesn't get it any longer. We need substance.

2. A major killer of children in Africa is malaria. The solution is simple. Just as Europe and the United States did back in the 1920's we spray the infested areas with DDT. Shortly, the death rate of millions of Africans would subside and the quality of health care would greatly improve. Oh yea, we can work on saving a few species of animals as the need arises but the mission is to save human beings.

3. Do not move a single penny into an African nation without proof of full compliance with HIV/AIDS prevention and care. We have a Minister of Health in South Africa telling her people to eat more vegetables and HIV/AIDS will go away. All the while, 300,000 South Africans are dying each and every year. Let's get real!

4. All USAID, TDA and other such funding for Africa must go exclusively on its infrastructure. Viable roads, water and sewer lines, wastewater treatment, bridges, power plants, schools and hospitals should be the top priority. These funds should go out as competitive bids and contracts to US/African joint ventures. No more consulting contracts, feasibility studies, conflict resolution exercises and other inconsequential overly priced exercises. We need infrastructure for economic vitality and an atmosphere consistent with progress. Let's stop flushing billions of valuable dollars down the toilet for worthless programs on an annual basis.

5. Let's stop "Third Country Loopholes" to Africa. Any trade enhancements or initiatives should be between the United States and sub-Saharan African nations exclusively. What does China, Malaysia, Mauritius, etc. have to do between us and Africa? Thanks for the interest Europe, Asia, etc. but we are going to do this deal and make it work for the intended party - sub-Saharan Africa. It is so sad to see a Black congressman speaking on behalf of Asian or other interests saying that Africa isn't ready for the big time so let's let China or whoever in the deal in exchange for menial jobs. Currently, a member of the Congressional Black Caucus is touting China for raw cotton and textile production in Africa under the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). He says in exchange Africans can receive \$80 per month sweating over some sewing machines. One African ambassador told me it's "intellectually insulting" but I declare it downright crazy.

What was the Voting Rights Act for if it wasn't to empower African Americans and provide a natural ally and resource for Africa? It is shameful, despicable and extremely dangerous what we have going on right now. Wake up Black America!! It's time to hold our so called leaders and elected officials accountable. Millions of children depend on us.

Starting in January we are going to track each member of the CBC and other key congressional members to see what they are doing for Africa on a quarterly basis. We will let you know.

Mr. Alford is President/CEO of the National Black Chamber of Commerce.

Website: <http://www.nationalbcc.org/>. Email: president@nationalbcc.org .