

Health and economic issues have never been more important to Sub-Saharan Africa than the last fifteen years. There has been one president who stepped forward and made a positive difference. There is another president, in contrast, that has done virtually little nor shows any concern for this land of over one billion human beings. Ironically, the president with purely European bloodlines and an upbringing from the southern part of the United States has poured his heart into

Africa

. The president who has direct bloodlines to

Africa

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Kenya

) has displayed a very laissez faire attitude to the tremendous challenges that face this continent.

Here is a review of President Bush's involvement in Africa by the Africa Growth Initiative:

"Bush's most important initiatives focused on alleviating major health challenges facing the African people. In 2003, President Bush launched the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which was then the largest single effort by any nation targeting a specific disease. The program sought to establish and scale up HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment programs. According to the PEPFAR program website, "during its first phase, PEPFAR supported the provision of treatment to more than two million people, care to more than 10 million people, including more than four million orphans and vulnerable children, and prevention of mother-to-child treatment services." Under President Bush, this program was criticized for its emphasis on abstinence based prevention, but on the whole this initiative was an unprecedented attack against the AIDS pandemic.

Bush then targeted another deadly disease with the launch of the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI) in 2005. The PMI had the initial goal of reducing malaria-related deaths by 50 percent in 15 focus countries. Malaria places a huge burden on Africans—causing millions of adult deaths every year and significant reductions in productivity. Results on the PMI website show that the program has major effect in reducing prevalence of malaria, child mortality and related deaths.

The Bush administration's African foreign policy did not stop with health initiatives. Bush led the push for the G-8 nations to demand the multi-lateral debt relief initiative (MDRI), which encouraged the IMF, World Bank and the U.S. to reduce the debt burden of highly indebted poor countries. According to the African Development Bank, as of 2009 the MDRI relieved debt for 21 African countries. In 2004, Bush also successfully passed reforms that converted poor country debt into grants. Additionally, Bush tackled security issues. The president was one of the first world leaders to label the conflict in

Sout

h Sudan

genocide. Although, Bush received criticism for not recognizing the indictment of Omar al-Bashir by the International Criminal Court, he did put in place sanctions on oil coming from the Republic of Sudan

in order to pressure a peace deal. These sanctions currently remain in place. Bush was also determined to create an Africa-based central command for

U.S.

forces. However, he did not win the support of African leaders to base the command, now called Africom, on the continent, with the base now resting in

Germany

. Africom, however, is now an implementing partner for the Department of Defense and PEPFAR, supporting training and testing throughout

Africa

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Following the format of Presidents Carter and Clinton, Bush continues to focus on global health beyond his two presidential terms. His global health cause célèbre is the Pink Ribbon Initiative, an organization formed by the George Bush Presidential Center Institute in partnership with the U.N. and the Susan J. Komen Foundation, to expand access to cervical and breast cancer screening in Africa and Asia. Testing for cervical cancer can be done easily with a drop of vinegar quickly highlighting cancerous tissue; however, screening remains unavailable in many parts of Asia and Africa. Both Laura and George Bush will try to build awareness of this issue during their trip this week. Despite the perception that Bush was only involved in counterterrorism, he built an expansive African foreign policy base that bears as much recognition as the Clinton administration's African Growth and Opportunities Act and Global Health Initiative. “

On the other hand, President Obama has ignored Africa. He went to Ghana in 2009 and gave a condescending speech to elected African leaders talking about corruption. Other than that he has done very little. Many African presidents voice their disappointment with President Obama. According to Patrick Muboko, a Congolese American who recently protested in front of the White House,” We want to tell him it is over if he does not do the right thing for Congo, for children who are crying and dying if he does not do the right thing for democracy, he can count that he has not only lost my vote, but he has lost a lot of votes,” as told to VOA News.com.

Thanks President Bush for all you have done. President Obama, it is not too late.

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