

You can say what you want about Hugo Chavez, President of Venezuela, but one thing is for certain – he is a world player.

Single handedly he has made his country a major influence in South America. Prime ministers and presidents kiss his hand and ask for his advice on international issues.

The more the Bush administration throws at him, the bigger he becomes.

Any major policy that goes on in the Caribbean and South America comes across his desk for opinion.

How did he do it? By simply leveraging his natural resources such as cash and oil. You even see public relations plays on television touting his generous discounts of home heating oil to residents in northeastern United States.

Citgo, owned by Venezuela, is a major player not just in South America but right here in the United States.

It is as if no one can stop this new major player named Hugo Chavez.

As President Bush is making a tour of South America he is countering with an “anti-Bush tour” with the moral support of Black activists such as Harry Belafonte and Danny Glover.

He is a player and Venezuela, perhaps all of South America, is better for it – at least more independent.

One of the most impressive things President Chavez has done is wean South American nations from the influence of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). He views the IMF as an agent in the service of the US.

He has persuaded South American nations to pay off their debts to the IMF and use Venezuela as the preferred friendly lender.

IMF lending in the region has fallen to \$50 million, or less than 1 percent of its global portfolio, compared with 80 percent in 2005.

Meanwhile, Chavez has used his oil wealth to lend \$2.5 billion to Argentina, offer \$1.5 billion to Bolivia and \$500 million to Ecuador.

He says he is promoting a “socialist” alternative to the Fund and its biggest shareholder, the US Treasury.

The global clout of the IMF is now diminishing.

The counterpart to the IMF in Africa is the World Bank. The World Bank has the majority of African nations indebted to it. Like Venezuela, Nigeria is loaded with oil reserves and receives billions in cash from this precious resource.

Due to malfeasance and corruption, this nation which has the largest population of Blacks (100 million+) does not bask in the sunlight with its oil revenue.

It squanders it through many diversions.

It is actually in debt itself and there is much internal violence due to the poverty caused by the vast waste.

If Nigeria became a responsible nation and would realize the power of its resources, there would be little poverty in the nation and it could spread its influence amongst its neighbors and protect them from the exploitation that comes from all directions of the globe. Wouldn't that be wonderful? Afri
can nations depending on financing from their sister nations would be the start to massive economic empowerment.

Right now, the leading investor in Africa is, in fact, the Republic of South Africa.

But it cannot do it alone.

Nigeria with its natural wealth can be the key to turning this around.

Within a few years, the World Bank would be getting out of Africa and the sphere of influence would belong solely to the Africans.

The greedy money grabbers that have too much power in these countries must soon realize that they can still be rich while allowing their own people to free themselves from poverty and oppression caused by indebtedness to strangers who do not have their best interests at heart.

It is the destiny of Nigeria to lead the way. Venezuela has set the example and a set of “best practices”. It may sound like hard medicine to the United States from a policy point of view but let’s face it.

The world, particularly Africa, is not our toy or something destined to be under our power.

The oil revenue from Nigeria can be the catalyst.

With success and a good business model, the continent can proceed with harnessing the rest of its massive reserves of oil.

From there they can move to diamonds, platinum, gold, coltran and all of the rest of the valuable resources that God has blessed it with.

My goodness, if Venezuela can move to a major position of power and influence in a few quick years, think about the possibilities of the great continent of Africa. Hugo Chavez speaks and the whole world listens.

He is quoted almost daily in all major newspapers because he has learned the power of resource utilization. Nigeria, it is time to make your move.