

Blacks Urged to do more to Help Africa

by Hazel Trice Edney
 WASHINGTON (NNPA) — Black people have talked far too much about the problems in Africa and the Diaspora without taking responsibility to be part of the solution, say veteran advocates for

Africa at the National Urban League 65th annual conference. "I think the secret to our civil rights movement was that we understood that segregation was real. We understood that there wasn't

a reason to complain about it. We had to do something about it. Then we saw ourselves as leaders of the United States of America, redeeming the soul of America from the triple evils of racism, war and poverty," said former United Nations Ambassador Andrew Young. "Now, when it comes to dealing with that, I don't think we can redeem the soul of America from poverty unless we involve ourselves with the African continent."

While White Americans take advantage of economic ventures in Africa that benefit them, African-Americans have little knowledge of opportunities in their own

homeland, said Young, chairman of GoodWorks International, which does economic development work in Africa and the Caribbean.

"White people are greedy. They're going where the money is. The money is in Africa. I don't care how humanitarian they are. I don't care how religious they are," Young told an audience during a town hall meeting on Africa and the Diaspora at the NUL's 65th Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. "When it comes to economic opportunity and economic potential, we have done ourselves and Africa a disservice by talking too much about the prob-

lems and not enough about the opportunities."

Florizelle Liser, assistant U.S. trade representative for Africa, said economic trade is improving with the U.S., but there is a long way to go.

"U.S. imports have risen substantially in the last few years, reaching \$26.6 billion in 2004, up 88 percent over 2003," she said.

"This increased trade translates into tens of thousands of new jobs in some of the poorest countries in Africa and hundreds of millions of dollars in new investment in the region," she said.

A problem, she said, is that many small Black firms know little about how to get started in

a trade relationship with Africa. Among resources for information she pointed to the U.S. Department of Commerce and U.S. Export Assistance Centers around the nation.

Mel Foot, founding president and chief executive officer of Constituency for Africa, which co-sponsored the event with the Urban League, says many African-Americans have little knowledge of the travesties being suffered by Africans or the opportunities there to benefit both Africans and African-Americans.

"Hundreds of thousands of our sisters and brothers in Niger and in West Africa are dying and

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Jakes Cries Foul

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crime, it is a business decision. And, to retaliate in that manner was totally unprofessional."

He also suggests that Black-owned publications are walking an ethical fine line between journalism and advertising sales.

"I am under the impression that most newspapers separate their marketing departments from their news departments to ensure that the news stories they publish are not tainted or influenced by the dollar amount spent by the subject of the articles," he says. "And what we're discussing here is a prime example of what happens when marketing and business issues bleed over into the newsroom. Without that separation, how can your readers be cer-

tain that articles are unbiased and are not influenced by the subject's financial contributions to the publication?"

"Marketing didn't ask us to do this article," responds Voice Editor Stan Washington. "I heard what happened and felt that it was newsworthy in light of the June meeting with the NNPA."

Instead of being mad at the Black Press, Jakes should call his staff on the carpet for dropping the ball and subsequently embarrassing him. He should ask his marketing people, "How come we didn't make any buys with the Black press in

BET's A.J. and Free out of work

By David Baudex

NEW YORK — The hosts of "106 & Park" are both out after five years with BET's most popular series, with one suggesting he was pushed out the door.

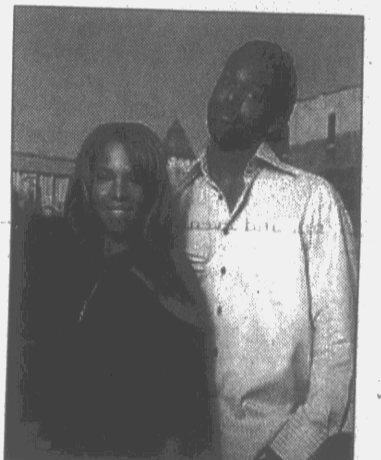
A.J. and Free had their last

shows last week, and their exits prompted an "overwhelming" number of calls and e-mails from fans, a network spokeswoman said. The popular music video and interview show, which airs weekdays from 5 to 6:30 p.m., is a cousin to "Total

Request Live" on fellow-Viacom network MTV.

A.J. Calloway said he was told by BET executive Stephen Hill that the network's new head of programming, Reginald Hudlin, was looking to change the face of the network.

With his contract up, Calloway



Shown the door? Marie Wright and A.J. Calloway, known as Free and A.J., have hosted their last "106 & Park." Calloway suggests he was forced out; the network denies it. — Photo provided by BET

said he was offered a very brief extension — no more than three months. He felt he was being given a message.

"After five years of growing the show to what it is today, it was basically a no-brainer situation," he said.

Hill, BET's executive vice president for music and entertainment programming, said Calloway was never told he wasn't wanted. He would not discuss specifics of contract talks.

"His announcement to leave was a surprise because we were in the process of negotiations to retain him, as we were with Free," Hill said.

Said Calloway: "If you're trying to aggressively keep someone, you don't offer them a month-to-month contract."

Free, whose given name is Marie Wright, did not immediately respond to an e-mail message for comment.

The move prompted an outcry from fans of "106 & Park," which is continuing and may soon audition replacement VJs.

"I assumed we were going to get a number of calls, but we've actually gotten an overwhelming amount of phone calls and e-mail," BET spokeswoman Marcy Polanco said. "A lot of them have been from parents."

Hill said the two hosts "gave an amazing face to our video programming and our programming in general. A.J. and Free are stars, absolutely are stars."

Calloway said he's looking to stay in show business. He's opening a restaurant in Brooklyn this fall.

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we don't know anything about it. The media is not covering it. It's not being told. We're pushing it with the Black Press, NNPA, but we've got to have a vehicle so we

can inform our people about emergency needs," says Foote.

In Niger alone, thousands of children have died from starvation and communicable diseases amidst drought and the worst infestation of crop-devouring loc-

usts in 15 years.

The United Nations has warned of increasing deaths as it has targeted \$2.5 million for emergency food aid while the need exceeds \$9 million.

That does not count the 15

million Africans who have died from AIDS since the epidemic started two decades ago.

Former Congressman Ron Dellums, known for his leadership in helping to end apartheid in South Africa and his current fight

against AIDS/HIV in Africa, told the audience that because of the spread of AIDS around the world, Africa must now see assistance to Africa as a part of its own self-interest.

In other words, "Help me be-

cause to not help me kills you, fool," he said, breaking the audience into laughter and applause. "This is 2005. The level of our rhetoric, the level of our strategic thinking has to change.

Health is now a global strategic issue. So, everyone's self-interest at this point is engaged. The extent to which the Diaspora is disproportionately disadvantaged and vulnerable is the extent to which the rest of the world is also disadvantaged and vulnerable."

Foote outlined a list of solutions that could begin establishing strong relationships between Africans and African-Americans.

"We would urge the National Urban League to move quickly toward developing a strategy for positive engagement with African peoples and issues. We truly believe that our collective efforts are vital to the future political, economic and social well-being of Africa and the Diaspora as well as the United States and eventually the entire world.

How about a 'Whitney M. Young Institute for African Affairs'?" Foote said to loud applause from the audience.

Young, the fourth executive director of the NUL, drowned in Lagos, Nigeria on March 11, 1971, while attending the third African/American dialogue.

Urban League President and Chief Executive Officer Marc Morial told the audience that the League realizes the importance of Black organizations taking up the cause of African-African-American relationships.

"It's important because we have a growing community of people in the United States of people who are from the Caribbean and from Africa," said Morial. He added that even enlightened people have let down their guards as if the struggle in Africa was over after the crumbling apartheid more than a decade ago. But African causes must be renewed among African-Americans, he said.

Ron Walters, University of Maryland political scientist who moderated the panel, agrees that South Africa protest strategies must now be applied in other ways, including against government oppression in Sudan, where a government army of about 20,000 is blamed for vicious attacks, rapes and murders of non-Muslim civilians in the Darfur region.

More than 2 million people have died either by violence, disease or other war-related impacts over the past decade, according to Globalsecurity.org.

Applauding the work of WOL radio talk show host Joe Madison in his fight against the violence in Sudan, Walters said Madison was recently honored in Newark, N.J. as Gov. Richard J. Codey signed divestment legislation similar to sanctions against South Africa.

Chicago will attempt a similar strategy, he said. "We're hoping that by using this same tactic, we can be successful in bringing some of the pain that people in Sudan are suffering today to an end."

From oppression to AIDS and other diseases to war and famine, dark-skinned people around the globe suffer disproportionately.

Ron Daniels, executive director of the New-York-based Center for Constitutional Rights, says Haiti has been all but ignored. The 7.5 million people of the war-torn nation are the poorest in the Western Hemisphere, with 80 percent living in poverty.

"We need more aggressive government enforcement by way of U. S. government in collaboration of Haitian authorities, we need jobs programs, massive public works programs, and medical assistance," said Daniels, founder of the Haiti Support Project. "We must focus on both justice and reconciliation."

The needs of the Diaspora are daunting, says Morial, but, he said he believes it's time for a unified effort.

"We are just going to continue to think about ways that the Urban League and other historic African-American organizations can in fact develop a unified agenda, how we can make sure that these issues are on the agenda," Morial said. "At the very, very least, we have to re-energize the conversation. Whether it's Haiti or the Sudan, whether it's the economic issues related to global or debt relief, whether it's related to the continuing problems of poverty and AIDS, or whether it relates to the issues of fair trade, economic aid, whatever the issues are, we've got to educate and we've got to enlighten the people and we've got to first begin by understanding the issues ourselves."



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