

## TOWARDS A STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT: AN AFRICAN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE



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As a graduate student at UCLA in 1976, majoring in Political Science, with a specialization in Southern African politics, the burning question, at that time, was “What Path to Development for Africa?”. Today, the answer to the question remains as elusive now, as then, perhaps, even more so. As I’ve wrestled with this question, since my graduate years, I feel much closer to a workable solution and strategy, given the current realities on the ground in the sub-continent. Today, unlike 1976, many African countries have attained a degree of “independence”, in as much as the faces of governance have changed and now, have African origin. However, colonial rule, in many and most instances, has only been replaced by a system of neo-colonialism and a philosophy of neo-liberalism which keeps the African governments subservient, and holds their economies hostage to non-effective aid policies, IMF loans, global corporate greed and exploitation, European and American intervention in internal affairs (political, economic and social), political assassination, sabotage, and divide and rule tactics. Such antics on the part of Western entities, breed internal corruption, unstable governments, social displacement, disempowerment, and outright poverty. We still await the studies investigating whether there has been overt or covert involvement by the West in a conspiracy to spread HIV/AIDS in Africa as a means of population control.

While this kind of behavior is expected and anticipated by Western governments, what is not to be tolerated is the complicity by certain African governments, which allow it, or foster internal strife, thus furthering impoverishment and disempowerment of their own populace. The West’s involvement in the assassinations of Patrice Lumumba, Thomas Sankara and Amilcar Cabral are well documented. The loss of such leaders and visionaries such as Sekou Toure, Steven Biko and countless others, have left a leadership vacuum in the sub-continent, which at times, seems insurmountable. Thus, thinking outside the proverbial box is needed if we are to address the question of Sustainable Development in Africa, and by extension, the African Diaspora. This implies an answer that one is not likely to find in academia or institutions of higher learning. This requires a potential solution which is born out of the struggle of African people, everywhere

we have found oppression, exploitation and toil. Those of us who have shed blood, tears and sweat in our quest for liberation and a higher level of life, come with different perspectives than those whose experience has been limited to the confines of academia or offices with air conditioners or what the topic of the next lecture should be. The view from the trenches is somewhat different than the one from the hill, and therefore our solutions and approaches should attempt to form a synthesis of both perspectives. This will be the direction and shape of the content of this paper.

In the past, many academic circles have viewed the difference in approaches by W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington, as being mutually exclusive. DuBois' Talented Tenth would pull the rest of the race up as it made social progress and achievements in various areas of critical social space, i.e. Medicine, Law, Business, religion, Entertainment, Education, Communications, Sports, etc. On the other hand, Booker T. emphasized the learning of basic skills, such as welding, Agriculture, and industrial work. This emphasis even shaped the curriculum of some of the historically Black colleges and universities. Tennessee State, in Nashville, used to be named Tenn. A & I, which stood for Agricultural and Industrial. The Black boarding school I graduated from, Laurinburg N&I, in Laurinburg, N.C., was known back then, as a Normal and Industrial school. The idea was, that in these schools a basic education was all that was necessary to function in society and to get a good paying job. One did not have to learn Shakespeare's Sonnets, or the Philosophy of Hume, Locke and Descartes by verse. Some scholarly works also make mention of the differences which existed between Marcus Garvey and Washington, with reference to Garvey's emphasis on developing Africa, using it as a power base for blacks in the Diaspora.

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Malcolm X taught us, "that of all our research, history is our best reward". As we look back now, at these iconic figures in Black History, each of them may have held a key to the intellectual and practical puzzle called, "What Path Development for Africa, and by extension, the Diaspora"? What emerges as we purview each of these tendencies in the Black Liberation Movement is that they may not appear to be as conflicting as they seemed, just a few years ago. In fact, it is looking more like they may even be complimentary to each other, or put another way, each forms a necessary thesis for a synthesis. Our strategy will seek to explore this possibility. DuBois is not incorrect by stating we need a sector of our community which are knowledgeable, capable and committed to elevating the entire national community up to a level where we all can live freely and provide the kind of prosperity for our future generations, which all people strive for. This sector of our people, what Harold Cruse refers to as the "Negro Intellectual", but what I will call the Revolutionary and Progressive Intelligentsia, must be prepared to not only function and learn from acting on a "macro level" in the dominant society, but must be willing and capable to also, utilize those skills in carving out "critical social space" (in Medicine, Law, Communications, Transportation, Health, Science and Technology) in the image and interests of our National Community. What we mean by "in the image of", is that, how we engage these "critical areas" must be guided by African Centered values, laws of governance, and ethics and not the Euro-centric ones we have docilely followed heretofore. Our revolutionary intelligentsia must not cower to Euro-centric paradigms, but must elevate to be/becoming social engineers, who construct theories and ideologies which reflect our (African peoples) vision and view of the world and how we, collectively, wish to shape it, and then build the institutional frameworks and societal structures which house these aspirations, goals, and objectives. However, it is not

enough for our intellectuals to just delve into the realm of ideas, but too, must formulate the best means and ways of implementing those ideas in such a way that they lead to human flourishing and the ability of any system, government or institution we devise, to service and satisfy human need. Practice proves the validity of every good idea or theory. The proverb which states, “while it’s true we don’t live by bread alone, we can only come to that conclusion once we’ve eaten”, rings true. The first premise.

The second premise of this syllogism is put forward by, nonetheless, than Booker T. Washington, the ex-slave who rose up to become the Founder of Tuskegee Institute (now University). While much of the critique of Washington is directed at his many questionable political views, his economic programs, when looked at in historical perspective, have much merit, requiring further investigation. It appears, that in the current social milieu, that his emphasis on practical and trade skills, was not misplaced at all. In 1881, the year that Tuskegee was founded, Washington stressed such industrial skills as farming, welding, carpentry, brick making, shoemaking, printing and cabinet making. These skills also helped to involve students in the building and expansion of the school. Just as trade skills were used in the building and expansion of Tuskegee University, those same skill sets, and more, can be used in Community and Nation Building also. What may have been lacking in Washington’s strategy was a theoretical and visionary framework of where these skills sets could take us, as a people united around a set of principles, goals and common objectives. Yet, in the context of building a National Community and an infra-structure for Pan African Unity, trade and other practical skills sets take on new meaning and relevance, especially in the area of Sustainable Development. Not only do we need brick makers, but we now need solar installers and maintenance persons. We need windmill panel makers, installers, water usage and purification systems and mechanisms, and contractors who have the knowledge and skilled worker base, to refurbish and retrofit new and existing housing in order to maximize their sustainability and energy efficiency. These are jobs that would not just be limited to the US, but as the world moves closer to a “Peak Oil” critical moment, these skills will be in demand all over the world and will need a trained workforce to supply and fill that demand. The beauty of Washington’s position is that it occurred at the same time as the Industrial Revolution in the Western world. As a community of people Blacks were not poised, nor was American

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society receptive to, blacks taking full advantage of the economic transformation about to sweep the globe. Booker T. Washington made his transition in 1915. The first Model T Ford was made in 1908. It remains disputed when the first airplane flew. But these two industries alone, revolutionized trade, commerce, and the tourist industries for time immemorial. Yet, the thought lingers, what if Washington had prepared and trained a Black work force to service and permeate these key industries? However, we should not wallow in despair as the Sustainable and Green Revolution afford the same possibilities and potential as the Industrial Revolution. Van Jones, author of the best selling book, “Green Collar Economy”, and former Green Jobs Czar of the Obama administration, points out that Blacks are well suited to take advantage of the jobs and industries which will grow out of the Green Revolution currently gaining momentum in American and other industrialized societies. These could also be the type of good jobs, which ex-felons and at-risk youth could do easily, when trained, giving them a degree of parity in the work force, allowing them to enter back into the social fabric, cutting recidivism, thus, making them productive citizens.

The synthesis we hope to form, is really a combination of the ideology and practice of two

historical figures, Marcus Garvey and Kwame Nkrumah. Garvey's economic policies were fairly advanced for his time, but their value and vision are very relevant in the context of 2009-2010. Garvey, in his wisdom, sought to engage blacks in infra-structure building for what he envisioned as a Black Nation, which could independently trade with other Black Nations in the Caribbean, Africa and throughout Diaspora. This idea took shape and form in the establishment of the Negro Factories Corporation, which, in Garvey's words, was to "build and operate factories in the big industrial centers of the United States, Central America, the West Indies (sic) and Africa, to manufacture every marketable commodity". Through his vision and leadership, Garvey's organization, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), started chains of grocery stores, restaurants, steam laundries, tailoring and dressmaking shops, a millinery store and publishing house. In no small measure, this accounts for one of the reasons the membership of the UNIA grew into the millions, worldwide, and was able to employ many of its own people, while providing the means to deliver basic goods and services. The West African country of Liberia, founded by ex-slaves, was to serve as a base of operations to build infra-structure for delivery of similar goods and services on the African continent. The Liberia project was launched in 1920, and it sought to build trade schools, colleges, universities, industrial plants and railroads to facilitate trade and commerce. While Garvey is credited with the phrase, "Africa for the Africans", he did not advocate that all African Americans emigrate back to Africa, just those who chose not to accept to live within the confines of a racist, oppressive and exploitative system which sought to deny people of African descent, basic human and civil rights as expressed in the Constitution. Thus, Africa, in Garvey's scheme and model, was to serve as a political base for its Diasporan children wishing to "return home". The final link in this master strategy was the Black Star Line, which was to purchase ships which would be used to transport people and goods across the Atlantic and throughout the Caribbean. Garvey may have made what, in hindsight, was a fatal mistake, and could have learned a valuable lesson from DuBois. Garvey could have had more trained and professional people manage, purchase, register and raise money for the ships in the Black Star Line. Nevertheless, Garvey's vision was masterful, and serves as a model and paradigm for what is possible, even today.

As a young West African, Ghanaian student, Kwame Nkrumah graduated from Lincoln University, in Pennsylvania, in 1942. As he continued his education, he grew increasingly, under the influence of Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. Du Bois and George Padmore, an organizer of the Manchester Conference of 1945, which is credited for laying the establishing the agenda for African decolonization. As Garvey was laying groundwork for building economic infra-structure on the African continent, Kwame Nkrumah was becoming the inspiration and personification of the unity of African people the world over, with his philosophy of Pan Africanism. Nkrumah's plan was to build Ghana as a model African country, and learn to export the model to other African countries as they gained independence. Working with C.L.R. James and George Padmore to organize the 5th Pan African Congress, Nkrumah was quickly emerging as an

4) ideologue for Pan Africanism. Many and most of the African independence leaders attending this conference, began to lay out broad strategies on how they would collectively and particularly, pursue independence in their respective countries. Later, Nkrumah was to become the inspiration and agitator for the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Many organizations in Africa and the Diaspora, still aspire to build the ever elusive Pan African Unity, which DuBois, Garvey and Nkrumah espoused. However, it may be the philosophy and teachings of Booker T. and Garvey which provide us with the paths to achieve this noble goal.

Garvey's notion of "building an industrial infra-structure which provides every commodity", may seem a bit ideal in today's world, but when connected with Booker T's idea of building a workforce of skilled laborers, it has intrinsic value in the following areas which we will call: SEVEN FACTORS OF SUSTAINABLE AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA AND DIASPORA

- I. Establishing Trade and Commerce Missions (Africa, New Africa, Caribbean)
- II. Revenue and Funding Sources – Dues, Foundations, Investment Clubs/corporations, IMF, UN, taxes
- III. Infra-structure Building – Garvey's notion of building in every industry combined with Booker T's trade skills training.
- IV. Expansion of Cultural and Economic Trade and Exchange
- V. Modernization of Agricultural Production/Distribution among African peoples
- VI. Systematic and Strategic, Transfer and Exchange of Knowledge, Technology and Science between/among Continental and Diasporan Africans
- VII. Dynamic Development Strategies and Methods – Triangular (Africa, New Africa, Caribbean); Square (inclusive of African ex-patriates)

#### SEVEN FACTORS OF SUSTAINABLE AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA AND DIASPORA

1. Establishing Trade and Commerce Missions (Africa, New Africa, Caribbean)
  - A. Determining which industries are most attractive to and marketable for African/Diasporan people; e.g. Fashion Industry(African centered designs, textiles, clothing outlets) tourism, agriculture, herbology, sustainable housing Construction (Esp. African centered architecture designs).
  - B. Decide where to place each industrial center/plant in order to maximize production and distribution of the

5) designated commodities.

- C. Determining the most efficient trade/commerce/transportation routes to get products to market, and which are for export and which need to be imported.
    - D. Given the above factors, price schedules must be established which allow for affordability, but also enough profit to make the industry sustainable over time/circumstances (market conditions, weather/climate changes competition.
    - E. Economic Intelligence – defense and development.
    - F. Determining the best places to begin building African Marketplaces, which would also house museums, learning centers, theaters, Community Administrative centers (Council of Elders, youth/Simba Corps, Cultural/Convention Center, Communication and Response Teams.
    - G. Training centers for the various trades or a trade college/university.

#### 2. Revenue and Funding Sources

- A. dues, taxes, IMF, Foundations, grants, donations, charities
  - B. The key difference is that these funds will not go to corrupt politicians or civil servants, but will be allocated and administrated by a Foundation, with a Pan African Board of Directors which will determine which projects get funded based on need; how, when, where, and by what

means.

C. We propose that any Reparations which comes in monetary form also be allocated through such Foundation, or Foundation approved sources.

D. Immediate debt relief for African and Caribbean Countries and people of African descent, as part of a reparations package

### 3. Infra Structure Building

A. Transportation – Cross continental Rail System, Modernized air transport system, commercial shipping fleet, trucking system. Roads which facilitate commerce and tourism trade.

B. Sustainable Energy – water (waterfalls, reservoirs, ocean, stream), wind, methanol-ethanol, Solar, Bio-Thermal, which all link up with a continental energy grid.

C. Indigenous Sustainable Sanitation Systems and Water purification

D. Indigenous Communications Systems with the ability to link up with Global systems

E. Reduction of and Penalties for Toxic Waste caused by foreign and/or domestic corporations.

### 4. Expansion of Cultural and Economic Trade an Exchange

A. Exhibition and Preservation of African People artistic heritage and the progressive character of its culture – Museums, Festivals Seminars, Performing Arts Shows

1) As African people enter into this Renaissance era and new stage of development , new rules of engagement must be designed to enter into the global economy. It is mandatory that institutions are built which preserve the

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integrity of African and Diasporan art forms, languages, systems of thought (Dogon, Maat, Ifa, Akhan, Zulu, Masai, etc.) and cultural traditions, such as Council of Elders, Rites of Passage, Cooperative Economics, Extended Family, Reverence for Nature and the Spiritual Quest for Oneness with a God Force. These defining elements of African life and culture must not be lost or compromised at the expense of modernization and/or development.

2) Recognition that Africa Culture is one of Africa's most important , if not the most important exports. It has played a dominant role in the American, South American, Caribbean, and Australian cultures, and now even in faraway places such as Japan. African culture has economic and human value. Thus, it must be packaged to represent the best of what Africa was, is and has the possibility to become, though, it should not just be viewed as a commodity, rather, an expression of who we are as a People in the forward flow of human progress.

B. Employment of Culture in our Collective Struggle for Human Liberation and Transformation

1) Culture must provide the foundation for our:

(a) Identity – who we are, based on our historical Personality as a people

(b) Purpose – based on who we are, what our role and responsibility is in relationship to elevating the quality of life of our people, creating human progress, and transforming society to reflect the best of who we are as Africans and humans.

(c) Direction – the means we choose to achieve the above. To engage in the struggle to define, defend and develop ourselves as African, Pan Africanists and humans. The process(es) of Social Transformation which allows the human personality to realize its fullest potential, and creates a social context which allows for human flourishing.

2) Definition of a Black Aesthetic which gives Black/African art its distinction and unique qualities as an art form.

3) African and African centered Culture is our most valuable product and therefore, must not only be preserved, but promoted among our own people in our quest to regain our historical personality, and overcome the Post Traumatic Shock of Enslavement.

### C. Culture as Economic Stimulus for Africa and Diaspora

1) Gain economic dominance in those areas of Culture where we can gain a measure of control, i.e.

- (a) African centered Fashion Design, tailoring, textiles, haberdashery, millinery
  - (b) Control of Music Production, distribution and promotion
  - (c) African Centered Architectural Design
  - (d) Sports and Entertainment personalities donating to Foundations engaged in Sustainable Development policy, programs and projects.
  - (e) More exchange between and among African (Nigerian, Ghanaian, Senegalese) and New African filmmakers; building community theaters.
  - (f) Encouraging youth to become more inventive and innovative in technology and teaching modalities, particularly in Black schools.
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5. Modernization of Agricultural Production among African people is mandatory, while Preserving the quality of Rural, Social and Cultural Life.

A. Low Carbon foods are healthier/while balance must be struck with export/import crops.

B. Irrigation systems must be installed and maintained, esp. in arid and dry areas.

C. Basis for industry-wide growth as Garvey called for; feeding into grocery markets and restaurant chains; developing food and herb coops; Holistic Health Coops and delivery systems which service underserved communities.

D. Methodologies which ensure that African Mineral Wealth benefits indigenous people.

Corruption must be challenged and rooted out, and replaced by a system which allows re-distribution of wealth on a level of parity. Qatar and Kuwait might serve as models.

6. Transfer and Exchange of Knowledge, Technology and Science between and among Continental Africans and Diasporans –

A. Each sector of the African World (Continental Africans, African Americans, African expatriates, Caribbeans, Brazilians, Africans in Europe, New Zealand, Australia, Fiji, and the rest of Diaspora) must seek methodologies and modalities whereby Science, Knowledge and Technology will be used for human good and progress from an African Worldview, which puts humanity, and Human Good at the center. Emphasis on establishing consortiums, economic clubs, Coops, Conferences and strive to build Pan African Universities which can encourage inventions, study of African languages, architecture, science, Math, Governance, and requirements for re-structuring civil society.

7. Dynamic Development Strategies and Methods –

A. Revolution, as a social phenomena, should never be limited to just struggle from physical bondage, but is inclusive of economic, political and psychological liberation also. Sustainable development strategies and methodologies must be cognizant of this fact, while seeking ways and means of empowering the disenfranchised (peasants, workers and people of color). In this millineum, in todays' world, Sustainable Development is the sine qua non of today's revolutionary process. Sloganizing, theorizing nor repeating ideological formulations will no longer suffice as substitutes for designing ways in which we satisfy human need. The degree to which ideologies, theories and slogans contribute to human growth and flourishing, i.e. Sustainable Development, is the new criteria for their validity. Now is the time to make the

world we only imagined 60 years ago.

The key dynamic to the above proposal is its Comprehensiveness. Obviously, all of these elements cannot be addressed at the same time or to the same degree. Yet, it remains a Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development which can be debated how it is tactically implemented in phases, based on priority, budgetary constraints, and economic/social conditions. It is important here, to define what is meant by Sustainable Development. There are at least 3 Key Elements: Environmental, Economic and Socio-Cultural. Environmental concerns address how we design and balance environmental policy and programmatic initiatives in a manner which is respectful and cognizant of our responsibility to

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be/become good stewards of the earth and nature. The issue of “Peak Oil” points to the need to manage the earth’s resources with maximum efficiency and conservation. The second element of Sustainability, economics, addresses equitable distribution of goods and services, while respecting each person’s human worth and right to benefit from the bounty of the earth’s resources. The socio-cultural element of sustainability identifies key areas of development such as health, housing, jobs, education, agriculture, transportation, technology, spiritual, ethical, artistic and value dimensions of Sustainable Development. While the African Union (AU, formerly Organization of African Unity) seeks to address issues in these critical areas, it remains the responsibility of “Sustainable Minded Developers” to begin strategic building of these infrastructure modalities. These modalities must seek ways to circumvent current political realities which hinder and impede real sustainable development in African and Diasporan communities. We have attempted to draw key elements from the philosophical thrust of each, Washington, DuBois, Garvey and Nkrumah. By reaching across and outside of the continental divide, we hope to have formulated a policy outline for strategic economic development which is truly a joint venture and Pan African in scope and content.

The last sixty years have been marked by worldwide revolution, in which many of the emerging nations and peoples fought against oppression, exploitation and toil imposed by racist and profit motivated regimes which had very low regard for the well-being of their subjects. Malcolm X pointed out to us, that the Bandung Conference illuminated the fact, that it was essentially people of color and poor people who were victimized by colonialism and the imperialistic designs of Europe and its collaborators. Many of the independence movements which followed did little to improve the economic well-being of the constituent masses, as neo-colonial and neo-liberal policies were instituted, which continued to serve the interests of the former colonizers. This paper seeks to detail, with strategic design, how African peoples the world over, can begin to take back into their own hands, their own “destiny and daily lives, and step back on the stage of human history as a free, proud and productive peoples.”

In December, 2010, the largest assembly of people of African descent in history, will meet at the FESMAN FESTIVAL, in Dakar, Senegal. This assembly is being called the beginning of the African Renaissance. A renaissance is not just defined by the quality of life of its people. If Africa and its Diaspora aspire to reach a real renaissance and achieve full and final liberation, it must seek a quality of unity, which Kwame Nkrumah envisioned in his concept of Pan Africanism. In his book, *Consciencism*, Nkrumah, correctly points out, that “while each social system has a supporting ideology, a revolutionary ideology seeks to introduce a new social system”. Therefore, it remains incumbent of every African of good will and conscience, to aid in the definition of the impending African Renaissance. The Industrial Revolution and the rise in



Technological Superiority defined the era of European and American dominance in Global geopolitics, during the past century. As a student of history, there are clear signs that this era is in decline, while marking the ascent of a New World Order in which the world's people of color and its disenfranchised will play a key role. It is within this historical context that we wish to place the African Renaissance. To summarize, the following qualities are proposed in building strategies for a Pan African Sustainable Development:

1. Comprehensive and Multi-dimensional approaches to development.
2. Integrative - Integration of banking, film, communications and media, Fashion and Hair Industries, tourism, etc.
3. Synergism - A synergistic basket of program and projects requiring short and long planning for their implementation.
4. Triangular Development - fundamental to building Pan African Community is the building of linkages between and among continental Africans, African Americans and Caribbeans.

Towards this end we offer these policy proposals, programs and projects with the hope they lend themselves to African peoples (globally), making a meaningful contribution to the forward flow of creating a world in which, "we, our children and our people, can live, love and create freely, and walk in a warmer Sun". Though practice is never quite up to principles, our ancestors and our children demand that we represent the best of what it means to be African and human in the World.

Humbly Submitted, Mwalimu W. Kabaila Chair, Congress of African People;  
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