

## Why Africa Matters to Americans, Eizenstat Memorial Lecture, Atlanta GA

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**Paul Wolfowitz:** Shalom! Good evening! Thank you for this very warm welcome to AhavathAchim Temple. It's a great honor to be here. Thank you, Nancy Levine, President of the Synagogue and to Stanley Baum and Philip Siegel co-Chairing the events. I want to say a special thanks to two friends -- Stuart Eizenstat and Andrew Young -- for their kind introductions. They were little excessive, but it reminds me of once when Lyndon Johnson got a really over the top introduction. He said, "I just wish my mother and father were still alive to hear this. My father would have been so proud, and my mother would've believe it." As Ambassador Young said, and he's said this on some other occasions, he never expect to be introducing me. But I guess he's gotten used to it. We appeared together, as he said, at a community support program in Anacostia last May and then again at the Sullivan Summit inNigeria to promote private enterprise in Africa.

The truth is we do have a lot in common. We not only share a belief in the importance of creating opportunities for the poor, but we also believe that Africa is becoming a continent of hope and not just despair.

Andy Young is a remarkable man who has devoted his life to the cause of democracy and social justice in the United States, and he has taken those concerns to Africa. As mayor of Atlanta, he encouraged private enterprise, and he believes the private sector holds the key to the future ofAfrica.

Thanks to his persuasive skills, the World Bank will be supporting an exciting new initiative, to leverage the knowledge, resources and talent of this city to help fight poverty in an African city in Ghana. Tomorrow, I will be joining Mayor Shirley Franklin, Helene Gayle, President of CARE and Ambassador Young in making the announcement.

Finally, let me say how grateful I am to Stuart Eizenstat for inviting me to this prestigious lecture. I looked at the list of people preceding me as speakers, and I thought that, if I had read the list before I accepted, I might not have felt worthy of the honor. But it is an honor to be here, and to really help celebrate the memory of your father and your uncle.

Both Leo and Berry Eizenstat were children of immigrants. They were part of the greatest generation that served this country so magnificently in World War II, and they went on to run a successful business together. Both men built the lifelong connection to this Synagogue, which has been taken up proudly by the next generation.

I can't imagine a better way to honor your father and your uncle than with a lecture series like this devoted to the topic of public service.

Stuart, I'm very sorry that your mother, Sylvia, couldn't join us today. I was at the Carter Center earlier today, and they told me that she was the very first volunteer there. And they talked about how she was out there everyday greeting visitors to the Center. Please send her my best wishes.

I think we all know the Eizenstat family has been deeply committed to service to our country, serving the cause of social justice.

So much so, that I am told in 1980, when Jimmy Carter lost the election that year, Leo urged his son Stuart, who had been serving under President Carter, to stay on in public service. "I'd rather have you happy in Washington 500 miles away," he said, "than unhappy next door. Your real life is public policy issues and politics. Washington is the city for it and you should stay there." Thanks to his father's wisdom, Stuart has continued to lead a truly outstanding career in public service, law practice and philanthropy. He has worked tirelessly for justice across faiths, class and communities. He has led a pioneering and successful effort to reclaim the assets of Jews stolen during the Holocaust and we are all grateful for his service. I think it's been said that Stuart's first foray into politics was with Andrew Young's Congressional campaign back in 1972 and he and Fran went to work on Atlanta's north side. So, it's a special pleasure to be introduced today by two such distinguished Georgians, who have each given so much to their people and to their country.

Standing in this impressive building, I am reminded of how throughout history, places of worship have represented a powerful expression of hope and opportunity. The idea of caring and giving is deeply rooted to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Sadly, today we hear more about the differences among these faiths and about what they share in common. And one thing they do share in common is the belief in the obligation to give to the poor and needy.

Most of you are probably familiar with what Rabbi Hillel said in Babylon two thousand years ago:  
Eem en ani li mi li?  
Ve'kshe'ani le'atsmi ma ani?  
Eem lo ach'shavey' matay?

If I am not for myself, then who will be for me?  
And when I am only for myself, who am I?  
And if not now, when?

Hillel was a humble man who believed that faith rested on simple principles, the foundation of which was the moral duty to help the less fortunate. Thousand years later, another great Jew Maimonides talked the degrees of tzedakah. The highest form of charity, Maimonides said, is to give a poor man a work opportunity or a business partnership so that he can stand on his own feet. In fact, if you ask poor people what they want -- and we have done that at the World Bank; we've surveyed 60,000 poor people all around the World -- the first thing on their wish list is not charity, but work, work of any kind. What they want is a hand up, not a hand out.

By most measures, this country is one of the most charitable in the world. Last year, American businesses and citizens gave \$260 billion to local and international charities. That's more than double the \$106 billion that all the rich countries combined spent on foreign aid that year. Yet despite all that giving, we continue to live in a world that is marked by vast inequality. The global economy has now produced roughly 700 billionaires, but it's also left behind more than 1 billion people who are trying to survive on \$1 a day or less -- 1 billion people. But there is some good news. In the past quarter-century, nearly 500 million people have been able to escape poverty, most of them in the two big emerging economies, China and India. In the next decade, it's expected that another 400 million will escape poverty, following their footsteps.

The one continent that has been conspicuously left behind by the promise of change is Africa. While so much progress was made against poverty in other parts of the world, the number of poor in Africa has nearly doubled from roughly the 160 million 25 years ago to 300 million today, half the population in Sub-Saharan Africa surviving on \$1 a day or less.

I believe that Jewish-Americans, particularly those who are familiar with tragic history of slavery in this country, don't need to be persuaded that there is a moral imperative to help Africa. But helping Africa is also in our self-interest. It's simply not a healthy or safe world when so many people in such an important

region are falling behind. And it's certainly not a world that we want our children to inherit. I still recall the day, 43 years ago, when I joined the 1963 March on Washington for civil rights and was privileged to hear the Reverend Martin Luther King speaking from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

In a voice that resonated over that huge crowd, Martin Luther King said,

*"Many of our white brothers have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny and their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot," he said, "we cannot walk alone."*

Today, we cannot walk alone on the path to prosperity. We cannot afford to turn our backs on the pain and poverty that consumes entire nations and communities.

You may have heard that the situation in Africa is hopeless, that aid to Africa is money wasted, or that if only African governments would be more responsible and accountable, they wouldn't need our help at all. I'm here to tell you that none of those things are true, or at least they're not true any longer. Since I joined the World Bank last year, I have visited 11 African countries, I've seen many of Africa's challenges first hand, and yes there is no question that Africa is in desperate need of help. Every 30 seconds, an African child dies of malaria. HIV/AIDS in this past year has claimed the lives of 2 million Africans and left many more orphans. Think about this: there are more AIDS orphans in Africa today than there are children living east of the Mississippi.

Nearly 50 million African children are still not in school, and if you've ever seen a satellite picture of Africa at night, you'll see that much of the continent sits in darkness. More than three-quarters of Africans have no access, no access at all, to electricity. But despite all those things, it's no longer accurate to describe Africa's condition as hopeless. What most people don't seem to know is that already, quietly and almost without notice, the landscape across Africa is changing. We are seeing conflicts diminish; we're seeing small businesses emerge. We are seeing a new breath of hope infused in all parts of that continent. In the last ten years, some 17 countries, with about one-third the population of the subcontinent, have achieved annual real growth of 4% or better. A few have even averaged as much as 7% or 8%. That's still far from enough. To cut poverty in half by the year 2015, one of the Millennium Development Goals, all the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa would need to grow at an average of 7%. Those are the kinds of rates that are not being achieved by all African countries, but those countries that are already growing offer hope for their neighbors. In Mozambique, for example, growth has made it possible for primary school enrollment to nearly double from 40% ten years ago to 70% now and to cut infant mortality by one-third. Signs of progress like those are a striking change from the past. They demonstrate that Africa is increasingly a continent of hope.

That brings me to the second myth—the belief that aid to Africa is inevitably squandered by corrupt governments. It is true that vast sum of aid have been channeled to Africa in the past without much result, and it is true that much of the aid in the past has perpetuated corruption among Africa's ruling elites. We're all too familiar with stories of dictators like Mobutu in Zaire, who stashed billions in foreign bank accounts, while his country plunged into deep poverty. But that image is increasingly outdated and misleading.

A new generation of leaders is emerging in Africa, who increasingly recognize their responsibility to their people. More and more governments are accepting the limitations laid down in their constitutions, and leaders are peacefully handing over the reins of power at the end of their terms, or when they are voted out of office. Last year, after 20 years of terrible civil war, Liberia held its first election. Liberians had the chance to choose between a soccer star and a woman economic reformer, who promised to fight corruption and rebuild their country. They went for the grandmother. And that woman, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the first woman president of any African country, joins a growing number of African leaders who take the issue of good governance and accountability seriously. More and more Africans are saying that they can't live with corruption.

For a long time, I am sorry to say, the development community had failed to recognize that development assistance sometimes was helping corrupt leaders to stay in power, doing enormous damage to their countries. In my current job, I've been pleased to find, that it is people in the developing countries, government officials as well as ordinary citizens, who are most conscious of the costs of corruption. One such person is Nuhu Ribadu, the brave and capable head of Nigeria's Economic and Financial Crimes Commissions, someone I feel privileged to know. We had a meeting in Singapore recently where he said, "We know what corruption has cost us. It has denied us the value of our resources, both human and natural. It breeds injustice. It causes killings, the diseases that ravage us almost everywhere. This is not what we want, and this is not what we are going to allow to continue." In fact Nuhu Ribadu is literally on the front lines putting powerful officials from Nigeria in jail.

When you stop and think about it, you realize that for every corrupt transaction there are at least two parties, and too often the person getting the bribe comes from one of these so-called developed countries. That has to stop. Rich countries must also do more to help reformist governments recover assets that have been stolen by corrupt leaders. I am pleased to say that a first step was taken in this past year. Switzerland has returned to Nigeria half-a-billion dollars that the former dictator Abacha had stashed away in Swiss Banks. But we need to see more of that. So, yes good governance matters, but one can go too far and suggest that that's the only thing.

So, the third myth I'd like to dispel is the belief that if African governments simply did the right thing they wouldn't need any help at all. That's just not true. Even countries that are spectacularly successful like South Korea and China, have needed the help from the World Bank and other donors. South Korea received more than \$20 billion just from the World Bank over four decades, and China received approximately \$45 billion from us in a 20 year period.

Across Africa, crumbling infrastructure has held back business expansion and opportunities to compete in international markets. Today, because of poor roads and infrastructure, an entrepreneur in Africa would pay more than three times what his Chinese counterpart often pays to transport a cargo container the same distance. Exporters in Rwanda who ship fresh produce to Europe lose 5% or more in their output when refrigeration fails because of unreliable electricity. Africans also need access to global markets. They need a successful completion of the current trade negotiations, the so-called Doha Round. Right now, there's a real danger that the Doha talks will fail. For the talks to succeed will not be easy, and will require political will on all sides. But if each party will take some pain, the whole world, and most importantly the poorest countries, can gain.

Last year in Scotland at the Gleneagles Summit, the leaders of the world's eight biggest economies promised to double aid to sub-Saharan Africa by the end of this decade. For the United States, that would mean giving out about \$8.8 billion a year by 2010. The good news is, I guess, is that United States has tripled its support for foreign aid in last six years, including large programs for AIDS relief and combating malaria. But more than a year after the Gleneagles summit, most of the major donors, definitely including the United States, are in danger of falling short on their promises. Donor countries say they want evidence that scaling up can work before they dig deeper to their pockets. That's understandable, but African countries cannot build on a foundation of hollow promises.

Developing countries need predictable funding so they can make long term investments that deliver results. The countries that are making good use of development assistance, and that's a growing number, need steady increases that they can count on. They can't hire pieces for that \_ that expand the education system, that they cannot \_ period of time. Measured as a percentage of total national income, US foreign assistance is only one-fifth of 1%. Some small countries like Norway and Denmark give four to six times as much per capita as we do.

We need to do better. Strong US support for foreign aid is particularly important to help address issues important to Americans, issues like government transparency, anti-corruption, and civil society participation. But here we face another obstacle, something you might call the fourth myth. One poll shows that Americans commonly think that 24 percent of the federal budget goes to foreign aid. The

actual number is closer to one percent. The same poll showed that on average, Americans believe that 24 percent is too much, that 14 percent of the budget is about right, about 14 times the actual level. So there's clearly room to do better. Americans are proud of their country's role on the world stage, but with global leadership comes global responsibility.

Let me leave you with a story that I've taken with me around the world that may strike a special chord with Atlantans. During my first visit to Africa as President of the World Bank, I met a remarkable woman in Rwanda. Beatrice Gakuba left behind a comfortable life in the United States to start a small flower-growing business in her native country. Against enormous odds, her business expanded. Today, Beatrice and her 200 employees, most of them rural women, export a million stems of roses to Europe each month. Just 12 years ago, 950,000 Rwandans, nearly a million, were slaughtered in one of the worst acts of genocide since the Holocaust. Though many challenges remain, Rwanda has come a remarkable distance from its years of pain and conflict. When I asked Beatrice why she decided to take on such a daunting challenge, she said, leaving a comfortable life here in the US, she told me, "I came back here to grow beautiful flowers on the ashes of genocide." Like the Atlantans who raised this city from the ashes, that woman's courage and determination, and that of many other Rwandans, is helping to steer her country into a brighter future.

I believe that Africa today is at a hopeful turning point, one that was captured in a cover story of the National Geographic magazine last year, "Africa," the cover read, "whatever you thought think again." Turning points are times to think again and time to think boldly. I still remember vividly a different turning point 29 years ago, when President Anwar Sadat of Egypt made his historic address to the Israeli Knesset. He began his address saying:

"Salaamu-alaikum wa-rahmatu-llah  
Salaam lana jamiyan, ala ard-il Arabia wa fi-israeel."

"Peace be upon you and God's mercy  
Peace be upon all of us in the Arab lands and in Israel."

To those who are old enough to remember, that was the first time, the first time, that any Arab leader had spoken the word "Israel" in public, much less spoken so respectfully to representatives of the Israeli people. And President Sadat said,

*"Ladies and gentlemen, there are moments in the lives of nations and peoples when those known for their wisdom and clarity of vision must look beyond the complexities of the past in a bold leap toward new horizons."*

As President Sadat recognized, turning points are moments when we need to look beyond the residues of the past and reach out boldly for a more hopeful future.

It will up to Africans most of all to bring about the momentous changes needed to conquer poverty. But as Americans we must be able to say that we did everything we could to give them the hand up that they need and deserve. Todah rabah. Thank you.