



On August 19-21, 2008, The Second Annual African Outreach Program sponsored by The Institute for Economic Policy Studies, Worcester, Massachusetts, USA, took place in Gaborone, Botswana. The theme is:

“Developing A Continent: Who is in Charge?”

Participants from African, American and European Universities addressed several issues related to the development of the African continent. Many articles and books have been written about development, yet development goals have remained elusive for many third world countries.

Debates about lack of developments and sustainable growth in many African countries have put the onus on poor political institutions, undemocratic regimes, corruption, and foreign aid. Little attention has been given to those institutions that generate knowledge, or the role played (or should be played) in development by those who generate knowledge. A gathering of scholars from Academia, research institutes took up the challenge. The first task was to inquire as to the role of the University in the economic and social development of the African continent. To bridge the space between the American University and the African University, the conference began with recorded interviews of three members of Clark University (not present at the conference): John Bassett President of Clark University; Dr. Nancy Budwig, Dean of Graduate School and Research Studies, Associate Provost and Professor of Psychology and Dr. Wayne Gray, Chairman of Clark University’s Economics Department.

Dr. Ott posed the questions and conducted the interviews. President Basset: As you recall back in July 2006, a gathering of scholars from West African Universities and Research Institutes along with scholars from American Universities took place here at Clark University as part of the first African Outreach Program. Professor Joseph Pare, The Minister of Education in Burkina Faso delivered the keynote address. His talk was devoted to the role of the African University in the process of development. I was struck by his characterization of the African University created mostly during the colonial rule. In the words of Minister Pare, **“the African University was like a house with a roof which is not adapted to the house, to make the roof fit with the house, changes have to be made to the plan.”** As the President of Clark University, I like to pose to you four questions:

First: Can the University with its emphasis on generating knowledge through research and through educating generations of students, play an active role in shaping or formulating economic and social development policies?

Secondly: Developing the African Continent has and continues to pose a challenge for economists, politicians and the World Financial Institutions such as IMF and the World Bank. American Universities, although, having presence in some African countries, their role seems to be limited to turning out College Graduate with “American type degree.” What changes would you offer to make the American University in Africa more conducive to development?



My last two questions have to do with the role of foundations: Last year, The John Templeton Foundation put forth the following question to eight scientists and scholars involved in one or another aspect of development: “Will Money Solve Africa’s Problem?” Only three thought so, the other five did not for various reasons. Only one of the eight put emphasis on ‘education.’ If you were to pose a question to your Faculty or your University constituents what question regarding Africa’s development would you pose? Finally, four US Foundations: Carnegie Foundation of New York, The Ford Foundation, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthurs Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation have instituted a “partnership program” in support of African Universities. One of the stated goals of the partnership is to “Advocate for wider recognition of the importance of Universities to African development.” As the President of an American University do you see a role for Clark University in promoting this goal?

The second interview was with Dr. Budwig. She was asked to respond to two questions:

The first question dealt with a speech by Mr. Mbeki, Deputy Chairman of the South African Institute for International Affairs. In a foreign policy speech he put the onus for the lack of economic progress in Africa on African elites. I quote: “Africa, as in the rest of the world depends on a vibrant private sector. Entrepreneurs in Africa, face daunting constraints. That the African political elites use marketing boards and taxation to divert agricultural savings to finance their own consumption and to strengthen the repressive apparatus of the state.” The same sentiment seems to have been echoed earlier (1996) by Harold James Perkin. In his book “The Third Revolution: Professional Elites in the Modern World”, (Publisher Routledge) the author warns of the greed and corruption of the elites.

The question then: Since the elites are mostly the products of elitist graduate schools, as a prominent psychologist and the Dean of Graduate Studies at Clark University, could you shed some light on this “unsavenny” behavior of the elites or at least some of them?

The next question dealt with what is called “paternalism.” Understanding human behavior is the province of social scientists in general and the discipline of psychology in particular. Recently there has been a surge of interests in both the psychology and economic disciplines (the new behavioralists) in human actions leading to the proposition that individuals do not always know about or act in their own best interests...In other words their rationality is “bounded”. With this premise, the argument is put forth that “someone else” other than the individual should make the decision for them. Would you think this reasoning would create another brand of unsavenny elites?

The third interview with Dr. Wayne Gray focused on graduate education in economics and what students in development are able to offer to the developing world. The question posed to him was: Policy makers, more so in the US than elsewhere, defer to “experts” in formulating and enacting social and economic policies. The importance of policy advice cannot be stressed enough when the entire future of a country...the case of economic development...is at stake. Yet, policy decisions especially those formulated and implemented at the recommendations of economists have done little to advance the cause of development in poor countries, especially in the African continent. Do you think that graduate education especially in the field of development help “future” experts addressing the task of development? If not could you suggest ways to improve it?



Lastly, graduate students at Clark University are a diversified group that comes from Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the US. Would you comment on this feature as to whether this diverse background had spillover effects on the training they receive so that perhaps “future policy makers” can get things right?

[A video of the interview questions and responses are available from the institute at a “minimal” charge. Just contact aott@ispolicy.org]

Conferees took the opportunity to evaluate the questions and responses in two sessions. The discussion also touched on Minister Pare’s speech about the African University which was recorded and aired at the conference. The discussion did raise issues pertaining not only to the role of the university scholars and the elites but also the political environment where they operate. One thing was clear: development is not a one way street; you need to enhance the road to development by opening up new venues, political, social as well as economics.

The papers listed in the conference program were presented and commented upon. Interest in some of the findings reported in the papers led us at the Institute to do a follow up. The Institute President, Dr. Ott, put together a session on the African continent development which was presented at the International Atlantic Economic Society meeting in Montreal, Canada on October 9-12. The society offered us the opportunity to air out to a wide audience some of the findings by devoting a special issue of their Journal: International Advances in Economic Research to the papers presented at the meeting.

The special issue is scheduled for publication on August 2009. (Articles are currently posted at <http://www.springerlink.com/home/main.mpx>). The special issue consists of seven papers, all dealing with issues relating to the African continent. The first paper is a summary of the speech delivered by Dr. Tina Dooley-Jones, Director of the Regional Growth Office, USAID/South Africa at the Institute of Economic Policy Studies Botswana Conference “US Government’s Efforts for Growth in Southern Africa”: The six other papers are “Is Economic Integration the Solution to African Development?” by Attiat F. Ott and Oswaldo J. Patino; “Is There a Link Between Exchange Rate Pass-Through and the Monetary Regime: Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America” by Naa Anyeley Akofio-Sowah; “A Regional Perspective on Aid and FDI in Southern Africa” by Henri Bezuidenhout; “Debt Relief Incentives in Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC): An Empirical Assessment” by Dobdinga C. Fonchamnyo; “Does Corruption Persist in Sub-Saharan Africa?” by Nicole Bissessar and “State-Sponsored Mass Killing in African Wars: Greed or Grievance?” by Chyanda M. Querido.

Papers listed in the Botswana Conference Brochure (August 19th- August 21st, 2008) may be obtained directly from the authors.

Building a bridge of knowledge is the Institute’s basic objective. Thus far, we have made two successful crossings. We hope to continue to travel the road to African development by calling on our colleagues, especially colleagues from Africa, to sharpen the focus on those issues most urgent towards the goal of



development. This input will advance our efforts in shaping the Third Annual African Outreach Program scheduled to take place in 2010.
