

Daring to Lead

Andrew Young

We who have dared associate ourselves with the cause of "the least of these," our brethren around the world, those of us who, by circumstance or choice, find ourselves in sympathy with the struggling aspirations of the poor, the moans and cries of the oppressed, the pain and suffering of the diseased, know that somehow we on this earth have got to learn to live together as brothers.

Many of us learned these lessons at the side of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We saw how things happened to him. One of the reasons that I am able to be involved at the United Nations is because of the inspiration I drew from the association with Dr. King and the strength and understanding I saw him draw from ordinary people and the people who strengthened him to carry on.

The things that have gotten me in trouble most are the things that many of us take for granted—that racism is pervasive all across this world. I didn't have to go to anybody's university to learn that. I learned that as a two-year-old boy, put in the back of a bus in New Orleans, Louisiana. I asked why. And there were those who helped me to understand why. Then all my young life I saw our nation torn apart in the Southland.

They talk about the South now as the Sunbelt—land of growth and opportunity. But that's not what changed about the South. The sun has always been shining down South. But the South did not become a land of growth and opportunity until blacks and whites started working together. Then the growth and opportunity began. Now we recognize it as the Sunbelt—the land of growth and opportunity. It was in direct response to those lessons that I began to talk about racism in the world.

I was down in Trinidad and Tobago and the prime minister, Sir Eric Williams, called me in to see him. Even before he said good morning he said, "Son, I knew what you were talking about regarding the British, the

Swedes, and the Russians. But why in the hell didn't you say something about the Danes and the Australians?" I said, "I'm sorry, Mr. Prime Minister, but I really had no experience with them. I was only talking about what I knew."

What I know about is a nation like Nigeria, which sells us \$5.5 billion worth of oil each year. This is second only to Saudi Arabia in the supply of oil we get. Yet we do only \$700 million worth of business with the Nigerians, which means that they end up with \$4 billion of our money. Now fair trade says that if those factories where people are being laid off are going to stay open, we've somehow got to sell Nigeria \$4 billion worth of American-made goods to get back the money we give in exchange for oil. Then our people can go to work. But we are not able to do business with Nigeria essentially because most of American business is very uncomfortable doing business with arrogant, rich, smart black folk.

Not long ago I was down in Zaire and a major American corporation lost a \$400 million contract to build one of the largest hydroelectric power plants in the world. In Zaire I saw generators as big around as this church, and they're all Italian-made. I said, "Why?" (Not that I'm against the Italians, because Italy needs the work too.) They said they wanted America to make them. I asked, "What happened?" They said, "We gave the contract to an American firm but they felt uncomfortable. So they bought a Belgian firm and turned the contract over to the Belgian subsidiary.

Zaire is the old Belgian Congo, and it took hundreds of years to get rid of the Belgians. These Harvard, MIT, Cal-Tech engineers didn't have sense enough to realize Zaire's sensitivity to the former colonials. When I came back, I met with the firm's international vice president. I said, "You don't need a black Ph.D.; you didn't need a black man with an engineering degree. Any brother or sister off the corner would have understood that. You could have been \$400 million richer!"

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There's a cultural gap that exists between the U.S. and the Third World and it's costing us money and jobs. Some people talk about making the

U.S. independent of the Third World. But my good friend Gerald Ford tried that when he talked about Operation Independence. We can't be independent. It takes \$45 billion worth of imported oil to run this country. Even if we cut down, as the president is desperately trying to get us to do, even if all our energy plans are passed as they were conceived—and Congress doesn't seem willing to do that—we would still end up with an oil import bill running close to \$50 billion a year.

That means we've got to find a way to have an international economy. It means we've got to find a way to sell more American goods abroad. It means we've got to learn to do business with "colored people" in order for our economy to survive. People wonder why I'm dabbling around in Africa. Yes, I loved Steve Biko and I love his family. Robert Sobukwe and his children are good friends of mine. They're here in school, living with me. But it's not because of black kinship alone. Of thirteen natural resources that we need to produce television sets, automobiles, stoves, refrigerators, seven of the thirteen are primarily found in two places, Southern Africa and Siberia. We've got to learn to get along with the "niggers" or the "Communists." There is a natural link there that is necessary for the survival of our economy. But it's also necessary for the possibility of their development. If people are going to be fed, if they are going to mine their resources, they need Western technology.

Angola is supposed to be Marxist, but the oil in Angola is about twelve to fifteen miles offshore and in about two hundred feet of water. The only way the Angolans can get that oil out of the ground, which brings them a billion dollars annually, is to do business with the Gulf Oil Company. They're pumping more oil now under the present Angolan government than they were when the Portuguese were the colonial masters.

It just seems to me that a sensible foreign policy would take the realities of that situation into account. We should not be blinded by labels but, rather, should look at that common ground of humanity. You see, we have no problem doing business with Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union, and they are all Communist. It seems we only have difficulty doing business when the black folk happen to be Communist. President Nyerere talks about *casaba* and Africans. He said that "no *casaba*-eating people would ever go Communist." He said: "There's something about the African spirit that defies that kind of rigidity." I think, as does the president of the United States, that we have the wealth, the resources, and the talent to compete peacefully with Communists anywhere in the world.

It's sad but it's true: When I went to Kenya and saw on the corner of Jomo Kenyatta Avenue and Uhuru Boulevard a Kentucky Fried Chicken stand, I realized the power of the American consumer economy. People want transistor radios, electric lights, and vaccinations to get rid of smallpox. They want us to help them with medicines for the cure of river blindness. They want us to share with them some of the teaching methods we have learned in these United States that have produced a mass-educated population. They are most anxious to relate to this country, whether they are called Com-

munists or not. I have been very well received all around the world largely because there's not a place in this world, even in the black villages, where they have not heard of Martin Luther King.

So we have an opportunity for a new American foreign policy that is open to the Third World, based on justice and morality, and that will, incidentally, be profitable.

Regardless of what you think of this system, it produces. I can buy inexpensive well-made clothes off the rack because of the multinational corporations' ability to take petroleum from Saudi Arabia, cotton from Egypt, blend it in a corporation here in America, and market it all over the world in large supply. Though we are very aware of the faults, inequities, and injustices in it, there's something about this system that's very attractive to the rest of the world. It's the ability of that system to produce goods and services the world desperately needs. So we can have a world community that's based on an economic independence that gives the rest of the world what it needs and enables us to have jobs producing the things that the world needs.

Our economic capacity is running at about 75 per cent efficiency. If we raised that efficiency to 90 per cent, everybody in America, including women and high school students, would be able to have part-time jobs. But we can't crank that massive system up to 90 per cent unless we have war, or *unless we pursue peace and development aggressively.*

The aggressive pursuit of peace means the aggressive pursuit of justice. It means we have to help negotiate a settlement in the Middle East. When the price of oil is raised 15 per cent, the last people hired are going to be the first people fired. The economy is going to contract and we're going to have much more suffering and poverty and problems than we have had since the Great Depression.

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On the other hand, if we aggressively pursue peace in the Middle East, we create for ourselves an atmosphere for a new market; the desert will be helped to bloom as a result of the new, peaceful relationship that could exist between Israel and its Arab neighbors. If the money that was going into war in the Middle East were to go into peace in the Middle East, the desert would flower. The same is true in Southern Africa. That part of the world can be a tremendous market, a tremendous resource

basket, or it can be chaos and confusion for another dozen years.

For the first time in a long time the U.S. passed a resolution and won in the United Nations. When the vote was taken on the Anglo-American peace proposal for Rhodesia, the vote was 13 to 0 in our favor. Even though the Russians and the Chinese abstained, they did not use their vetoes. The reason was that the Third World supported the position that the United States had taken.

The United States is now rethinking its position on the Panama Canal. Americans can argue about whose canal it is in Panama and who built it, but the fact remains that for some of the most valuable real estate in the world we were paying only \$2.3 million a year in rent. I couldn't rent the southside of Chicago for that. They pay more rent than that for Lawndale. The Panama treaties are a means of saying: "America pays a fair share of the rent." The Canal is profitable. The treaties don't involve U.S. tax dollars. The money comes from the revenues of the Canal. The new treaties show an America willing to be fair. The fact that America—the strongest nation in the world—is willing to be fair and treat one of the smallest nations in the world justly means that we have won support, not only from Panama, but from twenty-nine countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

What I'm talking about is a vision of the world that's very easy to see. It was for such a time as this that God allowed us to be brought to this country as slaves. All of the struggle that we saw beautifully portrayed in Alex Haley's *Roots* came for a time like this. It's at a time like this that the world is crying out for someone to bridge the gap between the haves and the have-hots. *You may have*, but your mama was a *have-not*. *You may have*, but when you were growing up, you knew what it was to pour some syrup over some cornbread and have that as your only meal of the day. So the pains and suffering of the Third World are not something that a lot of us have to take a sociology course to understand. There is desperately needed in today's world someone to bridge the gap. There is needed right now, in every business in America, a cadre of talented, dedicated young people who are technically competent and spiritually and emotionally sensitive to bridge the gap between the haves and the have-nots.

I sit with people each day who hold Ph.D.s from the great universities of the world. I listen to them getting caught up in their theories, but from the things I learned from my grandmama I have learned to say, "Wait a minute. That doesn't quite make sense. It seems to me that even though I didn't read Mr. so-and-so's book and I don't speak but one language, something in my heart tells me that it just ought to be this way."

What I want is a generation of young people who not

only have something in their hearts but who have the opportunity to learn three or four languages by the time they get to be adults. I have no choice but to communicate with my heart, with my instincts, and with my feelings.

All we're saying is that the next generation of young black children, whose hearts are fixed by the same kinds of grandmamas you and I had, have also got to have their heads fixed. They've got to know not only how to speak English, French, and German, but they've got to learn the computer languages, because the computer languages are making most of the decisions about the way the world goes. Our children must realize that they are not dumb. For on a world scale the average seventh grader in Chicago's public schools has already had more education and knows more than 70 percent of the people in the world.

Already children in Chicago's inadequate free school lunch program are consuming more calories in a week than most of the world's children will in a month. The investment in vitamins alone means that your mind can function better than the overwhelming majority of the people of the world, even though your skin is black and even though you are considered poor in America. Somehow we've got to untap those resources.

We have an educational system, God bless it, that is essentially a nineteenth-century system. It has not changed very much since my grandmama and yours were in school. Today we have twentieth-century kids looking at twenty-first-century color television. Somehow the adjustment has got to be made. The adjustment has got to be made where it is cheapest and easiest, and that is in the motivation in the mind and heart of the child. Somebody needs to figure out how to do that.

We are a world power, and in our midst we have an underdeveloped nation. We are trying, as a people, not only to catch up but we have also to find a way to put ourselves in a position of giving leadership to Anglo-Saxon society.

If I didn't do any more than all the other diplomats have done at the United Nations, you wouldn't know my name. You would be saying, "What happened to Andy? Remember him?" It's only because I dared to try to give leadership in a situation where it seemed to me that if some leadership did not emerge, people were going to continue killing each other.

I want to plead with you to make an investment of your time and your money because there is an experiment in humanity going on here. Oh, we don't know all the answers. We don't even know fully what all the problems are. But we know that young people and others today have the potential, not only of understanding those problems, but of solving those problems for ourselves, our nation, and the world.