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**The United States and the United Nations  
World Conference Against Racism  
Worrill's World**

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The Obama Administration's decision not to participate in the Durban Review Conference in Geneva, Switzerland, April 20-29, 2009 is consistent with the role the United States Government has played through the previous Bush Administration that threatened not to attend the Conference in August of 2001. However, the difference between the Obama Administration and the Bush Administration is that the Bush Administration finally attended and sent an official delegation. It was only when they could not get their way that a few days before the conference ended, the United States withdrew. It is shameful and unfortunate that the Obama Administration has chosen this path of being out of touch with most of the Nations of the World who will be participating in the Durban Review Conference, aimed at addressing the continuing impact of racism and discrimination worldwide. The following is an article that I wrote in 2001 leading up to the Durban Conference. What I wrote then applies to the behavior of the United States today.

Recent news reports have revealed that, "The United States will not attend next month's World Conference Against Racism if two contentious issues are included in the conference agenda, a senior State Department official said yesterday." Further, these news reports cited that, "Top State Department officials plan to inform three dozen foreign diplomats today of the Bush's administration position on the issues of Zionism as racism and reparations for slavery and colonialism, the official said."

These news reports pointed out, "The Washington-based ambassadors, representing

several continents, are expected to meet in Foggy Bottom with Marc Grossman, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, and Undersecretary of State Paula J. Dobriansky. They intend to tell the ambassadors that the United States needs their help to build support for striking the two topics."

This turn of events is not surprising for those of us in the African Liberation Movement who have been organizing to attend and participate in the historic United Nations World Conference Against Racism that will be held in Durban, South Africa from August 31st through September 7, 2001. More than four hundred African people from the United States will be delegates to the conference representing the December 12th Movement International Secretariat, the International Association Against Torture, the North South XXI, and the National Black United Front.

As Atty. Roger Wareham of the December 12th Movement recently revealed in an article circulated on the Internet earlier this year, "Since 1997, when the UN agreed to hold this World Conference, the United States, Canada, and western Europe (the WEO Group of countries) have done all they can to prevent it from succeeding."

In the spring of 1998, at the Africa Group meeting during the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, Switzerland, a resolution was drafted identifying the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade as a Crime Against Humanity. The United States, using all of its influence, succeeded in blocking the resolution. However, this did not stop the momentum throughout the African world to push for this resolution to become an official position of the United Nations World Conference Against Racism.

At the African Regional Preparatory Conference for the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) held in Dakar, Senegal (January 22-24, 2001), the African Ministers developed what is called the "Dakar Declaration." In their deliberations, they affirmed, in part, the following:

Affirm that the slave trade is a unique tragedy in the history of humanity, particularly against Africans - a crime against humanity which is unparalleled, not only in its abhorrent barbaric feature, but also, in terms of its enormous magnitude, its institutionalized nature, its transnational dimensions and especially its negation of the human nature of the victims.

Further affirm that the consequences of this tragedy, accentuated by those of colonialism and apartheid, have resulted in substantial and lasting economic, political and cultural damage caused to the descendants of the victims, the perpetuation of the prejudice against Africans on the continent and people of African descent in the Diaspora.

Strongly reaffirm that States which pursued racist policies or acts of racial discrimination, such as slavery, colonialism, and apartheid, should assume their full responsibilities and provide adequate reparations to those States, communities and individuals who were victims of such racist policies or acts, regardless of when or by whom they were committed.

Some news reports are suggesting, "The absence of the United States [at the WCAR] would be a severe blow to the convention which is being billed as the most important international meeting on racism." This view of the United States threatening not to

attend the WCAR if Zionism is equated with racism and reparations for slavery, colonialism, and apartheid are on the agenda fundamentally seeps of arrogance and white supremacy. ***We take the position that if the United States refuses to participate in the United Nations World Conference Against Racism, it is an admission of guilt!***

During the past two years, NBUF and the December 12th Movement, along with African governments, Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and the African and African Descendants Caucus, have fought for the inclusion of the Africa Group Resolution in the WCAR Durban Declaration. This resolution takes the position that both the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery were Crimes Against Humanity and that adjudication of these crimes requires an examination of the economic roots of racism.

This position is the basis for the Movements stance regarding reparations for people of African descent. The European Union, led by its ally, the United States, is opposed to the inclusion of this resolution in the Durban Declaration. They do not want to admit that the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery were Crimes Against Humanity; they do not want to be found culpable; they do not want to be declared liable for reparations.

The United States must recognize that international law supports the position that the enslavement of Africans was a crime against humanity. The Charter of the Nuremberg Tribunal defined crimes against humanity as: "Murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts committed against any civilian population...whether or not in violation of the domestic law of the country where perpetrated."

African people and all freedom loving people are clear that the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery were Crimes Against Humanity. There is no debate on this issue! If the United States attends or does not attend the United Nations World Conference Against Racism, it does not make a difference. They have been exposed to the world and they know it!

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