

**SPEECH TO THE GUESTS OF THE SOUTH AFRICA –WASHINGTON  
INTERNSHIP PROGRAM ("SAWIP") AT THE SAWIP WINE-SIP HELD ON 14  
MAY 2009 AT THE SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON,  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

1. Good evening to
  - Congressman Donald Payne;
  - The staff of the South African Embassy; and
  - all our special guests that have joined us tonight.
  
2. A lot has changed in the United States and South Africa since Michael Currin and I took to the streets of Washington D.C. in 2006.
  - The people of the United States have once again made a permanent imprint in the annals of our world by electing the son of a Kenyan man as their 44<sup>th</sup> president. This at a time where the global credit crisis demands bold and decisive leadership and a reasoned stewardship of the world's leading economy.
  - President Barack Obama said of that historic election that it proved the dreams of America's constitutional drafters were still alive even in our time and that anyone who questioned the power of democracy was answered by the lines that stretched around schools and churches in numbers never seen by people who waited hours

because they believed that this time it would be different. What was of greater significance to me as a young person and as an alumnus of SAWIP was the statement by President Obama that the campaign that placed him in high office drew strength from the young people who rejected the myth of their generation's apathy.

- South Africa on the other hand has just inaugurated its third democratically elected president. This after millions of South Africans also answered those who doubted the strength of her democracy. I was one of those that answered the clarion call to strengthen our country's democracy. Not only did I exercise my right to vote (for which I still have the indelible ink on my left thumb to show), but I participated during the campaign period as a volunteer for one of our political parties. On election day I participated as a party agent at a voting station in Alexandra Township, a township trapped by debilitating poverty notwithstanding its geographic location, literally, a mere stone throw away from the affluent and leafy suburb of Sandton.
3. As I made my way to the voting station at 5 am on voting day (two hours before voting stations opened) I was fortuitously granted a free tour of the township by my GPS unit which refused to pick up the streets correctly. There in the morning dawn which was filled with the smoke of burning coal stoves, I was greeted by queues that had begun to snake out of each of the voting stations I drove past. The young, old and the infirm were all in

the queues. Voters were huddled side by side some clothed in blankets to beat the Highveld morning chill. These scenes sent shivers down my spine because they so strongly resembled the scenes I witnessed on the day of our first democratic election fifteen years ago. I was also excited by the prospect that South Africa, just like the United States, had once again proved that the ideal of a government of the people, for the people and by the people was an ideal that had not perished.

4. However, having been in Alexandra, I was reminded of the stark reality of some of the problems facing South Africa today. If these problems are not addressed decisively and swiftly we will be responsible for bankrupting South Africa's constitutional vault and not honouring the promissory note signed at the Congress for a Democratic South Africa.
5. South Africa remains a country with an unmatched HIV/AIDS scourge, the public health system is bursting at the seams, the education system is failing her children and is not addressing the country's skills needs, unemployment stands at approximately 23%, inequality as measured by the gini coefficient is on a gradual rise while a large number of the population are relegated to the lowest rungs of the economic ladder by grinding poverty.
6. But as you know these are not only South Africa's problems. Martin Luther King Junior wrote from a Birmingham Jail that we cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham.

We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects me directly in South Africa, affects you indirectly in the United States. I therefore challenge you to keep supporting SAWIP because it has been designed to provide the inspired leadership that will grapple with and find solutions for the problems mentioned.

7. Professor Kader Asmal, former minister of Education of South Africa, believes that the program can be used to remove the narrow parochialism which often blights the landscape. He continues to state that the link between the oldest democracy with one of the youngest can only lead to greater understanding.
8. Former United States Ambassador to South Africa, Professor James Joseph who is very familiar with the advantages that a program like SAWIP can offer strongly endorses the program.
9. SAWIP is a program that seeks to inspire the youth to reject the myth of their generations apathy and to take up the leadership and civic duty mantle. One of our patrons, Doctor Mamphela Ramphele, former managing director of the world bank and former vice chancellor of my alma mater says the program is a fantastic idea to expose young South Africans to the world. SAWIP can, must and will be used to summon a new spirit of patriotism, of service and responsibility.

10. South Africa must be ready when the torch of leadership and civic duty passes. It is inevitable that that torch will be passed to the graduates of SAWIP including myself. With your continued support, each time that that torch is passed South Africa will have produced a new leadership generation that can create an actual South African reality that will reinforce humanity's belief in justice, strengthen its confidence in the nobility of the human spirit and sustain all our hopes for a glorious life for all.

Thank you and God bless you.