

The Truth About Democratic Republic Of The Congo by Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

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What is the real motive of some of the so-called human rights and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that consistently propagate a negative image about Africa and African people? Do they really care about Africa? Or are there other more profound sinister motives by these groups that only highlight and disseminate inaccurate and harmful information about the emerging economies in Africa today, especially in key nations such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)?

I am in the DRC once again on a mission of initiating a local "Sustainable Job Creation Program" related to the mining sector of the DRC's economy. The World Bank just announced that economy in the DRC today is growing in "an unprecedented rate of 7%" annually from 2011 to 2012. It was a special pleasure over the past several days to be on the ground in the Katanga Province of the DRC that is the leading mining province in the largest land mass African nation. The size of the Katanga Province alone is larger than the nation of France.

All Americans should know more about the truth of the current positive economic and human development progress in Africa today after centuries of colonialism, imperialism, neocolonialism, and unjust exploitation of the people of Africa. I know some of us do not like to use these terms today because of the false notion that the world community has progressed sufficiently to the point that we should stop talking about the wrongs of the past and focus more about the opportunities of the future. Believe me, I understand that perspective; but what I am saying is that precisely we must learn from the past while not permitting a repeat of past injustices to occur in Africa, in America or anywhere else in the world.

So much of what is "wrong" today is the deliberate misrepresentation in the established media about the factual progress that is being made in DRC and in other African nations. This is the sole reason why I choose to speak out now. I will not be silent or complicit to the misdeeds of well-intentioned or ill-intentioned people who do not live in Africa, do not know Africa, and who do not care about Africa, but yet who are so bold to raise money internationally for the specific purpose of undermining purpose and attacking the legitimate aspirations and self-determination of African people across the continent of Africa.

Please understand, I am not challenging anyone's right to freedom of speech and freedom of the press. I am exercising those inalienable rights, but I am also confronting the increasing tendency of some journalists and African-issue fundraisers who consistently get their facts wrong about the DRC in particular and about Africa in general.

For example, the BBC recently erroneously reported that Glencore Mining was using child labor in the DRC and contributing to environmental dangers. The problem is the Panorama film group featured in the BBC story had all of their facts wrong, and the story was not true, but the BBC had already broadcast the negative story about the DRC and Glencore throughout the world. I personally had a meeting with Glencore Mining officials here in the DRC, and they confirmed that no one from Panorama met with the Glencore officials at the site in question to fact-check their allegations.

But this was just one example of what I am pulling the sheets off to demand more accuracy and fairness when it comes to doing feature news stories about Africa that only serve to further destabilize Africa, rather than help Africans to empower themselves. I am glad that CNN did run a positive story about the development of the Georges Malaika Foundation (GMF) in the DRC in Lubumbashi in the Katanga Province that focused on the excellent work of Noella Musunka and the GMF in building and maintaining a school for girls in Lubumbashi and an adjacent community development center. I saw how they were making their own bricks and building schools and giving back to the community in ways that will have a long term sustainable impact on the future progress of the people who live and work in that community.

Africa still has a long way to go in terms of future development. Like other emerging economies, the DRC should be encouraged not falsely criticized. I met with the young Governor of the Katanga Province, H.E. Moise Katumbi Chapwe, on several occasions during my visit to Lubumbashi. The governor's brilliance and commitment to serve the economic and social interests of the people of the Congo reminded me of the style, intelligence, integrity and substance of young President Barack Obama in the United States.

I was very pleased to witness the growing economy of the Katanga Province and the overall improvement in the quality of life in that part of Africa. Let's work harder to support sustainable development in the DRC and in all of Africa, as well as in our own communities in the United States. Solidarity necessitates unity in action, word and deed.

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