

## **Vincent Vanderpool-Wallace**

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**Subject:** SPEAKING NOTES FOR THE AFRICA DIASPORA SUMMIT CONFERENCE

Dear Minister,

Please accept my apologies for having to leave the conference before its conclusion. I had to host another conference call an hour and a half after we began. I was quite pleased with the comments up to that point as I sense that we were converging on that subject that I wished to amplify in the five minutes of my allotted time as shown in the speaking notes below.

I should like to begin by telling you a story while putting my undergraduate degree in Biological Anthropology to work.

I have a daughter who is unambiguously of African descent who grew up in The Bahamas and later went to university in the United States. No one told her in The Bahamas, as black children are told in the United States, that people of African descent don't know how to swim. I was present when she broke the United States record and United States all comers record for the 100 freestyle. Except for the smattering of applause from her parents and teammates, I understood the meaning of deafening silence. The 99% white audience could not believe what they just witnessed. That was NOT supposed to happen. Suddenly, no one was asking me where the bathrooms or the snack bar was located. Thereafter, on passing us, they bowed their head in respect for the rest of that swim meet.

We need to recognize that Africanness, the image of Africa in the world and the image of Africa in the diaspora needs much work. That is something on which we can all work provided that a coherent and consistent communication strategy is agreed and followed.

The current perception of Africa that we share at this conference is not shared by many members in the diaspora and beyond because of the relentless bombardment of misinformation about peoples from our continent.

If we wish to increase diaspora travel to places in Africa and places with large numbers of people of African descent, we need to remember that the old marketing acronym, AIDA, "Awareness, Interest, Desire, Action" is very much at work.

How many people of African descent and others are aware that Africa has the most diverse genetic populations in the world? Whenever we see skin colour, we have been taught to see sameness, not diversity. What does that great diversity mean?

It explains why people of African descent are the fastest runners in the world. Look at the lineup of any Olympic 100 meter final. It also explains why people of African descent have nearly all of the world records in the longer distance races. How is it that people of African descent occupy both ends of the running spectrum. That is the result of vast genetic diversity.

Africa has the tallest people in the world. Africa also has the shortest people in the world. That is the result of vast genetic diversity.

Africa has a greater variety of spoken languages than any other place in the world. That is a result of genetic and social diversity.

Africa has more tribal groupings than any other place in the world. That is a result of genetic and social diversity.

Africa has the smartest people in the world and the not necessarily smartest people in the world. That is the result of genetic and social diversity.

Go look at the performance of people of African descent on standardized tests in the United States and in the United Kingdom.

Shocking!

The world that wishes to establish themselves as the most advanced people on the basis of their skin colour is not interested in promoting the obvious and outstanding achievements of people associated with the African continent. That is why the rest of the world hardly hears about these achievements.

Look at the history of civilizations over the many past Millennia in the world. No one wishes to tell of the prowess of many great African civilizations. In fact, history shows that they actively suppress it and distort it.

No one talks about these accomplishments on a regular basis.

Africa is known scientifically to be the cradle of all human origins. Ever wonder why that does not show up on all DNA tests? Can we imagine some of the current politicians in the global north admitting such a connection?

Members of our diaspora have to want to be associated with Africa and Africanness. That has to be our task at the beginning. Without that, we can accomplish little else.

While we can never forget the relatively recent history of slavery and the need to continue the pursuit of reparations, that cannot be it all. We have to stir up the pride in people with their associated with Africa.

We need to celebrate our diversity and we also need for us to have a common language that we all can share to accelerate communication. That has to take an all out effort.

If we wish to accelerate travel to Africa and intra-diaspora travel, we have much work to do and it has to start with revealing the true story of Africa that once revealed we fulfill the wish of every member of our diaspora.

Let us hasten the day when there are two kinds of people in the world: People clearly of African descent and people who wish they were of African descent.

Moving relentlessly in that direction is our primary collective task to lubricate all that we wish to accomplish.

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