"Explaining President Barack Obama’s First Visit to Africa (Egypt): Three Phenomena of Africa and Africans as the Core of U.S.-Arab/Muslim Relations,"

Amadu Jacky Kaba, Seton Hall University

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Explaining President Barack Obama’s First Visit to Africa (Egypt):
Three Phenomena of Africa and Africans as the Core of U.S.-
Arab/Muslim Relations

By Amadu Jacky Kaba

On June 4, 2009 U.S. President Barack Obama delivered a highly
anticipated speech on U.S.-Arab/Muslim relations in Egypt, Africa. The
selection of Egypt as the venue for a speech that was planned for many
months, was a strategic one. Why Africa? Why Egypt? To answer those
questions, I have come up with three phenomena that I think are crucial
to that decision. The first phenomenon is that geographically, Africa has
been the land where the vast majority of all Arabs in the world reside.
The second phenomenon is that in 2001 and in 2009, Africa is the only
continent on the planet where Muslims comprise the highest proportion
among all types of world and African religions. The third phenomenon is
the positive legacy of peace for Africans in Africa and people of African
descent all over the world bequeathed by three individuals I call “The
Three Wise Black Men”: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., President Anwar
Sadat of Egypt and President Nelson Mandela of South Africa. Each of
these three great wise Black men won a Nobel Peace Prize. It is useful to
note that I could have chosen countless other Black male and female
leaders and explain how they too have contributed to world peace. So
this particular paper is only focusing on these three Black male leaders
because of their direct connections to current events. Let us now briefly
go over each of these three phenomena.

Africa as the Land Where the Majority of Arabs Reside

There are many people in the world who might not know that the
Arabs came to Africa in significant numbers over 1,400 years ago and
Africa has been good to them to the point that their average standard of
living is relatively higher than the rest of the Black Africans. The four
most populous Arab nations in the world as of July 2009 are in Africa: (1) Egypt, 83,082,869, Sudan, 41,087,825, Morocco, 34,859,364, and Algeria, 34,178,188. The only other Arab countries with at least 20 million people are: Iraq, 28,945,657, Saudi Arabia, 28,686,633, Yemen, 23,822,783, and Syria, 20,178,485. Of the 22 members of the League of Arab States, 10 (45.4%) are in Africa: Algeria, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Somalia, Sudan and Tunisia. As of July 2009, of the total estimated 352,710,546 people in the 22 member countries of the Arab League, 224,235,015 (63.6%) are in Africa. It is important to note that a substantial proportion of Arabs both in Africa and countries in the Middle East such as Saudi Arabia and Yemen are Black people who are Arabized—Arab as culture.

Africa as the Only Continent with Muslims as Highest Proportion of Religions

Africa is very central to Islam. Apart from Africa, no other continent has Muslims as the highest proportion of religions, not even Asia, where Islam originated. Africa is also currently the continent with the highest total fertility rate, with 5 children born per woman on average, meaning there is potential to increase or sustain their proportion.

In my published and forthcoming research studies on the spread of foreign religions in Africa, I found that as of July 2001, Muslims in Africa comprised 371.4 million (45.1%) of the total 823.4 million people. In July 2009, their numbers increased to 434.74 million, but the proportion declined to 43.6% of the 997 million people. The 434.74 million Muslims in Africa in July 2009, is 31% of the 1.41 billion Muslims in the world in 2007.

The total Christian population in Africa increased significantly from July 2001, 304.31 million (36.9%) to 411.13 million (41.2%) in July 2009. The total number and percentage of Africans who practice indigenous religions have declined significantly from July 2001 (16.7%) to July 2009 (11.8%).

Three Wise Black Men and Their Legacy of Peace: Martin Luther King, Jr., Anwar Sadat and Nelson Mandela

Today, despite what ever obstacles that Black people world-wide are experiencing, including Black on Black violence, they actually have peace because they are not in any war with any other racial group in the world.
My thesis is that these three great wise Black men contributed to this peace.

**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

On the issue of peace-making between Arabs/Muslims and the U.S., during his speech in Egypt on June 4, 2009, President Obama said that: “For centuries, black people in America suffered the lash of the whip as slaves and the humiliation of segregation. But it was not violence that won full and equal rights. It was a peaceful and determined insistence upon the ideals at the center of America's founding.” No rational human being can argue against the fact that Barack Obama is President of the U.S. today due to the efforts of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his legacy of peace among all the races and cultures of the United States and therefore the world. Finally, the new positive relations between Africa and the U.S. today is due partly to the legacy of peace left by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

**President Anwar Sadat.**

The late President Anwar Sadat of Egypt made peace with Israel and the U.S. in 1978-1979 in two forms: (1) as an Arab leader of the most populous Arab country, which also is in the continent with the majority of Arabs in the world and (2) as a Black African leader of an African country. Since Anwar Sadat signed a peace treaty with Israel and the U.S. not only has there never been a war between Egypt and Israel, but also there has been no war between Africa and Israel. So one can claim that President Sadat made peace not only for the most populous Arab nation, but also the land that keeps the majority of Arabs in the world. But President Sadat also made peace with Israel and the U.S. as a Black man. That is because when most Americans were filled with pride while they watch the peace treaty signed in the U.S. in 1979, they saw a Black man, like Dr. King before him making peace. President Anwar Sadat had a Black mother from Sudan and an Arab father. In the U.S. such a person is classified as a Black man. So President Anwar Sadat made peace as an Arab and as a Black African.

**President Nelson Mandela**

Former President Nelson Mandela of South Africa is today known as one of the world’s foremost peacemakers. Like his counterpart in the northernmost part of Africa, Anwar Sadat, President Mandela, in the
Southernmost part of the continent also made peace with the Whites or Europeans of South and Southern Africa. This article has briefly provided explanations that Africa, Africans in Africa and people of African descent are at the forefront in the efforts of the U.S. to make peace with the Arab/Muslim world. The most populous Arab country is in Africa as the majority of Arabs are in Africa. Africa is the only continent where Muslims have the highest proportion. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., President Anwar Sadat and President Nelson Mandela have contributed enormously to the relative peace that people of African decent all over the world now enjoy.