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Transcript

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Diversity and Development: Collaboration between Millennium Challenge Corporation and Phelps Stokes Fund's Ralph Bunche Societies

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Transcript

HAYDEN: Good afternoon. I'm Luddy Hayden. I'm a senior fellow with the Phelps Stokes Fund.

And I'm happy to welcome you this afternoon, on behalf of the fund and the Millennium Challenge Corporation, in cooperation with Congressman John Lewis, Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson, Congressman Bobby Rush, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, Congresswoman Barbara Lee, and Congresswoman Diane Watson, to this signing ceremony marking diversity and development, collaboration between the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the Phelps Stokes Fund's Ralph Bunche Society.

And it gives me great pleasure at this moment to introduce to you Ambassador John J. Danilovich. Ambassador Danilovich began his duties as chief executive officer for the Millennium Challenge Corporation in November of 2005, continuing a distinguished career of more than 30 years in both the public and private sectors.

The Millennium Challenge Corporation is based on the principle that foreign aid is most effective when it reinforces good governance, economic freedom and investments in people. Under his leadership, it has become a key U.S. government agency in reducing poverty through economic growth.

Prior to his appointment by President Bush as chief executive officer, Ambassador Danilovich served as the American ambassador to the Republics of Costa Rica and Brazil.

Ambassador Danilovich has been a business man and private investor with a strong background in foreign affairs. A native Californian and resident of London for many years, he was active in the international shipping business for over two decades and served as director of companies in the shipping, property, publishing and investment fields.

Ambassador Danilovich served on the board of directors of the Panama Canal Commission from 1991 through 1996 and chaired the commission's transition committee prior to the transfer of the canal to Panama.

Ambassador Danilovich has been a director of the Stanford University Trust, a trustee of the American Museum in Britain, a director of the U.S.-U.K. Fulbright Commission, and has served in leadership positions for several charitable organizations.

Please help me welcome Ambassador John Danilovich.

(APPLAUSE)

DANILOVICH: Thank you very much, Luddy, for that introduction.

Mr. Cahn, friends of the Phelps Stokes Fund and the Millennium Challenge Corporation, it's a pleasure to be here this afternoon to sign and to celebrate this most important memorandum of understanding between the Phelps Stokes Fund and the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

I want to particularly thank and acknowledge and express our appreciation for the support of Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson of Texas, Congresswoman Barbara Lee of California, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson of Texas, Congressman John Lewis of Georgia, Congressman Bobby Rush of Illinois, and Congresswoman Diane Watson of California.

This MOU demonstrates what we all know to be true -- working together in partnership and collaboration, we can accomplish far more than working apart separately.

MCC and Phelps Stokes Fund share a common goal. We both seek to expand and deepen minority involvement in the international arena.

Given the diversity of the world in which we live and work, it makes perfect sense to equip the next generation of leaders with professional experience and career development opportunities to actively participate in and be the leaders of the global community.

This is a future in which everybody wins. As a flagship initiative to reduce poverty, MCC wants to make sure that the best and the brightest minds form the foundation of this endeavor.

MCC deeply values the immense contribution diversity brings to the success of our mission.

The complexities, demands and challenges of international affairs are many, and we must have a diversity of backgrounds and experiences to achieve the most creative solutions to resolve these challenges.

The Millennium Challenge Corporation partners with some of the world's poorest countries to reduce poverty through sustained economic growth.

With grants totaling \$5.5 billion to 16 countries around the world in Africa, Central America, Eurasia and the Pacific, MCC is changing the lives of the poor through our innovative, different and demanding approach to development assistance.

Built on accountability, MCC allocates aid based on how well countries perform on a set of 17 independent and transparent indicators in the political, economic and social field, and on their willingness to deliver meaningful results through their own development efforts.

Not only are we focused on helping the world's poor, but we also openly recognize that it is in our national interest to reduce global poverty. Poverty is a breeding ground for hopelessness, resentment and terrorism that endangers the security of the United States and the world.

The Phelps Stokes Fund understands the importance of our interdependent global society. Dedicated to building bridges of intercultural, interracial and international understanding, Phelps Stokes Fund is establishing Ralph Bunche Societies on college campuses across our country to prepare minority students to engage globally.

As the first person of color to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, Ralph Bunche was a dedicated civil servant at both the State Department and the United Nations.

The societies that bear his name inspire today's minority students -- indeed, all students -- to follow in his footsteps and be tomorrow's leaders in international affairs.

When I was a young man, Ralph Bunche was an inspiration to me, and I feel personally humbled and honored to be the head of an organization that is partnering with Phelps Stokes Fund, particularly in Ralph Bunche Societies, to develop globally conscious students to assume such future leadership.

Paving the way for the cooperation we commemorate today, the United States State Department, under the leadership of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who also serves as chairman of the MCC's board, paid tribute to Ralph Bunche during the official launch of Phelps Stokes Fund Ralph Bunche Societies just two years ago.

We at MCC are proud to add our MCC voice to this tribute through concrete actions that underscore a commitment to both development and diversity.

The memorandum of understanding between MCC and Phelps Stokes underlines four main areas of cooperation to achieve our mutual objective of increasing minority participation in international affairs.

First, we will engage in student leadership development activities. Members of Ralph Bunche Societies, for example, will be invited to learning seminars -- or brown bag lunches, as we call them -- at the MCC, a place where innovative programs and global engagement coexist.

Second, we will foster summer internship experiences by providing members of Ralph Bunche Societies with internships that will allow them to gain practical experience in international development.

I am very pleased to announce that April Evans will be joining the MCC as our first intern through this program.

A student at Winston-Salem State University in North Carolina, April will participate directly in the many facets of our work, including the substantive rigors of developing compacts with countries that seek to partner with us. We look forward to welcoming April to the MCC family this summer.

Third, we will participate in Ralph Bunche Societies expanding mentoring program. MCC staff will serve as caring mentors to members and interns from Ralph Bunche Societies.

And fourth, we will participate in speaker exchanges. Professionals from both MCC and the Phelps Stokes Fund will be invited to speak at one another's international education events and conferences.

The Millennium Challenge Corporation welcomes all these opportunities that positively impact the lives of students interested in the development field and in preparing for a possible future career in development.

We are committed to establishing leadership and career development tracks for minority students in international affairs. And in partnership with the Phelps Stokes Fund that is exactly what we are setting out to do today.

The memorandum of understanding we sign this afternoon ushers in a new day of cooperation that will further expand and strengthen the diversity of professionals dedicated to taking and to making our world a better place.

The Millennium Challenge Corporation is honored to work with Phelps Stokes Fund's Ralph Bunche Societies toward this shared vision.

Thank you all very much.

(APPLAUSE)

HAYDEN: Thank you, Ambassador.

I'd like now to ask Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson to come up and give us some remarks, please.

(APPLAUSE)

JOHNSON: Thank you very much. This is a person that I have known for as long as I've been in Washington, 16 years. Let me thank you, Ambassador, and thank you, Mr. President. You're the president of -- on the -- chairman of the board.

This is a very exciting endeavor to me. I am very, very interested in world affairs and most especially interested in human relations throughout the world. We almost are without borders now, and I try to make sure that I have a diverse staff, because I have a diverse district.

And I know that this will be very, very meaningful to the persons, to the countries where you go, but also to this country. And we need all the help we can get.

I serve on a board at my alma mater, who has started an international grooming -- it's a woman's college, St. Mary's up in South Bend, Indiana, and (inaudible) in Claremont out in California.

I'm so delighted to see that this agreement has come, and I'm delighted that you have seen how important it is to include students who probably never would have an opportunity to leave these shores.

And 75 percent of the world now are people of color. And so we must get to know each other, understand each other, and live together in peace on this planet so we can have a future for our children.

I thank you again.

(APPLAUSE)

HAYDEN: Thank you, Congresswoman. It's been a very pleasant 16 years, by the way.

I now have the pleasure of introducing the chairman of the board of trustees of the Phelps Stokes Fund, Mr. Jonathan Cahn. Mr. Cahn is a partner and member of the international group in Baker & McKenzie's Washington, D.C. office.

Mr. Cahn's practice focuses on advising clients active in making investments in Russia, Central Asia and China, particularly in the petroleum and energy sectors.

He has advised on numerous exploration and production agreements, including production-sharing agreements -- PSAs -- as well as the construction and financing of transportation and downstream infrastructure.

Mr. Cahn also has extensive experience in international arbitration, particularly investment-related disputes and international trade litigation. Mr. Cahn's practice experience also includes a wide variety of investment and cross-border financing transactions in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and China.

Prior to joining Baker & McKenzie in October of 2005, Mr. Cahn opened and was the managing partner of a Coudert Brothers office in Almaty, Kazakhstan, a place that I know well, and subsequently served as the managing partner of that law firm's Moscow office.

It gives me great pleasure to ask Mr. Cahn to come to the lectern.

(APPLAUSE)

CAHN: Luddy and I probably have crossed paths in Almaty. There's only one decent hotel there.

Ambassador Danilovich, honorable members of Congress, other dignitaries, ladies and gentlemen, some ceremonies commemorate the past. They celebrate what has been done. All of us have been at those ceremonies.

This is not one of those ceremonies. Our eyes are not turned toward the past. We look forward to the future. This ceremony is about a process set in motion, about something that is unfolding.

Events take their meaning from how we interpret them, from the meanings we invest in them. There are three parts to this event -- who is here, what we do here, why we do it.

First, the who. The Millennium Challenge Corporation, the Phelps Stokes Fund and, if I may take the liberty, Ralph Bunche, or at least the spirit of Ralph Bunche.

What meaning are we to give to this element of the event, the who? I choose to think of the Millennium Challenge Corporation as a national statement that we have the courage to acknowledge that we have made mistakes, that aid to others in the past often has not reached those we intended to help or did little good, that we are committed to learning, learning a new definition of doing good, and that knowing that definition and that doing good carries with it new risks and challenges.

The Millennium Challenge Corporation is exactly that -- a challenge that starts from the premise that we are not omniscient. But we do know the value of integrity, of trust, of honoring one's word. It is also an experiment in using aid to support those founding values we cherish most as a country.

There are some things that we have learned, that we must root out corruption, we must support efforts to uphold human rights, we must endeavor to advance the rule of law and the interests of justice.

So we are in the presence of an organization and its leaders who still hold the torch of liberty at a time when so many countries look to us and seek to emulate our founding values.

The second who is the Phelps Stokes Fund, and I am honored to represent the fund here today. The Phelps Stokes Fund is America's oldest continuously operating foundation serving the needs of African Americans, Native Americans, Africans and the rural and urban poor.

The fund functions as an advocate, an incubator, think tank, convener, operating fund and advisor. In all of those roles, it promotes and seeks to address the concerns of under-resourced communities as well as marginalized groups to leverage their ability to promote change, reconciliation and rehabilitation.

We all stand here because we stand on the shoulders of giants, of legendary warriors for equality, for human dignity, for democracy, for respect that bridges and honors diversity.

The fund has a long history and a rich legacy in Africa. Organizations and programs that trace their beginnings to the fund include the African Student Aid Fund, Archbishop Tutu's Southern African Scholarship Fund, the Booker Washington Institute of Liberia, the Franklin H. Williams Caribbean Cultural Center, the South African Institute on Race Relations, the Association of Black American Ambassadors, the United Negro College Fund, the American Indian College Fund.

Currently, the fund is reshaping its women and girls empowerment program in Liberia and implementing an educational and leadership program in Latin America.

The third who is the spirit of Ralph Bunche, whom we honor through the Ralph Bunche Societies we are forming on campuses throughout the United States. Dr. Bunche served on the board of trustees at Phelps Stokes Fund for 20 years.

He influenced the work of the fund and our goals of human dignity, education, racial harmony, democracy. Dr. Bunche's involvement with the fund was no coincidence, especially given his significant contributions to the post-war decolonialization of Europe and Africa.

He was the first person of color to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his work as the U.N.'s chief mediator for the United Nations' special committee on Palestine, he secured the signing of the 1949 armistice agreements between Jews and Arabs, and later mediated in other strife-torn regions, including the Congo, Yemen, Kashmir and Cyprus.

Now more than ever, we have a need of his wisdom and his guidance. That is the who.

Now, the what we do here. We sign an agreement. And in doing so, we recognize, we affirm and reify a relationship of trust, of reciprocity, of engagement and support that does three things -- secures internships for qualified members of Ralph Bunche Societies, provides mentors from Millennium Challenge Corporation for Ralph Bunche Society members, creates a speaker exchange between the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the Phelps Stokes Fund.

The memorandum of understanding is unusual. In the past, it might have been a gesture of philanthropic noblesse oblige, from those with more money to ones deemed worthy of largesse. But that was yesteryear.

This is a very different type of gesture. Today, what we do here signifies a relationship of parity, of mutual respect, because today's actions signify and testify to the need for a new generation of global leaders whose ranks will now include students of color preparing for the 21st century and the emerging new world order.

So what we do here creates a bridge where the traffic goes two ways, from those who understand how to wield power to reduce intolerable disparities and from those who know worlds of despair, of inequality, of desperate need, of violence being incubated and who are committed to fashioning a different world.

We seek to create a new vanguard who are no strangers to adversity but who are not afraid to unfurl the banners of hope even in the darkest hours when we seem adrift on tides of cynicism and despair.

We are not celebrating achievement. We are setting in motion a process that enlists, ennobles and empowers, guided by wisdom from mentors like those here today, wisdom that is beyond market price.

Finally comes the why. Why here, why now, why in this way? Every economic era draws upon unique raw material. The hunter-gatherer era foraged for what it needed. The agricultural era drew upon the land. The industrial revolution thundered forward with ever-more powerful machinery and technology.

Now we are said to live in the post-industrial information age, driven by vast and ever-growing databases. The Internet has been dubbed the Library of Congress on steroids.

But the new era, the one we are already entering, the one I believe we are trying to fathom, is different. It is actually the ecological revolution, and the raw material from which it will emerge is relationships, relationships like the one we are formalizing today with a memorandum of understanding, relationships of interdependence, relationships of trust and reciprocity and engagement, relationships that cross lines of color, age, gender, nationality and language, relationships across ecological domains that seek to preserve endangered species and appreciate the fragility of this planet and its ability to sustain life forms.

The why is simple. We need a moral compass as we fashion those relationships, and we need the spirit of Ralph Bunche to reach out to the best impulses within us.

We need his belief in the fundamental goodness of our species and his faith that trust could be created, a distilled center of shared values that somehow emerges from the fractal structure within chaos.

The why resonates as a call to redefine what leadership means in an era of interdependence, where great schemes and noble dreams fail if we cannot enlist those we seek to help as partners, as co-workers and as co-producers of justice, of democracy and of an ecologically sustainable planet.

It is my privilege to join hands with you today in what is quite literally a memorandum of understanding, understanding the challenge that this millennium poses to all of us.

I want to thank Ambassador Danilovich for his vision, his leadership and his willingness to reach out to this new generation of leaders and to offer them an opportunity to look into a world so few of us have had a chance to glimpse.

I want to thank the many Congress people who have been involved and supported this effort and have made it possible for us to be here today.

And I want to thank Luddy Hayden for his commitment and his ability to really work very hard on a possibility that's now become a reality.

And I'd like to thank Bethany Dickerson for the extraordinary effort she's made in supporting this process, bringing it to fruition and really coordinating and building the Ralph Bunche Societies across the United States. It's very important for us all.

Thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE)

HAYDEN: I take some pride in the claim that the lady I will next introduce is the lady with whom I had a brief conversation in September which I think was the real seed planting for what we're doing here today. I'm really happy about that.

But she is Deidra Fair, and Deidra is country director in compact development at the Millennium Challenge Corporation. Ms. Fair's duties include representing the Millennium Challenge Corporation with governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, academia and civil society.

She's also responsible for coordinating the activities and providing leadership to the transaction team during the proposal development and due diligence process.

She has had the lead role in managing the Millennium Challenge Corporation's relations with the government of Lesotho and was the Lesotho transaction team leader for the \$362 million compact signed in July of 2007.

Ms. Fair is now focusing on the compact development process with Malawi.

Prior to the Millennium Challenge Corporation, Ms. Fair worked at the International Finance Corporation in the infrastructure and Middle East-North Africa departments.

As an investment officer there, she worked on transactions in Latin America, South Asia, southern Europe and Africa.

Ms. Fair's first international work experience was in Ghana as a structural engineer for a Ghanaian engineering consulting firm, where she helped design several infrastructure projects, including roads and office buildings.

Ms. Fair?

(APPLAUSE)

FAIR: Thank you very much for that introduction, Luddy. I appreciate that.

I wanted to make a few remarks today about how excited I am about this collaboration. And if you will indulge me, I also wanted to put that in the context of my own personal experience.

As I mentioned, I'm excited about this MCC-Phelps Stokes partnership that will provide internships and mentorship opportunities to bright young motivated college students.

This really resonates with me because 20 years ago I was one of those bright motivated college students who made her debut into the professional world through a program similar to this.

Some of you might be familiar with the INROADS Program that offers internships and professional development opportunities to minority students. I was an Inroader. I know Bethany and I had this conversation. She was an Inroader as well.

And through that problem, I was able to get a summer job at Indianapolis Power & Light in the mechanical and civil engineering department, which sure beat my previous summer job flipping burgers at McDonald's.

So not only did it pay better and it was a lot less messy than my previous job, it offered me a glimpse into my chosen profession, engineering. And also, it benefitted me professionally and academically, and I was able to go back to college with real-world experience.

That's one of the reasons why I eagerly support this collaboration since it began to take shape. And providing support to the Ralph Bunch students is something that I feel is not only my duty but also a privilege for me.

And I want to help to pave their road into the field of international relations and share my experiences at MCC and also at the International Finance Corporation.

So I commend my management for -- as Luddy mentioned, it was a seed, but through the hard work of Bethany and Erin and also our management, it became a full flowering tree.

So I feel again that it is an honor and duty to fulfill this role, and I am pleased to see this journey come full circle for me 20 years later.

Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

HAYDEN: Don't go too far, Deidra.

Now, the moment. If I might ask Ambassador Danilovich, Mr. Cahn, come up, please.

(APPLAUSE)

(LAUGHTER)

HAYDEN: That's it. That's it.

(APPLAUSE)

END