



## Congressional Video - Senators Risch and Coons

### Transcript for Importance of the U.S.-African Relationship in the Time of COVID-19

#### *Speakers*

- Senator James E. Risch, U.S. Senator for Idaho (R-ID), Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
- Senator Chris Coons, U.S. Senator for Delaware (D-DE)

### Session Transcript

**Senator Risch:** Hi, I'm James Risch, U.S. Senator for Idaho and Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

**Senator Coons:** And I'm Chris Coons, U.S. Senator for Delaware.

**Senator Risch:** As you already know, the 2020 Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders has been postponed until summer 2021 due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the unprecedented crisis brought on by COVID-19 and the Fellowship being on hold, America's support for emerging leaders remains strong. The United States has a long-term, bipartisan commitment to supporting Sub-Saharan Africa and its youth.

**Senator Coons:** We applaud the work that Mandela Washington Fellowship Alumni, Partners, Finalists, and Alternates are doing in their communities across Sub-Saharan Africa and the United States, and we need you to continue your exemplary servant leadership in order to help your communities survive and thrive in the coming months.

Like Ijeoma Idika Chima, a 2014 Alumna from Nigeria who attended the University of Delaware for a Leadership in Civic Engagement Institute. Through her organization, Teenz Global Foundation, Ijeoma launched an information-sharing and awareness program. Since March, she has held virtual discussions, making information easy for youth to understand and helping counter the spread of COVID-19 in Nigeria.

**Senator Risch:** And Obed Mambwe, a 2019 Alumnus from Zambia who attended Boise State University for a Leadership in Public Management Institute. As a sign language interpreter, he strives to help bridge the information and communication gap that the deaf community experiences. Since the start of the pandemic, Obed and his group of volunteer interpreters have made videos in sign language so that information on COVID-19 would be accessible to the deaf community across Zambia.

**Senator Coons:** Since 2010, the Young African Leaders Initiative, or YALI, has inspired millions of young leaders to make positive changes in their community. On the tenth anniversary of YALI, we're



proud of how the 650,000 members (and counting!) of the YALI Network and Fellowship Alumni have risen to the challenge and are playing a critical role in fighting COVID-19 across the continent.

**Senator Risch:** In the wake of this global crisis, servant leadership is more critical now than ever. Young leaders need to be engaged in solving the problems brought on by this crisis and the other challenges our communities and countries face every day.

The Mandela Washington Fellowship is an important opportunity for Americans and Africans to forge long-term relationships and collaboratively tackle challenges in both the United States and Africa. Since 2014, nearly 4,400 Fellows have connected with Americans across 42 states, and we look forward to forging new connections virtually this year and in person in the years to come.

**Senator Coons:** We hope that Fellowship Alumni and other members of the YALI family use new virtual engagement opportunities to connect with other Africans and Americans who are committed in seeing them succeed and help build solutions for a stronger Africa and deeper ties with the United States.

**Senator Risch:** And stay connected with the United States – the Mandela Washington Fellowship, U.S. Embassies, and other partners want to work with Alumni and highlight their successes in the coming months and years. We're proud of all you've accomplished, and we know the best is yet to come.