



Mandela Washington Fellowship Summit

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Leadership for the Future: Resilience and Inclusion

Day 2 Welcome Transcript for Day 2 Welcome Session

Speakers

- Yolanda Sangweni, Senior Director of Programming, National Public Radio
- Islam Abdalla Elamin Elsheikh, 2021 Mandela Washington Fellow, Sudan
- Samantha Power, Administrator, U.S. Agency for International Development
- Cory Booker, U.S. Senator, New Jersey
- Joni Ernst, U.S. Senator, Iowa

Session Transcript

Yolanda Sangweni: Welcome to day two of the 2021 Mandela Washington Fellowship Summit, and because we are Africans, I want to greet you. In Madagascar, we say, “Salama!” In Kenya, we say, “Jambo!” In Ghana, we say “Akwaaba!”

We are so pleased to join us today and hope you enjoyed networking and insights from what you learned yesterday. We want to hear from you on the chat and on social media. Remember to Use the #YALI2021. Share with us these new connections you made yesterday and also during the Expo, and a reflection you have from listening to the panelists’ “Ignite Talks” or the guest speakers.

Here tell us more about the meet ups that you had, the “Meet Up” sessions, and how you participated, and what new connections you made, and what did you learn. Watch parties at the embassies, How are you doing? Tell us where you are and how you are participating in the Summit. My name is Yolanda Sangweni and I will continue to guide you throughout the day. We have a lot more in store for you today, beginning with some exciting conversations, but please, first, visit the agenda to view all the amazing speakers we have lined up for you.

Today, we begin with a special guest welcoming you to day two. I will now hand over to the 2021 Mandela Washington Fellowship Summit, from Sudan, Islam Abdalla Elamin Elsheikh, who will be introducing our very special guest, Samantha Power, the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Islam Abdalla Elamin Elsheikh: Thank you Yolanda, and welcome everyone to day two of this important gathering. My name is Islam Abdalla Elamin Elsheikh, I am a 2021 Fellow from Sudan, and I am in the Leadership in Business Track. I am here to introduce an exceptional guest to the stage, the Administrator for the U.S. Agency for International Development: Ms. Samantha Power.

Prior to joining the Biden-Harris Administration, Ms. Power was the Anna Lindh Professor of the Practice of Global Leadership and Public Policy at Harvard Kennedy School and the William D. Zabel



Professor of Practice in Human Rights at Harvard Law School. And from 2013 to 2017, Ms. Power served in the Obama-Biden Administration as the 28th U.S. permanent representative to the United Nations. During her time at the UN, Ms. Power rallied countries to combat the Ebola epidemic, ratified the Paris Climate Agreement, and developed new international law to cripple ISIS' financial networks.

She worked to negotiate and implement the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals, helped catalyze bold international commitment to care for refugees and advocate to secure the release of political prisoners, defend civil society from growing repression, and protect the rights of women and girls. All are important issues for Sub-Saharan Africa.

From 2009 to 2013, Ms. Power served on the National Security Council staff as a special assistant to the president and senior director for multilateral affairs and human rights. At the NSC, she advised the Obama-Biden Administration on issues such as democracy promotion, UN reform, LGBTQ+ and women's rights, atrocity prevention, and fights against human trafficking and global corruption. An immigrant to the United States from Ireland, Ms. Power began her career as a war correspondent in Bosnia, and she went on to report from places including Kosovo, Rwanda, Sudan, and Zimbabwe. She was a founding executive director of the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School, and has been recognized as one of *Time's* "100 Most Influential People," one of *Foreign Policy's* "Top 100 Global Thinkers," and by *Forbes* as one of the "World's 100 Most Powerful Women."

Ms. Power is an author and editor of multiple books and the recipient of the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for non-fiction. In leading the world's premier international development agency and its global staff of over 10,000 people, Ms. Power is focused on helping the United States respond to four interconnected challenges: the COVID-19 pandemic and the development gains it has imperiled; climate change; conflict and humanitarian crises; and democratic backsliding. I am honored to welcome the USAID Administrator, Ms. Power, to give her remarks.

Samantha Power: Good afternoon, Fellows!

Thank you, Islam, for that wonderful introduction, and thank you to all of you for joining us from all over the continent.

I know you've heard it already, and I know you'll be hearing it across these two days, but you haven't yet heard it from me: congratulations.

I wish—as you do, I'm sure—that this event could be held here in Washington, D.C.; that you could have had the chance to spend some of your summer visiting monuments and museums, meeting your peers in person, and cheering on your countries in the Olympics.

But just like our athletes, we all have to adjust our expectations as we race to address the COVID pandemic and overcome the devastating impacts it is having on our lives, our economies, and even on the stunning progress Africa has made in recent decades. COVID is not just claiming lives, it is contributing to social unrest from South Africa to Senegal. It is exposing deep inequalities, and it is

giving its cover to repressive regimes to restrict freedoms and suppress the media. That is not unique to the African continent; that is a dynamic playing out across the world.

But, as President Biden has said, the United States is committed to turning peril into possibility, crisis into opportunity, and setback into strength. We are committed to helping African nations deal with these devastating impacts. In addition to investing billions of dollars in COVAX, the global vaccine alliance, and donating hundreds of millions of vaccines to share with the world, the United States is also investing in Africa's own vaccine manufacturing capacity, so that African countries are in a position to address their own global health priorities going forward. We don't just want countries to build back –we want countries to build back better, and we are committed to doing so as partners.

I am currently on my first official trip to Africa as USAID Administrator, to Sudan and Ethiopia – two countries whose trajectories reflect both promise and peril. My first visit to Sudan was nearly 20 years ago, and it was by no means official. I was a journalist, and, in order to reach Darfur, where a brutal campaign of genocide was underway, I had to cross the border from Chad illegally. What I saw was chilling beyond words: charred villages, bomb craters, wells that had been destroyed to deny water to local villages, and a fresh mass grave – the work of a regime whose grip on power then seemed unshakeable. Not once during my time on the ground did I imagine that Sudan would one day become an inspiring example to the rest of the world that no leader is ever permanently immune from the will of their people. But thanks to a youth-driven and largely peaceful revolution, one led primarily by Sudan's women, the country is now experiencing a fragile yet hopeful transition to a civilian-led democracy.

In Ethiopia, a long-standing partner of the United States, the case is starkly different. A country that has been home to some of the most impressive development gains and economic growth anywhere on the continent, and a regional anchor of stability and security, now finds itself mired in conflict. The government's brutal campaign against the people of Tigray has put the country's people at risk of a prolonged civil war and the people of Tigray at grave risk of imminent famine.

In both Sudan and Ethiopia, we cannot assume a predetermined outcome. Sudan's trajectory is promising, but spoilers abound and people are impatient for swifter change. Ethiopia's current path is deeply troubling, but all stakeholders there can still choose peace, pulling back from the brink. In both Sudan and Ethiopia, the United States wants to see citizens enjoy dignity, end violence, and expand economic opportunity. But too often a lack of compromise, a winner-take-all mindset, and a prioritization by some leaders of self-interest over national interest have ruled the day.

The people we count on to change the destiny of the communities and countries that constitute the continent of Africa—the people we count on to fuel peace and fuel prosperity—are you. And that is where we know our investments are best placed.

Today is a day of celebration, so I don't mean to add any responsibilities to your plates. Each of you were leaders before this Fellowship; indeed, you were leaders before you'd ever heard the word YALI. But today, you emerge as something far more powerful: Alumni of a network that spans the entire African continent. Each of the people you meet at this Summit is someone who can help you think through an idea or scale one you already have; someone who can lift you up when you struggle and

cheer you on when you succeed; someone who knows what it is like to feel the weight of other people's expectations upon you, and to know that your own expectations create the most pressure of all; and someone who will hold you accountable, to live up to your promise, and to represent the values of this program: a belief in inclusive growth, social change, and ethical leadership.

Even though you're finishing your Fellowship today, I want you to know that our support for you does not end when the Fellowship ends. In fact, I'm proud to announce that USAID is partnering with the U.S. African Development Foundation to provide up to eight entrepreneurship grant awards of \$25,000 each to applicants from your cohort, the 2021 Mandela Washington Fellows.

This can be seed capital to start a new initiative or enterprise, or it can be money to help scale the great work you're already doing. Regardless, we are invested in your trajectory, and we want to continue to support your success. It is your success, after all, that will determine Africa's success.

And I don't mean Africa's future. So often when we in the West speak about Africa, we talk about its great potential—about what awaits the continent tomorrow. And when we talk about that future, we speak about you—about the nearly 800 million young people who make up the vast majority of Africa's population and will ensure it is the world's youngest continent for decades to come.

But one last thing I want to stress to all of you: You are not Africa's future – you are Africa's present. When we invest in you, we are not investing in some brighter tomorrow – we are investing in leaders who are shaping Africa's trajectory today.

You are fighting against gender-based violence and on behalf of refugees and displaced peoples, centering your work in an emphasis on the dignity of others. You are launching projects to preserve the environment, to plant trees, to help smallholder farmers efficiently power their homes. And you are fueling the engine of Africa's enviable growth – staggeringly, more than 40% of you already own your own businesses. As founders, innovators, data scientists, developers, you are creating sustainable economic opportunity.

It is sustainable because it is yours. You are not waiting for some bright future; you are out there building it today. I hope you cherish that responsibility, I hope you continue to embrace it, and I hope you know the United States will continue to support you along the way.

Congratulations again, Fellows!

Yolanda Sangweni: Thank you, Samantha Power, Administrator for the U.S. Agency for International Development. Your commitment to support African countries through the COVID pandemic is applauded, and I must reiterate yours and President Biden's words, we must all build back better. Fellows and guests, there are many leaders within the U.S. Government who are applauding the Fellows and supporting your continued development. Yesterday you heard from senator Representative Karen Bass. Today, we are pleased that we have Senator Cory Booker of New Jersey and Senator Joni Ernst of Iowa will share their perspectives on the views and the views on the Fellowship.

Corey Booker: Greetings, 2021 Mandela [Washington] Fellows. I am so excited about your leadership. You are bringing the best of your countries and your communities here to the United States of America at a time that this world so urgently needs you. It needs the best of what you have to offer: your talent, your love, the light you bring through your commitment to others.

This has been a difficult, difficult time for the planet Earth. We are seeing already the devastating impacts of climate change, growing refugee crises, instability all across the globe. And on top of that, it's all been compounded by this horrible pandemic. It's made your Fellowship very different, so much of it being virtual. But amidst it all, I know you all have shown grit, and guts, and grace, and goodness. You all have shown heart, and your commitment to the ideals of this Fellowship. If there's any advice I have for you, it is to continue to be bold – in your intellectual curiosity, and your willingness to call questions into this world. And then if they're not answered, to answer them yourselves. To be an agent or instrument of the highest of human virtues: hope, and love, and courage, and service.

I know from looking at my own DNA that my ancestors come from West Africa. I know that that connection--one of my family members said that, "blood is thicker than the water that separates us." I am proud of you, I am grateful for you, and the traditions that run deep in my DNA. I know that the best of those traditions is yet to come, because they will be made by the leaders of today gifting to future generations a better tomorrow. I wish you all the best. Thank you.

Joni Ernst: Hi folks, this is Senator Joni Ernst, junior senator for the great state of Iowa. While I'm sorry I can't be with you all in person today, I'm honored to share a few words at the 2021 Mandela Washington Fellowship Summit. Since 2014, the Mandela Washington Fellowship has helped shape the next generation of African leaders across government, business, and civil society. And this year, I'm so glad that all of you have had this tremendous opportunity to forge long-term relationships and collaboratively tackle challenges in both the United States and Africa. Today, I'd like to congratulate you on your completion of an intensive six weeks of Leadership Institutes. As a proud Iowan, I'd like to give a special shout-out to both the Drake University and University of Iowa Fellows.

As dynamic and diverse young leaders from 49 countries across Africa, it's important each and every one of you continue your exemplary servant leadership in order to help your community survive and thrive in the months and years to come. Something I've taught my daughter over the years, instructed my soldiers in, and have strived to live out every day myself are four key principles (or pillars): service, leadership, gratitude, and prudent risk. And I encourage you all to do the same. Serve your family, community, and state; lead by example; always find something to be grateful for; and even though it might be scary, assume prudent risk.

My final piece of advice is to be the subject matter expert. Whatever your passion is, know that passion inside and out. Know what the advocates are advocating for, and know what the naysayers are going to push back against, and then know how to debate it properly. Own the room. As our next generation of leaders, you all represent a bright future for your communities. Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to share a few words today, and if I can ever be of assistance, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Yolanda Sangweni: Thank you, Senators Booker and Ernst for their optimistic welcome messages. We will now delve into the critical issues of our time: public health, social justice, and climate change. Please choose one of the concurrent breakout sessions to participate in. These breakout sessions will not take place in the “main stage”. You have to click on the link for the sessions you wish to attend. We will join the main stage after the breakout sessions, and for the final Ignite Talks Showcase for the Summit.