

UN HRC Fifteenth Session – September 2010

Item 9(clustered): Interactive Dialogue with the SR on Racism Mugai and the Working Group on People of African Descent

We appreciate the work of both the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent. The reports of both Special Rapporteur Mugai and the members of the Working Group bring much needed attention to important issues surrounding racism and discrimination.

WGPAD

The United States welcomed the visit of the Working Group of People of African Descent and would like to take this opportunity to provide a few comments on the Working Group's report. First, however, the United States would like to make special mention of our respect and gratitude for the work of Professor Rex Nettleford, who unfortunately passed away while he was on this official visit to the United States, one day before his 77th birthday.

We fully agree with the conclusion of the Working Group that a “comprehensive solution to inadequate access to quality education is needed.” To that end, the Obama Administration has created the [Race] to the Top Fund, a competitive grant program designed to encourage and reward U.S. States that are creating the conditions for education innovation and reform; achieving significant improvement in student outcomes, including making substantial gains in student achievement, closing achievement gaps, improving high school graduation rates, and ensuring student preparation for success in college and careers; and implementing ambitious plans in core education reform areas.

We would like to clarify the reference in the conclusions to the abolition of slavery. The Thirteenth Amendment allows the state/ federal government to compel the labor of anyone convicted of a crime – it does not apply only to African Americans. Because the term “slavery” is associated with the chattel slavery of African Americans before the civil war, use of the term to apply to convicted prisoners may be misleading. Section one of the Thirteenth Amendment abolishes slavery, but equally important is the fact

that Section two gives Congress the power to enforce the Amendment “by appropriate legislation.”

SR on Racism

Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance are serious challenges facing the international community and the United States believes they must be examined methodically and deliberately.

We appreciate the fulsome report presented by the Special Rapporteur. ...

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