

Statement of Donald Teitelbaum Ambassador-Designate to Ghana
Before the Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
May 7, 2008

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today as President Bush's nominee for Ambassador to the Republic of Ghana. I would like to thank President Bush and Secretary Rice for this opportunity and for their trust and confidence.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to start today by introducing some people that have influenced my life. First, my wife Julianna Lindsey and her parents, Jon and Annette, my parents, Robert and Fumie Teitelbaum, my older brother Alex and my sister Romie, and their families; and, last but not least, the best friends anybody could ask for: Allen Crane, Scott Findley, John Carter, and Gary Boswick.

Mr. Chairman, I come to this point in my career with a deep respect for the countries of Africa and a firm belief that the United States of America must engage across the continent. As a Foreign Service Officer, I was immersed in Africa on the ground in South Africa, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda, and from the vantage point of the National Security Council. Through these experiences I have seen the promise, opportunity, and hope that embrace the continent. But I have also seen the suffering, conflict, and despair that stifle progress in far too many African nations. I have seen stark, complicated contrasts -- abundant natural resources, fledgling democracies, incredible personal courage, and historical global links standing toe-to-toe with challenges such as civil wars, HIV/AIDS, poverty, and corruption.

The intricate nature of the African continent is present in Ghana. A democracy since 1992, Ghana has held four free and fair national elections -- including a peaceful transition from one party to another in 2000. Ghana has an apolitical military and a lively, free media. Ghana has emerged as a regional leader and a strong partner in peacekeeping, on conflict resolution, and as a supportive ally during its tenure on the United Nations Security Council from 2005-2007. Ghana has started to implement its \$547 million Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact. And the Ghanaian people are benefiting from improved schools, sanitation, health services, and other basic infrastructure as a result of sound macro-economic policy and debt relief.

However, political and social upheaval marked the years following Ghana's independence in 1957. Democratic institutions are still young and political power is highly centralized. Economic gains remain fragile. Poverty has decreased markedly but broadly shared prosperity is yet to be achieved. Political patronage and connections still taint commercial and economic opportunities. Additionally, the current government lacks capacity to fight escalating drug trafficking.

America's centuries-old relationship with Ghana has similar contrasts. The dark era of the slave trade intertwined our histories. Our economic interaction was once largely that of debtor and creditor. Past international issues, such as Ghana's relations with Libya, strained our relationship.

But now, Ghanaian students studying in America and Americans proudly tracing their heritage in Ghana characterize our people to people contacts. Our coinciding fights for freedom -- America's civil rights struggle and Ghana's national independence movement during the middle of last century -- inspired each other. The first United States Peace Corps overseas mission was established in Ghana in 1961. Our militaries cooperate through many programs, including the Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance Program, Africa Command's Africa Partnership Station, and the International Military Education and Training program. Ghana is one of Africa's premier peacekeeping partners. We are trading partners under the African Growth and Opportunity Act. And President Bush had a successful visit to Ghana in February.

Ghanaians and Americans share a love of democracy, human rights, educational opportunity, free enterprise, peace, and stability. These shared values implore the United States to be active in Ghana. I believe that every corner of the globe is significant in the fight for freedom, peace, and prosperity. Successes and failures in Ghana can affect its neighbors, the region, the continent, and, indeed, the world.

If confirmed by the Senate, I will use the resources of the United States Government wisely, efficiently, and effectively to bring the utmost benefit to the peoples of Ghana and of America. My priority will be to support transformation in Ghana and of America's relationship with Ghana. It is time to put the donor-recipient nomenclature away and continue our journey towards true partnership. It is time to stop talking about potential and start achieving measurable goals.

If confirmed by the Senate, I will have the power of sound policy, programs such as those of the Millennium Challenge Corporation and

USAID, and the talent and skills of Embassy personnel to push transformation. There are opportunities for Ghana to transform and for the United States to assist. I see opportunity in the upcoming elections in December. I see opportunity in making wise decisions regarding offshore oil discoveries. I see opportunity in alleviating poverty, making economic growth durable, and spreading its benefits widely. I see opportunity in continuing the fight against malaria, for which the Congress has provided bi-partisan support. I see opportunity in immobilizing drug trafficking. I see opportunity in strengthening democratic institutions.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, Ghana and America's relationship with Ghana do not lack for opportunities to transform. If confirmed by the Senate to be the next U.S. Ambassador to Ghana, my duty will be to turn those opportunities into outcomes -- to move from a picture of stark contrasts to freedom, prosperity and peace. I will depend on the people at the Embassy in Accra and I will seek out strong commitments from my counterparts in Ghana. Importantly too, I will count on continued communication and consultation with this Committee and Congress so that our aim stays true and our efforts yield the greatest benefit for the American and Ghanaian peoples. Thank you for your attention. I am very pleased to be here and I am happy to answer any questions you have.