

# Summit forges ties between U.S., Africa

By Roderick C. Willis  
AFRO NEWSPAPERS

BALTIMORE — Dr. Lenox Dingle, a Baltimore surgeon, decided to close his practice earlier this year after more than 30 years. Sweeping changes in the HMO system, rising medical malpractice insurance premiums and escalating costs, among other conditions, were factors in his decision.

At 58, he is considered to be still relatively young, and has a wealth of knowledge and experience that could be used.

Dingle may have found the inspiration, the drive and the economic incentive to rekindle his medical practice this week in an unexpected place: the fifth biennial U.S.-African Business Summit, held earlier this month at the Baltimore Marriott Waterfront.

Attending a meeting with dignitaries from the Republic of Guinea, Dingle was informed that the northwest Africa nation has many public health problems to overcome, especially with the delivery of health care and the struggle to contain the spreading HIV/AIDS virus and other contagious diseases — problems he could play a part in solving.

"This U.S.-African Business Summit has created a tremendous opportunity to link African-American physicians, health care practitioners, businesses and technology to the continent," said Dingle, who recently formed a non-profit, The African Diaspora Medical Project Inc., to develop health projects in Africa.

"There are so many needs in the area of health care that can be addressed by forming partnerships, and there are many African-American

physicians and health care professionals that can play a role in transforming the way health care is delivered," Dingle said.

The summit was sponsored by The Corporate Council of America, whose members represent nearly 85 percent of the total U.S. private-sector investment in Africa. Since 1993, CCA has been the leading American organization dedicated to enhancing trade and investment relations between the United States and the 54 countries of Africa.

CCA's decision to hold the summit in Baltimore is due to the vision of Maryland Lt. Gov. Michael S. Steele. Energized by his 2004 trade mission to Ghana and South Africa, and inspired by the opportunities that existed for trade and strategic partnerships between Maryland businesses and institutions, Steele, along with Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich, invited CCA to hold the summit in Baltimore rather than Washington, D.C., its usual venue.

"We are tremendously pleased that CCA accepted our invitation to come to Maryland to hold its summit," said Steele. "Maryland businesses should seize this golden opportunity to make contacts and to start to perceive itself as part of the global market. I am especially encouraged to see African-American business participating in this summit. I have been told a number of times by African business and gov-

ernment officials that the future of Africa rests with its connectivity to African-American businesses and American technology."

Dingle met with Dr. Djene Saran Camara, minister of industry, commerce and small business for the Republic of Guinea, which lies immediately west of Liberia and touches parts of Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast). Unrest in those nations has sent thousands of refugees into the Republic of Guinea, which must provide treatment for the spread of infectious diseases and a number of other health problems.

Dingle and Camara discussed ways that Dingle might assemble a number of physicians and health care providers to resolve the nation's health care problems.

"Our nation is struggling to become a part of the new global economy," said Camara. "Having met with Dr. Dingle and other American businessmen, I am confident that part of our solution rests with the establishment of relationships with African-American businesspeople who care about our fate. American technology, and the historical linkages between Africans on the continent and African-Americans, could be a powerful force to resolve many problems."

The conference began with a dinner reception hosted by the Baltimore President's Roundtable. The reception

turned into a networking bonanza for businesspeople and government officials representing nations in Africa.

The dinner was followed by a black-tie gala in the Marriott's Grand Ballroom. The speakers included Steele; W. Frank Fountain, a senior vice president for DaimlerChrysler Corp.; Mayor Martin O'Malley; Jean Ping, president of the UN General Assembly and Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, president of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

The summit held several workshops on finance, trade and partnering governments, companies and non-governmental organizations to ensure that investments are managed to yield a positive impact on surrounding communities.

There were also workshops on how African agriculture can impact economic growth through policies that foster appropriate technology, guarantee property rights to promote investment, expand access to financing and improve market access.

HIV/AIDS was discussed in a separate workshop called "Reality and Perception: The Status of Health in Africa and the Impact on Investment." The workshop discussed the current real status of HIV/AIDS and related health care issues in Africa, and addressed public and private strategies to improve conditions and mitigate investment risk.

Dr. Robert Gallop, director of the Institute of Human Virology, spoke to the group about research being performed to find a cure for HIV/AIDS, and how to implement strategies to contain its spread.

Site visits to the corporate headquarters of some of the members of The President's Roundtable were arranged for African government and corporate officials.

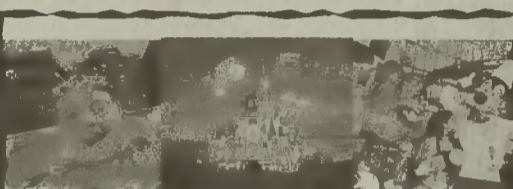
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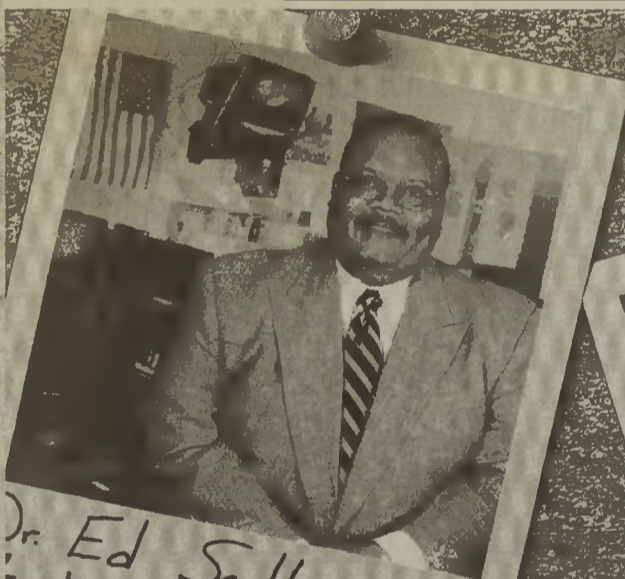
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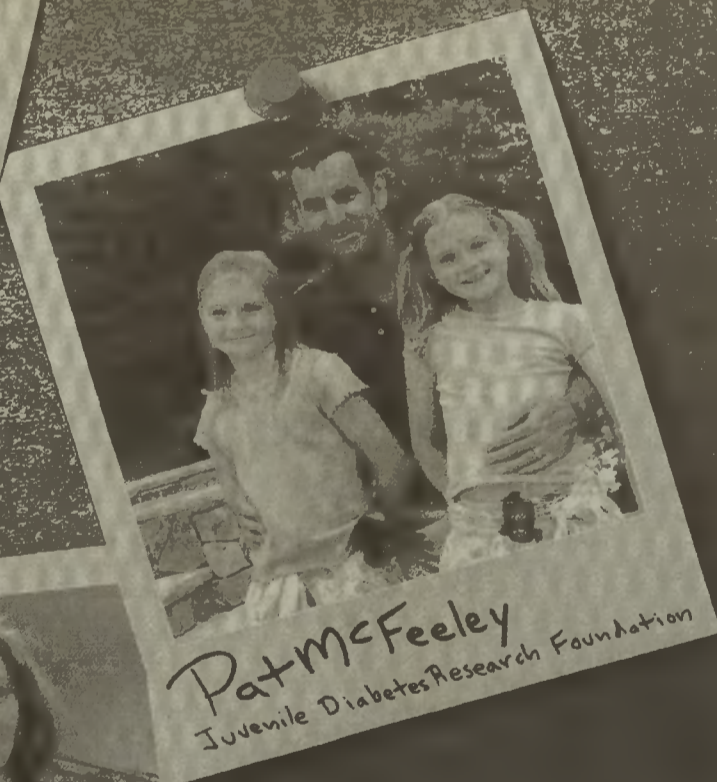
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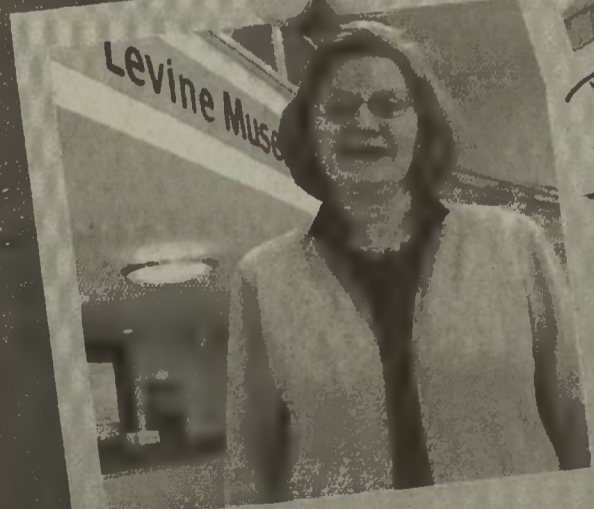
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