

10-1-1979

## The Young Resignation: What Does It Mean?

Ronald Walters

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dh.howard.edu/newdirections>

---

### Recommended Citation

Walters, Ronald (1979) "The Young Resignation: What Does It Mean?," *New Directions*: Vol. 7: Iss. 1, Article 3.

Available at: <https://dh.howard.edu/newdirections/vol7/iss1/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Howard @ Howard University. It has been accepted for inclusion in New Directions by an authorized editor of Digital Howard @ Howard University. For more information, please contact [digitalservices@howard.edu](mailto:digitalservices@howard.edu).



# THE YOUNG RESIGNATION WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



## An Analysis

By Ronald Walters

**T**he resignation of U. S. Ambassador to the United Nations Andrew Young is significant, not only for the incident itself, but for its catalytic effect upon the development of a Middle East policy in the Black community and the attendant ramifications this carries for domestic Black-Jewish relations.

While it is a fact that on August 15, 1979, Young submitted his "non-negotiable" resignation to President Carter, accounts of this event rarely provide the context within which it occurred. This was a context essentially defined by the attempt of the U. S. to fulfill one of two objectives of the Camp David accords by bringing the Palestinians into discussions on the question of U. S.-Egyptian-Israeli proposals for their "autonomy."

One early actor in this diplomacy was U. S. Ambassador to Austria, Milton Wolf, an industrialist and prominent member of the Cleveland (Ohio) Jewish community, who was reported to have had three "unauthorized" meetings with representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) previous to the Young resignation. The first two of these meetings occurred in the spring of 1979 and were said to have been "social" in nature, but the third appears to have been more substantive.

State Department spokesman Tom Reston said that Wolf was contacted by Isa Sartawi, an aide to PLO leader Yasser Arafat, to "clarify the group's position on a certain issue," saying that Wolf simply listened but made no comment and took no substantive position. He (Wolf) merely repeated the standing U. S. policy of prohibition on recognition of or negotiations with the PLO until it recognizes Israel's right to survival. Then, appearing to provide the full weight of State Department protection to Wolf's activities, Reston added: "I want to stress that Ambassador Wolf on no occasion has sought any meetings with or any dialogue with members of

the PLO." (*Washington Star*, August 16, 1979).

Although the substance of these discussions have not been made public by any U. S. sources, the *Jerusalem Post* reported that the meeting was "lengthy and detailed." More importantly, the last meeting took place just before Arafat himself flew to Austria for a meeting with Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky and Willy Brandt, former chancellor of West Germany, in early July 1979. This meeting produced a formal protest from the Government of Israel to the Austrian Government but no condemnation of the role of Ambassador Wolf. (*Newsweek*, September 3, 1979).

Meanwhile, also in July, Ambassador Young was conducting delicate negotiations on a resolution in the U.N. which called for a halt to Israeli settlements on the West Bank, but at the last minute, the U. S. representatives were instructed to abstain. Young explained that the PLO was considering an endorsement of U.N. Resolution 242 (a policy objective of several U. S. Administrations), but that it needed some tangible encouragement, which was denied them by the U. S. abstention. (*Newsweek*, August 27, 1979). A second resolution, sponsored by Kuwait, was drafted that affirmed both Resolution 242 (which contains the important provision on the legitimacy and integrity of Israel's right to exist as a state), and the right of the Palestinians to a state. Young's view, however, was that this resolution would provoke an acrimonious debate in the Security Council (at its August 23 meeting) when the U. S. would be in the chair, and would force the U. S. to cast an embarrassing veto of the proposal. He, therefore, set out to negotiate support for the procedural step of putting off the debate.

Ambassador Abdullah Yacoub Bishara of Kuwait was approached by Young with the suggestion of postponing the debate but Bishara refused, saying that the recommendation of Shedi Labib Terzi, the PLO observer to the U.N., would be influential in such a procedural matter with

other members of the Arab bloc. This led to the crucial meeting of July 26.

The meeting was discovered, the *Atlanta Constitution* reported, by Israeli intelligence agents who were following Terzi, and apparently leaked the information to *Newsweek* reporter Milan J. Kubic in Jerusalem. When *Newsweek* inquired about the meeting with the State Department, Assistant Secretary of State Charles W. Maynes telephoned Young, who responded with the official version that the contact with Terzi was "inadvertent" and that no substantive matters were discussed. In Young's words, "Nobody was misled: everybody knew what was going on," that he was attempting to secure a postponement of the debate on the resolution.

Although reports of such Israeli intelligence operations in the U. S. as suggested by the *Atlanta Constitution* have been denied by U. S. officials, Young later asserted that he had read a "virtual verbatim" account of the meeting at Ambassador Bishara's house in a State Department report, which was circulating at the highest levels as of July 30, four days after the meeting and two weeks before his reprimand by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance for the meeting. (*New York Times*, August 19, 1979).

Nevertheless, Young said that when he was made aware that his "official version" of the Terzi meeting was not believed, he told the full story to the Israeli representative to the U.N., Yehuda Blum, so that Ambassador Blum would not be under the impression that Young had really lied to him about the meeting. Blum reported the substance of his discussion with Young to the Israeli Government, whereupon it issued a public protest to the U. S. This protest, together with a report of the meeting, reportedly angered Secretary Vance, who called Young to a meeting at the White House with the President on August 15 under a welter of press reports which detailed the meeting between Young and the PLO, and many of which included calls for his resignation by journalists and prominent members of the



8 Jewish communities in New York and Florida. Young carried his resignation letter to the White House on the morning of August 15 and the announcement was made by him at an emotional press conference at the State Department later that day.

### U. S. Middle East Policy

One of the major effects of the Young resignation was its impact upon the tenor of U.S. policy in the Middle East, first through actually achieving the objective of postponing the debate on the resolution offensive to the U. S., and second, by opening up the possibility of a dialogue with the PLO as a legitimate fact of U. S. diplomacy in the area.

With regard to the U.N. Security Council resolution, the U. S. attempted to seize the initiative by sending Robert Strauss, special U. S. envoy for Middle East, on a mission to obtain a compromise resolution two days after Young's resignation. Although his trip was previously planned, his immediate mission was to propose to both Israel and Egypt that they support a new U. S.-sponsored resolution calling for Palestinian rights, but stopping short of endorsing the idea of a Palestinian state while upholding the language of U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338. The initiative failed as both Prime Minister Begin and President Sadat vetoed the proposal. Then Strauss said himself that the mission had been ill-advised and that it was better to let the peace process between Egypt and Israel work its course and not attempt a forced intervention of the Palestinian issue which would possibly endanger their cooperation. (*Newsweek*, September 3, 1979). Thus, the U.S. resolution was withdrawn.

An operative resolution on the Palestinian issue was proposed by Senegal in the Security Council meeting of August 23, after some debate on the language which contained references to Palestinian "self-determination, national independence and sovereignty." The Arab delegates, including PLO's Terzi, declined to bring the resolution to a vote. Bishara suggested

this was done as a goodwill gesture to Andrew Young by saying: "we cannot imagine Ambassador Young being blemished with a veto." (*Newsweek*, September 3, 1979). "We agreed to postpone the vote out of deference to him. My only concern was the enhancement of the status of Ambassador Young." (*New York Times*, August 25, 1979). Similar sentiments were expressed by Terzi.

While these sentiments were expressed which avowed deference to Young, it was also clear that another opportunity to press the vote would arise in the near future, and that an important intermediate objective of the Arabs had been achieved—an enhancement of the status of the PLO. Given this fact, the additional time became useful in cultivating allies outside of the Third World bloc and in enhancing the status of Arafat at the September non-aligned nations conference in Havana, Cuba. In this ironic way, the foreign policy objective of the U. S. was also achieved.

The second objective of finding a formula for bringing the Palestinians into the peace talks would be more difficult, and for an appropriate analysis one must review the results of the Camp David accords. The Camp David Summit of September 5-17, 1978 resulted in two agreements, a so-called Framework for Peace in the Middle East and a Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty Between Egypt and Israel. The former agreement was essentially concerned with three issues: the Palestinian "autonomy" question, the principles which would guide the approach to peace treaties between Israel and other states in the region (such as Jordan, Lebanon and Syria), and the conduct of Egypt and Israel in relation to these issues (substantially established by their separate peace treaty).

The peace treaty between Egypt and Israel was signed in Washington, D. C. on March 26, 1979, thus fulfilling the first "Framework" agreement, and pursuant to the second agreement at Camp David, talks were started between the U. S., Egypt, and Israel with respect to the Palestinian question. The specific pro-

posal contained in the Framework for Peace in the Middle East relative to the Palestine question calls for four-power negotiations between Egypt, Israel, Jordan and elected representatives of the Palestinian peoples of the West Bank and Gaza. So far, however, Jordan has refused to recognize the Camp David agreements and the accords have been denounced by the PLO and also by pro-Western Palestinian leaders. For example, the moderate mayor of Bethlehem, Elias Freij, has said: "We'll accept nothing less than complete Israeli evacuation of this area and Palestinian statehood. And remember my words: eventually, the Israelis and the U. S. will have to talk with the PLO." (*Newsweek*, September 3, 1979). Also, King Hussein of Jordan used the forum provided by the non-aligned meeting in Havana to again denounce the Camp David agreement and to call for a Palestinian state.

That Andrew Young was following a line of U.S. policy with respect to the Palestinian issue has been made clear from the evidence of the talks between Wolf and representatives of the PLO. But in addition, press reports indicated that the meeting between Arafat and Chancellor Kreisky and Brandt, was characterized by Arafat as part of a U. S. plan to involve the Palestinians in the Camp David peace negotiations. (*Washington Post*, August 13, 1979). The reaction of Israel was swift as its foreign policy spokesmen began to suggest that they feared the U. S. would not veto the intended Arab sponsored U.N. resolution to be considered on August 23. At the same time, the PLO Central Council, which was meeting in Syria, affirmed on August 11 that the U.N. resolution must call for an independent Palestinian state.

Repeated Israeli questioning of the proposed U.N. resolution and a possible shift of U. S. policy toward the PLO because of the prospect of oil sanctions by Arab states or the Palestinians themselves, led to a White House meeting between Secretary Vance, President Carter and Israeli Ambassador to the U. S.



Ephraim Evron. The 90-minute session reaffirmed the policy of the U. S. toward the Middle East when at its conclusion Secretary Vance said: "I want to state categorically that there has been no change in our policy toward Israel. It remains our policy to work toward a comprehensive peace settlement which is based on U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338." (*L.A. Times*, August 9, 1979). Apparently unsatisfied with the assurances by Vance, editors of major American newspapers asked the President about his view of the Palestinian question a few days later, and he responded: "I am against any creation of a separate Palestinian state. I don't think it would be good for the Palestinians. I don't think it would be good for Israel. I don't think it would be good for the Arab neighbors of such a state." (*New York Times*, August 12, 1979).

In addition, much has been made of the 1975 policy enunciated by former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger relating to a prohibition on relations with the PLO. The document, a Memorandum of Agreement between the U. S. and Israel relating to the 1975 Geneva Peace Conference, states in part: "The United States will continue to adhere to its present policy with respect to the Palestine Liberation Organization, whereby it will not recognize or negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organization, so long as the Palestine Liberation Organization does not recognize Israel's right to exist and does not accept Security Council Resolution 242 and 338. The United States Government will consult fully and seek to concert its position and strategy at the Geneva Peace Conference on this issue with the Government of Israel."

While the prohibition on contacts is described in the memorandum as a "policy" it may have had the status of a "practice" in the absence of any other evidence to the contrary. Also, it is clear that this agreement was drafted in relation to the impending Geneva Peace Conference between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, which may have the legal effect of limiting its application to other diplomatic situations.

However, despite Kissinger's role, the practice or policy was explicitly reaffirmed by President Carter in the context of his recent assurances to Israel that the U. S. had not in fact changed its policy. He said: "I will not deal with the PLO unless they do two things: accept the right of Israel to exist, which they have not yet been willing to acknowledge, and accept the fact that United Nations Resolution 242 is a document binding on them. They have got to accept 242 and accept the right of Israel to exist. This is the commitment we have made. We have never deviated from it. We are not going to deviate from it." (*New York Times*, August 12, 1979).

Against this background, it is important to point out that at the closing minutes of the August 23 session, after the withdrawal of the resolution, Ambassador Young made what amounted to a farewell speech as chairman of the Security Council session. In his remarks, he emotionally referred to the policy which prohibited contacts with the PLO: "It's a ridiculous policy of not talking to the PLO," suggesting equally that it was ridiculous for many states at the table not to have relations with Israel. (*New York Times*, August 25, 1979).

It is worth noting that the lack of precise definition on whether or not the contact between Young and Terzi constituted a "procedural" or "substantive" contact and what kinds of contacts were specifically prohibited by reference to the Kissinger memorandum and subsequent statements by the Carter Administration, give the appearance of the Administration having made up a definition to fit its embarrassment in the Young case. In fact, the State Department spokesman said the ban refers to "any substantive contact" between the PLO and U. S. representatives. (*Washington Post*, August 15, 1979). But the meaning of "substantive" is as yet unclear.

### **Black Politics**

The second major impact of Ambassador Young's resignation was felt in the Black community which, accurately or not,

Young had come to represent in his attempts at building linkages to Africa and the Third World. The reason for the reaction lay in the fact that Young, more than any other person in the Black community, had played an early and fundamental role in bringing Blacks into the Carter electoral column in the presidential election of 1976. It was he who urged other Black political leaders to stay with Carter after the Florida primary. Then he smoothed the way for Carter's nomination by working behind the scenes to quiet Black discontent over Carter's use of the term "ethnic purity" in regard to neighborhood residence, and helped Carter gain access to local Black neighborhoods. Having played such a role, Young gained a special place in the Carter entourage and esteem from the candidate and later the President.

Black voters, however, expected that Young would use this prominence and his political influence as a member of the U.S. Congress to broker badly needed benefits from the Administration in the domestic arena. They became somewhat bewildered and upset when Young took all of his credibility and placed it in the lowly regarded [at that time] United Nations job at the request of the President. This was, many felt, an unfortunate concession of dubious value to the national Black community. But Young's activities as a former aide to Martin Luther King, gave him strong ties to the Black community, and his performance at the U.N. actually boosted his image.

Notwithstanding his new venue and visibility, there was a great deal of ambiguity in the Black community about Young. When he said that the British were "racists," that there were "hundreds perhaps thousands of political prisoners in the U. S.," that the Cubans were "a force for stability in Angola," and that Ayatolla Khomeini was a "saint," there was instant identification with these statements in the Black community, and the occasional conflict they produced provided Blacks with the periodic opportunity to rally to Young's defense.



At the same time, there was considerable feeling that both his status as an ambassador and his former role as a minister and disciple of non-violence, would limit his understanding of why African liberation movements turned to armed struggle to win their political independence—especially in Southern Africa. Perhaps the crux of this problem was his attempt to approach what had been declared a revolutionary situation in terms and strategies of the American civil rights movement.

Equally disconcerting to the liberation movements and their supporters in the United States and around the world was his attitude toward the role of American businesses in Southern Africa, and his role, together with that of his deputy, Donald McHenry, in attempting to set the terms for peace negotiations in Zimbabwe and Namibia, which were not always favorable to the interest of the liberation movements.

Nevertheless, the day following his resignation, a hastily assembled meeting of Black leaders—Vernon Jordan, Coretta King, Bayard Rustin, Eddie Williams and others—was convened in New York. A relatively weak one-page statement was issued after the meeting. It upheld Young's integrity and accomplishments, expressed regret at his resignation and at the President's acceptance of it, questioned the difference between Young's treatment and that of Ambassador Wolf, and expressed the hope that this incident would not "exacerbate tensions between the Black and Jewish communities."

At the time of his resignation, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, SCLC (the organization with which he had been strongly identified in the past) was having its annual meeting in Norfolk, Va., and Young had been scheduled to give the dinner address the following evening. His cancellation of that address brought the Rev. Jesse Jackson into that role. In his remarks, Jackson correctly identified one source of anger in the Black community as he pointed to the strong possibility that Young was forced out of his U.N. position by powerful Jewish

interest groups in the country. He also tied this to the prevailing disaffection with Jews, which Black people had come to feel as a result of their opposition to issues such as school busing, job and educational quotas as expressed in the *Bakke*, *DeFunis* and *Weber* cases, and their passive acceptance of the role played by the Israeli Government in South Africa.

But the anger was also directed toward the reason for Young's resignation, as Joseph Lowery, president of SCLC, said: "If we have to maintain your (Jews) friendship by refraining from speaking to Arabs, then that friendship must be reassessed." (*Washington Star*, August 16, 1979). Jackson was of the view that Young had been "made the fall guy for a shift in U. S. Policy" toward the Middle East. A chorus of statements by other figures followed, but two decisions were made, one to call a meeting of the national Black membership, the second was for the SCLC to have a meeting with both the PLO observer and the Israeli representative to the U.N. the following week.

The rationale for the meetings was issued by Congressman Walter Fauntroy of the District of Columbia, and chairman of the Board of SCLC. He suggested that Blacks should become "students of the Middle East" situation because our own vital interest in peace were grounded in the realization that continued conflict there would jeopardize U.S. energy resources from that region which would have a disadvantageous impact upon Blacks economically, and perhaps disproportionately affect the actual lives of Blacks in the event the U. S. is drawn into a war there. The specific goals for the two meetings were listed as follows:

#### The PLO Meeting

- Understand their position
- Communicate our support of their human rights
- Communicate our continued support of non-violence as the most acceptable means of resolving conflict and affecting change

- Encourage them to recognize the human rights of the Israelis, including their right to exist as a sovereign state.

#### The Israel Meeting

- Reiterate our support of Israel as a free sovereign state
- Clarify our support of PLO human rights
- Communicate our concern about Israel's relations with South Africa
- Discuss common objectives of ending racial and religious discrimination.

The beginning of the week following Young's resignation, the SCLC delegation met with both the PLO representative Terzi and Israel's U.N. Ambassador Blum in New York on the same day. The meeting with Terzi was relatively cordial, ending with the PLO official thanking the SCLC for their understanding of their plight, but refusing commitment on the question of recognition of Israel or forswearing violent tactics, for the moment. In contrast, the meeting with Blum was more tense, with Blum appearing to patronize the SCLC delegation for its lack of experience in Middle East politics and its temerity for meeting with the PLO representative. Blum's subsequent statements after the meeting deplored the fact of the SCLC meeting with Terzi.

(It is patently ironic that it has been the long experience of Blacks which has led them to see the PLO in a different light than others, rather than their inexperience. And Young was reflecting this experience when he identified, in his resignation valedictory at the State Department, with the PLO as an "oppressed people." Similarly, the principle of self-determination has loomed largest in the struggle of Blacks in the U.S. to support the just aspirations of Africans for independent status from the earliest stirrings of Marcus Garvey to the present day struggle in Southern Africa. How then, one must ask, is it possible for Blacks to betray this legacy when it comes to the Palestinians or any other peoples struggling for freedom?).



Clearly, Blacks are used to the idea that the definition of "terrorist" or "militant" resides not only in the fact, but in the power to make such definitions operational.

(In fact, CIA spying on Black Americans in the late 1960s and early 1970s was rationalized by then CIA Director Richard Helms to his skeptical subordinates by directing them to change the designation of their operations from ones concerned with "militant groups" to "Terrorism." *The Washington Post*, September 8, 1979).

In the 1940s, the British considered the Zionist movement led by the Irgun Zvei Leumi as a "terrorist" organization, and the present Israeli Prime Minister was one of its key leaders. Today, the PLO, which considered itself at war with the Israelis, is considered a "terrorist" organization just as the Patriotic Front is considered "terrorist" by Zimbabwe/Rhodesia sympathizers, and the African National Congress and the Pan African Congress are considered "terrorist" by the South Africans. These labels find their way easily into common usage by supporters of Israel, South Africa and Zimbabwe-Rhodesia in the United States today.

What is to some extent puzzling is that the experience of those who are supposed to be professional foreign policymakers has not led them to recognize that the extreme claims of combatants—such as that implied in Article 27 of the PLO Charter that it would liquidate Israel—are a necessary part of the psychological resources of relatively powerless groups, and that the process of achieving a stage of negotiation requires a political understanding of such issues as well as the literal interpretation. The extraordinary position of the United States is that it has been maneuvered into a foreign policy position based on the Israeli interpretations of PLO objectives, and appears unwilling to use its dominant position with regard to Israel to moderate its behavior, or its view of the world. For example, the result is, in the words of a U.S. official in Lebanon, the Israelis have become the oppressor in

the region through their merciless military assaults upon suspected PLO bases, utilizing weapons provided by the United States.

After the meetings, with the PLO and Israeli representatives, Lowery explained that they did not meet with these two adversaries as negotiators schooled in the details of the Middle East, but as "moral ambassadors" seeking peace in the tradition of the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Still, the press and other members of the Jewish community denounced the SCLC delegation for this "foray into foreign policy," apparently ignorant of the fact that Blacks had been involved in U.S. foreign policy since 1869 with the appointment of the first Black American ambassador, and since 1919 when a Black organization—the NAACP—sponsored W.E.B. DuBois in his formation of the first Pan African Conference in Paris. That conference had the specific intention of influencing U.S. policy toward a just settlement of the African colonial question as a part of the peace agreements ending World War I. (See Jake C. Miller, *The Black Presence in American Foreign Affairs*, University Press of America, 1978; and Adekunle Ajala, *Pan-Africanism: Evolution, Progress and Prospects*, Andre Deutsch, London, 1973).

It is worth noting that no substantial period in the 20th Century has elapsed when there was not an organized Black group with the stated intention of influencing the outcome of U.S. policy toward Africa, and many of their activities took into account other areas of the world as well.

As a continuation of this thrust, the SCLC adroitly tied the issue of the Middle East to Africa by pointing to growing relations between Israel and South Africa, which has had a small but significant Jewish population for nearly 50 years. While this Jewish community has had to tread lightly between the issues of its own prosperity and opposition to apartheid, the growing isolation of Israel from the Middle East and Africa—since the 1967

war when most African countries broke diplomatic relations with Israel—has brought it into closer relations with South Africa. For example, Israel is reported to have provided South Africa with sophisticated electronic equipment and technicians to electrify its border with Mozambique to stop the infiltration of liberation fighters, and provided military equipment such as sea-to-sea rockets for the South African Navy.

On the other hand, South Africa has supplied Israel with vitally needed energy supplies such as coal and uranium, and the two countries have opened up trade in a variety of other commodities and signed air transport agreements facilitating trade and tourist travel arrangements. Finally, there are rumors that the two may be sharing nuclear technology, given their mutual desire for the acquisition of substantial nuclear power facilities, and similar security situations.

To continue with the events of Black politics, at the larger August 22 meeting of more than 100 delegates representing various organizations, the level of anger which issued forth from the participants was strong and unmistakably blunt against both Israel and the American Jewish community for their role in the Young affair, and for their opposition to Black domestic causes. And while the attendance and exchanges were remarkable, the drafters of the statements worked to tone down the fervor of the three statements which were issued, while retaining their content.

The statements, nevertheless, though overlapping considerably, were relatively substantive in pointing out (1) the contribution of Andrew Young to U.S. foreign policy and Black pride in his achievements, (2) the arrogance of Jews in challenging the right of Blacks to participate in shaping American policy in any part of the world, (3) the forgotten role of the late Dr. Ralph Bunche,<sup>1</sup> and the assertion of a role by Blacks in foreign policy matters in view of the disproportionate impact of negative foreign policy decisions on the



12 Black community, (4) the abysmal role of the State Department in its conduct of foreign policy and its inclusion of Blacks in substantive decision-making roles—even with regard to African affairs, and (5) the Jewish defection in America from liberal causes, as evidenced by their leadership in the neo-conservative movement and opposition to vital public policy issues affecting Blacks.<sup>2</sup>

In a subsequent meeting between representative Black leaders and leaders of the American Jewish community, Jews were at pain to make two points: the first is that they continued to deplore the legitimacy which Blacks had given to the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the second was that in a meeting called by Robert Strauss (just one hour before the Young resignation was announced) with a representative group of Jewish organizations, most of them pointed out that they did not favor the resignation of Young, that they were more concerned about the perceptible shift in U. S. policy toward the Palestinians. Theodore Mann, chairman of the Council of Presidents of Jewish Organizations made this point in subsequent press interviews.

But while the majority of Black leadership had the purpose of subscribing to the wishes of Andrew Young to attempt to ameliorate any tensions between Blacks and Jews caused by his departure, it was also clear that a significant group perceived of the series of events of the previous week as an opportunity to play a more formidable role in the shaping of U. S. foreign policy and to initiate a strategy of "bargaining" with the American Jews concerning the continuing needs of Blacks and the current role of Jewish leaders in the American political economy. Noted

sociologist Dr. Kenneth Clark, in fact, described the Black unity meetings as a "declaration of independence."

Although in historical perspective it might be viewed as a curious outcome that the Congressional Black Caucus, CBC, did not immediately issue a statement in response to Young's resignation, two factors account for this result. The first is that most members of the CBC, including the chairwoman, Cardiss Collins, were either out of the city or the country during the Congressional recess and could not immediately organize to respond. But the more important problem is that key members of the group were fearful of any statement which would have reflected upon the Jewish problem due to the financial and electoral support Jews constituted in their home districts and in the Congress. Here, prominent exceptions who pushed for forceful response were Ronald Dellums, Parren Mitchell, Charles Diggs and Walter Fauntroy, with all but Diggs issuing individual statements.

### Conclusion

Much of the speculation in the national media and in the Black community has focused on how the events described above might affect the support by Blacks for the renomination efforts of President Carter, and what eventual dynamics might result from the apparent breach between Blacks and Jews over the Middle East.

To begin with, the question arises because of the signs previously surfacing that Blacks, a vital constituency for Carter in 1976, have been increasingly dissatisfied with the attention of his Administration to Black needs and the lack of policy-directed social changes. The Carter Administration has made its first priority stemming the growing inflation, and although Carter spokespersons point to some accomplishments, the lack of *sufficient* attention to Black and other minority problems through massive intervention policies has made Blacks strongly feel the sting of unemployment and the ravages of income loss and job immobility.

National opinion polls had already illustrated significant Black losses of support for Carter and the traditional Black leadership organizations had adopted a "wait and see" posture toward his presidential candidacy in 1980. In addition to this, a recent poll by The Gallup Organization indicated that the Black approval rating for Carter was about what it had been before the Young resignation (37 percent), but one-fourth of those questioned said the Young affair had made some difference in their view of the President, possibly signaling further defections later.

While the main findings of the poll indicated that the 532 Blacks interviewed were uninterested or uninformed about Middle East politics, most confirmed the existence of tensions between Blacks and Jews in America in the areas of quotas for jobs or education, and Jewish business operations in Black areas. (*Newsweek*, September 3, 1979).

With the Black leadership focusing on the Black-Jewish split due to the Young affair, the issue of presidential responsibility has faded into the background. This may have been due, in no small measure, to Young's statement that his resignation was "non-negotiable" and his immediate announcement of support for the President—as well as the reluctance of the Black leadership to directly challenge the President over the Young affair. The statements "deplore" the President's acceptance of Young's resignation and question irregularities in his treatment. And the President's statement the following week at Emory University contained no explanations, rather he appeared more the arbiter of the Black-Jewish fight than a man yielding to pressures from the press, State Department policy elite, the Israeli Government and the American Jewish community to fire Young. Perhaps the reason for this is that, as was suggested in *Newsweek*, presidential advisers consider the departure of Young a plus for Carter's reelection possibilities, because Carter "demonstrated leadership" in his drive to reposition his Administration for a second

1. Dr. Bunche, former chairman of the Political Science Department at Howard, and deputy secretary general of the U.N., won the Nobel Peace Prize for his negotiations which led to the cease fire between the Arab states and Israel in 1939.

2. As an example of this phenomenon, see a recent book, *Affirmative Discrimination*, by Nathan Glazer, a former leading American Jewish liberal, now a leader in the neo-conservative movement. The book presents a powerful indictment against affirmative action.



assault upon the White House. (*Newsweek*, August 27, 1979).

In any case, there is the open question considering meetings, such as the Black Leadership Forum Summit in September, and the National Black Political Convention early in 1980, whether Young's support for the President maps out a collision course between him and a substantial portion of Black America on the question of symbolic versus substantive dividends in exchange for the Black vote. Should such a conflict materialize, the ultimate meaning of the Young resignation is that it set loose a powerful contender for the political allegiance of Blacks in domestic politics among the existing leadership cadre.

Secondly, it is now a matter of common parlance that the Young affair has had the effect of both legitimizing the PLO among Blacks and making it possible for them to discuss openly the dimensions of Black-Jewish relations previously prohibited by the fear of withdrawal of Jewish support and charges of "Black anti-Semitism." In this, the willingness of Blacks to rally to the support of the Palestinian people—as a similarly oppressed people (described by Young) through open contacts with the PLO and other Arab groups—sets up a serious responsibility for Blacks to become more knowledgeable about the politics of the Middle East. Otherwise these events would only constitute a temporary response to the problem of an individual Black and would appear to have exploited the struggle of the Palestinian people for the right to a homeland which was taken away from them by force. This would correct the highly generalized level of the initial treatment of the Middle East problem by Black leaders in their statements, and cause them to reply on more substantive inputs from scholars, politicians and others, but especially the people of the Middle East themselves.

Key subjects in this regard would involve the Black response to such matters as the history of the Middle East conflict and the role of U. S. policy; the process of

the formation of the state of Israel and the dispossession of the Palestinians; the various agreements promulgated by the Nixon/Ford and Carter Administrations and especially the Camp David accords and their implications; the nature of the PLO, including the view of other Palestinians toward that organization; the specific definitions of "autonomy" rather than statehood; the role of Egypt in the peace process; the attitude of other Arab states toward the Camp David accords; the PLO and the Palestinian peoples in their areas; the position of Blacks on U.N. resolutions relating to the Middle East; the relationship of the Middle East problem to Africa; the stakes of the American Black community in the U.S. reliance on the Middle East nations for oil; and, the function of Israel in the strategic interest of the Western states—among many others.

Here, the call by Young, during his early September leadership of a Presidential trade mission to Africa, for African countries to restore diplomatic and other relations with Israel bears serious consideration. The most important question is why, and what would be the stakes involved. For example, shouldn't African countries insist upon their own doctrine of Israel's recognition of a state for the Palestinian people, the cessation of commando and bombing raids into Lebanon, compliance with the mandatory U.N. arms embargo against South Africa (including the cessation of all nuclear relationships) and cessation of the supply of military equipment to the so-called Zimbabwe/Rhodesia, and U.S. revocation of the doctrine of no-contact with the PLO? It would appear that African states might question such a suggestion of renewed relations with Israel as inconsistent with their previous role in the Middle East conflict and overly gratuitous at best.

(The suggestion by Young of the renewal of African ties with Israel was first put to President William Tolbert of Liberia last month. But while Tolbert was initially enthusiastic, he quickly grew cautious about the implications of such a proposal, es-

pecially since several key African states were simultaneously at the Havana non-aligned nations meeting where they joined in the denunciations of the Camp David accords, and in putting Egypt's membership in that organization on a probationary status. It is predictable that such a suggestion would have a poor reception in Africa at this time. At best the value of such a proposal is highly devisive to African unity).

Finally, it is doubtful that either the resignation of Andrew Young or the salience of Middle East politics will continue to have high priority in the context of the American Black agenda. It is relatively predictable that as the specific issues in the Middle East conflict, presidential politics and the Jewish-Black debate run their course, divisions will occur within the ranks of the temporarily unified Black leadership itself. In fact, it would be less than accurate to suggest that such differences of opinion and approach will not be dominant as one confronts the question of how the status of Blacks might be improved in relation to the politics of 1980 as the immediate arena.

The Black leadership, however, has shown the capacity for mobilization and a surprising degree of unanimity in its recognition of the Jewish problem. This problem, however, may be seen more clearly as a response to neo-conservatism itself rather than a rise in anti-Jewish sentiment, but to that extent a formidable onus rests upon the Jewish leadership of this movement and the challenge to it by other Jews still committed to fundamental social change. This fact should result in dialogue because of the hard fact that, despite the significant Islamic community among Blacks, Arab states have been less than sensitive to Black needs or potential themselves and substantially insensitive to the needs of Africans on the continent who are suffering from the impact of European colonialism compounded by high oil prices. Arab states are said to play a significant role in sup-



14 plying South Africa with oil and in purchasing South African gold which keeps the South African economy afloat. It is possible to predict, because many Arabs practice the same racism as Europeans, that they will not replace, nor indeed be able to replace the relationship between Blacks and Jews in America.

Yet, organizations representing the two million Arab-Americans have recently shown a welcome willingness to enter into a mutually beneficial dialogue with Blacks. Such a dialogue might possibly convey to Arabs the depth of Black feeling with regard to these important issues.

In the short run, however, recognizing that some issues may be irreconcilable, a way must be found to transform the capacity for mobilization among Blacks in this instance to confront both traditional domestic concerns where both American-Arabs and Jews might alternately be part of a coalition with Blacks, and to map out a broader international agenda which might encompass wider issues of life and death—such as the size of the military budget and its use in fomenting weapons of destruction, the arms race with the Soviet Union and attendant political problems surrounding the limitation of strategic arms, the state of the international economy and its relation to the economic status of Blacks and other broad issues.

The resignation of Andrew Young is an unfortunate event because of his success in raising difficult questions to test the standards of human rights proposed as the basis for U. S. policy around the world, and because he established relations with Africa which have helped to concretize the interests of all Blacks.

But the real legacy of his resignation may well be its catalytic effect in a process of political development whereby Blacks have been enabled to see more clearly the shape of their own interests both in domestic and in international politics. □

---

*Ronald Walters, Ph.D. is associate professor,  
Department of Political Science, Howard University.*