The Obama family is on a week-long international trip that will take in three very different countries and cultures: Russia, Italy, and Ghana. Michelle, Sasha, Malia, and Michelle's Mother traveled with President Barack Obama to meet First-world leaders and greet blacks in the Third world. President Obama designed the trip to make Accra, Ghana his first official trip to sub-Saharan Africa.

Before the First Family reaches the western coast of Africa, they will join President Obama in Russia and at the G8 summit in Italy. The topic of Africa will receive little discussion during the first two stops among leaders of industrialized countries. Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, who is hosting the G8 Summit, is expected to report G8 nations are “in default” on promises to eradicate poverty in Africa. Not only has this group of world leaders defaulted on aiding Africa, under the guise of “humanitarian purposes” G8 countries’ are guilty of repeatedly using economic sanctions to destabilize African governments they seek to chance. On this occasion, it’s hoped that Obama go against past presidential administrations and urge the G8 to lift some sanctions in Africa.

Three-fourths of countries suffering sanctions are located in Africa. Previous American administrations have adopted sanctions 16 times, 13 of which were in Africa. Sanctions stifle development in Africa and only end up hurting the people they are designed to help. Two of the most prevalent instances of sanctions are against Zimbabwe and Sudan; to which South Africa's International Relations and Co-operation Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane stated: “World leaders should drop sanctions against Zimbabwe and open lines of credit to the country”. She urged "leaders of the world to leave sanctions and open up the lines of credit and let the people of Zimbabwe take full control of their lives. We need to give peace and development a chance in Zimbabwe".

The case of Zimbabwe is fraught with deception on the part of the US. Zimbabwean Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai traveled with a tin cup on a three-week tour to convince rich Western nations to end their sanctions against Zimbabwe and to send more aid money, Mr. Tsvangirai was once President Robert Mugabe's chief rival as opposition leader, and now a coalition partner in Mugabe's government – requested $700 million from President Obama. But, the US is now debating whether to lift sanctions against the coalition government they urged. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton now says that the US should wait for Mugabe to leave before opening up the taps for aid.

On the other side of the continent, Sudan is reeling in throws of Western sanction. Critics say that if the US were actually concerned about stopping the suffering and conflict in Sudan, the approach would be to organize large-scale infrastructure projects. The diplomatic activity Special Envoy General Scott Gration has initiated with Sudan should go forward to include: normalizing relations, and lifting economic sanctions, which are serving to divide the country, and making it very difficult to implement the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which settled the 50-year-long conflict between North and South. The Obama Administration has followed the Bush Administration in not taking Sudan off the list of state sponsors of terrorism. Sudan cooperated with the United States against terrorism, and made a peace deal with the South. The normalizing of U.S.-Sudanese relations, which had been promised if Sudan signed the CPA, is long overdue, and the US is currently “in default” on this matter.

Ghana is no more than a glitter stop. Obama plans to meet with and address the parliament of Ghana on issues of development and democracy. Afterwards, the First Couple will tour the historic Cape Coast Castle, used in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. During his African Homecoming, it would be good for Obama to have “a cultural awakening” about the slave trade and its residual effects. He should give more consideration to “reparations” and move to repair damage done to Zimbabweans and Sudanese by Western countries’ sanctions. It’s “high time” too that the American public does likewise, and supports lifting debilitating sanctions still in Africa.

William Reed – www.BlackPressInternational.com