

Jubilee USA Network Media Kit

The following materials are samples that debt cancellation advocates can use to reach out to their local media. The materials refer to the first event of the Sabbath Year, Jubilee Sunday on January 21, but can be updated with different news hooks throughout the year (e.g., re-introduction of the Jubilee Act in March; spring meetings of the IMF and World Bank in April; G8 Summit in June).

Important note: *We will update these materials once the JUBILEE Act is re-introduced in early 2007. For now we refer to the impending legislation simply as new debt legislation.*

Contents:

1. Sample Opinion Editorial
2. Tips for Placing Letters to the Editor (LTE) and a Sample Letter to the Editor
3. Sample Press Release for Jubilee Sunday
4. Sample Editorial Memo

As you will see, much of this work involves “repackaging” our message to fit different formats and lengths. For more tips and ideas, please see “Creating News and Pitching Stories,” “Writing Press Releases,” and “Talking to the Press” at <http://www.dupontcirclepr.com/trainingmaterials.html>.

1. Sample Opinion Editorial. Op eds appear on the right-hand side of the last page of the A section in the newspaper. This space is reserved for community leaders to express their views on timely subjects. A good op ed is about 700 words long. Op eds are more likely to be published when they are tied to something happening in the news or some event on the calendar. Most papers like to have about seven days to review your submission. Contact Debi Kar in the Jubilee USA national office if you need help finding contact information for your local newspaper opinion page: debi@jubileeusa.org or (202) 783-0215.

Ending Global Poverty

By Name of Person

“I am happy that I do not have to think of how I will pay my child's school fees any more. I can now spend a bit more on food for the family.”

Those are the words of Frazer Mayaba, who runs a barber's shop in Zambia. Before Zambia's debts to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank were canceled, the African nation spent more money on servicing debt than on taking care of its people. Debt relief has helped the country spend money on schools, hospitals, roads and anti-poverty initiatives.

Around the world, one in five people live on less than one dollar a day – extreme poverty that is unimaginable to most Americans. We can help our neighbors in the impoverished nations of the

Southern Hemisphere by asking Congress to pass new debt legislation that builds on the historic G8 agreement of 2005, which immediately cancelled the debts of 18 impoverished countries. A new deal on debt is urgently needed to provide debt cancellation for more nations struggling to take care of their people.

In the 1970s, developing nations borrowed money often with unfairly high interest rates and sometimes to the benefit of dictators rather than their people. For example, Sub-Saharan Africa is the world's most impoverished region but carries \$201 billion in debt, despite repaying more than 90% of the \$294 billion received between 1970 and 2002. Today, they remain burdened with \$14 billion in annual debt service.

The demands of powerful creditors force developing nations into a downward spiral of deepening poverty by forcing them to prioritize debt payments over clean water, adequate housing, AIDS prevention, basic health care, and schooling for their people. Many of these debts can be classified as odious and illegitimate because often these debts were contracted by undemocratic regimes such as the Duvaliers in Haiti, Samuel Doe and Charles Taylor in Liberia, Mobutu Sese Seko in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Suharto in Indonesia.

Every day, 30,000 children die of easily preventable diseases due to malnutrition and lack of adequate medical care. One person in seven has no access to clean water for drinking, cooking or washing. Around the world, 104 million children do not go to grade school because their parents cannot afford fees, books or uniforms.

The quickest and most just solution is debt cancellation. Social spending in countries that have received debt relief has increased by 75% on average. Three billion dollars in debt relief has enabled Tanzania to increase funding for poverty reduction by 130 percent over the last six years. Their investments in education enabled approximately 1.6 million children to return to school almost overnight. Debt relief has enabled Mozambique to make strides in combating HIV/AIDS. By 2002, 24 testing and counseling offices were opened; 50 offices will be operating by the end of this year.

Twenty nations in Africa and Latin America have had their debts to the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and African Development Bank cancelled, but this is only the beginning of what is needed. Only one in ten people in the developing world will benefit from the debt cancellation provided to date.

In 2007, people of faith are calling on world leaders to observe a Sabbath Year by focusing particular attention on the need for cancellation of unjust debts of impoverished nations in Africa, Latin America and Asia claimed by wealthy countries and institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

[for placement Sunday, January 21, 2007] Today is Jubilee Sunday when congregations across the country, including [insert participating congregation] will read from Luke 4:14-21, a key Jubilee scripture in which Jesus declares a jubilee or "year of the Lord's favor" by proclaiming God's liberation for all oppressed and impoverished people.

In Biblical times, Sabbath Year observance required that debts be cancelled, those enslaved because of debt be freed, and equal relations among community members be restored. In modern times, Sabbath Year observance means that our prayers and actions must be focused on righting relationships between nations and alleviating the extreme poverty that pervades the southern hemisphere.

As Americans, we enjoy so much good fortune, and we understand that from those to whom much has been given, much is also required. We can start by increasing our efforts to end the suffering of people who live in unimaginable poverty. If we care about the future of the world community, we must all do our part – starting by asking our elected officials in Washington, D.C. to pass bold and prophetic debt legislation which would provide debt cancellation to many more countries that need it. When even one person is sick or hungry, it diminishes us all. This is not something we do for them. This is something we do for us -- for all of us.

Name of Person is Role at Name of Affiliation.

2. Tips for Placing Letters to the Editor (LTE)

1. Check the word limit and submission rules for your local paper. Most LTEs are short and concise – around 150 to 250 words. Most do not contain more than three sentences in each paragraph.
2. Your letter has the best chance of being published if it is in reaction to a story or column in the paper. Respond as quickly as you can.
3. Read the LTE page of the paper where you are submitting your letter. You may get a sense of the style of letters that get published. It is usually encouraged on the LTE page.
4. Your personal experiences are always worth adding. So are any details to localize the issue.
5. The LTE page is one of the first things that policymakers read. A LTE shows that an issue is of concern in the community.

Sample Letter to the Editor

To The Editor
Lake Wobegone Times

Your article on [global poverty/instability of regions leading to terrorism/upcoming G8 Summit, etc.] omitted an important point.

If we are serious about ending global poverty, we must cancel the illegitimate debts that impoverished countries in the southern hemisphere claimed by wealthy nations in the north and institutions like the International Monetary Fund.

In the 1970s, developing nations borrowed money often with unfairly high interest rates and sometimes to the benefit of dictators rather than their people. The results can be seen in highly impoverished regions like Sub-Saharan Africa that carries \$201 billion in debt, despite repaying more than 90% of the \$294 billion received between 1970 and 2002.

Debt relief works. For example, Tanzania received \$3 billion in debt relief, enabling the country to increase funding for poverty reduction by 130 percent over the last six years. Their investments in education enabled approximately 1.6 million children to return to school almost overnight.

Every person of good conscience should take action. The first step is asking our elected officials in Washington, D.C. to pass new debt legislation which would provide debt cancellation to countries that are struggling to take care of their people.

This is not an act of charity. It is an act of justice.

Sincerely,

Your name

Address

Daytime phone and email – the paper will want to verify that you wrote this letter before publishing it or may ask you to approve an edited version.

3. Sample Press Release. The more your press release looks and sounds like a story in the newspaper, the more likely it is to be used (some papers print press releases verbatim) or get a reporter's attention. It's best to send your press release by email and then follow up with a phone call. You can find contact information for reporters in your area for free through websites such as: <http://capwiz.com/nwlc/dbq/media/>.

For immediate release: January 11, 2007

Contact: Local Name at XXX-XXXX or Debayani Kar at 202-783-0215

[Insert Local Congregation Name] Joins Nationwide Observance of Jubilee Sunday

People of Faith Pray for End to Global Poverty and Take Action with Congress

(Town, City) On Sunday, January 21, 2007, [Local Congregation Name] will join with thousands of people of faith across the country in observing Jubilee Sunday. Jubilee Sunday is a time to pray, reflect and take action to end world poverty by canceling the debts of impoverished countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia. As part of Jubilee Sunday celebrations, congregations will call on Congress to observe a Sabbath Year in 2007. Sabbath Year

observance refers to a Biblical mandate that requires that debts be cancelled, helping to restore just relationships among peoples and nations every seven years.

“Around the world, one in five people live on less than one dollar a day – extreme poverty that is unimaginable to most Americans. The poor are part of our human family, and our faith requires us to care for them as we would our own parents, siblings, and children,” said Local Spokesperson.

[Local congregation Name] will be reading from Luke 4:14-21, a key Jubilee scripture in which Jesus declares a jubilee or “year of the Lord’s favor” by proclaiming God’s liberation for all oppressed and impoverished people. Parishioners will also write to their Congressmembers and Senators asking them to support new debt legislation in the Sabbath Year.

Jubilee Sunday participants will also call on the U.S. government to support immediate and full debt cancellation for Liberia, under the leadership of its new president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the first democratically elected female head of state in Africa. Parishioners will send Valentines to the U.S. Treasury urging them to “Have a Heart, and Cancel Liberia’s Debt.” [Congregations can edit this depending on the action they plan to take.]

In the 1970s, developing nations borrowed money often with unfairly high interest rates and sometimes to the benefit of dictators rather than their people. An example of the impact can be seen in Sub-Saharan Africa, the world’s most impoverished region that carries \$201 billion in debt, despite repaying more than 90% of the \$294 billion received between 1970 and 2002. Today, the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa remain burdened by debt, paying \$14 billion annually in debt service.

The demands of powerful creditors force developing nations into a downward spiral of deepening poverty by forcing them to prioritize debt payments over clean water, adequate housing, AIDS prevention, basic health care, and schooling for their people. Many of these debts can be classified as odious and illegitimate because often these debts were contracted by undemocratic regimes such as the Duvaliers in Haiti, Samuel Doe and Charles Taylor in Liberia, Mobutu Sese Seko in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Suharto in Indonesia.

This is why debt relief works. Three billion dollars in debt relief has enabled Tanzania to increase funding for poverty reduction by 130 percent over the last six years. Their investments in education enabled approximately 1.6 million children to return to school almost overnight. Debt relief has enabled Mozambique to make strides in combating HIV/AIDS. By 2002, 24 testing and counseling offices were opened; 50 offices will be operating by the end of this year.

“As people of faith, we are called to end the suffering of people who live in unimaginable poverty. We can start by asking our elected officials in Washington, D.C. to support bold new debt legislation that would provide full debt cancellation to many more countries that need it,” said Neil Watkins, National Coordinator of the Jubilee USA Network, an alliance of more than 75 religions denominations and human rights groups working to cancel the illegitimate debts of impoverished countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia.

For more information, please visit <http://www.jubileeusa.org/>

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4. Sample Editorial Memo. Editorial writers express the opinions of the newspaper on the left-hand side of the last page of the A section. You can contact the editors on the editorial board anytime by phone or email to ask them to write an editorial in favor of a particular action step, such as urging Congress to pass new debt legislation. You can ask for a meeting to brief them on debt cancellation. Some editorial writers will meet with members of the community; some will simply want to talk on the phone. It is a good idea to submit an Editorial Memo to help them write the editorial. This approach can also be used for a columnist who writes regularly for the op ed page.

Memorandum

To: William Smith, Editorial Writer
From: Name of Person, Group
Date: January 9, 2007
Re: Concrete Action to End Global Poverty

Our Congressperson, Harry Summers, is a leading sponsor of debt cancellation, which would significantly reduce poverty in impoverished nations in Africa, Latin America and Asia. We are writing to ask you to write an editorial urging the new Congress to take bold action on the debt crisis.

Around the world, one in five people live on less than one dollar a day – extreme poverty that is unimaginable to most Americans. The new Congress has the chance to do something about global poverty and we urge them to take this opportunity. Bold new debt legislation is needed which would cancel the illegitimate debts of certain impoverished nations in the southern hemisphere.

In the 1970s, developing nations borrowed money often with unfairly high interest rates and sometimes to the benefit of dictators rather than their people. An example of the impact can be seen in Sub-Saharan Africa, the world’s most impoverished region that carries \$201 billion in debt, despite repaying more than 90% of the \$294 billion received between 1970 and 2002. Today, the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa remain burdened debt, paying \$14 billion annually in debt service.

The demands of powerful creditors force developing nations into a downward spiral of deepening poverty by forcing them prioritize debt payments over clean water, adequate housing, AIDS prevention, basic health care, and schooling for their people. Many of these debts can be classified as odious and illegitimate because often these debts were contracted by undemocratic regimes such as the Duvaliers in Haiti, Samuel Doe and Charles Taylor in Liberia, Mobutu Sese Seko in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Suharto in Indonesia.

Every day, 30,000 children die of easily preventable diseases due to malnutrition and lack of adequate medical care. One person in seven has no access to clean water for drinking, cooking or washing. Around the world, 104 million children do not go to grade school because their parents cannot afford fees, books or uniforms.

The quickest and most just solution is debt cancellation. Simply stated, debt relief works.

Social spending in countries that have received debt relief has increased by 75% on average. Three billion dollars in debt relief has enabled Tanzania to increase funding for poverty reduction by 130 percent over the last six years. Their investments in education enabled approximately 1.6 million children to return to school almost overnight. Debt relief has enabled Mozambique to make strides in combating HIV/AIDS. By 2002, 24 testing and counseling offices were opened; 50 offices will be operating by the end of this year.

Twenty nations in Africa and Latin America have had their debts to the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and African Development Bank cancelled, but this is only the beginning of what is needed. Only one in ten people in the developing world will benefit from the debt cancellation provided to date.

Inspired by Old Testament texts calling for the cancellation of unjust and harmful debts every seven years, people of faith across the country are calling on their elected representatives to observe a Sabbath Year in 2007. In Biblical times, Sabbath Year observance required that debts be cancelled, those enslaved because of debt be freed, and equal relations among community members be restored. In modern times, the Sabbath Year observance calls for the creation of just relationships among nations and alleviation of the extreme poverty that pervades the southern hemisphere.

As Americans, we enjoy so much good fortune, and we understand that from those to whom much has been given, much is also required. We can start by increasing our efforts to end the suffering of people who live in unimaginable poverty. If we care about the future of the world community, we must all do our part – starting by asking our elected officials in Washington, D.C. to pass bold and prophetic debt legislation which will allow more countries to meet the basic needs of their people. This is not an act of charity. It is an act of justice.