



Jun 28, 2013, 6:00am EDT

Viewpoint

A new catalyst for global Atlanta

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President Obama's trip to Africa signals intent to reanimate U.S. relations with the continent.

In light of this goal, Atlanta's star continues to rise as a global vortex in which transportation, business, technology, logistics, research and development, energy and environment, health, education, cultural expression and more form a new leading edge for innovation and global interaction.

This visit underscores the timeliness of a new metro-wide opportunity to recast perceptions of relationships among Africa, Europe and the Americas and make way for the abundant potential for positive action. In Atlanta, this potential calls for concerted collaborative action.

Key strategies include:

1. Highlighting existing connections among Africa, Europe and Atlanta across the metropolitan Atlanta area.
2. Creating a digital "clearinghouse" for understanding who is doing what where and what the linkages among endeavors might be.
3. Establishing a think tank for identifying strategies and creating a springboard for connecting local and global economic opportunities.
4. Positioning the robust connections between cultural and economic imperatives as dimension of the success of Atlanta as a global gateway.
5. Raising awareness of colleges and universities as assets in enhancing and sustaining vibrancy in local/global connections.

Moreover, as dean of a college at a university where young people are not content to stand by and observe, I see yet another enhancement for this opportunity. I am inspired by the burning desires of our students to learn, to act and to lead — and to do so with respect for and consideration of those around them. I believe that this spirit of engagement is true, or could be, of youth around the globe, and perhaps especially so in Africa, where we have one of the world's fastest-growing global markets. These globally aware, Internet-enriched youth are shaping a new

dynamic and amplifying a potential that is borne out by President Obama's current African trip, focused on economic development, democracy and youth.

One vehicle that we are proposing for bringing to the fore the city's capacity to meet this critical opportunity is Africa Atlanta 2014. It is a year-long series of events designed to explore the combined potential of economic and cultural imperatives with the intention of identifying strategic actions.

Business comprises a vital component for success with this effort, and we look to the Atlanta business community to partner with us in galvanizing initiatives for cohesive impact. With the support of Mayor [Kasim Reed](#), the Consulate Generals of Belgium and France, and more than 25 anchor partners across the city, we have developed a mechanism for leading the nation in reimagining our connections with Africa and achieving ambitious national goals.

Now is the time, and Atlanta is already on its way. We have a distinctive opportunity to advance the city as the nexus for holistic action in development and sustainability — economic, cultural, social. The business community is a key player in this innovative model for collaboration.

Royster is dean of the Georgia Tech Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts. She conceived Africa Atlanta 2014 and is spearheading its organization as a citywide initiative.