

### **Rotary's Position on War**

A recent article in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette interviews President-elect Jonathan Majiyagbe and his view on Rotary and the possibility of a war with Iraq. "Rotarians do not preach politics or religion. They emphasize peace," said Jonathan Majiyagbe, president-elect of Rotary International.

The article goes further to explain how Rotary promotes world understanding and what Majiyagbe plans to focus on while he is in office.

## **Leader says Rotary ready to help if war starts**

Thursday, March 06, 2003

By Monica L. Haynes, Post-Gazette Staff Writer

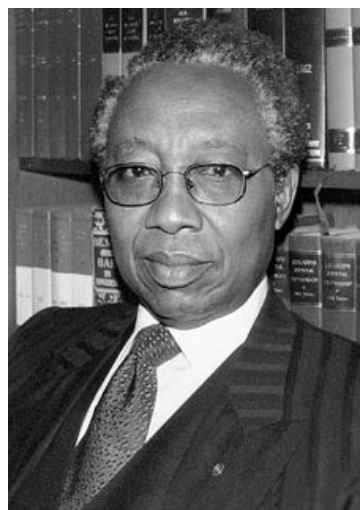
***"When people are no longer hungry and have work to do and have a healthy environment, then they will not think of a war or violence" -- Rotary International President-elect Jonathan Majiyagbe.***

**Rotarians do not preach politics or religion. They emphasize peace,** said Jonathan Majiyagbe, president-elect of Rotary International.

Tomorrow, Majiyagbe, the first black and the first African Rotary International president, will be here to talk with district club presidents-elect at the Green Tree Radisson Hotel.

"One of the missions of the Rotary is to promote world peace. We're hoping there will be no war," Majiyagbe said, "but if there were a war, it would just be treated like every other disaster and Rotarians would offer assistance where needed."

When he takes office in July at Rotary headquarters in Evanston, Ill., Majiyagbe said, he plans to ask his 1.2 million members in 164 countries to focus on four areas: health concerns, including the AIDS crisis, malaria and completion of the Rotary's eradication of polio project; the alleviation of poverty; Rotary membership, and education and literacy, especially for girls and women.



**RIPE Jonathan Majiyagbe.**

"I believe if you're able to train women, then you're training the nation and a nation free from illiteracy will be able to have sustainable development," said Majiyagbe, 68, who lives in Kano, Nigeria.

While the Rotary has not taken on AIDS in a unified way, individual clubs, especially those in Africa, have developed programs to deal with the resulting devastation. Those projects include hospices, AIDS education and awareness programs, and orphanages for the children who've lost parents to the disease.

"I'm seeing a lot of projects, but on a global level, Rotary hasn't taken any step as such," Majiyabe said. "We have to finish the eradication of polio, embarked on in 1985 and we're very close to eradication."

A Rotarian since 1967, he is principal partner in J.B. Majiyagbe & Co., a commercial law practice in Nigeria. He is a member and past president of the Rotary Club of Kano and has served Rotary International as district governor, International Assembly instructor, committee member, director and trustee of the Rotary Foundation.

He is chairman of the Africa Regional PolioPlus Committee and member of the International PolioPlus Committee. The Rotary's PolioPlus program is a global effort to assist international health agencies in ridding the world of polio by 2005.

Majiyagbe is a member of the International Bar Association, chairman of the Nigerian Red Cross Society and a member of the Kano Chamber of Commerce, Industry Mines and Agriculture.

Asked about the pending war with Iraq, Majiyagbe said the Rotary's "four-way" test used to make business decisions could be adapted to anything, including whether war is the right option.

The questions are:

1. Is it true?
2. Is it fair to all concerned?
3. Will it build good will and better friendship?
4. Will it be beneficial to all concerned?

The Rotary has a number of programs promoting peace, including its Ambassadorial Scholars, which gives scholarships to graduate students to study peace-related subjects in other countries.

"We've had quite a number of [participants] since the program started 45 years ago," Majiyagbe said. One of them is Sadako Ogota, the former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Also in the name of peace, the Rotary Foundation has partnered with eight leading universities around the world to establish the Rotary Centers for International Studies in peace and conflict resolution. Starting this year, the Rotary will select 70 scholars to study at one of the Rotary Centers. The selected Rotary World Peace Scholars will begin two-year master's-level degree programs in conflict resolution, peace studies, and international relations.

"We're hoping when these students graduate they will be diplomats, they will be mediators, they will be negotiators," Majiyagbe said. "That will be part of the Rotary's contribution toward world peace as well."

---

Monica Haynes can be reached at [mhaynes@post-gazette.com](mailto:mhaynes@post-gazette.com) or 412-263-1660.