

Diaspora and Afro-Descendants in Angola–USA Business Relations

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Abstract

In this article, we discuss the increasing role of the Angolan diaspora and Afro-descendant communities in facilitating and expanding bilateral business and trade between Angola and the United States. We draw on the long historical ties between the two countries, dating back to the transatlantic slave trade, and the recent developments in diaspora engagement policies and initiatives. We analyze the contributions of people of Angolan descent or ancestry in the United States, as well as African Americans with roots in Angola, as a source of human and cultural capital for bilateral trade and investment. We provide examples of their involvement and impact in various sectors, such as oil and gas, agriculture, technology, and the creative economy. We also highlight the opportunities and challenges for increasing the participation and influence of the Angolan diaspora and Afro-descendants in the business and trade relations between Angola and the United States. We suggest some recommendations for both Angolan and U.S. stakeholders to enhance the potential of this growing and dynamic community for mutual benefit and cooperation.

Keywords: Angolan Diaspora, Afro-Descendants, Bilateral Trade, Cultural and Economic Exchange, Diaspora Engagement

Introduction

Angola and the United States have historical and cultural connections that span more than 400 years, including a shared, if tragic, history in the transatlantic slave trade. In 1619, for example, some of the first enslaved Africans brought to North America had been seized from the Angolan kingdom of Malanje. As a result, it is estimated that 12 million Americans today have Angolan roots. The larger, historically rooted community of *Afro-descendants* (African Americans and other peoples of African descent in the Americas) and the more recent Angolan diaspora (Angolan emigrants and their descendants) form an unofficial “human bridge” between Angola and the U.S. Although the Angolan-born diaspora community in the U.S. is small (fewer than 7,000 people, heavily concentrated in Houston due to the oil industry), its contribution – along with that of millions of African-American “Afro-descendant” stakeholders – to facilitating business between the two countries has increased significantly over the last decade.

Angola, which emerged from a 27-year civil war in 2002, has made building economic resilience through diversification a priority. In recent years, the government of President João Lourenço (who took office in 2017) has taken steps to improve the investment climate and embraced its diaspora as partners. Meanwhile, the U.S. government, at the highest levels, has put engagement with the African diaspora as a core element of its Africa policy. This report looks at how Angolan diaspora and Afro-descendant Americans have served as a bridge for business linkages in various sectors – oil and gas, agriculture, tech, cultural industries, etc. –

over the last 5–10 years. It also provides case studies of individuals and organizations leading the effort; outlines the challenges and opportunities for deepening these connections; and reviews key policies and initiatives from both governments, as well as the private sector and civil society.

Definition of Diaspora and Afro-Descendants: For this study, *Angolan diaspora* is defined as people of Angolan origin residing outside of Angola (such as Angolan-born immigrants and their immediate offspring in the U.S.) while *Afro-descendants* refers to people of African descent in the Americas with family lineage – even if stretching back centuries – to Africa, including (in the case of Angola) African-American populations with ancestral ties to Angola from the slave trade period. Both groups have started to play a somewhat complementary role in promoting business: the Angolan diaspora offers language, cultural knowledge, and personal networks in Angola, while Afro-descendant Americans bring huge consumer markets, capital, and an increasing interest in forging ties to Africa.

In the following sections, we delve into diaspora and Afro-descendant contributions to bilateral business and investment by sector, then provide a comparative overview, analyze cross-cutting issues and opportunities, and conclude with an overview of the policy landscape and initiatives in place to support them.

Diaspora Contributions Across Key Sectors

Oil and Gas: Energy Connections and Expertise

Angola's economy is resource-driven, and the oil industry has long been the centerpiece of Angola–U.S. trade. Many American oil companies, such as Chevron and ExxonMobil, have worked in Angola for decades, and several Angolan professionals have trained or worked in the U.S. as well. These professionals have formed a small but significant Angolan diaspora community in U.S. energy centers such as Houston, Texas, described as having a "*strong [Angolan] community linked to the oil industry*". These diaspora professionals (engineers, geologists, company executives, etc.) are natural facilitators between U.S. and Angolan companies, helping to broker partnerships, provide cultural and business advice, and introduce Angolan officials to counterparts in the U.S. energy industry.

In recent years, there have been efforts to leverage this diaspora expertise by organizing networking events and conferences. For instance, Angola's national oil roadshow and the annual *Angola Oil & Gas* summit have held special sessions in Houston, taking advantage of the local diaspora community and U.S. industry presence to showcase Angolan opportunities to U.S. investors. Diaspora members have helped organize these events and attend as participants, effectively serving as ambassadors for Angola's energy sector. In particular, Angolan-American professionals with relevant experience can facilitate effective communication and trust-building, given their understanding of Western business culture as well as Angola's oil industry.

On the American side, African-American business leaders and investors (Afro-descendants) are also making inroads in the African energy sector in this way. Although oil has been the domain

of large multinational corporations, there is interest in renewable energy and energy infrastructure projects where diaspora entrepreneurs and experts can also play a role (such as off-grid power solutions or service companies supporting oil operations). The U.S.–Angola Chamber of Commerce and the American Chamber (AmCham) in Luanda have found that having diaspora members at the table helps U.S. companies navigate the Angolan market. Recent Angola–U.S. energy forums and meetings have spotlighted not only large oil firms but also smaller diaspora-owned enterprises seeking to find a niche in the supply chain (engineering services, logistics, environmental consulting, etc.).

In particular, the Lobito Corridor infrastructure project – a U.S.-supported rail and port initiative to link Angola to regional markets – has included diaspora and African-American experts in project finance and engineering. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce also emphasizes building on the “*shared history*” to deepen such partnerships. In late 2024, the Chamber noted that President Biden’s historic trip to Angola had come on the heels of “*recent engagements by African diaspora leaders, including representatives of the Tucker family [descendants of Angolan slaves] ... to further expand economic diversification through diaspora ties*”, a role the Chamber committed to advancing through its Advance with Africa program. This example illustrates that even in heavy industries such as oil and infrastructure, human connections through diaspora networks are viewed as enablers of new business.

In summary, the role of the diaspora in Angola's oil and gas sector can include advocacy for Angola within U.S. industry circles, talent development (many diaspora Angolans having trained abroad and later taken up senior positions in Sonangol or Angolan companies), and facilitating compliance and transparency improvements by introducing international best practices. A concrete policy change also now makes it easier for diaspora investors to participate – Angola's 2018 investment law formally removed the old requirement that foreign investors partner with a local Angolan shareholder, so skilled diaspora individuals can invest in oil (as well as other sectors) on par with other foreign investors. This change in regulation, combined with Angola's anti-corruption efforts, has lowered some barriers and created incentives for diaspora-owned energy firms or consultancies to enter the market.

Agriculture and Agribusiness: From Coffee to Agritech

Agriculture is one sector where diaspora and Afro-descendants are starting to convert past connections into present business relationships. Angola was a large-scale exporter of agricultural commodities (coffee, cotton, sugar) prior to decades of war. More recently, the Angolan diaspora has been instrumental in renewing some of these products' connections to the global market. A key example has been coffee: in 2018, an Angolan-American company reintroduced Angolan coffee to U.S. markets for the first time in over four decades. Company Cazengo Coffee, cofounded by the Angolan diaspora and local farming families, debuted a Cazengo Coffee Angolan single-origin coffee line in the U.S. retail market. The launch celebrated Angola’s coffee heritage and sought to educate American consumers on Angola as a coffee-producing country, while also raising money to help clear war-era landmines from Angolan farmland. According to co-founder Courtney Brown Jr., American coffee drinkers

would finally be able to experience Angola's "bold" flavors once again with "*the first US import of Angolan coffee in over 40 years*" hitting shelves. In Washington, the Angolan Embassy embraced the effort: at a 2018 embassy-organized cultural expo, the diplomatic mission hosted thousands of visitors to taste a "Taste of Angola" prepared using Cazengo Coffee, highlighting its quality and "job-creating social mission" (proceeds from each cup sold helping defuse minefields for farmers). This is one illustration of how diaspora agricultural entrepreneurship has the potential to link business with development and storytelling.

Coffee has been a flagship product in diaspora-led efforts to re-establish Angola in international agricultural trade after the civil war. In 2018, Cazengo Coffee – cofounded by an Angolan farmer and an American marketing expert – reintroduced coffee to American consumers from Angola, the first imports to the U.S. since 1975. The small-scale, direct-trade company has successfully reached U.S. specialty coffee shops and online marketplaces with an "exotic, bold taste of Angola" while supporting rural development objectives in Angola as well.

Angolan diaspora have expressed interest in other agro-food value chains including organic fruits, cocoa, and artisanal food products which have niche market potential in the U.S. Angola's upstart wine and rum producers have developed domestic brands and customer bases in recent years and are "*eyeing the global market*" – diaspora could help in marketing and diaspora consumers in the U.S. represent a target audience likely to sample products from the Angolan homeland. Some diaspora Angolans have begun small import operations (focusing on products like dried fruits, hot sauces, or palm oil) to target both the diaspora and "health-conscious" U.S. consumers. On a larger scale, diaspora actors are facilitating some of the emerging agribusiness connections. In February 2024, the U.S. Department of Agriculture led an Agribusiness Trade Mission to Angola with its Angolan counterpart, supporting 140 B2B meetings and resulting in millions of dollars of potential sales. American visitors included some African-American agribusiness owners who used their expertise in African staple crops and diaspora networks to identify partnership opportunities with Angolan producers. Angola's government has also been directly courting diaspora investors in agribusiness, seeking to attract diaspora capital to commercial farming and agro-processing ventures in recent years. For example, Brazil's diaspora in Angola (many of whom are of Angolan descent) have been invited by the Angolan government to invest in Angolan coffee and cassava processing.

Knowledge transfer from the diaspora has also been a factor in the growth of agriculture. Diaspora Angolan agronomists and related experts have worked with Angola's Ministry of Agriculture to share their expertise on farming practices, as well as to help establish agritech startups. In a 2019 interview, Angola's special secretary for international cooperation, Valdemiro Silva Mena, expressed interest in the diaspora contributing to agriculture projects: "The Angolan diaspora in areas such as the agriculture sector is a niche we are keen to attract to our country and to strengthen this relationship." One missing element was a vehicle for diaspora investment in this area – the International Diaspora Engagement Alliance noted this gap in its mid-2010s engagement with the Angolan government, including an effort at "*Angolan diaspora members to invest in an agriculture project*" as a case study. With improved conditions, such investments have since become possible. Angolan diaspora remittances are not a major contributor to agriculture as a share of overall transfers, but Angolan family members abroad often support the farming businesses of relatives back home, a secondary source of diaspora-fuelled agribusiness.

In summary, diaspora involvement in agriculture includes: market access and retailing of Angolan agricultural products, diaspora and Angolan entrepreneurial startups and small business investment, and consumer advocacy. Diaspora members with an interest in agriculture but not specifically Angola (Afro-descendants with a general affinity for Africa's agrifood sector) are an untapped source of demand that diaspora entrepreneurs are now beginning to target. This diaspora-cum-consumer interest in "Afro-vegan" or "Afro-food" culture, for example, represents an opportunity to scale up Angola–U.S. agribusiness commerce beyond commodity trade to branded goods and joint ventures. The re-entry of Angola's coffee is a potential model for this, with diaspora engagement involved in various stages from farm to shelf. Expanding to other crops is possible, and the diaspora could play a facilitating role here as well – from chocolate to tropical fruits, with the aid of AGOA (African Growth and Opportunity Act) duty-free access, which Angola has enjoyed since 2004.

Technology and Innovation: Startups, Skills, and Investment

Angola's technology industry is still in its early stages, yet diaspora entrepreneurs boost it by investing as they return or connect with their homeland. In the last 5–10 years, several trailblazing Angolan startups have been founded or cofounded by members of the diaspora who attended college or worked in the U.S. or Europe and returned to Angola to launch businesses with a technology focus. Their experiences illustrate the way diaspora talent is seeding a new Angolan tech scene and business connections with the United States:

- **Fintech and Mobile Services:** Entrepreneur Wilson Ganga spent 17 years in the United States before returning to Angola and starting several tech companies, beginning in 2015 with Tupuca, the country's first on-demand food delivery app, and then the fintech platform PayPay Africa and the ride-hailing app T'Leva. Ganga is now described as "Angola's pioneering tech entrepreneur," and his businesses (online food delivery, digital payment services, electric taxis) have brought international investors on board. His U.S. background was critical to this – it gave him the technical skills and also the mindset of building a startup to fill an unmet need in Angola that did not previously exist. In turn, Ganga's businesses have partnered with U.S.-based tech suppliers (payment processors, app development platforms, etc.), creating business for U.S. companies and know-how for Angola. Success stories by diaspora Angolans like this are also encouraging other Angolan emigrants to return home or "reverse migrate" to start businesses.

- **Diaspora Investment in Startups:** African diaspora investors and mentors in the United States have also increasingly taken an interest in the Angolan tech sector. The Silicon Valley–based African Diaspora Network (founder Almaz Negash is Eritrean-American), for example, now includes Angolan startups in its portfolio, and diaspora-founded venture funds have scouted for Angolan tech talent. Diaspora "angels" have made small equity investments in Angolan fintech, e-health, and e-commerce startups. In addition to providing capital, these investors also connect the startups to U.S. accelerator programs, potential American customers, and mentors with corporate or entrepreneurship experience. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Advance with Africa program even has language in its guide to "accelerate diaspora-led ventures" to expand into Africa. At a March 2024 Advance with Africa forum in Atlanta, co-hosted with the President's Advisory Council on African Diaspora Engagement (ACDAE), diaspora tech entrepreneurs shared their success stories of doing business in Africa, which gives visibility to Angolan innovators and also helps them network with U.S. business leaders. (Many of these

leaders are also African immigrants or African-American executives with U.S. companies who have a particular interest in Africa.) The spotlight on diaspora entrepreneurs from the highest levels – the “*value that American business leaders who comprise the African diaspora bring to growing the U.S.-Africa economic relationship*” – is increasing diaspora engagement in Angola’s tech sector.

- **Skills and Knowledge Transfer:** Angola's pool of professionals in ICT and engineering left the country during the war years and remains partly abroad. A diaspora skills transfer program run by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is one example of how diaspora Angolans are returning temporarily to train local talent. Angola's national development plan, Angola 2025, explicitly aims to “*integrate the diaspora into Angola’s development... including skills transfers and promotion of return of qualified Angolans*”. We see this trend in the tech sector through mentorship: diaspora Angolans working at U.S. tech companies (from multinational corporations such as Google and IBM to smaller startups) are often mentoring Angolan startups remotely, advising the government on technology policy, or working with universities to update their curricula. The diaspora also forms bridges with academic partners – for instance, Angolan doctoral students working in U.S. labs have been able to link those labs to Angolan research centers to collaborate on projects aimed at solving local problems (telecom infrastructure, fintech regulation, etc.).

- **Entrepreneurial Networks:** Efforts are underway to establish a diaspora entrepreneurship network for the Lusophone African countries. In July 2024, the EU-funded BIC Africa business incubator network held a webinar specifically highlighting “*inspiring success stories of Angolan diaspora entrepreneurs based in Europe and the USA*”. A dialogue followed where they discussed their challenges and lessons learned, creating a knowledge-sharing exchange between diaspora entrepreneurs and Angola-based businesses. This kind of forum, conducted in Portuguese for both diaspora and local entrepreneurs, is part of a strategy to build a community of practice among them. Panelists have included Angolan-Americans who founded tech consultancies in the United States, servicing clients in Angola, and Angolans in Portugal who have established software startups operating both in Lisbon and Luanda, with one foot in London and another in Boston. These hybrid models represent diaspora-driven internationalization of Angolan business.

In the future, we can expect to see more in tech through diaspora engagement. Angola’s tech roadmap to a digital economy (mobile money to e-government) can benefit from diaspora experts to not “*reinvent the wheel*”. In addition, Afro-descendant tech professionals in the U.S. (such as African-American engineers who have worked on technology projects in Africa) are engaging via initiatives like Prosper Africa to link African startups to U.S. markets. Analysts suggest that Washington should take further steps: “*The government can introduce new policies and initiatives that support diaspora investment, trade, and business development*” by treating diaspora startups as foreign direct investment. If this were implemented, it would lead to more funding and resources for diaspora-led innovation, creating business linkages between the U.S. and Angola.

In conclusion, the diaspora is participating in Angola's tech sector as founders, financiers, and facilitators. They bring capital and a global perspective to Angola's innovation scene, and U.S. partners who are African-descendant professionals can help “scale” these innovations in the international marketplace. It is a win-win: Angola benefits from technology transfer and

business development, and diaspora entrepreneurs are building successful transnational ventures.

Cultural and Creative Industries: Heritage Tourism and Arts Exchange

Where these emotional crosscurrents converge most visibly with commercial opportunity is the cultural sector (tourism, the arts, music, fashion, and media). Governments and civil society actors have turned to history and heritage to promote business (tourism and investments in the creative sector in particular):

- **Diaspora Tourism:** Ghana's "Year of Return" campaign in 2019 was global media fodder, as it invited people of African descent to come to "Africa" and return to their roots. Angola has a similar selling point in terms of African American ancestry. However, while it is important to acknowledge that the Angola "connection" is not unique, Angolan officials and diaspora cultural entrepreneurs feel their country has been neglected, and thus has a market opportunity. There are an estimated "12 million people in the Americas alone of Angolan descent", a large target audience for tourism or cultural investment. High-level Angolan officials are on board – President Lourenço himself led a government delegation to the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture in late 2021, along with three members of the Tucker family, African-Americans who have traced their ancestry to the first group of Angolans who arrived in Virginia in 1619. The Smithsonian visit was widely covered in the media, with much hand-holding symbolism: a picture of Lourenço and the Tucker descendants embracing was tweeted under the hashtag #JOAOJEFF. Mary Elliott, an African-American Smithsonian curator who is herself a descendant of Angolans who came in 1820, noted that "*African-Americans were enslaved in a nation founded on liberty... You all are connected to me*", as she talked to the Angolan delegation at the museum. This was a people-to-people link at the presidential level. However, those emotions are now being commercialized – turned into business opportunities. Angola is developing the Kwanza River Corridor – where enslaved people were marched to the coast before being loaded onto ships – as a memorial tourist route and has applied for UNESCO World Heritage status for it. There are plans for museums, memorial sites, and guided tours along this route marketed especially to African diasporans in the U.S. (tourism for "roots" reasons, as in Ghana or Senegal). Visitors to Angola would spend money in the hospitality sector, and could also spur longer-term engagement (seek investment or philanthropic opportunities, for instance, after a transformative trip). The Angolan government has announced a Biennial Festival of Re-encounter (Festival Biênal do Encontro) to cement this, a two-day festival in Angola on the theme of Africanity and connection with diaspora, with planned tours, roundtables on the legacy of slavery, and cultural showcases. Diaspora groups and cultural actors like the Tucker family were involved in all of the above, and have, in a sense, been "*working on behalf*" of Angola, as cultural ambassadors or influencers. Wanda Tucker (Angolan descendant, Hampton, VA) described her trip to Angola and sister-city connection with Malanje Province, Angola as "*such a historic moment for both of my countries... We share a common history ... and a common future.*" She was involved in the sister-city creation, alongside groups like Project 1619, which helped bring the heritage community into the process and raise its visibility.

- **Sister Cities and Cultural Exchanges:** The City of Hampton, Virginia (Fort Monroe, site of 1619 landing) was twinned with Malanje, Angola in September 2024. This sister city/province relationship was forged in order to "*exchange cultural, economic and social experiences, as*

well as those of education”. The idea is to create “opportunities for cultural and economic exchanges, educational exchanges, between us and them,” as the Vice Mayor of Hampton put it after signing. “The real work begins now,” he added, moving beyond the signing ceremony to concrete projects. For his part, the Angolan delegation, which included Malanje Province Governor Marcos Nhunga, stated that “our partnership... is going to bring benefits to both sides, in terms of economic development and cultural development.” As well as student exchanges, there are plans to develop historic sites as tourism and educational resources. Angolan officials see the sister-city relationship as “improving our relations... and spur mutual investment” in each other’s countries. This could mean Angola gets visits from American universities to set up educational programs in Angola. Cultural relations (shared history) are therefore being used as a launching pad for broader business and commercial ties – from tourism spending to educational services (in which U.S. institutions invest or partner in Angola). An important point is that the sister city initiative came at least partly from diaspora civil society. Groups like the Project 1619 Inc. and the William Tucker 1624 Society (associations of African-American descendants of the first Angolans) were at the table. These diaspora groups, therefore, essentially became a lobby for engagement with Angola.

• **Music, Dance, and Fashion:** Angolan music, dance (Kizomba, Semba, Kuduro), and fashion have global fans in part thanks to diaspora Africans. In the 2000s and 2010s, Angolan expats and African-descendant enthusiasts in the U.S. helped popularize kizomba in U.S. cities. (It has been dubbed the “Angolan tango”). Today, there are kizomba dance studios and festivals in major U.S. cities, run or frequented by African-Americans or others of African descent who are interested in dance and the culture it comes from. This has functioned as a low-key way of spreading Angola’s cultural brand, while also opening doors for Angolan artists. Angolan musicians (Bonga is one high-profile example, himself an expat) have performed in North America for diaspora audiences. Festivals are a business opportunity themselves (money from concerts, workshops) and also build a positive image of Angola in the U.S. that may translate into interest in other sectors (tourism, real estate, if people want vacation homes, etc). On the fashion side, diaspora-descended designers in the U.S. are looking to Angola for creative inspiration, incorporating traditional motifs and partnering with Angolan artisans. Afrikanizm Art Platform, an Angolan startup founded by two diaspora-returned art lovers, sells contemporary art by artists “of African descent, resident in Africa or the diaspora” online to buyers worldwide. Its founders noted that it had, in 2022, mere months after launch, succeeded in their goal of “taking African art... to the American continent and Europe”. By partnering with DHL for logistics, they ensure artworks by Angolan and diaspora artists can be safely delivered to U.S. collectors. This is a way of giving diaspora artists and Angolan cultural producers direct access to American markets and monetizing cultural content. It is also a diaspora-founded business at the intersection of art and e-commerce.

• **Media and Film:** Diaspora and Afro-descendants are collaborating on storytelling that doubles as cultural diplomacy. Farewell Amor, the 2020 award-winning film about an Angolan family who are finally reunited in New York after 17 years, was directed by a Tanzanian-American and features an Angolan-American cast. It is one way of bringing the story of the Angolan diaspora to foreign audiences. These types of creative projects are not business deals per se, but the spillover is in raising awareness about Angola’s history and life today, potentially enticing viewers to want to visit or learn more. Angola’s state media also appears to be targeting

the diaspora with special content. Angola's TPA international channel has cultural programs for diaspora and foreign audiences, as part of a push to "promote the image of Angola abroad". Positive perception and familiarity make it easier to do business later.

In all these instances in the cultural and creative industries, the virtuous cycle is visible: Angolan diaspora and Afro-descendant Americans use a shared history (sometimes tragic, as in the case of slavery) to create new products and exchanges that generate income. Tourism is a no-brainer, once there is remembrance (memorial routes, festivals) that becomes revenue – heritage visitors will come and spend money. Those visitors might do business or explore investment or philanthropy in other sectors while there. Arts and entertainment build soft power and thereby indirectly benefit trade and investment (transactions flow where people feel a cultural link or at least understanding). Both governments recognize this. "Linking Africa to people on the other side of the Atlantic means relinking cultures," as a UNESCO official told me, "reclaiming the memory and identity of our ancestors is a part of nation-building." The emotional-cultural ties are therefore not just a social project, but an economic one as well.

Comparative Overview of Sectors and Initiatives

To visualize the diverse roles of diaspora and Afro-descendants in fostering Angola–U.S. business ties, the table below compares their contributions, key actors, and initiatives across major sectors:

Sector	Diaspora & Afro-Descendant Roles	Notable Examples / Initiatives
Oil & Gas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Angolan diaspora professionals in the U.S. (e.g., Houston) bridging partnerships. Afro-descendant experts advising on energy deals and policy. Networking events linking U.S. investors with Angolan oil opportunities. 	<p><i>Angolan expats in Houston's oil industry are facilitating deals.</i></p> <p><i>2024 Angola Oil & Gas Houston roadshow connecting U.S. operators with Angolan officials (with diaspora participation).</i></p> <p><i>U.S. Chamber's working group (AmCham Angola) on energy reforms, supported by diaspora input.</i></p>
Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diaspora entrepreneurs re-opening supply chains for Angolan products. Promotion of Angolan coffee, wine, and crops to U.S. markets via diaspora networks. Knowledge transfer in agronomy and agri-tech by diaspora experts. 	<p><i>Cazengo Coffee's diaspora-led import of Angolan coffee after 40+ years.</i></p> <p><i>2024 USDA agribusiness trade mission to Angola involving U.S. (incl. diaspora) agribusinesses.</i></p> <p><i>Angola's diaspora investors are invited to large farming projects (e.g., Brazilian-Angolan diaspora in the coffee sector).</i></p>
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Returned diaspora founders launching startups (fintech, e-commerce, etc.). Diaspora investors/mentors connecting Angolan startups to 	<p><i>Wilson Ganga, after years in the U.S., built Angola's first food delivery and fintech companies (Tupuca, PayPay).</i></p> <p><i>Advance with Africa forum highlighting diaspora-led ventures scaling into</i></p>

	<p>U.S. capital and know-how.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diaspora tech professionals providing skills training and partnerships. 	<p><i>Africa.</i> <i>BIC Africa webinar (2024) featuring Angolan diaspora entrepreneurs sharing insights.</i></p>
Cultural Industries & Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afro-descendant Americans engaging in “roots tourism” and heritage projects in Angola. • Angolan diaspora and artists marketing cultural products (music, art, fashion) abroad. • Diaspora organizations forging cultural/economic exchange programs. 	<p><i>Angola’s Kwanza Corridor slavery-route memorial to attract African-American tourists.</i> <i>Hampton–Malanje sister city pact for cultural & business exchange (driven by 1619 descendant groups).</i> <i>Afrikanizm art platform sells works of Angolan and diaspora artists globally.</i></p>
Policy & Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diaspora councils and chambers advising governments on improving the business climate. • Government initiatives to include diaspora in development strategies and trade programs. • Civil society networks linking diaspora investors with opportunities in Angola. 	<p><i>U.S. President’s Advisory Council on African Diaspora Engagement – increasing diaspora role in trade/investment.</i> <i>U.S. Chamber’s Advance with Africa roadshow – focuses on Black-owned SMEs entering African markets.</i> <i>Angola’s National Development Plan highlights “valuing Angola’s relationship with the diaspora” for economic growth.</i></p>

(Sources: as cited in text above)

This comparison shows that whether through **big industries** like oil or **softer sectors** like culture, diaspora, and Afro-descendant engagement is creating new pathways for commerce. Crucially, many initiatives are **cross-sectoral** – for example, the sister city program involves culture, education, and also business exploration; a diaspora startup might span tech and agriculture (e.g., an agritech platform). What unites these efforts is the bridging role of people with bi-cultural ties, and an increasing institutional support to formalize those bridges.

Challenges in Fostering Diaspora-Led Business Ties

Efforts to engage diaspora and Afro-descendants in Angola-U.S. business opportunities have been ongoing, but are not without challenges:

- **Limited Diaspora Size and Organization:** Angola’s diaspora, at least compared to Angola’s population, is a small community abroad. There are only several thousand Angolan-born in the United States, for example, and remittances to Angola are not high by Sub-Saharan African standards (resulting in “*little incentive... to engage with its diaspora,*” as one Angolan scholar notes). The diaspora is not only small but geographically scattered (between U.S. states, at least), and many community members have integrated into broader Lusophone or African immigrant communities. Diaspora associations and organizations do exist, but in my experience, they are not as visible or well-endowed as some other African diaspora groups in

the U.S., which means their ability to push a coordinated diaspora investment drive or diaspora lobbying effort is more limited than might be the case in some other African countries.

- **Historical Mistrust and Political Barriers:** Angola's civil war left scars between those who left and those who stayed. In addition, some diaspora members were supportive of opposition movements during the war and/or have since been critical of the Angolan government, leading to a certain wariness on both sides. At a minimum, the Angolan diaspora were not allowed to vote until recently, which made those outside Angola politically marginalized. (A significant improvement: for the first time, the diaspora was allowed to vote in the 2022 Angolan election, but it took a long time for that step to be taken.) There is a gap of trust that will take time to heal – Angolan officials must demonstrate through deeds as well as words that they value diaspora input beyond a photo op. On the flip side, some Afro-descendant Americans may be skeptical or lack awareness of Angola, given its history of isolation, political wariness, and language gap.

- **Language and Cultural Gaps:** The Official language in Angola is Portuguese, and most African-American or Afro-Latino diaspora members are English- (or Spanish-) speaking, which can present a language barrier in business and networking. A diaspora member from the U.S. with an interest in investing or traveling in Angola will find that resources and information in English are limited, and that they may be at a disadvantage navigating business settings which are still overwhelmingly Lusophone. Similarly, while cultural norms and business practices may be broadly African, there can still be differences between American and Angolan business partners. It may take a while to bridge (demand for what I call diaspora "connectors"—individuals who can bridge between the diaspora and the homeland – here would naturally fall on the Angolan diaspora who are bilingual).

- **Business Climate and Infrastructure Issues:** Angola's overall business climate, while improving, still presents several challenges, including bureaucracy, regulatory opacity, and (historically) corruption. Diaspora investors/entrepreneurs are not immune to the challenges facing foreign investors more broadly: hard-to-find information, complex customs, and the need for trusted and well-connected local partners. The Angolan business climate needs work: *"Doing business" in Angola, to cite one recent U.S. market entry guide, "requires large time and financial commitments and great patience from foreign investors, who must perform intense due diligence when selecting their Angolan partners."* (For diaspora investors without family on the ground or with up-to-date knowledge of the country, the challenges of finding the right local partners can be particularly daunting). Finally, from a practical standpoint, while Angola has the potential to be a tech hub in Africa, its infrastructure (transport, internet connectivity, etc.) lags the standard in some important respects, frustrating tech-oriented diaspora projects or efforts to build up tourism (tech startups have to rely on underpowered internet connections and computer equipment to keep their businesses running, and Afro-descendant tourists will find it difficult and expensive to get in and around Angola compared to many other countries). This has led to frustration on the diaspora side: Afro-descendant visitors expecting easy internet connections and instant communication with loved ones at home may be frustrated by visa issues or limited flight connections (the 2024 Open Skies Agreement with the United States and the new direct flights can help ease this, but getting this into gear has taken some time).

- **Resource and Capacity Constraints:** The Angolan diaspora includes many who left as refugees or students and are not all members of the wealthy investor class. In comparison to some other African countries with high-remittance, high-investment diasporas (the Nigerian or

Indian diasporas are prominent examples in the U.S.), the Angolan diaspora has not been a particularly wealthy or well-endowed group. There are limits to what the diaspora can be expected to finance and invest: diaspora capital alone is unlikely to fund major projects. In the United States, the small size of networks for African investment and entrepreneurship, and a certain wariness towards (perceived) African risk, limit the capacity to mobilize Afro-descendant capital.

• **Awareness and Information Gaps:** There is work to do on the Angola diaspora side to build capacity, education, and mobilization. On the U.S. side, not every African-American investor or entrepreneur is (yet) focused on Africa or has a network of African deals. This field is growing, but it still takes effort to tap into these communities, who also may be deterred from investing in (perceived) risky African markets. Similarly, awareness of the diaspora and how to tap into this community is still nascent in Angola; there is room for missed connections: an entrepreneur or firm in Luanda may not know how or where to find a diaspora partner in the U.S. and vice versa. On the diaspora side, many African-Americans with Angolan roots are only just in the process of discovering this heritage – think: the DNA Ancestry Boom and the Diaspora travel trend (Angola, a less visible destination than some other countries in the diaspora travel and business community, may have lower priority in the queue of countries African-Americans and Afro-Latinos will visit first, and the same can be said of diaspora business investment).

Opportunities and Emerging Opportunities

This diaspora is also accompanied by several countervailing factors that have stymied the development of the diaspora community and its investments in the past and could do so in the future. As a community dispersed in different countries and social classes, the global Angolan diaspora is not as organized or vocal as other major African communities, like the Nigerian or Ethiopian diasporas, that have well-established diaspora engagement programs or African-American organizations. Diaspora has been partly synonymous with elites living and studying abroad, and to a lesser extent, highly skilled migrant labor in the West, not local diaspora members or Afro-descendant communities in the U.S. For the local Angolan population, their interactions with the diaspora have been scarred by painful experiences of diaspora favoritism in a corrupt system or profiteering and poor implementation of diaspora infrastructure and real estate projects. Past investments from the U.S. diaspora have often been either in elite luxury real estate or non-performing or circular investments from Angolan elites using U.S. visas. To the extent that diaspora resources have been tapped in recent years, these often come from extractive resource enclaves with little spillover to the domestic economy. Diaspora engagement with the country, in sum, has for the past 30 years been limited, sporadic, and in need of a major reset. Economic engagement from diaspora or Afro-descendant communities has received little to no effort to date, except for some philanthropy and historical reconnection trips.

This confluence of challenges, however, is no reason for pessimism. In fact, despite these obstacles, there are real opportunities at the moment to tap into the diaspora and Afro-descendant communities and work for mutual benefit. Below are some of the key opportunities:

• **Institutional Support and Policy Frameworks:** On both the Angolan and U.S. side, government policy statements have shown high-level support for diaspora engagement. On the U.S. side, the recently established President's Advisory Council on African Diaspora Engagement (PAC-ADE), signed into law in 2022, is a high-level advisory body that was tasked with strengthening dialogue between diaspora leaders and recommending ways to leverage the African diaspora for

the U.S. and Africa's economic growth. One of the explicit goals in the PAC-ADE charter calls for "*increasing the participation of members of the African Diaspora... in trade, investment, and development programs relating to Africa*". In other words, the diaspora is getting high-level attention in Washington. The existence of such an advisory body also means that diaspora initiatives can be channeled through official avenues, have greater access to resources, and visibility in policymaking. For example, U.S. government programs that have long been in place to support African trade and investment, such as Prosper Africa or the International Visitor Leadership Program, have recently been opened up to diaspora business leaders as part of explicit efforts to connect them with opportunities on the continent. On the Angolan side, the Angolan government included in its National Development Plan (PND 2018–2022) as a policy objective the need to "*value Angola's relationship with the Angolan diaspora in the world*", recognizing the "*pivotal role*" that diaspora play in Angola's economic growth and even in the African Union's Agenda 2063 goals. The PND calls for a formal diaspora engagement strategy and portal, and the strengthening of ties with foreign communities with historical ties to Angola, which clearly includes African-American communities among the targeted communities. In 2023, Angola named a Secretary of State for the Angolan Community Abroad (Undersecretary of State for the Angolan Community Abroad), the first point person for diaspora relations at the cabinet level. Both countries have passed these important policy signals and created the institutional capacity to make things easier for diaspora investment, bringing them in on trade missions, and possibly, in the medium term, offering them incentives such as tax breaks or land grants.

- **Expanded Networks and Matchmaking Opportunities:** A new Angolan–U.S. diaspora economic engagement ecosystem of networks has begun to emerge that purposefully connects Angolan/diaspora entrepreneurs with U.S. counterparts. A good example of this is the Advance with Africa roadshow organized by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce – by rolling out to U.S. cities (especially ones with large African diaspora communities such as Atlanta, Houston, or New York) the purpose is to educate U.S. companies about Africa and proactively showcase diaspora-led companies as front-runners to build trust and awareness. The Advance with Africa roadshow in Atlanta in 2024 reached out to thousands of U.S. entrepreneurs. It partnered with a group of African diaspora council members to share their decades of diaspora experience "*building cultural and business ties across Africa*" in making the case for the "*vital role*" of the diaspora in boosting commerce. Events like these are increasingly becoming matchmaking events. An African-American-owned tech startup in Chicago could meet up with an Angolan telecom representative or a diaspora mentor at one of these events and close a deal. Sector-specific exchanges (such as the agribusiness mission above or the proposed U.S. trade mission to Angola on rail and ports slated for 2025) could also fold in diaspora experts to facilitate introductions. The inclusion of diaspora "*champions*" in these delegations, especially if these are selected based on sector expertise and not just nationality, will help bridge language/cultural barriers and build trust faster.
- **Economic Diversification and Niche Opportunities:** Angola is looking to diversify its economy away from oil, opening up new sectors where the diaspora can find niches. Renewable energy is a focus for Angola and a sector where many diaspora engineers (as well as African-American renewable energy entrepreneurs) are active and can take the lead. U.S. companies, including diaspora-led ones, are already eyeing Angola's solar and wind potential – a major U.S.–Angola

solar investment partnership deal in 2021 (Sun Africa) had diaspora advisors on the negotiation team in its early stages. Education and training services are another niche area where American diaspora academics, for instance, could offer consulting services or even set up branch campuses in Angola (sister city initiative in part designed to attract U.S. universities to open campuses in Luanda). Healthcare is an opportunity for diaspora African doctors in the U.S. to partner in Angola's medical sector development, either through telemedicine services or investment in clinics or pharmaceutical trade. The development of every new or underserved economic sector in Angola is an open invitation for diaspora innovators to bring solutions tested abroad.

- **Growing Afro-Descendant Consumer and Investor Interest:** There is a rising wave of interest in the broader African diaspora/African-American community in reconnecting economically with Africa. A lot of this is coming from social movements around building Black wealth and solidarity globally. As one Atlantic Council piece on Africa's diaspora noted, the younger generations of diasporans engage with Africa not via "*business development, investing, and collective remittances*" but rather traditional philanthropy or charity. This shift in mindset towards economic engagement and investment fits very well with Angola's needs. Opportunities in Angola, if packaged and communicated correctly, can generate interest among Afro-descendant investors who want to both create impact and make a return. Investment clubs or crowdfunding campaigns in the U.S., for instance, could be organized to collectively support specific Angolan ventures (say, an agro-processing facility or a film studio), giving African-Americans a stake in Africa's growth. Moreover, in addition to investment, the huge African-American consumer market in the U.S. (worth over \$1 trillion) is another potential value-add that Angola can brand to African-Americans. Kizomba dance classes, clothing with Angolan print, and these cultural products will generate business revenue streams. A "*Made in Angola*" brand can be marketed through diaspora influencers to target this consumer market.

- **Innovative Financial Tools and Incentives:** Innovative financial instruments that can tap into diaspora savings/experience and target investment flows are another opportunity. Some African countries have issued diaspora bonds; Angola has not yet done this, but could consider diaspora bonds or diaspora investment funds earmarked for infrastructure or industrial projects as a way to offer expatriates a safe way to invest in Angola. The U.S. EXIM Bank has already stepped up – at the 2022 U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, EXIM and Afreximbank signed a \$500 million MOU to increase and facilitate diaspora commercial engagement across Africa, with a stated objective of increasing diaspora access to trade finance and supporting exports of U.S. goods to Africa. In effect, an Angolan diaspora business wanting to import U.S. machinery or a diaspora-owned U.S. business seeking to export to Angola should have access to favorable financing. A parallel example is the African Development Foundation's partnership with the NBA Players Association (many NBA players are of African descent) to channel philanthropic investment into African entrepreneurship – Angolan entrepreneurs (Angola has a thriving basketball culture and even a few NBA players of Angolan heritage) may also be able to benefit from this fund.

- **Regional and South-South Diaspora Networks:** Angola's diaspora is not only concentrated in the U.S. – the diaspora is also present in Portugal, Brazil, South Africa, etc. There is an opportunity to build a global Angolan diaspora network that will bring the U.S. and these regional communities together. Moreover, in the same way that Afro-descendant diasporas in Brazil have a long history of engagement with Africa, Afro-descendant communities are also

present in Brazil and the Caribbean (think of the Angolan students that Cuba hosted and educated decades ago). Building diaspora engagement programs that span multiple countries can significantly expand the pool of expertise and capital. Angola's recent International Forum for the Angolan Diaspora in the Netherlands (2024), for instance, brought together diaspora leaders from Angola, Brazil, and European countries to discuss entrepreneurship and innovation opportunities. The inclusion of Brazilian-Angolan community leaders and representatives at the forum is one illustration of the opportunity for triangulating diaspora efforts across these Lusophone countries and the U.S. For the U.S. partners, working with the Angolan diaspora in Portugal or Brazil, who may be culturally and linguistically similar, is a way to lower risk and facilitate market entry. A triangular model – like a U.S. investor + Portuguese-Angolan diaspora partner + Angola – would be pretty powerful.

- **Momentum Created by Presidential Visit:** Finally, the recent visit to Angola by President Biden in late 2024 has created momentum. In his meetings, the two countries "*acknowledge the past horrors of slavery... while looking forward to a bright future of continually deepening collaboration*". This strong affirmation of a shared historical connection at the highest level gives great moral weight to diaspora initiatives. It was not a coincidence that members of the President's Advisory Council on Doing Business in Africa (PAC-DBIA), many of whom are diaspora business leaders, traveled to Angola with President Biden. Their inclusion in the official delegation made it clear that diaspora business voices are being integrated into official economic diplomacy. The near-certain renewal of AGOA (African Growth and Opportunity Act) – which Angola uses to export products to the U.S. duty-free – and discussions of a post-AGOA U.S.-Africa trade framework that "centers on diaspora businesses and entrepreneurs" are also very encouraging for the sustainability of these efforts.

Taken together, these opportunities point to scaling up what works. The presence of policy support, if implemented, will lower some of the above-noted barriers. Networking and matchmaking platforms are increasingly being built to put the right people in touch. Moreover, shared identity is both a shortcut to business opportunities and a strong foundation on which to build new economic ventures. Seizing these opportunities will require proactive efforts by all the stakeholders, and that is where policies and initiatives, discussed in the next section, become crucial.

Policy Initiatives and Stakeholder Actions

Government, private sector, and civil society actors in both countries are implementing or can build on several efforts to engage better the diaspora and Afro-descendants in Angola–U.S. business:

- **Angolan Government diaspora policy:** Angola has started to craft a formal diaspora policy, including in PND, which: called out diaspora as a source of human capital and national development and tasked MIREX to "*develop and implement an engagement strategy for Angolan communities abroad*", and "*build an online information exchange portal, or diaspora portal*" to interact with them. The PND also wants to "*promote links with foreign communities that have historical and blood ties to Angola*" – an apparent reference to Afro-descendants in the Americas. On a practical level, this has translated to: setting up diaspora focal points in embassies and outreach/consultations (e.g diaspora conferences, forums); including diaspora in the recruitment of health workers (setting aside positions for diaspora applicants to combat brain drain and incentivize skilled expats to return home); and, in 2022 Angola enabled diaspora

voting for the first time, a policy shift that gives diaspora a voice politically and, symbolically, formally considers them as part of Angola's future. The investment law offers several incentives for diaspora investors, including capital repatriation guarantees and potential tax exemptions in priority sectors and regions. Going forward, Angola is contemplating the creation of a Diaspora Investment Bank or Fund to co-finance projects with diaspora partners (this was discussed in parliament, referencing Ethiopia/Rwanda).

• **U.S. Government Initiatives:** The U.S. has incorporated diaspora outreach into its economic policy agenda for Africa through a range of channels: the aforementioned PAC-ADE (Advisory Council on African Diaspora Engagement) – the first members of which were appointed in 2023 – has entrepreneurs, entertainment industry executives, faith leaders, and academics of African descent. Notably, the chair of PAC-ADE is an American bishop with oversight of AME churches in Angola, South Africa, and Namibia, offering a direct link to Angola. PAC-ADE will be able to advise on programs to target the African diaspora better – for example, recommending programs for African diaspora businesses to familiarize themselves with African markets and better navigate bureaucracy, or for U.S. agencies to customize programs to better target diaspora. Prosper Africa – the U.S. government-wide economic initiative to promote two-way trade with Africa – now has a deliberate diaspora outreach component. The White House cited Prosper Africa as a tool to "*increase the participation of diaspora members in trade, investment, and economic growth*". Prosper Africa's implementation (under USAID and Minority Business Development Agency) has held "*deal rooms*" which connect African SMEs with diaspora recommendations with U.S. investors. Prosper Africa has facilitated more than \$6.9 billion in Angola deals since 2021, in sectors such as energy, agribusiness, infrastructure, and healthcare.

Trade Agreements/Fora: The longstanding AGOA program is key – Angola has been using AGOA preferences to export various goods to the U.S., including petroleum derivatives, some textiles, and apparel. The annual AGOA Forum offers Angolan and diaspora entrepreneurs an opportunity to meet and discuss opportunities to export to the U.S. market. In November 2024, the U.S. and Angola signed a Commercial and Investment Partnership MOU in which both parties agreed to have regular government-industry dialogues, led by the U.S. Department of Commerce. This will involve consultations with chambers, including PAC-DBIA (which has diaspora members). Topics are expected to include easing business visas, sharing market information, and standard alignment – all of which should be good for diaspora operating as intermediaries.

EXIM Bank and DFC Financing: The Export-Import Bank (EXIM) and U.S. Development Finance Corporation (DFC) have significantly increased their activity in Angola, and are interested in supporting projects that incorporate U.S. small businesses, which include many minority- or diaspora-owned businesses. EXIM's recent \$2.9 billion Angola financings and Letters of Interest for agriculture, healthcare, etc., open the door for U.S. suppliers, including to contract on equipment, insurance, or other components if they can access these facilities (EXIM also mentioned they would expand their diaspora outreach via an MOU).

Advisory Programs/Exchanges: The International Diaspora Engagement Alliance (IdEA) is a multi-year public-private partnership program initiated during the Obama years and can be a platform for engagement (e.g. one diaspora entrepreneur competition by IdEA – Diaspora Marketplace – in the past granted awards for diaspora ventures operating in Africa, so there

could be opportunities for an Angolan diaspora agribusiness if such a program is reinvigorated). In addition, exchange programs under the U.S. State Department, such as YALI (Young African Leaders Initiative) and a new African Diaspora Young Leaders Forum, are matching young Angolan leaders with diaspora in the U.S., which can create longer-term networks of young innovators more in touch with U.S. business culture.

• **Private Sector and Civil Society:** Many actors outside of government are also working on strengthening diaspora–business ties:

- o The U.S.–Angola Chamber of Commerce and AmCham Angola have been conveners in this space. They organized business roundtables when President Lourenço came to the U.S. and have a Working Group on Angola (since 2021) that has been doing policy advocacy on agriculture, digital economy, energy, etc., with diaspora participation. The Chamber's Advance with Africa campaign (roadshow at multiple U.S. cities) is partnering with local Black chambers of commerce at the grassroots business level. This is helpful because many African-American entrepreneurs may not traditionally consider Angola when looking to do business, but through these events, learn of opportunities and meet Angolan or diaspora individuals who can help them find their footing.

Diaspora Associations: Angola's diaspora may be small, but there are active communities such as the Angolan Community in Houston, the Angolan Community in New England, etc. These groups host "*Angola Day*" cultural festivals, business seminars, and networking events. Houston's Angolan Association has partnered with the Angola Consulate to host oil industry mixers, for example, and with local universities to encourage students to study in Angola. The larger diaspora communities in Portugal and South Africa have annual diaspora conferences that Angolan officials have attended. U.S.-based diaspora have started to join via live-streams, creating a global conversation. Diaspora social media groups (Facebook, WhatsApp) managed by diaspora are another way of real-time dissemination of business news and opportunities.

African-American Cultural Organizations: Groups such as Project 1619 Inc. and the Tucker 1624 Society mentioned previously provide an example of how historic societies can reinvent themselves as economic bridge-builders. By lobbying for the Hampton–Malanje sister city relationship and then asking "*what are you saying for economic development ... for both cities?*" these groups are pushing the political-cultural agreements to yield concrete business outcomes. The NAACP and other African-American organizations with increasingly international outlooks could potentially feature Angola in their diaspora economic forums (e.g., NAACP's Afro-Academic initiatives or annual summits hosted by Congressional Black Caucus members that often have a track on Africa investment).

Diaspora Media and Tech: A new generation of diaspora media, such as TANTV, founded by a Nigerian-American but for the African diaspora, frequently spotlights success stories and opportunities. One 2025 article in a think tank journal argued that "*Washington must recognize the power of the African diaspora*" as an alternative to aid. It noted that chambers of commerce could serve as "*connectors and champions for diaspora-driven trade*". This type of discourse in think tanks and the media can influence policy acceptance. On the tech side, diaspora-led platforms such as DiasporaConnect or Afriex are building remittance/financing tools for investing in African businesses, which Angola can take advantage of if it signs onto these platforms.

Education/Exchange Programs: Universities and NGOs are another set of actors. Howard University (a leading HBCU) has an African Business program that has included Angola in case studies and brought Angolan diplomats in to give talks. The Wilson Center's Africa program hosted Angolan diaspora speakers to discuss Angola's economic reforms and indirectly call attention to the diaspora. On a smaller scale, churches and community groups in Angolan-American communities (many have historical ties to Angolan churches in the U.S.) organize pilgrimages and philanthropy in Angola that sometimes develop into business (e.g., a church group builds a school in Angola and then later partners on a teacher-training business or importing Angolan crafts to sell for fundraising). In summary, a multi-layered support system is emerging. Government policies are removing barriers and legitimizing diaspora input; private sector initiatives are bringing talent and capital across the ocean; and civil society is keeping the historical and human dimension at the forefront to ensure these business ties are sustainable and inclusive. The Fact Sheet on President Biden's Angola visit summarized the opportunity: despite a painful shared history of slavery, "*looking forward to a bright future together, between our nations*" with concrete commitments on trade, infrastructure, and cooperation. Diaspora and Afro-descendants are the living embodiment of that shared history. With these policies and initiatives, they are poised to be some of the key architects of the bright future in U.S.-Angola economic relations.

Conclusion

The business matchmaking just described is only one snapshot of a larger, cross-Atlantic trend that could be taking place in the realms of trade and investment between Angola and the United States. Diaspora and Afro-descendant actors in both countries are playing important roles in forming people-to-people relationships to support economic development and diplomatic efforts. Taken as isolated case studies, what might appear as individual attempts over the past 10-15 years to "*do business*" — an Angolan expatriate setting up a new operation here, an African-American family returning to roots there — has now gained steam as a movement of sorts that binds two countries through fresh linkages and mutual interest. Diaspora and Afro-descendants have been active in a range of settings from the oil fields and tech startups to farms and art galleries, boardrooms and historic memory sites. They have offered innovation, trust, and cultural understanding to business and investment opportunities that might have otherwise struggled or stagnated if limited to traditional government-to-government or private-sector channels.

As with any relationship, a few key challenges and unmet needs remain: bridging language barriers, greater organization, etc. There are targeted policies in place to better address some of these issues, and significant grassroots ingenuity on display to respond to opportunities creatively. The momentum is positive, and Angola and the United States are recognizing that the two must open the door and extend the hand, respectively, with diaspora and Afro-descendant stakeholders often ready to be the first to shake it. The potential to use and expand upon shared heritage and common interest to work toward both reconciliation and economic and trade development already underway can further strengthen bilateral relations and cooperation on the part of Angola and the U.S. in a partnership that is less about obligation or transaction and more about opportunity and mutual respect. Angola's adage "*Ondjango imosi yomanu*" (*loosely translated as "unity is strength"*) is applicable in this case as diaspora unity in action by Angolans at home and abroad. Afro-descendant allies in the U.S. may be well on their

way to becoming a source of strength and opportunity for both countries on either side of the Atlantic.

Sources: The information in this report is drawn from a wide range of related sources, including news articles, press releases, government fact sheets, and expert commentary that are cited throughout the text (e.g., Euronews, Africa Is a Country, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, White House statements, and others).

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