

Endorsement Note from Jerome Ringo of Apollo Alliance

Apollo Alliance president Jerome Ringo's Statement
to Participants in the Green Festival for Educators, India

Something happened recently that got me excited. I was at the White House when President Barack Obama formally announced the creation of the White House Middle Class Task Force. The President walked up to me and grabbed my hand. I said, "Mr. President, I'm Jerome Ringo." He said, "I know who you are. You're the president of Apollo Alliance. You guys are doing great work. Keep up the great work."

Beyond the fact that the President knew who I was and appreciated Apollo's efforts, I was excited because I realized that the message that Apollo has been promoting for six years — the message of clean energy, good jobs — is now the economic message of our times.

Since our founding in 2003, Apollo Alliance has led the fight for a clean-energy revolution that will put millions of Americans to work in a new generation of high-quality, green-collar jobs. By ramping up domestic clean-energy production, we can secure the nation's energy supply, curb climate change, and ensure a broadly shared prosperity.

My story starts on March 2, 1955 in Lake Charles, Louisiana - home to a couple dozen heavy industrial sites. I graduated high school in 1974, then went to Louisiana Tech for two years, but dropped out to work at the local petrochemical plant. At that time, we were making about 18 bucks an hour, which was good money. I was soon offered a permanent job, and I joined the union.

As the years went on, I started to organize the community to fight the industries - even while working for the man. In the late 1980's I organized the Mossville Environmental Action Network. It was an odd position to be in: The industry was afraid of me, but the people in the community didn't trust me because I worked for the industry. I had to win the trust of those people while still being an employee of the plant. My goal was to build bridges between the community and the industry, who wasn't that receptive. I was sent on an assignment to Malaysia. I knew — and all those close to me knew — why they sent me: to get me out of their hair.

When I returned in 1994, my company offered me a medical retirement. That's when I started to tie the different threads of my life together — my passion for civil rights, experience in the petrochemical industry and as a labor organizer, and an understanding of the environmental problems facing my community and the country. I saw the link between pollution and poverty and now I had to do something about it and get others to do the same. I began my transition from a worker in the old petroleum-based economy to an advocate for a new clean energy economy. I started an environmental consulting firm. I became involved with the National Wildlife Federation and eventually worked my way up to become its national board president and the first African American to lead a national environmental organization.

At the end of 2005, I became president of the Apollo Alliance. I saw Apollo as an organization with the potential to engage Americans and put us on the path toward economic prosperity, a clean environment, and energy independence.

The Apollo Alliance is a coalition of labor, business, environmental and community leaders working to catalyze a clean energy revolution that will put millions of Americans to work in a new generation of high-quality, green-collar jobs. The strength of Apollo comes from our diverse coalition, which represents more than 20 million Americans. The coalition is why our clean energy, good job message has been able to shape public discourse, and it gives us real influence with policy makers.

For example, in January we sent a delegation composed of economists, businessmen, and labor and environmental leaders to Washington, D.C., to meet with legislators about what should be in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. As a result, the stimulus package included more than \$110 billion in spending and incentives for the clean energy sector, many of which were proposed and advocated by the Apollo Alliance, including: \$38 billion for energy efficiency programs; \$17.7 billion for public transit capital investment and rail projects; nearly \$7 billion for brown field remediation and redeveloping Superfund sites and former military bases; and \$1 billion for green job training.

The stimulus bill and other federal policies under consideration are creating demand for the inputs of a clean energy economy. With the recent movement toward sustainable local economies, this demand is only going to grow. A skilled workforce is a crucial input. In the U.S., there is evidence that companies are having trouble meeting work demands due to a shortage of trained workers. That's where schools come in.

Schools can set an example by going green themselves. They can make their buildings more energy efficient, they can become green consumers by demanding that the materials they buy are environmentally friendly and sustainable.

Even more importantly, schools can and must do what they do best, which is to educate on all levels. Schools can both set an example and teach students about what it means to be a member of a sustainable economy. Educational institutions can also offer career technical curriculum to prepare young people to serve the growing labor market, and provide access to meaningful, career-oriented jobs.

We at Apollo are thrilled that you are working on educating the next generation of green leaders in India. We all need to be part of the solution because we all are contributing to and feeling the effects of the problem. We encourage the Greening India/Greening Indian Education project, and we wish everyone at this first Green Festival for Educators the best of luck in your endeavors.

Sincerely,

Jerome Ringo, President
APOLLO ALLIANCE
330 Townsend Street
Suite 205
San Francisco, CA 94107
www.apolloalliance.org