

## **The Black Futures Summit**

New York City, NY

September 20-21, 2024

Action Day Side Events of the United Nations Summit of the Future

[Vernita Pearl Fort](#)

Presenter

Attached, please find descriptions of the two side-events I seek to lead at the UN Summit of the Future, including its Action Days. They address two of the five UN designated topics. They could also be highly interactive youth events specified for the Action Day on September 20th

### **(1) Summit of the Future Designated Theme: Global Governance**

**Topic:** “Democratizing the Charter of the United Nations as the political, economic, and ecological contract for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Global Governance:  
The Africana World Stands Poised to Play a Global and Transformative Leadership Role”

### **(2) Summit of the Future Theme: Financial Development and Sustainability**

**Topic:** “Forging a [Human Rights Economy](#) within Planetary Boundaries:  
The Africana World Stands Poised to Play a Global and Transformative Leadership Role”

### **Presentation Expert: [Vernita Pearl Fort](#)**

- Evolutionary Systems Ecologist and Political Economist;
- Former United States Diplomat with the U.S. Agency for International Development;
- Worked in 60 countries across Africa, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Latin America, Asia Europe, and North America, managing annual budgets of up to two billion dollars;
- Board Member and Researcher, Center for United Nations Constitutional Research, Brussels;
- Democracy and Human Rights Research Scholar, University of Illinois Global Institute, (UIUC);
- International Working Group Member, UN Permanent Forum on People of African Descent;
- Founding Director, Lead Researcher, and Producer of the Music and Human Rights Project;
- Licensed Yoga Instructor (Hatha, Kemeti) for Rights, Earth and Joy; Performer and Filmmaker;
- MS, Yale University; BS University of California Berkeley - Evolutionary Systems Ecology;
- National Economics Association Doctoral Fellow, University of Maryland.



**(1) Summit of the Future, Global Governance Theme:**

**Topic: “*Democratizing the United Nations Charter as the political, economic, and ecological contract for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Global Governance: The Africana World Stands Poised to Play a Global and Transformative Leadership Role*”**

**Presenter: [Vernita Pearl Fort](#)**

- Board Director and Researcher,  
Center for United Nations Constitutional Research, Brussels
- Democracy and Human Rights Research Scholar,  
University of Illinois Global Institute, Urbana-Champaign

In 1945, 51 nations signed the Charter of the United Nations that had been developed at the UN’s San Francisco Conference with predominately male representatives, while one third of the world’s people lived under colonial rule or other oppressive regimes such as Jim Crow laws in the United States and approximately one half of the world lived under patriarchal dominance. This means that the majority of people of African descent and of the world, did not have the opportunity to participate in writing the UN Charter, undoubtedly an unprecedented and formidable document that set the rules, principles, and international order after the world’s most deadly war.

So while the crisis of World War I brought us the League of Nations and the crisis of World War II ushered in the United Nations, today humanity faces a poly-crisis more severe than the two world wars combined. An undemocratic international order birthed a UN Charter and institution with severe democratic deficits. For example, the UN has no parliamentary or people’s assembly, and five countries hold veto power. Also, the UN Charter like most treaties and constitutions, is not only a political document. It is also an economic document. It embeds the dominant economic model that: 1) prioritizes growth at almost any cost, rather than human rights and wellbeing for all; and 2) incorrectly assumes that accumulated wealth will trickle down to the poor and the possibility of infinite growth on a finite planet now facing climate change and ecological collapse as a result. Ironically, many the UN’s extraordinary humanitarian programs, some with which I have had the opportunity to work, address the harsh outcomes of a model that also violates economic democracy.

Fortunately, the founders in San Francisco included amendment clause, [Article 109](#), in the UN Charter. It allows for “A General Conference by the Members of the United Nations for the purpose of reviewing the present Charter” and for its “alteration.” Many of us refer to Article 109 as the *San Francisco Promise* of the Charter that begins with the words, “WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS.” In this event we will elaborate on this history and on the promising ways that WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS, can fulfill the promise of democratic global governance, with people of African descent playing a global and transformative leadership role. We will elaborate on this history and explore how people of African descent can play a global leadership role in this transition.

## (2) Summit of the Future Theme: Sustainability and Financial Development

**Topic:** “*Forging a Human Rights Economy within Planetary Boundaries:  
The Africana World Stands Poised to Play a Global and Transformative Leadership Role*”

**Presenter:** [Vernita Pearl Fort](#)

- 1) Democracy and Human Rights Research Scholar,  
University of Illinois Global Institute, Urbana-Champaign;
- 2) Founding Director, Lead Researcher, and Producer,  
The Music and Human Rights Project (MHRP)

This event presents and examines the human rights economy, which prioritizes the rights and wellbeing of everyone, everywhere, over and above capital accumulation for the few and the impossibility of unlimited growth on our shared and finite earth. We will contrast the human rights economy with the world’s dominant economic model that prioritizes growth at almost any cost, a model that systemically drives poverty and inequality, and that inaccurately assumes the possibility of infinite growth on a finite planet risking ecological collapse. Drawing from the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, Volker Türk:

“A **human rights economy** seeks to redress root causes and structural barriers to equality, justice, and sustainability, by prioritizing investment in economic, social and cultural rights. It delivers:

Maximum social protection, and quality education and healthcare for all.

Access to justice and rule of law.

Effective climate and environmental action.

Fundamental freedoms, and the broadest possible civic space.

It ensures that business models and economic policies are guided by human rights standards.

It enables an integrated and mission-oriented combination of socio-economic policies that advance each and every SDG goal and target, including in particular by ending discrimination against women and girls, as well as racial, ethnic and linguistic minorities. We know that such discrimination causes cascading society-wide and intergenerational harm. And by making these investments, a human rights economy also advances a more fair distribution of resources that reduces inequalities within and between countries.”

I will explore advances and currently lived prototypes of the human rights economy, and how people of African descent have the opportunity play a global leadership role in shaping a global human rights economy that functions within planetary boundaries.