# MAKING CONNECTIONS

## for Africa

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**Report from a Constituency
Builders' Dialogue**

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Imani Countess,
Loretta Hobbs,
Doug McAdam,
William Minter,
and Linda Williams

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Africa Policy Information Center
*Washington, D.C.*

# Contents

# Foreword

F oreign policy is historically one of the areas of government most resistant to democratic accountability. With easy resort to appeals to national unity and the prominence of officials drawn from elite societal backgrounds, even Congress generally defers to those who claim to have privileged insights based on insider information. For the most part, the public remains uninvolved. In rare cases, however, citizen advocacy has had profound impact. The anti-apartheid movement in the 1980s is one case in point. Although at this writing the outcome is not clear, another instance is the current worldwide movement to ban landmines, which has already significantly changed the parameters of debate.

US policy towards Africa is particularly in need of reinvigorated advocacy by concerned citizens. The continent has been consistently subordinated to other interests on the US foreign policy agenda, as in the Cold War, or simply relegated to the margins, in parallel with the racial hierarchy still profoundly determining other aspects of national life. Without greater public engagement by those who care passionately about Africa, this situation is unlikely to change.

Can it be different as we approach the new millennium? Can citizen advocacy prove a counter-balance to the inertia of old stereotypes and priorities? In this era of globalization and rapid technological advance, is the continent—perhaps with the exception of a few "winners"— destined to stay on the margins of the agenda, with the exception of the occasional media splash of a humanitarian horror story? Or can citizen advocacy help promote new constructive and mutually beneficial ties that demonstrate US responsiveness to new African realities and priorities?

The answer will depend on whether a critical mass of Americans can wake up to the extraordinary range of initiatives being taken by Africans themselves to move the continent forward, in what United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan calls the "third wave" of Africa's post-independence history. The first wave of decolonization and struggle against apartheid was followed, he noted in his address to the Organization of African Unity in mid-1997, by a period "too often marked by civil wars, the tyranny of military rule, and

economic stagnation." He called on Africans in today's new era to reinforce a wave leading to "lasting peace, based on democracy, human rights, and sustainable development."

The opening years of the new era also have seen both the depth of horror, as in the Rwandan genocide, and extraordinary moments of hope, as in Nelson Mandela's election in South Africa. Most other positive and negative signs are more ambiguous. The path outlined by the Secretary-General will be no easy road to walk, but the scope of African initiatives at all levels makes it clear that Africa has now decisively stepped into its "Second Independence" era.

The phrase "Second Independence," first coined by Congolese revolutionaries in the 1960s, meant—and means—that the benefits of independence must reach beyond a small elite. African peoples have formidable challenges in this era of global competition and rising inequality. At the same time, there is also a new horizon of possibilities and a new determination not to repeat previous mistakes.

There are some recent signs of a growing awareness in the US policy arena of such new African possibilities. Regrettably, however, statements of intention are for the most part not yet matched by corresponding practical policy changes and implementation. Africa and Africa's advocates within the US political arena still lack the clout to force policymakers to pay attention. The old stereotypes about Africa are still pervasive and disempowering.

The idea for the Constituency Builders' Dialogue came from our experience at the Washington Office on Africa and the Africa Policy Information Center in the first years of the post-apartheid, post-Cold War policy environment. Our historical mandate had been defined by the struggle to complete Africa's "First Independence"—freedom from colonial and white-minority rule. We knew that this would not end the struggle for human rights, economic development, and social justice. But it would—and did—end the relatively easy clarity of such an obvious enemy as the apartheid system of South Africa.

As we expanded our mandate to a wider range of issues and, geographically, from Southern Africa to the entire continent, it was clear to us that there are a host of allied groups engaged in the same struggles—some country-specific, some specific to a particular issue area such as human rights or debt relief. As we and our coalition partners struggled defensively against cuts in almost all budgets related to African issues, organized to support the Nigeria pro-democracy movement, and sought to galvanize informed

international engagement in response to crises in the Great Lakes, Liberia, and elsewhere—to name only a few issues that have recently engaged Africa advocates—one point kept resurfacing. Whatever the virtues of the proposals put forward by advocacy groups, getting them on the policymakers' radar screens—much less adopted and implemented—required a level of political influence that eluded us all.

Virtually everyone concerned with Africa policy, from Africa specialists within government to grassroots human-rights activists, talked of the need to build more powerful constituencies to fight against the marginalization of African concerns. Most were themselves engaged in one or another aspect of this effort, to the extent that organizational mandates allowed. Yet the efforts, while having some impact, seemed to add up to less rather than more than the sum of their parts. Often one group was not even aware of what another was doing, and it was not clear whether everyone meant the same thing by "constituency building."

The purpose of the dialogue was to enable some of us to step back to reflect, in the changed African and US context of the late 1990s, on our experiences and priorities for "constituency building" for Africa advocacy. We were under no illusion that we—or those we gathered for dialogue— had definitive answers, or that we would emerge from the dialogue with clear "marching orders." However, we were convinced that dialogue and analytical reflection on strategy—beyond the immediate imperatives of crisis response and organizational campaigns— were essential to our joint future and effectiveness.

For this kind of conversation, we wanted a group that was large enough to encompass much of the diversity within the Africa advocacy community, but not so large as to make it an unwieldy and elaborate conference. The dialogue planning committee worked diligently, and largely successfully, to ensure a balance along lines of race, national origin, gender, age, region within the United States, and organizational issue area. Participants were invited in their individual capacities, not as representatives of organizations. Given constraints including complicated personal schedules and logistics, a number of those invited were unable to attend. The East Coast was still overrepresented and youth were underrepresented. Nevertheless, in terms of experience and background, the group represented a wide range of those involved in nongovernmental advocacy for social justice, democracy, human rights, and sustainable development in Africa. (See list of participants, page 83.) We were

aware—and discussions in the dialogue confirmed—that there are many other kinds of ties with Africa also relevant to building constituency. (Cultural links and business links particularly come to mind.) This dialogue, however, and the group gathered for it, was particularly focused on issue advocacy.

Convinced of the need for more systematic analysis of the prospects for policy advocacy, we asked several experienced scholars to prepare background working papers for our discussion. These appear in this volume. Doug McAdam, a sociologist specializing in social movements, and Linda Williams, a political scientist who has focused on recent African American political organization, agreed to draw out some of the implications of recent scholarship for us. APIC Senior Research Fellow William Minter was asked to reflect on the recent experience of Africa advocacy in particular.

Our process was also based on the conviction that every participant was also an "expert," bringing experience and insight. Maureen Burke of the Advocacy Institute and Loretta Hobbs, our rapporteur, of O'Neal-Hobbs Associates helped lead the planning committee in trying to ensure that the dialogue was consistently interactive. Rachel Diggs not only skillfully served as our logistics coordinator, but also brought her insights both as a "refugee" and as an experienced participant in organizations from the grassroots to multilateral bureaucracies.

The result, participants felt, was extremely productive in terms of shared reflection and new insights. We may have wished for even more, in terms of clearly formulated and agreed common strategies only in need of being implemented. Such an outcome, however, can only result from a much wider dialogue in many different venues. We hope this publication can stimulate and contribute to that wider dialogue.

I cannot—and should not try to—sum up all the insights from the dialogue in this brief foreword. The essays and the summary of proceedings are rich sources of both insights and questions. I encourage you to read actively and take the debate into greater depth in your own thinking. I do want to single out, however, a few key points that particularly stood out to me.

One was Doug McAdam's point that social movements don't just "happen." What he terms "mobilizing structures" at different levels are central to making things happen. Movements require organizers with the capacity to target and mobilize specific constituencies—and to lay out "enormous expenditures of time and energy." He concludes with a key question: "does such a cadre of organizers exist [for building a domestic

conscience constituency for Africa] and, if not, what are the prospects for assembling one?"

A second point, stressed in McAdam's paper and echoed in comments by many other participants, was the importance of how issues are framed, by organizations and by the media. To cite only one example, the successes of the anti-apartheid movement in the mid-1980s, in the midst of the conservative Reagan era, came in large part from the way the issue was framed as a basic issue of racial justice. When African issues are framed instead by stereotypes such as "ancient tribal rivalries" or aid "giveaways" to undeserving poor, the possibility of successful political advocacy is burdened in advance with almost insuperable obstacles.

Linda Williams brought out one particularly central "framing" issue when she noted that typically African issues moved high on the agenda for African Americans only when perceived through the same lens as domestic racial injustice. The challenge now, she concluded, is to make the connection when the issue is not clearly "race," and in particular when African popular struggles are pitted against domestic tyrannies. "Without race as an anchor for deciding which side to take," she notes, "unity is more difficult for African American interests to maintain." More recently, Congressional Black Caucus chairperson Maxine Waters has stressed the same issue, denouncing lobbyists of the Nigerian military regime and calling for the American black community to "part company with African dictatorships and their US supporters."

The "framing" and "mobilizing" themes were brought out repeatedly in different forms in discussion and in exercises aimed at exploring strategies together. It clearly emerged that both the "message" and the "messengers" were key components in determining whether broader constituencies could be mobilized for African concerns. Bill Minter's paper stressed the diversity of those already involved or potentially involved in African concerns, and the need to define more precisely who could be unified or mobilized around what particular issues. He, as well as other participants, emphasized that the issue of joint involvement of recent African immigrants, other African Americans, and other Americans in Africa advocacy could not be separated from domestic issues of racial justice and diversity.

While participants did not arrive at a final definition of "constituency building," they did identify two contrasting approaches. One was labeled the "more is better" school, which identifies the key issue as isolation of Africa from mainstream policy concerns and tends to argue that what Africa

primarily needs is more attention and more incorporation into mainstream agenda areas such as trade and investment in particular.

Participants at the dialogue strongly identified with another approach, stressing that "more" was not necessarily "better." Both approaches oppose the marginalization of Africa, and advocate energetic organizing to gain a fair share for Africa on the national foreign policy agenda. But, participants stressed, it is not enough to be "for Africa." Values and goals matter. It matters what interests in Africa particular US involvements support. Africa advocates should not limit themselves to lobbying for "more" for Africa. Campaigns must be directed at supporting goals of social justice, human rights, political participation, and sustainable development that benefit African peoples, not just elites.

Neither domestic issues of racial justice and diversity nor the issue of the role of Africa in US foreign policy can be adequately addressed merely through "inclusion" within an unaltered and unreformed mainstream agenda. The failure to confront the legacy and present reality of domestic racial inequality reveals unresolved structural flaws in the construction of the "American dream." So too, the failure to address the role of Africa reveals the lack of a politically powerful paradigm for constructive US participation as partner in the global struggle for social justice and equitable development. If the United States is to find a post-Cold-War role as a constructive world citizen, rather than as global policeman, short-sighted market leader, or isolationist giant, Africa and Africa advocates will have to play an active role in the rethinking.

As we move towards the millennium and beyond, more powerful "voices for Africa" must also be voices for a new vision of the United States in the world, a world which is not just a world of trade and of military threats, and not limited to the market "winners," but a world of people seeking peace, justice, and human development in all its forms. Advocacy for Africa, in the final analysis, is advocacy for ourselves and for the values we want to prevail at home and abroad.

It will not be easy. But I am confident that the organizers and the strategies will be found.

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Imani Countess
*Executive Director, 1992-1997*
*Africa Policy Information Center*

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# Building a Constituency for Africa:
# Implications of Social Movement Theory

*Doug McAdam*
*Department of Sociology*
*University of Arizona*

Т
he study of social movements has been a significant "growth industry" in the social sciences over the past quarter century. This expansion was set in motion by a "paradigm shift" in the field that took place roughly two decades ago. Until 1970, social movements were generally viewed as just one of a number of "collective behaviors"—the others include fads, panics, and spontaneous crowds. These, in Bill Gamson's paraphrase of the collective behavior perspective, were better left to "the social psychologist whose intellectual tools prepare him to ... understand the irrational."[1]

The events of the 1960s made this traditional perspective increasingly untenable to a younger generation of scholars. They were inclined, based on their experiences, to emphasize the political and organizational aspects of social movements. The result has been a steady proliferation of work in the area, first by sociologists and more recently by political scientists.

## The Emerging Consensus

This renaissance in movement scholarship has produced its share of theoretical debates.[2] Increasingly, however, one finds movement scholars from various countries and different theoretical traditions emphasizing the same three broad

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1. William A. Gamson and David S. Meyer, *The Strategy of Social Protest* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1990), 133.
2. For reviews of these theoretical debates, see Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, "Toward an Integrated Perspective on Social Movements and Revolution," in *Ideals, Interests, and Institutions: Advancing Theory in Comparative Politics*, ed. Marc Irving Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Aldon D. Morris and Cedric Herring, "Theory and Research in Social Movements: A Critical Review," in *Annual Review of Political Science* 2 (1987): 137-98.

sets of factors. These are: 1) the structure of political opportunities and constraints confronting the movement; 2) the forms of informal and formal organization available to insurgents; and 3) the collective processes of interpretation that mediate between opportunity and action. In short, we can refer to *political opportunities, mobilizing structures,* and *framing processes.*

In this paper I want to describe briefly each of these factors, with an eye to teasing out the implications of contemporary movement theory for building a domestic political constituency for Africa-related issues. The implications, I will argue, are none too positive. They force us to go well beyond contemporary theory to speculate a bit about how a domestic constituency for Africa could be built. I begin with a brief discussion of the three concepts listed above.

### Political Opportunities
Writing in 1970, Michael Lipsky[3] urged political analysts to direct their attention:

> away from system characterizations presumably true for all times and places....We are accustomed to describing communist political systems as "experiencing a thaw" or "going through a process of retrenchment." Should it not at least be an open question as to whether the American political system experiences such stages and fluctuations? Similarly, is it not sensible to assume that the system will be more or less open to specific groups at different times and at different places?

Clearly Lipsky felt the answer to both questions was yes. He assumed that the ebb and flow of protest activity was a function of changes that left the broader political system more vulnerable or receptive to the demands of particular groups. Three years later Peter Eisinger used the term "structure of political opportunities" to help account for variation in "riot behavior" in 43 America cities.[4] Consistent with Lipsky's view, Eisinger found that "the incidence of protest is...related to the nature of a city's political opportunity structure." He defined this as "the degree to which groups are likely to be able to gain access

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3. Michael Lipsky, *Protest in City Politics* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1970), 14.
4. Peter K. Eisinger, "The Conditions of Protest Behavior in American Cities," *American Political Science Review* 67 (March 1973): 11.

to power and to manipulate the political system."[5] Protest grows, in other words, when there is some chance that it will have some effect.

Within ten years this became the central tenet in a new "political process" model of social movements. Proponents of the model saw the timing and fate of movements as largely dependent upon the opportunities afforded insurgents by the shifting institutional structure and ideological disposition of those in power.[6]

Since then, the concept of "political opportunities" has become a staple in social movement theory. The emergence and development of instances of collective action as diverse as the American women's movement, liberation theology, peasant mobilization in Central America, the nuclear freeze movement, and the Italian "protest cycle" have been attributed to the expansion and contraction of political opportunities.[7]

The concept of political opportunities has thus proven to be a useful tool. But it can be overused. As Gamson and Meyer have cautioned: "The concept of political opportunity structure is in trouble, in danger of becoming the sponge that soaks up virtually every aspect of the social movement environment—political institutions, and culture, crisis of various sorts, political alliances, and policy shifts....Used to explain so much, it may ultimately explain nothing at all."[8]

Mindful of this danger, various movement scholars have sought to specify what they see as the relevant dimensions of a system's "structure of political

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5. Ibid., 25.

6. For example, J. Craig Jenkins and Charles Perrow, "Insurgency of the Powerless: Farm Worker Movements (1946-1972)," *American Sociological Review* 42 (April 1977): 249-68; Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Sidney Tarrow, *Struggling to Reform: Social Movements and Policy Change During Cycles of Protest*, Western Societies Program Occasional Paper no. 15 (Ithaca, NY: Center of International Studies, Cornell University, 1983); Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1978).

7. Anne N. Costain, *Inviting Women's Rebellion: A Political Process Interpretation of the Women's Movement* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Christian Smith, *The Emergence of Liberation Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Charles D. Brockett, "The Structure of Political Opportunities and Peasant Mobilization in Central America," *Comparative Politics* 23 (April 1991): 253-74; David S. Meyer, "Protest Cycles and Political Process: American Peace Movements in the Nuclear Age," *Political Research Quarterly* 46 (September 1993): 451-79; Sidney Tarrow, *Democracy and Disorder: Protest and Politics in Italy, 1965-1975.* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

8. William A. Gamson and David S. Meyer, "Framing Political Opportunity," in McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, *Comparative Perspectives*, 275.

opportunities." A recent survey of these works finds strong agreement on the following four dimensions:

1.  the relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system;
2.  the presence or absence of elite allies;
3.  the state's capacity and propensity for repression;
4.  the stability or instability of that broad set of elite alliances that typically undergird a polity.[9]

Movements, then, are expected to emerge, develop, and ultimately decline, at least in part, in relation to changes in one or more of these dimensions of political opportunity. Favorable changes in political opportunity are expected to help set movements in motion, encourage their expansion, and mediate whatever institutional gains they may achieve. On the other hand, contractions in political opportunities are likely to stunt the growth of a movement and/or limit its ability to achieve its institutional aims.

### Mobilizing Structures

A conducive political environment only affords a population the opportunity for successful collective action. It is the organizational resources available to that population that enable movement groups to exploit these opportunities. In the absence of such resources, the population is likely to lack the capacity to act even when granted the opportunity to do so. Here I am asserting the importance of what Katz and Gurin have termed the "conversion potential" of the aggrieved population.[10] To generate and sustain a social movement, the population must be able to convert a favorable "structure of political opportunities" into an organized campaign of social protest.

This depends on the strength of the *mobilizing structures* available to the population in question. By mobilizing structures I mean *those collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action*. This focus on the middle-level groups, organizations, and informal networks that comprise the collective building blocks of social movements is the second element stressed by virtually all movement scholars.

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9.  Doug McAdam, "Conceptual Origins, Current Problems, Future Directions," in McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, *Comparative Perspectives*, 23-40.
10.  Irwin Katz and Patricia Gurin, eds., *Race and the Social Sciences* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 350.

This emphasis on the crucial importance of organizational capacity in shaping the prospects for successful collective action has come primarily from two distinct theoretical traditions. The most important of these has been resource mobilization theory. As formulated by its initial proponents, resource mobilization theory sought to break with the psychologically based conceptions of social movements.[11] Instead, it focused on mobilization processes and the organizational settings within which they took place. For McCarthy and Zald, social movements, while not synonymous with formal organizations, nonetheless became a force for social change primarily through the social movement organizations they spawned. In some ways, theirs was less a theory of movement emergence/development than it was an attempt to describe a new social movement form—professional social movements—that they saw as increasingly dominant in contemporary America.

The second theoretical tradition to encourage work on the organizational dynamics of collective action has been the political process model. Scholars in this tradition disagree with the resource mobilization equation of social movements with formal organization. Charles Tilly and various of his colleagues laid the theoretical foundation for this second approach. They documented the critical role of various grassroots settings—work and neighborhood, in particular—in facilitating and structuring collective action.[12] Drawing on Tilly's work, other scholars sought to apply his insights to more contemporary movements. For example, Aldon Morris and Doug McAdam analyzed the critical role played by local black institutions—principally churches and colleges—in the emergence of the American civil rights movement.[13] Similarly, Sara Evans' research located the origins of the women's liberation movement within informal friendship networks forged by women who were active in southern civil rights work.[14] The more recent spate of network studies of movement recruitment also show a theoretical affinity with

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11. John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, *The Trend of Social Movements in America: Professionalization and Resource Mobilization* (Morristown, NJ: General Learning Press, 1973); John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory," *American Journal of Sociology* 82 (May 1977): 1212-41.

12. Charles Tilly, Louise Tilly, and Richard Tilly, *The Rebellious Century 1830-1930* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975); also Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*.

13. Aldon Morris, "The Black Southern Sit-in Movement: An Analysis of Internal Organization," *American Sociological Review* 46 (December 1981): 744-67; Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: Free Press, 1984); McAdam, *Black Insurgency*.

14. Sara Evans, *Personal Politics* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980).

the political process model's emphasis on informal, grassroots mobilizing structures.[15]

### Framing Processes

The combination of political opportunities and mobilizing structures provides groups a certain structural potential for action. But there is one more necessary factor. Mediating between opportunities, organization, and action are the shared meanings and definitions that people bring to their situation. People need to feel aggrieved about some aspect of the world. They also need to feel optimistic that, acting collectively, they can redress the problem. Lacking either one or both of these perceptions, it is highly unlikely that people will mobilize even when given the opportunity to do so. The presence or absence of these perceptions is affected by that complex of social psychological dynamics that David Snow and his colleagues have referred to as *framing processes*.[16] Snow modified and applied Erving Goffman's term to the study of social movements. In doing so, he helped to crystallize and articulate a growing discontent among movement scholars over how little significance proponents of the resource mobilization perspective attached to ideas and the role of cultural processes in collective action.

Snow was not alone in asserting the importance of the more cognitive or cultural dimensions of social movements. Two other streams of recent work have also called for further attention to the role of ideas or culture more generally in the emergence and development of social movements. For many of the *new social movement* scholars it was the centrality of their cultural elements that marked the new social movements as discontinuous with the past. The work of many of the most influential new social movement theorists thus

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15. Roger V. Gould, *Insurgent Identities: Class, Community, and Protest in Paris from 1848 to the Commune* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Doug McAdam, "Recruitment to High Risk Activism: The Case of Freedom Summer," *American Journal of Sociology* 92 (July 1986): 64-90; Doug McAdam, *Freedom Summer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); David A. Snow, Louis A. Zurcher Jr., and Sheldon Ekland-Olson, "Social Networks and Social Movements: A Microstructural Approach to Differential Recruitment," *American Sociological Review* 45 (October 1980): 787-801.

16. David A. Snow, E. Burke Rochford Jr., Steven K. Worden, and Robert D. Benford, "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation," *American Sociological Review* 51 (August 1986): 464-81; David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, "Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization," in *From Structure to Action: Comparing Movement Participation Across Cultures*, ed. Bert Klandermans, Hanspeter Kriesi, and Sidney Tarrow (Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press, 1988), 197-217.

focused primarily on the sources and functions of meaning and identity within social movements.[17]

The final theoretical perspective to emphasize the importance of shared and socially constructed ideas in collective action was the political process model. Though best known for their stress on the political structuring of social movements, such theorists as Gamson, Tarrow, and Tilly also acknowledged the critical catalytic effect of new ideas as a spur to collective action.[18] McAdam's discussion of the necessity for "cognitive liberation" as a prerequisite for mobilization is only the most explicit acknowledgment of the importance of cultural processes within the political process tradition.[19]

### The Three Factors Combined

Having discussed each of the three factors separately, it is now possible to sketch the model of movement emergence/development that has come to dominate a great deal of contemporary scholarship on social movements and revolution. In that model, the generation of collective action is expected to reflect the favorable confluence of the three factors. When combined with the established mobilizing structures of some aggrieved group, expanding political opportunities are expected to afford insurgents the "structural potential" for successful mobilizing. Structures are seen as necessary, but not sufficient for collective action. It is the all-important framing processes that transform this structural potential into a sustained social change effort.

## The Limits of Contemporary Movement Theory

In recent years, this model has been effectively deployed by an increasing number of scholars to account for the rise and development of an impressive

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17. Ronald Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977); Alain Touraine, *The Voice and the Eye: An Analysis of Social Movements*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Karl-Werner Brand, "Vergleichendes Resümee," in *Neue sociale Bewegungen in Westeuropa und den USA: Ein internationaler Vergleich*, ed. Karl-Werner Brand (Frankfurt: Campus, 1985), 306-34; Alberto Melucci, "Getting Involved: Identity and Mobilization in Social Movements," in *From Structure to Action: Comparing Movement Participation Across Cultures*, ed. Bert Klandermans, Hanspeter Kriesi, and Sidney Tarrow, (Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press, 1988), 329-48.

18. William A. Gamson and David S. Meyer, *Talking Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Mass Politics in the Modern State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*.

19. McAdam, *Black Insurgency*.

array of movements.[20] Still there are a number of limits to the perspective that are only now being recognized by movement scholars. Let me mention two such limitations, both of which are germane to the question of building a domestic constituency for Africa-related issues.

### *The Western Democratic Bias in the Study of Social Movements*

While social movement theorists implicitly assert universality for their models, the fact of the matter is the vast majority of empirical work on which these theories rest has come from studies of contemporary reform movements in western democratic polities. These temporal and geographic biases raise significant questions:

1.  to what extent do regularities in contentious politics vary by time and place, and
2.  to what extent does the disproportionate attention to Western Europe and North America in the literature produce misleading generalizations about various forms of contention? Specialists in, say, Somalia, Bosnia, China, or Afghanistan must therefore ask which generalizations from previous work they can safely import into their own regions.[21]

But, why, you might ask, is the "western democratic bias" in the study of social movements a problem for thinking about the building of a domestic constituency for Africa-related issues? After all, the "constituency" we are considering in this case is the United States. So the disproportionate attention paid to the United States by movement scholars should be an asset and not a liability.

Unfortunately, this is not the case. Experience shows that the development of a domestic constituency on behalf of a group elsewhere typically depends on the presence of a visible and sympathetic movement among the group in question. Thus to fully address the issue of constituency building, we would need to assess the prospects for successful collective action in Africa. Alas, the "western democratic bias" in the movement literature makes this difficult to do.

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20. See references in preceding section.
21. Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, "To Map Contentious Politics," *Mobilization* 1 (March 1996): 17-34.

There is, moreover, a second, and even more basic, bias inherent in the dominant theoretical perspective sketched above.

### *"Beneficiary" versus "Conscience" Constituents*

In their classic 1973 explication of resource mobilization theory, McCarthy and Zald distinguished between "beneficiary" and "conscience" constituents.[22] Though the distinction has often been cited by movement scholars, it fails to inform the dominant theoretical perspective. That perspective tends to equate social movements with the actions of "beneficiary" constituents. So movements typically arise when events conspire to make established regimes more vulnerable or responsive to populations who are already at least *minimally constituted as organized and self-conscious interest groups.* African-Americans are perhaps the prototypical "aggrieved population" in this regard. On the eve of the civil rights movement, they lacked neither organization nor self-consciousness.[23] For such groups, movement emergence may well depend on favorable environmental shifts that increase the opportunities for successful collective action.

But this explanatory framework would seem to be a good bit less applicable to "conscience" than to "beneficiary" constituents. Conscience constituents are groups who mobilize on behalf of others. When we speak of US constituents for Africa-related issues, we are clearly concerned with this latter type of constituency. So, to the extent that contemporary movement theory applies primarily to movements rooted in communities of beneficiary constituents, we will need to move beyond that theoretical perspective if we are to gain much purchase on the question of building a domestic conscience constituency for Africa.

## Beyond Movement Theory: Building a Conscience Constituency

Even the most casual survey of recent social movements denotes the clear problem stemming from this second bias. A good many movements involve either the exclusive or partial mobilization of conscience constituents. If we restrict ourselves to the United States, any number of such movements come to mind. The animal rights movement is only the most obvious example. Mobilization on behalf of the homeless is another case that has tended to

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22. McCarthy and Zald, *Social Movements.*
23. McAdam, *Black Insurgency*; Morris, *Civil Rights Movement.*

involve a large number of conscience constituents.[24] In the early to mid-1960s large numbers of whites came to be involved in the civil rights movement.[25] Similar support was also prominent in the farm workers movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s.[26]

The number of US-based movements that have developed in support of populations elsewhere is small, but hardly non-existent. The sizeable movement that developed in the US in the 1980s in support of the Sandinistas is but one example. The Sanctuary movement which sought, in the same era, to help political refugees from Central America migrate—generally illegally— to the US affords another example. And lest we think there are hemispheric limits to this type of movement, we would do well to consider domestic movements oriented to Asia and Africa. Opposition to the war in Vietnam is but the most obvious example of the former, while the anti-apartheid movement that flourished on American campuses and in other sectors during the 1980s provides a clear example of the latter.[27]

It is to this mix of domestically and internationally oriented *movements of conscience* that we should look to for insights into how a US constituency for Africa-related issues might be fashioned. With this in mind, I now want to return to the three concepts with which I began the paper and analyze them in relation to the kinds of movements of conscience listed above.

### Political Opportunities
It is this central linchpin in contemporary movement theory that would seem to lack any real explanatory power in regard to the mobilization of conscience, as opposed to beneficiary, constituents. The image of movements as latent collections of aggrieved and minimally organized individuals only

24. Daniel M. Cress and David A. Snow, "Mobilization at the Margins: Resources, Benefactors, and the Viability of Homeless Social Movement Organizations," *American Sociological Review* 61 (December 1996): 1089-109.

25. Evans, *Personal Politics*; McAdam, *Freedom Summer*.

26. J. Craig Jenkins, *The Politics of Insurgency: The Farm Worker Movement in the 1960s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

27. See, among other sources, Eric L. Hirsch, "Sacrifice for the Cause: Group Processes, Recruitment, and Commitment in a Student Social Movement," *American Sociological Review* 55 (April 1990): 243-54; Sarah Soule, "The Student Anti-Apartheid Movement in the US: Diffusion of Tactics and Policy Reform," (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1994). On the anti-war movement, see Charles DeBenedetti and Charles Chatfield, *An American Ordeal: The Anti-War Movement of the Vietnam War* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990).

awaiting the facilitative spark of political opportunity simply does not work very well for movements of conscience. For one thing, many such movements appear to develop under conditions of threat rather than opportunity. So all of the notable internationally oriented movements touched on above developed in the context of hostile national political climates. The anti-apartheid and Central America solidarity movements emerged during the Reagan years, while the anti-Vietnam war movement peaked during the Nixon presidency.

More importantly, no expansion in political opportunities—no matter how dramatic—is going to stimulate collective action in the absence of *a high degree of issue awareness and salience on the part of some group of people possessed of sufficient organization to act on this awareness.* And these are precisely the conditions that one cannot assume to be routinely present in the case of conscience constituents. The reasonable assumption of enlightened self-interest that movement scholars have generally made in regard to beneficiary constituents does not apply in the case of conscience constituents. This shifts the explanatory spotlight away from opportunities to the other two factors discussed above.

### Mobilizing Structures

The extraordinarily wide range of mobilizing structures that have been shown to serve as the collective building blocks of successful movements leads me to a conclusion. Especially in democratic polities where the right of association is well established, there is always sufficient organization to grant movements of conscience a host of plausible sites for mobilization and recruitment. This does not mean that mobilizing a conscience constituency is easy. On the contrary, the fact that the myriad formal groups and informal associational networks that comprise a democratic polity are organized around concerns and identities other than the one at issue, makes the task of what might be termed "organizational appropriation" exceedingly difficult.

But it is not impossible. The challenge is, first and foremost, cultural. Those seeking to mobilize a conscience constituency must be able to *frame issues in such a way as to appropriate the identity and value commitments of those not directly affected by the issue.* The most efficient way to do this is to target groups, rather than individuals. So, unlike political opportunities, mobilizing structures remain important in the generation of movements of conscience. But the operative question in regard to mobilizing structures is not whether a specific

aggrieved group is sufficiently well organized to mount and sustain a movement. Instead it is whether organizers can identify and successfully appropriate the organizational resources and energies of nominally disinterested groups. This brings us back to the last of our three concepts.

### Framing Processes

In the article that introduced the framing concept to movement scholars, Snow and his colleagues argued that among the most important, yet neglected, processes in social movements was that of *frame alignment*.[28] By frame alignment, the authors meant the strategic efforts by which organizers sought to link the aims of a movement with the interests or values of potential recruits. They went on to distinguish between four distinct types of frame alignment. Of these four, the one most germane to the recruitment of conscience constituents would seem to be *frame extension*. As defined by the authors, frame extension involves the attempt by a movement to "enlarge its adherent pool by portraying its objectives or activities as attending to or being congruent with the values or interests of potential adherents."[29] Movements of conscience must convince nominal outsiders that their interests, values and/or conceptions of self require action on behalf of a constituency of which they are not directly a part.

My own empirical work on the recruitment of white students to the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer project has, I think, produced evidence of exactly the kind of frame extension process noted by Snow and his colleagues.[30] As reported in several publications, I used information recorded on the original project applications of some 720 project volunteers and another 239 "no-shows" to try to understand why some of these white "conscience constituents" made it to Mississippi while others did not. The findings were clear:

> neither organizational embeddedness nor strong ties to another volunteer are themselves predictive of ... activism. Instead, it is a strong subjective identification with a particular identity, *reinforced by organizational ... ties*, that is especially likely to encourage

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28. Snow et al., *Frame Alignment*.

29. Ibid., 472.

30. McAdam, "Recruitment"; McAdam, *Freedom Summer*; Doug McAdam and Ronnelle Paulsen, "Specifying the Relationship Between Social Ties and Activism," *American Journal of Sociology* 99 (November 1993): 640-67.

participation. ... Our findings ... argue for a much stronger effect of organizational (or otherwise collective) as opposed to individual ties in mediating entrance into collective action. Clearly much work remains to confirm this conclusion, but it is an intriguing one and one that accords with "bloc recruitment" accounts of the emergence and rapid spread of collective action.[31] Ties to individuals may well mediate the recruitment process, but they appear to do so with special force and significance when the tie is embedded in a broader organizational or collective context linking both parties to the movement in question.[32]

Seen from the point of view of project organizers, success in recruiting these conscience constituents turned on their ability to identify plausible communities within which to recruit—liberal church groups, the old left, teachers—and to then frame specific recruitment appeals that linked participation in Freedom Summer to the identities and values of community members. Those applicants who were embedded in one or more of these *target communities* and for whom the identity in question (e.g., "Christian," "teacher") was highly salient, were overwhelmingly likely to make it to Mississippi. Those applicants who lacked either of the above conditions were much less likely to take part in the project.

## Conclusion

I can afford to be brief. The perspective sketched in the previous two paragraphs should speak for itself. In my view, the key to the mobilization of conscience, as opposed to beneficiary, constituents is to be found in creative and aggressive efforts at targeted group recruitment based on the principles of frame extension. Expanding political opportunities or other forms of environmental facilitation of collective action (e.g., "suddenly imposed grievances")[33] are largely irrelevant when it comes to movements of conscience.

31. Anthony Oberschall, *Social Conflicts and Social Movements* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973).

32. McAdam and Paulsen, "Social Ties," 659 and 663; emphasis in original.

33. See, for example, Edward Walsh and Rex Warland, "Social Movement Involvement in the Wake of a Nuclear Accident: Activists and Free Riders in the TMI Area," *American Sociological Review* 48 (December 1983): 764-81.

Such movements, in my view, turn on the concrete efforts of organizers to identify potentially sympathetic populations for targeted recruitment appeals. These appeals should be based on an aggressive assertion of the congruence between the issue in question and the values and identities of the target population.

The implications of this argument for the building of a US-based conscience constituency for Africa issues are none too encouraging. The strong suggestion is that no new foreign policy initiatives by the US government (e.g., intervention in Somalia)—that is, expanding political opportunity—or series of dramatic crises (e.g., a state of near anarchy in Liberia; another round of "ethnic cleansing" in Rwanda or Burundi) is apt to have any effect on the American public's willingness to mobilize in an organized way around Africa-related issues.

How might such a willingness be developed? Not by engaging in general educational campaigns aimed at the US population as a whole. The key to building such a constituency is, as I noted above, "*targeted* recruitment appeals based on an aggressive assertion of the congruence between the issue in question and the values and identities of the target population."

What does this mean in English? It means that those interested in building such a constituency cannot wait for events to spur people to action. Instead, they are going to have to engage in the time-consuming process of building such a constituency based on appeals, not to latent self-interest, but to shared values and humanitarian concerns. This kind of mobilization of conscience involves four key steps:

1.  First, organizers need to identify those general targets to whom they are going to direct their appeals.

2.  This choice of targets leads inevitably to concrete efforts to frame the issue in ways that are likely to resonate with prospective recruits. Consider the following example discussed above. In trying to recruit white students to come to Mississippi as part of the 1964 Freedom Summer project, four different recruiting appeals were used. One involved religious appeals to the Christian left. Another targeted "new leftists," based on a (then) radical critique of American society. Yet another sought to draw teachers into the project

by representing it as a kind of "domestic Peace Corps" operation. And the fourth appeal was to young democrats, intent on honoring the murdered JFK by heeding his call to idealistic action in service to America.

3.  Having identified general targets and thought through the framing of recruitment appeals, organizers then need to identify **specific** organizations that they think embody the particular collective identities and ideological values implied in the recruiting appeals. To return to the above example, the organizers of the Freedom Summer project targeted northern college campuses in general. But they tended to concentrate their efforts on those campuses that had active student chapters of: new left organizations (e.g., SDS, Friends of SNCC), liberal church groups (e.g., Methodist Student Movement), or liberal political groups (e.g., Young Democrats).

4.  The final step is gaining entrée or permission from the targeted groups to make formal recruiting appeal to their members. This is easier said than done. But if an organizer can gain such entrée and successfully recruit even one congregation, one student group, one community organization, etc., then s/he is then in a position to rapidly expand the movement's base by targeting "proximate" congregations, student groups, or community organizations. This is the logic of "bloc recruitment." One reason the civil rights movement spread so rapidly in the South is because it developed first in a handful of urban black churches that were linked to many other such churches through ministerial alliances and other denominational associations. The key, then, is to establish a few organizational beachheads and expand from that base.

All four steps are key and, in combination, require enormous expenditures of time and energy to pull off. They also imply the presence of a dedicated group of organizers with the will and resources to mount such a campaign. This

raises a question that I have heretofore skirted, but which may well hold the key to the building of a domestic constituency for Africa: does such a cadre of organizers exist and, if not, what are the prospects for assembling one?

As Africa-related experts, you are in a better position to answer this question than I. But answer it you must. For in the absence of such a cadre of organizers, everything else I have said about the dynamics of constituency building is moot. Lacking organizers, it matters little that one can identify techniques by which conscience constituencies can and have been built.

# American Interest Group Research: Implications For Africa Constituency-Building

*Linda Williams*
*Department of Government and Politics*
*University of Maryland*

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever does.
—*Margaret Mead*

**M**ead's words remind us that even a small collective of people, unified for a common cause, can be a powerful force igniting change. The study of such collectivities organized to influence governmental decisions is the premier focus of interest group research. This paper explores the literature on American interest groups to see what answers it holds for activists concerned with building a wider constituency for Africa. Two main sets of questions guide the analysis. The first is what does research on American interest groups show about how to mobilize people. The second is what kinds of interest group mobilization produce maximal success.

The essay is organized as follows. The next section provides a brief review of the state of the art in interest group research. This is followed by a short list of practical suggestions flowing from this literature. Then I present a summary of key conclusions vis-a-vis foreign policy interest groups. Finally I look at the prospects and difficulties in the mobilization of black Americans on African issues.

## The State of the Art in Interest Group Research
Two broad definitions are useful for understanding interest groups. On the one hand, an interest group can be defined as all those who share objective interests (that is, all whose life chances are affected by certain developments whether they know it or not). This definition of an interest group refers to *the group in and of itself.* For example, all African Americans, all Jews, all

Latinos, or even the entire American working class can be considered to be interest groups.

More commonly, however, those who write on American interest groups have focused on much smaller entities, namely those who share subjective interests and are consciously organized around common political concerns. This definition refers to *the group for itself*.[1] The literature on interest groups usually focuses on groups that not only have expressed positions on political issues but that are also formally structured, leadership-dominated organizations that have offices, staffs, and budgets and routinely interact with political leaders. Hence, most of the literature is about *organized interests*.

Such interest groups are a ubiquitous and accepted part of American political life. In fact since the 1960s, there has been a proliferation of politically active interests.[2] The phenomenal growth of numbers and kinds of interest groups in the last three decades has led to widespread concern about the influence of some types of interest groups on American politics, especially political action committees (PACs). Nevertheless, the literature on interest groups is not brimming with practical insights for activists. In short, it may be disappointing, but the activist should not expect to find a rich array of helpful information concerning interest group formation, maintenance, and success in the academic literature. Better advice for organizers can be found in "manuals" for activists developed, by and large, by activists themselves.[3] Nonetheless, there is today a relatively voluminous and growing body of scholarly literature on interest groups.

Interest group literature first flourished in the 1950s and early 1960s when a substantial body of pluralist theory was proffered. A central goal of the pluralists was to address the question of group mobilization and the relative power of diverse interests. For example, in his classic, *The Governmental Process*, David Truman argued that interest groups arise from two interre-

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1. For a discussion of the distinction between objective and subjective interests, see Isaac Balbus, "The Concept of Interest in Pluralist and Marxian Analysis," *Politics and Society* 1 (February 1971): 151-77.

2. Anthony Nownes and Grant Neeley, "Toward an Explanation for Public Interest Group Formation and Proliferation: 'Seed Money,' Disturbances, Entrepreneurship, and Patronage," *Policy Studies Journal* 24, no. 1 (1996): 74-92.

3. See, for example, Kim Bobo, Jackie Kendall, and Steve Max, *Organizing for Social Change: A Manual for Activists in the 1990s* (Arlington, Va.: Seven Locks Press for the Midwest Academy, 1991).

lated processes.[4] First, societal change precipitates the emergence of new interests. Then disturbances— political or economic upheavals—disrupt stable patterns of interaction between individuals. Affected individuals then spontaneously organize in groups to defend their interests.

Few analysts doubt that societal evolution encourages group proliferation, but societal change is not the whole story. It was these untold parts of the story that won the pluralists sharp criticism from two very disparate vantage points.

On the ideological left, critics of pluralist theory pointed to the many ways in which the modes of interest group participation or non-participation and the degree of influence that resulted were consistently determined by location in the class and racial structures. The pluralists erred, left critics contended, by ignoring consistent biases toward the interests of elites. These biases were inherent in the presumably neutral governing structures and electoral-representative procedures that contained and conditioned interest group behavior, no matter how much non-affluent groups sought to mobilize. Indeed, reflecting on the social movement defiance of people of color, women, and students in the 1960s, social science theorists on the left concluded that organized interest group activity was a very limited strategy for many. For non-advantaged groups, protest tactics and other forms of insurgent movement politics, outside the political norms of interest group activity, were the best recourse.[5]

Left scholars thus tended to turn away from pluralist interest group theory and focused instead on social movements. Rational choice theory, on the other hand, was an alternative approach used by those in the mainstream (or on the ideological right) to criticize pluralism. The focus of the rational choice model was on why people do not join interest groups. Thus, in a stinging indictment of pluralism, Mancur Olson noted that there are rational, economic reasons for non-participation.[6] The costs of contributing to collective action generally outweigh the benefits. As a result, rational individuals often will refrain from acting collectively even if it is in their best interest to do so.

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4. David Truman, *The Governmental Process: Political Interests and Public Opinion* (New York: Knopf, 1951).
5. Frances Piven and Richard Cloward, *Poor People's Movements* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 2-3.
6. Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965).

Rational individuals—content to "free ride" off the efforts of others—often will react to societal change (and/or disturbances) by doing nothing. Overcoming this rational impulse to "free ride," Olson argued, requires either the provision of selective material benefits or coercion.

The more rational choice models came to dominate the study of foreign policy, the more interest groups disappeared in the literature as key players in influencing foreign policy decision-making. After all, from the perspective of rational choice theorists, mobilizing an interest group devoted to foreign policy was an especially tough project since foreign policy is the collective good of all collective goods. In other words, the "free-rider" problem is especially acute since foreign policy is consumed by the nation as a whole. For instance Rosenau argued that since a person is almost always more concerned about his or her immediate material needs, his or her most intense political interests will be in things domestic.[7] In short, very few people would be motivated to participate in foreign policy interest groups.

Following Olson, the search for how to overcome the "free-rider" problems led some rational choice theorists to focus on the group's leader whose job is to design and administer a group's incentive structure.[8] Salisbury, for example, argued that successful group formation requires a mutually beneficial exchange of benefits between a leader and group members. The group leader obtains a good job (at a good salary), power, prestige, and fulfillment. Members receive some mix of purposive (rewards associated with ideological or issue-oriented goals), solidary (rewards derived from association in group activities), and material benefits.[9] Salisbury's exchange theory (which rests upon Olson's cost-benefit framework) became the dominant rational choice paradigm for explaining group development.

In sum, attacked on the left and attacked on the right, Truman's "disturbance theory" fell into disrepute by the late 1960s. Left scholars turned their attention to social movements and relatively spontaneous actions such as riots. Mainstream interest group scholars, spurred by Olson and drawing

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7. James Rosenau, *Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy* (New York: Free Press, 1967).

8. Terry Moe, *The Organization of Interests: Incentives and the Internal Dynamics of Political Interest Groups* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

9. Robert Salisbury, "An Exchange Theory of Interest Groups," *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 13 (February 1969): 1-32.

heavily upon Clark and Wilson's seminal study of organizational incentives,[10] examined how groups overcome the substantial barriers to mobilization.

But having come this far, neither the critics of interest group theory on the right nor left went much further, at least until the 1980s. Instead, after an upsurge of scholarship on interest groups in the late 1950s, the development of interest group studies came to a virtual standstill in the early 1960s. This resulted in roughly a 15-year break in the study of interest groups by political scientists.[11] It is as if as interest groups became more important in American society, their significance for political scientists declined!

By the 1980s, however, the political environment had changed significantly. First, movement politics had not only declined but nearly disappeared (compared to the number and size of social movements in the 1960s). Meanwhile the election of Ronald Reagan and a new Republican majority in the Senate in 1980 occurred simultaneously with the rise of a host of new right-wing interest groups. Particularly, the attack on economic and social regulations that began during the Carter years but was brought to fulfillment by Reagan may have also contributed to a growing awareness of the impact that business interest groups were having on the political agenda and the shape of public policy. These developments, coupled with worries about the decline of political parties, apparently led political scientists to rediscover the study of interest groups.

Thus, the 1980s saw a burst of scholarly literature on interest groups. This time the focus was disproportionately on the analysis of data derived from large-scale surveys of various interest groups headquartered in the nation's capital. With this data, scholars sought to test older theories and hypotheses and to reconceptualize the role of interest groups in the political process. Two studies provide classic examples of the kinds of research on interest groups that appeared in the 1980s: Jack Walker's *Mobilizing Interest Groups in America* and Kay Schlozman and John Tierney's *Organized Interests and American Democracy.*[12]

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10. Peter Clark and James Q. Wilson, "Incentive Systems: A Theory of Organizations," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 6 (September 1961): 129-66.
11. Mark Petracca, "Tilling the Field of Interest Group Research: An Overview of New Insights," *Perspectives on Political Science* 22 (Spring 1993): 61.
12. Jack Walker Jr., *Mobilizing Interest Groups in America: Patrons, Professions, and Social Movements* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991); Kay Schlozman and John Tierney, *Organized Interests and American Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986).

The most important findings from Walker's mammoth surveys of interest groups concern the role played by patrons in their origins and maintenance. Without external institutions to serve as sponsors or patrons, Walker found that few, if any, political organizations representing a constituency would come into being. Material and solidary incentives proved to be less significant as inducements for individuals to join a group than commonly supposed. Instead a mixture of professional and purposive benefits emerged as more important determinants of membership. Precisely what benefits were provided turned out to be less a function of the desires and calculations of the individuals involved than a function of large institutions who provide the "seed money" for interest group formation. Thus Walker's research succeeded at widening political scientists' appreciation for the role played by institutions, including government and foundations, in creating, maintaining, and empowering organized interests.

In a second major survey of organized interests based in the nation's capital, Schlozman and Tierney concluded that the "pressure community" strongly favors business organizations, whereas public interest groups and groups representing the less advantaged are under-represented in Washington. Schlozman and Tierney also pointed out that influence varies with the nature of the issue, the nature of the demand, the structure of conflict in a particular controversy, and the resources available to the group. Interest groups exercise the greatest influence on issues which are not visible or highly charged. Groups defending a position or preventing change were more effective than those aiming for policy changes. And organized groups were more successful when they were unopposed than when they had well-organized opposition. Finally, groups with access to a greater resource base (including—but not limited to—money), an appealing cause, a widely dispersed membership, or expertise were more likely to be successful than those without.

In sum, interest group studies in the 1980s were rich "empirically," built as they were on extensive analysis of group actions and buttressed by large scale surveys. Still, they could nearly be likened to the man who spent $50,000 trying to find his way to a whore house, when anyone on the street could have told him for free. (That is, hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent to produce findings in surveys that surely most interest group activists already knew.) For those who seek to broaden constituencies for Africa, the premier scholarship on American interest groups is not particularly enlight-

ening. The next section highlights the best of the practical insights for building constituencies that flow from the academic literature on interest groups.

## Practical Suggestions

1. Emphasize the personal relevancy of an issue and foster critical awareness and public education. Interest groups can build constituencies by showing others/volunteers why an issue is relevant to their lives. It is easier to mobilize a constituency if one can promote the view that one's self interest is at stake.

2. Create an organizational structure that allows systematic coordination and strategic planning. Set short-term goals and long-term goals. Groups should identify issues, define issues in concrete terms, develop specific goals, outline flexible strategies to achieve goals, and involve a sufficient number of people. Increasingly new means of electronic communication are essential to successful interest group communication.[13]

3. Foster shared leadership and develop leadership skills among the membership. Groups should not become too heavily dependent on a single charismatic leader such that if that leader is no longer a part of the group, the group falls a part.

4. Encourage democratic and inclusive styles of decision making and respect diverse viewpoints. There should be a free flow of ideas about how the group could maximize its successes.

5. Foster group cohesion and in-group identification. Members are more likely to persist in their activism if they feel a social connection and loyalty to the other members of the group. In addition, if they come to identify their group membership as an important part of how they define

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13. Michele Wittig and Joseph Schmitz, "Electronic Grassroots Organizing," *Journal of Social Issues* 52 (Spring 1996): 53-69.

themselves, they are more likely to contribute time, money, or other resources to the sustenance of the group.

6. Promote group and individual efficacy through skill building. Hold training sessions on: organizing, holding meetings and accountability sessions, communicating with the media, using new electronic communications technology, lobbying public officials, and writing op-ed columns and letters to the editors, for example.

7. Use the members' skills and time effectively; show how time expenditures lead to identifiable accomplishments. Members must not only feel empowered through successes, but understand their own personal contributions.

8. Access community resources. These resources can include not only access to funding patrons in the public and private sectors but also access to relevant information (for example, policy documents), useful technology (computers, media), and individuals with specialized knowledge and experience (academics, policy analysts, journalists, community and church leaders, etc). This last category of human resources is especially important for education campaigns and publicizing a cause.

9. Develop intergroup coalitions. Exchange important information and material resources with others. Avoid re-inventing the wheel, especially when it comes to policy research. Establish connections with powerful persons or groups, such as those involved in the media or in public-policy decision making.

10. Emphasize short-term successes of the group and the success of groups with similar goals. Accomplishing profound change—say in American foreign policy toward Africa—may take an extended period of time. The motivation of members to sustain efforts toward such change may be fueled by recognizing the success of short-

term goals and also by learning about the struggles and successes of other similar interest groups.

The above overview of the literature and ten practical insights focus on interest group organizing in general. The next section draws out the implications in sharper relief of the general literature on interest groups for constituency building for Africa.

## Implications of the Interest Group Literature for Constituency Building for Africa

The body of literature on the role of interest groups in the foreign policy process is substantially smaller than on interest groups in the domestic arena. Indeed there is little or no consideration given to the role played by interest groups in influencing policy outcomes either in the three mostly commonly used mainstream analytical frames for studying foreign policy making (the rational actor, organizational process, and bureaucratic politics frameworks) or in neo-Marxist political economy frames.

One type of interest group in the foreign policy arena which has garnered increasing attention is ethnic groups. As early as 1975, Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan concluded that ethnic influences were the single most important determinant of American foreign policy.[14] The amount of empirical work based on such a framework is very limited. Nevertheless, a number of recommendations flow from the literature on foreign policy ethnic interests:

1.  The group should press for a policy in line with America's strategic interests, the "national interest." In addition, the foreign policy issue must be viewed as being consistent with public perceptions of morality. It also helps to arouse a significant degree of indignation against a perceived enemy or threat through highly charged moralistic and humanitarian appeals. Such mobilization builds on residues from a religious commitment, a sense of community, a cognitive structuring of perceived injustice, and an individual's sense of moral responsibility to address injustice. The more a group feels threatened, the more it is likely to mobilize.

14. Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan, eds., *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975).

2.  The group should be assimilated into American society, yet retain enough identity with the "old country" so that its foreign policy issue motivates people to take political action. Groups that stand outside the mainstream of American life find it difficult to mobilize. For example, blacks as blacks may identify and feel closely associated with Africa, but it is as Americans that they form interest groups that can change US policy toward Africa.

3.  Ethnic interest groups should have a high level of political activity and be sufficiently numerous to wield political influence. There are many forms of political activity, of course. Most interest groups, especially those with lobbyists, concentrate on legislation in Washington. Increasingly, however, groups also focus on the electoral arena. In general, to be taken seriously an ethnic interest group needs to pose a credible electoral threat. Passage of voting rights legislation, massive voter registration drives, increased educational and economic opportunities, other progress in integrating African American into the mainstream of American life, and a growing awareness of their political power have all contributed to the ability of African Americans as an ethnic interest to pose a credible electoral threat.

    A second—and probably more influential—form of political activity is financially contributing to political campaigns. Interest groups use political action committees (PACs) to channel contributions to candidates for Congress. If a sound presentation fails to convince a legislator to accede to one's cause, the argument runs, perhaps a campaign contribution might.

4.  An ethnic interest group should be politically unified to maximize its chances of success. When organizations can provide clear, specific policy alternatives, the prospects for a favorable outcome are enhanced. When interests are clearly identified, it is easier to mobilize.

5. The ethnic group must also have an effective lobbying apparatus. Lobbying connections must be thorough. The group needs to set up a nationwide network of constituents with supporters in each district of the members of Congress it seeks to influence.

6. A group should be prepared to seize moments of opportunity; it must be concerned about timing. Actually, the literature shows a curvilinear relationship between group influence and the intensity of perceived crises. The more the government perceives a situation as threatening to its basic values and concerns, the less likely the nongovernmental group is to have direct and immediate access to or influence over decision makers.

7. The group should seek patrons, provided that they do not steer it away from its previously defined course. The more patrons a group can attract, the more the group widens its constituency. The more a social movement around the group's key issues grows, the more likely the interest group will be successful. Indeed, ethnic interest groups acting alone usually have little chance of directly influencing public policy making. They tend to be too small and lack the political resources required to independently influence government. Developing tight relationships with sympathetic government officials and other patrons and building coalitions with other nongovernmental organizations continue to be important vehicles for broadening the power base of the group and increasing its potential influence over policy. Coalitions should also be sought for the purpose of balancing the perceived or potential influence of opposed groups.

These general points about foreign policy ethnic group formation and maintenance are helpful. However, they tell us little about two key questions concerning mobilizing ethnic foreign policy interest groups for Africa: 1) under what conditions does the African American community speak with a relatively unified voice and have an effective impact on policy; and 2) under

what circumstances do African American interest groups focus on foreign policy with high enough priority to impact policy? The next section mainly looks to public opinion and diaspora studies to address these questions.

## Mobilizing Blacks for Africa: The Primacy of "Race Matters"

It does not, of course, take every black walking hand-in-hand to indicate unity on an issue or impact policy change. To specify how much unity is required, we can consider three different components of an ethnic interest group. First, there are the "core members" or organizing elites who are intensively active; second there are the "rear guard members" or past activists who have drifted away but can be easily re-energized; and third, there are all other "silent" members whom interest group elites consider as potential recruits. The more the first two groups can work out a sphere of unity around a clearly defined issue or set of issues, the more successful the ethnic interest group is likely to be. The members of the third group are either inferred from public opinion data or are, perhaps, mainly an "imagined community."

As the historical record and current surveys of African American public opinion demonstrate, there is a substantial unity when the issue is "race." On such issues, not only core and rear guard members, but the third group of "silent" African Americans are relatively homogenous and speak with one voice. Thus civil rights issues and anti-discrimination policies produce substantial agreement among African Americans. Opinion polls commonly report that more than three out of four African Americans give the same response to questions on these issues. Especially when racial interests are clearly identified and threatened, greater mass support can be found and mobilized.

The more the subject is not overtly and clearly about race, however, the more differences surface among African Americans. For example, on issues related to civil liberties, criminal justice (especially capital punishment), homosexuality, and a woman's right to choose, blacks tend to differ according to class—with less affluent blacks holding more moderate and conservative views. By contrast, less affluent blacks tend to hold more liberal positions on questions of social welfare and government spending. Diversity of opinion also often exists based on other demographic differences—especially gender and age.

In instances where mass black opinion is split, unity of the black voice is undercut and influence on decision-making is weakened. To take one recent

example, consider the different level of pressure the Clinton administration was forced to respond to over affirmative action (viewed among blacks as a clear and threatened race issue) versus welfare reform, crime, and/or health care reform. Although particularly welfare reform and crime reform were substantially impacted by race-coding, blacks, including core or elite dimensions such as the Congressional Black Caucus, were less outspoken, vigilant, and vigorous. They ultimately had little or no influence on these issues. By contrast, the President's "mend not end" affirmative action stance responded to heavy lobbying and pressures from black leadership and the civil rights community more generally (especially women's groups).

A review over time indicates that certain conditions are favorable to mobilization on the basis of race and others are not. For instance, success on race issues is more likely achieved when the electoral system is unstable and competition between the two major parties is tight. In these instances, blacks can pose a credible electoral threat—given the possibility that their vote as a bloc could be pivotal in determining election results. For example, as early as the 1948 presidential election, splits from the Democratic party on both the right (Strom Thurmond's Dixiecrats) and the left (Henry Wallace's Progressives) produced support for the first civil rights plank to be included in the party's platform and for Truman to take an anti-discrimination stance during the campaign. The closeness of presidential contests in 1960, 1976, and 1992 produced similar (albeit more dramatic) concessions on civil rights policy.

To a large extent, what is true in the domestic arena is also true in the foreign policy one. That is, when the issue is race, blacks tend to demonstrate more unity and ability to organize to speak in one clear voice. Analysis of public opinion data is illustrative.

In general, the limited data available on black views toward foreign policy demonstrate that this is one of the few issue domains in which black opinion appears to be very diverse (not homogenous) and in which blacks tend to agree (not differ) substantially with whites. A March 1995 Hart-Teeter poll produced typical results. For example, when asked whether "greatly reducing US involvement in UN peacekeeping missions was a step in the right direction or the wrong direction, 57 percent of blacks and 58 percent of whites thought it was a step in the right direction while only 36 percent of each group reported it was a step in the wrong direction. In contrast to polls on domestic issues, polls on foreign policy, such as the studies of the Program

on International Policy Attitudes of the Center for International and Security Studies at the University of Maryland, only occasionally report racial differences on foreign policy issues.[15]

When differences emerge between blacks and whites and when blacks tend to speak with one voice on foreign policy issues, usually the issue (as in the domestic arena) is perceived as being about "race." Most pointedly, throughout the black experience in the United States, African Americans who lack a single homeland have treated Africa as a whole as their ancestral home. Policy toward Africa is seen through the lens of race. As recent polls show many continue to feel close to Africa. For example, the National Black Electorate Study found that in 1984, 55.2 percent of blacks reported they "feel close to Africans," including 58 percent of those with some high school and 60.4 percent of those who were college graduates. Nonetheless, even as late as 1988 on questions related to South Africa, there was not dramatic concern. For example, slightly over one-third had no opinion on the question "How important is it for black people to bring pressure on Congress to change US policies on South Africa?" (Of those who did have an opinion however, two-thirds considered it very important and another 25 percent thought it was "somewhat important.")[16]

Indeed, policy toward Africa rarely emerges as an issue high on the agenda even of the black core sector (i.e., leaders) except when African Americans see in developments on the continent problems and/or solutions similar or common to their own domestic plight. Such perceptions of commonality have typically occurred in the midst of African American mobilization for their own rights at home. Thus, for example, Pan-Africanism first flowered in the Harlem Renaissance. In the 1920s and 1930s leaders like Marcus Garvey, W. E. B. DuBois, and Paul Robeson endeavored to establish an international Pan-African movement. The fight was not just against colonial rule and im-

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15. Some questions do show differences, however. "When informed that foreign aid is about 1% of the federal budget, 37% of whites but only 19% of African-Americans wanted to cut it," notes Steven Kull in *Americans and Foreign Aid* (College Park, Md.: Program on International Public Attitudes, March 1, 1995), 31. In another poll, "Seventeen percent of whites said defense spending is a lot more than it needs to be, but 35% of African-Americans said so." [Steven Kull, *Americans on Defense Spending* (College Park, Md.: Program on International Public Attitudes, January 19, 1996), 28.]

16. Patricia Gurin, Shirley Hatchett, and James Jackson, *Hope and Independence: Blacks Response to Electoral and Party Politics* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1989), 105.

perialism, but against **white** colonialism and **white** imperialism. Racial commonality was the glue linking early Pan- Africanists to African concerns.

Similarly, in the reawakening of interest in Africa in the 1950s and 1960s, the focus again was race. Malcolm X, for example, drew a parallel between the treatment of blacks in the United States and white colonialism in Africa. Other black leaders went as far as to advocate the mobilization of volunteer black American troops to fight in the Southern African liberation struggles. Indeed, the 1960s represented black America's growing belief that what happens to blacks in Africa has implications for blacks at home. Africa would be weak as long as African Americans were weak, and African Americans would be weak as long as Africa was weak. Within this perspective, the anti-colonial struggle in Africa dovetailed with African American calls for "self-determination" at home and the view of African America as an internal colony.

Finally in the 1980s and 1990s, views toward the struggle in Africa or in other (non-US) parts of the diaspora grew hand-in-hand with the struggle at home. For example, President Reagan, perceived by the black leadership to be insensitive to civil rights issues in general, was perceived to be uncaring on apartheid in particular. As then Senate majority leader, Bob Dole, acknowledged in the early 1980s, the issue of sanctions had "now become a domestic civil rights issue."

When it comes to the Caribbean as well, the lens of race is potent. For example, what made restoring Aristide to power in Haiti a rallying cry for African American interest groups and leaders was not so much Haiti's own diaspora in the United States, but a view among native-born blacks that Haitian refugees were being treated harsher than non-black refugees. They were being treated in a racist fashion "because they were black." By contrast, not even core groups mobilized in any substantial sense to protest events such as Walter Rodney's assassination in Guyana, Maurice Bishop's assassination in Grenada, or other events in the West Indies which pitted blacks against blacks and could not be perceived as part of racial conflict. In short, in periods of activism, African Americans tend to see in their mobilization for Africa and other diasporas their own empowerment within the United States. Where the racial nature of conflict is missing, activism is limited.

To be sure, humanitarian crises, especially deriving from war or refugee situations where African lives are at stake, can produce strong support from African American interest groups (particularly church-related ones). Even

here, the glue between domestic concern and foreign policy mobilization is first and foremost the animus of race. Where race does not matter, mobilization for Africa faces rough seas.

## Conclusion

Can African America become an organized and strongly committed diaspora, transforming itself into a powerful political player with transnational implications, and if so how? The literature on interest groups raises almost as many new questions as answers to this query. Moreover, rapidly changing conditions (particularly globalism, the revolution in communications and transportation technology, and the end of the Cold War) are confounding the few conclusions the literature has spawned.

Meanwhile the ever more complex politics of race in the United States is playing havoc with support for Africa among even its most "natural constituency." Although African Americans continue to feel "close to Africa" and Africa's distress could exert a destabilizing influence on the United States in an age of cultural and racial clash, several developments threaten at the least to challenge the level of ethnic interest group support for Africa. For instance, the growing bifurcation of African America by class suggests the need for new levels of sophistication about the meaning of race. Even on the domestic front, African Americans (now more divided by class than ever before, even as race continues to be highly significant) have had difficulties fashioning unity toward policy and/or candidates when the subject is not clearly about race.

The confusion over policy when the issue is not race and when one black national grouping is struggling against another black national grouping is multiplied exponentially on the foreign policy scene—where information, knowledge, and interest are all the more weak among the broad African American population. In this context, the question of how to build a constituency for Africa becomes more complex. And yet, that is clearly the stage today and in the next century. With apartheid apparently a thing of the past, almost every new issue in Africa is less directly about race and more the subject of intra-national debate.

The new agenda places economic aid and human rights front and center. Both issues in turn are connected to democratic transformation of tyrannies in many nations. They often require interest groups to challenge African regimes' attempts to suppress or co-opt its opposition, to contest a regime's international legitimacy, to expose human rights violations, to combat the

home regime's foreign propaganda, to obstruct friendly relations with the United States through effective lobbies, or to assist actively in the struggle of domestic opposition groups. Without race as an anchor for deciding which side to take, unity is more difficult for African American interests to maintain.

In sum, an array of developments (from global ones to the more complex domestic racial situation to a more conservative American government) present new and difficult questions for those who would build a broader constituency for Africa. What is needed is not only a new conceptual framework for foreign policy making which ends the centuries-long marginalization of Africa but also more and better research on the role of interest groups in forging this new framework in the waning years of the twentieth century.

# Making Connections for Africa: Constituencies, Movements, Interest Groups, Coalitions, and Conventional Wisdoms

*William Minter*
*Africa Policy Information Center*

**A**frica's marginalization within the US foreign-policy process is widely acknowledged. Those of us who think Africa does deserve more attention can easily identify one remedy: build a larger, better organized and more powerful constituency for Africa that demands response from policymakers because of its political clout. Spelling out in practical terms how to do this, however, is no easy matter.

Thinking on this topic has often been short-circuited by the misleading model of the lobby for Israel, with its image (not entirely deserved) of consistent success.[1] That model is too simple. 'Africa' is not one country. To think of all Africans as having only one agenda is to accept a stereotype that wrongly distinguishes the continent's people from the rest of humanity. The agendas coming from Africa are as multifaceted as from any other world region. At times they are contradictory. Moreover, the constituencies for Africa in the United States are diverse, both within and beyond the African American community. To put it bluntly, there will be no American Israel Public Affairs Committee for Africa as a whole. Lobby(ies) for Africa must build their strength on unity in diversity, not pursue the will-o'-the-wisp of one centrally directed line in support of one easily defined cause.

The model(s) for success must be complex enough to match the complexity of the reality. They must consider the multidecade efforts of the anti-apartheid movement and other cause-oriented foreign policy campaigns

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1. See, for example, the discussion in *Foreign Policy*, 15 (Summer 1974), with articles by Martin Weil, Roger Wilkins and Donald McHenry; Kenneth Longmyer, "Black Ethnic Demands," *Foreign Policy*, 60 (Fall 1985): 3-16; and Eric M. Uslaner, "All Politics are Global: Interest Groups and the Making of Foreign Policy," in *Interest Group Politics*, 4th ed., ed. Allan J. Cigler and Burdett A. Loomis (Washington: CQ Press, 1995), 369-91.

as well as the mixed record of 'ethnic' lobbies. They must also reckon with obstacles rooted in inequalities both within and between countries. And they must take account of the variety of interests among those in the United States who care about US relations with the continent and its peoples.

This paper aims to pose questions and lay out hypotheses. I have tried to state them clearly, freshly, and at times provocatively, in order to focus discussion and move our debates beyond generalities. It is a measure of our collective ignorance[2] that almost all the generalizations below are impressions from participant observation rather than conclusions from organized empirical data. This brief essay is more an agenda for debate than a finished analysis. Even so there are many important aspects not included here.

## Constituencies and Connections

'Constituency' is narrowly defined as 'a body of voters in a specified area who elect a representative member to a legislative body.' Even for elected officials, it is often ambiguous who their 'constituency' really is. It can be everyone in their district, the fraction that votes, only the voters who voted for them, or their campaign donors. For groups and individuals claiming to speak 'for Africa,' the definition is even more confusing. Who 'represents' whom? On what do they base their legitimacy? If one is talking about influence in the US political arena, potential constituencies 'for Africa' must be individuals or groups satisfying two criteria. They must (1) have weight (as decision-makers, voters, opinion-makers, or donors) within the US political system, and (2) have some link to the African continent giving them reason to use their voice, whatever that may be, 'for Africa.'

There are many such individuals and groups that fit within the broad definition of the previous paragraph. Unlike members of the American Association of Retired Persons, however, they are not all listed in anyone's consolidated database. Nor do they all speak with one voice, or even at all, on African issues. Diverse constituencies in the United States relate to similarly diverse constituencies in Africa. And they may reflect those African agendas more or less faithfully. The dialogue across the Atlantic is still

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2. Or, more optimistically, perhaps just my personal ignorance. I would be very pleased to have my attention called to data sources or analyses that have not yet come to my attention. Despite the extensive literature on political participation by different sectors of society, and recent more sophisticated studies of public opinion on foreign policy, there seems to be very little that is specific enough on either opinion or participation with respect to Africa issues in particular.

hampered by practical difficulties in communication as well as divergent views and interests.

So we are talking primarily about 'potential' constituencies for Africa, rather than ones already mobilized and standing up to be counted in favor of a particular agenda. We should not take it for granted that the many US-based groups or individuals with interests in Africa all share common agendas. These issues, moreover, rarely reach the public as ones that demand a response. As a result, public opinion on most African issues is latent and general rather than firmly consolidated.

The potential for mobilization depends on many factors. These include kinds of connection to Africa, generalized values on issues affecting Africa, and the opportunities (information, appeals) presented to individuals and groups to respond to. All of us have our own impressions based on our personal experience. However, there is little systematic empirical data on the relative effects of these different factors.

**Proposition 1:** *Ancestral connection to Africa is an extremely important component for potential mobilization of individuals on African issues. But it is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition. Whatever the racial or ethnic background, some people will be involved and others not.*

(a) Among US citizens and residents, some were born in Africa or are separated from the continent by only one or two generations. This rapidly growing group ('neo-diaspora') has the most direct connection with Africa. Many, however, have reasons to concentrate on personal agendas or to avoid involvement in policy issues. Some may identify primarily (or be identified by others) not with 'Africa' as a whole but with a specific country or ethnic group, or even as Arab, Asian, British, or American. In addition, their access to the US political arena may be limited by lack of experience or confidence, by restricted channels of influence, or by policymakers' suspicions of special pleading.

(b) Those with ancestral links to Africa dating to the slave trade, stretching back six, ten or more generations, are diverse in terms of current relationships to the continent. Some, whose ancestors' journeys passed through Latin America, may identify as Latino or Hispanic rather than African American or black. Many, probably most, still share much disinformation and stereotypes about Africa communicated by the mass media and educational

system. Many have a cultural identification, but have had no opportunity for first-hand links to the continent. Despite the significant potential in rising identification with pan-African and Afrocentric themes, cultural identity still rarely carries over into policy advocacy on African issues. The high cost of travel and the deficiencies of the US educational system also limit access to information about African issues.

Black Americans, while not monolithic, do tend to have distinctive perspectives on world affairs. As historian Brenda Plummer has recently stressed, however, this interest has not been limited to Africa or to the African diaspora.[3] There has been a broader tendency to be identified with the oppressed and issues of justice wherever the location of the struggle.

(c) Other ('non-black') Americans, are in ancestral terms separated from Africa by 600 or more generations, with more protracted journeys through other continents.[4] Nevertheless they share the generally unacknowledged influence of African culture, through its ancient and medieval impact on Europe and through cultural interpenetration in the Americas over the last 500 years. Significant numbers have been influenced by participation in the anti-apartheid movement or other personal contacts with Africa.

(d) Whatever the ancestral connection to Africa, the potential of individuals for involvement in organized advocacy for Africa is likely to vary significantly by other factors. These include values, personal experience, professional and organizational responsibilities, opportunities to travel to or live on the continent, and general experience with and confidence in political advocacy and other organizational skills. Whether broader constituencies not actively involved have more or less sympathetic attitudes is another relevant factor. But foreign policy issues, including Africa, will be highly salient for at best a small fraction of the attentive public.[5]

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3. Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black American and US Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1996).

4. Paleoanthropologists are still debating the issue, but one recent study dates the migration of *homo sapiens* out of Africa to only 20,000 years or so ago (*The New York Times*, June 4, 1996).

5. One of the most detailed surveys of political participation (from 1989), found that of issue-based activities (contacting policy-makers, protests, etc.), international issues accounted for 3% of all such activities for Anglo-Whites, 1% for African-Americans and 4% for Latinos. [Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Scholzman, and Henry E. Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995).]
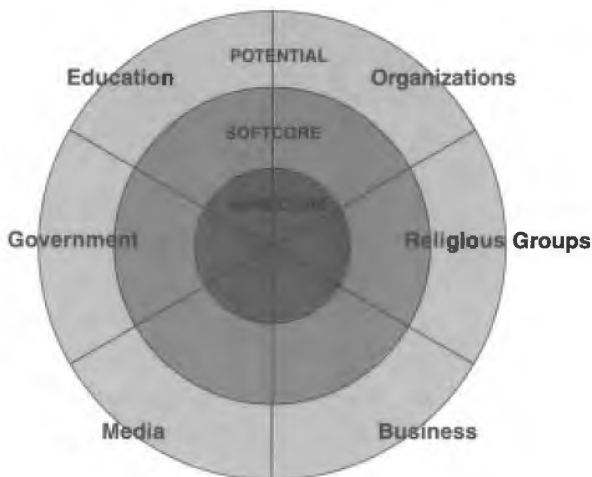
## Conceptual Map of Africa-Interested Constituencies

The map of Africa-interested constituencies can be envisaged as three concentric *circles*, each divided into six *sectors*. The operational definitions are only suggestive illustrating how one might begin to put numbers to these divisions, if data were available.

### *Circles*

The inner circle (HardCore) consists primarily of people having jobs with Africa-focused organizational responsibilities. It could be operationally defined as people spending more than half of their working time dealing with African issues, whether employed by Africa-focused organizations or as staff with Africa responsibilities within broader organizational structures. An initial guesstimate is that there may be as many as 3,000 to 5,000 such individuals resident in the US, including, for example, staff of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as the African-American Institute, Africare, staff of US and multilateral agencies and embassies, and teachers of African studies. A broader definition of the HardCore would include people who would like to spend more than half of their working time dealing with African issues, if they could find a job that would let them do this.

The second circle (SoftCore) includes the inner circle, plus individuals with significant involvement in African issues as indicated by, for example, subscribing to an Africa-focused publication, being a member of or a regular contributor to an Africa-focused organization, being a repeat buyer of books on Africa, teaching one course on Africa a year, having significant business relations with Africa, or significant if still part-time professional involvement with Africa. This

core Africa-interest group might, on an initial guesstimate, include as many as 20,000 to 25,000 additional individuals.

The outer circle (Potential Africa-Interest Constituency) extends outward to include all those US residents with some organizational or media-attention factor making them significantly more likely than the average to have some occasional interest in African issues. Only a fraction would be expected at any given time to respond to offers of information or challenges to be involved. But their likelihood of response can be hypothesized to be much greater than of a general audience. Examples include members of African American civic, civil rights, or social welfare organizations, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Council of Negro Women, or Alpha Kappa Alpha; members of international affairs interest groups such as the Foreign Policy Association, UN Association, World Affairs Councils; teachers of international affairs, current issues and social studies courses in secondary schools as well as colleges and universities; subscribers to African American magazines such as *Emerge* and to public affairs magazines such as *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy*, and *Current History*; immigrants from African countries; US citizens who have worked in, lived in or visited African countries.

Together these categories might include as many as 10 to 20 million additional individuals.

### Sectors

The constituency map can also be divided up by sectors, each of which has different information needs, and a different potential relationship to advocacy and constituency mobilization. Some individuals, of course, may be active in more than one sector at the same time, or over time. The audience for Africa-focused communication media, such as the Africa News web site, includes individuals and organizations from all the sectors. But despite overlap, the best communication channels for reaching the different sectors are unlikely to be identical.

Although further research may indicate an alternative breakdown, six sectors seem initially to be sufficiently distinct to warrant separate consideration: government, business, education, media, organizations, and religious groups.

### Demographic data

For each of the 18 pieces of this circle (a 3x6 table) it would be useful to know background demographic or other data that might be relevant to their information needs, communication channels by which they might be reached, and so on. It might be useful to develop a standard set of variables that different organizations could use in constituency research, such as, obviously, geographic location, age, gender, race, national origin, education, income, occupation, experience in Africa, level of interest in Africa or specific regions or countries within Africa, access to e-mail and fax and so on.

**Proposition 2:** *US-based organizations with an institutional stake in relations with Africa are equally or more important than individuals in defining operationally the 'constituencies for Africa.' This includes private sector, not-for-profit, and governmental institutions.*

(a) The number of such Africa-interested organizations is almost certainly much less than those with comparable institutional stakes in Europe, East Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, or other major world regions.[6] The substitution of globally thematic focuses for area studies or regional focuses, increasingly common in academic and foundation circles, runs the danger of contributing in practice to the marginalization of Africa. If this is not to happen, it must be complemented by area-specific emphases and affirmative action for historically disadvantaged world regions, including Africa in particular. This applies equally within the government, private sector, and voluntary sectors.

(b) Organizations within the African American community (educational, religious, social service, advocacy, commercial) likely have a greater tendency to be interested in Africa—as compared to other world regions—than their historically white counterpart institutions. But the historical legacy of inequality has a countervailing effect. Focus on domestic issues and general lack of opportunities for international involvement may result in less involvement on Africa than their historically white counterparts.

Most of the large or prominent African American organizations (e.g. NAACP, National Urban League, Congressional Black Caucus) focus primarily on domestic affairs. They pay only very limited program attention to the African continent or foreign affairs more generally. Many historically black educational institutions, religious denominations, and businesses have significant African connections and programs, often predating those of their historically white counterparts. The scope of these has, however, been constrained by institutional resources. As a result, the current scale of African involvement is not necessarily proportionally more (in relation to domestic concerns) than that of their historically white counterparts.

(c) In practice the organizations that make up the core 'constituencies for Africa' are either (1) those with an Africa-specific mandate or (2) those with particular agendas (human rights, environment, development, relief,

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6. I am not aware, however, of any systematic statistics that have been compiled on this point.

missions, etc.) in which Africa figures prominently enough to support the assignment of personnel to Africa-specific departments or programs. Some of the Africa-specific organizations (e.g. TransAfrica, Africare, International Foundation for Education and Self-Help, Constituency for Africa) are specifically based in the African American community. Others (e.g., African-American Institute, American Committee on Africa/Africa Fund, Washington Office on Africa/APIC) are historically multi-racial. The paid personnel and members/supporters of the non-Africa-specific historically white organizations engaged with Africa are, to varying degrees, more diverse than in the past in terms of race and national origin. But there is still a major challenge for historically white development, human rights, and other issue-focused groups to address diversity issues.

(d) Whatever their racial composition, degree of Africa-specific mandate, or sector, all the US-based groups concerned with Africa are in need of much greater accountability and transparency. It should be openly acknowledged that there is an element of self-interest not only in the business sector but also in the institutional interests of government agencies and nongovernmental groups. There is nothing inherently wrong with this. In fact, the 'constituencies' for Africa will be stronger for acknowledging that they are also constituencies for their own specific institutional agendas. There should be no automatic assumption, however, that what is good for a specific company, nongovernmental organization, or government agency is necessarily also good for 'Africa.' That should be a subject of public debate and open evaluation.

> **Proposition 3:** *The extent to which these constituencies for Africa have a political impact depends on the number of people willing to be involved. It also depends on the kind of links made (a) among Africa-interested constituencies and (b) between Africa-interested constituencies and the wider society and polity. The anti-apartheid movement provides an exceptional instance of how diverse connections can come together to produce a powerful political impact.*

(a) Relationships among Africa-interested constituencies are fragmented along many different lines. To name only a few, there are racial and national divisions within the United States, geographic focus within Africa, and institutional focus (human rights, development, relief, private business,

church, government, education and others). Many Africa-interested persons and groups are primarily interested in only one country or one issue and are difficult to mobilize on other countries or issues. While simple lack of coordination is more common than open conflict, there are issues (e.g., sanctions against the Nigerian military regime, the rights and wrongs of market-oriented structural adjustment programs, and others) on which there are diametrically opposed perspectives.

This diversity should be no surprise and is not in itself any cause for lamentation. It is potentially a strength as well as a weakness. But it does pose the fundamental issue as to how and when these diverse interests and concerns can cumulate to make an impact equal to or greater than the sum of their parts. This is vital for public perception as well as for the political weight that can be brought to bear at one time in a policy debate of decisive importance, such as, in 1994, the issue of US response to genocide in Rwanda. In extreme cases, moreover, there are US institutions with high interest in Africa (e.g. multinational oil companies with investments in Nigeria) whose inclusion among constituencies 'for Africa' must be questioned.

(b) Public impact on Africa policy also depends fundamentally on the broader public, opinion-makers and policymakers who do not have a specific Africa interest or involvement. The general climate on such issues as, for example, the US role in the United Nations, foreign aid, trade, and human rights, sets the context for the policy community's reactions to specific African issues. General assumptions about Africa in the media and in government also have profound effects on the policy options that are taken into consideration.

For all the sectors of Africa constituencies, therefore, their links to the rest of society — at community, elite, and policy-making levels — are just as important as their numerical weight and internal coherence.

(c) The anti-apartheid movement provides the major example in US history of a foreign-policy-oriented constituency-based social force which cut across racial, sectoral, and other barriers to have a profound impact. It is notable that throughout the phases of its history, the constituencies involved consistently included a mix of South Africans in exile, black Americans and other Americans, long- and short-lived groups with varying compositions and agendas, as well as a wide range of institutional sectors. Its experience is unlikely to be duplicated, and contains its fair share of negative as well as

positive examples. But it is still one of the major sources to be probed for possible paradigms for future Africa constituency-building.

## Movements

Movements, in the sense of broadly encompassing and mobilizing social formations, are historically specific. In recent US experience, among the most prominent are the civil rights movement, the women's movement, and the environmental movement. Those focused on foreign policy issues are relatively few (anti-Vietnam war movement, anti-nuclear movement, anti-apartheid movement, Central America movement). Their impact is generally less pervasive than those dealing with domestic issues. The anti-war movement is an exception, since once troops are dying overseas, an international issue quickly becomes domestic. More general lessons from movement experience are addressed in another paper. The following comments focus specifically on the anti-apartheid movement and possible future counterparts.

> **Proposition 4:** *The anti-apartheid movement, as a movement, is over. It has left a rich legacy of personal experience, connections and values which can contribute to building stronger constituencies for Africa. However, only a small portion of that contribution will be in specific involvement with Southern Africa in particular. Most involvement in Southern Africa will be on an interest-group or professional level rather than in a movement mode (see next section). Equally if not more important will be the involvement of former anti-apartheid movement participants in other African issues. In addition, one can build on understanding of African issues among former anti-apartheid movement participants whose energies are now engaged in other international and domestic issues and institutions. Any strategy to utilize the movement legacy should take this range of diverse options into account.*

(a) The history of the anti-apartheid movement, or Southern Africa solidarity movement, is still relatively unexplored for positive and negative lessons. It featured decentralization and diversity, accompanied by generally weak organizational structures and lack of coordination. But it also embodied sustained interaction between the struggle in Southern Africa and the

development of the movement in the United States. It built linkages among grassroots groups, national organizations, and a wide range of other groups in civil society. It developed a broad consensus on major aims and strategies, and its central message resonated with the values of the society at large.

(b) Like all movements, and particularly those connected with specific foreign policy issues, the anti-apartheid movement's history had a beginning and an end.[7] With the obvious enemy removed, the coherence of a movement which was never organizationally centralized disappeared. Some analysts argue that significant opportunities were lost for greater engagement by movement organizations in post-apartheid US/South African relations because of the lack of flexibility of movement leadership in the early 1990s.[8]

Whether that is the case, or whether the organizational decline was an inevitable result of historical developments, US/South African relations in the post-apartheid period have moved rapidly to an interest-group rather than movement model. Diverse interests and institutions in the two societies are building more particularistic ties not integrated by any common movement theme. Those groups and individuals with roots in the movement experience are a minority among the forces driving the US/South African relationship. Among many who were active in the movement, there is still an understandable but also unproductive bitterness at the prominence of newcomers who were absent or even others who were collaborators to a lesser or greater extent with the previous apartheid order.

Many individuals or groups coming out of the anti-apartheid movement are still struggling to find appropriate niches in relations with South and Southern Africa under the new circumstances. There are many individuals placed within a variety of institutions which are actively engaged. A number of existing groups trace their current involvement to the anti-apartheid legacy. But without a common symbolic or movement link, it is likely that successful engagement will be primarily in specialized sectoral arenas.

(c) The relevance of the anti-apartheid movement is not limited, however, to continued active engagement with South and Southern Africa in particular. Just as veterans of the civil rights movement moved into other

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7. See Christian Smith, *Resisting Reagan: The US Central America Peace Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) for a case from roughly the same time period.

8. See, in particular, the most careful study to date of the movement: Ellen J. Dorsey, "Human Rights Strategy for a Changing International Environment: The United States Anti-Apartheid Movement in Transition" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1992).

arenas after the height of the movement in the 1960s, so the experience of the anti-apartheid movement is available for other Africa-related issues which similarly evoke the need to fight injustice. Openness to new directions on US relations both with South Africa and the rest of the continent should also be enhanced by the presence of people with anti-apartheid movement experience in other societal institutions, whether or not their current job and political commitments mandate active engagement on Africa.

> **Proposition 5:** *A variety of African issues may energize and involve constituencies in movement-like action on specific countries, issues (e.g., landmines), or crises. It is possible that no single African issue will evoke sustained engagement from US constituencies on a broader movement model. If one Africa-specific issue does gain such prominence, however, it is likely to be the Nigeria pro-democracy movement.*

(a) The Nigerian crisis lacks the easy clarity of the race-based political and economic oppression of the apartheid system. There are many reasons, nevertheless, to think that a significant international solidarity movement may emerge. Nigeria is central to the African struggle for a 'second independence' from oppressive postcolonial systems. The size and weight of the country make it unavoidably prominent, whatever happens. The extremism and crudity of its current military regime, as symbolized by the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa, carries with it the potential for repeatedly discrediting itself in world opinion, as did the South African regime. The odds that current transition programs will resolve the structural crisis are low to non-existent.

The Nigerian diaspora is relatively well-educated and engaged. There are diverse international constituencies already involved, from human rights and environmental groups to Africa-specific advocacy organizations. The movement and individual movement organizations admittedly have multiple weaknesses. But it should not be forgotten that the South African liberation movement and its overseas supporters in the 1960s and 1970s suffered from many similar weaknesses.

(b) It is also important to consider the role of Africa within non-geographically-specific "movements" with an international focus. To what extent are broad sectoral movements (women's rights, environmental, human rights, gay and lesbian rights, and so on) to be the likely vehicle for engagement of US citizens with international issues? What about issue-

specific campaigns, such as banning landmines or reducing Third World debt? How do such movements and organizations address the issue of sustaining a focus on particular African countries and the African continent? How do Africa-specific organizations relate to these movements and their constituencies? To what extent can productive structural links be built between Africa-specific organizations and organizations with issue rather than geographically defined mandates?

## Interest groups

The concept of interest groups can be understood in many different ways. At one extreme it refers simply to categories of people who may share or be assumed to share common interests (women, blacks, middle class, media executives, immigrants, Republicans, etc.). At the other extreme it refers specifically to organized groups or associations, with offices, staff, budgets, and defined positions on issues. Defining what constituencies for Africa mean in terms of interest groups can vary significantly depending on the definition used. What should be clear, however, is that it is absolutely essential to consider a wide range. In terms of interest in and mobilization around African issues, there is significant variation not only **between** categories, but also **within** almost any category one might name. Organized groups probably are the most significant in operational terms. How closely they represent the constituencies they claim to represent, however, varies widely.

In a rough breakdown of national associations, based on two surveys in the 1980s, Jack Walker identifies three major clusters, very distinct in their funding, operations, and patterns of political action.[9] These are profit sector groups (e.g., a chamber of commerce), nonprofit sector groups (e.g., an association of social work professionals) and citizen groups (e.g., Amnesty International, or the NAACP). Although not included in Walker's survey, individual nonprofit or profit institutions (e.g. a university or an oil company) could also fit in his 3-part division. Trade unions, religious denominations, and media institutions are each probably distinct enough to form additional clusters on their own.

Those individuals, organizations, or departments within organizations interested in Africa within any of these broad sectors operate in terms of their

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9.  Jack L. Walker Jr., *Mobilizing Interest Groups in America: Patrons, Professions, and Social Movements* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991).

particular Africa concerns (which may be very specific in terms of geographic or issue focus). They also are constrained by their particular institutional environments. They have distinct relationships to the political process as embodied in party politics and government agencies. It should be no surprise, therefore, that it is difficult to discern a coherent message on most Africa issues from this vast arena of US civil society.

The key issues then become (a) to what extent these groups share common or divergent interests and views with respect to US involvement in Africa or with a particular African issue, and (b) to what extent these commonalities are demonstrated in practice, and made visibly relevant to policy formation. Can such diverse interests ranging from church members supporting a particular mission hospital in an African village through large multinational companies to a student Boycott Shell group set up by someone who spent a summer in Nigeria to (fill in the blank yourself) come together to project an effective political voice? If so, how? If not, which fraction(s) of these interests can really come together for what specific objectives? The following propositions are only a few of those that need to be debated and studied before there can be good answers to these questions.

> **Proposition 6:** *There are organized expressions of interest in Africa in virtually every institutional sector of US society, particularly the profit, nonprofit, and citizen group sectors identified above. The most glaring vacuum is within the media sector, where Africa-specific media initiatives have been consistently marginalized. For the trade union movement, international issues raised by NAFTA (North American Free Trade Area) and Asian competition seem far more prominent on the public agenda than is Africa. Even among sectors with more Africa-specific engagement, the level of coordination is extraordinarily weak.*

Efforts to build a stronger voice for Africa must find a way to build the widest possible consensus(es) around a range of issues among the many diverse and even opposed interests and interest groups already concerned with Africa. The forthcoming National Summit process holds the potential for contributing to this goal, but only if it recognizes that consensus(es) cannot be built by inside-the-beltway agreements at elite level. If that does not happen, the Summit will become simply another one of the competing

interest groups, adding to the cacophony rather than aiding the chorus to sing with some degree of harmony.[10]

It is highly unlikely that one massive and sustainable coalition can be built 'for Africa.' Less ambitious but still wide coalitions around specific issues, programs, or causes, however, are absolutely essential if there is to be any significant new impact on policy. Identifying which coalitions can be built, and then carrying out the delicate and time-intensive work of building the necessary consensus(es), are central challenges for pro-active Africa constituency building. Without this, it will not be possible to mobilize large numbers of new constituents.

Even if a critical mass of Africa's constituencies are 'on message' and singing in harmony, however, probably the most significant obstacle to wider diffusion of the message(s) is the lack of basic understanding among the media gatekeepers and gatekeeper institutions.

**Proposition 7:** *There are significant cultural and political gaps with respect to Africa, as on other domestic and international issues, between, broadly speaking, the business sector on the one hand, and the nonprofit and citizen group (movement) sectors on the other. There are many individuals and groups that are beginning to bridge these gaps, or have the potential for doing so. Polarly opposed views, however, are still very common on both sides of the divide. On the one hand there is a simplistic free-market, antistate perspective that assumes that trade and investment are automatically beneficial to all parties involved. On the other, there is the reflex assumption that all private business interests are indifferent to and will run roughshod over human rights, the environment, and social equity.*

This gap cannot be bridged over by pious affirmations of "all the above." In fact, the policy options dictated by expanding unregulated free markets, democracy, human rights, etc., are often incompatible in the short- and

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10. The National Summit on Africa, a project initiated in 1996 with funding from the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York, is intended to link constituencies for Africa throughout the United States, engage Americans in discussions on African topics, and convey the richness of African cultural diversity, economic opportunity, and political growth. It will organize regional summits in different parts of the United States in 1998 and culminate in a National Summit in Washington, DC in 1999. See also discussion, page 79.

medium-term. There are stereotypes and prejudices that can and should be undone. Different viewpoints, however, also reflect real differences of political views, values, interests, and class positions. The changing world order holds hope for some but increased insecurity and inequality for others, both at home and abroad. These differences manifest themselves on domestic policy issues as well as international issues. It would be naive to assume that they would or should be suspended for Africa-specific issues alone.

The search for common ground by different stakeholders is necessary nevertheless. Compromises and common understandings may be possible on many issues. Reaching such understandings—or even seeing if they are possible—requires detailed examination of specific issue areas and debate involving diverse constituencies. On some issues, it should be recognized, there will be confrontation of viewpoints. There was little common ground between most businesses invested in South Africa during the apartheid era and the anti-apartheid movement. Whether or not there is common ground in the current African context will vary according to circumstances and particular national situations.

**Proposition 8:** *The mobilization of ethno-racial constituencies for African issues, both from black Americans in general and country-specific immigrant groups, has great potential for influence on US policy towards Africa. These efforts will be most effective when coupled, as was the case in the anti-apartheid movement, with appeals to common American values and alliances with multiracial organizations and coalitions. To date such mobilization suffers the same weakness as efforts to coordinate Africa constituencies dispersed in various US institutional sectors. There is still a failure to build policy consensuses that are widely-enough shared and specific enough to have significant policy impact.*

Policymakers have multiple reasons for neglecting black American views on African issues. Given the present configuration of US politics, disregard is common even on domestic issues where opinions are well-formed and clearly articulated by African American opinion leaders. This pattern is even more exaggerated when it is known that views on specific African issues are not strong and clear among black American leadership circles and, at times, little known to grassroots African American opinion.

The primary focus of black American organizations on domestic issues is understandable and appropriate. Increased attention to Africa and other international issues, however, would hold potential for increased leverage on domestic issues as well. This could be coupled with new alliances with multi-racial organizations and coalitions with an international focus. The prominence in the news of Asian and Asian American funding in the 1996 campaign—paralleling the recognition of rising Asian influence on the world scene—holds negative as well as positive lessons. But positive changes in the reality and image of Africa in the world could significantly affect the position of Americans of African heritage. In an earlier period, under very different circumstances, the rise of African countries to independence added its impetus to the contemporaneous civil rights movement in the US.

## Conventional Wisdoms

Whatever happens with the Africa-specific constituencies, the impact will be fundamentally affected by the dominant conventional wisdoms, which are profoundly biased in multiple ways against African grassroots interests. There are three important arenas in which conventional wisdom is reinforced and reformulated, with substantial feedback loops among them that are extremely effective in blocking new creative thinking. These are (a) academic and policy think-tank institutions, (b) the policy establishment of politicians, officials, and their reference groups, and (c) media gatekeepers.

In each arena pervasive myths about Africa and Africa-related issues pose formidable obstacles to understanding and policy formation. Public misinformation and prejudice about Africa is built on a strong foundation of misinformation and prejudice among precisely those sectors of society who consider themselves to be the intellectual leadership on foreign affairs. The most striking examples, among many, are the hearing and acceptance opinion makers have given to work such as Robert Kaplan's 1994 *Atlantic Monthly* article, Samuel Huntington's 1993 *Foreign Affairs* article, and Michael Mandelbaum's 1996 *Foreign Affairs* article.[11] Each of these articles displays, in different ways, both unabashed ignorance of Africa and disdain for the role of Africa in US foreign policy.

11. Robert D. Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy," *Atlantic Monthly* (February 1994); Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72 (Summer 1993): 22-49; Michael Mandelbaum, "Foreign Policy as Social Work" *Foreign Affairs* 75 (January/February 1996): 16- 32.

Each arena requires its own strategy, with the media establishment probably the most set in its ways and resistant to reform. But many of the myths involved are common, pervading not only establishment views but also public opinion and even many among the potential constituencies for Africa. Among the most important (of an incomplete list) are:

**Proposition 9:** *The myth of Africa as unimportant in hard-headed realistic terms is fallacious even on its own terms, as well as reflecting a simplistic and outdated vision of the role of the United States in the global community.*

This myth is pervasive. As a result Africa advocates sometimes argue for attention to Africa in humanitarian terms only, allowing their position to be dismissed by self-styled realists as "social-work foreign policy." The challenge to this perspective must encompass several parallel arguments. First, in economic terms, generally recognized as key to power and status in the new world order, Africa is already far more important than is generally recognized, and potentially even more so. Sub-Saharan Africa, even without including South Africa, accounts for more total trade with the US than the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe combined.[12]

Secondly, the end of the Cold War mandates a reexamination and broadening of the concept of security. Even within classical US concepts of security priorities, developments in Northwest Africa are vitally relevant to Europe, as is Northeast Africa to the Middle East. Sub-Saharan Africa may not retain the classical relevance of the simplistic Cold War period. It is clearly relevant, however, in terms of global security concerns about drugs and other criminal activities, the environment, and human migration. These are not less important simply because they do not fit the classical model of interstate military threats.

Thirdly, the appropriate role of the United States in the post-war international community, in which globalization in some form is an inescapable reality, has not yet been addressed by the US foreign policy community. In this necessary rethinking, involving the US role in a host of

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12. See Robert Browne, *The US and Africa's Trade: Prospects for Partnership*, APIC Background Paper no. 4 (Washington, DC: Africa Policy Information Center, 1995); and Salih Booker, *Thinking Regionally: Priorities for US Policy toward Africa*, APIC Background Paper no. 5 (Washington, DC: Africa Policy Information Center, 1996).

multilateral institutions, Africa is unavoidably prominent on the agenda. The debate over whether the US will engage seriously with African issues is not just a bilateral question. It is intimately tied up with reconceptualizing a US role as responsible world citizen rather than as world policeman or inward-looking rogue state. It is unlikely that any constituency can adequately mobilize response to crises such as Rwanda in 1994 or Eastern Zaire in 1996, for example, unless there is an adequate international framework in place, with a base level of support from the United States, that can guide response to new crises as they emerge.

> **Proposition 10:** *The myth of one homogeneous African society takes many forms, some more nefarious and others even seemingly benevolent. But all are damaging to the building of an informed advocacy-oriented Africa constituency or the formulation of appropriate policy options on particular issues. Unless the histories and current dilemmas of African peoples are understood in historically specific terms, rather than in terms of some mythologized racial essence, it will be impossible to develop policies that apply to real-world African problems.*

The stereotypes of Africa as one country, beset by chaos, poverty and primitive conflicts, still dominate much popular (and elite) perception of the continent. There is little awareness of the diversity within the continent, the range of economic and social conditions, or even the simple fact of distance. Developments in the Great Lakes region can affect international market evaluations of investment potential in South Africa, as far removed from each other as St. Louis from Mexico City. At the worst this is accompanied by still live racial prejudice and jungle images, reinforced by simplistic media coverage.

Other variants may be less pernicious, but still have negative impact by their distance from reality and promotion of misleading simplistic views. Some versions of Afrocentric views present romantic images of African culture, as do some versions of anthropological idealizations of traditional cultures. Undifferentiated identification of African regimes with their peoples, leading to labeling criticism of oppressive regimes such as the Nigerian or Sudanese military regimes as anti-African, does a profound disservice to African aspirations for human rights. In another way, using the label 'black-on-black violence' to interpret African conflicts is profoundly dehumanizing and

misleading, since it implies that there is something unique about conflict between people with black skins, unlike conflicts between people of other colors. (Would World War II, or even the conflict in Northern Ireland, be so easily referred to as 'white-on-white' violence?).

> **Proposition 11:** *The myth of 'ancient tribal hatreds' is particularly damaging to the prospects for informed international response to historically specific conflicts in particular African countries and regions.*

If African conflicts, as conflicts in many other parts of the post-Cold War world, are conceived as inevitable outcomes of centuries-old hostilities, the possibility of developing appropriate policy response is ruled out in advance. For Africa, this tendency is made much worse by the pervasive currency of labeling all African conflicts as 'tribal,' with the misleading connotations that they are all traditional, primitive, and basically the same. Mobilization of hatred on the basis of ethnicity or 'tribe' is indeed deadly, and its roots in earlier history are certainly relevant. But to regard it as unchanging and inevitable is as fallacious as it would be to blame the Holocaust in Europe simply on 'ancient religious hostility' between Christians and Jews.

This does not mean going to the other extreme of assuming that all conflicts could be resolved if only the antagonists would try to understand each other, follow the Mandela example, or take the advice of international conflict-resolution specialists. That would also be a dangerous illusion. Each conflict has its specificity. But Africa constituency builders will continue to be handicapped in responding to any of them unless overarching frameworks are found which can credibly challenge the pervasive and demobilizing fallacy of 'ancient tribal hatreds.'

> **Proposition 12:** *Among the most dangerous myths for Africa in the US political arena is the assumption that a minimalist state focused exclusively on creating space for trickle-down market economics is good for Africa, as for everywhere else. Downsizing rather than rightsizing both national and multilateral governmental institutions is a recipe for disaster except for a favored few, with particularly damaging consequences for Africa.*

There are efforts underway to lay out frameworks which allow for the complementarity of private, state, and voluntary initiatives in sustainable

development. Equity is paired with growth, rather than pitted against it.[13] Yet US political discourse remains stuck for the most part in the liberal-conservative debates defined by the far-right offensives of the 1980s and 1990s. Development of productive policy frameworks depends on the development of new metaphors as well as new arguments. This applies to Africa, as to international issues in general and indeed to domestic issues of racial and class equity.

Challenging any of these myths is extremely difficult because each builds on master metaphors that resonate widely, beyond the specifically African arena. They cannot be 'refuted.' They must be challenged by alternate metaphors that are just as compelling, while simultaneously more truthful and less damaging to Africa's future. It is not simply a matter of replacing Afro-pessimism with Afro-optimism. We must build visions which have room both for tragedy and for hope, and shape messages that are nuanced enough yet powerful enough to have policy relevance. This is a major intellectual task as well as a communications task. It can only be addressed by collective efforts to develop alternative paradigms and ambitious consensus-building efforts around them.

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13. Among many examples: the annual series of Human Development Reports from the United Nations Development Programme; World Bank, *Taking Action for Poverty Reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa: Report of an Africa Region Task Force*, Report No. 15575-AFR, May 1996; Howard Stein, ed., *Asian Industrialization and Africa: Studies in Policy Alternatives to Structural Adjustment* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995).

# Summary Report of Proceedings[1]

*January 10-12, 1997*
*Airlie Conference Center*
*Warrenton, Virginia*

## Exploring Social Science Literature On Constituency Building

How might common language and common understanding about constituency building for Africa be cultivated by diverse groups? The variety of approaches to identifying and working with Africa interest groups, to collaborating with fellow activists, and to political sensibilities regarding Africa required a broad examination of both existing theory and practice.

Participants engaged the concepts contained in three papers commissioned by the Planning Committee for the purpose of exploring the current social science literature about constituency building. They were asked to focus discussions on the extent to which their own analysis concurred or differed with the author's. Participants were also asked to identify the most important lessons, insights, and questions from the papers and from their discussions.

The following are summaries of reactions from the three sub-groups discussing the three papers.

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1. This summary was prepared by rapporteur Loretta Hobbs on the basis of detailed notes from the conference sessions. Participants were assured that remarks were not for attribution. In this summary, accordingly, remarks are not attributed to individuals, except in the case of a small number of reports from specific organizations. No formal statement was adopted by the group, and references to "consensus" in the summary refer to a "sense of the meeting," not that all individuals agreed with the specific wording used by the rapporteur. Participants were given the opportunity to review the summary for errors, but responsibility for the wording remains with the rapporteur and with APIC staff involved in editing the publication. Some sections of the report correspond to break-out groups which reported back to the plenary; other discussions were held in plenary.

"American Interest Group Research: Implications for Africa Constituency Building," by Professor Linda Williams, Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland.

Participants seek a re-definition of interest groups and desire guidance presently unavailable from the literature about how to create or understand Africa-focused interest groups. The group sentiment was that it is not sufficient to define constituent groups in the black community simply in terms of an undifferentiated "Africa." Further, the African American community can not be organized solely on the basis of race matters.

There was recognition that not enough is understood about the differences between Africans and African Americans in the US. Issues about Africa need to be framed in the context of African American issues for them to have meaning in the black community at a mass level. An example cited was the lack of challenge in the US to President Mobutu by African Americans. Participants noted it was important to challenge the view of some that African Americans should blindly or universally support African leaders just because they are African. The question was raised of what views or knowledge grassroots African Americans had of the role of dictators such as Mobutu in Zaire and similar cases in other countries.

Participants noted the paper's conclusion that large numbers are needed for successful activist work. It follows that Africa constituency building needs to be less Washington focused and more grassroots in character.

"Building a Constituency for Africa: Implications of Social Movement Theory," by Professor Doug McAdam, Department of Sociology, University of Arizona.

Participants noted that those seeking to build a constituency for Africa lack a sufficiently detailed consensus on agenda and shared goals. A contributing factor is that it is not commonly understood how people in the US and Africa share common enemies and related battles. Nor are the reciprocal benefits gained by a relationship with Africa widely understood.

Recruiting multiple constituent populations requires many different change agents to develop diverse ways of framing an issue for different target groups. Shared agendas, shared ideas and values need to be communicated with one voice through diverse messages. People need clarity about what activists want and what they want constituents to do. Activists need to be clear about what they want people to hear, from whom, and through what medium. Limited resources and efficiencies of scale must be factored into an organizing approach.

A core movement leadership for Africa in the US is ongoing, even though interest may peak only during crisis periods or when threats to current values emerge. Cadres of organizers do exist though lack of coordination and different emphases may hinder their effectiveness.

"Making Connections for Africa: Constituencies, Movements, Interest Groups, Coalitions, and Conventional Wisdoms," by William Minter, APIC Senior Research Fellow.

Participants stressed that constituency building for Africa should never be restricted to the interests of the African elite. Supporting the interests of grassroots African people necessitates a strategy to address tensions between multinational interests and African peoples.

In the United States, it is essential to establish clearly why a constituency for Africa is needed. Constituency building must not be restricted to the African American community. The economic diversity of the African American community, in terms of divergent interests, must be recognized. Building beyond the historical African American pro-Africa base is a key component of constituency building. It is also imperative to establish constituencies within many diverse communities.

Discussions on the three topic areas in the group plenary, informed by the papers, brought out a number of themes regarding organizing strategies. Themes included the role of African American leadership in Africa organizing; how to engage black people at the grassroots around Africa; how Africa and blacks in America are perceived by the public and influential sources, such as foundations, politicians, media, etc.; how to cultivate financial and

other resources to strengthen the organizational base for mobilization around Africa; and who are Africa's allies in the United States.

Among the points made by one or more participants:[2]

► There is a framework around race that people grasp. There is no correspondingly clear framework around democracy.

► Domestic outrages must be linked to international outrages, and these must go beyond race. The black community can no longer be organized just around race. Rather the black community can and should be organized around fairness and justice.

► It is difficult to mobilize blacks around Africa concerns when the issues are perceived as white issues (e.g. "abstract" human rights with no reference to racial inequality).

► Elite constituents are important to pressure other elites and the US Congress and Administration.

► Attention is needed to grassroots organizing, not just organizing national campaigns. The right wing is very organized and they organize the grassroots. The right wing learned organizing tactics from the progressive struggles of the 1960s and 1970s.

► Too much weight is placed on the African American leadership when it comes to Africa. Below the African American leadership is a constituency of regular people, with whom a relationship regarding Africa needs to be cultivated.

► The absence of some prominent Africa-related organizations from the Dialogue was noted.

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2. The listing immediately below and similar lists later in the summary represent "brainstorming" sessions, in which the effort was to get a number of points on the table rather than to discuss each one in detail. The summary sometimes reorganizes the points for greater clarity, but does not attempt to integrate them into an articificially coherent presentation.

▶ Besides the lack of information on Africa, one black community reality is that there is a crisis in black leadership. Black leadership needs a global perspective.

▶ Many black organizations lack technological knowledge and resources.

▶ The right wing has good organizers. Good organizing means money. With us, our money goes to big structures that do not do organizing. We must attack this framing. The big question is how to get money and resources to pay full-time organizers who will reach our folks and allies, including targeting specific constituencies with tailored appeals. The right wing shows how it can be done.

▶ There are prominent Africans in the United States who have good jobs and money who would be willing to donate to pro-African causes.

▶ There is far more protest activity now and more left-of-center activity now than 35 years ago. There is an amazing amount of organizing going on, in many different arenas and locations. However, neither the media nor politicians pay attention to it, and so even the organizers don't realize how much is happening.

▶ It is illusory that progressives have access and influence. Time and again allies in establishment political roles will not come through.

▶ There are more people working on Africa now than ever before. However, people tend to make alliances before figuring out if there are mutual goals.

▶ Africa advocates need to look at how Africa is framed for public perception. It is framed as a policy issue at times, but more often as the land of wildlife or of disasters. Framing for the public domain that everything in Africa is good and the United States is bad is also counterproductive. Africa has a destructive frame in the foundation world. It is framed

as a basket case, such that financial contributions would go down a bottomless pit.

▶ We fail to articulate a world view in words that reach people. The right wing is more effective at articulating a world view. Their message is grassroots. The right's agenda is exclusionary, but clear.

▶ Our organizers must have some vision that is easily communicable. The frame out of which the black community functions is one of hopelessness. In contrast, the 1960s was a vision of hopefulness.

▶ Conceiving of Africa as social work is a problem that must be changed. Activists do not have the leverage of 25 years ago. They must put their house in political and ideological order and look for opportunities. Martin Luther King and Malcolm X were moving toward a common stance on justice. We need to do that and build a broader coalition.

▶ The most important efforts activists make are in periods of the doldrums. Activists must keep alive the movement so that people can take advantage of new opportunities when they come.

## Sharing and Learning About Each Other

A central goal of the Dialogue was for participants to share information, approaches, and strategies about their respective Africa-related work. Selected representatives presented information about their organizations as case studies and described their understanding of constituency building. The particular cases were considered against the backdrop of a chart presenting a Conceptual Map of Africa-interested Constituencies (see page 44), which participants found helpful as a tool for reflections on strategy.

*Gwen Mikell, President, African Studies Association (ASA)*

ASA's work focuses on scholarship, book publication, conferences, and the establishment of a dialogue among those working on Africa. In the past, ASA was not engaged in constituency building, as it is

now. The organization once thought constituency building occurred naturally and therefore did not have to be cultivated. Members believed that interested people would come work with them on their own accord. ASA is now working on policy matters. It is in the process of redefinition. ASA now believes it must be more activist. Since it is educationally based, ASA may have to clarify its $501(c)(3)$ status. Activism will be debated at the Spring 1997 Board retreat.

ASA will have to think about new constituencies and reach out to associations dealing with Africa, policy groups, Capitol Hill, the Executive Office. ASA will also look at joint conferences with other organizations that are scholarly; maybe also others who are outside education. Color is now an issue. The organization has mainly been white. However, it must recruit non-white constituents. ASA is rotating the location of its conference around the nation to increase outreach to, and membership of, teachers and students.

## Tunde Okorodudu, Free Nigeria Movement and Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 535

Legal activist and community activist efforts are combined to link the African American community with Africa. Outreach is conducted to such entities as the National Society of Engineers. Material contribution campaigns, such as sending books to Africa, are conducted. US labor is linked with labor in Africa through the SEIU, as an element of the pro-democracy movement. They target already-formed organizations and reach out to those with similar beliefs. In addition, a black-owned cable channel in Oakland is an outlet for balanced news coverage.

## Elaine Hickman, Task Force on Southern Africa, Church Council of Greater Seattle

The Church Council speaks out on injustice and has a solid reputation which helps to make an impact. The Council publishes a monthly newspaper and often uses APIC/WOA information as the basis of articles. The Council's Task Force was originally an anti-

apartheid group. However, it now focuses on global economics and is shifting toward a domestic agenda.

The Task Force is moving more toward coalition building. Its strategy is to seek a way to develop active coalitions and mobilize congregations. It would not exist without constituency building. There is no paid staff, but a core of 8-12 faithful members. The Task Force receives no funding from the Church Council. American Friends Service Committee is one of the organizations which has co-sponsored several projects. The Task Force also works closely with a local Africa-focused nonprofit organization called Ustawi.

### Jennifer Davis, American Committee on Africa (ACOA)/Africa Fund

ACOA works on economic issues. They are troubled by what constituency building terms and concepts seem to mean. Constituency building used to refer to movement people. ACOA finds it important to put the word "mobilizing" back into constituency building. ACOA notes that constituencies must be "for" something and must work for these values and goals at different levels. ACOA views democracy in Nigeria as a mobilizing issue. ACOA often finds itself going back to old groups, even as it seeks new allies.

### Deeohn Ferris, Washington Office on Environmental Justice (OEJ)

The environmental justice movement recognizes a correlation between race, class, and the environment. Economic issues are part of that debate. There are starkly identical environmental impacts on people in developing countries and communities of color in the United States. Everyone is part of the same declining environment, but people of color are closer to the decline.

OEJ's strategy is to build grassroots networks around these issues, networks that can help people to empower themselves. OEJ gets information to people so they can act on it in their own communities, although OEJ rarely thinks of this explicitly as "constituency building."

## Identifying Organizing Tactics

Dialogue participants cited examples of constituency building in their own work by listing organizing tactics that reflect how they engage in constituency building, mobilizing, and outreach to others and how they interpret their relations with other organizations. Some of the organizing tactics identified included:

### *US/Africa Linkages*

- ► reporting developments in Africa for a wide US audience
- ► linking church programs in the United States and in African nations
- ► targeting key movers and shakers and organizing tours for them in South Africa
- ► hosting Africans in the United States
- ► visiting a South African Community affected by a transnational corporation and using this to reinforce advocacy efforts (One group sent letters to the CEO of an offending corporation and the CEO's response generated much excitement.)
- ► including Africans in range of activities
- ► hosting or supporting African dinners with Africans and local community participants
- ► twinning US churches and unions with counterparts in African countries
- ► creating a directory of US-based organizations that have projects in Africa
- ► organizing programs for African visitors in seven cities
- ► linking organizing to internships, semesters abroad, etc.
- ► keeping in touch with people coming back from exchange programs

## *Organizing*

- ▶ identify activities that can engage people
- ▶ conduct campaigns with specific goals and timetables
- ▶ good publicity
- ▶ work the media
- ▶ promote public education, talks, teach-ins, and dissemination of information
- ▶ membership development; pay dues to join organizations and obtain services
- ▶ phone banking
- ▶ communicate in simple language
- ▶ build personal contacts
- ▶ test messages for what works by using focus groups, polling, etc. teach-ins
- ▶ develop strategies to pull soft core activists into the hard core (e.g., campus organizing to gain student support)
- ▶ prepare short-term curriculum aimed at youth symposia
- ▶ work with the high school generation
- ▶ use film to teach history in a way that is accessible to a wide range of audiences
- ▶ design age-appropriate activities, such as poster contests, to increase "age reach"
- ▶ cultivate community radio outreach

## *Networking*

- ▶ build relations and coalitions with strong agencies/groups that have a voice
- ▶ locate resources where they can reach new groups
- ▶ outreach/contact—listen to others
- ▶ expand networking capacity

- ▶ share information strategically and use new technology for information sharing

- ▶ use constituency visits to develop two-way communication.

- ▶ identify individuals in congregations that have responsibilities for Africa or global issues

## Environmental Analysis of Africa Work

Every prudent organizing effort takes stock of its human and material resources and seeks to keep abreast of existing and potential opportunities and challenges. Consequently, the group conducted an Environmental Analysis of Africa work in the United States. This required a working definition of constituency building, for the purpose of the discussion. The working definition offered was:

*...mobilizing people and institutions to affect those in the United States, at multiple levels, who relate to Africa.*

A model for determining a context for constituency building was put forward and utilized. The model was an analysis of advantages, challenges, threats, and opportunities.

### *Advantages/Internal*

- ▶ Human resources, history, knowledge, experience, starting with a 'core' community of activists and organizations

- ▶ Enormous potential for US activists and Africans, can't limit to leaders

- ▶ Lots of international experience and travel

- ▶ Core group has experience organizing around race and racism issues

- ▶ Core group has commitment and passion

### *Challenges/Internal*

- ▶ Maintaining the survival of a solidarity support community

- ▶ Preventing burnout among hard core activists

- ▶ Limited money

- ▶ Formulating agendas that reach out and are inclusive, not exclusive or only country-specific
- ▶ Identifying how to reach youth
- ▶ Identifying issues that will gain attention and excite
- ▶ Dysfunctions in the core (competition, lack of coordination, top-down attitudes, failure to link issues and agendas)

### *Threats/External*

- ▶ Economic and cultural globalization
- ▶ Danger that external support for "democratization" and "conflict resolution" could in practice offer opportunity for greater foreign penetration and control of resources
- ▶ Media, information resources
- ▶ Despair
- ▶ Lack of US Africa-focused organizations effective in raising money
- ▶ Political conflicts in Africa creating negative images of Africa
- ▶ Disinterest at the policy level due to the end of the Cold War
- ▶ Fewer international restraints on US power
- ▶ Economic globalization has focused the attention of governmental, nongovernmental, and business actors alike on a limited number of African countries, causing African countries to compete for attention
- ▶ Racism threatens US resources for Africa because threats to domestic constituents, who might otherwise focus on Africa, require them to focus on domestic struggles
- ▶ Hardships are imposed on natural constituents by economic globalization
- ▶ National antagonism between potential allies in labor are intensified by the free movement of capital
- ▶ No new vehicles for challenging big capital

- ▶ Limited development in Africa of local forces with whom constituency builders could act in solidarity

- ▶ Decline of mobilizing structures

- ▶ Capacity of big capital to appropriate radical dissent

- ▶ Leadership and the talented tenth escape from the issues

- ▶ Insufficient organizers, fragile structures lack of human and financial resources

- ▶ Increased demand on private philanthropy due to state's withdrawal from social welfare, resources going to support domestic survival

- ▶ State of race relations - the great divide

### *Opportunities/External*

- ▶ End of the Cold War

- ▶ Globalization

- ▶ Changing leadership in Africa

- ▶ Increased mobility for international travel

- ▶ Revolution in communication technology, such as the Internet, creating opportunities for new contacts and methods of communication

- ▶ Media, information resources

- ▶ Absence of a dominant post-Cold-War foreign policy paradigm, creating the potential for developing alternative paradigms

- ▶ Emergence of effective NGOs in Africa

- ▶ Potential to recruit new array of activists and volunteers

- ▶ Framing linkages with domestic issues

Participants then discussed how challenges, threats, and barriers might be changed or managed by embracing advantages and opportunities. The comments can be summarized as follows:

Education needs to be interdisciplinary because otherwise it leads to a disjointed approach to history; an approach that needs to be changed. Direct

linkages have to be made between domestic racism and Africa. It is important not to do this in a heavy-handed way because of the potential to split constituents. Must look at class and elite hegemony over information, resources, etc.

There is a lot within the core group of leadership organizations that is dysfunctional today (e.g., competition, lack of coordination, top-down approach, failure to incorporate grass-roots perspectives and initiatives). There must be a vigorous debate between the core and an emerging constituency.

African American leadership groups have lost legitimacy among broader constituencies because there is so much despair within the black community.

It was noted that while those present in the Dialogue represented a wide range of constituencies, there were still many key groups not represented, including a number that were invited. The group questioned whether their absence precluded the ability to formulate an agenda but felt the answer was no. Participants strongly affirmed, however, that the weekend should be the beginning of a wider dialogue, involving many others, carried on in a variety of venues.

To strengthen connections and networking in the hard core there is need for more regular interconnection and communication within the hard core of groups most involved—not just more organizing that leads to more meetings.

Out of the environmental analysis, the group agreed to derive common working objectives. As ideas were listed, consensus was implied, though not verified.

### *Unity in Diversity*

- ▶ Develop a broad platform around which people can relate issues

- ▶ Cultivate a climate of respect for differences in terms of different issues

- ▶ Develop themes that lead to a framework

- ▶ Create guiding principles around which work can be done with constituents

### *Democracy and Development*

▶ Democracy should stand for popular participation and accountability in political, economic, cultural, social sector.

▶ Work toward building civil societies in Africa. (Several participants rejected this concept. One person noted that one must be careful in using the term "democracy" because for some it means voting and capitalism. But the proposer noted that although democracy is defined in a particular way in the United States, African democratic models may differ. Another person felt that we need to focus on what US constituencies can do, allowing Africans to set their own priorities.)

▶ Focus on economic development and sustainable communities.

### *Connections*

▶ Link and connect domestic and international issues.

▶ Connect African and African American studies as part of a larger need to connect internationally.

▶ Address highly racialized culture by carefully connecting US racism to an international strategy

▶ Address elite class control of information.

▶ Address core leadership issues.

## A Model For Constituency Building

Every campaign, every organizing initiative, every movement contains basic building blocks of effective strategy formulation. Those building blocks denote the who, what, when, and how of social change. Attention to those building blocks helps improve organizing ability and an ability to work effectively with others. The group approached these themes by considering two examples that were proposed by participants, each an issue in which a substantial number of participants had some involvement and knowledge.

While examining the Campaign to Ban Land Mines and the Nigeria Pro-Democracy Campaign, participants applied to their deliberations a model that pinpointed:

**Targets:** Who can make it happen? What do we want them to do/think/feel?

**Message:** What do they need to hear?

**Messengers:** From whom?

**Medium:** How and through what medium?

The time given for discussion was limited and intended to stimulate thinking rather than to produce definitive conclusions. Most participants agreed that the process helped clarify additional factors which could aid in more strategic planning for these and other advocacy campaigns with which they are involved.

### *Nigeria Pro-Democracy Model*
**Goal:**
Creation of a democratic government, accountable to the rule of law.

**Targets:** Decision-Making
US government - Executive and Congress
Foreign governments
Multinational corporations

**Targets:** Mobilizing
Religious community
Trade unions and Environmental groups
Campuses and students
Nigerian-American community (including cab drivers)
ASA and professional academics concerned with Africa

Hard core sectors in Nigeria

Media

Manufacturers of conventional wisdom: think tanks, talking heads

African American community

## Message:

The story of repression in Nigeria

Opportunities for effective action

Fighting back — what Nigerians are doing to build human rights and democracy

Must be consistent with audience's values and experience

## Messenger:

Both expert and authentic

A variety of Nigerians — Muslim and Christian (both Protestant and Catholic)

Women, students, media, labor, human rights groups, sports figures, local community leaders, artists and entertainers

US people — Nigerians in the US, people with access to and influence with mobilizing targets and leaders, the Congressional Black Caucus, celebrities, old anti-apartheid networks, community leaders, educators.

## Medium:

Community media — radio and papers,

National media; Electronic media; Publications from NGOs

Person-to-person contact through organizations, speaking tours, and teach-ins

Fun activities linked to the message and action, such as concerts

Documentaries/videos/films; development of short in-hand curricula

Cab drivers

### *Campaign to Ban Land Mines Model*

Africa has the highest concentration of land mines.

**Goal** (short term):

For President Clinton to override the Pentagon and support a total ban.

**Targets:**

Decision-makers, Corporate sector

White House and Congress, Department of Defense, State Department

Children — through film and video, Families of Bosnia

Veterans and Retired generals

International Red Cross and ICRC, Mainstream medical groups

Others in Africa advocacy community

**Message:**

Who is suffering (e.g. children)

**Messenger:**

Those who suffer

**Medium:**

Visual

Internet with frequently changing images of the suffering, etc.

The exercise, carried out in smaller workshops, provoked a number of reflections in the plenary session about ways in which advocacy campaigns could be enhanced and expanded to new constituencies by more strategic reflection. While taking energy from ongoing struggles and new definitions in Africa, organizers here need to think systematically about who can communicate those concerns to different constituencies here in the United States. To make an impact it is necessary to reach out widely. Collectively we know how to organize campaigns, but much work is needed on the details and particularly in learning new ways to reach out to groups and constituencies not previously involved. There was recognition of the need to get beyond generalities and deal with framing of specific issues for maximum impact. There was recognition that this was hard work, since each target constituency has its own concerns which may be much more immediately pressing. One category

identified as in particular need of new creative thinking by African constituency builders was "youth," and in particular African American youth.

## National Summit On Africa

Colonel MacArthur DeShazer, Executive Director of the National Summit on Africa, met with participants to discuss the Summit and how organizations and individuals can participate. He invited everyone present to have a role in the Summit and encouraged broad participation. The Summit agenda is to heighten the visibility of Africa in the United States. The Summit is planned for 1999 in Washington, DC.

The Summit structure includes National Co-Chairs, a Preparatory Committee, and a Secretariat. The Secretariat will work with a series of five expert groups, one for each of the five general themes: sustainable development, human rights, trade and investment, democracy peace and security, education and culture. The Summit will involve Africans broadly. There are plans to move discussions around the country.

Dialogue participants asked how they may become involved. Some expressed concerns that the Summit was not open and inclusive, and that staffing and planning were proceeding without broad consultation. MacArthur DeShazer assured the group that nothing is set in stone, that the Summit staff wants dialogue. He encouraged everyone to feel that they have as much stake in the Summit process for Africa as anyone else.

Given Col. DeShazer's military background, some concern was expressed about how defense related issues might be incorporated into the Summit and whether discussion of those issues would be driven by the defense community. The response was there is no hidden agenda. Rather the role of the Summit secretariat was to invite discussion, not take positions or prescribe outcomes.

## Closing Session: Taking Stock and Planning For A Plan
### What Was Accomplished

The planning committee, as well as participants at the outset of the dialogue, defined a successful dialogue as a high level of exchange of information and headway made toward common definitions. Participants agreed that the summit exceeded its goals of sharing information about what participants are doing, having a high level of exchange, and defining constituency building. Participants shared their own constituency building practices and tactics, engaged

reflections from the social science literature, and worked through models of how to strategize more effectively. Participants also felt they moved closer towards common definitions, but affirmed that this was the beginning of a process rather than full clarity and consensus on "marching orders."

Themes stressed as participants evaluated the weekend included the following:

- ▶ Sharing ideas/dialogue/general learning
- ▶ Networking/building contacts
- ▶ Learning new skills and tactics/identifying opportunities
- ▶ Defining common agenda/setting goals
- ▶ Gaining energy/ "recharging batteries"/solidarity

Participants felt that they took encouragement from the energy, commitment, and multiple involvements of other participants, and a wider vision of the range of constituencies involved in working for justice for Africa's peoples. It was also clear, however, that there were many issues to be resolved in order for practical cooperation among Africa's multiple constituencies to grow and be more effective.

Within the spectrum of constituency-building approaches, participants identified two primary tendencies. One tendency, labelled as the "more is better" model, identifies the major problem as the marginalization of Africa within the US foreign policy agenda. The primary remedy is therefore more attention to Africa, more information about Africa, a higher profile for Africa and, in general, moving Africa into the "mainstream." Participants in the dialogue agreed that fighting the marginalization of Africa was important. But they also stressed that it was not sufficient. They argued that it was also necessary to outline more specific values and goals, to take sides in struggles for social justice, human rights, and equitable development. "More" is not necessarily "better," since some involvements with Africa are less beneficial or even negative in their effects on the welfare of African peoples. To make an impact, and to ensure that the impact is beneficial, it is also necessary to decide what values advocacy campaigns stand for, beyond the general "for Africa."

*Next Steps: Where To From Here*
There was full agreement that more attention and support for Africa is needed and action is vital. Although a common definition of constituency building remained to be conclusively agreed, headway was made in understanding various perspectives about how it is currently approached. It was acknowledged that not everyone will be ready to take sides and join in campaigns with specific targets. Participants also affirmed, however, that taking sides was necessary in order to build a movement and have an impact.

Among the distinctions participants found useful was the distinction between hard-core and soft-core Africa-interested constituencies (see conceptual map, page 44). Whether for broad constituency-building efforts or more particular campaigns, strategies for drawing people in initially and involving them in a more systematic, sustained way should be distinguished. And much would depend on how groups and individuals most actively involved (hard-core) related to each other's work and outreach to the as yet uninvolved.

In terms of specific follow-up to the Dialogue, APIC is committed to provide a publication on this conference. Participants stressed the importance of "framing" the publication in such a way as to support ongoing dialogue about constituency building. Participants committed themselves to remain in contact and to try to incorporate "contextual" insights into their ongoing advocacy work.

In addition, participants suggested a number of options to be pursued as time and funding permitted. These included:

Reconvene this group for coalition building and team building. There is a need to brainstorm about how to continue and regularize this dialogue. Reconvene in a way that encourages participation by others. Choose those issues that reflect genuine struggles in Africa and build authentic contacts with grassroots organizations in Africa - not just the exile community here. Address the younger generation. Coalitions are needed to reach new or missing people, like the youth.

Build bridges to other existing campaigns not just reconvene this group. Build linkages to specific target groups. Diminish fragmentation through more coordination and coherence.

More discussions beyond the East coast are needed. Recommend reconvening such groups as this one for next steps periodically, with similar sessions in different parts of the country.

There is need for a serious discussion of dysfunctions in the Africa organizing core that addresses its impact on organizing efforts and on activists. There is a relationship between that discussion and the ability to maximize the potential of this work. At the same time, participants stressed it was important not to become bogged down in seeking total unity to the extent that this distracted from ongoing work by separate organizations.

It was agreed that additional meetings of this kind would be highly valuable, and that APIC should be urged to develop such proposals in consultation with participants. Even without such targeted gatherings, however, ongoing communication among participants should be maintained through more frequent e-mail contact and sharing of opportunities for collaboration.

## List of Participants and Other Invitees
Constituency Builders' Dialogue, January 10-12, 1997

### *Dialogue Participants*

Adotei Akwei, Amnesty International, Washington, DC

Salih Booker, Council on Foreign Relations, Washington, DC

Maureen Burke, Advocacy Institute, Washington, DC

Jim Cason, *La Jornada*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Mark Clack, OXFAM America, Washington, DC

Imani Countess, APIC Staff, Washington, DC

Jennifer Davis, Africa Fund, New York, NY

MacArthur DeShazer, National Summit on Africa, Washington, DC

Rachel Diggs, Dialogue Coordinator, Reston, Virginia

Jerry Drew, African-American Institute, Washington, DC

Vicki Ferguson, APIC Staff, Washington, DC

Deeohn Ferris, Washington Office on Environmental Justice, Washington, DC

Elaine Hickman, Task Force on Southern Africa, Church Council of Greater
    Seattle, Seattle, Washington

Loretta Hobbs, Rapporteur, Washington, DC

Bertie Howard, Africa News Service, Durham, North Carolina

Julius Ihonvbere, Organization of Nigerians in the Americas, Austin, Texas

William G. Martin, Association of Concerned Africa Scholars, Champaign-
    Urbana, Illinois

Doug McAdam, Sociology Department, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona

Gwen Mikell, African Studies Association, Washington, DC

Stephen Mills, Sierra Club, Washington, DC

William Minter, APIC Staff, Washington, DC

Prexy Nesbitt, Baobab Notes, Chicago, Illinois

Joanette Nitz, Michigan Coalition for Human Rights, Detroit, Michigan

Chidi Odinkalu, INTERIGHTS, London, UK

Tunde Okorodudu, Free Nigeria Movement and SEIU Local 535, Oakland, California

Dan Olson, South Africa Network, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,
    Chicago, Illinois

Sharon Pauling, USAID NGO-PVO Coordinator, Africa Bureau, Washington, DC

Danielle Quinn, APIC staff, Washington, DC

Zene Tadese, Forum of African Voluntary Development Organizations (FAVDO), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Douglas Tilton, APIC staff, Washington, DC

Cherri Waters, National Summit on Africa, Washington, DC

Michael West, Pan African Caucus, African Studies Association, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Linda Williams, Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

## *Invited but unable to attend*

Cherie Bellamy, African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Office of Social Development, Washington, DC

Basil Clunie, CCISSA, Chicago, Illinois

Chic Dambach, National Peace Corps Association, Washington, DC

Lois De Berry, Tennessee State Legislator, Nashville, Tennessee

Adwoa Dunn-Mouton, Development Consultant, Washington, DC

Mel Foote, Constituency for Africa, Washington, DC

Mack Charles Jones, St. Stephen Baptist Church and National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, Kansas City, Missouri

Willis Logan, National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, New York, New York

William Lucy, American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, Washington, DC

Joyce Mends-Cole, United Nations Development Programme, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Richard Moore, Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Kathy Pomroy, Bread for the World, Washington, DC

Randall Robinson, TransAfrica Forum, Washington, DC

Leon Sullivan, International Foundation for Education and Self-Help, Phoenix, Arizona

Walter Turner, US-South Africa Sister Community Project, San Francisco, California

Paul van Tongeren, National Commission for Development Education, Netherlands

Anne Walker, International Women's Tribune Center, New York, New York

Percy Wilson, Corporate Council on Africa, Atlanta, Georgia

Note: Participants were invited in their individual capacities, not as official representatives of their organizations. The discussion was off-the-record and participants were assured that individual comments would not be publicly attributed to them.

# For Further Reading[1]

## *Constituencies*

Association of Concerned Africa Scholars (ACAS). *Bulletin: Special Issue on The Ghettoization Debate: Africa, Africans and African Studies,* no. 46 (Winter 1996).
> Papers and additional commentary from the African Studies Association 1995 panel on "Ghettoizing African Studies," addressing issues of continued racial hierarchy and "old-boy" dominance within the African Studies field. The controversy ignited by white Africanist historian Philip Curtin's article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (November 10, 1995) put fundamental issues of race, racial representation and racism squarely on the agenda.

Brock, Lisa, guest editor. *Issue: A Journal of Opinion, Special Issue on African [Diaspora] Studies* 24, no. 2 (1996).
> Thought-provoking articles from both scholars and activists, probing the relationship between the often-separated fields of Africa studies and African diaspora studies. Aims to base a more integrated "black world studies" on investigation of relations with the "real Africa," not a symbolic or romantic Africa. *Issue* is the journal of the African Studies Association.

Dawson, Michael. *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African-American Politics.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
> Based on empirical survey data. Despite differences in views among African Americans of different classes on issues of economic redistribution, African American political behavior of all classes is still profoundly influenced by racial group interests, including (with respect to whites) both relative economic disadvantage and greater dependence on government action for advancement.

Hamilton, Richard F. *Class and Politics in the United States.* New York: John Wiley, 1972.
> Based on reanalysis of standard survey data, and still relevant as a caution for analysis of more current data. Argues that any study of attitudes which does not control both for region (particularly South/non-South) and religious "pillar" (Protestant, Catholic, Jew) as well as race will give misleading results for correlations between class (education, income) and attitudes. In particular, the popular and academic stereotype of "working-class" or "lower middle-class" whites be-

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1.   The following selected suggestions for further reading, with brief annotations, were compiled by William Minter. They are intended to point to a range of relevant background issues. More extensive bibliographies may be found in many of these sources and in other works cited in footnotes by Doug McAdam and Linda Williams.

ing consistently more authoritarian or racist than upper-middle-class whites is rarely supported by the survey data, when these controls are taken into account. The most consistently conservative group on almost all issues is upper-middle-class white Protestants.

Harris, Fredrick C. "Religious Institutions and African American Political Mobilization." In *Classifying by Race and Representation*, edited by Peter E. Peterson, 278-312. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995.
   Both survey data (metro Chicago) and analysis on variations in church-based political activism by race/ethnicity. Documents how religious activity gives a greater boost to political activism for blacks than for whites.

Hollinger, David A. *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism.* New York: Basic Books, 1995.
   Reflective essay style. Argues for a "cosmopolitan" perspective on cultural diversity, favoring "voluntary over involuntary affiliation, balanc[ing] an appreciation for communities of descent with a determination to make room for new communities, and promot[ing] solidarities of wide scope that incorporate people with different ethnic and racial backgrounds."

Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s.* 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 1994.
   Reflective essay style. Angela Davis terms it "required reading," and Manning Marable says the authors are "among our most important social critics on issues of race and class. Omi and Winant say a racial project is "racist" if it "creates or reproduces structures of domination based on essentialist [fixed, inherent, unchanging] categories or race." They argue that (1) old-fashioned racism still exists, (2) the traditional victimology of attributing all minority misfortunes to whites is moribund, and that (3) to oppose racism one must notice race.

Smith, Robert C. and Richard Seltzer. *Race, Class, and Culture: A Study in Afro-American Mass Opinion.* Albany: SUNY Press, 1992.
   Based on empirical research data. When class differences are factored out, blacks and whites are similar on most measures of political participation and social values. However, there are still significant differences by race: blacks, as compared with whites of the same class, are more religious, more suspicious, and more liberal on economic and foreign policy issues.

Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Scholzman, and Henry E. Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995.
   Based on empirical research data. The most detailed survey data documenting who participates politically, noting variations by race, ethnicity, gender. Examines time, money, and skills as resources for political participation and predictors

of engagement; the roots of political participation in experience in non-political institutional affiliations, including church, union; and the effects of parental background, educational attainment, political socialization, job history, and institutional placement.

West, Cornell. *Race Matters*. New York: Random House, 1994.
Reflective essay style. Deservedly a national bestseller. Essays ranging over a variety of current topics. Includes chapters on "The Pitfalls of Racial Reasoning" and "The Crisis of Black Leadership."

## *Movements*

Dorsey, Ellen. "Human Rights Strategy for a Changing International Environment: The United States Anti-Apartheid Movement in Transition." Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1992.
Not only a description of different phases of the movement, but also a challenging and substantive analysis of strategic and organizational issues.

McAdam, Doug, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, eds. *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
The introductory essay by the editors and fifteen essays by the editors and other leading social movement scholars provide a clear overview of current insights on social movements in the United States and other industrial countries.

Morris, Aldon. *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*. New York: The Free Press, 1984.
One of the earlier and best of the new wave of studies of the civil rights movement, focusing attention on the origins of the movement in the organizing efforts of activists rooted in the history and institutions of local black communities.

Smith, Christian. *Resisting Reagan: The US Central America Peace Movement*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
The most systematic and theoretically informed study of a movement directed toward "Third World" foreign policy issues, including historical data and survey data from Sanctuary and Witness for Peace activists.

## *Interest Groups & Coalitions*

Bobo, Kim, Jackie Kendall and Steve Max, *Organizing for Social Change: A Manual for Activists in the 1990s.* 2nd ed. Santa Ana, Calif.: Seven Locks Press, 1996.
> Strategy, tactics, and "nuts and bolts" advice from the experience of the Midwest Academy, a training center for movement organizers.

Cigler, Allan J. and Burdett A. Loomis, eds. *Interest Group Politics.* 4th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1995.
> Despite a strong tilt towards conventional wisdom (interest groups make government unwieldy), this volume has several useful articles, particularly on religious activist groups, on public interest patrons, and on fundraising strategies of environmental groups. The article on foreign policy interest groups is superficial and sloppy, but reflects the current status of research on the topic.

Gomes, Ralph C. and Linda Faye Williams, eds. *From Exclusion to Inclusion: The Long Struggle for African American Political Power.* New York: Greenwood Press, 1992.
> An important collection of essays on different aspects of African American political power, particularly in the electoral arena. An essay by the editors on "Coalition Politics: Past, Present, and Future" examines the difficulties of coalition building between African American constituencies and other political forces and recommends ways to maximize the effectiveness of this necessary coalition building.

Shuman, Michael. *Towards a Global Village: International Community Development Initiatives.* London: Pluto Press, in association with Towns & Development/Institute for Policy Studies, 1994.
> Reviews emerging trend, particularly in Europe and the United States, towards involvement of local communities in foreign policy and development concerns relating to the global South.

Smith, Robert C. *We Have No Leaders: African Americans in the Post-Civil Rights Era.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996.
> The most comprehensive study to date of African American politics of recent decades. Analyzes the failure of African American organizations and political groups to win influence and exert power on behalf of the majority of African Americans, despite the rising number of individuals incorporated into existing political institutions.

Walker, Jack L., Jr. *Mobilizing Interest Groups in America: Patrons, Professions, and Social Movements.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991.
> Based on empirical survey data, national surveys of membership organizations operating in Washington, DC in 1980 and 1985. Also a major theoretical contribution. Argues that there are three distinct modes of political mobilization (apart

from political parties) in the United States: business associations or professional groups from the profit sector; occupational associations in the nonprofit or governmental sectors; and groups related to social movements. Each of the three has distinct patterns of funding, organizational maintenance, and political strategies. The major gap in the study is lack of data on unions.

Weissman, Stephen R. *A Culture of Deference: Congress's Failure of Leadership in Foreign Policy.* New York: Basic Books, 1995.

A former House Africa Subcommittee staffer from the period of that committee's greatest effectiveness analyzes Congressional initiatives and limitations on a range of Central American, African, and Asian issues. Cases in which Congress achieved some successes despite the pervasive "culture of deference" to the executive and narrow interests, include El Salvador (1989-91), the Philippines (1984-86) and South Africa (1985-86).

### Conventional Wisdoms

Block, Fred. *The Vampire State, and Other Myths and Fallacies about the US Economy.* New York: Norton, 1996.

Has significant section on global economy, free trade. A little bit is good, he notes, but beware of the dosage fallacy: "if a teaspoon of medicine makes you better, then why not drink the whole bottle."

Gordon, David. *Fat and Mean: The Corporate Squeeze of Working Americans and the Myth of Managerial Downsizing.* New York: Free Press, 1996

Shows the United States has highest proportion of corporate bureaucrats among advanced countries, correlated with lowest wage growth and a labor-cost-cutting rather than organizational innovation approach to increasing productivity.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). *Human Development Report 1997.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

The latest in a series of annual reports beginning in 1990. Each report brings together innovative thinking, statistical yardsticks (including the Human Development Index), and examination of special themes to develop a more comprehensive view of human development than narrow focus on macro-economic growth alone. The 1997 report focuses on the changing face of poverty and an agenda for global poverty eradication.

## Contributors

**Imani Countess** was the Executive Director of the Washington Office on Africa and the Africa Policy Information Center from 1992 to 1997 and the initiator of the Constituency Builders' Dialogue project. She now serves as the Congressional Liaison Officer for the African Development Foundation.

**Doug McAdam** teaches in the Sociology Department at the University of Arizona. He is the author, among other works, of *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970* (1982) and *Freedom Summer* (1988). His most recent book, edited with John D. McCarthy and Mayer Zald, is *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (1996).

**Linda Williams** teaches in the Department of Government and Politics at the University of Maryland, College Park, and has recently served as Acting Chair of the Afro-American Studies Program. She previously worked with the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. Her published work includes *From Exclusion to Inclusion: The Long Struggle for African American Political Power* (1992), edited with Ralph Gomes. She is currently working on a book entitled *We Shall Overcome: The Role of the Black Church in Shaping Black Male and Female Political Leadership.*

**William Minter** is the Senior Research Fellow at the Africa Policy Information Center. His books include *King Solomon's Mines Revisited: Western Interests and the Burdened History of Southern Africa* (1986) and *Apartheid's Contras: An Inquiry into the Roots of War in Angola and Mozambique* (1994).

**Loretta Hobbs** is an organization development specialist in meeting and group facilitation, leadership coaching, communication issues, and staff training. She is a 16-year veteran of the communications industry and holds a Masters of Science in Organization Development from The American University/NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Science.