



Chapter 1

An Unfinished Journey

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The early morning phone call came on February 4, 1969, the day after I arrived back from Tanzania to my parents' house in Tucson, Arizona. "Eduardo has been assassinated."

The caller was Gail Hovey, one of the co-editors of this book. She was then working with the Southern Africa Committee in New York, a group supporting liberation movements in Mozambique and other Southern African countries. Eduardo, as he was known to hundreds of friends around the world, was Eduardo Mondlane. At the time of his death by a letter bomb, he was president of the Mozambique Liberation Front, known as Frelimo. Had he lived to see the freedom of his country, he would likely have joined his contemporary and friend Nelson Mandela as one of Africa's most respected leaders.

It's hard to say what factors build lasting connections between people, but surely the deaths of those engaged in a common struggle must count among the most powerful. I had just said goodbye to Mondlane at the airport in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on New Year's Day 1969, after two years of teaching in Frelimo's secondary school. I was one of many inspired by his leadership, and his sacrifice reinforced our commitments. The deaths of Mondlane and others involved in freedom movements had profound impact not only on their own countries but around the world. The list is long: Amílcar Cabral, whose words provide our title, was killed in

1973; Patrice Lumumba in 1961; Malcolm X in 1965; Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968; Steve Biko in 1977; Ruth First in 1982; and Samora Machel in 1986—to name only a few.

Memories of those who gave their lives can bind together and inspire those who carry on their legacies. So can highly visible public victories, such as the dramatic release of Nelson Mandela from prison in February 1990 and the first democratic election in South Africa in April 1994. The worldwide anti-apartheid movement, which helped win those victories, was arguably the most successful transnational social movement of the last half century. All of us engaged in this book project were minor actors in that movement, and our roles will become clear as the story unfolds.

In February 1969, when Hovey and I spoke of Mondlane's assassination in Tanzania, I had not yet met Charlie Cobb, also a co-editor of this book. But he and his comrades at the Center for Black Education in Washington had already made connections to liberation circles in Dar es Salaam after years of civil rights organizing in the U.S. South. Later that year he moved to Tanzania, determined to live in an African country "long enough to really learn something about it." "What looks simple turns out to be complex," Cobb told an interviewer in 1981, after returning to the United States to continue his career as a journalist. "If you want to write about it, as I did



Eduardo Mondlane's funeral, in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, February 1969. Janet Mondlane stands with the couple's children, Chude, Nyeleti, and Eddie. President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania is at left with arms crossed. *Photo reproduced from Manghezi 1999.*

when I got to Africa, or if you want to organize it, which is what I did in Mississippi, then you have to learn to deal with these complexities.”

Dar es Salaam was indeed a gathering place in the 1960s. The city welcomed both the liberation movements of Southern Africa and veterans of the U.S. civil rights movement who looked to independent Africa for answers that were not forthcoming in the United States. Exiles from apartheid South Africa, its colony South West Africa (Namibia), white-ruled Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), and the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique all found their way to Tanzania. Liberation movement leaders regularly visited, even from distant West Africa, where Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde remained under Portuguese rule.

It was in Dar es Salaam in 1968 that I first met Prexy Nesbitt, who was still there in 1969 when Mondlane was assassinated. Over the decades Nesbitt, who has been an indispensable adviser to this book project, traveled from Chicago to Mozambique and South Africa and around the United

States, making connections between African and American activists on many fronts.

Nesbitt and I became involved with groups working on Africa in the mid-1960s. Even earlier, however, we felt the influence of Eduardo Mondlane and other Africans who came to the United States as students or visitors and spoke out eloquently for the freedom of their countries. Nesbitt, growing up in a progressive African American family in Chicago, had already met Mondlane at his family's Warren Avenue Congregational Church. Mondlane was exceptional in his range of contacts and his powerful presence, winning the respect of hundreds of Americans who would become involved with African liberation.

In a still-segregated United States, Africans speaking of freedom for their homelands found eager listeners among those engaged in organizing for equal rights in the United States. George Houser, for example, became the first executive secretary of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in Chicago in 1943 and helped organize a “freedom ride” to the

South in 1947. Later he moved to New York and headed the American Committee on Africa, which was founded to support the civil disobedience campaigns of South Africa's African National Congress (ANC) against the apartheid system.

Both the African and African American movements entered a new stage in that decade. The year 1955 marked a turning point for both. In June, the ANC and its allies convened the Congress of the People in Kliptown, near Johannesburg. The Freedom Charter adopted there, just before police moved in to disperse the assembly, declared that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white." Two months later, a 15-year-old from Chicago named Emmett Till was kidnapped, killed, and dumped in the Tallahatchie River in Mississippi, accused of provocative remarks to a white woman. That killing was one of the decisive catalysts for the U.S. civil rights movement of the next 10 years.

Prexy Nesbitt and I were only a few years younger than Emmett Till. For both of us, there is a direct line from his death to our engagement with support for African liberation. Nesbitt was in Chicago when Till's body was brought back and viewed by thousands at an open-casket funeral. I, a white American growing up on an interracial cooperative farm in Mississippi, spent my childhood just 35 miles from where Till was killed. Our cooperative, a legacy of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union of the 1930s, served the local black community with a clinic and a cooperative store that were more successful than our limited farming operations. In the charged atmosphere of the mid-1950s, white plantation owners targeted the co-op with a boycott, threatening their black workers with expulsion if they continued to associate with it. Within a year of Till's murder, the co-op residents had dispersed, most leaving Mississippi.

For both Nesbitt and me, our memories of the 1950s and our understandings of racism in the United States are linked to our later involvement with Africa. Similar links are common to many other activists we have spoken to. But diverse connections between Americans and Africans, embedded in the history of race on both sides of the Atlantic, are not unique to this period. They predate the 1950s by decades and even centuries, going back to the earliest years of the slave trade. To cite only one prominent example, in 1839 captive West Africans rebelled and took over

the Spanish slave ship *Amistad*. Afterwards the ship was captured by a U.S. Navy ship; the Africans were charged with the murder of the captain and jailed in New Haven, Connecticut. After a long legal battle, in which they were supported by abolitionists and represented in court by former president John Quincy Adams, the Supreme Court freed the "mutineers" in 1841, and they returned to Africa.

Historians are beginning to trace far earlier connections as well, such as the contacts between black American and Caribbean sailors and the black populations in Cape Town, South Africa before the nineteenth century (Atkins 1996; Linebaugh and Rediker 2000). In the nineteenth century, the complex interaction among the Americas, the Caribbean, and Africa featured influences in many different directions. In the first half of the twentieth century, the links between resistance leaders in South Africa and African Americans were particularly close, as shown most recently in David Anthony's (2005) richly textured biography of the complex figure of Max Yergan.

Nonetheless, the last half of the twentieth century stands out as a distinct period. In Africa, a remarkable march to freedom produced more than 50 independent states. In the United States, organizing, protest, and legislative changes resulted in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the most important advances for African Americans since the Emancipation Proclamation. Throughout this period, there was a constant interplay between how activists in the United States understood their own country and how they made connections with others in Africa and around the world.

These reciprocal connections—and in particular the influence of Africa on Americans—hardly appear in conventional historical accounts. When a journalist from *Ebony* magazine asked Mandela about how the American civil rights movement had influenced South Africans, Mandela replied, "You are correct, there are many similarities between us. We have learned a great deal from each other" (May 1990). While the reporter's question implied one-way influence, Mandela's tactful correction stressed that the learning process was two-way, and that the struggles on both continents shared much in common.

The journalist's facile assumption is part of a larger pattern of narrowing the historical narrative.

Thus Martin Luther King Jr.'s nonviolent civil rights leadership is celebrated in classrooms, while his opposition to the Vietnam War goes unmentioned. As Lisa Brock notes in chapter 2, despite the internationalist perspective of almost all the principal civil rights figures, the standard narrative focuses exclusively on civil rights at home. There is little consciousness of that stream of American internationalism that identifies not with American preeminence but with the demand for full human rights both at home and abroad.

A Half Century of Connections

World War II provided Africans, African Americans, and other colonized people the opportunity to make their commonalities visible, especially in the black press. Paul Robeson and W. E. B. Du Bois linked the fight against Jim Crow with the war against fascism and the anticolonial campaigns. Many whites as well as blacks applauded them. The two outspoken leaders exposed doctrines of white supremacy that the then-segregated U.S. army shared with European colonial powers and the white settler outposts in Africa, even during the battle against Nazi racism.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt had hinted that the promise of freedom for oppressed peoples might apply not only to those conquered by the Nazis but also to those ruled by Western powers. But the United States and its allies did not expect that day to come for generations. As the United States mobilized for the Cold War in the late 1940s and early 1950s, even most groups working for social justice at home downplayed the connections between anticolonial and domestic antiracist movements. The dominant civil rights forces, in an effort to prove their American loyalty, dropped the language of identification with oppressed peoples.

As a result, during the second half of the twentieth century there was little public awareness of the connections between movements in the United States and Africa. None of the organizations engaged in making these connections gained a sustained mass following or political influence. Yet in each decade these ties, both organizational and personal, had powerful if unseen effects on how wider sectors of American society saw the world and their country's global role.

In the 1950s, nonviolent resistance in South Africa as well as the success of India's independence



Daily protests at the South African embassy on Massachusetts Avenue NW in Washington began on November 21, 1984. Organized by the Free South Africa Movement, they were scheduled to last for a week but continued for well over a year. The coordinator, Cecelie Counts, was a staff member of TransAfrica from 1983 to 1988 and a member of the local Southern Africa Support Project. Here she holds a sign from the National Education Association, the largest national teachers' union, whose members participated frequently in the embassy demonstrations. Photo of embassy © Rick Reinhard. Photo of Counts courtesy of Clarity Films and TransAfrica Forum.

movement in the previous decade inspired Martin Luther King Jr. and other U.S. civil rights leaders to adopt the strategy for themselves. In doing so, they ventured beyond the cautious approaches of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Urban League. Ghana's independence in 1957 provided visible evidence that freedom was possible, energizing a generation of African and American activists.

In the 1960s, despite legislative victories, the pace of civil rights advance was painfully slow. The battle-weary movement was visibly fractured after the assassination of Martin Luther King. As the Vietnam War dragged on, disillusionment grew; the New Left expanded rapidly, but fell apart into factions. At the same time, however, new opportunities for personal contacts between Americans and Africans left their mark on a growing number of individuals and institutions. Large numbers of African students and exiles came to the United States. Peace Corps workers and other Americans went to Africa; many, if not most, returned with changed perspectives and new commitments.

In the 1970s hundreds of U.S. groups organized on behalf of African freedom. Tens of thousands of individuals established strong personal ties and identified with liberation movements in Southern Africa. While most organized groups were short-lived, their outreach extended in many directions. Those involved included African Americans, other Americans, and African students and exiles. Organized groups and informal caucuses on African issues emerged in universities, churches, communities, and unions, among artists and athletes, and in almost every profession. Densely interconnected but not centrally coordinated, these groups spread the message of African liberation around the United States.

This organizing laid the groundwork for the final push for sanctions against South Africa in the 1980s. Both domestic and international policy veered to the right under President Ronald Reagan. But after Reagan was elected to a second term, activists began demonstrations at the South African embassy in Washington and around the country. Congress overrode Reagan's veto of anti-apartheid sanctions in 1986.

The sanctions imposed on South Africa by Congress represent perhaps the high point of official U.S. support for majority rule in Africa. The U.S. solidarity movement celebrates the sanctions victory as its greatest achievement. Yet a closer look at the circumstances reveals that the anti-apartheid movement was in fact sharply limited in its ability to influence U.S. policy toward Africa.

Congressional support for sanctions was narrowly focused and went hand in hand with backing for South Africa's regional war against Angola and other neighboring countries. In the late 1970s and particularly in the 1980s, South Africa, both directly and through covert intervention, mounted attacks that caused hundreds of thousands or even millions of deaths. The South African government rationalized its "total strategy" as defense against a communist "total assault." U.S. senators and representatives could see that it was time to end support for apartheid in South Africa. But they continued to view Angola and Mozambique through Cold War blinders, allowing them to embrace South Africa as an ally in the global conflict with the Soviet Union.

The decade of the 1990s started out with jubilation. Mandela walked free in 1990, and even U.S. politicians who had dismissed the imprisoned ANC leader as a communist terrorist were eager to be seen applauding his address to the U.S. Congress. In April 1994, hundreds of activists from around the world, many of them with decades of solidarity work behind them, traveled to South Africa to serve as observers for the historic first election. But at the very moment that celebrations in South Africa were marking the end of white minority rule on the continent, in Central Africa the Rwandan regime launched its genocidal attack on the Tutsi population and moderate Hutus. The outside world, which could have stepped in to stop the slaughter, did virtually nothing. More than 800,000 people were dead by the time the Rwandan Patriotic Front ousted the regime and brought the mass killings to an end.

Despite the end of the Cold War, official Washington continued to assume that economic prescriptions from the West were the appropriate solutions for African problems. Efforts such as the Jubilee 2000 campaign to cancel the debt of African and other developing countries initially won only token concessions from rich countries and international

financial institutions. And Africa was marginalized even within the new wave of global justice protests that started in 1999 with the World Trade Organization summit in Seattle.

We undertook this book project because we believe that lessons from the last half century are relevant to the debate on how to confront today's global inequality and the marginalization of Africa. Amílcar Cabral's mandate to "tell no lies, claim no easy victories" is as relevant today as it was decades ago. It is our guide as we tell this story of 50 years of solidarity between Africans and Americans.

The connections run deep. They were shaped, of course, by public figures and public events, but they were also influenced to a remarkable degree by a host of less visible actors and influences. Many public records are available in centralized archives, but the history of solidarity is not so neatly preserved. Even when historians explore news accounts and the written archives, many pieces are still missing. This book starts from networks in which we have been involved and from recent interviews with a diverse set of activists. We have also consulted secondary sources when available, but we are particularly conscious of our obligation to point to realities that we know to be obscured or distorted in the public record. We see our work of recovering and weaving together threads from this history as part of an ongoing process.

The 1950s, along with the 1930s and 1940s, have attracted significant attention from historians exploring the connections between U.S. Africa policy and U.S. race relations. Brenda Gayle Plummer (1996) has painted a broad canvas of black American engagement with foreign affairs from 1936 to 1960. Penny Von Eschen (1997) covers much the same ground, highlighting in particular the "decline of a radical anti-colonial politics" (155) resulting from the marginalization of Du Bois and Robeson. Thomas Borstelmann (2001) and Azza Sadama Layton (2000) have shown how Cold War interests shaped changes in domestic race policy as well as Africa policy. James H. Meriwether (2002), also reviewing the period from the mid-1930s to 1960, brings out the critical roles of South Africa, Kenya, and Ghana in shaping black American consciousness that "proudly we can be Africans."

This literature makes little use of oral history, and almost all the people who could tell stories of this period are no longer alive. Nevertheless, works such as the dissertation by Charles Johnson (2004) as well as the book by Anthony (2005) mentioned earlier show that there is rich archival material still to be explored on these themes.

Very little has been written about the decades after the 1950s. The three most prominent overview volumes, by Massie (1997), Culverson (1999), and F. N. Nesbitt (2004), cover the main features of the national anti-apartheid narrative, and Massie adds some detail on the divestment campaign in the northeastern states. But none gives attention even to solidarity with Namibia, much less to other countries in the region. Each spends a few pages on the year-long demonstrations at the South African embassy in 1984–85, noting the media impact of the events and the prominent figures arrested there. But not one of the three mentions the Southern Africa Support Project, which worked for years to educate the local community in Washington, DC about apartheid and provided the core of the organizing work for the daily demonstrations. These overview volumes and media accounts of the period do capture the broad picture, but the number of missing pieces makes these portrayals seem seriously misleading to those of us who were involved.

Only a few published works to date, such as those by Love (1985), W. Johnson (1999), and Gastrow (2005), provide detailed case studies of action at the state or local level. A recent dissertation (Hostetter 2004) looks more closely at the role of three organizations: the American Committee on Africa, the American Friends Service Committee, and TransAfrica. In general, however, historians have hardly begun to explore the varied aspects of the movement in these decades.

The stories we tell in this book are, in our view, just a beginning of the history that needs to be written. As noted in the preface, for every activist mentioned in these pages, any of us could name many more who should also have been included, and an even larger number surely remain unknown to us. And while we concentrate on tracing the links between Africa and the United States, we are well aware that these fit within a context of wider links between the Americas, Europe, and other parts of the world. It

would be simpler, perhaps, to tell the story of one or two organizations or a few individuals, or to limit our investigation to a careful examination of a few critical years or specific campaigns. Indeed, if the book is successful, future historians will take up such tasks. When they do, we hope that they will realize that to understand a movement it is not enough to look at the individuals and organizations that appear on stage at high points of the drama. One must also trace the often invisible networks and supporting cast offstage, and the threads linking struggles across decades and even generations.

The 1950s

At mid-century, the broad internationalism emerging from World War II was still influential if not dominant in U.S. public life. “Let’s Join the Human Race” exhorted a widely distributed pamphlet published in 1950 by Stringfellow Barr, a prominent white American educator. Barr’s internationalism, which inspired one of the predecessor organizations of the Peace Corps, paralleled the vision being eloquently expressed by Paul Robeson. Son of a former slave, Robeson was an athlete, lawyer, activist, and star of stage, screen, and concert hall, and was at the

time one of the most famous Americans of any race, inside the country and around the world.

Yet in that same year, 1950, the United States went to war in Korea, and the U.S. Congress passed the McCarran Act to defend “internal security” against subversives. Traveling to Moscow and other European cities as an artist, Robeson had been warmly welcomed and had encountered little of the racism and prejudice he experienced at home. He began to protest the growing Cold War hostility between the Soviet Union and the United States, questioning why he should support his own government when it did not treat him as an equal citizen. The U.S. government could not tolerate the fact that he had been “for years extremely active in behalf of the independence for the colonial people of Africa,” and in 1950 the State Department seized his passport to prevent him from traveling abroad (Von Eschen 1997, 124). Robeson’s virtual disappearance from public view meant the loss of a powerful voice speaking out for international understanding and African freedom.

In 1952 South Africa’s ANC and its allies launched the Defiance Campaign Against Unjust Laws, sending more than 8,500 volunteers to be arrested in protests against racial discrimination. The NAACP, the largest U.S. civil rights organization, passed resolutions



George Houser with Walter and Albertina Sisulu at ANC headquarters in Johannesburg, 1999. Houser traveled to South Africa to present the Sisulus with the book *I Will Go Singing: Walter Sisulu Speaks of His Life and the Struggle for Freedom in South Africa*. The book is based on conversations Sisulu had with Houser and Herbert Shore. Photo courtesy of George Houser.

condemning World Bank loans to South Africa and calling for a more active role against colonialism at its July 1952 convention (Meriwether 2002, 117–18). But it also joined official Washington in denouncing Robeson for his communist ties. Subsequently, NAACP leaders chose to focus almost exclusively on domestic issues and sought support from the Harry Truman administration, turning away from active involvement with African causes.

For the ANC and for many activists in the United States as well, common opposition to racial injustice took priority over the U.S.-Soviet rivalry. Yet over the next decades the Cold War continued to define the context of solidarity work in the United States.

The ANC's Walter Sisulu appealed for international support of the Defiance Campaign. Those who responded included Robeson's weakened Council on African Affairs (CAA) and the newly formed Americans for South African Resistance (AFSAR). AFSAR was organized by radicals and liberals wary of the Communist Party for its Soviet ties but, unlike the NAACP, committed to direct action based on strong anticolonial convictions. It was part of the organizational nexus that included CORE, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and the Socialist Party.

The CAA and AFSAR each organized meetings and demonstrations in support of the ANC, and each raised a few thousand dollars to send to South Africa. The CAA, weakened by government harassment, dissolved in 1955. In 1953 AFSAR gave birth to the American Committee on Africa (ACOA), which would soon establish itself as a small but critical link between African movements and American activists.

The negative impact of the Cold War dominates this period. There is little question that U.S.-Soviet rivalry fostered division among progressive groups and reduced popular identification with anticolonialism and with Africa. Even so, the drama of Africa rising had a powerful impact on organizations and individuals in the United States. And despite the removal from public view of the influential bridge-building figure of Paul Robeson, the African cause continued to draw in white as well as black Americans who saw anticolonialism and opposition to domestic racism as interrelated. The Council on African Affairs and the American Committee on Africa drew on overlapping networks and on similar repertoires of action, with a focus on combating ignorance about



E. S. Reddy protesting apartheid in 1946, soon after his arrival in New York. When African National Congress president Dr. A. B. Xuma visited the United Nations, the Council on African Affairs picketed the South African consulate in support of the ANC. Reddy brought a group of Indian students to join the rally. *Photo reproduced from Hunton 1946.*

Africa with information about liberation struggles against colonialism and apartheid.

In the 1950s, the efforts of this small contingent of Africa activists had little or no direct influence in Washington policy circles. Outreach around the United States was modest at best. As Lisa Brock notes in chapter 2, both the CAA and the ACOA succeeded in disseminating information about Africa and in helping African nationalists make connections in the United States. But without broader media support, the active involvement of large organizations such as the NAACP, or any strong advocates for Africa within the State Department or Congress, the scope for influence was decidedly limited.

Both the CAA and ACOA found ways to be effective, however, within the small but potentially influential context of the “international community” taking shape around United Nations headquarters in Manhattan. Retired U.N. anti-apartheid official E. S. Reddy (2004) recalls that as early as 1946, Alphaeus Hunton of the CAA provided delegates with critical information they needed to stop South African annexation of South West Africa (later Namibia). The ACOA made a significant contribution in the 1950s by supporting African petitioners who came to make their case, helping them with office space, networking, and day-to-day survival in New York City. The list of visitors includes famous names such as Julius Nyerere of Tanganyika, but also less prominent figures such as representatives of Algeria’s National Liberation Front and opponents of South African rule in South West Africa.

Around the country, first the CAA and then the ACOA reached thousands of supporters who subscribed to their publications. Still, public opinion about Africa, among both black and white Americans, was shaped primarily by how the mainstream media reported events. The visibility of Africa in the press grew significantly over the decade. Liberal journalist John Gunther published the 950-page *Inside Africa*, one of his widely read “Inside” series, in 1955. Raising its own profile, the ACOA was able to attract the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., as well as white liberals such as Gunther and Eleanor Roosevelt, to serve on a committee of sponsors.

Though there may be a common impression that the United States at least nudged Europe toward faster decolonization, the historical record shows otherwise. It is true that by the end of the decade, with the advance of decolonization on the continent, activists were in a stronger position to facilitate contacts in Washington. Democratic politicians in the opposition began to refer to Africa. In 1957, for example, Senator John F. Kennedy spoke out against the French colonial war in Algeria and the Dwight Eisenhower administration’s support of French policy. Nevertheless, “the overall thrust of U.S. policy toward Africa in the 1950s was the same as the administration’s policy toward civil rights at home: to avoid it as much as possible” (Borstelmann 2001, 116).

Both the Truman and Eisenhower administrations focused on keeping the Soviet Union out of Africa. But their strategy for doing so continued to depend on the subordination of Africa to Europe rather than on forging alliances with new African leaders. There were voices within the U.S. Congress and the public demanding that more attention be paid to African aspirations, but those voices were virtually inaudible to policy makers. African nationalists who had hoped that U.S. involvement might provide new negotiating space were disappointed (Nwaubani 2001, 232–34).

If U.S. policy was to develop in support of African freedom, far more Americans would have to know and care about the continent. It was during the 1950s that this began to happen, in part as a result of influence in the other direction—from Africa to the United States. African freedom movements reached out to Americans, through the ACOA as well as through many other connections. American activists were also learning about African freedom movements and asking questions about what the African example might mean for freedom at home. The example of Ghana was foremost, followed by that of Kenya.

At the beginning of the decade the strategies of the leading civil rights organizations were focused on appeals to dominant white institutions—the courts and the political establishment, most often the president. These appeals made the argument that racial discrimination at home handicapped U.S. global leadership by giving ammunition to Soviet propaganda.

Progressive American activists were divided about the Soviet Union. Some, notably those linked to the Communist Party, saw the Soviet Union as an ally against racism and injustice around the world, building on the World War II common front against fascism. Others disagreed, citing internal repression in the Soviet Union as well as the Communist Party’s history of manipulation of its allies. But whatever their disagreements about the Soviet Union, activists who looked to the CAA or the ACOA agreed with the African National Congress in South Africa: action against racism and colonialism took priority over Cold War disputes. The national leadership of the NAACP, in contrast, feared offending those in power by staging demonstrations at home or supporting liberation abroad.



Restaurant sit-in, 1945. Bayard Rustin, left, and George Houser led interracial workshops sponsored by the Fellowship of Reconciliation and CORE. When a restaurant in Toledo, Ohio refused to serve them, they decided to sit in. *Photo courtesy of George Houser.*

When Rosa Parks famously refused to give up her seat to a white man on December 1, 1955, the bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama launched a new phase of the civil rights movement. This was just a few months after the death of Emmett Till. Her act and the boycott that followed were part of a tradition of protest that included Paul Robeson as well as Mahatma Gandhi. Looking back through the prism of the debates about nonviolence in the 1960s and 1970s, it is easy to forget that when activists in the 1950s—in South Africa or the United States—turned to Gandhi, the lesson most embraced was the need to resist rather than the aspect of nonviolence as such. And the perspective, even in the United States, was international. Civil rights activists were influenced not only by Gandhi's ideas but by India's achievement of independence. Many also looked to the examples of resistance in South Africa and in Ghana, which in turn drew inspiration from India's example.

ACOA founder George Houser already had some experience with direct action. In 1947 he had been one of the organizers of the "Journey of Reconciliation" that took a handful of black and white activists through the South, defying bus segregation and courting arrests and beatings but gaining little national attention. He was ready to do more. During the ANC's Defiance Campaign, he recalled, the newly organized Americans for South African Resistance got information from Z. K. Matthews, who was at Union Theological Seminary as a visiting professor for the 1952–53 school year. Matthews was one of the top leaders of the ANC, and his son Joe headed up the Defiance Campaign in the Cape province. While the Defiance Campaign was finally suppressed by the apartheid regime, American activists were impressed to see some 8,500 South Africans going to jail to fight for their rights.

In contrast to South Africa, Ghana became a story not only of resistance but also of victory. Returning to Montgomery after Ghana's independence celebration in 1957, Martin Luther King Jr. told his congregation that Ghana taught the lesson that "the oppressor never voluntarily gives freedom to the oppressed. . . . Freedom only comes through persistent revolt" (Carson 2001, chap. 11). The *Amsterdam News* heralded Ghana's independence in March 1957 as "the first robin of spring" for "millions of colored people around the world" (Meriwether 2002, 163).

Kwame Nkrumah himself was one of the interpreters of Africa to Americans. As a student at Lincoln University and the University of Pennsylvania in the 1930s and 1940s, the future Ghanaian leader built ties to U.S. civil rights activists. In July 1958, as president of newly independent Ghana, he made a triumphant visit to the United States. There he not only addressed the House and Senate in Washington but also spoke to enthusiastic thousands gathered to receive him in New York and Chicago.

Pioneer West African nationalist Nnamdi Azikiwe, Nigeria's first president, also counted Lincoln as his alma mater. Like Nkrumah, he established contacts around the United States in his student years that prefigured later ties between Nigerians and Americans. Yet it was also less-known interpreters like Z. K. Matthews and Eduardo Mondlane who made personal connections and friendships behind the scenes. Mondlane, who studied at Oberlin College and Northwestern University, reached out to Americans much as Nkrumah had done two decades earlier. Such relationships helped shape these African leaders, but equally important, they had profound influence on the Americans who came to know them.

In a country as vast as the United States, however, neither these contacts nor the network being built by the ACOA was powerful enough to counter the pervasive ignorance and stereotypes concerning Africa. A 1957 survey found that only 1 percent of African Americans and scarcely 6 percent of white Americans could name as many as five countries in Africa (Nwaubani 2001, 233).

Some of the most pernicious stereotypes stemmed from coverage of the 1952–55 Mau Mau insurrection in Kenya. Robert Ruark's 1955 bestseller

Something of Value, with its graphic descriptions of African "savagery," helped shape public perception of the uprising, as did biased media accounts. In fact, Mau Mau was a revolt by people in Kikuyu-speaking areas that had suffered mass expropriation of land by white settlers. It was brutally suppressed by the British. While both sides committed atrocities, less than 100 whites and some 2,000 Africans were killed by insurgents; the British killed, by official count, 11,500 insurgents and executed 1,015 captives (Minter 1986, 118–24). Two new studies by historians David Anderson (2005) and Caroline Elkins (2005) provide detailed documentation of the horrific violations of human rights perpetrated by the British authorities, settlers, and loyalists, including torture, displacement, imprisonment of civilians, and summary execution of prisoners and suspects.

In Britain, criticism of the war by opposition Labour party politicians eventually gained some attention. But in the United States, with the exception of a 1954 conference organized in New York by the Council on African Affairs (Meriwether 2002, 124–49), there was virtually no analysis or criticism of the war. Among many black Americans, the term "Mau Mau" signified resistance. But few Americans, black or white, were in direct communication with Kenyans who could have provided a more complete picture of the revolt and the events that led up to it.

In the early 1960s, following the independence of many African countries, an influx of African students arrived to pursue higher education in the United States. As Americans came into contact with these students, opportunities to know Africans and learn about Africa increased substantially. The receptions for Kwame Nkrumah and for Kenyan nationalist leader Tom Mboya in the 1950s had illustrated the eagerness of Americans for direct contact with African spokespersons. Most young Africans who came to study in the United States were not destined for high political office, of course, nor were all inclined to political activism. But with their numbers growing from only a few hundred in the early 1950s to several thousand a decade later, their influence was greater than is generally recognized.

Beginning in 1959, the students included those brought by the ACOA-linked African-American Students Foundation, as well as those who found their way to the United States on other programs.



Jackie Robinson



Ida Wood of the Phelps Stokes Fund, left, and Eunice Kennedy Shriver.

Welcoming African Students

The African-American Students Foundation chartered planes in 1959 and 1960 to bring more than 300 East African students to New York to take up scholarships around the United States. The welcome programs for their arrival, organized by Cora Weiss, included meetings with prominent Americans, from baseball pioneer Jackie Robinson, who headed the fundraising campaign for the 1959 airlift, to Malcolm X, Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Ida Wood of the Phelps Stokes Fund, and Rep. Charles Diggs. The second airlift, in 1960, was financed with a grant from a Kennedy family foundation.

Photos courtesy of Cora Weiss.



Clockwise from top left:
 Lorraine Hansberry
 Malcolm X
 Cora Weiss, left, and Ida Wood
 Representative Charles Diggs



They were dispersed to colleges and universities around the country, some to Southern white colleges where they were the first blacks admitted, some to historically black institutions and large universities (C. Weiss 2003). At the end of the decade, African students were enrolled at almost all of the historically black colleges in the United States. Repeatedly, in interviews or in conversations about this book, activists who grew up in the 1960s mentioned that their families had hosted African students or that they had met African students on campus.

These students brought with them not only an understanding of their home countries but also a growing consciousness of the unfinished freedom march down the continent, a march that was blocked by white minority regimes across the southern third of Africa. A 1960 study of black youth in the United States reported that African students often challenged their African American colleagues to be more aggressive in seeking freedom (*Washington Post*, March 6, 1960, A17). At an ecumenical student conference in Athens, Ohio at the end of the 1950s, which was attended by hundreds of Southern black students, the Africans present reportedly “stole the show” (Carson 1981,16).

The 1960s

For me, the 1960s began with the Athens conference over the 1959–60 winter break. A college freshman, I was one of some 3,500 people gathered at the University of Ohio in Athens. Sponsored by the Protestant ecumenical National Student Christian Federation (NSCF), the conference included more than 100 Africans and at least 900 students from other countries. We were guided through an intensive program that emphasized the Christian responsibility to take action for social justice at home and abroad. Conference co-chair Bola Ige, who went on to become a highly respected Nigerian lawyer and was attorney general at the time of his assassination in 1998, eloquently denounced imperialism as well as racism. Martin Luther King Jr. and Nashville-based James Lawson, soon to be one of the leading sit-in leaders, called for action, not words, against racial injustice.

Less than a month after they returned to their campuses, in early 1960, many students who had been at Athens joined the wave of sit-ins against segregated restaurants across the South. Our small



Eduardo Mondlane in his senior class picture at Oberlin College, 1953.
Photo courtesy of Oberlin College Archives.

student group in Tucson, Arizona, took on a less dramatic campaign to ban landlords who discriminated from the university registry of off-campus housing.

That same year, 17 African countries gained their independence. British prime minister Harold Macmillan declared at a widely heralded speech in Cape Town, South Africa, that the colonial powers had to adapt to the “wind of change” that was sweeping the continent. John F. Kennedy narrowly won election over Richard Nixon after a well-publicized intervention to help gain the release of Martin Luther King Jr. from jail. Just as Africans expected Britain to respond to peaceful protests by accelerating progress toward independence, so civil rights demonstrators hoped to arouse Washington to support their campaign against segregation.

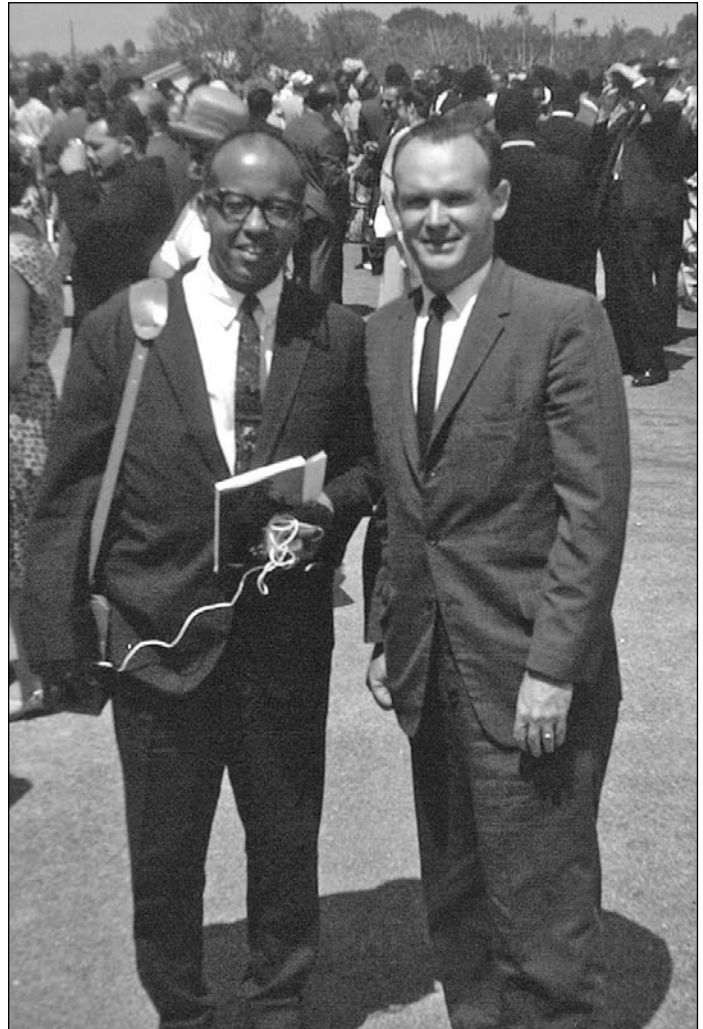
Already, however, there were signs that the journey would be dangerous and prolonged. On March 21, 1960, South African police killed 69 demonstrators at Sharpeville. And just after Kennedy’s election in November, Congo’s elected prime minister, Patrice Lumumba, was captured by the forces of Joseph Mobutu at the instigation of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). They turned him over to be executed by Belgian-backed rebels only days before Kennedy’s inauguration in January 1961.

By the end of the 1960s, few African liberation leaders or U.S. Africa activists retained any illusions that Washington would respond to moral appeals to act against white minority rule in Africa. Africa activists were part of a generation radicalized by their experiences in the domestic civil rights movement and their opposition to the Vietnam War. This radicalization was reinforced by the realities they saw in Southern Africa. African movements were forced to take up arms, while the United States continued its ties with the white regimes. Activists in turn identified with the African movements. The activists targeted not only U.S. government policy but also corporate interests that were seen as bolstering oppression at home and abroad.

This shift in perspective was propelled in part by events in Africa, but it also reflected the changes in American life associated with the 1960s. The narratives of this period are as diverse as the decade itself. For some, whether they applaud or deplore the results, the emergence of a counterculture is the central story. For others, the political evolution from Kennedy to Johnson to Nixon takes center stage. For historians of the period, and probably for the majority of activists, Africa was hardly visible. Indeed, most volumes recounting “the 1960s” hardly mention the continent. For many of us, however, African connections and experiences were closely interwoven with engagement in the civil rights movement and the movement against the Vietnam War. By the end of the decade, as Mimi Edmunds describes in chapter 3, a much larger and diverse array of political forces on the left was becoming aware of Africa and other parts of what was then called the Third World.

Developments in the civil rights movement at home were fundamental to this evolution. The commonly repeated civil rights narrative centers on moments such as Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech at the 1963 March on Washington. Historians also often cite President Lyndon Johnson’s appropriation of the anthem “We Shall Overcome” in pressing for a new civil rights act after the nationally televised white violence at Selma, Alabama in 1965. The summary lesson is that Washington and the mainstream white majority joined protesters in rejecting the explicit racism of Southern whites. In this celebratory version, the victory over segregation was won in the 1960s. The meaning of Martin Luther

King’s opposition to the Vietnam War, his assassination, and demands for economic justice as well as political inclusion have no place in this story.



Bill Sutherland and George Houser at Zambian independence celebration in Lusaka, October 1964. *Photo courtesy of George Houser.*

For most civil rights activists, white as well as black, the story was more complex and the outcome far more ambiguous. Despite the laws passed, the restaurants integrated, and the voters registered, we also saw the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) target protesters more enthusiastically than they investigated white racist violence. It was no secret that liberal white politicians, from the White House on down, were more interested in urging protesters to be patient than they were in addressing racial and economic inequality. In 1964 the Democratic Party refused to seat the elected delegates from the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, giving preference to the racially exclusive delegation of the Mis-

Mississippi white establishment. Murders of civil rights workers—Medgar Evers in 1963, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Mickey Schwerner in 1964, and many others less known—went unpunished or unsolved. In August 1965 violence in the Watts section of Los Angeles led to the killings of 34 people, most by police or national guardsmen. Watts marked the beginning of years of urban unrest that exposed the fact that racial inequality was entrenched nationwide rather than confined to the Southern states.

As the war in Vietnam escalated, student and civil rights activists joined traditional peace groups in mobilizing against the war. In April 1965 over 20,000 demonstrators showed up in Washington for an antiwar demonstration spearheaded by Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Speakers at the gathering included Bob Moses of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the civil rights group that was most active in speaking out against the war. By 1967 Martin Luther King Jr. had overcome resistance from his more cautious advisers to denounce the U.S. government as “the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today” (King 1967). The speech brought down on King a barrage of condemnation from “mainstream” liberals and civil rights leaders, reminiscent of that unleashed against Robeson and Du Bois in the 1950s.

After an exhilarating beginning, the 1960s witnessed a slowing of the momentum of liberation that had brought so many countries to independence. The decade that opened with the Sharpeville massacre and Lumumba’s assassination continued with South Africa’s arrest of Nelson Mandela in 1962, allegedly with the help of a tip-off from the CIA. There were civil wars in the Congo (1960–65) and in Nigeria (1967–70). A military coup ousted Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana (1966). Portuguese colonialists and white settlers prevailed in the southern third of the continent. The Nixon administration that took office in 1969 based its Africa policy on the stated assumption that the white minority regimes were “here to stay.” Activists’ hopes to the contrary were based as much on the conviction that justice must eventually triumph as on any evidence then available.

While the 1950s provided the hopeful image of independent Ghana, it is the specter of the Congo that haunts and still obscures the 1960s. Because of the preoccupation with the Cold War, what little

attention presidents Kennedy and Johnson gave to Africa was centered on the Congo. The United States aided white mercenaries who were slaughtering thousands of Africans in the eastern Congo in 1964, yet U.S. officials and media focused almost exclusively on the fate of white hostages. By mid-decade the CIA had installed Joseph Mobutu as the country’s dictator, sealing Congo’s fate for the remainder of the century.

In the United States, meanwhile, white racist groups mobilized to influence U.S. Africa policy, including the Friends of Rhodesia and a lobby for secessionist Katanga in the Congo. Their clout significantly outweighed the impact of those of us campaigning for African freedom. Neither the ACOA, which had supported Lumumba, nor black nationalists from Harlem, who had demonstrated at the United Nations after his death, had the capacity to project alternative policies for the Congo into the U.S. political debate. More than 40 years later, an official U.S. apology or investigation of U.S. complicity in Lumumba’s assassination remains hardly conceivable.

In retrospect, one might think that repression by South Africa’s apartheid regime in the early 1960s would attract more attention in the United States, given the dramatic rise of the civil rights movement at home during the same period. President Kennedy’s inauguration led to expectations that Washington would take action against apartheid and colonialism. But his administration was driven by Cold War concerns. Apart from a vote for a voluntary U.N. arms embargo against South Africa in 1963, it gave little more than lip service to anti-apartheid ideas. Senator Robert Kennedy’s June 1966 visit to South Africa—one of the few signs of awakening concern—failed to lead to any ongoing engagement. Nor, apart from the symbolic identification with the anti-apartheid cause, did Robert Kennedy himself follow up his speeches with proposals for a changed U.S. policy.

The emerging New Left, for its part, paid no more than passing attention to Africa. In March 1965, five years after the Sharpeville massacre, a demonstration called by SDS, with the support of smaller groups such as the National Student Christian Federation, brought more than 400 demonstrators to the New York headquarters of Chase Manhattan Bank to protest the bank’s loans to South Africa. SNCC organized a sit-in at the South African consulate. Yet Africa

dropped from the SDS agenda after the demonstration. Although Todd Gitlin was one of the organizers of the demonstration for SDS, for example, there is no entry for Africa in his book on the 1960s (Gitlin 1987). In SNCC also, there was little follow-up to the demonstration despite growing consciousness of Africa. As conflict escalated both in Vietnam and in U.S. cities, only a few U.S. activists—most with recent personal connections to the continent—saw Africa as a primary focus for their work.

Throughout the decade, the American Committee on Africa continued as the principal contact point in the United States for African liberation movement leaders. Shortly after Sharpeville, Oliver Tambo of South Africa's ANC toured the country at ACOA's invitation, as did other liberation movement leaders in later years. The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law created its Southern Africa Project in 1967, providing a way for progressive U.S. lawyers to support political prisoners in South Africa and Namibia. Groups of younger activists also emerged, including the Southern Africa Com-

mittee of the NSCF in New York in 1964, the Liberation Support Movement among U.S. draft resisters in Vancouver, Canada, in 1968, and the Africa Research Group in Boston the same year. Also in 1968, SNCC veterans founded the Center for Black Education and the Drum and Spear Bookstore in Washington, DC.

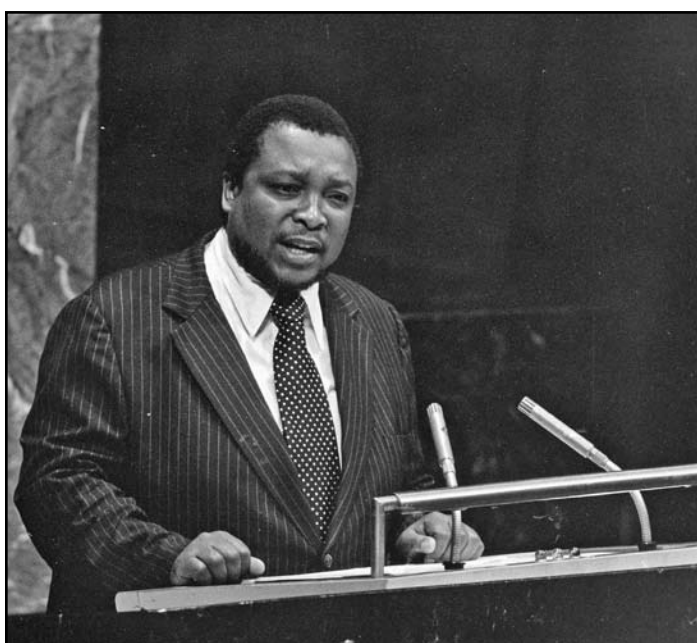
The ACOA already shared a common agenda with the younger activists. Despite the pacifist roots of some of its leaders, the organization supported the African liberation movements as they turned from nonviolent protest to armed struggle in the 1960s. The 1960 Emergency Action Conference against Apartheid that was convened in response to Sharpeville fully endorsed African demands for a boycott against South Africa. And the ACOA pioneered in exposing U.S. corporate ties that reinforced apartheid, an effort that would grow over the next three decades into a multiplicity of actions targeting such companies as well as institutions investing in them.

By the end of the decade, there was broad agreement among activists on the twin objectives of



The World Conference for Action Against Apartheid held in Lagos, Nigeria, in August 1977 brought together liberation movement leaders with representatives of more than 100 governments and the United Nations. Theo-Ben Gurirab, right, the SWAPO representative in New York, was very well known to U.S. activists. At his left is SWAPO president Sam Nujoma. *UN Photo.*

direct support for liberation movements and action against U.S. companies linked to South Africa. On both fronts, the movement had its most consistent congressional ally in Representative Charles Diggs of Detroit, who took over as chair of the House Subcommittee on Africa in 1969. Diggs, who also helped launch the Congressional Black Caucus that year, had been outspoken on civil rights at home and abroad since he was first elected to Congress in 1954. He traveled to Mississippi to witness the sham trial of Emmett Till's killers in 1955 and was an active supporter of the African-American Students Foundation from its inception in 1959.



David Sibeko, who represented the Pan Africanist Congress in New York from 1975 until his death in 1979, was an active campaigner who was well received by groups around the United States. *UN Photo.*

More than any organization or politician, however, South African exiles in the United States helped raise awareness of South Africa among Americans through their personal ties to universities and communities around the country. Ben Magubane, profiled in chapter 3, was one of many. The 1969 conference in North Carolina mentioned in that chapter included organizer Rev. Gladstone Ntlabati, Magubane's university colleagues Martin Legassick and Anthony Ngubo from California, as well as Rev. Chris Nteta and Rev. Ken Carstens from Boston. Magubane himself, who did not attend the conference because he was in Zambia at the time, maintained a broad range of contacts that included PAC supporter Peter

Molotsi; Liberal Party member Leo Kuper, who was his academic adviser; and Dr. A. C. Jordan, a prominent member of the Unity Movement, a small but intellectually significant liberation group.

Among the exiles, perhaps the voices most widely heard by Americans were those of musicians—Miriam Makeba, Hugh Masekela, Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand), and others. Like American singer-activist Harry Belafonte, who took the initiative to open doors for them in the United States, these musicians were deeply engaged with the fight for freedom. They lent their talents to freedom concerts hosted by the ACOA and sent a powerful message through their music.

Miriam Makeba was banned from South Africa in 1960 and lived in the United States for most of the decade. She sang at President Kennedy's birthday celebration in Madison Square Garden in 1962. In 1963 she testified before the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid, calling for a complete boycott of South Africa. Her songs were banned in South Africa, but in the United States she sang to overflow crowds around the country.

Makeba married SNCC leader Stokely Carmichael in 1968. As Carmichael moved to the left politically, he became a target of right-wing forces. Promoters cancelled Makeba's American concert and recording contracts, and in late 1968 the couple moved to Conakry in West Africa at the invitation of Guinean president Sekou Toure. In Conakry, Carmichael worked closely with exiled Ghanaian leader Kwame Nkrumah and took the name Kwame Ture in a tribute to the leaders of both Ghana and Guinea. Makeba focused her career on European and African venues.

Their distance from the United States mirrored the general eclipse of Africa among U.S. activists, in comparison with the focus on Vietnam and on domestic issues. Nkrumah's name had faded from prominence. Sekou Toure, from French-speaking Africa, had never been widely known in the United States. Even Nelson Mandela had not yet been featured in the media and was as yet known to only a few.

Despite appearances, however, the small network of African connections of the late 1960s was on the verge of expansion. Still below the radar screen of public attention that would only light up in the mid-

1980s, activists inspired by African liberation and outraged by oppression in Africa and at home were growing in numbers across the United States.

The 1970s

Returning to the United States from Tanzania in early 1969, I found a very different climate than the one I had left several years before. The antiwar movement, the civil rights movement, and the U.S. Left were fracturing along multiple ideological and strategic lines. The debates pitted violent against nonviolent tactics, black nationalist against multiracial strategies, and various Marxist ideologies against each other. There was also conflict among many forceful, competitive personalities, often exacerbated by government provocation—a mix that was often bewildering and sometimes deadly.

Solidarity against Portuguese Colonialism

But underneath this turmoil a broad consensus on key African issues continued to grow among activists. Support for the liberation movements that had taken up arms against Portuguese colonialism and the white settler regimes was the first common denominator. The second was support for campaigns to challenge corporate complicity with Portugal, Rhodesia, and South Africa. It was possible to target these companies and banks directly at a time when official sanctions against South Africa were still a distant goal.

In the 1970s, Tanzania, with its leader Julius Nyerere, profoundly influenced activists and others who were beginning to take an interest in the continent. Among the general American public, however, not even Tanzania and Nyerere could command the level of attention that Ghana and Kwame Nkrumah had received in the 1950s and early 1960s. The novelty of African independence had passed, while the ongoing wars in Southern Africa received little attention and no regular coverage in the establishment media. Even the names of the countries engaged in liberation struggles—Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe—remained exotic or obscure. When the Committee for a Free Mozambique distributed a button with the slogan “Free Mozambique” in 1971, people asked, “Who’s Mozambique?”

Amilcar Cabral, leader of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC), first came to the United States in February 1970, just a year after Mondlane’s assassination. Cabral made only brief visits to the United States before he himself was assassinated by Portuguese agents in January 1973. But he provided Africa activists with guidance and inspiration disproportionate to the time he spent, strengthening their commitment to solidarity with the liberation movements.

Eduardo Mondlane had taught at Syracuse University in the early 1960s and a memorial lecture had been established in his honor. Cabral was the invited lecturer in 1970 and spoke on “national liberation and culture.” Because the PAIGC had established liberated territories in the small Portuguese-occupied colony of Guinea-Bissau, it had credibility as a movement actively fighting for a country’s independence. Cabral stressed the importance not of military action as such, but of the cultural and political renewal of African people. Like his contemporary Frantz Fanon, Cabral stressed the physical and psychological violence perpetrated by the colonialists and internalized by the colonized. His impressive personal presence added weight to his message. Publication of his speeches and accounts of the liberated areas by distinguished Africanist scholars such as Basil Davidson made Cabral one of the most influential thinkers for both American and African activists seeking perspective.

One of the keynotes of Cabral’s message, paralleling Robeson’s in an earlier generation, was that Africa was part of a worldwide struggle for justice. The enemy, the PAIGC stressed, was not the Portuguese people or whites as such, but the structures of oppression embodied in Portuguese colonialism. Cabral consistently reached out to potential allies across racial as well as ideological lines without ever downplaying his confident pride in African identity or his own movement’s distinctive views.

After his lecture at Syracuse, Cabral visited New York, where he met informally with a group hosted by ACOA. Gail Hovey’s notes of the gathering record that he spoke very specifically about the impact of colonialism on his country and then talked about life in the liberated zones, how the local villages were organized for education, medical care, and so on. He said that although they hadn’t



Amílcar Cabral speaks on receiving an honorary degree from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, 1972. Distinguished alumni of the university include Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, and Nigeria's first president, Nnamdi Azikiwe.

Photo by Ray Lewis for Africa Information Service.

planned it that way, men and women were equal partners. The women had insisted on their role in the movement and were now a fundamental part of it. From New York, Cabral traveled to Washington, where he testified before the House Subcommittee on Africa chaired by Representative Diggs. In 1972 Cabral visited again, receiving an honorary doctorate at Lincoln University and meeting with supporters in New York.

I was not on the East Coast for either of Cabral's visits. But I was part of a local Madison Area Committee on Southern Africa in Wisconsin that was campaigning actively in favor of his movement. The same week that Cabral spoke in Syracuse, the University of Wisconsin's Luso-Brazilian center hosted a Portuguese government film on Portugal's "overseas provinces." The 200 protesters we organized with the African Students Union and the Black Council outnumbered the original audience and turned the event into a teach-in on Portuguese colonialism. An exiled Portuguese poet joined us in denouncing the Portuguese fascist regime and affirming common ground with African liberation.

Madison was already an activist campus and town. In May 1968, some 300 students had sat in at the administration building to demand withdrawal of university investments in Chase Manhattan Bank. And it was not alone in early actions against investment in South Africa. In 1968–69 there were demonstrations at Princeton University, Cornell University, Spelman College, and the University of California at Santa Barbara. Nor were radicalized students and faculty the only sectors responding to African liberation. Within U.S. churches, as well, the campaign to divest funds from South Africa was growing, while support for liberation movements became an issue for churches worldwide.

Endorsements by the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations strengthened the legitimacy of the liberation movements. So too did actions by global religious institutions. In July 1970 Pope Paul VI met with Amílcar Cabral and liberation movement leaders from Angola and Mozambique. In September 1970 the World Council of Churches, whose membership comprised 253 Protestant and Orthodox churches including almost all the major U.S. denominations, announced \$200,000 in grants to groups fighting racism. The recipients included liberation movements in Guinea-Bissau, Angola, Mozambique, South Africa, Namibia, and Zimbabwe. Despite a storm of conservative protest, including a 1971 *Reader's Digest* article attacking the World Council, the grants continued. In October 1970 the United Nations General Assembly overwhelmingly affirmed the "inherent right of colonial people to struggle by all necessary means" for their freedom. The roster of negative votes—South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, and the United States—graphically illustrated the rift between a handful of powerful Western governments and broad world opinion.

The Movement Grows

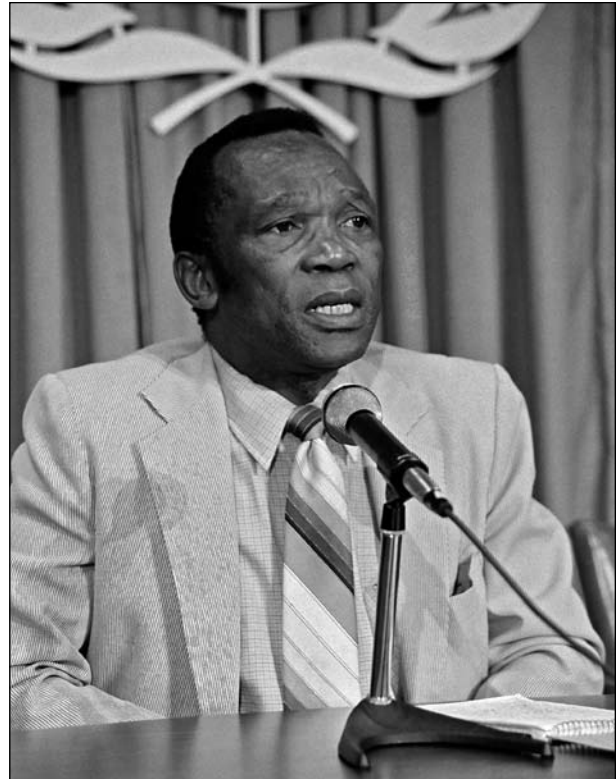
During the 1970s, new immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa to the United States more than tripled, from less than 3,000 a year to more than 10,000 a year. Still a small fraction of immigrants in comparison to those from other continents, this group nonetheless included many politically conscious and well-educated activists whose influence on American activists was disproportionate to their small numbers. The Cape Verdean community

was a special case. Numbering more than 300,000 and centered in New England, it included families who had immigrated centuries before as well as recent arrivals from the islands. Despite differences between these two groups, Amilcar Cabral's stature contributed to a new sense of pride arising from their country's drive for independence.

Not only were Africans coming to the United States; Americans were going to Africa. They included thousands of Peace Corps volunteers and smaller numbers from other programs who returned and spread out around the country. Their experiences and views were diverse, but almost invariably they testified that the impact of Africa on their lives outweighed any contribution they might have been able to make to African development. Despite the Peace Corps' official independence from political direction, some U.S. officials as well as critics saw the volunteers as tools of U.S. foreign policy. But in the political climate of the 1960s and early 1970s, these work and study-abroad programs and the experiences they provided became fertile ground for movement recruiting.

These years also saw the development of the women's liberation movement and the rise of feminism in the United States and around the globe. The civil rights movement, by its example, and the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which outlawed discrimination on the basis of gender as well as race, contributed directly to the parallel movement for women's rights. The women's movement often meant different things for black women than for white; there were fierce debates in both communities about ideology, strategies, and tactics. For women involved in Africa solidarity work, the two movements intersected closely. The engagement with Africa sometimes provided a meeting place where black and white women could find common ground.

Women of different generations often had different priorities. Older women on both sides of the Atlantic tended to argue that the nationalist struggle or the civil rights struggle had to take precedence. Younger women often felt that including equal rights for women could not be postponed and was in fact central to both the goals and the strategies of the movement. Wrestling with such issues as they worked for civil rights and national liberation, women helped to shape the debate about what a transformed society might look like.



Johnny Makatini, African National Congress representative in the United States, speaks at a United Nations press conference, August 25, 1981. *UN Photo.*

How people were drawn into solidarity work with Africa varied for each African country, as the liberation movements drew on specific networks to make connections in the United States. Namibia was a case in point. Illegally occupied by South Africa, Namibia was the most blatant example of South African defiance of United Nations rulings. With fewer than a million people in 1970, Namibia was little known in the United States; few Americans had ever been there. Nevertheless, the South West Africa People's Organisation, known as SWAPO, drew hundreds if not thousands of Americans into active support of its cause. From 1964 to 1975, Hage Geingob, who two decades later became prime minister, actively represented SWAPO from his base in New York while studying at Fordham University and then serving in an official post at the United Nations.

South Africa helped indirectly to mobilize additional support for Namibia by expelling successive Anglican clergy who opposed the apartheid regime there, beginning with Bishop Robert Mize from Kansas in 1968. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Bill Johnston of Episcopal Churchmen for South Africa (later Episcopal Churchpeople for a Free Southern

Africa) was an indefatigable campaigner for Namibia. After the African Lutheran Bishops of Namibia issued an open letter in 1971 calling for South African withdrawal from their country, many Lutherans in the United States also became involved in active support for Namibian independence. In 1978 Namibian students at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa, were among the founders of National Namibia Concerns, which reached out to congregations across the Midwest and nationally.

It was during the 1970s that the challenge to U.S. investments in South Africa, which began in the 1960s and reached its peak in the 1980s, first

even more unequivocal in its tilt toward the white regimes of Southern Africa than its Democratic predecessors had been. There were also strategic advantages in focusing on particular companies. It was possible to make an impact. Although denying that they had been influenced by pressure, Chase Manhattan and nine other banks canceled a \$40 million revolving loan to the South African government in 1969 after four national church agencies threatened to remove funds from the banks. Moreover, corporate-focused campaigns like this gave the opportunity for decentralized actions.

The number of actions in the early 1970s was



Paul Irish of the American Committee on Africa, Chris Root of the Washington Office on Africa, and Roberta Washington of the Southern Africa Committee at the Conference to Support the Peoples of Zimbabwe and Namibia held in Maputo, Mozambique in May 1977. *Photo courtesy of Richard Knight.*

small in comparison to the wave of campus protests that would erupt after the Soweto student rebellion in June 1976. But the information base and the repertoire of strategies and tactics were already well developed. In 1970 the ACOA published "Apartheid and Imperialism: A Study of U.S. Corporate Involvement in South Africa." Over the first half of the 1970s there was a proliferation of reports from the U.N., church agencies, activist groups, congressional committees, and others, detailing the involvement of dozens of companies not

spread across the country. Banks and corporations responded initially with indifference, then defended their involvement as contributing to the reform of apartheid. Church financial officers and top officials, and later university administrators, followed a similar path, moving from disregard to study commissions to reform proposals. Activists who identified with African liberation, in contrast, argued that U.S. corporate involvement prolonged the apartheid regime's viability, and they demanded that companies withdraw until apartheid was ended.

The focus on corporate withdrawal rather than government sanctions came in part because activists had concluded that there was little or no hope of gaining U.S. government support for sanctions against apartheid. The Nixon administration was

only with South Africa but also with Portuguese colonialism in Africa.

Most church agencies hesitated to demand withdrawal or to withdraw their own investments in companies. Many turned to shareholder resolutions to raise the issues. This strategy was institutionalized when the National Council of Churches founded a Corporate Information Center in 1971 to coordinate information and action on such issues; it became the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility in 1972. Another group, the Investor Responsibility Research Center, was founded in 1972 by universities and other institutional investors with the mandate to provide them with "impartial" research to use in responding to protests and shareholder resolutions.

Identification with Africa took many forms among African American activists on campuses and in cities during the early 1970s. Some focused primarily on culture or history, with emphasis on Africa's past, including the symbolically important civilization of ancient Egypt. Others looked mainly for connections to current African issues. Some were already on the way to academic careers and fighting the battles that would lead to new programs of black studies, Afro-American studies, or Africana studies. Others were turning to local politics, both militant protest and participation in the electoral arena. Despite the differences, however, there was common ground in support for those fighting apartheid and colonialism.

This movement, with a presence in almost every city and on almost every university campus, would provide one of the natural constituencies for anti-apartheid action when apartheid gained national attention in the 1980s. In the nexus of connections that gave political content to the African liberation message in the 1970s, Tanzania was the foremost crossroads where U.S. activists met Africans, including those involved in the liberation movements across Southern Africa. It was in President Nyerere's Tanzania that the Organization of African Unity had established its Liberation Committee, and all the liberation movements from white-ruled Southern Africa had offices there.

A Pan-African Vision

Bob Moses of SNCC arrived in Tanzania in 1969. He was joined by three other SNCC veterans the next year: Charlie Cobb, Courtland Cox, and Judy Richardson. The three of them had founded the Drum and Spear Bookstore and the related Center for Black Education in Washington, DC, with the support of veteran Pan-African intellectual C. L. R. James and Tanzanian ambassador Paul Bomani. Drum and Spear was a space where community activists and local schoolteachers could mingle with diplomats, writers, and artists; it was also a base for regular interchange between Washington and Dar es Salaam over the decade. It had ties to parallel institutions in other cities around the United States. Drum and Spear established a close relationship with the newly formed Tanzania Publishing House, and Drum and Spear staffer Geri Marsh (later Geri

Augusto) served as Washington correspondent for Tanzanian newspapers.

In May 1972, the African Liberation Day coalition mobilized as many as 30,000 demonstrators in Washington, 10,000 in San Francisco, and 20,000 elsewhere, as Joseph Jordan recounts in chapter 4. The origins of the coalition also go back to the Dar es Salaam crossroads, and in particular to the Mozambique Liberation Front, Frelimo, which relied on Tanzanian support for its liberation war to the south. In August and September 1971, Robert Van Lierop, an African American lawyer in New York and an activist on the board of the ACOA, traveled with Frelimo guerillas into liberated territory in Mozambique, accompanied by cameraman Robert Fletcher. Owusu Sadaukai (Howard Fuller), of Malcolm X Liberation University in Greensboro, North Carolina, accompanied them part way. When Sadaukai raised the prospect of black Americans coming to help fight in Mozambique, Frelimo president Samora Machel reportedly told him that what was needed was work back in the United States. "If you could play a role in that," Machel reportedly said, "it would help us much more than sending folks over here" (Waller 2002, 54–55).

Van Lierop's film *A Luta Continua* was shown hundreds of times to community groups, black studies classes, and church groups. Frelimo representative Sharfudine Khan, based in New York from 1968 to 1975, reached out effectively to both black and white constituencies. Many new groups became involved in this period, from the Committee for a Free Mozambique in New York to the Committee for the Liberation of Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau in Chicago and the Southern Africa News Collective in Washington. Even so, solidarity with the movements fighting Portuguese colonialism never gained mainstream media attention. Most of the local black nationalist or Marxist groups that received the message enthusiastically had little opportunity to follow up with ongoing ties to Mozambique or other African countries. Nor were there any ideological or rhetorical formulas for transplanting a revolutionary united front from an African to an American environment.

Complex Networks

African liberation movement leaders visiting the United States were more accustomed to meeting representatives of Western European support networks that had clearly defined political alliances. They found the United States a bewildering contrast, despite the common ground they had with their African American supporters in experiences of racism and repression and despite a shared view of the war in Vietnam as a manifestation of American imperialism. U.S. radicals, black or white, were unable to build political forces capable of quickly changing their own communities or speedily stopping the Vietnam War. Much less were they able to have a material impact on the balance of power in Africa. Geographic dispersion and racial and ideological fragmentation made it difficult to see much potential in these scattered groups for countering Washington's alliance with the white minority regimes.

Nonetheless, by the 1970s the liberation movements and their supporters did have some allies within the halls of power in Washington. Representative Diggs became the chair of the House Africa Subcommittee in 1969. By 1971 the number of African American representatives in Congress had more than doubled, to 13, and Diggs and his colleagues created the Congressional Black Caucus. With veterans such as fellow Detroiters John Conyers and newcomers such as Ron Dellums from Berkeley, California, this small band took on the responsibility of bringing to national attention not only the interests of their urban constituencies but also the concerns of the black world at large.

Diggs also co-chaired the 1972 National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana with Richard Hatcher, mayor of Gary, and black nationalist Amiri Baraka of Newark, New Jersey. Diggs unambiguously endorsed the movement consensus in favor of isolating South Africa and supporting the African liberation movements. His trips to Africa and the extraordinary investigative work of his staff attorney Goler Teal Butcher ensured that the critique of U.S. policy was based on reality rather than rhetoric.

At that time, neither the Black Caucus nor the Africa Subcommittee had enough weight in Congress to prevail over entrenched interests. They were unsuccessful, for example, in their attempt to deny South Africa a sugar quota giving it special access

to the U.S. market, even though their efforts won the backing of Senator Edward Kennedy. And the public paid little attention. But the caucus and subcommittee provided an essential point of reference and a communication channel for both old and new activists identifying with African liberation.

This was true despite the turmoil of the decade, which saw increasing divisions between black community activists and black elected officials on domestic issues and electoral politics. Black militant organizations succumbed to government repression and internal disputes. The antiwar movement splintered even while helping hasten the end of the war. The Republican Party moved even further to the right, while much of the Democratic Party fled from a liberal label. The "Black Power" label was as likely to serve as justification for black business promotion as for community activism.

Nevertheless, the networks linking Africa activists in churches, communities, congressional offices, and universities continued to grow. This growth was nurtured, and the pace determined, by African as well as American realities.

One example, which Joseph Jordan discusses in his chapter on the 1970s, is the discovery by a small group of workers at the Polaroid Corporation in Cambridge, Massachusetts, that the company's South African subsidiary was providing equipment and film used in the apartheid pass law system. The campaign against Polaroid gained national prominence, but it was just one example of a pattern repeated many times during the decade in which local activists took their own initiatives. They sought out information and identified local targets embodying the U.S. connection to the white minority regimes in Africa. They built local ad hoc groups or coalitions, invited speakers, showed films, sold literature, and raised money or goods to be sent to support the liberation movements. Although most groups lasted only a few years as formal organizations, they had lasting impact through the minds they changed and the informal networks they created.

At the 1972 Azalea Festival in Norfolk, Virginia, over 500 people protested when the military port city honored Portugal as a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). They distributed 50,000 leaflets calling for "Portugal out of NATO, NATO out of Norfolk" and denouncing U.S.

Coal From South Africa Apartheid in The Mines

The following article is taken from a memorandum written by Tom Bethell of the United Mine Workers of America. It describes the new development of coal imports from South Africa, the threat this is to the job security of U.S. miners, and the added strength it will give to the repressive apartheid policies of the South African government.

Arrangements are currently being made to bring substantial quantities of low-sulfur steam coal into the United States from the Republic of South Africa. This move on the part of the coal and utilities industries requires a strong response on the part of the UMWA, because it takes jobs away from American miners and because coal is produced in South Africa under conditions very close to slave labor.

(Continued on page 7)



Above: South African miners.

Alabama Miners Say "No"

BIRMINGHAM, Ala.—Almost 1,000 people took part in a rally and picket line here on May 22. They were letting the stockholders of the Southern Company know that they were opposed to coal being imported from South Africa.

The occasion was the annual stockholders' meeting of the Southern Company, a holding company which owns Georgia Power Company, Alabama Power Company, Mississippi Power Company, and Gulf Power Company.

At issue was a contract signed by the Southern Company to import 2 million tons (\$50 million worth) of coal from South African coal producers over the next 3 years. The first shipment will be brought into the Port of Mobile in mid-July and burned at generating stations in Florida.

Rank and file members, particularly from District 20 of the UMWA and other unions, as well as people from various community organizations made the rally the largest and most militant gathering in Alabama in over a decade.

The coal companies employing District 20 members reported absenteeism at around 90%. The miners said they were not on strike but that they were "taking time off to take care of business."

Approximately 100 miners went to the state capital in Montgomery to see elected government officials. Governor Wallace was out of town and the politicians told the miners that they couldn't do anything to prevent American corporations from importing coal.

At the Birmingham picket line the men were angry, and they manifested their attitude both in their conversation and in the slogans on their signs: "Pull the switch on Southern Co.," "Stop Southern Company Imperialism" and "No Slave Coal!"

After two hours of picketing, the miners held a rally on a corner of the hotel lot. Acting as coordinator was Andy Himes of the Selma Project, an Alabama political action group which worked in the last United Mine Workers election to help throw out the corrupt Tony Boyle machine.

Among the speakers was Mrs. John Marchant, the wife of a retired miner from Brookwood, a coal town

outside Birmingham. Mrs. Marchant talked about the lynchings, lockouts, and "yellow dog" (anti-union) contracts the companies had used against the miners in the twenties and about how her own brother had been killed in a roof fall in the thirties. She said it was profit that they had to fight then and it was profit they had to fight now.

Don Stone of the Black Workers Congress spoke about the conditions in the South African coal fields and stressed the importance of fighting in both places against the same enemy, the monopoly capitalist corporations.

Andy Himes wound things up with a statement about how the Company was not only chiseling the miners of Alabama out of jobs but that the electric ratepayers of the Southeast were being expected to pick up the tab. "They say that they're concerned about Alabama because they live here too. Well, that's a damn lie. Look at the top ten stockholders of the Southern Company. They're all New York City banks and all they care about is more profit."

(Information from Andy Himes and the Georgia Power Project).



Photo by Ernest Cole



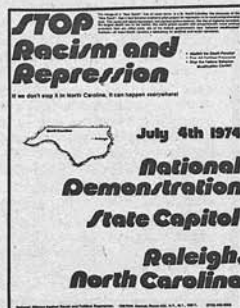
Photo by Earl Dotter/UMWA

Plans For North Carolina Demonstration

RALEIGH, N.C.—The National Alliance Against Racism and Political Repression (NAARPR) has declared the state of North Carolina a "national disaster area" and announced a massive demonstration to be held July 4th in Raleigh.

The demonstration's theme is "To End Capital Punishment and Free Political Prisoners". Over 10,000 people are expected to come from all parts of the country.

North Carolina, it has been said, best exemplifies the reformist spirit of the New South. This is the misconception based on the liberal traditions of three



famous academic communities — Duke, Chapel Hill, and Raleigh — and the gains once made by trade unions in the textile and tobacco industries — gains since wiped out.

The truth about North Carolina is that it is the state most vigorously renewing its efforts to use the death sentence for crimes such as first degree burglary and rape. Its thirty-one persons on death row are almost half of the nation's condemned prisoners.

Butner, N.C., is the site for the development of the Federal Center for Correctional Research (formerly called the U.S. Behavioral Research Center). The United Church of Christ's Commission

for Racial Justice has warned that, "prisoners will be chosen and shipped from around the country to Butner, to be experimented on. Drugs, brain-washing and hypnosis will be used on 'uncontrollable' prisoners to develop methods to control other uncontrollables — inmates and non-inmates."

Charlotte, Wilson, and Ayden, N.C. have been the scenes of mass jailings and beatings of black high school students protesting school conditions and racism. In 1971, black students demonstrating for a black studies program had to defend themselves in a Wilmington church for four days from the attacks of white

(Continued on page 5)

The *Southern Patriot*, a radical newspaper in Louisville, Kentucky, headlined a demonstration against the importation of South African coal by the Southern Company, May 1974. The protest in Birmingham, Alabama, was organized by District 20 of the United Mine Workers, other unions, and their supporters. Photo courtesy of Ken Lawrence.

collaboration with the Portuguese wars in Africa. After the U.S. Congress passed the Byrd amendment in 1971 allowing the importation of chrome from white-ruled Rhodesia in violation of U.N. sanctions, longshoremen's unions and local activists repeatedly blocked chrome imports. In 1974 the United Mine Workers launched a protest against imports of South African coal to Alabama. Annual meetings of corporations were beset not only by church-sponsored shareholder resolutions but also by local demonstrators. Gulf Oil was boycotted because of its investments in Portuguese-ruled Angola, General Motors and scores of others because of their strategic involvement in the South Africa economy.

Even before student actions spread around the country in the late 1970s, the number, diversity, and shifting patterns of local groups and coalitions were beyond anyone's capacity to track. As in the 1960s, the New York-based ACOA was still the most prominent national point of contact and source of activist-oriented research. But neither the ACOA nor any other group could realistically aspire to create a coherent national organization or even a stable national coalition. Even in the 1980s, despite vastly greater national attention and eventual impact, this fundamental reality apparent in the early 1970s did not change.

By the mid-1970s, after the African Liberation Support Committee that had organized the African Liberation Day marches fractured over ideological disputes, the prospects for centralization were so remote that few even considered trying. Activists were aware that the de facto model of decentralized networks had many weaknesses. And yet, as recent studies of dispersed networks are showing in many fields, such networks can have hidden strengths. Functioning in a society that was profoundly divided, the networks supporting African liberation sometimes showed unexpected capacities for growth, rapid communication, and consensus building.

The networks included not only local groups and activists around the country but also new national groups that collaborated with the ACOA and the House Africa Subcommittee as resources and reference points. In 1972 the ACOA worked with churches and labor unions to form the Washington Office on Africa. The following year Tami Hultman and Reed Kramer, based in Durham, North Carolina, founded Africa News Service, which joined the monthly *Southern Africa* magazine out of New York as essential communication tools for Africa activists. The American Friends Service Committee, based in Philadelphia, set up a Southern Africa program in 1975 that regularly brought veteran activist Bill Sutherland from Dar es

Salaam for speaking tours around the United States, benefiting from his long activist experience and contacts on both sides of the Atlantic. And in 1977, discussions within the Congressional Black Caucus culminated in the formation of TransAfrica, an African American lobby on Africa and the Caribbean headed by Randall Robinson.

The mix of strengths and weaknesses displayed in U.S. Africa solidarity networks depended above all on the African country involved. It was easier to find consensus on Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and Namibia, where there was one dominant lib-



Ruth Brandon interviews President Samora Machel of Mozambique for *Africa News*, New York, October 1977.
Photo courtesy of AllAfrica Global Media.

eration movement. But none of the three had even a faint chance of gaining prominence in U.S. media or policy arenas. In the case of South Africa, pervasive divisions in the liberation forces were outweighed by the visibility of South African repression, the moral clarity of the anti-apartheid message, and the large number of people speaking out for freedom.

But in both Angola and Zimbabwe, divisions in the national independence movements were projected into the U.S. arena, leading to disunity among activists. In Angola in particular, the internal divisions paralleled with uncanny precision the fractures among potential liberation supporters in the United States. Jonas Savimbi of the National Union for Total Independence of Angola (Unita) touted his black nationalist credentials, decrying the prominence of white and mixed-race Angolans in the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). Savimbi's ties with China enhanced his appeal to the rising Maoist strand among U.S. radicals. And Unita could also rely on personal ties with missionaries of the United Church of Christ and the United Church of Canada, both long active in Angola.

Unita's alliance with South Africa and the CIA in the 1975 conflict in Angola that followed the withdrawal of the Portuguese thus came as a shock to its supporters. Almost all U.S. activists most deeply engaged in African issues took a clear stand against the U.S. intervention in the oil-rich African nation. We applauded when liberal academics and members of Congress also mobilized and added sufficient political weight to bar the United States from continuing its covert military involvement. And we celebrated when the MPLA, with Cuban assistance, fought off South African troops, mercenaries, and its Angolan rivals. Only a few activists stuck by Unita, some later following it into the far-right circles of the Reagan revolution.

The absence of significant movement ties with newly independent Angola, however, left the door wide open for Reagan's alliance with South Africa in attacking that country. The Angolan government never established a working relationship with its potential supporters in the United States. And even at the height of the anti-apartheid movement a decade later, South Africa's deadly wars on its neighbors were barely known to most activists, much less to the wider public.

U.S. activists were more engaged in supporting liberation movements in Zimbabwe, where the white Rhodesian regime continued in power until the end of the decade. But the U.S. right wing also mobilized to support the white regime. The ACOA and the Washington Office on Africa worked with both congressional allies and longshoremen to try to block imports of Rhodesian chrome. Journalists with *Southern Africa* magazine and Africa News Service exposed the involvement of U.S. companies in providing Rhodesia with oil and helicopters. Both the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) fostered support groups in cities around the United States. In 1979 Congress came close to lifting sanctions, after Ian Smith successfully persuaded Methodist bishop Abel Muzorewa and Congregational pastor Ndbaningi Sithole to break with other nationalists and serve in token roles in his white minority regime. Nevertheless, most U.S. church people involved with Southern Africa, with multiple ties to the liberation movements and their own sources of information, stood firm for keeping sanctions.

This history has been little researched. But it is clear that the scattered efforts of activists still added up to only marginal impact on national public debate or policy regarding Zimbabwe. As many as 1,000 American mercenaries fought for the white regime in Rhodesia, openly applauded and aided by magazines such as *Soldier of Fortune*. Along with Rhodesian troops, they were involved in massacres of hundreds of Africans, both inside Rhodesia and at refugee and guerrilla camps in neighboring countries. For the U.S. media and the Jimmy Carter administration, nevertheless, these were non-issues. Nor were activists able to mobilize many outside their ranks to pay attention.

If it was difficult to gain a large audience and support for Southern Africa, the obstacles were even more daunting in relation to independence movements elsewhere on the continent. In the case of Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony illegally occupied by Morocco, Morocco continued to block a referendum that would lead to independence. In the case of Eritrea, a former Italian colony, it was again a neighboring African state, Ethiopia, that stood in the way of independence, annexing the territory as a province in 1962 and setting off a 30-year



Demonstrators at Harvard Medical School call on the university to divest its holdings in companies involved in South Africa, March 1985. Photo © Ellen Shub.

war. While individual Americans visited both territories and provided some coverage in the press, U.S. activists concerned with the two countries lacked vehicles for organizing and were never numerous enough to have much impact in either case.

The Impact of Soweto

Thus, while those activists most deeply involved saw an interconnected and Africa-wide array of issues, that perspective rarely reached the wider public. Only for South Africa did the movement succeed in influencing a critical mass of Americans. The first decisive stage of that expansion began with students, who responded to the Soweto student uprisings in South Africa in 1976. For many Americans, television coverage of police shooting down students evoked the classic images of violence against civil rights marchers from the 1960s. Sam Nzima's photograph of 12-year-old Hector Pieter-son, dying in the arms of Mbuyisa Makhuba while his sister Antoinette runs along beside them, became an icon of the movement, appearing in newspapers around the world and on countless posters. Over the

next three years thousands of student demonstrators confronted university administrators at more than 100 campuses around the United States, demanding divestment of funds invested in companies involved in South Africa.

Just as televised police violence in Birmingham and Selma had dramatized the Southern civil rights movement for potential activists and politicians, so the apartheid state's violence served over the next decade as a powerful recruiting tool for anti-apartheid activism. Spring 1977 saw almost 300 arrested at Stanford University, and an early victory was won at Hampshire College in Massachusetts when trustees sold \$215,000 in stock in response to student protests. The murder of Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko, at the beginning of the 1977-78 school year, gave further momentum to the student movement. Total divestments by universities jumped to more than \$25 million a year in 1978 and 1979.

No one has yet told the full story of these student protests, in large part because it has as many chapters as there were campuses involved. Each local

protest was driven by events in South Africa and fed by multiple connections to the ACOA and other central network nodes. Each involved some mix of predominantly black and predominantly white groups of student activists, often bolstered by faculty members and veteran community activists. The student protests were indeed tied to each other and to parallel divestment campaigns in churches and communities. But that linkage came from common themes and interlocking communication networks as much as from efforts at national coordination.

By the end of 1978, the Committee to Oppose Bank Loans to South Africa, a national network spearheaded by the ACOA and the Vietnam-era antiwar group Clergy and Laity Concerned, included local groups in at least 11 cities. The South Africa Catalyst Project at Stanford had published its own guide to divestment actions. Regional conferences of anti-apartheid activists had been held in the Northeast, Midwest, and Southeast, and on the West Coast, and plans were laid for nationwide protests in April 1979.

In this period there still seemed little chance that U.S. companies or their shareholders would actually respond to the demand to withdraw from South Africa. Shareholder resolutions from churches were increasing, and they often included calls for withdrawal as well as more moderate demands. But civil rights veteran Andrew Young, who served as the Carter administration's ambassador to the United Nations from 1977 to 1979, was a passionate advocate of business reform rather than sanctions to abolish apartheid. The Reverend Leon Sullivan, who had urged withdrawal from South Africa as a General Motors board member in 1971, opted instead in 1977 to ask companies to endorse a set of principles committing them to improve conditions for their workers in South Africa.

On this front, however, activist networks successfully maintained and expanded a strong consensus in favor of full sanctions against apartheid. Slogans such as "Break All Ties with Apartheid," "US \$ Out of South Africa Now," and "Stop Banking on Apartheid" had appeal and credibility. A response required neither ideological agreement nor detailed knowledge of African geography. At a summit conference of Black Religious Leaders on Apartheid in April 1979, for example, delegates rejected Rev.

Sullivan's plea to endorse his principles. Instead they supported the Reverend William Howard, president of the National Council of Churches and the ACOA's board chair, who urged that U.S. investors withdraw from South Africa until the white supremacist government abandoned apartheid. The conference, chaired by the Reverend Wyatt Tee Walker, former top aide to Martin Luther King Jr., also adopted a resolution supporting the use of "any means necessary" to overthrow the apartheid state.

By the end of the 1970s, the Lancaster House agreement had paved the way for the transformation of white-ruled Rhodesia into independent Zimbabwe in 1980. Over the next decade, as action against apartheid intensified inside South Africa, South Africa also waged an immensely destructive series of wars against neighboring African countries. The Reagan administration in Washington tilted toward South Africa in these wars and actively joined Pretoria in intensifying the war on Angola. The anti-apartheid movement reached new heights, culminating in the congressional vote to override President Reagan's veto of sanctions in 1986. Despite this achievement, however, the means to turn anti-apartheid sentiment into sustainable solidarity with Africa continued to elude activists.

The 1980s

Ronald Reagan was sworn in as 40th president of the United States on January 20, 1981. Ten days later, South African army commandoes raided the Mozambican capital of Maputo, killing 13 members of the ANC and a Portuguese bystander. Yet when Reagan's new secretary of state, Alexander Haig, spoke of the need to retaliate against "rampant international terrorism," he was not speaking about the South African cross-border attack. Nor was he referring to the apartheid regime's sponsorship of the Mozambican National Resistance (Renamo), which was then escalating its terror campaign targeting civilians, schools, and clinics as well as economic targets inside Mozambique. Rather, he was alluding to the presumed threat from the Soviet Union. In May of that year Chester Crocker, the architect of President Reagan's policy toward South Africa, wrote in an internal briefing paper, "The chief threat [to cooperation, stability, and security] is the presence and influence in the region of the Soviet Union

and its allies” (cited in TransAfrica 1981). South Africa, Crocker argued, had a shared interest with the United States in thwarting Soviet goals.

Over the two Reagan terms, Crocker’s approach to South Africa would be called “constructive engagement.” It became, in effect, the more moderate of two emphases in play. Proponents of constructive engagement held out the hope that negotiated reforms in apartheid and the independence of Namibia could contribute to the administration’s primary goals of rolling back Soviet influence and ousting Cuban troops from Angola. No one in the Reagan administration gave much heed to the view, prevalent in Africa and among activists, that the Cuban troop presence was a legitimate response to the South African threat to Angola. But Crocker at least hesitated to give Pretoria a “blank check” and sometimes counseled restraint, particularly toward Mozambique.

The other approach was advocated by those farther to the right, such as William Casey at the CIA, officials at the Defense Department, and a network

of right-wing political activists. It was based on the unwavering belief that all opponents of the Pretoria regime were terrorists. This faction embraced South Africa’s allied insurgents including Unita in Angola and Renamo in Mozambique as “freedom fighters” deserving unconditional support, along with the contras in Nicaragua and the mujahadeen in Afghanistan. President Reagan himself joked that “sometimes my right hand doesn’t know what my far-right hand is doing” (Barrett 1984, 61). The limited political spectrum of Reagan’s Washington left little space for the view that the apartheid regime itself was the real threat to stability and security in the region.

Although the turn to the right in Washington put progressive movements on the defensive, it also clarified what was at stake and energized both long-term activists and new movement recruits. The nuclear freeze campaign against the nuclear arms race drew over a million demonstrators to New York in June 1982 and was endorsed by 275 city governments and 12 state legislatures. Central America



The corner outside the South African Mission to the United Nations was officially renamed Nelson & Winnie Mandela Corner in 1984. From left: unidentified woman; New York City council members Robert Dryfoos and Wendell Foster, who sponsored the name change; J. M. Makatini, the ANC representative to the United Nations; SWAPO deputy representative H. P. Asheke; ANC deputy representative David Ndaba; and ACOA executive director Jennifer Davis. *Photo by Joshua Nessen.*

solidarity groups around the country mobilized in opposition to U.S. support for the contras in Nicaragua and for military regimes in Guatemala and El Salvador. On the domestic front, Jesse Jackson's 1984 and 1988 presidential campaigns built grassroots support and alliances, as did the election of Chicago mayor Harold Washington in 1983. Both were signs of the potential for broad progressive alliances prominently featuring African American initiatives.

It was in this context that the anti-apartheid movement gained momentum during the 1980s. On Africa, as on domestic and other international issues, activists not only faced the opposition of the dominant Republican administration. They also had to contend with opposition or indifference from the congressional leadership of the Democratic Party, which was the majority party in the House of Representatives for both Reagan terms and gained majority control of the Senate in Reagan's last two years.

The success story of the 1980s, as recounted by David Goodman in chapter 5, was the buildup of political pressure that led to legislated sanctions against South Africa by the U.S. Congress. The story also includes scores of private economic actions signaling a loss of confidence in the apartheid regime. These were successful because of the extensive connections that had been forged between the United States and South Africa over many decades. It was not just that many South Africans had come to the United States and that South Africa's acts of repression against its own people kept hitting the headlines. The economic connections between the two countries meant that in virtually every community in the United States, local activists could do something on their own to help end apartheid. They could take money out of a bank that loaned to South Africa. They could make sure their pension fund was not invested in companies that operated there. For the rest of Africa, with very few exceptions, there were no equivalent organizing handles.

This was a painful reality for those of us who had worked in or visited Mozambique. We were conscious of the destructive furor of apartheid's regional wars. We saw the promise and hopes of the early independence years battered by the relentless assault of South African-backed insurgents on villages, clinics, schools, and railways. The number of civilians killed during this period in Mozambique,

Angola, and other countries in the region, and the additional deaths due to famine and disease, are impossible to estimate with any precision. But it is undeniable that the death toll numbered in the hundreds of thousands or even in the millions, and that these deaths went virtually unnoticed by the American public and policy makers.

Independent African states, meanwhile, made decisive contributions to the liberation of South Africa from apartheid. Tanzania and Zambia played early roles, followed by Botswana, Angola, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, joining in a group that became known as the Frontline States. They provided inspiration and indispensable rear bases for the movement inside Namibia and South Africa, although their support for armed guerrilla action varied according to their circumstances. But although these regional dynamics were known to longtime activists, communicating them to the broader public proved almost impossible.

On South Africa, nevertheless, the anti-apartheid movement became a force to be reckoned with during the 1980s. The movement involved multiple networks, not centralized in any one organization but linked well enough so that the various strategies and tactics adopted reinforced each other. The movement built on background knowledge and personal ties to South Africa, dating back several decades, and continuously expanded. The visibility of resistance to the minority regime inside South Africa reinforced the message; so too did the brutality and intransigence of the regime's response.

The Anti-Apartheid Convergence: Core Organizations

In the 1980s, four organizations were the cornerstones for national anti-apartheid action. In Washington, TransAfrica, the most recently founded, continued under the leadership of its first director, Randall Robinson, throughout the decade. The Washington Office on Africa (WOA) chose Jean Sindab to succeed Ted Lockwood as director in 1980. After Sindab left in 1986 to direct the World Council of Churches Programme to Combat Racism, Damu Smith and then Aubrey McCutcheon directed WOA. In 1980 civil rights activist Jerry Herman became coordinator of the Southern Africa program of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in



Delegation from Actors/Artists Against Apartheid following 1988 Senate hearings. From left: actor Danny Glover, Washington Office on Africa director Damu Smith, Senator Carl Levin of Michigan, actress Alfre Woodard, actress Mary Steenburgen, legislative aide Jackie Parker. Photo courtesy of Jackie Parker.



Nobel Laureate Bishop Desmond Tutu, right, with Randall Robinson of TransAfrica at demonstration at the South African embassy in 1984. Photo © Rick Reinhard.

Philadelphia. And in New York, with the retirement of George Houser in 1981 after more than 25 years of leadership, the work of the American Committee on Africa and its tax-exempt educational affiliate, The Africa Fund, was directed by two South African exiles. Jennifer Davis became the executive director after many years as research director, and Dumisani Kumalo, who first joined the organization for a 10-week national speaking tour in 1979, continued as projects director throughout the decade.

These organizations played complementary and overlapping roles as they interacted with wider networks of activists, specialized groups, and what would now be called “civil society.” All four shared basic ideological and policy positions on Africa. They supported comprehensive sanctions against apartheid and the legitimacy of the liberation struggles in Namibia and South Africa, the remaining outposts of white supremacy. They opposed U.S. intervention in independent Angola and Mozambique and lobbied against the Reagan administration’s backing of Pretoria’s regional wars. As the decade progressed, the general tendency was to give increasing support to the ANC and the United Democratic Front in South Africa, without excluding ties to other liberation tendencies such as the Black Consciousness Movement or the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). The four organizations sought to build support for the anti-apartheid cause from as wide a range of Americans as possible.

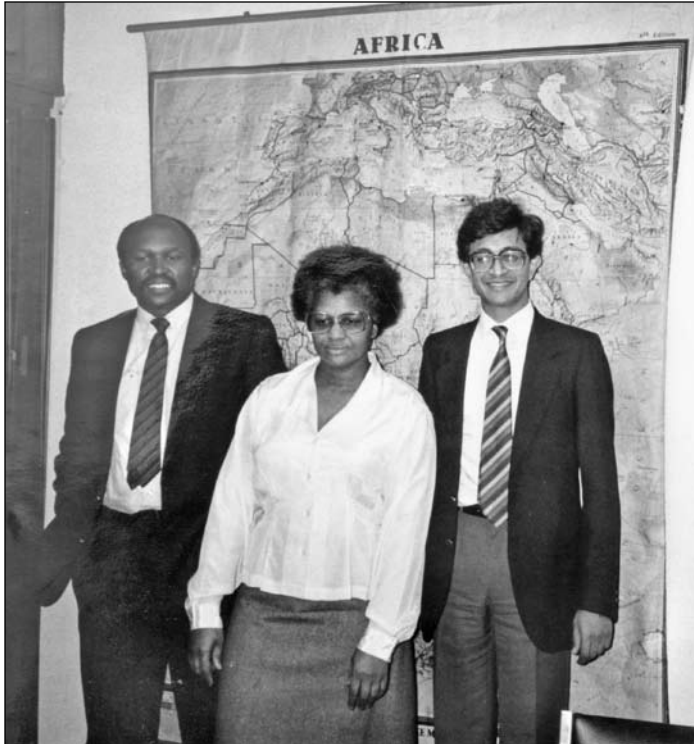
Race was one differential between the groups, but in a more complex way than a simple distinction between black and white. TransAfrica’s mandate was to represent the African American community and to lobby on issues related to Africa and the African diaspora in the Caribbean and Latin America. Thus it was understood to be an African American organization. In principle and in fact, the other three groups were multiracial in the composition of their leadership, staffs, boards, and constituencies. Yet in the convoluted context of racial perceptions in U.S. society, they were often seen both by the media and within the movement as historically “white” organizations. This image persisted even when black staff or board members played the most important leadership roles.

What counted most in practice was not such general perceptions but the specific organizational histories, locations, and personal ties of people in each

organization’s circles, including both black and white Americans as well as exiles from Southern Africa. The relationships featured both cooperation and rivalry; indeed, the movement working on African issues was hardly a harmonious family. Cherri Waters, who worked in the early 1980s at TransAfrica Forum, the educational affiliate of TransAfrica, was a close friend and adviser of Jean Sindab at the Washington Office on Africa. She said it this way: “If you think that the anti-apartheid movement was full of people who worked and played well together and who liked each other—no way. Get over it. . . . There were just lots of individual and institutional issues. But when push came to shove, their collective efforts had an impact” (Waters 2003). Still, the fact that the four organizations brought assets that were largely complementary, and that all generally acknowledged this good fit, made it possible to curtail turf battles despite the inescapable competition for constituencies and donors.

ACOA/Africa Fund’s assets included well-established links to diverse networks across the country and in New York and a long history of leadership on the demand to cut economic ties with South Africa. New York City housed the United Nations, the National Council of Churches, and, at that time, the headquarters of most of the major Protestant denominations. Representatives of SWAPO and the ANC were easily accessible, as were sympathetic African ambassadors and the staff of the U.N. Centre against Apartheid and Council for Namibia. ACOA’s Religious Action Network, headed by Rev. Wyatt Tee Walker of Canaan Baptist Church in Harlem, gave the organization access to leading black clergy in the city. Walker also provided a connection to the nationwide network of Progressive National Baptist congregations and others he knew from his earlier role as director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference for Martin Luther King Jr. As interest rose in the anti-apartheid cause, the ACOA/Africa Fund also became the principal contact point for progressive trade unionists and politicians dealing with the issue.

On the campaign for divestment and economic sanctions, it was the ACOA/Africa Fund that provided information exchange and strategic consistency for the wider circles that became involved. The Africa Fund published a regularly updated list of U.S. companies involved in South Africa, providing in effect a shopping list of targets for local activ-



Annie King, ACOA's longtime office manager, provided organizational memory and stability. She is shown here in January 1989 with South African United Democratic Front leaders Murphy Morobe, left, and Mohammed Valli Moosa. *Photo courtesy of Jennifer Davis.*

ists. And the ACOA hosted events such as the June 1981 two-day conference of 42 legislators from 22 states, who met with U.N. officials, activists, organizers, and trade unionists to discuss strategies for attacking investments in apartheid. Georgia state senator Julian Bond, veteran SNCC activist and future executive chairman of the NAACP, keynoted the event with a call to “end American complicity with this international crime” (1981).

The AFSC, with a long history of engagement in both overseas relief and peace activism, was also by the 1980s an essential link in anti-apartheid networks. Given the Quaker insistence on consensus and reconciliation, there were many in the organization who had doubts not only about support for African liberation movements but also about the confrontation involved in demands for divestment. But the group also had the unique advantage of having offices around the country, almost all of which served as gathering points for progressive activists involved in many different issues in their communities and regions. The AFSC's work on

Africa also built on the energy of the group's Third World Coalition that had been founded in 1971.

Visits by Bill Sutherland from Tanzania continued from the 1970s into the 1980s, and the AFSC was also one of the first groups to host Bishop Desmond Tutu on a U.S. tour. Sutherland recalls that the AFSC, itself a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, regularly nominated Tutu for the award, years before he received it. Based in Atlanta, Thandi Luthuli-Gcabashe, daughter of the 1960 Nobel laureate Chief Albert Luthuli, ran the AFSC's peace education program for the U.S. South from 1981 to 1996. AFSC offices in Seattle, Portland, Baltimore, Ohio, western Massachusetts, and North Carolina, to name only a few, were centers of local anti-apartheid activism.

Despite their location in Washington, DC, neither WOA nor TransAfrica was close to the centers of power in the nation's capital. They had good access to allies in Congress, such as the members of the Congressional Black Caucus and the handful of other representatives and senators—mainly Democrats but also a few Republicans—who showed consistent interest in Africa. But their influence even with these individuals depended in large part on their relationships to constituencies both inside and outside Washington. Both worked with other groups in the wider anti-apartheid movement, cosponsoring events such as the June 1981 conference on state and local divestment. From 1979, the two co-hosted the monthly strategy session of the Southern Africa Working Group, which at the height of the movement brought more than 40 groups together to coordinate pressures on Congress. Each also had its own networks of contacts in the local Washington community and around the country.

In addition to its ties to the national church denominations and a few trade unions that were its principal financial sponsors, WOA distinguished itself by its emphasis on coalition building combined with grassroots mobilization as the prerequisites for influence on Congress. Its leaders were a regular presence not only in the halls of Congress but also in rallies at churches and community centers. WOA repeatedly stressed the connection of apartheid with other issues, from Namibia and the regional wars in Southern Africa to domestic racism. Working with close allies such as Willis Logan, who directed the Africa office at the National Council of Churches

in New York, WOA spoke out against complacency and urged stronger action from the churches.

For its part, TransAfrica became best known for the national media presence of its director Randall Robinson, an eloquent voice not only against apartheid but later also on Haiti and other foreign policy issues. Like the other groups, however, TransAfrica depended on networks not readily visible to television audiences. TransAfrica was consistently the central contact and rallying point on African issues for national African American leaders. It retained particularly close ties to the Congressional Black Caucus and built links to politically conscious celebrities in film, music, and sport. And when Robinson sought local support for the demonstrations that launched the Free South Africa Movement in November 1984, he could turn to the experienced local organizers of the Southern Africa Support Project.

Beginning in 1984, the high level of national and world media focus on South Africa, particularly on television, motivated movement activists and was a decisive factor in the buildup of political pressure. The daily demonstrations in Washington, Ted Koppel's week-long series of *Nightline* programs broadcast from South Africa in March 1985, and the apartheid regime's open intransigence all helped keep the story alive. The debate on sanctions became in effect a referendum on racism.

The Anti-Apartheid Convergence: Wider Networks

What made this period different from previous decades was that South Africa became not only an international and national news story but a local story. And the involvement of musicians, film stars, and sports figures caught the attention even of those unlikely to follow political news.

Local activists turned to the national anti-apartheid organizations for information and occasional visiting speakers. But even when there was direct affiliation with a national body, as in the case of AFSC offices and TransAfrica chapters, the dynamic behind the activism was locally rooted. Ad hoc coalitions depended on local relationships and on local activists with a history of involvement in Africa solidarity as well as other progressive causes. It was the capacity of the movement to engage these far-flung local forces, not the existence of a single anti-

apartheid organization, that drove the movement's powerful impact on the U.S. Congress and on the business community.

In the United Kingdom and some other countries, the "Anti-Apartheid Movement" was a single, national organization. But in the United States there was no such organization, and the use of capital letters indicating an organizational name would be a misleading guide to historical reality. The diverse and hard-to-track currents involved—students, politicians, trade union groups, church groups, celebrities, and many others—were part of no unified organizational structure. Yet all are central to the movement's history.

By the early 1980s, several generations of students had come and gone since the anti-apartheid demonstrations of the mid-1960s. The post-Soweto wave of student actions was beginning to win results. By the end of 1979, universities on both coasts and in the Midwest states had divested over \$50 million in stocks of companies involved in South Africa. Over the next five years universities divested over \$130 million more, and in 1985 alone more than 60 universities divested some \$350 million. The Africa Fund counted more than 150 universities involved in divestment campaigns during the 1980s. Protest tactics such as the building of "shanties" spread from campus to campus (Soule 1995).

Student organizations were often short-lived, and they were often divided along racial lines even when the demands for divestment were identical. Only a few of the students involved went on to pursue sustained activism in solidarity with Africa. But large numbers carried the basic message with them after they graduated, whether their career tracks took them to politics, the academic world, or some other business or profession. As the issue gained even more prominence in the 1980s, veterans of student activism were to be found in local and state governments, on congressional staffs, and even among new members of Congress.

States leading the way, through both student action and the divestment of public funds, included Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Michigan, Wisconsin, and California. And they were just the beginning. In 1991 The Africa Fund compiled a list of 28 states, 24 counties, and 92 cities that had enacted legislation for divestment from South Africa. In each



Artists and Athletes Against Apartheid at a press conference arranged by the Organization of African Unity, September 14, 1983. From left: Gregory Hines, Tony Randall, Arthur Ashe, Rose Elder, Randall Robinson, Franklin Williams, Harry Belafonte, Joel Grey. *UN Photo.*

of these cases, and an unknown number more where the legislation failed, local coalitions placed the debate on South Africa onto the local political agenda.

Specialized groups and national networks in many different sectors of society also took up the issue. National groups that played important roles included the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, which coordinated church action on stockholders' resolutions and divestment, and the Southern Africa Project of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, which supported political prisoners and documented South African abuses. Church groups and celebrities were particularly important because of their wide impact on the public. Church groups tended to have closest ties with ACOA and WOA, while celebrities both white and black were likely to be more closely linked to TransAfrica. And people in each of these sectors also had their own political commitments and their own links with counterparts in South Africa and elsewhere on the continent that shaped their involvement.

Three South African church leaders, Anglican archbishop Desmond Tutu and Reformed Church leaders Beyers Naudé and Allan Boesak, were so omnipresent at church gatherings in the United States that some insiders jokingly referred to them as the "holy trinity" of anti-apartheid action. While particularly persuasive within their own denominational bodies, each was able to reach wider audiences. "Black theology" and the Kairos document released by South African religious leaders in September 1985 were studied in U.S. seminaries, college religion classes, and church study groups. They provided theological reflection on and religious grounds for opposition to apartheid, just as liberation theology provided a similar resource for progressive organizing in Latin America.

Each denomination with historical connections to Southern Africa worked within its own particular structures and relationships. Within the Lutheran Church, for example, Namibians studying at Lutheran schools in the Midwest sparked a national network supporting Namibia's indepen-

dence from South Africa. Network members raised the issue of Namibia at the Democratic presidential primaries in Iowa in 1984 and 1988 and consistently pushed the divestment issue at national meetings, despite opposition from denominational leadership. Eventually, recounts Dumisani Kumalo (2005a), even many Reagan Republicans were persuaded to support SWAPO, telling their representatives that the SWAPO guerrillas, far from being “communist terrorists,” were “good Lutherans.”

Celebrities who joined the anti-apartheid drive did so most often in the context of the movement’s call to boycott South Africa. Like the divestment movement, the cultural and sports boycott was important both for its direct effects on South Africa and because it repeatedly raised the issue of apartheid in the United States, forcing debate. Although it reached its height in the 1980s, it built on currents from previous decades. In New York, for example, the Patrice Lumumba Coalition joined with the National Black United Front to protest artists who violated the boycott to perform in South Africa. Actor Danny Glover, who played Nelson Mandela in a 1987 television film on Mandela’s life, had been a leader in the Black Students Union at San Fran-

cisco State in the late 1960s. Consciously placing himself in the politically progressive tradition of figures such as Paul Robeson and Harry Belafonte, Glover has been a consistent supporter of African liberation, maintaining close ties to TransAfrica in particular over the years.

Danny Schechter, a former activist with the Africa Research Group in Boston who became a media commentator and news producer, coordinated the *Sun City* record and video produced by Artists United Against Apartheid in 1985. Named for the luxury casino in Bophuthatswana that featured in the South African regime’s public relations drive, *Sun City* was explicitly political, calling on artists to boycott the casino (“Ain’t gonna play Sun City!”). The Africa Fund distributed proceeds from the *Sun City* sales to the liberation movements and to anti-apartheid work in the United States. Schechter, who had taken on the video project without telling his employer while a producer at ABC’s *20/20* news program, went on to produce the weekly television show *South Africa Now* from 1988 to 1991.

The sports boycott also gained impetus, although it remained less central to the movement in the United States than in Britain, Australia, and New Zealand, where rugby and cricket tours of South African teams ignited nationwide protests. In the 1970s South African exile Dennis Brutus and U.S. sports activist Richard Lapchick took the anti-apartheid message around the country. Tennis star Arthur Ashe had hoped to influence South African sport by visiting the country, only to discover that such visits were ineffectual. He joined the more than 6,000 protesters at the Davis Cup match in Nashville, Tennessee in March 1978. In 1983 Ashe agreed to join Harry Belafonte to chair Artists and Athletes Against Apartheid, a coalition of groups coordinated by TransAfrica to support the cultural boycott.

Dennis Brutus himself well illustrates how the South African cause reached Americans through the intersection of activist and other networks. A central figure in the global campaign to boycott South African sport after he went into exile in 1966, Brutus based himself in the United States, first at Northwestern University near Chicago and then at the University of Pittsburgh. One of Africa’s leading poets, he won world renown for his prison and exile poetry, and he was one of the founders of the African



Dennis Brutus testifies at the United Nations in 1967 on behalf of the International Defense and Aid Fund World Campaign for the Release of South African Political Prisoners and as president of the South African Nonracial Olympic Committee. *UN Photo.*



Proceeds of Sun City album and video sales benefit the ANC, January 1987. Tilden LeMelle, president of The Africa Fund, presents ANC president Oliver Tambo with a check for over \$100,000 to be used for educational and cultural projects benefiting South African refugees. Singers Harry Belafonte, right, and Little Steven look on.
Photo by David Vita.

Literature Association in the United States. A tireless campaigner speaking to audiences around the country, Brutus won political asylum in 1983 despite a two-year effort by the U.S. immigration authorities to expel him.

After 1985, the South African government increased restrictions on news coverage, barring television camera crews, but to no avail. Anti-apartheid pressures in the United States and worldwide built steadily as the struggle inside South Africa escalated. Events there continued to have an impact on the U.S. movement through multiple channels: the core national organizations, the mass media, and the scores of other personal and organizational networks that by mid-decade linked Americans with South Africa.

Invisible Wars, Invisible Continent

The same convergence did not materialize, however, for the countries targeted by South Africa's regional wars or for other crises confronting the continent.

For the core organizations and for Africa activists whose involvement preceded the victories over Portuguese colonialism in 1975, the regional dimension was fundamental. They were aware that freeing South Africa was the culmination of the decades-long continental and global drive for freedom from colonial-

ism and white minority rule. After the burst of independence in the 1960s, the focus of action on Africa had narrowed to the southern region. And as first the Portuguese colonies and then Zimbabwe gained independence, South Africa and its occupation of Namibia became the center of political action.

For most of the U.S. public, however, the relevant fact was that South Africa had repeatedly gained world attention, more than any other nation on the continent. Although the attention was intermittent, it began with the Sharpeville massacre in 1960 and continued through the Soweto uprising in 1976–77 and the resurgence of resistance in the 1980s. Both the message and the images of black resistance and white oppression resonated with the history of the civil rights movement in the U.S. South.

While opposing South Africa's attacks on Angola and Mozambique was always part of the activist message, this was not easy to communicate to wider constituencies, whose awareness of South Africa was shaped largely by television coverage. With very limited resources, all the groups found themselves, like it or not, concentrating on the simpler anti-apartheid message. Unlike in the case of South Africa, movement actions on other African issues never passed the threshold needed to have a decisive impact on the Washington policy scene.

In the case of Mozambique, for example, small networks of activists included *cooperantes* who had worked with Frelimo in exile in Tanzania or after independence in Mozambique. They raised funds to assist the country, supporting medical clinics, sending doctors, and providing other small-scale support for development projects. Just as important, U.S. activists mobilized public pressure to keep Mozambique off the target list for U.S. covert intervention, and they exposed South Africa's backing for the Renamo guerrillas opposing the Mozambican government. In 1987, when Mark van Koevinger, an American Mennonite aid worker, reported the massacre of 424 villagers at Homoíne, which he had managed to escape, U.S. activists successfully publicized the Renamo atrocity.

More significant, however, were the efforts of the Mozambican government itself. Veteran Mozambican diplomat Valeriano Ferrão, who had been my colleague as a teacher in the Frelimo school in Tanzania before independence, arrived in Washington

as ambassador in 1983 and quickly reinforced contacts with U.S. supporters. The Mozambican government also hired Prexy Nesbitt, who had earlier been program director of the World Council of Churches Programme to Combat Racism and special assistant to Chicago mayor Harold Washington, as a consultant in 1987. Through these contacts and others, the Mozambican leadership made a concerted and successful effort in the 1980s to maintain its ties with the core networks of Africa activists.

This was only part of a multifaceted Mozambican government drive to win friends and neutralize enemies in the United States. Maputo also reached out to the administration and to Congress, including right-wing lawmakers, and to business interests and humanitarian agencies. The strategy was defensive and admittedly fell short of decisively engaging the United States to stop South Africa's military support for Renamo. Nevertheless, Frelimo succeeded in building strong sympathy far beyond the ranks of its initial support from activists. The far-right supporters of Renamo failed to gain credibility and were frustrated in their attempts to win U.S. endorsement and support.

In contrast, the Angola government, with few personal networks and little knowledge of the U.S. context, had no equivalent involvement from U.S. activists, and approached the United States in a quite different manner. This was so despite the fact that in the mid-1970s progressive forces in the United States had succeeded in achieving a congressional ban on U.S. covert intervention in Angola. This ban was enacted in 1975–76 after it became publicly known that South African troops had also joined the war for power in Angola as Portugal withdrew, backing the same Angolan groups as the CIA.

In the 1980s, Jonas Savimbi continued to lead Unita in its war on the MPLA and the government in Luanda. Because the MPLA was aligned with the Soviet Union, Savimbi became the darling of the Reagan administration and far-right networks. The core U.S. activist groups opposed U.S. intervention and support for Unita, but they could muster almost no constituency on this issue. Without broader public awareness of the Southern African political context, the conflict in Angola was delinked from that in South Africa, even for most anti-apartheid activists. If Angola appeared on the average Amer-

ican's mental map at all, it was probably closer to Cuba or to Afghanistan than to South Africa.

Strikingly, the Angolan government made little or no effort to reach out to U.S. civil society or even to Africa activists. When Luanda did try to influence the U.S. political scene, it worked almost exclusively through expensive public relations firms or through its good contacts with U.S. oil firms. The array of right-wing forces lobbying for continued U.S. intervention was probably so powerful that they would have prevailed in any case. But there was practically no visible countervailing public pressure.

If it proved difficult to transfer anti-apartheid energy to solidarity with Mozambique and Angola, building a movement for solidarity with other African countries was an even more daunting prospect. For the most part, the public remained ignorant of or indifferent to intense U.S. involvement in countries as diverse as Liberia, Zaire, and Ethiopia.

The Cold War was still decisive in shaping American involvement on the continent, along with economic interests in oil and other mineral resources. In the 1980s the U.S. government was heavily involved in support for dictator Samuel Doe in Liberia, a country intimately tied to the United States since the nineteenth century. Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire (now Congo) not only provided a corridor for U.S. intervention in Angola but had long been notorious for his plutocratic and dictatorial exploitation of his own people. Cold War competition was even more intense in the Horn of Africa than in Southern Africa. Yet in none of these cases was there a significant public movement to demand that U.S. policy contribute to human rights and social justice.

In general, the core Africa activist organizations in the United States, stretched for resources even to keep pace with the growing anti-apartheid movement, regretfully accepted their lack of capacity to act on other issues. The ACOA took on a limited involvement in supporting the independence of Moroccan-occupied Western Sahara. And Randall Robinson of TransAfrica was arrested in a lonely protest against the Ethiopian dictatorship in 1989, an action that was totally overshadowed by the police attack on students in China's Tiananmen Square (R. Robinson 1999, 157). But none of the organizations

mounted sustained campaigns or educational programs on other African crises during these years.

Individual exiles and small exile groups from some African countries did organize among themselves. But few reached out beyond their own ranks to try to mobilize American supporters. By far the most effective were Eritrean exiles supporting their country's independence from Ethiopia. But their primary focus was on directing resources back to their own movements. American journalist Dan Connell first traveled to Eritrea in 1976 and went on to found Grassroots International in 1983 specifically to provide material aid and other forms of solidarity to the Eritrean people. Few other American supporters became engaged, as most activists shied away from the complexities and divisions of the conflicts in that region.

When famine in the Horn of Africa did gain attention in the mid-1980s, televised coverage made little or no connection to the political issues in the region. *We Are the World*, featuring an impressive array of 45 music stars, in 1985 became the fastest-selling album in music history. It eventually raised over \$60 million for famine relief and related causes. Yet, like the parallel Live Aid concert the same year, the message reinforced the stereotypical image of dependent Africans receiving charity. Miriam Makeba, then living in West Africa, com-

mented, "Everyone in Africa is thankful for this aid. But we listen to the lyrics, and we wonder: What is this? 'We are the world,' the stars from America sing. But who is the world? Where are the singers from Africa, Europe, the East, the Third World? They are all Americans singing 'We are the world'" (Makeba and Hall 1987, 233).

The anti-apartheid movement was successful in the 1980s largely because it had such an obvious enemy in the apartheid state and such readily available action targets in the United States. Many activists had a critical mass of knowledge and ties to South Africa, and there was a roadmap of how Americans could contribute to a struggle led by Africans. In the next decade, as victory over the apartheid regime was finally achieved, activists would face the challenge of finding new forms of solidarity that went beyond South Africa and were based on new African realities.

The 1990s

"Free Mandela! Free Nelson Mandela!" For decades these words in chant and song were a rallying cry for activists around the world. On February 11, 1990, after 27 years, it finally happened: Nelson Mandela walked out of Victor Verster Prison in Paarl and a new chapter in South Africa's history began. The drama of Mandela's release attracted unprecedented worldwide attention. Just weeks later, on March 21,

the 30th anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre, South Africa officially relinquished authority over Namibia, which gained independence under an elected government led by the liberation movement SWAPO. Four years later, Mandela took office as the elected president of South Africa.

These victories were generations in the making, and the extent to which they were long overdue simply increased the intensity of celebrations. Activists outside of Southern Africa recognized that those who had resisted tyranny inside South Africa



Board members and supporters of the American Committee on Africa/The Africa Fund in New York in 2000. From left: Robert Boehm, Robert Browne, Carl Hooper, Peter Weiss, and Huoi Nguyen, Browne's wife. The occasion was a reception hosted by U.N. ambassador Dumisani Kumalo in honor of Jennifer Davis. Photo by Suzette Abbott.

and Namibia were responsible for this moment but that anti-apartheid forces around the world had also played a part. Nelson Mandela traveled to greet his supporters on repeated overseas visits, where he was welcomed as a conquering hero. Yet amid the jubilation it was understood that this was a rare moment to be savored, and that the struggle was by no means over. Both Namibia and South Africa faced monumental challenges to overcome the legacies and distortions of occupation and apartheid.

In the United States, these victories closed one period of solidarity and opened a new period, one marked by the absence of any unifying framework. Indeed, during the 1990s questions multiplied for American activists focusing on Africa. Answers were tentative and fragmentary, and the movement's capacity to mobilize public pressure was much reduced from the high of the 1980s. Yet the need for action was as great as ever. This was exemplified most horrifically by the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, with as many as 800,000 people killed in a few months. And Rwanda was only one of several crises afflicting the continent. There was also continued war in Angola, new wars in West Africa, and—little noticed in the 1990s but already taking an enormous toll—the spread of HIV/AIDS.

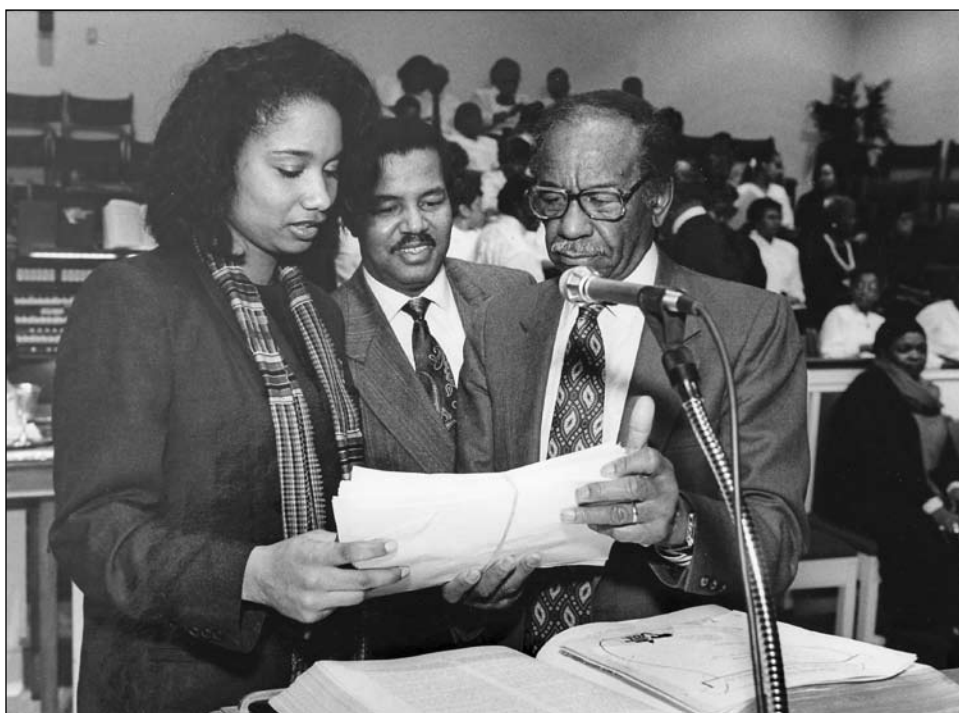
Ironically, factors leading to the success of the “anti-apartheid” convergence also contained the seeds of future weaknesses. Core Africa activists around the country, despite their diversity, most often saw the anti-apartheid cause within the context of wider advocacy for human rights and social justice in Africa and at home. But it was the narrow, and negative, anti-apartheid message that enabled activists to build organizational coherence and public awareness. Both the simplicity of that message and its reinforcement by the intransigence of the apartheid regime suited it

for media amplification and policy impact. And the dual strategy of national sanctions and local divestment allowed for creative pressures to be developed at all levels of the movement.

During the complex transition period from Mandela's release in 1990 until the April 1994 democratic elections that brought him into office, both the anti-apartheid message and the sanctions/divestment strategy had some continued relevance for South Africa. But that relevance rapidly waned, and was gone by 1994. The new problems to be confronted would require rethinking, both about continued inequality in South Africa and about the many issues facing the rest of the continent.

South Africa: Transition and Beyond

The four years following Mandela's release were both perilous and confusing. The dominant forces in the South African regime and among South Africa's business community did, at last, opt to abandon the apartheid framework for a new order with equal political rights for all. But there were significant currents within the regime determined to sabotage such a transition, or at least maximize their influence in it, through covert violence.



Gathering in support of South African political prisoners, Israel Baptist Church, Washington, DC, 1991. Aleah Bacquie, left, coordinator of the ACOA's Religious Action Network, confers with Rev. Morris Shearin, center, and a church deacon. Photo © Rick Reinhard.



"Unlock Apartheid's Jails." Activists demanding freedom for political prisoners deliver keys to the South African embassy in 1987. Gay McDougall of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, left, stands with Jennifer Davis of the American Committee on Africa. Behind McDougall are Damu Smith of the Washington Office on Africa (in tie) and Rob Jones of ACOA (in hat). Photo © Rick Reinhard.

Even more important, it was a time of intense jockeying for both political and economic advantage in the post-apartheid era. The most important arenas of competition were the negotiating table and the formal and informal debates over policy within the leadership of those forces contending for power. The

issues were tangled and often technical: how to shape the new constitution, how to shape thinking about future economic policy, how to control political violence and establish a new security order merging the personnel of the former regime and its opponents. With regard to international relations, there was both the immediate question of when to shift from calling for sanctions and divestment to attracting new investment and aid, and the long-term issue of how far to go to win the confidence of Western investors and the global financial establishment.

Among American anti-apartheid activists, Gay McDougall of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law was one of the few who was on the inside of the process in South Africa. She first came to know South African and Namibian exile leaders while studying international human rights law in London in the late 1970s. Later, at the Lawyers' Committee, she evaded South African restrictions and indirectly funneled as much as \$2 million a year into South Africa and Namibia to support political prisoners. For the constitutional negotiations she provided international research resources for the ANC team, and she was chosen as one of five international members of the 16-person commission that managed the 1994 election.

Such high-profile involvement by an American activist was the exception, however. Under presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton,

the U.S. government dramatically stepped up its involvement, seeing a peaceful transition in South Africa as a high priority for both strategic and political reasons. U.S. foundations and others with resources saw new opportunities in South Africa; they ranged from small and large businesses to individual philan-

thropists to professionals, educational institutions, and church agencies. But most grassroots activists had few resources to offer apart from their time and political commitment. And the core groups that had previously helped provide information and direction faced rapidly declining financial support, as donors seemed to conclude that the need for such work had already ended.

The first President Bush lifted official U.S. sanctions in mid-1991. However, the movement was largely able to maintain a consensus in favor of local divestment actions to serve as continued pressure until Nelson Mandela formally called for the lifting of sanctions in September 1993. As violence escalated during the transition period, U.S. anti-apartheid groups publicized charges by the ANC and human rights groups inside South Africa that the killing was covertly orchestrated by the regime. This, they noted, demonstrated that the South African government was not acting in good faith to end apartheid and negotiate with the African liberation

movements. Sanctions therefore needed to be maintained. But the debate over lifting sanctions was complicated, as the media celebrated President F. W. de Klerk's willingness to change and the ANC itself sent mixed signals to its supporters abroad. Official Washington and the U.S. media also gave little credence to evidence of a covert "third force" behind the disorder, preferring to accept the simplistic label of "black-on-black violence."

The decline in the movement's capacity for mobilization was in a sense inevitable as victory approached. In South Africa itself, negotiation and compromise were on the agenda. But for some activists, working behind the scenes during Mandela's initial U.S. tour in 1990, there were also early indications that it might be time to disengage. Competition to be on Mandela's schedule was intense in every single city visited. At times the political significance of the trip seemed overshadowed by the jockeying for a position close to the South African leader. To make it more complicated, the ANC



ACOA board president Wyatt Tee Walker with actress Alfre Woodard, left, ANC representative Lindiwe Mabasa, and filmmaker Spike Lee at a luncheon with the Congressional Black Caucus, March 1991. As pressure to lift sanctions against South Africa intensified, The Africa Fund organized a delegation to tell Congress to keep the sanctions in place. *Photo © Rick Reinhard.*



ACOA director Jennifer Davis and ANC president Oliver Tambo at a reception organized by ACOA/Africa Fund, January 1987. *Photo by David Vita.*

delegation itself included not only the commanding figures of Nelson and Winnie Mandela but also organizational bureaucrats. Some of these officials made it very clear that their future agenda for the United States would focus on business and government ties and include little or no role for solidarity activists.

Activists had been accustomed to dealing with South African exiles within the context of mutually understood political solidarity. As movement leadership in South Africa transitioned into a new period, preparing to assume power, new imperatives necessitated new ways of working. It was a time of often confusing signals and misunderstandings. Lines of communication became increasingly frayed without the steady hand of Oliver Tambo, who had presided over the ANC's international relations from 1960 until he was disabled by a stroke in 1989, followed by his death in 1993.

Still, American activists and the broader public that had rallied to the anti-apartheid cause continued to follow developments in South Africa. Hundreds of Americans, most with a history of involvement

in activist networks, participated as nongovernmental observers in the 1994 election. Thousands more traveled to South Africa over the decade, simply to breathe in the atmosphere of a free South Africa or to seek jobs, business ties, or other opportunities to contribute to building a new society. The activist Fund for a Free South Africa, originally established by South African exiles, spun off Shared Interest, an organization focused on providing credit guarantees for jobs and housing. For some years the ACOA was able to use its ties with state and city legislators to help foster relationships with elected officials in provisional and municipal governments in South Africa and the region. The Bay Area contacts noted by Walter Turner in chapter 6 had their counterparts in universities, communities, and professional associations around the country.

Yet such efforts were no longer situated within the context of a movement that could craft a coherent message or even sustain regular communication, much less coordination or complementary strategies, among individual activists and activist groups. By the time of the 1994 South African elections, TransAfrica had transferred its primary energies to the crisis in Haiti; its director Randall Robinson was engaged in a hunger strike to protest the U.S. policy of expelling Haitian refugees. WOA was trying to focus public attention on the continuing crises in Angola and Zaire. There was also the problem of resources. In some European countries, movement organizations related to Africa could count on government subsidies to finance their continued engagement with post-apartheid South Africa. But American movement groups had no funding flow to support such a shift.

At a deeper level, the developing impasse went beyond limitations in organizational resources. It brought to mind the dilemma of the civil rights movement following the political civil rights victories of the 1960s. With no common vision or strategy for winning social and economic rights that could lead to broader transformations in American society, that movement had fragmented. The anti-apartheid movement of the 1980s, with its commitment to fundamental political rights, had provided an opportunity to revisit the unifying spirit of the 1960s. But it had not tackled the fundamental issues of building a more just society.

Part of the problem was the fact that the movement had focused so intensely on race, commented Gay McDougall. But it was also, she said, that Americans in general believe in civil and political rights but not in economic and social rights: “We don’t believe that people should have a right to livelihood, to health, shelter, homes.” The anti-apartheid movement had not dealt with the tough questions about the future, she reflected. “I don’t want to be too harsh here because I think that we did real good with what we saw out there to do. But it was, in many ways, a shallow movement politically” (McDougall 2005).



The Africa Fund sponsored a national consultation on U.S. policy toward Africa in Washington, DC, in April 1997. From left: Karen Boykins-Towns of the NAACP, Richard Knight of The Africa Fund, and Gugile Nkwinti, speaker of the legislature of South Africa’s Eastern Cape Province. *Photo courtesy of Richard Knight.*

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, many African American and other activists had looked to Africa for inspiration, especially to Tanzania or to the liberation movements in Guinea-Bissau or Mozambique. By the 1980s the hopes that these countries might provide a new model for just societies had been shattered, if not by war then by the stubborn persistence of poverty. Despite the celebration of Mandela and the new South Africa, it was clear by the mid-1990s that South Africa too faced intractable dilemmas and internal debates about how to deal with the apartheid legacy of social and economic inequality.

Few American activists followed the South African debates about post-apartheid economic policy in detail. Fewer still had a firm opinion on whether the conservative economic policies adopted by the new South African government were necessary compromises or a betrayal of revolutionary hopes. Almost all were well aware that the media celebration of the South African miracle concealed stubborn realities of institutional racism and economic inequality still to be addressed. But neither in South Africa nor in the United States were there clear strategies for dealing with these issues, much

less a vision for how grassroots activists on both sides of the Atlantic might be involved.

African Crises in a Decade of Indifference

What then of the rest of Africa? Both the major anti-apartheid groups and the overwhelming majority of dedicated activists saw their involvement as part of a broader vision of freedom and justice, whether this was defined primarily in terms of Pan-African unity, global justice, or a U.S. foreign policy based on human rights rather than global dominance. On this wider front, the need for continued action was undeniable. But the Africa solidarity movement in the public eye had been narrowed to the anti-apartheid message focused on South Africa. In the 1990s it became clear that a movement with identified constituencies and viable strategies to take on the new Africa-wide challenges had yet to be built.

The most dramatic indication that this was a new time—and that there was no U.S. movement ready to engage it—came in April 1994, the same month as South Africa’s election. Gay McDougall remembers how, in the midst of managing the election in the conflict-ridden province of KwaZulu-Natal, she saw television images of bodies floating down a river



Memorial site in Rwanda at Ntarama Church, where approximately 5,000 people were killed in April 1994. "For the policy makers in Washington," reflected Rwanda specialist Alison des Forges, "Rwanda was simply not an issue that created enough noise for them to pay attention." *Photo by Samuel Totten.*

in Rwanda. "What in God's name is going on?" she wondered (McDougall 2005). By the end of the year, she was working with the International Human Rights Law Group (now Global Rights) on programs that included supporting human rights advocates in the Great Lakes region of Africa.

The failure of governments to respond to the genocide in Rwanda has been amply documented. African governments, the United Nations, and major powers including the United States either took too little action too late, or, even worse, blocked proposals for action that could have saved hundreds of thousands of lives. The general public indifference certainly made this inaction possible. But there has been little analysis of reasons for the failure to generate public pressure that would have required governments to respond. Human rights groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch provided information about what was happening, and a small number of activist academics familiar with the region spoke out. But the groups that had been part of the anti-apartheid movement were almost totally unprepared to act. "We, along with the whole world, allowed that situation to happen," Bay Area anti-apartheid and AIDS activist Gerald Lenoir reflected (2005).

Alison des Forges, an academic specialist on the Great Lakes and an adviser to Human Rights Watch, had been in close touch with Rwandan human rights activists. With her colleagues she had briefed U.S. officials on the threat of genocide. She recalled

the time in a 2003 interview on public television's *Frontline*:

We at Human Rights Watch had been involved since 1991 in trying to influence policy. We had seen small-scale massacres. We had documented the involvement of people in the government and in the military, and we had documented the growth of the militia. So we had been attempting already, for many months, to persuade governments and international agencies to be concerned and to take a stand on this issue.

When they finally reached top officials at the National Security Council (NSC) in the weeks after the killing began, they found officials trying "to find reasons not to do anything":

We did have one discussion with another staffer at the NSC, a military officer seconded to the NSC. We talked to him about this issue. He, to my great shock, talked about this genocide as age-old tribal hatred, as something that was perhaps almost inevitable, the kind of thing that happens in Africa and it's regrettable, but after all, we can't really do anything about it. . . .

It upset me, because here at the highest policy-making levels in the U.S. government was a military officer, who was presumably giving his advice to policy makers, who had so little conception of what was happening in Rwanda that he could mistake a modern-day genocide, designed and carried through by a group of political actors for their own benefit—that he could mistake that for so-called ancient tribal hatreds, which, in fact, were neither ancient nor tribal in the case of Rwanda. . . .

With Monique Mujawamariyaw, who had escaped from Rwanda in the days after the killings began, des Forges spoke with Anthony Lake, President Clinton's national security adviser:

He listened very carefully for perhaps half an hour, very intently. But at the end of the half-hour, I had the impression that he was not moved to change his ideas all that much. So I said to him, "Look, I have the feeling that we are not getting very far in trying to get some change in U.S. policy. What do we need to do to be more

effective?” He said, “Make more noise,” and I think that was the essential message throughout here—that for the policy makers in Washington, Rwanda was simply not an issue that created enough noise for them to pay attention. (des Forges 2003)

The U.S. movement had worked for decades to make enough “noise” to get the U.S. government to take action against apartheid South Africa. In 1994 the cry for Rwanda was only a whisper, emanating from a handful of individuals and groups. The movement lacked the infrastructure of information, networks, and committed and informed local activists able to respond to action alerts or press releases. Only a handful of Americans or African exiles—and almost no organized local groups—were even minimally informed about the complexities of Rwanda and its neighbors. In this context, there were no strong voices to challenge the wide indifference to African deaths or the stereotypical portrayal of the genocidal political project of Rwanda’s leaders as the product of “ancient tribal hatreds.”

Rwanda, one might argue, was particularly remote for Americans. French-speaking, it was of little economic or strategic significance to the United States and even lacked a history of U.S. Cold War intervention. But the entrenched indifference to Africa and the lack of a movement capable of breaking through to capture public attention applied virtually across the board. Liberia, Somalia, and Zaire, which had been favored U.S. Cold War clients, slid further into crisis in the 1990s. In each case small groups of activists and exiles with personal ties mobilized, aided in the case of Zaire by the notoriety of longtime dictator Mobutu Sese Seko. Human rights groups and humanitarian organizations put out reports and calls to action, as did the Washington-based progressive Africa organizations.

But these crises did not evoke the engagement of more than a fraction of those who had come out against apartheid. Nor did the parallel resurgence of pro-democracy activism across the continent, from Benin to Kenya, attract much interest. When media attention did come—as in the case of the attacks on U.S. troops in Somalia in 1993 and, eventually, the crisis in the Great Lakes in 1994—the images tended to reinforce stereotypes of African irrationality and chaos. This was of little help in building a frame-

work with which to mobilize activists for new Africa policies.

Even for those who were interested in Africa, it became more difficult to obtain nuanced coverage of the continent through traditional channels. Africa News Service, founded in 1973 as an outgrowth of the activist Southern Africa Committee, was forced to end print publication in 1993 for lack of financial support. The publication would find a new home on the Internet, eventually transforming itself into allAfrica.com. But in 1995 the government- and business-funded African American Institute shut down *Africa Report*, the only remaining regular national magazine on Africa—yet another indication of the marginalization of African concerns during the decade.

A Changing Africa and Globalization

Although little visible to most Americans, including anti-apartheid activists, new currents were stirring in Africa in the 1990s as civil society organizations and pro-democracy movements gained momentum. The loss of Cold War support for dictatorial regimes created the potential not only for new conflicts, but also for new thinking. Freed of the constraints of Cold War dichotomies, more and more Africans demanded that universal human rights apply to them, regardless of the exemptions claimed by many of their rulers.

On issues relating to conflict, human rights, and democracy, an increasing convergence of views across the political spectrum was developing on both sides of the Atlantic. In February 1990, the same week Nelson Mandela left prison, delegates from a wide range of organizations across the continent gathered in Arusha, Tanzania, for a session supported by the United Nations. They adopted the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation, which demanded an opening up of the political process and the political accountability of the state. The winding down of the Cold War made it more apparent that ideological rhetoric and external backing, whether from the left or right, had often served as a cover for the self-interest of elites.

New coalitions brought together nongovernmental activists with innovative officials in international agencies and governments to push forward

global issues that were of particular interest to Africa. New Internet-based communication tools facilitated outreach and coordination across geographic and institutional boundaries to maximize the impact. In the campaign for an international landmines treaty, for example, governments such as Canada and Mozambique worked with international activist networks to mobilize support. By 1997, 121 countries had signed the treaty, although the United States remained a holdout.

The growing agreement on issues related to conflict, human rights, and democracy was not matched by parallel concurrence on economic and social rights for Africa. African scholars and civil society groups, including the churches, denounced the failure of the cutbacks and privatization schemes being imposed on Africa by the World Bank and rich-country creditors. The Arusha conference directed its call for democratization not only to African governments but also to international agencies imposing outside economic agendas, notably the economic orthodoxy of the "Washington consensus." But in Washington such critical views found little favor. Instead, the principal policy alternative to a business-as-usual development agenda emerged from the right under the slogan "trade, not aid." Many of those organizing to pressure officials for more attention to the continent regarded radical critiques of U.S. economic policies as inappropriate and inconvenient. They hoped instead for a larger share for Africa in the established economic order.

Neither Africa nor developing countries more generally were anything but marginal to the debate as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade was transformed into a new, more powerful World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995. There was little room for dissent from economic orthodoxy in the Clinton administration, which also pushed through the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994.

The African Growth and Opportunity Act, which eventually passed in 2000, provided some limited additional access to U.S. markets for selected African countries, stressing the potential benefits of trade. More significantly, it dominated and narrowed public debate on Africa in the second half of the 1990s. Progressive nongovernmental organizations either opposed the bill or called for amending

it to exclude the conservative economic policies it imposed. Some in the Congressional Black Caucus also took this position, but many within this group were moving toward greater emphasis on working within the conservative economic policy assumptions of the era. The debate provided little opportunity for discussing structural changes needed both in Africa and in the world economic order.

One of the groups that tried to bring other perspectives into the debate was the Africa Policy Information Center, the educational affiliate of the Washington Office on Africa. In early 1997, Imani Countess, who directed the two organizations from 1991 to 1997, took the initiative to bring together a group of activists from a variety of backgrounds to debate the way ahead in building "constituencies for Africa" that could counter the marginalization of the continent in policy debates (Countess et al. 1997). Participants identified a division among those working to counter the marginalization of Africa, comparable to trends that had developed in the civil rights movement at the end of the 1960s. On the one hand, many groups in Washington argued that what was essential was to get "more for Africa," to move Africa into the "mainstream" of global development. The majority of the activists at the gathering, however, argued that "more" attention for Africa was not necessarily "better." The crucial question was on what terms Africa would be involved. Working for Africa, the participants agreed, required actions to oppose the status quo of global economic inequality.

Opposition to the inequalities of globalization sparked well-publicized protests at the Seattle WTO summit in 1999. Among the WTO protesters, Africa gained relatively little attention. Yet Africa is the continent predicted to be most disadvantaged by increased trade liberalization. Without accumulated investment in infrastructure, human capital, and industrialization, African countries exporting primary commodities stand little chance of competing with the richer nations of the West or with the rising Asian powers.

In the 1990s AIDS in Africa was only beginning to become visible to activists in the United States and other rich countries. Thus Africa activists applauded as the veteran AIDS activist group ACT-UP targeted the Clinton administration in 1999 and 2000 for its hostility to the use of generic drugs. At the end

of the decade, however, wider consciousness about AIDS in Africa was just beginning to emerge.

New Directions in Solidarity

Through the end of the 1990s, then, no single issue provided a focus as clear as the earlier anti-apartheid push. Nor did the networks linking potential activists for Africa match the reach or complexity of the anti-apartheid convergence of the 1980s. But there were some encouraging efforts, notably the Nigeria pro-democracy movement and the largely church-based Jubilee movement for debt cancellation. These gave some indication that it was still possible to mobilize Americans in significant numbers for solidarity with Africa. And increasingly, Africa was part of the agenda for American activists and organizations focusing on global issues, from trade to genocide to AIDS.

One campaign that did develop during the decade, described in more detail in Walter Turner's chapter on the 1990s, was solidarity with the movement for democracy in Nigeria. It replicated, on a smaller scale and for a shorter period, many of the characteristics of the anti-apartheid movement, although racial division between oppressors and oppressed was not a factor in Nigeria. From the installation of the dictatorship of General Sani Abacha in 1993 until the return to civilian rule in 1999, pro-democracy campaigners inside Nigeria and the charismatic figure of Ken Saro-Wiwa in the Niger Delta attracted a mounting wave of support in the United States and worldwide. In the U.S. context, the diverse forces involved did not come together in one centralized group. But lines of communication were strong, fostered by groups such as The Africa Fund in New York and by regular meetings of the International Roundtable on Nigeria in Washington. The large community of Nigerian immigrants in the

United States produced many activists. Many of the organizations and networks that had made up the anti-apartheid movement were drawn to the Nigeria issue, while environmental activists and trade unionists were drawn in by the role of U.S. oil companies.

But few other countries in Africa—whatever the scale of their crisis or legacy of U.S. involvement—could match the convergence of factors promoting action around Nigeria. Among the many issues that needed attention, probably the most successful in gaining grassroots support were the campaign for an international landmine treaty and the campaign to cancel Africa's debt. The debt cancellation issue, which continued into the next decade, was closely linked with other issues of global economics and carried the potential to raise fundamental questions of inequality. But it was not easy to explain in simple terms, and activists were hard-pressed to find ways to build a wider movement.

The debt campaign was initiated by the worldwide Jubilee 2000 movement, named for the biblical concept of a jubilee year in which property is returned to its rightful owner. The All Africa Conference of Churches called the debt burden "a new form of slavery as vicious as the slave trade." But in the



Nigerian activist Dr. Owens Wiwa of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People and Stephen Mills of the Sierra Club speak at the University of Alabama, September 24, 1996. *Photo by John Earl.*

United States, despite the engagement of significant numbers of church activists and of many others who had been involved in anti-apartheid networks, the hope of having a major impact by the millennium year 2000 met with disappointment. Creditor countries and the World Bank proved obscure as targets, making it difficult to attract much media attention or mobilize large numbers of activists. And the largely white church networks involved were too limited a vehicle, as they were unable to tap into either black activist networks or the new and diverse set of African immigrant organizations.

Africa did not figure prominently in the debates about globalization that were gaining momentum at the end of the decade, highlighted by the Seattle protests in 1999. Nevertheless, by the end of the decade there was a rising consciousness about issues of both domestic and international equality. The 1990s also saw new developments that would change the context for U.S.-African relations and could possibly provide the basis for new movement in subsequent decades. Just as new personal and organizational ties in the 1950s and 1960s intensified U.S. contact with Africa, in the 1990s the expansion of the Internet and the wave of new African immigration presented new opportunities for communication.

It took decades before the seeds planted in the 1950s and 1960s could bear fruit in a movement large enough to have an impact on U.S. policy. At the end of the 1990s, the challenge of forcing fundamental changes in U.S.-African relations and in global patterns of inequality was as great as the challenge of opposing colonialism and apartheid had been—possibly greater. No one had found a way to craft the messages or build the networks that could foster a powerful movement for justice and full human rights for both Africans and Americans. Yet the signs during the decade were in some ways encouraging. The number of people in the United States who were involved in small-scale actions of solidarity already exceeded that of previous decades. Many were new immigrants who were sending support to families or communities at home in Africa and closely following developments there. This provided links that potentially could converge again to form a movement capable of making larger changes. It was clear that the battles against injustice inside the United States and inside African countries were not isolated

and disconnected, but were linked to the need to change an international order that some of us were beginning to describe as “global apartheid” (Booker and Minter 2001).

This chapter and this book stop with the turn of the millennium. Our brief reflections on the subsequent period and the potential for the future are presented in an afterword. The new century has already brought events and developments that stand to profoundly affect both Africa and the broader global context: 9/11, the worldwide spread of HIV/AIDS, the war in Iraq, a new level of U.S. strategic interest in African oil, the emergence of the African Union, the crisis in Darfur, and more. In the years following the 1990s, the organizational configuration also changed. Africa Action emerged from the merger of ACOA, The Africa Fund, and the Africa Policy Information Center. Other groups changed leaders, and new issue coalitions developed. The catastrophe in New Orleans in 2005 provided a vivid reminder that the inequality of global apartheid has its counterpart at home. How to build an effective challenge on either front is an unresolved question.

From our review of the previous five decades, it is abundantly clear that those committed to Africa must take a long-term perspective. The connections emerging now, we are convinced, are important not just for what can be accomplished in this year and this decade. Just as connections made in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s contributed years later to the end of the apartheid regime, the ties now being forged can, if nourished, help make possible a world in which everyone can enjoy the same fundamental rights to freedom and justice.

Oral sources for chapter 1 include interviews with Robert S. Browne (2003), Jennifer Davis (2004, 2005), Sylvia Hill (2003, 2004), Reed Kramer (2005), Ben Magubane (2004), Gay McDougall (2005), Prexy Nesbitt (1998), Robert Van Lierop (2004), Cherri Waters (2003), Cora Weiss (2003), and Peter Weiss (2003).



NO EASY



VICTORIES



**African Liberation and
American Activists over
a Half Century, 1950–2000**



Edited by
William Minter, Gail Hovey,
and Charles Cobb Jr.

with a Foreword by
Nelson Mandela



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