



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



FOR THE FIRST TIME, A PANORAMIC VIEW OF U.S. ACTIVISM ON AFRICA FROM 1950 TO 2000.

“We were part of a worldwide movement that continues today to redress the economic and social injustices that kill body, mind, and spirit. *No Easy Victories* makes clear that our lives and fortunes around the globe are indeed linked.” —NELSON MANDELA

Hundreds of thousands of Americans mobilized to oppose apartheid in the 1980s. They built on decades of behind-the-scenes links between African liberation movements and American activists, both black and white.

No Easy Victories draws on the voices of activists of several generations to explore this largely untold history. While U.S.-based groups and individuals contributed to African liberation, African struggles also inspired U.S. activism, including the civil rights and black power movements.

Today Africa and the world face global injustices as deadly as apartheid. Understanding this history of solidarity is essential for finding new paths to a future of equal human rights for all.

Richly illustrated with 120 photographs, *No Easy Victories* features chapters by William Minter, Lisa Brock, Mimi Edmunds, Joseph F. Jordan, David Goodman, and Walter Turner. Shorter essays highlight a wide array of individual activists and organizations.

“*No Easy Victories* tells the compelling stories behind the U.S. anti-apartheid movement in the voices of those who were there. It reminds us that movements emerge over time, built on hard work by movement foot soldiers and on personal networks that bridge generations and continents.” —Danny Glover, actor, activist, chair of TransAfrica Forum

“Africa today is experiencing a second wind of change, with Africans demanding good governance, respect for human rights, and empowerment of women. Those who are in the forefront are standing on the shoulders of those whose voices and stories we

hear in *No Easy Victories*.” —Charlayne Hunter-Gault, author of *New News out of Africa: Uncovering the African Renaissance*

“With its mixture of history, personal stories and photographs, this richly detailed book has the feel of a family album. The family, though, is a large one: multiracial, multicontinental. Some of its members are well known, some unsung. All of them share a passion for justice.” —Adam Hochschild, author, *King Leopold's Ghost*

“*No Easy Victories* is equal parts inspiration, education and celebration of how social change happens. It is a remarkable chronicle of how activists on opposite sides of the Atlantic united around their shared commitments to freedom and self-determination.” —Amy Goodman, host, *Democracy Now!*

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No Easy Victories: African Liberation and American Activists over a Half Century, 1950-2000
edited by William Minter, Gail Hovey, and Charles Cobb, Jr. Africa World Press, 2008.

xvii, 248 pages; ill., maps; 28cm. Includes bibliography and index.

ISBN: 1592215742 (hardback); 1592215750 (paperback).

Excerpts and more information at www.noeasyvictories.org

List price \$29.95. 15% discount for orders through www.noeasyvictories.org

"This is a remarkable and often insightful collection of essays and reflections ... in its very strength it exposes an entire realm of research that has yet to be completed." -

Gerald Horne, H-Net review January 2008

Chapter 6

The 1990s: Seeking New Directions

Walter Turner

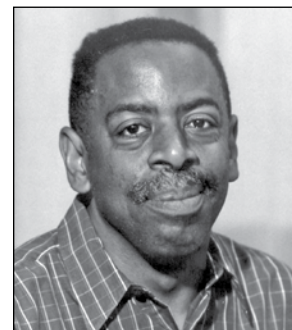
For me, as for many other American activists, the historic April 1994 election in South Africa was the culmination of decades of political work and dreams. Personal connections had already made that country a part of my life. Now I was traveling to South Africa as part of a delegation from California's Bay Area with the mission to support the campaign of the African National Congress and its partners in a tripartite alliance, the South African Communist Party and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). Our delegation included, among others, Fran Beal, Nesbit Crutchfield, Arla Ertz, Gerald Lenoir, and Essie Mormen. Linda Burnham, then and now director of the Women of Color Resource Center in Oakland, had coordinated planning for the group.

We arrived in South Africa a few days before the election to find the atmosphere charged with tension. I worked with COSATU-supported candidates in Germiston, just outside Johannesburg. Each day we drove between meetings in Johannesburg, voter training in the East Rand, and COSATU events throughout the Johannesburg region. Several days before the election a bomb exploded in the taxi rank near our offices. My first thoughts were whether any of my COSATU comrades—Disco Chigo, Joyce Kgoali, Elizabeth Thabete, or Godfrey Tsotetsi—had been killed.

But the election was held. Thabete, Kgoali, and Tsotetsi were elected to office, the ANC won an overwhelming victory, and our delegation celebrated along with millions of South Africans and supporters around the world.

Even as we were celebrating, however, it was already clear that we would face new questions about our work with South Africa and the African continent and how it related to our communities back home in California. Nesbit Crutchfield and I had known each other for 25 years, going back to our common involvement in the San Francisco State University student strike of 1968. Others in our delegation had come to the Bay Area later and had become part of the movement currents that brought together local and community issues of racism with internationalism built on antiracism, anti-imperialism, and Pan-Africanism. For all of us, South Africa was viscerally linked to our lived experience of racism at home. Personal contacts and common struggles had made the African continent and the trans-Atlantic connection part of our lives. By 1994, the connection between our work at home and our work abroad was not in question.

But would the spirit of activism that energized support for the Southern African liberation movements carry over to the



Walter Turner
Photo courtesy of Walter Turner.

new challenges of Africa in the 1990s? How should we set our personal priorities and strike a balance between coping with family and community issues at home, finding ways to connect to a new South Africa, and delving into areas and issues we were not familiar with—Rwanda, Nigeria, Liberia, Somalia, HIV/AIDS and more? How could we educate ourselves and help educate a new generation of activists for the period ahead?

The answers to these questions were not obvious. In the 1970s and 1980s, the liberation struggle in Southern Africa resonated with our own experiences and memories from the civil rights movement and with our continued experience of racial affronts at home. Now the issues required a different understanding and analysis of African history, and of political and economic realities. After 1994, we had no choice but to look for new directions.

As I talked to my fellow activists about the decade of the 1990s, everyone acknowledged that conditions had changed. There was no ready formula for what to do next, at home or abroad. There were, however, common convictions: that our consciousness of the trans-Atlantic connection should not be allowed to fade away; that new ways must be found to confront abuses to human dignity in Africa, at home, and around the world; and that the victories of the years of solidarity were real, however great the problems that remained to be confronted. The movement we were a part of, all were convinced, had made its own indispensable contribution to African freedom.

Bay Area Activism in the 1970s and 1980s

The San Francisco State student strike in 1968 was the first major action demanding that Third World studies be offered at a large U.S. institution. It was also the first big leap in my consciousness about Africa. I was already a member of the Black Panther Party chapter in Marin City, north of San Francisco, and the Black Panther newspaper frequently carried stories on liberation struggles in Guinea-Bissau, Namibia, South Africa, and Mozambique, as well as in Asia and Latin America. At San Francisco State, the Third World Liberation Front, a political union of Asian Americans, Latin Americans, and African Americans, was at the forefront of the strike organizers. We were demanding changes in staff, curriculum, and recruitment policies.

The strike was a bitter one, and some of us went to jail for our participation in civil disobedience.

The strike made a clear connection between what was happening on our campus and what was happening in Africa. We knew of the visits to Africa by SNCC members and by Malcolm X. Malcolm's two historic visits to meet key leaders on the African continent in 1964 cemented our notion of a connection between our struggles. The film *The Battle of Algiers*, which first appeared in 1965, was shown repeatedly on campus, and we read *The Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon in study groups. It was a time of Black Power and of a new international consciousness.

For me, as for Nesbit Crutchfield, who later worked in community organizing and youth counseling in Marin County, international connections and local struggles became inseparable. In addition to his local work, Crutchfield visited Cuba with the Venceremos Brigade in 1979 and 1982. There he found Africa as well as Latin America to be high on the agenda for solidarity with world revolution.

For my part, I transferred to the University of California at Berkeley and was fortunate to participate in a summer study program in Ghana in 1971. This was another giant leap in my consciousness about Africa. By the end of that summer I was convinced that this would be the first of many trips to the continent; Africa would be central to my vision for the rest of my life. As I continued my studies and local community involvement after returning from Ghana, I worked on layout and editing for the Black Panther newspaper, with a strong emphasis on international affairs.

It was not only black community activists who were involved in support for African liberation. The Liberation Support Movement was based among white leftists in Oakland, Seattle, and Vancouver, Canada. Founded in 1968 by Don Barnett, an anthropologist from Iowa who had studied the Mau Mau in Kenya, it included Ole Gjerstad from Norway and Chantal Sarrazin from Quebec, as well as Americans. It played a key role in bringing information from the liberation movements to all of us.

The 1976 Soweto uprising in South Africa first brought Africa to the forefront for many in the United States, and the decade following Soweto was the high point of Africa solidarity work in the Bay Area, as else-



James Madhlope Phillips leads the multiracial choir Vukani Mawethu, based in Berkeley, California, in late 1980s. Phillips, a South African labor organizer and Communist Party member, was a founder of Mayibuye, the cultural unit of the African National Congress. He left the country in 1984 after a banning order curtailed his work. He began to train choirs in Europe and the United States to sing liberation songs in the indigenous languages of South Africa, using music as a vehicle to teach thousands about the freedom struggle. *Photo courtesy of Vukani Mawethu.*

where. Nesbit Crutchfield became intensely involved in support for the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe, working with a local group spurred on by the presence of Tirivafi Kangai, a Zimbabwean who studied at Berkeley and became the ZANU representative in the United States. Both Crutchfield and I were part of Bay Area coalitions on Southern Africa, which focused particularly on South Africa after the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980.

Ida Strickland and Belvie Rooks of the Third World Fund were among the leaders developing a support base for this work, often providing the resources to host liberation movement representatives. The Data Center in Oakland, an international research center that initially focused on Latin America, provided a home for the Africa Resource Center, which I helped found and directed from the late 1970s through the late 1980s. The resource center maintained a library and organized public events. California Newsreel in San Francisco became



The Vukani Mawethu choir visits South Africa in 1997. *Photo courtesy of Vukani Mawethu.*

a key distribution point for films on the liberation struggle, serving schools, churches, and solidarity groups around the country.

The Bay Area became one of the pacesetters for action against apartheid, and we had a national impact through networks such as our trade union activists and public officials. We also hooked into national networks, using information, for example, from the national Stop Banking on Apartheid campaign. Miloanne Hecathorne, working out of the local offices of the American Friends Service Committee, spearheaded a campaign that targeted the California-based Bank of America.

The Vanguard Foundation, founded in 1972 in San Francisco, consistently made anti-apartheid work one of its priorities. Led by Hari Dillon and Danny Glover, it was one of the steady influences fostering a link between national and international issues around racism, social justice, gender equality, and human rights.

One of the key communications vehicles for the movement in the Bay Area was Pacifica radio station KPFA, where Faraha Hiyati started a regular radio program called *Africa Today* in 1977. I took over that slot two years later and have continued to host the program ever since. The program covered the African diaspora as well as events on the continent, allowing me to follow the ups and downs of Africa work in our community.



Nelson Mandela addresses the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid after his release from prison in 1990. *UN Photo.*

The year of the South African election, 1994, was the turning point, the culmination of decades of work and the beginning of a new period. Our trans-Atlantic African connections would begin to take different shape. This process had just barely begun as the decade, and the millennium, ended.

New Ways of Connecting

Nelson Mandela's long-awaited release from prison in 1990 was an inspiration to some to remain involved with South Africa. For others it was a sign that priorities would now shift. One of those was Leo Robinson of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union. "We watched it on TV, when [Mandela] walked out and got in the car and drove away. When he drove away, my anti-apartheid work was over." Whatever might happen from that point on, Robinson felt, the South Africans would deal with it. Active in his local union, Robinson had also campaigned against police brutality and to raise awareness of the pressing economic situation facing workers at home. For him, these issues now became paramount.

Nesbit Crutchfield also turned his primary attention to local issues after 1994. But he still took every opportunity he could to travel to South Africa. Despite his years of solidarity work, his first such opportunity had only come in 1991, when he joined a trip to Zimbabwe and South Africa that I organized for the recently formed Global Exchange. The first time he set foot there, he immediately felt "more at home in South Africa than in the United States." He returned for the election in 1994 and later to visit his daughter, who had decided to spend her junior year of college studying in Cape Town. While he continued his professional career and engagement at home, Crutchfield told me that his community "had expanded tenfold." For his family and his wider social circle, Africa became not just a subject of interest but part of their lives.

Among groups maintaining close ties with South Africa was Vukani Mawethu, a multiracial choir of more than 60 people that was formed on the initiative of the great South African freedom singer James Madhlope Phillips during a visit to Berkeley in 1986.

During the anti-apartheid period this choir was a force for unity among activists of rival political tendencies, inspiring countless community audiences and raising funds for the liberation movements. The choir performed for Nelson Mandela's visit to the United States in 1990 and continued to sing at community events throughout the decade. In 1997 the singers toured South African cities and townships. A vibrant community institution for more than 20 years, Vukani Mawethu still performs concerts to support organizations working on HIV/AIDS in South African townships and other causes.

The Institute for a New South Africa, on whose board I served, began in the 1980s and continued in the 1990s to build links between communities and city officials in the United States and South Africa. Myesha Jenkins, a Bay Area activist, went to South Africa to head its office and was still living there in 2007. Although the institute itself did not survive the 1990s, many of the participants are still working in local governments in South Africa.

Global Exchange, a Bay Area organization founded in 1988 by Kevin Danaher, Kirsten Moller, and Medea Benjamin, continues today to make vital links between Southern African and U.S. activists. Danaher had become a leading researcher on Southern Africa after his initial engagement in the divestment movement at the University of California, Santa Cruz, while Benjamin had worked briefly in independent Mozambique. Global Exchange, for which I have been a tour leader and board member since 1989, has always included Southern Africa in its active program of "reality tours" intended to educate U.S. activists and engage them in dialogue with their counterparts in other countries.

Similarly, the Women of Color Resource Center, founded in 1990, treats dialogue with African women from the continent as an integral part of its work. Founder and director Linda Burnham carries on a family tradition of engagement with progressive causes. Her father, Louis Burnham, edited the magazine *Freedom* for Paul Robeson and was on the staff of the progressive *National Guardian* until his death in 1960. Linda Burnham made contacts with African liberation struggles through her participation in Venceremos Brigades to Cuba in 1971 and 1972. Cuba was actively involved in support for African liberation, hosting frequent visits by libera-

tion movement leaders and educating African students in Cuba. As part of the Third World Women's Alliance, Burnham helped organize annual South African Women's Day demonstrations in the Bay Area in the 1970s and 1980s. She also raised funds for an ANC child care center in Africa.

Burnham has led delegations of women of color from the United States to participate in U.N.-sponsored global interchanges, beginning with the World Conference on Women held in Nairobi in 1985 and continuing with the Beijing women's conference in 1995 and the World Conference against Racism in Durban in 2001. At these gatherings, which advanced global thinking on women's rights, African women were in the forefront. After Burnham returned from Beijing, I spoke with her on *Africa Today*. She had helped put together a delegation of more than 115 women of color from the United States to attend the conference. There were thousands of women from the African continent in attendance, she told our radio listeners. These women not only stressed familiar women's rights issues but also insisted that global economic policies—notably the cutbacks in public services imposed on African countries as part of "structural adjustment"—were at the heart of women's concerns. For Burnham, as for many others, African issues in the second half of the 1990s began to intertwine with issues of global policies and economic globalization.

Elsewhere in the United States, as in the Bay Area, veterans of the movement found new ways to engage with South Africa and the continent, often creatively bringing their connections into their ongoing professional work. In Washington, DC, for example, I talked to Sandra Rattley, who had been one of the coordinators of press coverage for Nelson Mandela's historic 1990 U.S. tour and for several subsequent visits by Winnie Mandela. Rattley began her career as a radio journalist at the Howard University station WHUR and worked closely with the local Southern Africa Support Project in the 1970s and 1980s. Her long career with public radio included directing the Satellite Program Development Fund that supported independent producers and public radio projects, and she has always been engaged with international as well as domestic issues.

In the 1990s much of Rattley's time in Africa was spent tracing the roots of her own Quander



National and local anti-apartheid activists at a reception at the South African embassy in Washington, 1997. Back row, from left: Joan Sonn, South African ambassador Franklin Sonn, Randall Robinson, Representative Ronald Dellums, Roger Wilkins, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists founder William Lucy, Dick Gregory, Chestivia Shoemaker. Front row, from left: a South African embassy official, Hazel Ross, Rev. Joseph Lowery, Gay McDougall, Cecelie Counts, Sylvia Hill, John Payton, Sandra Hill, A. C. Byrd. *Photo by Ron Lewis. Courtesy of Sylvia Hill.*

family, documenting ties to her ancestors in Cape Coast, Ghana. In 1999 she turned her radio expertise to launching the satellite-based Africa Learning Channel, now a part of First Voice International. The noncommercial channel works with more than 190 community broadcasting partners across Africa to distribute programs on HIV/AIDS and other health and development issues.

Africa in the New Global Context

As I continued to question activists about the dilemmas that faced us after 1994, I found no common answers. But I did find common themes. For all of us, African Americans but also white activists, the parallels with our own country's history of racial oppression are fundamental. Our engagement with Africa is embedded in an understanding of the damage inflicted over the centuries on both sides of the Atlantic by slavery and colonialism—and by the new forms of economic exploitation and social inequality that followed. Although we came to the African connection at different times and in response to different events, that connection was rooted in the previous history of Pan-African connections.

Since the early Pan-African congresses that began in 1900, Africans of the diaspora have engaged with

anticolonial struggles in Africa. This engagement has responded to a consciousness of shared circumstances and intertwined histories and the felt need to speak out for the African continent within our home countries. Apartheid was not seen as merely an African issue; rather, the South African regime was the final embodiment of white minority rule that dominated almost the entire globe at the beginning of the twentieth century. For black activists, opposition to U.S. support for apartheid was also tied to our growing understanding of the history of U.S. imperial expansion and its toll in the Caribbean and Latin America. We placed

our opposition to the Vietnam War and to Reagan-era interventions in the same historical framework.

After apartheid's fall, anti-apartheid activists in the United States were acutely aware from our own experience that the end of legal discrimination and the expansion of formal political rights would not mean the end of racial abuse or of the inequality and poverty left by generations of racial oppression. But on both sides of the Atlantic, it was clear that the issues ahead, as Sandra Rattley commented, would not lend themselves to "bumper sticker politics." The clearly visible enemy, the die-hard white racist leaders, had exited stage right.

Most activists understood that organizing around issues of debt, development, and corruption would require targeting both international economic institutions and corrupt and unaccountable African governments tied to these institutions. The Jubilee 2000 coalition focused on debt, while the 50 Years Is Enough campaign targeted the World Bank and governments that were accepting its right-wing economic prescriptions. These campaigns aimed to raise public consciousness about the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and to link these issues with domestic policies that affected poor and minority communities in the United States. But while the issues were real and vital,

they were not as dramatically visible as those that had characterized the anti-apartheid campaign.

Africa, we were discovering again, is immensely complex. More than three times the size of the United States, the continent by the mid-1990s included 54 countries and more than 800 million people. Few in the United States, even among activists, were familiar with more than a few chapters of the history. Fewer still understood the contemporary political landscape of the continent or had much knowledge of the countries that would feature in the headlines of the decade. African issues were still often perceived through long-standing stereotypes that had only partially been dislodged during the civil rights and anti-apartheid periods.

Meanwhile, at home, the televised beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles police officers in 1991 laid bare the continuing racial divide in the United States, as well as the unresolved issue of police brutality. The war on drugs particularly penalized minorities. That same year President George H. W. Bush chose right-wing ideologue Clarence Thomas to succeed civil rights pioneer Thurgood Marshall as the single African American on the Supreme Court. Although the Republican era of presidents Reagan and Bush was followed in 1993 by the two-term Democratic Clinton presidency, the rollback of social and economic rights for American workers and poor people continued. Large industries and unions were under the gun and the economic situation was difficult.

In terms of awareness of Africa, one problem was simply that, after Nelson Mandela's release from prison riveted worldwide attention for a brief instant, the U.S. gaze shifted elsewhere. Even South Africa's transition to freedom gained only minimal television time or policy attention in comparison to the Gulf War of 1990–91 or the conflicts in the



ANC deputy president Walter Sisulu and Imani Countess of the Washington Office on Africa greet each other in October 1991. Sisulu was released in October 1989 after serving 26 years in prison with Nelson Mandela and eight others convicted at the Rivonia Trial. The Africa Fund organized a tour of the United States for Sisulu and his wife Albertina Sisulu, deputy president of the ANC Women's League. Photo © Rick Reinhard.

former Yugoslavia. The rise of civil society and democracy movements across the African continent in countries like Benin, Mali, and Kenya received almost no coverage in the U.S. media.

The violence in Somalia and then Rwanda gained momentary attention, long enough to reinforce stereotypes but not long enough to promote understanding or engagement. Even the wars in historically closer West Africa drew little attention. And only a few commentators and activists noted that a number of the countries experiencing the most intense conflict—Somalia, Liberia, Zaire—had been key Cold War clients of the United States.

Both Africa and the international community were still in denial about the spread of HIV/AIDS on the continent. From its initial area of concentration in East and Central Africa, the disease continued a steady march across the continent, hitting Southern Africa with particular force. In the United States, HIV/AIDS was also spreading rapidly in some African American communities. But the stigma associated with the disease closed off discussion about this new threat to Africans. Those living with HIV/AIDS feared public exposure. By the end of the decade more than 2 million Africans were dying of AIDS each year. In the

United States, antiretroviral drugs were increasingly in use by the 1990s, saving many lives. But even most medical experts assumed that the drugs were too expensive or too complicated for use in Africa. Until activists mobilized after the July 2000 AIDS conference in Durban, South Africa, few questioned that Africans with AIDS would just be left to die.

With the end of the Cold War and the end of political apartheid in South Africa, the context for mobilizing public pressure to change U.S. foreign policy in Africa was fundamentally altered. The U.S. government had little incentive to keep its former Cold War clients in power. And U.S. complicity with white minority regimes no longer provided a meaningful target. Indeed, the primary threat was no longer Washington's active involvement but rather its indifference—and growing economic imperialism in the guise of globalization.

The Rwandan genocide in 1994 was the most extreme example of this indifference. The United States played a decisive role in blocking U.N. action that could have saved hundreds of thousands of lives. But similar patterns played out elsewhere as well.

In Liberia, dictator Samuel Doe, who provided Washington with a covert base for operations against Libya's Qaddafi, was overthrown by rebels in 1990. Liberian pleas for the United States to take the lead in promoting peace were ignored. U.S. marines were deployed off the coast to evacuate U.S. citizens only—a pattern the United States and other Western powers would repeat both in Liberia and elsewhere in the following years. West African forces under Nigerian leadership intervened in Liberia late in 1990, but by that time the country was shattered. "What is certain is that failure to stop the fighting during 1990, before the entire country was demolished, erected barriers to a solution that still have not been overcome," noted Reed Kramer of Africa News Service (1995).

Meanwhile, other crises were erupting across the continent. Anarchy in Somalia followed the fall of Washington's Cold War client Siad Barre. In Angola, Jonas Savimbi lost internationally supervised elections in 1992 and promptly returned to war. The conflict raged for a decade while Washington stalled repeatedly on officially recognizing the newly elected Angola government and blocking the flow of arms to Savimbi's Unita. In Zaire, dictator Mobutu Sese Seko held on to power until 1997, but war continued at

even higher levels after his fall. The complex conflict drew in almost all of Zaire's neighbors and allowed widespread looting of mineral resources. There were so many countries involved that the conflict was sometimes called "Africa's world war."

These conflicts and others caused hundreds of thousands, possibly millions of deaths—far more than the concurrent conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, none of the African crises received a fraction of the media or policy attention given to the situation in southeastern Europe. A constructive U.S. role in resolving these African conflicts would have required American officials to work with multilateral African and international partners to mount coordinated pressures for peaceful solutions.

Africa advocacy groups in Washington—such as the Washington Office on Africa, TransAfrica, and the Africa Faith and Justice Network—could and did call for alternative policies. So did the church groups with personal ties to Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Zaire in particular. They were often joined by human rights groups, humanitarian agencies, and exiles from the affected African countries. But it was much more difficult to critique U.S. indifference and inaction than it had been to blast U.S. complicity with apartheid. Moreover, many activists were reluctant to call for U.S. action because they feared it might do more harm than good. In none of these cases was there a critical mass of activists around the country familiar with the issues and able to push them onto the public agenda.

Starting Over with Public Education

Solidarity, we had learned, was impossible without a base of knowledge and networks of personal contacts. Many of us were already engaged in information and exchange projects that defined our tasks in continent-wide terms, and we were ready to continue even as the wave of intense interest in South Africa receded. In addition to maintaining and expanding our own contacts, we relied on publications such as *Africa News* for up-to-date information on what was happening in Africa. My weekly *Africa Today* program on KPFA was one of the longest-running local radio shows, along with Elombe Brath's *Afrikaleidoscope* in New York and Assumpta Oturu's *Spotlight Africa* on KPFA in Los Angeles. But there were also similar programs with loyal audiences on radio stations around the country.

In the 1990s, more Americans than ever before were traveling to Africa, or studying or working there. And more Africans were immigrating to the United States. Among African Americans, identification with Africa was still rising, with both cultural and political expressions.

Even so, I am not sure we realized how large was the public education task that lay ahead of us. Despite the natural parallels to our battles with racism at home, it had taken decades of political work to build up public understanding of South Africa. That work had benefited from a long-term emphasis by the African National Congress on educating Americans and others around the world. The pervasive involvement of U.S. companies in the apartheid system had given us political targets that captured local attention in communities throughout the United States. Now, although we had the advantages of easier communications and travel, and although we benefited from the new influx of African immigrants from a range of countries, we also faced new disadvantages. Most Americans did not even know the names of the countries where the burning issues of the decade were playing out, much less understand the complexity of these issues.

One group that quickly faced the issue of how to adapt to the changes was California Newsreel. Its Southern Africa work was directed by Cornelius Moore, who had grown up in Chester, Pennsylvania, and had become involved with the African Liberation Support Committee and other groups in Philadelphia in the 1970s. He had begun a career in film exhibition and distribution in Philadelphia before moving to California to work with Newsreel in 1981. Moore says that interest in their anti-apartheid films dropped significantly in the early 1990s, after Mandela's release. The films couldn't keep pace with events, he commented, while the momentum of activism was diminishing.

Nevertheless, in the 1990s, Newsreel, building on long-standing marketing connections to schools, churches, and community organizations, continued to grow. They maintained an emphasis on issues of racism and black history and culture in the United States, and they also launched a new "Library of African Cinema" that brought a wide variety of films to American audiences. Films from Senegal's Ousmane Sembène and other Francophone filmmakers featured prominently. As with the earlier

African liberation films, Newsreel offered background material and teaching aids to help students understand African realities.

Another movement veteran who focused on public education about African issues was Adwoa Dunn-Mouton, a fellow Berkeley student from the East Bay who was on the study tour to Ghana with me in 1971. Both of us stayed in Ghana after the tour, only returning to Berkeley to resume classes in the fall. Dunn-Mouton also made a lasting connection with Africa. After completing her master's degree in 1974, she left the doctoral history program at Berkeley and moved to the East Coast, thinking that the odds of finding Africa-related work would be greater there because at least it was closer to the continent. Working at Howard University's African studies program doing outreach to public schools, she also became an active member of the Southern Africa Support Project. In 1985 she joined the staff of the House Africa Subcommittee, and she became the lead staff person for the Senate Africa Subcommittee from 1990 to 1993.

"I never felt like I was just doing it for Africa," she told me when we talked in 2004. "I always felt that I was getting something from Africa. [I learned] that we



Adwoa Dunn-Mouton, then on the staff of the House Subcommittee on Africa, and Representative Howard Wolpe of Michigan, the subcommittee chair, on a congressional visit to Angola in 1985. *Photo courtesy of Adwoa Dunn-Mouton.*

did belong to a world that was larger than Richmond, California.” From 1995 to 1999, Dunn-Mouton was involved with a large project to produce a two-hour documentary film on Africa in the 1990s called *Hopes on the Horizon*. The series was produced by Blackside, an African American company that had made its reputation with *Eyes on the Prize*, a history of the U.S. civil rights movement. *Hopes* was made in cooperation with African filmmakers and directed by Onyekachi Wambu, a London-based Nigerian filmmaker. Dunn-Mouton traveled between Washington, Boston, and Ghana, and around the African continent, ironing out problems and working with the team to ensure that the final product both reflected African realities and could communicate with American audiences. The film premiered on public television in 2001 with segments on the pro-democracy struggles in Benin and Nigeria, post-genocide Rwanda, women’s rights in Morocco, and development challenges in Mozambique and South Africa.

Dunn-Mouton also served on the board of the Africa Policy Information Center (APIC), which evolved out of the Washington Office on Africa Educational Fund. In doing public education about African issues, APIC took advantage of the new possibilities for direct electronic communication with Africa and with activists around the world. In 1995 it began regular e-mail distribution of key information from sources that included organizations and activists on the African continent. Edited by William Minter, APIC’s e-mail bulletin served to connect and amplify the efforts of APIC and other groups working on issues such as debt cancellation, the landmines treaty, and the struggle for democracy in Nigeria. It joined allAfrica.com, formerly Africa News Service, as one of the key sources for activists working on African issues, and continues today as *AfricaFocus Bulletin*.

Campaigning for Democracy in Nigeria

The African issue that most engaged activists in the 1990s, paralleling in many ways the anti-apartheid cause, was the Nigeria pro-democracy movement. Nigeria had gained independence in October 1960 after a long but largely peaceful movement for independence led by figures such as Nnamdi Azikiwe and Chief Obafemi Awolowo. In the three decades preceding the 1990s, the country had alternated

between short periods of intense civilian political competition and longer stretches of military rule. Between 1967 and 1970, the country fought a civil war over the secession of the eastern region, called Biafra. Despite intense ethnic polarization and perhaps as many as a million people killed during the brutal war, the central government, which won the conflict, followed a policy of nonretribution. Subsequent division of Nigeria into smaller states in a federal system produced larger representation for ethnic groups other than the big three (Yoruba in the west, Igbo in the east, and Hausa in the north).

But in spite of a vibrant civil society and world-renowned writers and intellectuals, Nigeria was caught in the trap of military rule. Corruption centered on competition for the revenue from an oil industry that began production just before independence and boomed in the 1970s and 1980s. In June 1993, elections for a return to civilian rule brought victory to Moshood Abiola. Although the military itself had approved both Abiola and his opponent Bashir Tofa, Abiola, a flamboyant media magnate and philanthropist, was seen as potentially more independent. The military regime annulled the election results. In November General Sani Abacha took over from a short-lived caretaker regime. Meanwhile, Ken Saro-Wiwa, a leading writer and social critic, was mobilizing support for his Ogoni people, one of the groups on oil-rich land whose chronic poverty had been made worse by devastation of their environment.

Abacha took military repression to new heights, despite a growing international movement to isolate the regime. In November 1995 his government executed Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other leaders of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People. The Clinton administration, as well as other Western governments, imposed limited sanctions, including a ban on arms sales and visa restrictions on Nigerian officials. After the execution of Saro-Wiwa, Nigeria was suspended from the Commonwealth. But the deep involvement of international oil companies, including Shell, Chevron, and Mobil, and Nigeria’s role as a leading oil supplier to the United States meant that Washington and its allies held back from significant economic pressures.

In the United States as well as around the world, however, Nigeria’s pro-democracy forces were able to launch a solidarity movement. Like the anti-apartheid movement, though on a shorter timeline and a



Demonstrators in front of a Shell station in Washington, DC, protest Shell Oil's ties to the Nigerian regime of dictator General Sani Abacha, 1994. Folabi Olagbaju of the Service Employees International Union leads the demonstration. Two people behind him is Stephen Mills of the Sierra Club. *Photo courtesy of Stephen Mills.*

smaller scale, the movement mobilized a broad coalition and added to the pressure that led to Nigeria's return to civilian rule in 1999. This organizing was of particular importance because it demonstrated that, at least in some cases, it was possible to be effective even when repression did not fall along racial lines.

In New York I talked with Mike Fleshman, who had taken on the Nigeria issue for The Africa Fund and the American Committee on Africa in the 1990s. Fleshman was a student at the University of California at Santa Cruz when the Soweto uprising broke out. "For me it was the culmination of all the things that I had been doing . . . antiracism and anti-imperialist stuff," he recalled. Fleshman had learned about racism, he says, from black classmates in a small high school in Roswell, Georgia. As the only Northerner, "I was a white student but the rednecks hated me." The black students "finally decided that the enemy of our enemy could conceivably be some sort of an ally," and ultimately they became friends. At Santa Cruz he was one of the leaders of the divestment campaign that mobilized students and professors and raised almost \$40,000 on the campus to support Southern African liberation movements.

Fleshman was a member of The Africa Fund staff in the 1990s and recalls a planning meeting in June 1994, just after the South African election.

Should the organization declare victory and go out of business? Should it turn to development rather than political organizing? The decision was taken to continue the stress on organizing, but the question was how to focus. Three countries quickly presented themselves: Zaire, Liberia, and Nigeria.

Fleshman remembers that they discussed each case in turn. Although no national movement had arisen in the United States around Zaire, that country had been a focal point for activists because of the blatant corruption of the Mobutu regime and because of Zaire's intervention in Angola. Fleshman recalls:

Mobutu was on his way out, but Mobutu was still there. But at that point the American [government] had pretty much cut him out, and there wasn't a particularly strong U.S. policy or economic connection anymore. And we always figured that basically what you needed to run an ACOA-style campaign was really to have [three elements]. Good guys so you could say, you have to support these folks. You need the bad guys to oppose. And you needed a strong U.S. economic and/or political connection to the bad guys.

They didn't really have a good idea of whom to support in Zaire, Fleshman explained, and language was another complication. It would be harder to find

effective English-speaking spokespeople in French-speaking Zaire to bring a campaign to U.S. audiences.

Liberia was English-speaking, but the situation there by that time was even less clear. There was a strong historical U.S. connection, but Liberia was a country that had spiraled out of control. After the United States removed its citizens, the conflict in Liberia quickly dropped from visibility, the media moving on to other stories. The focus was on humanitarian rather than political issues. That left Nigeria under the Abacha regime.

Around the country, activists were turning to Nigeria, often at the initiative of pro-democracy advocates in the growing Nigerian diaspora. By the end of the 1990s the U.S. census counted 87,000 U.S. residents born in Nigeria. The actual numbers, including families, probably exceeded 200,000. In the Bay Area, Tunde Okorodudu of Oakland took the lead in getting the Oakland City Council and the Alameda County government to bar business ties with Nigeria. As he explained to me on *Africa Today* in July 1996, this comprehensive city action against Nigeria forced people to think about “blood money” for Nigeria. The Goldman Environmental Foundation awarded its 1995 prize in absentia to the imprisoned Ken Saro-Wiwa, only six months before his death. And the country’s largest environmentalist group, the Sierra Club, with home offices in San Francisco, also joined in campaigning on Nigeria. After his brother’s death, Dr. Owens Wiwa toured the United States, speaking on Pacifica’s *Democracy Now* as well as on local shows such as *Africa Today*, and briefing members of Congress in Washington.

There were, of course, some voices in favor of Abacha in the United States, as the regime’s lobbyists targeted black legislators and arranged visits by a host of less prominent figures. Ultimately, this attempt to sow confusion did not succeed. Activists maintained a concentrated focus on human rights and the role of the oil corporations in undermining democracy and accountable government in Nigeria.

Elombe Brath, the veteran Harlem Pan-Africanist, had hosted Ken Saro-Wiwa in 1990, before groups like The Africa Fund were ready to deal with Nigeria. Despite administration timidity, the Congressional Black Caucus called for sanctions. Significantly, when the only black member of the Senate, Carol Moseley-Braun of Illinois, took a “vacation” trip to Nigeria and

defended the Nigerian regime, she was repudiated in the 1998 election. Nigerian immigrants mobilized against her stance on Abacha, and black voters helped usher her out of office by a scant 100,000-vote margin.

In 1994, The Africa Fund knew little about Nigeria. But the relationships it had established with U.S. unions during the anti-apartheid years now provided a natural network to turn to as they took on this new campaign. In particular, their union allies helped make contact with the Nigerian oil workers’ union. Targeting the oil companies and focusing on local actions, U.S. activists hoped, might replicate some of the successful strategies used against South Africa.

As with the anti-apartheid movement, a diverse set of groups and networks made up the Nigeria pro-democracy movement. But with the advent of electronic communications, it was far easier than it had been to link their activities. Activists in the worldwide Nigerian diaspora were quick to take advantage of the Internet to mobilize coordinated action. New centers of activity emerged as exiled activists came together with local groups. In St. Louis, for example, a group including the vice president of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, Noble Obani-Nwibari, worked with the local office of the American Friends Service Committee to organize monthly protests against Shell Oil. In Washington, Ghanaian American human rights activist Adotei Akwei, who had worked in New York for the ACOA and moved to Washington to coordinate Africa issues for Amnesty International, was the guiding force for the International Roundtable on Nigeria. The roundtable’s monthly meetings served as a key forum for communication and strategizing, drawing in the veteran anti-apartheid organizations, local and visiting Nigerian activists, trade union activists, environmentalists, and others.

In June 1998 General Sani Abacha died, and opposition leader Moshood Abiola died in prison a month later. The following year, chastened military leaders allowed new elections that brought Olusegun Obasanjo into office. Nigeria’s problems—corruption, oil wealth, and more—remained to be solved. But the pro-democracy movement and its overseas supporters had at least contributed to the return to civilian rule.

New Contexts for Solidarity

Other African immigrant groups in the United States were also mobilizing to support their homelands, but on a smaller scale. Eritreans in the Bay Area and around the country worked to assist their country's development after it gained independence in 1993. Refugees and other immigrants from Liberia and Sierra Leone called for greater U.S. efforts to support U.N. and West African peacekeeping efforts in their countries, and they also sought extended refugee status for those who had fled the fighting. That such efforts did not spark a wider movement is hardly surprising: in the mid-1990s the total populations of Liberia and Sierra Leone were only about 2 million and 4 million respectively, with proportionately small diasporas. By comparison, giant Nigeria had over 100 million people at home and perhaps as many as 15 million scattered around the world.

In these ways and others, a new wave of African immigration to the United States was adding an important dimension to the potential for new relationships with Africa. Although the immigrants' impact on policy and mobilization was still limited, that seemed likely to change. Between 1990 and 2000, according to census figures, the African immigrant population in the United States increased by 134 percent. The 2000 census reported more than 500,000 African-born residents, and estimates of the total community, including children born in the United States, were well in excess of 1 million. The census figures, it is generally recognized, represent a substantial undercount, although it is difficult to establish more accurate figures (Gordon 1988; Logan and Deane 2003).

The community of new African immigrants was also becoming more diverse than ever. They came from more countries and were moving to more communities around the United States. They included people at all levels of the U.S. class structure, with different experiences of assimilation into American life and of continuing ties with their home countries. And, as in every other immigrant group, different generations had contrasting experiences and divergent understandings of their identities.

Like members of other immigrant groups, most Africans were preoccupied with making a living for themselves and their families in a new country. But

when Amadou Diallo was shot and killed by four New York City policemen on February 4, 1999, it was an abrupt reminder that African immigrants in the United States shared the risks faced by all black communities across the country. Diallo, a quiet, hard-working street peddler from Guinea, was gunned down by 41 shots in the entrance to his own apartment building in the Bronx. The police said they thought he resembled a rape suspect, and they feared he was drawing a gun when he reached for his wallet. The murder provoked a mobilization not only in New York but across the country. The next year a jury acquitted the officers of misconduct. Finally, in 2004, Diallo's family received a \$3 million civil settlement, and the block where he died was renamed Amadou Diallo Place.

The mobilization around Diallo's death involved African Americans, African immigrants, and supporters from other communities. Haitian American singer Wyclef Jean recorded a song about the death with Senegalese superstar Youssou N'Dour, with a line in the chorus: "Diallo, Diallo—similar to Steven Biko." "The murder of Amadou Diallo was not an aberration," wrote Elombe Brath (1999). "It was part of a tradition that has been going on far too long."

Brath is host of the radio program *Afrikaleidoscope* on radio station WBAI in New York. He has an intimate knowledge of the Pan-Africanist and black nationalist movement throughout the world, and he talks with ease and passion about Africa. Brath's involvement goes back over 50 years: growing up in the Bronx, he found his way to Harlem to join Dominican-born Carlos Cooks with the African Nationalist Pioneer Movement, a Garveyite group. Among its activities was strong support for the Namibian struggle. When Sam Nujoma of SWAPO first arrived in New York in June 1960 to petition the United Nations for Namibia's independence, the Harlem group raised \$100,000 to support the Namibian movement (Nujoma 2004).

Brath never subscribed to the simplistic view that black African leaders should be exempt from criticism. He knew early on that skin color alone was hardly sufficient to guide political allegiance. His family was from Barbados, where his mother's cousin, Clennell Wickham, had been a radical newspaper editor who spoke up for the poor. In the Bronx Brath went to school with Colin Powell, who

would become U.S. secretary of state (Brath 2004). In 1975, when some black nationalists were attracted to Jonas Savimbi's Unita, Brath founded the Patrice Lumumba Coalition to support Angola against U.S. and South African intervention. His group was also one of the most consistent in calling for opposition to Mobutu and to the military regime in Nigeria.

In the 1990s, even more than before, progressive forces relating to Africa often found themselves puzzled or on different sides when confronted with new conflicts and new issues. Brath, like many other longtime activists with a history of opposing U.S. intervention, was against calling for U.S. military involvement, even to support multilateral peace-keeping and humanitarian operations. Others of us, responding to calls from those directly caught up in disasters such as Liberia, denounced U.S. and international indifference and demanded that Washington "do the right thing" by providing resources for African-led initiatives to respond to crises.

The decade presented more opportunities than ever before for Americans to learn about African issues. African leaders were speaking up in international forums and traveling regularly to Washington and other U.S. cities. Progressive Americans could now travel to South Africa as well as elsewhere on the continent. E-mail connectivity was reaching almost all African capitals, even if not yet the countryside. Groups such as the Black Radical Congress, which emerged in 1998 as a national U.S. group, were well aware of the interconnections between domestic, global, and African issues, and outspoken on crises such as the war in the Congo, formerly Zaire.

Paradoxically, perhaps, the proliferation of voices and issues made it difficult to build consensus around any one course of action. And it was particularly difficult to see how activists could have a real impact. After the South African victory of 1994, the drumbeat of negative news elsewhere in Africa was almost unrelenting. There were seemingly endless wars in Angola, the Congo, Sudan, and West Africa. The HIV/AIDS pandemic was spreading across the continent, killing millions of people in the prime of their productive lives. No one could easily say how best to respond to these new crises; there were only questions.

It was a time of great discouragement. Many activists turned toward other less daunting issues or to purely personal matters. None of those I inter-

viewed for this project were giving up, however. And as I talked with veteran Bay Area activist Gerald Lenoir, who turned from anti-apartheid work to working on AIDS in the 1990s, I was reminded to take a longer-term perspective.

Lenoir had directed the American Friends Service Committee program on South Africa and Namibia in Seattle from 1976 to 1979, and he had played a key role in Seattle coalitions on Southern Africa. He came to the Bay Area in 1986. From 1989 to 1995 he directed the Black Coalition on AIDS in San Francisco, which in addition to its local work provided support for Haitian refugees and training and support for Africans from several countries. It was difficult working on AIDS then, Lenoir told me, "because at that point in the nineties, the black community was in denial about AIDS. . . . They didn't want to hear about AIDS for the most part, and there was an extreme amount of homophobia and fear of drug addicts, and just complete denial around HIV in the black community in America, let alone in Africa. . . . So we had a hard time." Still, they managed to mobilize significant additional resources for HIV/AIDS among African Americans and in Africa.

Today, he reflected,

I don't think things are going that well, either in America or Africa. [But] I'm not necessarily that discouraged. I just liken it to the early days, when I first came into the anti-apartheid movement in the mid-seventies, when events in Africa sparked another level of activism in the U.S. Soweto slapped me in the face and got me to say, "OK, so what are you going to do?" We're back to some basic base-building and education around what's going on. We're back to those days when people were saying, "Africa? What about Africa?"

"It's still the same struggle, same fight," Lenoir summed up, quoting the often-cited words of Mozambique's Samora Machel. "International solidarity is not an act of charity. It is an act of unity between allies fighting on different terrains for the same objective."

Oral sources for chapter 6 include interviews with Elombe Brath (2004), Linda Burnham (2005), Nesbit Crutchfield (2005), Adwoa Dunn-Mouton (2004), Michael Fleshman (2004), Gerald Lenoir (2005), Cornelius Moore (2004), Sandra Rattley (2004), and Leo Robinson (2005).

“Faces Filled with Joy” ~ The 1994 South African Election

Gail Hovey

As I stepped aboard the South African Airways plane, my thoughts drifted back to 1969. I had been one of a group of demonstrators picketing the airline to prevent it from landing in the United States as long as apartheid prevailed. That particular effort didn't succeed, but landing rights were finally blocked by the anti-apartheid act in 1986. Now, amazingly, I was boarding one of the airline's planes, flying to South Africa to observe the historic elections of April 26–28, 1994.

I got very little sleep on the long flight from New York. Almost all the passengers were on the same mission, had a history of anti-apartheid activism, and were as filled with anticipation as I was. All of us, in large and small ways, had been looking forward to this day for years if not decades. It was a kind of homecoming.

On arrival in South Africa, I was welcomed by my old friend Molly Bill, whom I had met along with her husband François in 1966 when we worked together in what was then the Northern Transvaal. The family's arena for action against apartheid was the ecumenical church. Their son Charles was forced into exile, and François spent 16 weeks in solitary confinement before being transferred to the white male section of the feared Diepkloof Prison outside Johannesburg in the mid-1980s. Already fluent in a local language, Tsonga, when I met her, Molly took up applied linguistics. Her specialty became training teachers, in what had been white schools, to teach Zulu and South Sotho, prominent languages of the newly named Gauteng province.

A resident of Johannesburg, Molly took me to St Paul's United Church where the preacher's text was from Micah, “beating swords into ploughshares.” On the way home we stopped by the supermarket, where whites were frantically buying up canned goods and candles in fear that water and electricity would be cut off amid chaos and violence surrounding the election.

It was not unreasonable to anticipate a certain level of disorder. The Independent Election Commission had had just four months to organize the election. At the end of 1993, it had one employee; by the time the election was held, it had 200,000. There were 9,000 voting stations around the country, some of them still being selected as we arrived. National, regional, and district presiding officers had to be chosen, with two to 26 voting officials per district. Eighty percent of them had been appointed in the preceding week. Voters had to be educated: a substantial majority of the electorate was illiterate and 80 percent of them had never voted before.

As if these challenges were not enough, 18 parties had registered to participate in the election. The one dangerously missing was the Inkatha

Gail Hovey first went to South Africa in 1966 on the Frontier Internship Program of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA. While there, she continued her relationship with the Southern Africa Committee in New York and its publication, *Southern Africa* magazine. Hovey and Don Morlan, both recent graduates of Union Theological Seminary, were assigned to the Tsonga Presbyterian Church/Swiss Mission. Even at an isolated school, Lemana, located some 300 miles north of Johannesburg, they were watched. Finally the Department of Bantu Education called on the church to withdraw them from the school, saying the two were propagating “their own critical view of the generally accepted policies and established customs in this country.”

Hovey was not able to return to South Africa until after Nelson Mandela's release in 1990. By this time she was living in Hawai'i, and she traveled half-way around the world to observe the 1994 elections.

Freedom Party (IFP) led by Mangosuthu Gatscha Buthelezi. The IFP and its supporters had been engaged in a long and bloody battle in KwaZulu-Natal against supporters of the United Democratic Front and the ANC. *The Sowetan* reported on April 20 that some 20,000 people had been killed in KwaZulu-Natal since 1985, including 172 in January 1994, 153 in February, and 331 in March. Extraordinary pressures were being exerted to persuade the IFP to participate in the election and end the violence.

The American Committee on Africa contingent of which I was a part included South Africans Jennifer Davis and Dumisani Kumalo, each of whom had spent decades in exile; Betsy Landis, a member of the board since the 1950s, who had become an expert on Namibia; and Prexy Nesbitt, who had played many roles in the solidarity movement over a quarter century. Aleah Bacquie, a member of ACOA's staff, had already been in South Africa for much of the year. At the request of President Frank Chikane of the South African Council of Churches, Bacquie had been seconded to that organization. She worked in communications, helping counter the minority government's continuing attempts to mislead the international community about progress in the country.

We were briefed first in Johannesburg. Davis, Nesbitt, and I had been assigned to KwaZulu-Natal. We drove to Durban for a second briefing and met colleagues from Oxfam Canada with whom we were paired. At last, we were briefed on site at our base in Empangeni.

The ACOA team was in South Africa as part of a larger observer presence organized by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. Concerned about our safety, the organizers had not wanted us to observe in KwaZulu-Natal. Jennifer Davis ended the heated discussion about this by saying simply, "If people are brave enough to vote, they deserve to have observers." At the eleventh hour, the Inkatha Freedom Party joined the election. New ballots were printed. The tension and fear in the region diminished quickly, and we were able to travel from one polling place to another without incident.

Our territory was rural: green rolling hills, potholed dirt roads, isolated schoolhouses, and tiny villages. Our job was to report immediately to an election official any incident that might compromise the standard of "free and fair" and to submit a daily record of our experiences.

Virtually everything that could go wrong, did go wrong. At Sundumbili Plaza, for example, an enormous tent was set up in the middle of a field for a double polling station, and the large, orderly crowd waited outside. But when we went inside, the presiding officer informed us that not a single person had voted. The generators had blown out the machines that could read the invisible ink on voters' hands that was intended to ensure that no one voted more than once. People got busy; the generator was repaired; new machines were brought. When the voting finally started, it went so fast that they ran out of ballots three times. The people waited, the wind rose, the tent shuddered and sighed, but the supply of ballots was replenished and the tent held.

Seemingly endless variations on this experience were repeated each day as we went out from Empangeni. What was at stake was in evidence again and again. We saw it in the ingenuity and perseverance of election officials. We saw it in the voters' faces. "We are going to vote," Mabungu, a waiting voter, said. "They can't kill all of us." "Thank God that before I died, I tasted voting." They queued up on sidewalks, stood in single lines that snaked like rivers or squared the corners of enormous fields. "I have waited for this day for all my life and I will wait for all the day if needs be," said another voter, Mashigo.

When eight white policemen burst into the polling place at Eshowe Town Hall, the fears and suspicion that had plagued the buildup to the election were suddenly manifest again. I felt the general panic. What was wrong? What had we failed to observe? And then I laughed out loud as the officers disarmed and stood in line to cast their ballots.

"It is good to get to vote while you are still alive," said Klaas.

Isithebe School ran short of ballots. Election officers and the police—both the South African police and the KwaZulu police—argued about what to do and someone was dispatched to bring more ballots. It was the first time that the South African police had been on what was KwaZulu police turf. The South African Defense Force was also present. Feared and hated until this moment, it was suddenly the welcome, neutral stabilizer.

"Now I can die with happiness in my heart," said 80-year-old Samuel Bhene. "Now I can walk like a real man."

The people came; the ballot boxes filled and were sealed with sealing wax. They switched to collecting ballots in mail bags. The people came, and the people in the great majority put Mandela in the box.

Every official observer's experience was different in the details. But all of us had participated in an event that marked both closure and conception, a rare moment that represented suffering and sacrifice beyond reckoning, courage and promise that only time would measure.

And so at last, after more than eight decades, with generations of petitioners, protestors, diplomacy, and armed struggle, the African National Congress won a resounding victory across the country. Nelson Mandela became the first president of all of South Africa's people. Some observers were able to stay on to hear Mandela's May 2 acceptance speech and attend the party that followed and the May 10 inauguration. I was among those who had to fly home before that. But my colleagues and indispensable friends Jennifer Davis and Dumisani Kumalo went to the party, which was the next best thing to being there myself, especially when Jen faxed me the news:

As we waited the mood was wonderful—lots of our old friends—who hugged and kissed us and kept saying over and over, "Thank you." "We couldn't have done it without you." . . . [Zambia's Kenneth] Kaunda was there and asked where George [Houser] was, sent his greetings. . . . The ANC choir sang wonderful songs in the background. The mood kept building and the room filling. The walls

were lined . . . with TV sets, and with thousands of black, yellow and gold balloons.

Jennifer went on to say that President Mandela spoke with a strong but not a strident voice. He reached out to the other parties, saying that all leaders would be needed, were “worthy South Africans.” He spoke of the legendary heroes across the generations and said that the people, with their courage, had won this night. He called on all South Africans to celebrate the birth of a new nation, but he asked them to do it in a peaceful and respectful way. “This is a joyous night for the human spirit.”

Then it was party time, Jennifer wrote. “We did it. We did it. Hundreds of people hugging and kissing, waving little ANC and SA flags. Dancing. It was beautiful. DK’s and Bacquie’s faces filled with joy.”



Gail Hovey, left, and Jennifer Davis served as official observers at the historic April 1994 elections in Empangeni, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. They are shown here with a local pastor, Robert Mkhwanazi, who served with the Ecumenical Monitoring Programme organized by the South African Council of Churches. *Photo by James Knutson.*

Philippe Wamba

New Pan-African Generation

Philippe Wamba

The lessons of my parents and the prevailing climate of 1970s black outspokenness and pride provided me with a strong sense of identification with Africa. But though my own father was from Africa, and though a celebration of Africa was part and parcel of the pro-black rhetoric that had shaped me, I really knew very little about the continent. . . .

Africa was a place of my imagination, a mythical environment I constructed in my mind out of raw materials provided by my father, books I had read, and movies and TV shows I had seen. . . . Even my parents' ongoing critique of the stereotypical African images that appeared in the media and in books I read could not entirely shield me from the prevailing views of Africa that had long saturated the American psyche. . . . In the end, I knew more about Africa than my white classmates, but was still somewhat susceptible to the prevailing American popular wisdom, which held Africa to be a wild, untamed jungle plagued by famine and bereft of Western technology, infrastructure, and advanced social institutions. . . .

For me as a child in Boston, and for many other black Americans, despite Africa's new prominence as the inspiration for a revolution in African American culture, Africa remained a "dark" continent. . . . I venerated the glory of the African past in school projects on ancient Egypt, I expressed my cultural identification with Africa in my attire, and I eagerly absorbed my father's sentimental stories of his Congolese childhood. . . . For my brothers and me, a real understanding of Africa and what it meant to us only began when my family moved to Tanzania in 1980, an adventure that completely debunked our own myths of Africa and changed our lives forever.

In Dar es Salaam, his father taught at the university and Philippe and his brothers attended school and learned KiSwahili. But in 1981, his father, an opponent of the Mobutu dictatorship, was arrested on a visit home to Zaire. He spent almost a year in prison.

With the arrest of my father, an Africanist historian who had taught at several U.S. universities and at one of the most respected campuses in Africa, an international network of friends, family members, activists, academics, politicians, and students responded quickly to call for his release. My father had been a part of various political struggles while a student and professor in the United States, and many of those he had worked with in the 1960s and 1970s now moved to support him in his time of need. . . .

The campaign was truly international, and in many ways it was also pan-African, coordinated by his black American wife and his African, black American, and West Indian colleagues in Dar es Salaam. They alerted people all over Africa, Europe, the United States, and the Caribbean. . . . My mother

"This book is about my own journey along the fault lines of African—African American relations and the wider historical relationship between black Americans and their counterparts in the "motherland," writes Philippe Wamba in his acclaimed memoir, *Kinship*.

Born in Los Angeles, Philippe Wamba was the son of Elaine Brown of Cleveland and Ernest Wamba dia Wamba from rural Bas-Congo in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire). He grew up in Boston and Dar es Salaam, finished high school in New Mexico, and graduated magna cum laude from Harvard University in 1993, going on to earn a master's degree from the Columbia School of Journalism. From 1999 through 2001 he was editor in chief of the Web site *africana.com*. Philippe Wamba died in 2002 in an automobile accident in Kenya, at the age of 31.

Reprinted by permission from *Kinship: A Family's Journey in Africa and America* (New York: Dutton, 1999). Additional information about Wamba is available on the Web site of the Harvard African Students Alumni Network at <http://www.hasanweb.org/memphilipife.asp>.

shuttled between Dar, Kinshasa, and Boston, spreading the word and trying to generate political pressure on the Zairean government. Members of her family and activists in the American black community urged the U.S. government to intervene on my father's behalf, and a global coalition of Africa-oriented political groups launched letter-writing, petition, and speak-out campaigns, targeting the Zairean government from pan-African nerve centers all over the world.

But while my father survived a Zairean prison . . . we knew that the furor raised on his behalf would do little to change conditions in Zaire itself. . . . Some time after my father was released, my mother's sister in the United States told us how she had watched her TV with disgust while Mobutu was being warmly received at the White House. Reagan had smiled and embraced his African ally like an old friend. . . .

. . . I was thrilled and relieved to have my father safely back among us. . . . I resented the power of tyrants like Mobutu to imprison or even kill people seemingly on a whim . . . I began to wonder how I, too, could make a contribution to the struggle for freedom in Africa. Of course, at the time I had barely completed primary school, but in the years that followed I took an intense interest in African history and politics, and felt inspired by the courage and conviction of African freedom fighters who waged the continent's wars of liberation.

Philippe Wamba finished his secondary education at United World College in New Mexico, where he and fellow black students raised funds for the ANC school in Tanzania. He enrolled at Harvard as an undergraduate in the fall of 1989.

To my unhappy surprise, the African American students I met [at Harvard] were not necessarily any more interested in or informed about Africa than their white counterparts. I automatically gravitated toward the black students I met in those early weeks, and did establish some friendships that lasted. . . . But sometimes the cultural distance between my upbringing in Tanzania and that of African Americans from U.S. cities and suburbs seemed an obstacle to empathy. . . .

For myself and other African students, the examples of racism by the American media, as well as incidents we experienced every day, demonstrated the extent of the social obstacles that confronted us as blacks in America. . . . After the acquittal of Rodney King's torturers, some black students rallied in protest, angrily shouting our solidarity with those venting their frustrations in L.A. And we found plenty to complain about right at Harvard. We marched to protest the harassment of black students by white Harvard policemen, we demonstrated in support of the beleaguered Afro-American Studies Department, and we called for more faculty hiring of women and minorities.

Despite feeling encouraged by the black student solidarity that grew around such issues, I remained frustrated by my own perception of African American indifference to Africa and African affairs. . . . I became involved in local anti-apartheid initiatives, campaigning for Harvard's divestment from companies doing business in South Africa and raising money for

South African refugees, and I also worked on campaigns targeting other African countries where dictatorships held sway. But though the anti-apartheid movement in the United States was led by prominent black American leaders, I found less enthusiasm for the struggle among my black student peers. . . . Too often it seemed as though black Americans were mainly preoccupied with their lot in America and did not see events in Africa as relevant. More than anything else, it was ignorance and apathy that kept many students from greater participation in political activism on Africa.

The most memorable political campaign of my student activist career brought me up against the despotism that had imprisoned my father. If Harvard students seemed to pay little attention to events in South Africa, they cared even less what happened in less celebrated tyrannies like Zaire. But when President Mobutu Sese Seko was invited to speak at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government in the spring of 1990, SASC, the local anti-apartheid group to which I belonged, and other political organizations mobilized to protest the visit.

A coalition of campus and community organizations joined together to denounce Mobutu and the college administrators who had invited him, arguing that by hosting Mobutu's speech Harvard was needlessly legitimizing his brutal politics. The coalition organized rallies at which I spoke of my experiences in Zaire and my father's detention; we canvassed the campus dormitories, informing students about Mobutu's speech and our protest against it; and we wrote letters expressing our disappointment that Mobutu had been invited, delivering them by hand to seemingly indifferent administrators at the Kennedy School.

. . . I told many African American acquaintances about our scheduled rally, but some admitted to me that they didn't know anything about Zaire and said they'd have to hear "the other side of the story" before they agreed to participate. We distributed as much information on Zaire as we could, but it was difficult to prove to a skeptical and completely uninformed audience that millions of people in a distant African country were suffering under the iron hand of a tyrant. I felt that the black students we spoke to were especially wary of accepting our indictments of Mobutu at face value, perhaps with good reason; black people are used to hearing criticism of black leaders and have learned to treat much of the fault-finding as hostile white propaganda. . . . But I knew it was probably more likely that in many cases ignorance would become an excuse for inaction. . . .

The day of Mobutu's speech found two groups of demonstrators positioned in front of the Kennedy School building: students and community activists who had come to denounce Mobutu, including some Boston-based Zairean dissidents, and a group of pro-Mobutu Zaireans from the Boston area who chanted their support for their president in French and Lingala. I picked out several faces that I recognized from the occasional Zairean parties at my uncle's home in Lynn. . . . I saw their actions as a traitorous insult to all of those who still languished under Zaire's repressive government. When I later told my uncle about the Zaireans' presence at the protest, he laughed bitterly and told me that some days previously one of Mobutu's aides had contacted members of the Zairean community in Boston and



Philippe Wamba

Photo courtesy of Barbara Eisinger.

offered them money to show their support at his speech. My uncle had also been approached with the offer but had flatly refused to get involved.

At the protest scene, police barricades separated the hundreds of demonstrators from Mobutu's convoy as it entered the parking lot at the rear of the building. Men in suits stood behind the police lines, coolly eyeing the protestors, and a man within the cordoned-off area snapped pictures of us, perhaps with which to open classified files in some shadowy government department. I led students in the South African shuffling stomp of the "*toyi-toyi*," the protest dance of anti-apartheid youth, and some of the Zairean dissidents began a call-and-response chant in French: "Mobutu, Mobutu—Assassin!" Inside the building, the demonstrators who had managed to get inside interrupted Mobutu's speech by unfurling a large banner that read END THE OPPRESSION NOW and were promptly ejected.

The demonstration made the local television news and was covered in the city papers. Veteran Cambridge activists said that it was the largest protest in recent memory, and student activists returned to their dorms satisfied that they had helped to discredit a dictator. But I left the demonstration alone, feeling empty, plagued by the same sense of discouragement that burdened my political activism throughout my college years. Was this really the best I could do? . . . It was [hard to] keep the wider context in mind, to somehow link my activities in Cambridge with the suffering that continued in Zaire. But when I discussed the protest with my father I felt that he was proud of me and that maybe I had actually managed to emulate some of his courage and conviction.

How I Learned African History from Reggae ♪

Angela Walters

I was raised in northern New Mexico, a white girl in a predominantly Hispanic population. The public education I received in this small southwestern town was somewhat unusual, as it reflected the cultural diversity within at least our own community. So although I was subjected to the traditional Western canon, and plodded through Shakespeare, the American Revolution, and the diagramming of English sentences, the community made sure that I learned some Spanish and some aspects of Mexican culture as well. In elementary school I made skeletons from colored construction paper and paste to commemorate the Mexican Día de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead. Later, my classmates and I listened, enthralled, to stories of ancient Aztec warriors being sacrificed on altars to appease the feathered serpent god, Quetzalcoatl. By the time I graduated from high school I was nearly as familiar with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo as I was with the Declaration of Independence, and I celebrated Cinco de Mayo, Mexican Independence Day, as well as the Fourth of July.

While my background was unusual in one way, in that my education was largely bicultural, it was not unusual in another. Throughout my childhood I learned no in-depth history of Africa or African-descended people outside the occasional civil rights curriculum around Martin Luther King. While we were taught that he was a hero because he was a proud and non-violent man, we were also taught, perhaps inadvertently, that the struggle for civil rights for African Americans and the struggle for equitable relations between blacks and whites—which was a U.S. struggle alone—had reached its appropriate zenith with his life. I believed this, because after we were taught about Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination some 15 years earlier, nothing more was said about African Americans today or about the peoples of Africa or the African diaspora.

If Mexican history was considered a strong river running alongside, and often intertwining with, the river of U.S. history, then African history was like a muddy stream one hardly noticed. And because there was not a single black family living in our little town, this muddy stream became my primary source of knowledge about Africa and the African diaspora. African history was diminished and made to fit into less than nine weeks of my tenth-grade U.S. history class. African history began with the Middle Passage and ended with the civil rights movement. Although we were taught that slavery was morally indefensible, the social and political foundations of the European colonization and exploitation of Africa were never discussed, and I consequently never considered what the profound ramifications of such a massive, protracted exploitation might be for Africa or the African diaspora.

Angela Marie Walters, a part-time student of Lisa Brock at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque in 1995, chose this essay topic for a class assignment. Brock selected the essay as a contribution to a special journal issue she edited. A freelance writer and mother, Walters is interested in multicultural issues and how they affect contemporary American society.

Excerpted from "How I Learned African History from Reggae," in "African [Diaspora] Studies," edited by Lisa Brock, special issue, *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 24, no. 2 (1996). Reprinted by permission of the African Studies Association. Lyrics are from Peter Tosh, "I Am That I Am," *Equal Rights* (Columbia Records, 1977), and Papa Levi, "Mi God, Mi King," *Reggae Greats: The DJ's* (Mango/Island Records, 1985).

I had a lot more to learn about Africa and her people, but it would not be taught to me in school.

Don't belittle my authority
It's time you recognized my quality
I said I am that I am
I am I am I am
—Peter Tosh, “I Am That I Am”

While searching one day through my mother's rather eclectic music collection, I came across the album *Kayo* by Bob Marley and the Wailers. Intrigued by the long dreadlocks and open smile Marley wore on the cover photograph, I listened to the album and was immediately absorbed by the music's slow and sensual rhythm, its heavy bass tones, and Marley's melodic, amiable voice. Though *Kayo* is one of Marley's least political albums, the experience of listening to it served for me as initiation into a new community, a community consisting of individuals actively involved in the project of creating for themselves their own identity. Because this identity is a distinctly *black* identity, and is in part rooted in African history and culture, discovering reggae was for me tantamount to discovering a whole new world.

I had never conceived of precolonial Africa as anything other than a dry and expansive wasteland inhabited by either savages or idiots. These images were not my own; they were gleaned from many years of exposure to media portrayals of African people, from novels like Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* or movies like *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, in which native Africans possess a sort of endearing ignorance and little culture to speak of. By contrast, songs such as Mutabaruka's “Great Queens of Africa” furnished me with unprecedented images of African people as shrewd and resourceful, emanating from a culture and tradition that was vigorous, glorious, irrepressible.

Reggae also caused me to consider for the first time the phenomenon of slavery from an Afrocentric perspective, rather than the Eurocentric perspective, far more comfortable for whites, that I was accustomed to. I was shocked into a new, often afflicted, consciousness from songs such as “Mi God Mi King” by Papa Levi, who sings:

They take 'way mi gold, they take mi silver.
Them hang me up and rape mi muddah
They take me from the wonderful land of Africa,
To slave for the plantation owner. They take
'way mi name and call me “niggah.”
The only word me know: “Aye's a comin, massuh.”
And then they say we ignorant and inferior
And owe them intelligence and superior
To the complexion of them skin color.

“Mi God Mi King” and other reggae songs like Third World's “96 Degrees in the Shade” or Burning Spear's “Do You Remember the Days

of Slavery?” challenged me to look upon the raw actuality of our country’s past with my eyes open. Slavery is ugly, it hurts me to look at it, but I suspect that the damage accrued from refusing to look is greater still.

The education I received from reggae was well-rounded. Apartheid was exposed as a virulent instrument of oppression and dehumanization in Alpha Blondy’s “Apartheid Is Nazism,” Peter Tosh’s “Fight Apartheid,” and countless other reggae songs. I first learned of Nelson Mandela’s imprisonment in South Africa not in school but from Yellowman’s song “Free Mandela.” It was Bob Marley’s *Survival* album that introduced me to the concept of Pan-Africanism. And Judy Mowatt’s song “Black Woman” caused me to reflect upon the moral, physical, and psychological pain suffered by countless black women at the hands of white violators.

Though much of the information I have assimilated from reggae is undoubtedly painful, concerning a past that is rife with discrimination and disfranchisement, an equally significant impression I have received from reggae is that the African diaspora has not merely endured the atrocities of history but thrived despite them. Reggae musicians attribute a large part of their strength to Africa and a conception of African history that reaches far beyond the beginning of European colonization. Reggae musicians evoke a time when Africa existed solely for itself, for Africans, a continent rich with resources, tradition, science, art, and personalities free from shackles.

In school, African history is always taught only insofar as it relates to European history, and never *for itself*. And though we, as white people, may perceive that the treatment Africa received from our ancestors was clearly wrong, I believe there inevitably exists for many the remnant of thought that Africa and the African diaspora are inferior, and subordinate, to European history and people of European descent. This remnant of thought seems inevitable because of our collective Western persistence in refusing to perceive the world with anything other than a Eurocentric perspective, which, when not balanced with an Afrocentric perspective, presents a skewed conception of history and our place in it. Everywhere one looks, whether in school textbooks, the national news, or movies and television, one sees portrayals of the African diaspora that are distorted by the veil of racism.

Reggae musicians subvert the negative misrepresentations of the African diaspora in part by engaging in a *retelling* of African history that is at once more subjective, more complete, and more authentic. Reggae musicians are a few of the many who are actively involved in the project of disseminating the stories of African history: stories of history and culture, stories of slavery, racism, and struggle, stories of freedom, dignity, and victory. The sharing of these stories would seem to disarm racism of much of its power. And unlike many forums utilized for the retelling of African history, reggae is a part of popular culture and is primarily heard among youth, which is perhaps the ideal place to confront racism.

I thank God I found reggae music. For a long while it was reggae alone that injected living blood into what was for me the dead flesh of African history. It was reggae that led me to African American history and studies. And it was reggae that ultimately exposed the smug and elusive veil of racism

I viewed the world behind, the veil I wore without knowing or choosing. In exposing the veil, reggae *destroyed* the veil, and it is for this reason I hope that reggae musicians continue to, in the words of Bob Marley, “tell the children the truth,” and I hope the children continue to listen.

Bob Marley’s Pan-African Consciousness

Jamaican reggae icon Robert Nesta Marley infused themes of African history and Pan-African solidarity and pride throughout his music. Bob Marley and the Wailers performed “Zimbabwe,” from the album *Survival* (1979), at Zimbabwe’s independence celebration in 1980.

Every man got a right to decide his own destiny.
And in this judgment there is no partiality.
So arm in arms, with arms, we’ll fight this little struggle,
'Cause that’s the only way we can overcome our little trouble.

Brother, you’re right, you’re right,
You’re right, you’re right, you’re so right!
We gon’ fight, we’ll have to fight,
We gonna fight, fight for our rights!

Natty Dread it in-a Zimbabwe,
Set it up in Zimbabwe,
Mash it up-a in-a Zimbabwe,
Africans a-liberate Zimbabwe. . . .

In “Africa Unite,” on the same album, Marley proclaims Pan-African solidarity.

Africa unite!
'Cause we’re moving right out of Babylon,
And we’re going to our Father’s land.

Africa unite
Africa unite
Unite for the benefit for the benefit of your people!
Unite for it’s later than you think!
Unite for the benefit of my children!
Unite for it’s later than you think!
Africa awaits its creators!
Africa awaiting its Creator!
Africa, you’re my forefather cornerstone!
Unite for the Africans abroad
Unite for the Africans a yard! [at home]

“Zion Train” is from *Uprising* (1980), the last album to be released before the singer’s death from cancer in 1981. It pays homage to the history of African-descended peoples:

Two thousand years of history
Could not be wiped away so easily.
Two thousand years of history (black history)
Could not be wiped so easily.

Oh, children, Zion train is comin’ our way; get on board now!
They said the Zion train is comin’ our way.
You got a ticket, so thank the Lord!

In Motion

The New African Immigration

Sylviane A. Diouf

More Africans have come voluntarily to this country in the past thirty years than came during the entire era of the slave trade, which transported to these shores an estimated half million men, women, and children between the 1600s and 1860, the year the last known slave ship landed in Alabama. . . .

Sub-Saharan Africans are a very small percentage of a total population that has multiplied about ninety times since the first census in 1790, and they represent about 3 percent of the people who identify as blacks. Nevertheless, as small as it still is today, the African community has been steadily and rapidly increasing. Close-knit, attached to their cultures, and quick to seize the educational and professional opportunities of their host country, Africans have established themselves as one of the most dynamic, entrepreneurial, and upwardly mobile groups in the nation.

Voluntary immigration from sub-Saharan Africa dates back to the 1860s, when men from Cape Verde—then Portuguese-controlled islands off the coast of Senegal—made their way to Massachusetts. They were seamen, and most were employed as whalers. The movement accelerated at the turn of the century; between 1911 and 1920, about 10,000 Cape Verdeans made their way to New Bedford, Massachusetts. For several decades, Cape Verdeans were the largest African community—other than Egyptians and white South Africans—in the United States.

A small number of African students were also present at the end of the nineteenth century. They were sent by Christian missions to historically black colleges and universities. The trend continued in the early twentieth century. [But the community] residing permanently in the United States was kept small.

Starting in the early 1960s, with the independence of most African nations from colonial rule, students and by then newly appointed diplomats formed the bulk of the continental sub-Saharan African presence in the United States. However, the composition and size of the African community started to change in the 1970s. Between 1961 and 1970, 29,000 Africans (including North Africans) were admitted, but the numbers increased to almost 81,000 from 1971 to 1980.

In 1980, a new Refugee Act was passed: it placed less emphasis on the Cold War policies that had favored refugees from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, increased the ceilings of refugees by region, and offered them the option of permanent residence after one year. The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 legalized eligible illegal aliens who resided in the country, and more than 31,000 Africans applied. This amnesty not only allowed many to regularize their situation, but also enabled their spouses and children to join them. Additionally, the Immigration Act of

“Migration has been central in the making of African American history and culture,” declares the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. The transatlantic slave trade is usually considered the defining element in the making of the African diaspora, “but it is centuries of additional movements that have given shape to the nation we know today. This is the story that has not been told.”

The New York-based Schomburg Center has begun to document this history through an extensive research project, *In Motion: The African-American Migration Experience*. It traces 13 discrete migrations of African Americans, Caribbeans, and Africans, to, within, and out of the United States. The project Web site (<http://www.inmotionaame.org/>) presents more than 16,500 pages of texts, 8,300 illustrations, and 60 maps, as well as lesson plans.

The last of the migrations documented there is the new, voluntary immigration from Africa to the United States. Immigration and census statistics are inconsistent, and both are generally agreed to greatly underestimate the actual numbers of African immigrants. But even the lowest estimates point to close to a million African-born United States residents by the year 2000, with many more if the U.S.-born children of immigrants are included. This steadily increasing influx, all too often overlooked, has contributed to the growing diversity of the U.S. black population.

Reprinted by permission from Sylviane Diouf’s “The New African Diaspora,” in *In Motion: The African-American Migration Experience* (© Sylviane A. Diouf and The New York Public Library). The full article and an extensive bibliography are available on the In Motion Web site.

1990 established a lottery system that favors underrepresented nations, a category that includes all the African countries. In 2002, more than 50,000 sub-Saharan Africans entered the country as legal immigrants. . . .

Africans are highly urban: 95 percent reside in a metropolitan area, and like most immigrants, they tend to establish themselves where other countrymen have preceded them and established the basis of a community. West Africans are mostly found in New York (17 percent) and Maryland (11 percent), while 15 percent of East Africans have chosen California and 10 percent Minnesota. Sixteen percent of Central Africans live in Maryland and 9.5 percent in California. The largest number of Nigerians (21,000 or 15.5 percent of the community) reside in oil-rich Texas—their homeland is a major oil producer and they have experience in that industry. The Twin Cities, Minneapolis and St. Paul, have America's largest Somali population, estimated at between 15,000 and 30,000.

Besides their "migration experience," the most significant characteristic of the African immigrants is that they are the most educated group in the nation. Almost half (49 percent) have bachelor's or advanced degrees, compared to 23 percent of native-born Americans. Studies show that black Africans, on the whole, have a higher educational level than white Africans (from North Africa and South Africa).

According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and to the International Organization for Migration, 27,000 [highly educated] Africans left the continent for industrialized nations between 1960 and 1975. While 40,000 followed them from 1975 to 1984, between 1985 and 1990 the number skyrocketed to 60,000, and has averaged 20,000 annually ever since. At least 60 percent of physicians trained in Ghana during the 1980s have left their country, and half of all Zimbabwe social workers trained in the past ten years are now working in Great Britain.

Sub-Saharan nations bear the great cost of educating students who will continue their education in the West and may not return home during their most productive years. As renowned Nigerian computer scientist Philippe Emeagwali puts it: "In essence, Africa is giving developmental assistance to the wealthier western nations which makes the rich nations richer and the poor nations poorer." This substantial brain drain is a significant obstacle to development, but African expatriates stress that it is economic and political conditions beyond their control, and human rights abuses, that are generally responsible for their leaving. They also point out that low salaries, lack of adequate equipment and research facilities, and the need to provide for their extended families are the reasons for their emigration, not individualistic motivations.

The African presence has become very visible on the streets of several U.S. cities. The prime example is Harlem. On and around 116th Street, in a neighborhood known as Little Africa, Africans—mostly from francophone West Africa—own several restaurants, a tax and computer center, grocery stores, a butcher shop, photocopy shops, a hardware store, tailor shops, wholesale stores, braiding salons, and telecommunication centers. Other businesses sell electronic equipment, cosmetics, household goods, and Islamic items. Little Africa is a microcosm of what African immigrants

represent and create: they are attached to their cultural and religious values; are quick to take advantage of what modernity can offer; and play a major role in familial, communal, and national development at home.

Whatever their circumstances in America, [African immigrants] maintain a very high level of financial support for their extended families. "The main reason I came here was to support my family," stresses a Ghanaian nurse. "I send \$250 every month, which is more than I used to make. I am nothing without my family and I would never think of not providing for them, even when it gets difficult here." Collectively, Africans in the United States send hundreds of millions of dollars home every year. In 1999, Nigerians abroad sent \$1.3 billion home from all corners of the world. The sum was equivalent to 3.7 percent of their country's Gross Domestic Product, while the total development aid to Nigeria was only \$152 million. Senegalese emigrants contributed close to 2 percent of their country's GDP. It is estimated that African émigrés the world over send more than \$3 billion home every year through official channels and another \$3 billion through informal channels, mostly person to person.

The number of African organizations and associations throughout the country is astonishing. Every nationality has national, regional, professional, gender, political, and sometimes ethnic organizations. In many areas, pan-African organizations, which bring together Africans from various nationalities, have also been established. People often belong to several organizations, and the multiplicity of groups shows the many layers of identity that Africans bring with them and are eager to maintain.

Like individual Africans, most associations are involved in development efforts in Africa. The Association of Nigerian Physicians in the Americas, which counts more than 2,000 members in the United States and Canada, sends doctors on medical missions to Nigeria to provide services and other support to people in underserved rural areas. Thousands of projects throughout the continent are being funded by the emigrants and are directly managed by the locals. The economic impact of the émigrés on their countries of origin, whether at the familial, local, regional, or national level, is extremely high.

Africans count on [the immigrants] and on information technology to counterbalance some of the effects of the brain drain. Nongovernmental organizations, international organizations, and African universities and associations are eager to capitalize on "the 'Diaspora option' which advocates making use of the resources of [African] nationals abroad, without necessarily having them relocate to their countries of origin." Thanks to the Internet, the expatriates' skills, expertise, and the networks they build in the United States and other countries of immigration are becoming increasingly available to colleagues and users in their countries of origin. This, they stress, transforms a problem into a potential asset. The digital divide is still enormous, but it is getting smaller. Major cities and many small towns on the Continent have telecommunication centers that provide telephone and fax services. Cyber cafes have sprung up at an amazingly rapid pace, and the Internet is thus available to a wide spectrum of urbanites, who can keep abreast of the expatriates' activities through their online magazines, or send e-mail to their kin and friends in the United States.

The flow of information also goes from Africa to America. Today, Africans from Los Angeles to Cincinnati can watch television programs and listen to radio broadcasts from their various countries of origin on their computers. They can read their national newspapers online, the same day they are published in Dakar, Nairobi, or Accra.

African expatriates are deeply conscious of the negative image of Africa projected in the United States. “Even in academia and the media Americans continue to use derogatory terms such as tribe for ethnic group and dialect instead of language,” complains a Nigerian physician, “and even though in many countries more than half the population is urban, the only images you see on TV are national parks, which makes it look as if Africans lived in the forest!” Although they readily acknowledge the political, economic and social problems that mark the continent, most Africans do not recognize themselves or their countries in the stereotypical and pessimistic images with which Americans are presented. The often astonishing nature of the derogatory clichés coming from a wide spectrum of American society that is ignorant of African realities is a common subject of conversation and irritation.

Although there are many who wish to remain in America, Africans overwhelmingly express the desire to return to their home countries. As children are born or grow up in this country, issues of identity, continuity, change, and integration will become more pressing. Future developments, at home or in the United States, may change their plans; but for now their life strategies—savings, education, and strong links to home—are geared toward achieving the objective of returning to their home countries. In the meantime, they bring to the United States their robust work ethic, dynamism, and strong attachment to family, culture, and religion, just as other Africans did several centuries ago.



Liberians in Boston march in support of peace in their country, June 2003. *AP/World Wide Photos. Photo by Michael Dwyer.*