

A MORAL IMPERATIVE: THE ROLE OF AMERICAN BLACK CHURCHES IN
INTERNATIONAL ANTI-APARTHEID ACTIVISM

by

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of
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DEDICATION

Dedicated in loving memory of my parents John Waymon Slade and Ruth Wilson Slade.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAM	Anti-Apartheid Movement
ACOA	American Committee on Africa
ALD	African Liberation Day
AFSAR	Americans For South African Resistance
AFSC	American Friends Service Committee
ANC	African National Congress
ANCLA	American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa
BAAC	Baltimore Anti-Apartheid Coalition
CALC	Clergy and Laity Concerned
CAA	Council on African Affairs
CBC	Congressional Black Caucus
CPUSA	Communist Party USA
FOR	Fellowship of Reconciliation
FSAM	Free South Africa Movement
HUAC	House Un-American Committee
ICAA	International Committee on African Affairs
IFM	International Freedom Mobilization
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NBBC	New Bethel Baptist Church
NBIFP	National Black Independent Political Party
NCBC	National Conference of Black Churchmen
NCC	National Council of Churches
NNC	National Negro Congress
SACP	South African Communist Party
SANC	Southern Africa News Collective
SASP	Southern Africa Support Project
UDF	United Democratic Front
WOA	Washington Office on Africa
WOAEF	Washington Office on Africa Education Fund
WCC	World Council of Churches

ABSTRACT

A MORAL IMPERATIVE: THE ROLE OF AMERICAN BLACK CHURCHES IN INTERNATIONAL ANTI-APARTHEID ACTIVISM

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Dissertation Director: Dr. Benedict Carton

In the twentieth century Americans bore witness to the rise of harsh white supremacy in South Africa. With the advent of apartheid rule in 1948, the draconian Pretoria government sought to control the majority black population through more violent enforcement of segregationist laws. As apartheid took root, U.S. anticolonial organizations—comprised of labor union members, church groups, and civil rights advocates--increasingly protested racial injustice in South Africa. These organizations, in solidarity with black South Africans, fueled an international fight against apartheid. *A Moral Imperative* focuses on four successive anticolonial organizations in the U.S., which fiercely challenged white supremacy in South Africa over a fifty-year period, beginning with the post-WW II civil rights campaigns that culminated decades later in black power movements. These organizations include the Council on African Affairs (CAA), American Committee on Africa (ACOA), TransAfrica's Free South Africa Movement (FSAM), and the Southern Africa Support

Project (SASP). Black church people in America effectively shaped the strategies of these four organizations. Clergy and parishioners initiated and participated in U.S. anti-apartheid protests from African Freedom Day rallies in the 1950s and 1960s to Free South Africa Movement demonstrations in the 1980s. Yet the key scholarship on transnational anti-apartheid activism has not only overlooked their vital contributions but also their galvanizing ideology of radical pacifism.

The primary evidence underpinning this thesis is drawn from period newspaper accounts, internal documents of the four anticolonial organizations, transcripts of oral history interviews conducted by other researchers, and the author's own oral history interviews with key organization founders, theologians, and church leaders. *A Moral Imperative* critically evaluates these sources to analyze how Cold War politics, racial solidarities, and gender dynamics influenced the black religious activism of four U.S. anticolonial organizations, which shaped the international anti-apartheid struggle.

INTRODUCTION

The classic example of organized and institutionalized racism is the Union of South Africa. Its national policy and practice are the incarnation of the doctrine of white supremacy in the midst of a population which is overwhelmingly Black. But the tragedy of South Africa is virtually made possible by the economic policies of the United States and Great Britain, two countries which profess to be the moral bastions of our Western world.¹

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?

INTRODUCTION

A prophet of human rights, the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. crusaded for freedom throughout the world, including South Africa. In speeches and writings King compared Jim Crow subjugation to apartheid oppression. He knew how to make, “the Christian gospel [relate] to the struggle for racial justice,” a struggle that entailed exposing the beneficiaries of segregation everywhere, including American corporations doing business in white-ruled South Africa.² King insisted that ridding the world of such inhumanity to man was a moral imperative. His interest in South Africa, sparked by his commitment to social justice everywhere, dates back to the mid-1950s during his pastorate at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama.³

¹ Martin Luther King Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 183.

² James H. Cone, *For My People: Black Theology and The Black Church*, The Bishop Henry McNeal Turner Studies in North American Black Religion, vol. 1 (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1984), 6.

³ Lewis Baldwin, “Martin Luther King, Jr., a ‘Coalition of Conscience,’ and Freedom in South Africa,” in *Freedom’s Distant Shores: American Protestants and Post-Colonial Alliances with Africa*, ed. R. Drew Smith (Waco, Tex: Baylor University Press, 2006), 54.

From the Truman administration to the end of Ronald Reagan's second term, American civil rights activists labored to be recognized by the men in the Oval Office for their anti-apartheid advocacy. Although the United States government was not eager to deal with apartheid, it valued South Africa's anticommunism stance, the economic benefits of association with the regime, and the almost unlimited access to the uranium ore in the Rand. These benefits outweighed the negative consequences of associating with the discriminatory practices of its most trusted Cold War ally south of the equator. Indeed, while President Truman, "sought to establish greater credibility with people of color at home," this aim did not extend to blacks in South Africa.⁴ At the advent of the apartheid era in 1948, Truman had no reaction to Prime Minister Daniel Malan's announcement that his principal aim, as the head of the newly victorious National Party in South Africa, was "the maintenance and protection of the European population of the country as a pure white race."⁵ From the time of Malan's ascension to power until the early 1990s, the U.S. government generally saw the apartheid regime as a stalwart in the fight against Soviet influence in mineral-rich Southern Africa.

Historian Tom Lodge points out that "networks of organized activity in four countries constituted the core dynamics of global public opposition to apartheid. The

⁴ Thomas Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle: The United States and Southern Africa in the Early Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 84.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 87. For a statement of the National Party's Apartheid policy, see *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle*. Some historians suggest that South Africa's National Party simply formalized segregationist policies that already existed; others argue that apartheid policies accelerated "the polarization between blacks and whites in South Africa." Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle*, 89. Daniel Malan led the National Party to power by winning a close national election in 1948. He served as Prime Minister of South Africa until 1953. Malan's second goal was the preservation of "the indigenous racial groups as separate communities." Thus, in South Africa political order, "before and after 1948," necessitated "white minority rule by whatever means necessary."

movement was wider...but these national networks were the most enduring and the best organized.”⁶ Anti-apartheid organizations from the, “United Kingdom, Sweden, the Netherlands, and the United States,”⁷ contributed to the demise of the apartheid system in South Africa; however, black South African activism cannot be relegated to a secondary position. Thomas Borstelmann concurs, “Apartheid was overcome primarily by the sustained resistance, at enormous cost, of black South Africans. The actions of Americans and other foreigners were secondary to developments inside the country.”⁸

American black faith organizations certainly were vocal in anti-apartheid activism, particularly after domestic civil rights battles had been won. Progressive black churches and many of their organizational affiliations asserted their support for southern African liberation for years. At their annual convention in 1976, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) resolution “called for an economic boycott against South Africa, accused the U.S. of ‘doubletalk’ in dealing with South Africa, Rhodesia and Angola, and demanded an end to all tax benefits for companies doing business with South Africa. This resolution was followed by an SCLC telegram to the UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim calling for an end to UN inaction over the South Africa Crisis.”⁹ Many examples of these anti-apartheid actions can be used to tell this important story. However, a full analysis of black church involvement and influence within these organizations has yet to be done.

⁶ Tom Lodge, *Sharpeville: An Apartheid Massacre and Its Consequences*, The Making of the Modern World (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 234.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and The Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001), 262.

⁹ “SCLC: Stand on Southern Africa,” *The Guardian*, September 1, 1976, sec. Black News, Box 73 Folder 16, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

Black faith communities in the U.S. were pivotal in driving the anticolonial and anti-apartheid agenda. Using tenets of black liberation theology, clergy and their parishioners initiated, participated in, and supported black South Africans through the four organizations covered in this dissertation. These organizations, covering a fifty-year time span, will be presented chronologically to show the many ways in which black church people shaped the formation, tactics, and strategies of the American anti-apartheid movement.

As might be expected, all four organizations experienced leadership challenges over the years. Race and gender were often at the center of the conflicts and variously impacted leadership composition, the launching of new initiatives, evolving protest strategies, and outreach to new supporters. To gain insight into these organizations and the role they played in the anti-apartheid movement, I will examine the work of nationally known activists, including Paul and Eslanda Robeson, Randall Robinson, the Reverend Walter Fauntroy, George Houser, and Eleanor Holmes Norton, alongside local activists such as Sylvia Hill, Cecelie Counts, and Mankekolo Mahlangu-Ngcobo.

The American struggle against apartheid was driven by a number of singular organizations. Few, however, had the tenacity of the U.S. based Council on African Affairs (CAA), the American Committee on Africa (ACOA), TransAfrica's Free South Africa Movement (FSAM), and the Southern Africa Support Project (SASP). Beginning with chapter one, the radical black-led CAA whose forceful anticolonial, antiracist positions, and uncritical acceptance of Soviet Union ideology would be assailed in the 1940s and 1950s. The official denunciations of CAA by Martin Dies and members of the

House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) would lead to the destruction of the organization and careers of its leaders. Furthermore, this chapter demonstrates how black American churches supported the organization despite McCarthy era “witch hunts”.

The CAA did not disavow communism but ACOA did, and perhaps this is because CAA suffered for its communist sympathies. Chapter two tells the story of ACOA, a radical pacifist, anti-Communist, white-led interracial group at the forefront of U.S. divestment campaigns. Established in 1953, “ACOA organized against South African apartheid from the group’s founding...until apartheid ended in 1994.” As CAA teetered on impending dissolution, this multi-racial group was the only major U.S. anti-apartheid organization from its founding until the mid-sixties.¹⁰ Its internal dynamics (and strategies of protest) reveal much about racial and gender dynamics that influenced the organization over time. The relationship between ACOA and black faith leaders shaped key initiatives, such as the Appeal for Action Against Apartheid in the 1960s and the Religious Action Network (RAN), in 1989. The many ways these leaders supported and led key organization initiatives will also be examined in this chapter.

As ACOA moved to more local and state divestment strategies, the relatively new black-led foreign policy lobby grew weary of the status quo. Chapter three examines how TransAfrica’s FSAM responded to an escalation of violence and repression against black South Africans in 1984. The organization led highly publicized anti-apartheid protests at the South African Embassy in Washington, D.C. and consulates around the country and by more loudly calling for U.S. sanctions against South Africa. Galvanizing ideals of

¹⁰ David L. Hostetter, *Movement Matters: American Antiapartheid Activism and the Rise of Multicultural Politics* – (New York: Routledge Press, NY 2006), 15.

black self-reliance and black pride influenced TransAfrica's decision to launch this campaign without consultation. As a result, TransAfrica was criticized by anti-apartheid establishment organizations such as ACOA. In addition, this chapter reveals the considerable involvement of black faith communities in supporting FSAM. Well-known and lesser-known clergy and ordinary church parishioners supported the work of FSAM. The Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) provided the impetus for the establishment of TransAfrica, under the leadership of Congressman Charles Diggs. Randall Robinson chaired the committee that would design and launch the black foreign policy lobby in Washington, D.C.

Chapter four chronicles the untold story of SASP, the grassroots organization that galvanized the local Washington, D.C. area community to join in solidarity with the southern African liberation movement. Founded in 1978 by black female activists, SASP drew from black power and black consciousness ideologies to educate black communities about the liberation struggles in Africa. Their education strategies sought to conscientize members of black communities. Truly a grassroots organization, SASP understood the importance of organizing "in the cultural and community institutions that people were familiar with [and] in the cultural forms that they valued."¹¹ Moreover, SASP served as a core strategic partner with FSAM, which relied on SASP to educate and rally members of the community to participate in its initiatives. SASP's remarkable integration of black church people from the start was at the core of the organization and evident in group meetings, outreach efforts, public protests, and program logistics. Here we see

¹¹ Minter and Hill, 51.

organizations working together, whereas the former two organizations had different cohorts of leadership based upon ideological differences.

RACE, GENDER, AND RELIGION

Gender Dynamics/Contestations

From their founding, women led major initiatives in each of these African liberation organizations. White American, South African, and European women were significant players in many of the U.S. anti-apartheid/anticolonial organizations. This was the case in the black led CAA and the white led ACOA. Often wealthy with connections, they brought their progressive ideas to the organizations. Freida Neugebauer, a white South African radical, whom Max Yergan met during his time at the University of Fort Hare, likely influenced his political shift to the left. Though white women were involved in FSAM and SASP, they were not in key roles. Black women activists were present in ACOA, they occasionally managed projects, chaired and served on major committees and decision making boards, and participated in key events; however, in terms of power and longevity white women held more long-standing and prominent roles. Jennifer Davis, a long-time invaluable staff member, became the first female executive director of ACOA in 1981. Black American poet and activist, Maya Angelou, worked briefly on a special project for ACOA, and many wealthy and influential women, like Eleanor Roosevelt, served on the largely symbolic National Board. Women were the connectors, the workers, and key strategists in all of the organizations.¹²

¹² Similarly, women in the Civil Rights Movement, were instrumental in implementing the work and shaping key strategies. Two women that stood out included, Septima Clark who formed the Citizenship schools to help southern blacks prepare for literacy tests required before being permitted to vote and Ella

Though key leaders of the movement had their personal foibles (e.g. Robeson, Yergan, and Du Bois were known to have affairs while married), many supported women's rights. David Levering Lewis demonstrates CAA member, W.E.B. DuBois was a strong advocate for women's equality. In contrast, Marian Mollin points out that while radical pacifists embraced gender equality, there is evidence of women not rising to top leadership positions in the national organizations represented in this study. There is no question that women were key to the radical pacifist led ACOA. However, long-term members like Elizabeth Landis who served on the board for more than three decades, never became board chair, although she did rise to the level of vice-president. *Was this because she had no interest in chairing the board or did ACOA prefer male leaders?* Similarly CAA, which briefly had a female chairperson, was led by men in most of its key leadership positions. Paul Robeson's wife, Eslanda, a radical black American activist feminist and intellectual, helped conceptualize and co-founded ICAA, later named CAA. She had considerable influence on the direction of the organization.

In contrast to ACOA and CAA, women were front and center in TransAfrica's FSAM and SASP. Mary Frances Berry and Eleanor Holmes Norton were involved in FSAM's first act of civil disobedience at the South African embassy. Not only were these well-known women involved in this first demonstration, along with women like Sylvia Hill, they were architects of FSAM. Moreover, black female members of SASP, including Sandra Hill, Cecelie Counts, and Adwoa Dunn proved strategically valuable to

Baker the adviser and strategist behind the Student NonViolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). See, <http://nchumanities.org/programs/road-scholars/septima-clark-citizenship-education-and-women-civil-rights-movement>.

FSAM. SASP worked in concert with TransAfrica's FSAM by connecting the organization to the local community.

Racial Contestations

Black activists were instrumental to the success of each of these organizations, which all had interracial membership. Black Americans were founders of three of the four organizations and co-founders of the fourth. The CAA an interracial, antiracist, anticolonial organization led by outspoken radicals, namely Paul and Eslanda Robeson, Max Yergan, W.E.B. DuBois, and Alpheus Hunton, would succumb to Cold War hysteria. As accusations of communism reached a high-pitch and the organization faced internal conflict, membership dropped significantly, including white participation, and the organization dissolved by 1955. Similar to the CAA in its mission, the anti-Communist ACOA was more palatable during the Cold War era. Described as an interracial organization, ACOA was founded in 1953 by George Houser and other members of the Congress of Racial Equality. Black American activists often described the organization as "white," Mark Harrison, who worked with faith-based organizations in Washington, D.C. and New York, concurred. Though there were black staff, board members, and supporters throughout its more than 40 year existence, black respondents were unequivocal in their view of the organization. As a radical pacifist led group, ACOA was more progressive on race and gender dynamics than the broader society. Randall Robinson, the first executive director and an architect of TransAfrica, advocated black Americans taking the lead in using new tactics in the U.S. anti-apartheid movement. Informed by black pride and black power ideology, TransAfrica advocated

black leadership and self-reliance. Similarly, SASP leaders were influenced by pan-Africanism, black power and black consciousness ideologies and represented radical black intelligentsia. Grounded in grassroots activism, SASP had built close ties to the local Washington, D.C. community. Though they collaborated with other groups, they preferred not working in coalitions.

The leadership of these organizations were both influenced by radical ideology, and had as a priority the grounding of their activism in a black base. Greatly influenced by the polemics of black intellectuals like C. L. R. James, Paul Robeson was an outspoken antiracist and civil rights activist.¹³ When W.E.B. Du Bois objected to moving CAA offices to Harlem, education director Alpheus Hunton agreed that “the Council’s program should not be limited by Harlem’s horizons,” however he argued “that the main base of our work ought to be among Negro Americans, who as a group, have the most direct interest in Africa.” Hunton did not see this as a threat to their “ties with... white progressive groups.”¹⁴ More than forty years later, the writing (and mentorship) of C.L.R. James and Frantz Fanon influenced the architects of the black-led FSAM and SASP. Both organizations viewed the black community as their priority and intentionally directed their strategies and education initiatives in black American cultural contexts. These perspectives on race influenced the internal and external dynamics of these organizations, revealing racial tensions and contestations.

Religion

¹³ Paul Robeson had played the featured role in James’ *Toussaint L’Ouverture* in London.

¹⁴ Penny M Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 142.

Black-led churches have largely been an overlooked dimension in the histories of the U.S. anti-apartheid struggle and even anti-apartheid organizational contestations. Faith communities shaped and advanced the U.S. struggle against white supremacy in South Africa. Black churches in Washington, D.C., New York, and throughout the country actively participated in anti-apartheid activism in concert with these organizations. The CAA received financial support from Harlem-based churches and hosted many of its activities at the renowned Abyssinian Baptist Church and St. Mark's Methodist Church. Abyssinian and Canaan Baptist churches in Harlem, also collaborated with the New York based ACOA. FSAM and SASP called upon many Washington, D.C. area churches to support and participate in southern African liberation initiatives. Local D.C. area churches provided a strong network of support for FSAM and SASP. The Reverend Walter Fauntroy's church, New Bethel Baptist Church, along with Plymouth Congregational Church, People's Congregational Church, Metropolitan Baptist Church, and Saint Augustine Church, to name a few, regularly engaged with these two organizations. Over the course of the nearly 50 years covered in this study, black churches held organizing meetings, hosted events, boycotted, managed logistics, and participated in anticolonial and antiapartheid protests. Clergy from many of these churches had roots in the Civil Rights Movement and brought their experience to anti-apartheid activism. These veterans schooled anti-apartheid activists on non-violent mass protest actions; and as King made clear, African independence movements inspired U.S. activism. Agitating for change was not new to them nor was going to jail to protest injustice.

To be sure, the religious dimension has not been entirely overlooked by historians. The well-known Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem is mentioned in most of the scholarship on black Americans and internationalism. The point that the earliest anti-apartheid organizations combined religious power and purpose in activism is well noted. The early CAA and ACOA preached radical pacifism, however, circumstances caused their position to change over time.¹⁵ Indeed, many American anti-apartheid leaders and their rank and file, white and black, embraced radical pacifism. But there was another spirit at work in the U.S. struggle against white supremacy in South Africa. This spirit has not been fully appreciated by scholars. This spirit emanated from proudly black church communities and their theologies of black liberation, which emphasized a responsibility to the poor and oppressed people of the world.

ORAL HISTORY

This dissertation draws upon unique evidence from black church communities not found or available in documentary records, evidence gathered through oral history interviews with clergy, parishioners, and activists involved in the anti-apartheid struggle. Though focused on the evolution of oral history traditions and techniques in South Africa, *Oral History in a Wounded Country*, edited by Philippe Denis and Radikobo Ntsimane, is a practical guide that provides context to better understand oral history research and its applications. Denis and Ntsimane point out, “Oral history has the potential to help South Africans to deal with their memories of the past and build together

¹⁵ See, Marian Mollin, *Radical Pacifism in Modern America : Egalitarianism and Protest* (Philadelphia, Pa: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006). Radical pacifists believed in nonviolent direct action. They sought an egalitarian society where race, gender, ethnicity, and religious differences were disregarded.

a new sense of identity. The effect of the act of remembering on the person who remembers is at the centre of this process.”¹⁶ In recalling some of the challenges and accomplishments of the Free South Africa Movement, one of my respondents came to tears during the interview as she remembered the past. Some respondents were candid about discord in the movement, exposing disappointment, hurt feelings, lingering conflict and differences in opinion. Denis and Ntsimane argue that in South Africa, oral history provided a vehicle in which respondents could tell their story, allowing them to “heal the wounds of the past.” In this regard, the impact can be profound for the individual and the community; indeed, it has “the potential to be – a life-changing event.” Similarly, in hearing the stories of oral history respondents in this study, “telling [their] story [was] more than simply producing knowledge about the past,” they could in some ways right the wrongs of the past.¹⁷ Race and gender contestations happened on many levels within these organizations. It molded how the story of the movement is represented. Dr. Tyrone Pitts, a past director of racial justice for the National Council of Churches (NCC) and black faith leader, explained activist black clergy and lay people were busy fighting for African liberation, justice and peace. Their focus on these goals regrettably meant they often did not record or tell their story or share their observations. Furthermore, the Reverend Bernice Powell Jackson, pastor and president of the North American region of the World Council of Churches, mentions black women who were heavily involved in the

¹⁶ Philippe Denis and Radikobo Ntsimane, eds., *Oral History in a Wounded Country: Interactive Interviewing in South Africa* (Scottsville, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008), 10. “In line with this understanding of memory, one of the main purposes of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the largest effort of collective memory ever attempted in South Africa and possibly in the world” allowed this healing to take place.

¹⁷ Ibid.

movement, whose stories have not been told. Unfortunately, the breadth of black church people's experience is often left out, resulting in holes in the historical narrative. This dissertation brings their voices and their importance to the forefront of the U.S. anti-apartheid struggle. Stories of the black faith community are also heard through, Mankekolo Mahlangu-Ngcobo, a South African exile and member of Bethel AME Church in Baltimore, Mark Harrison, and Mary Gresham, co-founder of the Baltimore Anti-Apartheid Coalition who worked closely with church parishioners during the movement. Gresham, not a church member, was a foot soldier in numerous church-based anti-apartheid campaigns. Interviews conducted by William Minter and others for his book project, *No Easy Victories*, were helpful in revealing some of the racial tensions within ACOA particularly during the height of the black power movement.

Given the relatively recent history of the anti-apartheid movement, most respondents in this study were key players and participants in these organizations, spanning most of the 50 years covered in this project. Mark Harrison, who has worked with faith-based organizations throughout his career, shed light on race, gender, and religion, asserting that he saw Black liberation theology as an extension of the civil rights movement. The Reverend Wyatt Tee Walker, a civil rights leader and chief of staff to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and retired-pastor of Canaan Baptist Church in Harlem, provided important details on black clergy involvement in the antiapartheid movement. As chair of the Religious Action Network, a largely African American led religious arm of the American Committee on Africa, Walker was at the forefront of antiapartheid activism in the U.S. Theology professor James H. Cone, best known as the father of black liberation

theology, added his perspectives as a theologian and an activist. Sylvia Hill and Cecelie Counts reveal much about black church involvement in the southern African liberation struggle. Through these oral history respondents, we gain a level of detailed information about black church participation not seen in earlier studies. These foot soldiers in the U.S. anti-apartheid movement, will take their rightful place in this important history. The second democratically elected President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, recognized the importance of “recording the voices of some of those who were the makers of history. Those who made the history must thus have the opportunity to participate in the process of recording that history in words, and interpret it as they see it.”¹⁸ Oral history interviews involving key leaders of the American Committee on Africa, the Free South Africa Movement, and the South Africa Support Project, are vital components to this study. As important, were interviews of individuals who were not formally affiliated with these groups, but (in most cases) had some knowledge of and interaction with them. Among these respondents are unsung heroes, men and women, who were church people and activists and whose voices have not been heard in scholarly literature.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

Black Americans have long been interested in international affairs. Their voices were generally ignored or disregarded when it came to shaping U.S. foreign policy.¹⁹ Perceptions of official U.S. support for South Africa’s white minority regime offended many blacks and progressive whites in America. The resulting “domestic political

¹⁸ Ibid., 15.

¹⁹ TransAfrica Forum, “TransAfrica,” *Issue Brief*, 1982, Reading Room, TransAfrica Forum Reading Room, TransAfrica Offices, Washington, DC; See also, Borstelmann, *The Cold War and The Color Line* Borstelmann provides an excellent study on the impact of race and the civil rights struggle in the United States on US foreign policy.

ramifications” cannot be ignored.²⁰ This historiography primarily examines what scholars have written about black Americans and internationalism, as well as about the four organizations represented in this study: the Council on African Affairs (CAA), the American Committee on Africa (ACOA), TransAfrica’s Free South Africa Movement (FSAM), and the Southern Africa Support Project (SASP). Several scholars have deftly relayed the critical roles and involvement of black American activists and their involvement in U.S. foreign policy. These studies have focused on anticolonial, and anti-apartheid activism, alongside civil rights advocacy. Key players have included black intelligentsia, the press, labor unions, non-governmental organizations, and political leaders. Although prominent black churches are often mentioned in the scholarship, few examine the specific ways the black faith community engaged in anti-apartheid activism. Moreover, historians generally have not explored the motivations behind clergy, parishioner support, and their participation in the anti-apartheid movement. Some reasons may be related to more attention given the long, hard fought, battle for domestic civil rights, which seemed to take precedence over the transnational struggle for the liberation of South Africa.

The 1970s black power and black consciousness movements brought more attention to links between the long fought battle for civil rights in America, lingering social and economic issues, and white-led repression of blacks in southern Africa, particularly South Africa. Communist sympathy was not always a reason for black

²⁰ Richard Payne. *Africa Today*, 71. TransAfrica Collection, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University Archives, Washington, DC. The TransAfrica Forum boxes contain correspondence from the ACOA. ACOA published the magazine, *Africa Today*.

church people to distance themselves from working in solidarity with the ANC. This dissertation reveals these alliances (intersections of religion and left politics) during the Cold War.

Scholars reveal ways people in the African diaspora and Africa worked in solidarity to challenge their government's domestic and foreign policies. Challenging U.S. presidential administrations was evident throughout the 50-year period represented in this dissertation. These scholars uncover U.S. administrations' complicity with European and South African governments to advance interests antithetical to democracy and the civil rights of African peoples. More concerning, these studies reveal activists who challenged the status quo often became victims of Cold War era politics.

American race relations proved to be the Achilles heel of U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War era. Anticolonial activists were quick to point out this weakness in international and national arenas. Persistent domestic race relations hindered trust from third world nations (and their allies) fighting for their independence. In contrast, the Soviet Union used its perceived openness to racial equality as a trump card against the U.S. Michael L. Krenn illuminates the seriousness of this problem; he asserts "during the Eisenhower years, ...it became painfully obvious that America's problematic race relations were having a negative impact on U.S. diplomacy."²¹

The important scholarship on this period of global rights activism has necessarily focused on the coordinated efforts of key activist organizations, their founders, and protest strategies. Little has been written about the specific ways in which black church

²¹ Michael Krenn, "Unfinished Business": Segregation and U.S. Diplomacy at the 1958 World's Fair," *Diplomatic History* 20, no. 4 (Fall 1996): 591–612.

leaders and their parishioners participated in anti-apartheid activism. Scholarship on these anti-apartheid organizations is relatively thin. With a few exceptions, the most relevant studies appear beginning in the 1990s, shortly after the Cold War came to an end and South Africa became a democratic society. A small but growing body of work addresses these organizations, and a few articles center on their engagement with black churches. Scholars have often written about large, mostly white church denominations (i.e. Methodist, Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Lutheran) and antiapartheid actions, particularly in reference to divestment campaigns.²² In addition, larger black faith organizations, such as the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church and the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC) appear in some studies. Literature related to black power and black consciousness, the anti-apartheid movement in the United States, black internationalism and the Cold War, memory and life stories, and gender helped me develop my thesis.

Black Power and Black Consciousness

To better understand transnational black power in a U.S. and South Africa context, scholars and activists must examine the seminal work on black power that influenced activists in both race-conscious countries. *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*, (1967) by Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) and Charles Hamilton, “likened the internal form of colonialism that characterized black-white relations in the United States to the oppressive system of white domination that prevailed

²² Robert Massie, *Loosing the Bonds: The United States and South Africa in the Apartheid Years* (New York: Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 1997), 217.

in South Africa and Rhodesia.”²³ *Black Power* urged the black community to build positive self-esteem and solidarity within their communities before participating in the broader society. This ideology influenced scholarship on and about black Americans and African liberation.

Since the 1970s scholars have written about the meanings and intended effects of black consciousness on black communities in the U.S. and South Africa. The “primary task of black consciousness was to “conscientize” black people, which meant giving (facilitating) them a sense of pride or belief in their own strength and worthiness.”²⁴ In *Black Liberation: A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in the United States and South Africa* (1995), George M. Fredrickson compares and contrasts the Black Power and Black Consciousness movements, pointing out their shared slogans and symbols like “Black is beautiful” and “Before a group can enter [or create] the open society, it must first close ranks,”²⁵ and the “clenched-fist Black Power salute.”²⁶ Earlier studies like Gail Gerhart’s *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology* (1978), examine the political history of black power and black consciousness in South Africa. Daniel Magaziner departs from Gerhart’s 1978 political history by elevating theology to the center of his analysis of the Black Consciousness movement in South Africa. In *The Law and the Prophets: Black Consciousness in South Africa 1968 – 1977* (2010), Magaziner, delves more deeply into the Christian theological underpinnings of the black

²³ George M Fredrickson, *Black Liberation: A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in the United States and South Africa* (New York; Oxford: Oxford university press, 1995), 295.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 302.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 313.

²⁶ Gail M. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa : The Evolution of an Ideology*, Perspectives on Southern Africa ; 19 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 295.

consciousness movement and its leaders' belief in conscientization as practiced in South Africa. He argues, "these young activists [Steve Biko among them] appeared to have drawn rather interesting conclusions about the theory and practice of resistance to apartheid, based not exclusively on politics or ideology, but on theology."²⁷ Magaziner added, "Christians believe that their faith has something to say about this world and about the human beings in it...something that can make a decisive difference in the quality of life."²⁸

Anti-Apartheid

George Shepherd's *Anti-Apartheid: Transnational Conflict and Western Policy in the Liberation of South Africa* (1977) discusses the work of ACOA in the context of transnationalism and the anti-apartheid movement. Characteristic of earlier studies on internationalism and foreign policy, Shepherd asserts, "in the United States, black groups were oriented toward legalistic and moderate internal goals and paid little attention to world affairs."²⁹ He goes on to characterize black American interest as, "at best, indifference."³⁰ Indeed, historians cast black Americans as generally uninterested in international affairs, overlooking the circumstances in which black groups shifted to domestic civil rights issues due in large part to U.S. policies and priorities. Specifically, persecuting those who challenged U.S. foreign policies related to anti-Communism and

²⁷ Daniel R. Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets: Black Consciousness in South Africa, 1968-1977*, 1 edition (Athens : Johannesburg: Ohio University Press, 2010), 2.

²⁸ Cone, *For My People*, 28.

²⁹ George W. Shepherd, *Anti-Apartheid : Transnational Conflict and Western Policy in the Liberation of South Africa* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1977), 32.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

anticolonialism.³¹ In a brief overview of the Council on African Affairs, Shepherd acknowledges CAA as “the first major expression of American NGO – and especially militant black NGO – concern for African human rights in the postwar era.”³²

A year later, Hollis Lynch (1978) wrote *Black American Radicals and the Liberation of Africa*, a monograph representing the first and only full treatment of the black-led Council on African Affairs its strategies, policies, key initiatives, and leadership. Most significantly as a monograph, *Black American Radicals* demonstrates the interest and involvement of black Americans (not just radicals) in international affairs, especially in Africa. Writing during the black power and black consciousness era, historians of the 1970s captured the stories of black American radical activists, such as those in CAA.

Janice Love in *The U.S. Anti-Apartheid Movement: Local Activism in Global Politics* (1985) provides a snap shot of local anti-apartheid activism using case studies of Michigan and Connecticut. She does, however, mention “Black Organizations’ Divestment Policies,” presented in a table, which highlights policies and resolutions of groups calling upon the U.S. government, unions, banks, and corporations to take economic action against South Africa or U.S. corporations doing business with South Africa. Major organizations represented in this work include The Coalition of [Black] Trade Unionists, The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Black Caucus of State Legislators, TransAfrica, and “The National Black

³¹ There were, however, civil rights activists and union leaders like A. Philip Randolph and Maida Springer who remained outspoken supporters of anticolonialism despite their anti-Communist views. See Carol Anderson, "Rethinking Radicalism: African Americans and the Liberation Struggles in Somalia, Libya, and Eritrea, 1945-1949." *Journal of the Historical Society* 11, no. 4 (2011): 385-423.

³² George W. Shepherd, *Anti-Apartheid*, 61.

Agenda for the 80s (a meeting ...of 1,000 black leaders representing 300 organizations).” In addition, Love spotlights a few key efforts of black religious coalitions, such as “The Summit Conference of Black Religious Leaders on Apartheid (a 1979 meeting of religious leaders from 38 states and 52 cities) [who] demanded immediate economic disengagement of U.S. corporations from South Africa.” Nevertheless her major focus in this study is on developing sanctions legislation for state governments.³³ Thus her work is less about black American participation and more broadly about the anti-apartheid movement in a local context.

In *Loosing the Bonds: The United States and South Africa in the Apartheid Years* (1997) Robert Kinloch Massie chronicles the U.S. anti-apartheid movement with a primary focus on divestment movements, which contribute to the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa. Massie begins with early U.S. and South African contact and influences that led to alliances and conflict with South Africa’s formal system of white supremacy. Churches figure prominently in the divestment movement as the larger white denominations (i.e. Episcopal, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Lutheran) held sizeable corporate investment portfolios. Massie does not closely examine the involvement of black churches, which typically did not have major corporate investments. Leaders and organizations, such as ACOA and TransAfrica’s FSAM, are included in his voluminous narrative. Oddly, there is neither mention of the Council on African Affairs nor its founders Paul Robeson, Eslanda Robeson, and Max Yergan. Given CAA’s appearance in earlier scholarship on the U.S. and South Africa, this absence is conspicuous.

³³ Janice Love, *The U.S. Anti-Apartheid Movement: Local Activism in Global Politics* (New York: Praeger, 1985), 35.

Black Internationalism and The Cold War

Scholarship illuminating black engagement in the Cold War centered on the potent power of black radicalism embodied by people like the Robesons, Yergan, and Hunton who are part of the cast of American left-wing activists. Historian Brenda Gayle Plummer places Gerald Horne's *Black and Red: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War, 1944-1963* (1986), as one of the "most influential"..."historical studies of the American left."³⁴ She asserts, Horne's work was "a milestone of African American history." Plummer points to three ways Horne's work was significant: "first it renders visible a long neglected period of W.E.B. DuBois's life...[s]econd, it reveals how the events and ideology of the Cold War shaped conventional historiography" particularly "in African and African American history." By addressing "the assumptions that past historians have made," Horne unveiled new interpretive strategies. These strategies opened "a vast treasure trove of data on the 1940s and 1950s," for future scholars. Finally, Horne "skillfully and ingeniously interweaves African American history with the U.S. mainstream."³⁵ Indeed, Horne laid the groundwork for future scholarship that examines African Americans engagement in international politics, as evidenced in the burst of 1990s publications.

Benefiting from new interpretations of sources uncovered by Lynch in the 1970s and Horne in the 1980s, opportunities for closer examination of leaders and organizations like the black-led Council on African Affairs increased. Historian Penny Von Eschen

³⁴ Brenda Gayle Plummer, "African Americans in the International Imaginary: Gerald Horne's Progressive Vision," *The Journal of African American History* 96, no. 2 (April 1, 2011): 222, doi:10.5323/jafriamerhist.96.2.0221.

³⁵ Ibid.

describes “Cold War habits that have subordinated... democratic movements,” to old ways of thinking. She speaks of Cold War Eurocentric paradigms that 1990s scholars began to shift from.³⁶ Historians of the 1990s focused squarely on African Americans as interested and active players in U.S. foreign policy and transnational issues of human rights, decolonization, and equality. Robin D. G. Kelley and Sidney Lemelle merge the domestic and transnational in *Imagining Home: Class, Culture, and Nationalism in the African Diaspora* (1994). Von Eschen contends Kelley among others “not only renewed attention to the global dimensions that make African American history and diplomatic history inherently interrelated fields” his scholarship challenged methodologies that attempted to “separate foreign from domestic” issues, which is of particular importance when issues of race and civil rights emerge.³⁷ Race, class, and gender are considered in the context of Pan-Africanism. By the late 1990s, these scholars honed in on black American interest and involvement in internationalism, producing highly regarded studies, while employing diverse sources. Pan-Africanism figures prominently in the literature. Even in an era in which African countries pursued independence, Pan-Africanism still played a critical role in the African diaspora because black leaders around the world understood the intersections between achieving their various independent goals while being politically prudent in recognizing commonalities in an international context. As the Cold War came to a close, studies reflected a determination to tell the story of black Americans and global activism. Brenda Gayle Plummer’s *Rising*

³⁶ Penny M Von Eschen, “Challenging Cold War Habits: African Americans, Race, and Foreign Policy,” *Diplomatic History* 20, no. 4 (Fall 1996): 628.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 627.

Winds: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960 (1996), and Von Eschen's *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (1997), answered the call.

Rising Winds counters earlier scholars who insisted black Americans had little interest in international affairs. In her groundbreaking work, Brenda Gayle Plummer shone a light on the many ways black Americans engaged in U.S. foreign policy. Challenging earlier scholars such as George Shepherd, Plummer used oral history collections, newspapers, and archival materials from a wide-range of sources to reveal specific ways black Americans not only demonstrated interest, but actively responded to domestic and international events. Beginning with the 1935 Italo-Ethiopian War and ending in 1960 with civil rights and black nationalism in an international context, Plummer uncovers black American perspectives and how they changed over time. Moreover, Plummer argues that there was indeed an undeniable interest in foreign affairs that was not limited to Africa. Plummer does include the participation of black faith organizations, mostly among lists about coalition work (e.g. "officers of the church, fraternal, labor, civic and educational organizations," signing petitions, mass meetings held at churches, organizing conferences).³⁸

Penny Von Eschen's *Race Against Empire* contextualizes the challenges and consequences of black left politics during the Cold War era. Building upon Lynch's 1978 monograph, *Black American Radicals*, Von Eschen examines black radical left politics by centering her study on the Council on African Affairs led by radical black

³⁸ Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 102.

intellectuals Paul Robeson, Max Yergan, Alpheus Hunton, and later W.E.B. Du Bois. *Race Against Empire* connected domestic racial strife to colonialism “everywhere,” showing “a broad critique of imperialism.”³⁹ Von Eschen shows CAA’s unrelenting pursuit of anticolonialism, civil rights, and anti-apartheid agendas, in the face of government persecution. Although most black American civil rights leaders and organizations had challenged imperialism broadly and insisted on equality at home, their positions shifted to domestic civil rights during the post-War years. This shift to American liberalism placed more emphasis on domestic civil rights and less on anticolonial and transnational interests. Cleavages between organizations and their leaders, who once shared similar domestic and international visions, played out in the press. Using newspapers and other sources, Von Eschen captures this tension and how it ultimately led to the demise of CAA, one of the few black-led organizations that refused to acquiesce to Cold War politics. Von Eschen elevates race as a major factor of concern in U.S. international relations and its impact on domestic and foreign policy. Differing from Plummer’s broad view of black engagement in international politics, Von Eschen spotlights black radicals in CAA with a more in-depth analysis than previous scholars. Both Plummer and Von Eschen provide a more balanced lens in representing black American voices. However, recent scholars have challenged what they see as an uncritical analysis of Robeson’s and CAA’s unwillingness to critique the actions of the Soviet Union. Eric Arnesen’s article, “Civil Rights and Cold War at Home: Postwar Activism, Anti-Communism, and the Decline of the Left” (2012), challenges historians of

³⁹ Brenda Gayle Plummer, “Race Against Empire,” *The International History Review* 20, no. 2 (June 1, 1998): 449.

Von Eschen's ilk by suggesting the radical left's position on the CP-USA and the Soviet Union has not been fully examined in the scholarship. Political Scientist Donald R. Culverson in *Contesting Apartheid: U.S. Activism, 1960-1987* (1999) focuses his study on anti-apartheid activism and how the Free South Africa Movement facilitated the participation, not only of well-known individuals but also ordinary citizens.

Historians of the 2000s are building upon earlier scholarship on American race relations and civil rights during the Cold War within the context of internationalism. Through the extensive use of black newspapers and periodicals, oral history interviews, and expanding archives many of these scholars uncover the voices and thoughts of the black community. Like Von Eschen before him, James H. Meriwether's *Proudly We Can Be Africans* (2002) examines how the black press largely supported CAA despite Cold War politics. Moreover, he delves into CAA and to a lesser degree, ACOA, to assess how domestic policies and politics intersect with international relations and U.S. policy. Meriwether covers a broad swath of organizations and personalities to show shifts in African American attitudes about Africa from 1935 through 1961, "from the anger and bitterness over Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 – 1936 to the...early 1960s, when dozens of colonized African nations gained independence."⁴⁰ His major contribution is pointing out not only how U.S. events impact Africa, but also how African events and politics impact U.S. policy. He contends influences were not limited to African

⁴⁰ James Hunter Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961*, The John Hope Franklin Series in African American History and Culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 1.

Americans “aiding and influencing Africans,” but also how they “watched and considered African political activities.”⁴¹

Shifting to a broader analysis of civil rights policy reveals how international politics influenced U.S. domestic policies. Mary L. Dudziak’s *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (2000), and Thomas Borstelmann’s *The Cold War and The Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (2001), both analyze civil rights policy and practices in the U.S. and how U.S. presidential administrations responded in an international Cold War context. Borstelmann’s earlier study, *Apartheid’s Reluctant Uncle* (1993), revealed the contradictions in the Truman administration’s domestic and international policies (i.e. support of increased civil rights at home while unabashedly aligning with the racist regime of South Africa). These studies broaden this earlier work and center their argument on civil rights; however, the voices of the foot soldiers who joined the domestic and African liberation struggles are not included.

Several scholars examine key anti-apartheid organizations led at two critical junctures by black American activists; first in the early Cold War years by the Council on African Affairs (CAA) and during the late Cold War years by TransAfrica’s Free South Africa Movement, less than a decade before the first democratic elections in South Africa. Despite changes in ideological perspectives over time, black Americans were instrumental in keeping the focus on the issue and forcing legislative sanctions on South Africa. Francis Njubi Nesbitt’s *Race for Sanctions* (2004), illuminates this approach; he

⁴¹ Ibid., 2.

dedicates considerable attention to radical politics of the Council of African Affairs, the establishment of the black foreign lobby TransAfrica, and the reemergence of direct-action strategies used in the Free South Africa Movement. Nesbitt uncovers the diverse perspectives of black American involvement in the anti-apartheid movement. *Race for Sanctions* centers squarely on black Americans and the anti-apartheid movement; in that context, like other scholars of black internationalism, Nesbitt focuses on the Cold War era, Pan-Africanism, and black power. Like Nesbitt, David Hostetter in *Movement Matters: American Antiapartheid Activism and the Rise of Multicultural Politics* (2006), focuses on the U.S. anti-apartheid movement; however, these studies are markedly different in their scope. Hostetter examines ACOA, American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and TransAfrica's FSAM among other anti-apartheid organizations and suggests the anti-apartheid movement helped to promote multicultural politics in the U.S. Hostetter's premise of a new multiculturalism emerging from the anti-apartheid movement discounts the long existence of multiracial alliances that influenced anti-apartheid organizations from their inception, whether black or white-led. Hostetter shows how the religious community responded to apartheid based upon their positions on American domestic issues; indeed, in his case study of Jesse Jackson and Jerry Falwell, Hostetter points to Falwell's emphasis on Cold War anti-Communism and Jackson's support and involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. Their positions reflected different "visions of America."⁴² Hostetter suggests such interactions around the anti-apartheid debate "contributed to the integration of American civil religion."⁴³

⁴² David Hostetter, *Movement Matters: American Antiapartheid Activism and The Rise of Multicultural*

Autobiography, Biography, and Memoir

Several important memoirs, biographies, and autobiographies not only shed light on the leaders of the three national organizations examined in this study, they uncover the influences that motivated these extraordinary individuals to dedicate their life's work to antiracist and anticolonial work. Through these personal accounts, the study provides an in-depth view of the life and times of key leaders featured in this dissertation. Several biographies of radical left African American activists during the early Cold War, reveal new insights about the individuals and the organizations they led. Martin Duberman's *Paul Robeson: A Biography* (1989), covers many major aspects of Paul Robeson's complex life. This 800-page volume contains sometimes an overwhelming amount of detail, which requires sifting through to focus on themes pertinent to the present study; however, in these details Duberman illuminates a few specific examples of black American church people's support of Paul Robeson and CAA. Though it is not a comprehensive analysis, he uncovers examples of how some black churches supported CAA and its leadership, especially Paul Robeson, even when their white counterparts and the broader society condemned them for being associated with "communists". Duberman gives major insight into the impact of Cold War "witch hunts" on Robeson. Indeed, we see the personal toll on Robeson's physical, emotional, and financial wellbeing.

In these biographies we see early influences that shape the ideology and perspectives of the important actors such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Paul and Eslanda Robeson, and Max Yergan, leaders of the Council on African Affairs. With the exception of

Politics, Studies in African American History and Culture (New York: Routledge, 2006), 125.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 10.

Eslanda, these black American radical intellectuals were raised in religious homes and had early connections with the black church community. Paul Robeson in *Here I Stand*, chronicles his deeply religious upbringing and how his clergy father greatly influenced his thinking and approach to life. In *W. E. B. Du Bois: A Biography of A Race, 1868 – 1919* (1993), David Levering Lewis revealed a man who “cared passionately about women’s rights.”⁴⁴ More recent black feminist scholars challenge Lewis and other scholars’ portrayal of Du Bois as a feminist. While acknowledging Du Bois as “an explicit advocate for women’s rights” with deep respect for black women, Celena Simpson in “Du Bois’s Dubious Feminism: Evaluating Through The Black Flame Trilogy,” insists that calling Du Bois a feminist is problematic because of his portrayal of black women in his writing.⁴⁵ She argues that Lewis’s “uncritical claims” of Du Bois should be questioned and reconsidered. Simpson concludes, scholars “should cease regarding Du Bois as a feminist.”⁴⁶ Perhaps Du Bois was not a feminist: however, his demonstrated support of women’s rights should not be lost in the debate. Still, black feminist scholars have revealed a more complex dimension of Du Bois which does merit continued critical analysis.

In *Here I Stand* (1958), a memoir written with longtime friend and colleague Lloyd L. Brown, Paul Robeson tells his own story and challenges those that harassed and

⁴⁴ David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919*, 1st Edition (New York: Henry Holt & Co, 1993), 418.

⁴⁵ Celena Simpson, “Du Bois’s Dubious Feminism: Evaluating through The Black Flame Trilogy,” *The Pluralist* 10, no. 1 (2015): 48–63. Simpson analyzes The Flaming Trilogy suggesting that the “masculinist symbolic structure of his vision” exposes “black women’s agency [as] fully mediated by men.” Simpson, “Du Bois’s Dubious Feminism,” 48.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 48; See also, Farah Jasmine Griffin, “Black Feminists and Du Bois: Respectability, Protection, and beyond,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 568 (March 1, 2000): 28–40.

accused him of being un-American and Communist. *Here I Stand* reveals a defiant man, who had been stripped of his livelihood because of his refusal to submit to Cold War ideology. Robeson's purpose is to set the record straight, particularly about his antiracist efforts in support of his beloved black American community. After Cold War persecutions landed devastating blows to Robeson's life and career, like Martin Luther in the sixteenth century, he steadfastly defends his position and declares "Here I Stand."⁴⁷

David Henry Anthony's biography, *Max Yergan: Race Man, Internationalist, Cold Warrior* (2006), exhaustively recounts the activism of a lesser known, yet significant radical left to right figure in twentieth century African American history. In this comprehensive biography, Anthony reveals much about Yergan's exceptional life, from his founding of radical left organizations such as the Council on African Affairs (CAA) to his participation in the National Negro Congress (NNC). With this biography, Anthony adds to literature on the Cold War and African American engagement in international affairs at the dawn of the twentieth century. Moreover, the study follows the development and demise of CAA. Similarly, Charles Denton Johnson's 2004 dissertation, *African-Americans and South Africans: The Anti-Apartheid Movement in the United States, 1921 – 1955*, though not a biography, centers largely on Max Yergan and his role in the early involvement in the African liberation struggle, particularly in South Africa. Johnson asserts that Yergan played an important role in transnational interactions that led to the emergence of the U.S. anti-apartheid movement. Similarly, the excellent and well-researched biography *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs.*

⁴⁷ James Bonner MacRae, "Soul-Searching," *The Phylon Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (June 1, 1958): 223–224, doi:10.2307/272950.

Paul Robeson by Barbara Ransby (2013), adds new perspectives on gender dynamics during the twentieth century. Ransby pulls Eslanda out of the shadows of her renowned husband, Paul Robeson, and reveals an independent, confident, radical black female intellectual.

Autobiographical memoirs also reveal a great deal about anti-apartheid leaders and their organizations; unlike biographies, we hear first-person narratives. *No One Can Stop the Rain: Glimpse's of Africa's Liberation Struggles* (1989), by George Houser, founder and executive director of ACOA, chronicles African liberation movements and his personal interaction with key liberation leaders. In *No One Can Stop the Rain*, we learn about early influences and motivations; Houser was raised in a religious home that shaped his ideology and life's work as a pacifist, antiracist, and supporter of African independence. *No One Can Stop the Rain*, shows the depth of Houser's work and relationships in the African liberation struggle.

Randall Robinson's book, *Defending the Spirit: A Black Life in America* (1998), is part autobiography, part commentary on U.S. foreign policy. He discusses factors that shaped his aspirations and motivations to engage, from a black American perspective, in foreign policy. He tells the story of the conceptualization and development of TransAfrica, the black foreign policy lobby, and its decision to launch the Free South Africa Movement. Through Robinson's recollections, the most publicized U.S. anti-apartheid struggle unfolds.

Women and Gender

Women and gender dynamics characterize the focus of the most recent scholarship on civil rights and global rights activists in the Cold War. These studies examine intersections between race, gender, and class. Unlike earlier studies, the roles and influences of radical women activists dominate the narrative. Marian Mollin's *Radical Pacifism in Modern America: Egalitarianism and Protest* (2007), examines radical pacifism in the U.S. between 1940 and 1970. Her work critiques radical pacifist discourse on race and gender, which Mollin argues in practice replicates problems (i.e. biases) of the larger society.⁴⁸ *Radical Pacifism in Modern America* points to the complexities of race and gender bias, as well as a lack of cultural understanding among leaders of the American peace movement. Mollin contends that women and blacks were marginalized, never rising to leadership within these organizations.

Dayo Gore's, groundbreaking *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women in the Cold War* (2011), departs from histories of the 1990s. Relying heavily on oral history and interviews, Mary Ellen Washington posits, Gore's study is one of two that "constitute the first comprehensive, book-length histories of black radical women in the U.S."⁴⁹ Gore gives voice to these radical black American women. Furthermore, Gore challenges "the dominant narrative that the Cold War represented only the decline for the radical left." Instead, Gore shows "that the Cold War ironically, provided an important

⁴⁸ While Mollin's thesis may or may not be contested by other scholars, it is important to point out that whatever their motivations, radical pacifists challenged gender and race biases, in ways far more progressively than their contemporaries. Furthermore, they faced sometimes severe consequences for their actions. The ACOA chapter in this study uncovers both progressive actions and biases.

⁴⁹ Mary Helen Washington, "Feminist Roots," *The Women's Review of Books* 28, no. 5 (September 1, 2011): 26.

space for black women's activism."⁵⁰ Many of these women were members or supporters of the Communist Party USA (CPUSA).

In the Eslanda Robeson biography (2013), Barbara Ransby reveals "Essie's" significant contributions to women's history, U.S. history, and black American internationalism. Moreover, this biography finds a confident Eslanda seamlessly navigating the world stage, fighting for civil rights, anticolonialism, and radical politics along the way. These women scholars of the 2010s uncover radical black women's activism, feminism, and their significant contributions to domestic and international civil rights. Through Ransby we gain a more expansive view of CAA and women's involvement and influence on the organization and its priorities. Ransby solidifies Eslanda's position as a major player among these radical left male activists and influential among black women activists of the same period. Unlike many scholars who examine CAA, Hollis Lynch should be credited with discussing Eslanda's influence in forming CAA and Paul Robeson's participation in its founding.

Together, these scholars have built an impressive collection of studies that inform us about Cold War-era international policies and engagement on civil rights, anticolonialism, and anti-apartheid activism in the U.S. What has yet to be considered more fully by historians are the internal dynamics of these instrumental anti-apartheid organizations, especially these gender and racial contestations, which challenged and shaped ideological policies and mobilized different groups to support one cause or another. These race and gender contestations broadly and compellingly illuminate the

⁵⁰ Ibid.

social and political fault-lines of the Cold War and civil rights eras. Several scholars including Penny Von Eschen, Brenda Plummer, George Fredrickson, and Francis Nesbitt, among others mentioned earlier, have placed racial contestations at the center of their studies. More recent, historians of global activism have addressed race and gender contestations including Dayo Gore, Marian Mollin, and Barbara Ransby. This scholarship allows me to sharpen my analyses, as I seek to further examine race and gender dynamics in these organizations.

Unlike the three national organizations represented in this study, the significant contributions of SASP, a local organization, are largely absent from the literature. A few journal articles and references in books written primarily by former SASP members, discuss the organization's successful strategies in building solidarity in the anti-apartheid movement. Yes, a local organization, however, its international and national reach has been underestimated and barely considered. For example, SASP is featured in a 1984 article in *The Black Scholar* journal titled, "Notes on Building International Solidarity in the United States" by Sylvia Hill, Sandra Hill, and Cecelie Counts and a 1995 article in the now defunct *CrossRoads Magazine*, "Solidarity as an Organizing Principle" by Joseph Jordan. Sylvia Hill and William Minter, rightfully, incorporate SASP in a chapter titled "Anti-apartheid Solidarity in United States - South Africa Relations: From the Margins to the Mainstream" in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*. SASP leaders, Sylvia Ione Bennett Hill and Cecelie Counts, who also represented TransAfrica, are featured in the award winning documentary film, *Have You Heard From*

*Johannesburg?*⁵¹ Generally, scholars have not closely examined this local black women-led organization to fully understand its significance during the anti-apartheid movement. Indeed, its contributions have been underestimated and its reach has been relegated to local impact only. This dissertation challenges that conclusion.

METHODOLOGY

Archival Research

I have conducted research in several university and organization archives holding extensive collections on the organizations and individuals in this study. The Amistad Research Center at Tulane University in New Orleans holds ACOA papers; the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center (MSRC) at Howard University houses collections about CAA in the papers of Paul and Eslanda Robeson, E. Franklin Frazier, and Max Yergan; the MSRC also houses TransAfrica's and SASP's papers. The large and partially unprocessed collection of Congressman Walter E. Fauntroy is housed at the George Washington University Gelman Library manuscript division. As a co-founder of the Free South Africa Movement, Fauntroy has in his papers many untapped sources related to the movement. CAA supporter and friend of Paul Robeson, the Reverend Charles A. Hill papers are housed at the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan. Online archives such as the African Activist Archive at Michigan State University, the Nelson Mandela Center of Memory, and the African National Congress collections were

⁵¹ Connie Fields, "Have You Heard From Johannesburg," *Clarity Films*, accessed March 2, 2015, <http://www.clarityfilms.org/haveyouheardfromjohannesburg/>. This seven part series, produced by Connie Field chronicles "the history of the global anti-apartheid movement that took on South Africa's entrenched apartheid regime and its international supporters who considered South Africa an ally in the Cold War." To learn more about this award winning documentary, visit <http://www.clarityfilms.org/haveyouheardfromjohannesburg/>.

extremely helpful. The archives of St. Luke's Episcopal Church, the first independent black Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C., includes papers about the church and its founder, Alexander Crummell, mentor of W.E.B. Du Bois. TransAfrica Forum's Research Library houses many of the newsletters and articles, as well as secondary sources about FSAM.

Newspapers from the mainstream and black press were used to research black church participation, verify and identify clergy (including racial status) who interacted with CAA and other organizations, and locate stories about the organizations. Papers that were helpful included: *The Baltimore Afro-American*, *Chicago Metro News*, *New York Age*, *New York Times*, *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, and *The Washington Post*. Historical information was also acquired from the following sources: court documents, newsletters, organization minutes and reports, letters, program booklets, government records, pamphlets, fliers/leaflets, press releases, oral history interviews, and websites. Moreover, articles from black newspapers and organizational newsletters were especially helpful in revealing internal and external contestations. The black press "served as a well-worn medium for disseminating ideas between African American elites and the broader community."⁵² The black press was an integral part of black communities. In 1943, W. E. B. Du Bois contended, "Today it is probably true that there is scarcely a Negro in the United States who can read and write who does not read the Negro press."⁵³ Transcripts of interviews conducted by William Minter and David Goodman for the No Easy Victories project included Jennifer Davis, Prexy Nesbitt, and Dumisani Kumalo.

⁵² Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 8.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 9.

Additionally, I used audio-taped interviews of George Houser, conducted by Brenda B. Square for the Amistad Research Center at Tulane University. In addition to using transcripts from interviews conducted by other researchers, I conducted fourteen oral history interviews representing key anti-apartheid organizations, clergy and members of faith-based organizations, community activists, theologians, exiled South Africans, and Congressional staff. Respondents included: James H. Cone, Cecelie Counts, Adwoa Dunn-Mouton, Mary Gresham, Mark Harrison, Sylvia Hill, George Houser, Maghan Keita, Richard Knight, Mankekolo Mahlangu-Ngcobo, Tyrone Pitts, Bernice Powell Jackson, Nkechi Taifa, and Wyatt Tee Walker.

CHAPTER ONE
RADICALS, RACE, AND THE COLD WAR: THE COUNCIL ON AFRICAN
AFFAIRS (1937 – 1955)

“As an artist I come to sing, but as a citizen, I will always speak for peace, and no one can silence me in this.” – Paul Robeson⁵⁴

At the end of the nineteenth century, black Americans endured intensifying racial hostility at home. The 1890s represented the high tide of lynching in the United States. By the early twentieth century, the inimitable W.E.B. Du Bois considered the prospect that Africa might offer refuge from extra-judicial killings and a secure platform for his global aspirations. Du Bois was tapping into a deep sentiment that his intellectual predecessors, Alexander Crummell among them, inspired a half-century earlier when “back to Africa” was their clarion cry during slavery.⁵⁵ Indeed, Crummell had spent close to 20 years as a missionary and educator in Liberia before returning to the U.S. and accepting leadership of St. Mary’s Chapel a “colored” mission of St. John’s Episcopal Church in 1873. A “part of the black empowerment movement of the turn of the late 19th century,” Crummell pursued and won independence, for the church, shortly after his arrival in Washington, DC.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Lenwood G. Davis, *A Paul Robeson Research Guide: A Selected, Annotated Bibliography* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1982), 181.

⁵⁵ For more on Alexander Crummell’s influence on Du Bois, personally and intellectually, see David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868 - 1919*, especially, pp. 161-168.

⁵⁶ St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, “St. Luke’s Washington DC – Genogram,” March 2005, 1, File Cabinet Folder- Founding, Church History, St. Luke’s Episcopal Church Archives, Washington, DC; St. Luke’s

The idea of an African refuge may have been appealing to some black Americans, but those knowledgeable of the political affairs on the continent knew that black Africans were being oppressed by European colonizers and capitalism. At the same time, Jim Crow laws and racial violence were a major factor in the oppression of black Americans. What could be done? This chapter will focus on an organization, first known as the International Committee on African Affairs (ICAA), later known as the Council on African Affairs (CAA) that attempted to address the needs of black Africans and black Americans through an organizational structure that embraced the black church. The CAA became the earliest anticolonial, anti-apartheid organization in the United States.

THE FOUNDERS

Two of the founders, Max Yergan and Paul Robeson were part of a longer tradition cultivated by black clergy and their parishioners whose activism informed the anti-racist initiatives of the ICAA (later CAA) during its nearly two-decade existence. The fact that black church people engaged in this kind of horizon-opening civil rights activism is well-known; one need only mention Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to strike this

Episcopal Church, "Biography Alexander Crummell," n.d., File Cabinet Folder- Biography- Alexander Crummell, Church History, St. Luke's Episcopal Church Archives, Washington, DC; Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Alexander Crummell: A Study of Civilization and Discontent* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 198–206. Crummell's story is important to understanding early black nationalism and pan-Africanism. Black pride and solidarity were important to Crummell, at the same time he was constantly in intense conflict with parishioners, who on more than one occasion sought his removal. St. Luke's past and more contemporary history show these tensions were not limited to Crummell's experience. By 1874, St. Mary's Chapel became independent; Crummell would be its first rector. Soon after, in 1876, the cornerstone for the "first separate 'colored' Episcopal Church" in Washington D.C, was laid, holding its first service in the Gothic style building and newly named St. Luke's Episcopal Church in 1879. Crummell led St. Luke's for twenty-three years, retiring in 1896; its official history suggests he left "for reasons of health." In 2009, I served as the humanities scholar for an oral history project at St. Luke's Episcopal Church. The purpose of the project was to create a podcast about St. Luke's rich history; in doing so, I had an opportunity to explore the church's vast archive, including files about its founder, Alexander Crummell. The podcast titled, *St. Luke's Episcopal Church: Preserving Our Past and Embracing Our Future*, was produced in October 2009.

point. Major scholars, including Robin D. G. Kelley and Gerald Horne,⁵⁷ have chronicled the impact of transnational civil rights activism. Indeed, this dissertation builds on their critical work as it also seeks to offer new evaluations of an under-researched, if vital subject: the significance of black American church people who joined movements that chose to oppose, simultaneously, the tyranny of segregation in the United States and South Africa. The CAA exemplified this approach. It was rooted in an ecumenical approach to anti-racism, which integrated mainstream and radical thinking of black American Christians, some of whom embraced Marxist ideology, despite its anti-religious intent, while looking for revelations from the Bible.

The ICAA was founded by Max Yergan, Paul Robeson, and Eslanda (Essie) Goode Robeson.

Born into a middle-class religious household in Raleigh, North Carolina, Yergan prized security, integrity, and education. His grandfather, Fred Yeargan (spelling varied), taught him to be an upright Christian and to never give in to white aggression. The patriarch of his family, Yeargan was an influential member of the black community “occupying a seat on the Board of Trustees of Shaw Institute, later Shaw University,” where Max would later attend. A leader of his local Baptist church, Max’s grandfather was revered by the community.⁵⁸ A most profound memory was his grandfather’s last

⁵⁷ Sidney J. Lemelle and Robin D. G. Kelley, eds., *Imagining Home: Class, Culture, and Nationalism in the African Diaspora*, The Haymarket Series (London ; New York: Verso, 1994); Gerald Horne, *Black and Red: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War, 1944-1963*, SUNY Series in Afro-American Society (Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 1986). For more on the significance of these books, see the historiography section of this dissertation.

⁵⁸ David Henry Anthony, *Max Yergan: Race Man, Internationalist, Cold Warrior* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 5.

request “that one of his grandsons would go as a missionary to ‘our people in Africa.’”⁵⁹ Max would answer his grandfather’s request.

Paul Robeson, also born into the middle class, was raised with strong Christian values and taught by his father to stand up for his race. Robeson, named after the Apostle Paul, remembered the presence and rectitude of his father, the Reverend William Drew Robeson, an escaped slave who rejected the life of an “Uncle Tom” and displayed “no hint of servility.”⁶⁰ The Reverend Robeson told his son that God believed “the Negro was in every way the equal of the white man.”⁶¹ The younger Robeson also received guidance from his older brother, Reed, who urged his sibling to “stand up to them [racists everywhere] and hit back harder than they hit you!”⁶² Following Reed’s advice, Paul believed that “quick militancy against racial insults and abuse” might best advance black American rights.⁶³

Eslanda Goode’s maternal grandfather was a Presbyterian minister, but her upbringing in Washington, DC and Harlem does not reflect a strong religious leaning.⁶⁴ Like Yergan and her future husband, she was equally guided by a powerful parent, her mother, who was “never a woman to bite her tongue or shy away from a challenge.”⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Ibid., 7.

⁶⁰ Paul Robeson, *Here I Stand* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 11.

⁶¹ Robeson, *Here I Stand*. [Ibid]

⁶² Ibid, 13.

⁶³ Ibid, 12. These lessons prepared Robeson for his life of activism, especially after facing banishment by the U.S. government and suffering major financial loss during the late 1940s and 1950s. Under such difficult sanctions, Robeson still insisted that “even in the worst period of McCarthyism...I saw no reason why my convictions should change with the weather. I was not raised that way, and neither the promise of gain nor the threat of loss has ever moved me from my firm convictions.” Robeson, *Here I Stand*, 30.

⁶⁴ Barbara Ransby, *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 21.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 25. Eslanda’s mother had long been an admirer of “Russian culture since childhood”; she undoubtedly influenced her children’s interest in Russia. One of Eslanda’s two brothers would marry and

Eslanda “prided herself on being” fearlessly “assertive, ambitious, and engaged.”⁶⁶ From a long lineage of educators and political activists, Eslanda exuded confidence and determination. She confronted injustice as her forbearers did, explaining “my grandfather Cardozo went to prison for his beliefs, so I have it in my blood.”⁶⁷ Essie, along with Max and Paul are central to this chapter.

Yergan, and the Robeson’s grew up in a time when envisioning the African “motherland” as a safe haven for weary black people seeking protection from their inhospitable home country was popular. As adults, they realized that like blacks in the U.S., those in the “motherland” were also in need of assistance. Drawing on lessons learned in the church and at the knee of a parent, they rallied, in their own ways, to help the poor and oppressed peoples of the world.

THE ROOTS

In 1920, Max Yergan moved to segregated South Africa to serve as Senior Secretary of the International Committee of the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA). He served in that position until 1936.⁶⁸ By the time Yergan returned to the U.S., he “had been radicalized by his experience” in a country racialized by “colonialism and capitalism.”⁶⁹ Yergan’s biographer, David Anthony, explains: “the work [Yergan]

settle in Russia, naming his daughter “Eslanda” after his mother and sister. Paul’s affection for Russia, matched perfectly with Eslanda’s beliefs. On their many visits to Russia, “they were treated like dignitaries by Soviet officials,” experiencing “not a hint of Jim Crow segregation.” Ransby, *Eslanda*, 95.

⁶⁶ Ransby, *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson*, 25.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 13. Unlike Yergan and Robeson it does not appear that Essie grew up in a particularly religious home.

⁶⁸ Max Yergan, “Yergan Curriculum Vitae,” n.d., Box 206 -1 Folder 11, Max Yergan Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

⁶⁹ Ransby, *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson*, 108; Yergan, “Yergan Curriculum Vitae.”

had been conducting on the [South African] grounds ... did not meet the urgent demands of the social and political situation. Instead, the type of cooperation fostered by institutions like the YMCA and the Student Christian Association not only refused to challenge the wrongs of South Africa but also, by its silence, showed complicity, in effect allying itself with the state's repressive apparatus and leaving him with no other alternative but disengagement."⁷⁰

Two things happened before Yergan returned to his home country. First, the Italian-Ethiopian War erupted in 1935, stirring a sense of dire urgency in black American communities. They saw a hallowed part of Africa and the continent's last truly independent people, aside from Liberians, confronting a fascist evil intent on imposing a new brand of racist colonialism. Up to this moment, Ethiopia was known as the black nation that temporarily halted the Scramble for Africa by repulsing Italian invaders at the battle of Adowa in 1896. At the center of this brewing conflict was a laudable hero in distress: "Abyssinian" Emperor Haile Selassie, the ruler of a twelve-century Christian kingdom.⁷¹ He was under merciless assault, with his capital city of Addis Ababa being bombed by Italian planes dropping poison gas. These chemical agents were expressly outlawed in the Geneva Protocol following World War I. The perpetrator of this crime was the dictator Benito Mussolini, Adolph Hitler's bombastic collaborator.

⁷⁰ Anthony, *Max Yergan*, 155.

⁷¹ See *The Real Facts About ETHIOPIA*, an Afro-centric polemical pamphlet, originally printed in 1936, by the author J.A. Rogers. *The Real Facts* illuminates how people throughout the African diaspora viewed Haile Selassie and Ethiopia as sacred. This small but potent pamphlet, praises Selassie's character and his leadership. Rogers contrasts Italy's Mussolini as one who "glorifies war" and Ethiopia's Selassie as one who "cultivates peace." Rogers, *The Real Facts About ETHIOPIA*, 31. The cover's photo notation reads, "His Majesty Haile Selassie I."



***Punch* Cartoon of Italian poison gas bombing of Ethiopian people in Addis Ababa, Oct. 1935⁷²**

As James H. Meriwether writes in *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, “black America’s response to Italy’s assault was one of broad and deep outrage,” with “widespread volunteering to fight for Ethiopia, the nationwide springing to life of Ethiopian aid organizations, and lobbying efforts on behalf of Ethiopians all indicate a

⁷² Source:

https://www.google.com/search?q=WW+I+Geneva+Accord+chemical+weapons&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ei=OWDzU-u9BqrpiwLpYGgBA&ved=0CAcQ_AUoAg&biw=1920&bih=955#q=cartoon+bombing+addis+ababa+italian+1935+with+poison+gas&tbm=isch&facrc=_&imgdii=_&imgrc=n0ONk6GzL-qdiM%253A%253B7duyGRr5IBclM%253Bhttp%253A%252F%252Frobieshilliam.files.wordpress.com%252F2012%252F11%252Fpunch-italy.jpg%253Fw%253D243%2526h%253D300%253Bhttp%253A%252F%252Frobieshilliam.wordpress.com%252F2012%252F11%252F07%252Fa-global-story-of-psalms-6831%252F%253B243%253B300

wellspring of pan-African commitment in black America.”⁷³ While black Americans had shown desultory interest in the politics of Liberia, they fiercely responded to the Ethiopian crisis as “the single most important pressure group in the United States pushing the government to act against Italy’s transgressions.”⁷⁴ A poem published in the Baltimore Afro-American newspaper, best captures black American sentiment:

ETHIOPIA’S BLACKS
Into the streets, Black Brothers,
 Into the dust and rain,
Speak the word for freedom:
 Shatter the torturer’s brain

Up from our knees of prayer,
 Up with our voices sing,
Brothers, Black, Brown and Yellow
 Selassie’s Emperor and king

Forward march, Black Brothers,
 Break through the barricades
 Guns and men and money
 Mussolini must not prevail

Oh God of our Fathers
Thy People cry to Thee
To Ethiopia’s millions
God, Give them liberty

- Arthur N. Wright (Baltimore *Afro-American*, August 3, 1935)⁷⁵

⁷³ Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 27–28. For more about Ethiopia and black Americas see Scott, *The Sons of Sheba’s Race*, Joseph E. Harris, *African-American Reactions to the War in Ethiopia, 1936-1941*, Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind*, and Alvin B. Tillery, *Between Homeland and Motherland*.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 28; Robin D. G. Kelley explains the significance of Ethiopia to the black community. He argues, “the Bible... framed most nineteenth-century black conceptions of national destiny, Ethiopia took on greater importance than any other nation or region of Africa.” Revered by black people around the world, Ethiopia or Abyssinia was “considered... the cradle of civilization.” Kelley adds, “in some ways, [Ethiopia] might be called an African Jerusalem.” Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*, First Edition edition (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), 20.

⁷⁵ William R. Scott, *The Sons of Sheba’s Race : African-Americans and the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935-1941*, Blacks in the Diaspora (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 97.

Their activism reflected their growing commitment to participating in international affairs by steering American foreign policy on issues of anti-colonialism.

The second event that took place before Yergan left South Africa was a visit by Eslanda Robeson in 1936. While Paul “may have been distressed by the fascist threat to Abyssinia but at the conflict’s outset expressed only faint concern about the Ethiopian question.”⁷⁶ On the other hand, Eslanda wanted first-hand knowledge of colonialism, and a few weeks after Mussolini’s occupation of Ethiopia, she “set sail for southern and eastern Africa on a long-awaited trip that would truly change her life.”⁷⁷ Eslanda was hosted by Max Yergan, whom Paul had met previously. She and Max formed a strong-bond and friendship⁷⁸ as she learned about “Italy’s activities in Ethiopia”⁷⁹ and colonialism in general.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 43. Scott elaborates, Robeson “opposed fascist aggression in Abyssinia but as an internationalist rather than a strict African nationalist he was ‘interested in the problems which confront the Chinese people, as well as in those which concern, for example, Abyssinia. To me the time seems long past when people can afford to think exclusively in terms of national units. The field of activity is far wider.’” Scott adds that typically, black American elites who were engaged in protests during this period had “close ties to the African-American masses.” Robeson had lived in Europe for close to a decade and would not be as closely connected to the “masses” until his return to the U.S. and his beloved Harlem.

⁷⁷ Ransby, *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson*, 101 Biographer, Barbara Ransby explains, “Essie’s first African journey, in 1936, was not only a scholarly expedition, but also a personal quest,” which she had desired to do since 1932. Sparked by embarrassment of Robeson’s participation in the pro-colonial movie, “Sanders By the River” (which they vowed never to accept such roles again), and her desire to better understand and articulate “complex social and political issues” of colonialism. Furthermore, Eslanda wanted to take her son to Africa to “acquaint him with his Black people.”; *ibid.*, 98, 100; Martin B. Duberman, *Paul Robeson* (New York: New Press, 1996), 260–261.

⁷⁸ Anthony, *Max Yergan*, 161–162; Ransby, *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson*, 110–111. Yergan coordinated many of the details of her travels. She saw Yergan as like-minded and forged a friendship with him. Eslanda observed the “deplorable conditions” faced by black South African mine workers, which “stunned” her. She witnessed first-hand the poverty and suffering of black South Africans, “she also noticed a growing spirit of resistance.” Ransby, *Eslanda*, 110-111.

⁷⁹ Ransby, *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson*, 109.

Yergan's return to the US and his move to the far left had him in search of new connections.⁸⁰ One outlet for Yergan's ideas was the National Negro Congress (NNC). The NNC brought together "liberals, leftists, and nationalists around a broad agenda for black working-class empowerment and social and economic justice...[formed] in 1936 with A. Philip Randolph as its president."⁸¹ Historian Robert Edgar explains, "The NNC's goal was to come up with a minimum program on which black groups could concur, so all black groups could focus on 'economic and social betterment as well as upon justice and citizen's rights.'⁸²

In speeches to the NNC body Yergan "linked Italian imperialism in Ethiopia to the expropriation of African land in South Africa."⁸³ He insisted on, "the necessity for an intelligent, organized resistance" to this attack on Ethiopia, adding "Fascism is the outgrowth of a larger force – imperialism."⁸⁴ A gifted networker, participation in the 1936

⁸⁰ Max Yergan, "Supreme Court of the State of New York; Council on African Affairs, Inc. Plaintiff against Max Yergan Defendant," n.d., 2, Box 206-1 Folder 12, Max Yergan Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

⁸¹ Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 10–11.

⁸² Ralph J. Bunche, *An African American in South Africa the Travel Notes of Ralph J. Bunche, 28 September 1937-1 January 1938*, ed. Robert R. Edgar (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992), 9, <http://mutex.gmu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=7151>.

⁸³ Anthony, *Max Yergan*, 168. Yergan would later play a more significant role in the NNC. (Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, pp.10-11); Edgar, *An African American in South Africa*, 9. Robin Kelly adds that during the NNC's first conference, "resolutions passed in support of black business and religious institutions." Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 124]. Under the leadership of its founder, Ralph Bunche, "The NNC got off to a promising start by setting up local branches in cities around the country." (In fact, the NNC was growing so rapidly that it was edging upon the reach of the NAACP; unfortunately, "because of its emphasis on working-class, the NNC lost support of black clergymen, businessmen, and professionals." Realizing race alone would not bring together economically and educationally diverse black, Bunche maintained his position and "counseled the NNC to remain focused on its working-class constituency." Bunche saw the NNC as a "viable alternative to the NAACP's moderation." Edgar, *Bunche* P. 9.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 169.

NNC gave Yergan exposure in preparation for introducing his “new venture.”⁸⁵ The time had come to join in solidarity with the people of Ethiopia and more broadly, Africa.

Indeed, the Ethiopian crisis was on Yergan’s mind when he “approached a number of people in America as well as Europe through correspondence [and] personal visits” about organizing the ICAA. Paul Robeson warmly received Yergan’s entreaty, and in 1937, Robeson agreed to join Yergan; however Robeson did not take “the Chairmanship of the Committee,” until his return to the United States in 1939.⁸⁶ Within one year of “Ethiopia’s fall,” the ICAA “was founded in New York City.”⁸⁷ Shortly after the organization’s founding, Yergan participated in a January 1938 meeting in Washington DC with seven other national black leaders “to discuss the significance for Afro-Americans of the [recent] global crisis,” with special concern about “the Italian occupation of Ethiopia.”⁸⁸ During this period, “African Americans remained much more internationally aware than they had been before the Ethiopian war. Anticolonial sentiment continued to infuse the community, and specific links with contemporary

⁸⁵ Ibid., 170. Yergan would later become NNC president, edging out civil rights activist A. Philip Randolph. NNC co-founder, Ralph Bunche was out of the country during the NNC’s second convention in 1937, however, he attended the 1940 convention which was “attended by 900 black and 400 white delegates – Bunche was present as Communist Party members, who had remained in the background in earlier proceedings, played a decisive role in forcing NNC president A. Philip Randolph to step aside for Max Yergan. Communist Party members also pressed the NNC to adopt strongly worded anti-imperialist and anti-war resolutions that dovetailed with Soviet foreign policy concerns. In Bunche’s view, the Communists had hijacked the NNC and ‘reduced [it] to a communist cell.’” Bunche, *An American in South Africa*, 10. Communist affiliations, like this example in the NNC, soured relationships between early liberal CAA members, like Bunche who disassociated with the organization by 1943. Lynch, *Black American Radicals*, 21.

⁸⁶ Hollis Ralph Lynch, Cornell University, and Africana Studies and Research Center., *Black American Radicals and The Liberation of Africa: The Council on African Affairs, 1937-1955*, Monograph Series (Cornell University. Africana Studies and Research Center) ; No. 5 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Africana Studies and Research Center, Cornell University, 1978).

⁸⁷ Ibid., 17.

⁸⁸ Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 31.

Africa continued to be laid.”⁸⁹ The ICAA worked to insure a balance of interest in African affairs, while continuing to fight for domestic civil-rights.

Once he returned to the states in 1939, Robeson kept his country’s injustices at the forefront of the ICAA’s agenda. Often quoting President Roosevelt on its pamphlets and other publications, the CAA had a cautious optimism and hopefulness about Roosevelt’s positions on colonialism. On the inside cover of the CAA’s 1944 Proceedings of the Conference on Africa program booklet, an FDR quote from the “second anniversary of the signing of the Atlantic Charter, August 16, 1943” states “We are determined that we shall gain total victory over our enemies, and we recognize the fact that our enemies are not only Germany, Italy, and Japan: they are all the forces of oppression, intolerance, insecurity and injustice which have impeded the forward march of civilization.”⁹⁰ The CAA saw Roosevelt as more progressive on policies affecting Africa and Asia. Historian Hollis Lynch explains,

The Council was greatly encouraged by the action and pronouncements of President Roosevelt, who was the main architect of the Atlantic Charter which held out freedom for former oppressed and colonial peoples – a principle that was regularly affirmed by the Allied Powers during the war. He had been markedly friendly to Ethiopia, which had regained its sovereignty in 1941 after a short-lived Italian rule, and to Liberia, which he visited in January 1943.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 59.

⁹⁰ Max Yergan, William A. Hunton, and et al, “Proceedings of the Conference on Africa,” April 14, 1944, Box 131-30 Folder 3, E. Franklin Frazier Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

⁹¹ Lynch, Cornell University, and Africana Studies and Research Center., *Black American Radicals and the Liberation of Africa*, 27. Lynch points out Roosevelt “In December 1943, Roosevelt received the first Ethiopian Minister to the United states, His Excellency Blatta Ephrem Tewelde Medhen. And in February 1945...he met with the Ethiopian Emperor, Haile Selassie.”

The State Department would later establish its own “African Affairs” division.⁹² Robeson “credited” President Roosevelt with seeing “very clearly” that the war was one for universal liberation – unlike Winston Churchill...but did not absolve the President or the country of blame for archaic policies and distorted attitudes.”⁹³ Although the State Department did not attend the CAA’s Conference on Africa, the fact that they “made use of black American experts in Africa,” was seen favorably.⁹⁴ At the same time, Robeson and others were not naïve, “Robeson well knew, the Democratic Party remained tied to its racially unreconstructed Southern wing, and the actual execution of policy had produced only marginal changes in the oppressive pattern of daily life for the black masses.”⁹⁵ Yet the CAA remained hopeful but with the unexpected death of FDR, their optimism abruptly ended as the prospects of a more conservative Truman administration took over the White House.

In response to a lynching in Georgia, Robeson sent a telegram on “on behalf of the CAA” to President Truman stating, “four Negro citizens of this country were lynched in cold blood. This is a matter of more than tragic irony. The Council on African Affairs demands that the Federal Government take immediate effective steps to apprehend and punish the perpetrators of this shocking crime and to halt the rising tide of lynching law. Only when our government has taken such action toward protecting its own citizens can

⁹² Ibid. “Three members of the Executive Board of the Council – Yergan, Hunton, and Field – met cordially with officials of the new Africa Division and urged a more aggressive pro-Africa policy.” “Three members of the Executive Board of the Council – Yergan, Hunton, and Field – met cordially with officials of the new Africa Division and urged a more aggressive pro-Africa policy.”

⁹³ Duberman, *Paul Robeson*.

⁹⁴ Lynch, Cornell University, and Africana Studies and Research Center., *Black American Radicals and the Liberation of Africa*, 28.

⁹⁵ Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, 255.

its role in aiding the progress of peoples of other countries be viewed with trust and hope.”⁹⁶ Robeson reached out to other organizations to coordinate “the present work among Negroes toward securing some kind of mass pressure upon Congress and upon public opinion and the conscience of the Nation, to drive through basic and immediate legislation on Negro (and other minority) citizenship rights in our country.”⁹⁷

Paul Robeson also reached out to individuals who could further the aims of the CAA. Williams Alphaeus Hunton who was appointed the education director was one such person. Essie was impressed by Hunton, a well-educated man with whom she had much in common. Indeed, she finally joined the CAA staff in 1945 in part because she

⁹⁶ Philip S. Foner, ed., *Paul Robeson Speaks: Writings, Speeches, and Interviews, a Centennial Celebration* (Citadel Press, 1978), 171. Robeson Asks Truman Action on Lynching” Daily Worker, July 29, 1946 by Paul Robeson Chairman of the Council on African Affairs; Telegram to President Truman.

⁹⁷ Paul Robeson, “Robeson Report,” 1947, Box 39 Folder - Organizations, Council on African Affairs, Minutes, Reports, Paul and Eslanda Robeson Papers; Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University, 1. Collaboration with other organizations was strategically important; at the same time Robeson recognized he had to be careful in not offending the leadership of other organizations and was complimentary in his meeting synopsis; he explained, “It was stressed that such co-ordination would not interfere nor compete with the fine work which many organized groups had already accomplished and were doing now, - on the contrary, this work would almost surely be strengthened by mass support.” Robeson Report, 1947, 1. A follow up letter, along with the report, was sent inviting leaders to a November 8, 1947 meeting. “We invite you to meet with us and about eighty other national Negro leaders to work out a co-ordinated program designed to win a major victory for Negro democratic rights in the coming session of the 80th Congress.” Robeson Report, 1947, 2. A list of sponsors on the invitation included prominent black leaders, among them educators, clergy, union leaders, civil rights activists, newspaper reporters, and women’s organizations. Robeson Report, 1947, 3. Numerous black leaders were interested in continuing dialogue about this effort, in fact, the CAA summarized comments from attendees. Dorothy Height, vice-president of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, advocated for involving ordinary people, who do not always make the connection between what is happening in the world and how they can engage directly she explained, “if we could reach back to the little people in the little towns and enlist them behind this program, it would be a very constructive thing to do.” W.E.B. Du Bois, representing the NAACP, “said he felt there was already unanimity of opinion among Negroes on such fundamental issues as the Poll Tax, F.E.P.C. and Anti Lynching.” Responding to his remarks, “Eslanda Robeson agreed with this, that there was already unanimity of opinion, but what we want now, is unanimity of action.” Her remarks capture the underpinning goal of the CAA; their work was centered on making a difference by doing the work. Robeson Report, 1947, 7-9.

found the dynamic educator to be a person with whom she could collaborate to further CAA aims.

W. A. Hunton was born in 1903 in Atlanta, Georgia, W.E.B. Du Bois' home when he taught at Atlanta University 1898 – 1910 and 1934 – 1944.⁹⁸ Hunton's "father served as the first black General Secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association"⁹⁹ Like his CAA colleagues, he was from a middle-class religious family who experienced the collective fear generated by extra-judicial killing. Right after Hunton's parents "moved to Atlanta a violent lynching took place and then in 1906, Atlanta was shaken by violent riots. The violence had a deep influence on the Hunton family," and on Hunton's future colleague in the CAA, W.E.B. DuBois.¹⁰⁰ In *Race Against Empire*, Penny Von Eschen explains that Addie Hunton, William's mother, reacted to the terror with a feeling that "all our sense of security was gone, and we had to realize that we, as colored people, had really no rights as citizens whatsoever. It left us very empty, for we knew that hour that all for which we had labored and sacrificed belonged not to us but to a ruthless mob."¹⁰¹ Yet the Hunton family would not allow racial violence to quiet their insistence on rights for all people.¹⁰² Soon after the devastating riot, they moved to Brooklyn.¹⁰³ William Hunton drew inspiration from his father's "religious internationalism" while

⁹⁸ Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois*, 198. Du Bois completed undergraduate work at Fisk University 1885 before going on to Harvard (BS, MA, PHD). Du Bois spent two years on the faculty of Wilberforce in Ohio in 1894, and a more lengthy time teaching at Atlanta University (two stints) in Georgia.

⁹⁹ Johanna Selles, "The Hunton Family: A Narrative of Faith through Generations" (Emmanuel College, University of Toronto, n.d.), www.old.religiouseducation.net/member/06_rea_papers/Selles_Johanna.pdf; Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*.

¹⁰⁰ Selles, "The Hunton Family," 7.

¹⁰¹ Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 58.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, 57. See Von Eschen pp. 57 -59 for more on Addie Hunton's political activism and fight for women's rights and her involvement in the planning of the 1927 Pan-African Congress, as well as his grandfather's close relationship with Harper's Ferry activist John Brown.

¹⁰³ Selles, "The Hunton Family," 7.

incorporating, as well, “the radical political traditions of his activist mother.”¹⁰⁴ William received degrees from Howard University, Harvard University, and New York University, where he completed his Ph.D. in English literature. A productive academic who found socialism appealing, Hunton later taught at Howard University. Before joining the CAA in 1943 as educational director, he was an active member of the National Negro Congress (NNC).

Hunton brought notable organizational skills and in-depth knowledge of Africa to the CAA. Described as a “gentleman revolutionary” and “praised by Du Bois...for his thorough knowledge and understanding of the continent of Africa,” Hunton helped the CAA grow into a stronger force.¹⁰⁵ William was an excellent prose stylist whose well-researched pamphlets on the international implications of U.S. foreign policy in Africa and activities of the CAA were widely read. Similar to the Robesons, Hunton was accused of affiliating with the CPUSA. Truth be told Hunton was a “fellow traveler.”¹⁰⁶ When faced with government harassment by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), Hunton did not acquiesce to demands to disclose information. He spent six months in jail, in 1951, for his refusal to name names.¹⁰⁷ Hunton’s incarceration made him an important speaker at rallies for the CAA. In 1949, he spoke at the Welcome Home celebration for his CAA friend and colleague, Paul Robeson. The Master of Ceremonies introduced “Dr. Hunton” as “a distinguished scholar and former Professor of English at Howard University, [who] gave up his teaching career in order to devote his

¹⁰⁴ Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 58.

¹⁰⁵ Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 57.

¹⁰⁶ Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 60. Von Eschen, points out Hunton was influenced by “his dissertation instructor, Edwin Berry Burgum, a Marxist”

¹⁰⁷ Selles, “The Hunton Family,” 9; Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 137.

talents to developing an [sic] wider mutual understanding between our own people and the African peoples through an appreciation of our different cultures and our common struggle for freedom.”¹⁰⁸

A friend and fan of Paul Robeson, W. E. B. Du Bois became vice chairman of the CAA in 1949.¹⁰⁹ Born in 1868, W.E.B. Du Bois was deeply versed in Christianity, having emerged from his Congregationalist Sunday School upbringing to enter Harvard University, where he trained to be a historian. He quickly became a renowned thinker and author who pioneered Pan-Africanism in the twentieth century. Known as the father of Pan-Africanism, Du Bois hosted the first Pan-African Congress in London, in 1919. The Congress brought together black leaders from throughout the African diaspora, (i.e. Africa, Europe, and North America) to strategize around African liberation.¹¹⁰ Du Bois’ groundbreaking books, emblazoned with biblical references such as *The Souls of Black Folk*, first published in 1903, spread his ideas throughout the world. His impact was strongest in black America, where he was revered as a prophet on a mission. Du Bois helped launch the NAACP in 1909, and while he supported it for decades (until he was rejected by the organization in 1948), his creed was far more revolutionary. Well known for his opposition to Booker T. Washington’s “Atlanta Compromise,” which advocated

¹⁰⁸ CAA, “Welcome Home Rally,” n.d., Box 39 Folder- Organizations, Council on African Affairs, Meetings, Welcome Home Rally, 1949, Script, Speeches, Flyers, Paul and Eslanda Robeson Papers; Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University. 2.

¹⁰⁹ Lynch, Cornell University, and Africana Studies and Research Center., *Black American Radicals and the Liberation of Africa*. Horne, Black and Red, 52, 70-73, 85, 186. Du Bois had joined the CAA in 1947 as a devoted socialist, although he had participated in the organization’s activities since 1944. Lynch speculates that although Du Bois expressed an interest in joining earlier, Yergan may not have liked the idea of sharing the spotlight. Du Bois also headed the African Aid Committee, the fund raising arm of the CAA, which donated money to African activists. CAA, “Welcome Home Rally.”

¹¹⁰ See Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois*; Clarence G. Contee, “Du Bois, the NAACP, and the Pan-African Congress of 1919,” *The Journal of Negro History* 57, no. 1 (January 1, 1972): 13–28, doi:10.2307/2717070.

incremental change and separate vocational education for black people, Du Bois championed a socialist future based on social equality and higher education. In *Black and Red: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War, 1944-1963* Gerald Horne situates “Du Bois’ radicalism” on a long continuum. It “did not suddenly burst forth,” Horne asserts, for “Du Bois was a socialist...all of his adult life. As a student in Berlin in 1893, he came into contact with what was at the time the most advanced socialist movement in the world.”¹¹¹

As a pre-eminent intellectual in the CAA, Du Bois campaigned for “two things American Negroes must do; first, they must know what is going on in this world.”¹¹² Second, “while the change is approaching we must prepare its path . . . [with] a firm stand for peace. No more war. Least of all, war with Russia, the one nation which has curbed wealth, outlawed race prejudice and refused to own colonies.” He acknowledged that “Russia is not perfect; neither are we; but there is nothing wrong with either that war can cure and we will do scant service to our own country if we let our greedy leaders lie us into an unjust war.”¹¹³ On behalf of the “Council on African Affairs” he pleaded for “the help of all who care for the most exploited part of the world today, for the continent crucified for four centuries to make white folks rich.”¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Horne, *Black and Red*. Du Bois joined the Communist Party, late in life, at 93 years of age, well after his time at the CAA. Long admired by internationalist communists, in 1959 he received the Soviet Lenin Prize “for strengthening peace” in the world [New York Times, November 23, 1961; <http://www.nytimes.com/books/00/11/05/specials/dubois-communist.html>]

¹¹² CAA, “Welcome Home Rally,” 4.

¹¹³ Ibid, 5.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

ORGANIZATION

The ICAA was inter-racial and committed to socialist principles and Christian ideals. There were 13 people in the nascent group, including officers from London, Toronto, Paris, New York, Washington, DC, Massachusetts, and Indiana. Early ICAA leadership reflected race and gender diversity, including “Miss Mary Van Kleeck, Chairman[;]” Max Yergan, Director[;]” and “Mr. Hubert T. Delany, Treasurer.”¹¹⁵ By 1938, the ICAA had expanded to incorporate prominent educators, scholars, philanthropists, an attorney and YMCA representatives. The list of members included the future Nobel Peace Prize winner Dr. Ralph Bunche¹¹⁶, Raymond Leslie Buell, Dr. Channing H. Tobias, Mrs. John F. Moors, Dr. Mordecai Johnson, Hubert T. Delany; F. E. De Frantz, Professor Leonard Barnes, and M. Renee Maran.¹¹⁷ The 1938 budget shows a \$15,980 operating account as well as miscellaneous funds used for “scholarships and grants to African Students” studying in “Europe and America.”¹¹⁸ In 1941 when the name changed officially, the Council on African Affairs absorbed the structure of the ICAA, which was “organized for the study of conditions of life and work in Africa and for the promotion of international cooperation for the welfare of the African people.”¹¹⁹ The CAA was not very active until after the reorganization, which began in 1941; this

¹¹⁵ Max Yergan, “May 10, 1938 -Memorandum for Miss Edith M.Howard,” n.d., Box 206-1 Folder 9, Max Yergan Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

¹¹⁶ For more on Bunche, see Bunche, *An African American in South Africa*. Prior to his 1937 visit to South Africa, while in London, Bunche met with Max Yergan , who “had recently left South Africa... , Frieda Neugebauer, a Fort Hare lecturer and companion of Yergan’s; [and] Essie Robeson”, 14. Upon his return to the U.S., in 1938 Bunche joined the CAA.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. Lynch attributes formative CAA success to Yergan’s fundraising ability “and his charm as a publicist.”

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

was due, in part to Yergan's many commitments. In addition to being ICAA's director, a City College of New York instructor, and a member of the NNC, Yergan was "part-owner and publisher of the militant Harlem newspaper, the *People's Voice* ." ¹²⁰

Yergan's absence was a point of contention for some CAA leaders like Hunton, who was impatient to advance the organization's work while Yergan was "everywhere and nowhere and thus a problem." During his tenure as executive director, Yergan presided over a "structurally weak" organization which still managed to attract "significant national and international attention." ¹²¹ His approach to public relations revolved around a call to action that invariably evoked comparisons between the violent marginalization of black Americans and the foreign rule over African peoples on the continent. For example, in the mid-1940s Yergan invited friends of the CAA to a planning meeting in preparation for the United Nations Assembly considering "the future of the people of Africa." ¹²² Yergan pointed to what was at stake in the international body erected in New York City: "Imperialist oppression abroad is closely linked with minority oppression and lynchings here in the United States," he declared, "and consequently whatever action the United Nations Assembly takes with respect to Africa must be of

¹²⁰ Yergan, "Yergan Curriculum Vitae"; Anthony, *Max Yergan*, 167,202; Ransby, *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson*, 108; Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 10–11; Lynch, Cornell University, and Africana Studies and Research Center., *Black American Radicals and the Liberation of Africa*, 20.

¹²¹ Lynch, Cornell University, and Africana Studies and Research Center., *Black American Radicals and the Liberation of Africa*, 23.

¹²² Max Yergan, "Dear Friend (Invitation to October 16, 1946 Conference)," October 5, 1946, Box 131-30 Folder 5, E. Franklin Frazier Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

vital importance to many sections of the American people.”¹²³ Yergan urgently “call[ed] for action” against South Africa, “which it is within our power to take.”¹²⁴

Paul Robeson’s “international reputation” as an anti-imperialist boosted the profile of the CAA, while “the genius of [Hunton] the educational director as an administrator and propagandist” broadcast the message that “Africa must be of vital importance to many sections of the American people.”¹²⁵ But what truly enabled the CAA to build into a movement was its internal push in 1943 to swell the ranks with new members, many of them recruited “professional black Americans from religious, labor and educational circles includ[ing] Charlotta Bass, a former Garveyite, publisher and editor of the Los Angeles *California Eagle*... William Yancey Bell, Professor of Theology at Gammon Theological College; Earl B. Dickerson, president of the Black National Bar Association; and E. Franklin Frazier, professor of Sociology at Howard University.” The CAA’s reorganization was complete by 1943 with twenty-seven members including one African and “five white members – all of them wealthy and progressive.”¹²⁶

Women in the CAA

Charlotta Bass was not an outlier. As we know from founder, Essie Robeson women played key roles in the CAA. Not always recognized for her contributions, Eslanda (“Essie”) Cardozo Goode Robeson was a powerhouse, too. While Essie was not

¹²³ Ibid..

¹²⁴ Yergan, “Dear Friend (Invitation to October 16, 1946 Conference).”

¹²⁵ Lynch, Cornell University, and Africana Studies and Research Center., *Black American Radicals and the Liberation of Africa*; Yergan, “Dear Friend (Invitation to October 16, 1946 Conference).”

¹²⁶ Lynch, Cornell University, and Africana Studies and Research Center., *Black American Radicals and the Liberation of Africa*, 21–22.

initially a member, there is no doubt that she was instrumental in shaping the ICAA. Indeed, her non-membership, may have been her choice. Essie was renowned for speaking her mind. Essie may not have wanted to be bound to present an official line at meetings and events. In *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War*, Dayo Gore persuasively argues that Black women radicals were not confined to one organizational affiliation or political thought. Their intent was to maximize their impact in a man's world. Furthermore, Gore suggests that "unearthing the political activism" of women like Essie Robeson demonstrates what needs to be considered more carefully, that is, what they could do, simultaneously, "as national leaders, intellectual architects, and strategists in building the black freedom struggle, U.S. radicalism, and feminist politics."¹²⁷ In addition, Essie courageously worked on controversial domestic and international projects with several organizations. Her appreciation for the Soviet Union and close relationships with the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) were never secrets. Why should they be she said, when admired black men like Paul Robeson and W. E. B. Du Bois expressed their affinity for communism.¹²⁸ It must be noted that the orthodoxy associated with the

¹²⁷ Dayo F Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 6.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 3. Gore asserts, many radical black women activists coalesced around Robeson and DuBois." Black female radical organizations like the National Negro Labor Council (NNLC), "maintained strategic ties to black left organizations affiliated with Paul Robeson," including the CAA. Like the CAA, the NNLC would be subjected to Cold War era government harassment. Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads*, 118. For more on Eslanda Robeson's radical feminist work (and the government's response) with organizations like Sojourners for Truth and Justice (STJ) see Jacqueline Castledine, "*In a Solid Bond of Unity*": *Anticolonial Feminism in the Cold War Era*, *Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 20 Number 4, Winter 2008, pp. 57-81.

CPUSA, a cell-based group, did not deter Essie either. She openly preferred the autonomy to consult or enthuse whoever she wished.¹²⁹

Essie was the first to contribute financially, donating “three hundred pounds” to the fledgling ICAA.¹³⁰ Her bequests frequently went beyond finances; she also loaned the ICAA “many of her books, maps, photographs, and artifacts from her travels in Africa.” These resources, she recalled, were given “after the group set up shop in New York City.”¹³¹ When the ICAA was at its strongest organizationally, Eslanda wrote for its newsletters and pamphlets. Her articles made it clear that women were well-represented in the organization.

Major supporters of women’s rights, Paul Robeson and William Hunton expected women to be an integral part of the CAA’s leadership. Hunton hoped to work alongside people who might match the vision of his radical mother, the anti-lynching advocate. For his part, Paul Robeson married his beloved muse, Essie, so he was socialized to encounter radical activist women like her in the CAA. In the 1940s, CAA letterhead revealed an impressive number of women in executive positions. One was the white

¹²⁹ Robeson, “Open Letter to Fellow Members of the Council on African Affairs”; Ransby, *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson*, 108; Plummer, *Rising Wind*, ; Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 17.; Lynch, Cornell University, and Africana Studies and Research Center., *Black American Radicals and the Liberation of Africa*, 18 - 19; Von Eschen attributes co-founding the CAA to Paul Robeson, although Essie was more engaged in discussions with Yergan; Plummer makes one unrelated reference ; Lynch acknowledges both Robesons as early supporters and likeminded radicals. Duberman covers many aspects of her life, however, there is no mention of her influence in helping Yergan conceptualize the CAA. Many scholars do not fully discuss the extent of Essie’s engagement in anti-colonial work with the CAA and other organizations. Her biographer, Barbara Ransby provides a more in-depth view of Essie’s lifelong and significant work and influence as a left-wing radical.

¹³⁰ Robeson, “Open Letter to Fellow Members of the Council on African Affairs.”

¹³¹ Ransby, *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson*, 134-135.;see also Robeson, “Open Letter to Fellow Members of the Council on African Affairs.”

treasurer Edith Field, whose husband Frederick was a wealthy philanthropist.¹³² The first chairman of the organization was Mary Van Kleeck, “a distinguished [white] sociologist.”¹³³ Freida Neugebauer, a white South African “became fast friends” with Yergan and worked as his corresponding secretary during his time at Fort Hare Native College in the (eastern) Cape Province. This school, a renowned institution of higher education, was attended by stalwarts of the African National Congress, the soon-to-be arch enemy of apartheid rulers.¹³⁴ Joining Yergan in New York, she served as secretary

¹³² Lynch, Cornell University, and Africana Studies and Research Center., *Black American Radicals and the Liberation of Africa*, 22.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹³⁴ What would come long after Yergan had left Fort Hare, would have lasting impact on challenges to white hegemony in South Africa. Donovan Williams’ *A History of the University of Fort Hare South Africa* provides a first-hand view of what he describes as “the unsettling decade” (p. v) of the “uneasy fifties,” (p. vi) at Fort Hare. A white Canadian faculty member, Donovan observed radical student activism on the campus during the 1950s, which shaped the radical ideologies of the ANC Youth League. Black student radicalism challenged the status quo, namely the government’s plans to take control of the relatively open University of Fort Hare (previously named, South African Native College until 1952). Donovan posits “political life among students on campus was funneled through only two groups, the African National Congress Youth League, and the Society of Young Africa” (SOYA). 16. Students and many staff attempted to preserve the relative equality and quality of education, so characteristic of Fort Hare. As apartheid encroached upon the encapsulated university, tensions grew. The “emergence of politically oriented groups on campus, with the Black staff and students thrown together in the common cause of freedom.”, 22 Donovan explains two laws were of particular concern to students; the 1953 Bantu Education Act – “decreed” that “majority Black” schools like Fort Hare, “were to fall under Government control.” Generating suspicion among blacks, this act created great distrust. Secondly, “the Natives Abolition of Passes and Coordinated Documents Act (1952)” required all Blacks “to carry passes including those previously exempt.”, 25. These laws along with the fear of an Afrikaner led administration, led to increased political activism and radicalism, with strong “opposition to the National Party.”, 28. The ANC establishment of Youth Leagues in the 1950s provided opportunities for student political organization; Fort Hare had earlier established a branch in 1948. The campus Youth League was all black. Another active student organization, the multiracial Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) also established a branch at Fort Hare by 1952, they were called the Society of Young Africa (SOYA). Both groups were active on campus during the fifties, making Fort Hare a highly politically charged environment. The ANC Youth League was very visible in the 1952 Defiance Campaign, which is discussed later in this chapter. G. M. Pitje who founded the branch sought support from Professor Zachariah Keodirelang (Z. K.) Matthews, an older more moderate ANC leader. ,34; another youth leader, Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, represented the radicalism of the Youth League. In a 1949 speech he declared, “We are pro-Africa. We breathe, we dream, we live Africa.” Sobukwe “rejected white paternalism, stressed black self-reliance, emphasized service, rejected colonialism and espoused socialism.”, 37. Fort Hare had “an ambiance that welcomed an organised political presence.”,38. However, generational tensions arose on the campus. Youth League radical Africanists disagreed with Matthews’ more moderate multiculturalism, causing major tensions to develop on campus. Activity ebbed and flowed due to internal and external events. Student political meetings not

of the CAA from its founding as the ICAA in 1937 to the early 1940s. Neugebauer, who was “very close to the Communist Party of South Africa,” shared with Yergan a love affair with the progressive left.¹³⁵

Mary McLeod Bethune and Cecelia Cabaniss Saunders were veteran activists who helped coordinate the huge 1944 Conference on Africa.¹³⁶ The Conference, a CAA brainchild, brought together multi-racial participants from labor unions, educational institutions, civil rights organizations, and churches.¹³⁷ It claimed “to define the problem & present solutions for it, - solutions based upon & affirming the indispensable condition of unity and close collaboration among the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, China and all of her members of the United Nations.”¹³⁸ In his welcome address, Paul

only took place on campus, they were often held secretly in locations off campus; these clandestine “bush” meetings were publicized by word-of-mouth.,55. During this period of student militancy, Matthews was in a precarious position as an administrator. Some students labeled him a “stooge” while conservatives labeled him an “extremist.”, 49. Still student political activity continued and Matthews continued to be “recognized as the undisputed unofficial representative of the Black groups on campus” and maintained support “by the majority of Black staff and students.”, 47. Donovan credits Professor Z. K. Matthews, who had risen to lead the Cape Town branch of the ANC and had international prominence, with being “committed to the cause of freedom for his people.”,38-39. Youth League activity at Fort Hare, greatly influenced the overall ANC organization; indeed, “Fort Hare was a centre from which ‘Black nationalism diffused’.”, 57. In the end, the South African government “passed a law empowering them to take over Fort Hare,” effective January 1960.

¹³⁵ Anthony, *Max Yergan*.

¹³⁶ Yergan, Hunton, and et al, “Proceedings of the Conference on Africa.” The detailed professional publication of the conference proceedings “was authorized by the conference and was prepared by...Mrs. Amy [Ashwood] Garvey, [first wife of Marcus Garvey] Mrs. Edith C. Field, [and] Mrs. LLewllyn Ransom,” alongside “Mr. H. A. B. Jones-Quartey, Dr. Max Yergan, and Dr. W. A. Hunton. Bethune also represented the National Council of Negro Women and Saunders, executive secretary, represented the Harlem YWCA. Later Bethune aligned with Yergan in his attempt to wrangle CAA leadership from Robeson. Though not considered a valid election, Bethune was elected as chairman during the 1948 rift among CAA leadership, validation would have ousted Robeson as chairman. This rift is discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

¹³⁷ A who’s who record of “cooperating sponsors” of the CAA’s Conference on Africa listed Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune, president NCNW; Professor Joseph P. Chamberlain, Columbia University; Professor Rayford Logan, Howard University; Joseph Curran, President, National Maritime Union & Greater NY Industrial Union Council, COP; Mrs. Cecelia Cabaniss Saunders, Executive Secretary, Harlem, YWCA; David H. Sims, presiding Bishop, First Episcopal District, AME Church; Dr. Sigerist, Johns Hopkins University; E. Franklin Frazier, Proceedings of the Conference on Africa, p. 4, series 131, box 30, p. 4.

¹³⁸ Yergan, Hunton, and et al, “Proceedings of the Conference on Africa.” 2.

Robeson told the delegations “[w]e are gathered here for the purpose of considering together our relation- the relation of the American people and their gov’t – to Africa’s place in the war and in the post-war world.”¹³⁹ He added “the winning of the war and the winning of the peace are inter-related things, not separate. Both depend upon the maintenance of the closest unity on the National & international levels. This conference is dedicated to promoting such unity in the interest of the African people and in the interest of American and world-wide security.”¹⁴⁰ CAA supporters, Bethune and Saunders among them, then ratified a resolution “that the government of the United States should set pace and standard for promoting policies of mutual aid in mutual self-interest by taking the initiative in securing international agreements and establishing effective international machinery for securing the social, economic and political advancement of the African and other colonial peoples, consistent with the Atlantic Charter and other declarations of the United Nations & with the requirements for achieving world security and peace.”¹⁴¹ In 1949 the CAA asked Louise Patterson, a black graduate of “the University of California . . . [with] a long and varied career as a teacher at Hampton Institute,” to accept the post of Director of Council. She was a highly regarded activist, having formed “interracial and labor circles in the Midwest” and ascended to be “vice-president of the International Workers Order.”¹⁴² As black American leadership shifted to a domestic agenda, including anti-communism, the drama

¹³⁹ Ibid, 10.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 12.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 7. HU, E. Franklin Frazier, 131, box 30, file 3, Proceedings of the Conference on Africa, p. 7, see also article which published the resolution.

¹⁴² CAA, “Council on African Affairs, News Release, Louise Patterson,” March 30, 1949, Paul and Eslanda Robeson Papers; Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

that unfolded at the CAA revealed alliances. Patterson and her female cohorts commanded respect by consistently pressing the causes of anti-colonialism and antiracism.

CAA women could challenge pillars of the organization, as well. In the 1940s Mary Church Terrell, a civil rights and women's rights activist, laid "charges of malfeasance, mis-feasance and non-feasance against Dr. Max Yergan" and tried unsuccessfully to oust him.¹⁴³ In addition, the illustrious novelist Pearl S. Buck, a daughter of white missionaries to China, was a CAA supporter who rejected one of the organization's dominant party affiliations. During W.W. II, she appealed to a large gathering in New York City alongside CAA boosters Lillian Hellman, Dr. Channing Tobias and Paul Robeson. They each spotlighted the "needs and possibilities of the people of Africa"¹⁴⁴ during a global conflict that depended, according to Yergan, on "the role of colonial peoples in the war against the Axis."¹⁴⁵ This mass event attracted "three thousand people," half of whom "were African-American, the other half white," according to Buck's biographer, Peter Conn. The crowd roared approval when Paul Robeson demanded the right to fight fascism "on an equal basis with the free peoples of

¹⁴³ John Latouche, Mary Church Terrell, and Henry Arthur Callis, "Charges of Mal-Feasance, Mis-Feasance, and Non-Feasance Letter to Paul Robeson about Max Yergan," May 15, 1948, Box 206 -4 Folder 11, Max Yergan Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University. Yergan fought the charges, however, he eventually lost the fight to remain executive director.

¹⁴⁴ Max Yergan, "Letter to Dr. Frazier Regarding Mass Meeting," March 20, 1942, Box 131-30 Folder 5, E. Franklin Frazier Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University; Peter J Conn, *Pearl S. Buck: A Cultural Biography* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998). See Conn for the Lillian Hellman reference.

¹⁴⁵ Yergan, "Letter to Dr. Frazier Regarding Mass Meeting." See also: Max Yergan, "Letter to Dr. Frazier Regarding the Research Committee," November 24, 1941, Box 131-30 Folder 5, E. Franklin Frazier Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

every race, color and creed in the world.”¹⁴⁶ Pearl Buck chimed in, likening racism to the worst form of “undemocratic” order that fractured resistance to fascism in Asia and Europe. Quoting the black American writer Chester Himes, Buck repeated that “race prejudice is bred of fear.”¹⁴⁷ Yet unlike Paul Robeson, she made it clear that her CAA participation was motivated by “anti-Communist” concerns. Even so, Buck remained close with the Robesons, especially Eslanda with whom she co-authored *American Argument*, a book-length “dialogue on American racism.” Through her anti-fascist writings and endorsement of the CAA during World War II, Conn concludes, “Pearl Buck made major contributions to the American struggle for civil rights.”¹⁴⁸

The Black Faith Community

The black religious community supported the CAA. As other anticolonial and anti-apartheid organizations would do, the CAA held events at black churches and engaged church leaders and their parishioners in anticolonial and anti-imperialism activities. There were several prominent religious leaders on its rolls including Bishops William Yancey Bell [CME] and David H. Sims [AME]. Sims was among the “cooperating sponsors” for the Council’s April 1944 Conference on Africa held in New York.¹⁴⁹ Council Member Bishop Bell along with the Reverends Elmer Dean, R. C. Henderson, William H. Melish, and G. C. Violenes were conference attendees. Also,

¹⁴⁶ Peter Conn, *Pearl S. Buck: A Cultural Biography*, First Edition (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 261.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. Along “with other celebrities who had been named as “Red appeasers” by a California state legislator,” Buck was included in “a front-page story in the New York Sun.” Paul Robeson was also listed among the celebrities named in the article. Peter Conn, *Pearl S. Buck*, 167, 317. See also, also Hollis Lynch, *Black American Radicals*, 26.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, xvi.

¹⁴⁹ Yergan, Hunton, and et al, “Proceedings of the Conference on Africa, ” 2.

well-established churches like Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church participated in the Council's signature Conference on Africa.¹⁵⁰

Participating in this Conference were Negro & white leaders of labor, civic, and women's organizations, national in scope and [reaching] several hundred thousand members; representatives of the church, education, and the press, and representatives of peoples of British West Africa, the Caribbean, and India...the resolutions embodying the main substance of the discussion on Dr. Yergan's address and the agenda outline, the participants spoke with one voice.¹⁵¹

In 1946 and 1947, CAA publications began to highlight "the oppression of non-whites in South Africa."¹⁵² To this end, one CAA pamphlet asks why "*8 million People Demand Freedom?*" It reprinted a political explanation by I.B. Tabatha, a black South African writing on behalf of the ANC. Another pamphlet crafted by Hunton offers the following thought: *Seeing is Believing – Here is the Truth About the Color Bar, Land Hunger, Poverty and Degradation, the Pass System, Racial Oppression in South Africa.*¹⁵³ Hunger, poverty and degradation were the concerns of the CAA fundraiser for famine relief in South Africa, which kicked off at Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem. "In response to appeals from the African National Congress for aid for the famine victims, the Council set up a twenty-eight member National Sponsors Committee for South African Famine Relief. The relief campaign commenced on January 7 [1946] with an overflow crowd of some five thousand at the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem."¹⁵⁴ The star attractions were Paul Robeson and Marian Anderson who planned to

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 36-38.

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 2.

¹⁵² Lynch, Cornell University, and Africana Studies and Research Center., *Black American Radicals and the Liberation of Africa*, 33.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 33.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 1.

perform free. One performance flyer beseeched people to “Hear Marian Anderson [,] Paul Robeson & Others...Mass Meeting for Famine Relief in South Africa...Admission Free...Monday, January 7th, 8 p.m. Abyssinian Baptist Church.”¹⁵⁵ The practical benefit of this entertainment was to secure “contributions of money and canned goods” for “four million Africans in the Union of South Africa.”¹⁵⁶ In response to the famine and food drive, U.S. Senator Kilgore commended the CAA “for its great fight to secure freedom and full democratic rights for the oppressed and starving South Africans and other colonial peoples.”¹⁵⁷ Hailed as “one of the greatest meetings ever held in Harlem,” several black clergymen were featured speakers. The Rev. Ben Richards remarked, “The Africans need more than food...They need to know how to overthrow the system that brings suffering year after year.”¹⁵⁸

Black churches and individuals supported the famine relief campaign by contributing money and canned goods. The Reverend James H. Perry pastor of Union Congregational Church contributed \$225 to the campaign by February 1946; several other black churches and individuals contributed to the fund during this same period. Mrs. Edith M. Stephens, Pearl Hart, and the Reverend Dr. C. M. Long of Bethesda Baptist Church of New Rochelle, each contributed \$50 and the Reverend Samuel H.

¹⁵⁵ Council on African Affairs, “Mass Meeting For Famine Relief in South Africa (Flyer),” January 7, 1946, Box 131-30 Folder 7, E. Franklin Frazier Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University. “During February and March [1946] the Council and its supporters [had also] organized South African relief meetings in about forty major cities throughout the United States”: Lynch, *Black American Radicals and the Liberation of Africa*, 32.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Lynch, Cornell University, and Africana Studies and Research Center., *Black American Radicals and the Liberation of Africa*, 32.

¹⁵⁸ Council on African Affairs, “Overflow Mass Meeting Launches Famine Relief Campaign for Africans,” *New Africa*, January 1946, Volume 5 No. 1 edition, Box 39 Folder - Organizations, Council on African Affairs, New Africa, October 1945 -June 1949, Paul and Eslanda Robeson Papers; Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University, .

Sweeney “Pastor of St. Marks Methodist Church, New York present[ed] a \$100 check to Dr. Yergan.”¹⁵⁹ Expressing their appreciation the CAA wrote in their February 1946 newsletter, “The Council desires to pay special thanks to the congregations and pastors of several of the churches in New York City which made splendid contributions of canned food as well as money.”¹⁶⁰

Black community leaders, like Mrs. Ada B. Jackson, led a fundraiser and food drive, in 1946, with “several community organizations in Brooklyn” the proceeds of “\$150 and [the] food” were designated “to go to South Africa.”¹⁶¹ Mrs. Jackson, president of the Brooklyn Home for [the] Aged was active in the Brooklyn community, providing keynote addresses for such events as the “annual meeting and forum of the Federation of Protestant Agencies” in 1953.¹⁶² Like many CAA supporters, Jackson engaged in a range of volunteer work in her local community; she was not a frontline, renowned leader, she represented the people. “The drive resulted in more than \$5,000 and twenty thousand cans of food being sent to South Africa.”¹⁶³ The CAA recognized the importance of reaching the black community through its clergy and members.

¹⁵⁹ Council on African Affairs, “American Aid Is Now on Way Across Atlantic to Relieve Victims in South Africa,” *New Africa*, February 1946, Volume 5, No. 2 edition, Box 39 Folder - Organizations, Council on African Affairs, New Africa, October 1945 -June 1949, Paul and Eslanda Robeson Papers; Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University, 1.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Council, “Nation-Wide ‘Help Africa’ Day,” March 1946, Volume 5, No. 3 edition, Box 39 Folder - Organization, Council on African Affairs, New Africa, Paul and Eslanda Robeson Papers; Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University..

¹⁶² “Mrs. Jackson Will Speak for Protestant Agencies,” *New York Age*, February 21, 1953, <http://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%201/New%20York%20NY%20Age/New%20York%20NY%20Age%201953-1953%20%20Grayscale/New%20York%20NY%20Age%201953-1953%20%20Grayscale%20-%200172.pdf>.

¹⁶³ Lynch, Cornell University, and Africana Studies and Research Center., *Black American Radicals and the Liberation of Africa*, 31-32.

Seeking to operate on many levels, low- and high-brow, which often entailed targeting events for different audiences, the CAA also arranged an invitation-only event at Club Baron in New York City for a “Celebration of Paul Robeson’s Birthday and In Support of the South African People’s Struggle for Democracy and Justice.” The night featured “A Special Benefit Performance of Gold Through the Trees a dramatic review by Alice Childress...based on the current civil disobedience campaign in South Africa.”¹⁶⁴

A Shift in Focus

By June 1946 the CAA, with its attention still focused on South Africa, would turn more “militant.”¹⁶⁵ The African National Congress (ANC) was combating a legacy of “fascist” social engineering—“a government’s land policy which has restricted the non-urban Africans to only 13 percent of the total land area.”¹⁶⁶ Author Hollis Lynch

¹⁶⁴ Council on African Affairs, “In Celebration of Paul Robeson’s Birthday and In Support of the South African People’s Struggle for Democracy and Justice,” April 17, 1952, Box 39 Folder - Organizations and CAA Programs, Paul and Eslanda Robeson Papers; Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

¹⁶⁵ Lynch, Cornell University, and Africana Studies and Research Center., *Black American Radicals and the Liberation of Africa*, 29 Lynch characterizes the immediate post-war period as the CAA’s “Militant Phase” which surged to the fore during the UN San Francisco Conference of 1945, mass protests, picketing, etc. . . . partly tied into what was happening in South Africa. Duberman adds that the CAA disagreed with the US position on colonialism taken at the UN San Francisco Conference in 1946. This was major. Scholars point to the San Francisco Conference as a turning point for the CAA and a major concern about the direction of US foreign policy as it related to colonialism. See ; Duberman, *Paul Robeson*; Borstelmann, *The Cold War and The Color Line*; Plummer, *Rising Wind*.

¹⁶⁶ In 1945 CAA’s periodical *New Africa* covered “starvation conditions . . . prevalent among Africans in the Northern Transvaal section.” The report stated that though the “area is suffering from a drought said to be the worst in eighty years,” the Executive Committee of the African National Congress (ANC) attributed the “starvation [to] the government’s land policy which has restricted the non-urban Africans to only 13 percent of the total land area. It is impossible to grow sufficient food in the “native reserves” to meet the needs of the crowded inhabitants.”: Council on African Affairs, “News Notes - Johannesburg, South Africa,” October 1945, Box 39 Folder - Organizations, Council on African Affairs, New Africa, October 1945 - June 1949, Paul and Eslanda Robeson Papers; Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University, 1. In 1946, CAA broadcast an “urgent call for immediate protest against racial injustice and the brutal smashing of the African mineworkers’ strike in the Union of South Africa”: Paul Robeson and Max Yergan, “An Urgent Call for Immediate Protest Against Racial Injustice and the Brutal Smashing of the African Mineworker’s Strike in the Union of South Africa,” *Spotlight on Africa*, 1946, Box 131-30 Folder

details the principal reasons “the Council had [long] shown a special concern about South Africa . . . [for] Africans there suffered from the most extreme form of white colonial exploitation and degradation.”¹⁶⁷ In addition, Yergan “had extensive contacts with progressive South Africans and in particular the African National Congress, the oldest and largest African nationalist organization in all of black Africa.”¹⁶⁸

Frustrated with South Africa’s “vicious discrimination” and blatant disregard for “the plight of the African millions resident there,” the Council organized one of their most successful mass demonstrations “on June 6 [1946] at Madison Square Garden,”¹⁶⁹ Attended by “an interracial audience of about fifteen thousand” who rallied for “freedom and full democratic rights” in solidarity with black South Africans. Challenging the Truman administration to take immediate action, the CAA urged compliance with the U.N.’s position on “democratic rights and self-determination” for all South Africans. As with the January [1946] famine relief fundraiser, proceeds from this event were “sent to the famine victims in South Africa.”¹⁷⁰

THE RIFT BEGINS

The CAA’s wholesale shift to South African activism was nearly derailed by bitter infighting. The power struggle involved two opposing camps, one represented by

1, E. Franklin Frazier Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University. See also: “Response to Pass Laws [title?],” *Your News of Africa*, n.d., UOPWA, No. 16 edition, Box 39 Folder - Organizations, Council on African Affairs, New Africa July 15, 1942 - October 1944, Paul and Eslanda Robeson Papers; Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University, 1.

¹⁶⁷ Lynch, Cornell University, and Africana Studies and Research Center., *Black American Radicals and the Liberation of Africa*, 31.

¹⁶⁸ Lynch, Cornell University, and Africana Studies and Research Center., *Black American Radicals and the Liberation of Africa*, 31.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁷⁰ Lynch, Cornell University, and Africana Studies and Research Center., *Black American Radicals and the Liberation of Africa*, 33.

Paul Robeson and W. A. Hunton, the other by Yergan, who was beginning to pivot away from communism with a sharp turn to the right. As threats to “communist leaders and fellow travelers” grew in 1947, Yergan moved for a political “neutrality statement for the Council,” which Robeson and Hunton adamantly opposed and viewed as “red-baiting.”¹⁷¹ By 1948, the year apartheid officially took hold in South Africa, their clash dragged on and became a battle for the hearts and minds of the organization. Yelling matches between factions prompted the police to visit CAA headquarters. There were angry accusations of rigged elections prompting Yergan’s camp to storm out of a March 1948 board meeting in protest of the results of a vote for control of the CAA.¹⁷² After months of legal wrangling, Robeson and his supporters limped to victory, regaining the reins of the CAA.¹⁷³ He and Hunton immediately assessed the results of this hollow triumph and set about repairing the damage “[a]s soon as possible” through the resumption of the “publication of the monthly news bulletin, *New Africa*,” the ideological rudder and oracle of their organization.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Anthony, *Max Yergan*, 118–119; Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 80.

¹⁷²The ballot rigging case revolved around Mary Bethune who expressed loyalty to Yergan and responded to “a membership meeting on April [sic] 21, 1948, at the offices of the Council.”¹⁷² The purpose of the meeting, according to Yergan, was to continue a fractious “February 2nd meeting...[but] with a more rational approach.”¹⁷² The agenda included “among other things the election of officers.” Paul Robeson and his supporters were not in attendance. An election was held and the results elevated “Mary MacLeon [sic] Bethune” to the position of “Chairman” of the CAA with “Max Yergan [remaining] Executive Director and Secretary.” Needless to say, Paul Robeson and his faction neither acknowledged nor certified this election: Max Yergan, “Supreme Court of the State of New York; Council on African Affairs, Inc. Plaintiff against Max Yergan Defendant.” Box 1, folder 12.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Paul Robeson and William A. Hunton, “Letter to CAA Members,” October 7, 1948, Box 39 Folder - Organizations, Council on African Affairs, Correspondence, Paul and Eslanda Robeson Papers; Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

IDEOLOGY

While diverse, and even clashing, internal political forces shaped the CAA of the 1940s, its ideology and leadership would coalesce around one major aim early in the next decade. Hunton's mission statement titled, "Here Are the Facts...You Be the Judge!" proclaimed that the galvanizing purpose of the CAA was "to provide accurate information on the conditions and struggles of the peoples of Africa and to promote and support their welfare and efforts toward liberation."¹⁷⁵ Increasingly, "efforts toward liberation" evoked parallel processes unfolding in the United States and South Africa. In 1951, one the CAA's hard-hitting pamphlets carried the headline: "What's behind the U.S. – South Africa Deal?"¹⁷⁶ The accompanying article detailed an \$80 million loan from the White House to the apartheid state in South Africa, which gave America purchase rights to "great quantities" of uranium ore from an ally that had the wealth, due to its "vast gold fields," to facilitate a range of massive resource transactions. Despite South Africa's dismal record on its extreme racial practices and policies, the Truman administration extended its alliance with and allegiance to post-War South Africa. Why? In *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena*, Thomas Borstelmann contends "strong common interests linked Washington and Pretoria;" namely anti-Communism, "strategic minerals," and war "alliances."¹⁷⁷ Whiteness played a role in American interest in South Africa. The U.S. identified

¹⁷⁵ William A. Hunton, "Here Are the Facts...You Be the Judge! The Council on African Affairs Answers Attorney General Brownell," October 23, 1953, Box 131-30 Folder 1, E. Franklin Frazier Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University, 1. See this stated purpose during the CAA's decline in 1953, which is very close to the 1938 version mentioned earlier.

¹⁷⁶ Council on African Affairs, "What's Behind the U.S. - South Africa Deal," *New Africa*, February 1951, Box 131-30 Folder 1, E. Franklin Frazier Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

¹⁷⁷ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and The Color Line*, 71,73.

culturally with the emphasis on bringing “Western civilization and Christianity,” to uncivilized people of color, and a shared history of racial tensions. Thus, white American citizens approved of Washington forging and continuing relationships with Pretoria. Of particular importance to the U.S. were South Africa’s “strategic minerals...,with South African manganese, chrome, and uranium becoming crucial elements for the postwar American armaments industry.”¹⁷⁸ Most notably, “By the mid-1950s the largest producer of uranium ore, South Africa also received the bulk of American investment and trade with the entire continent.”¹⁷⁹ Borstelmann argues, the overall thrust of U.S. policy toward Africa in the 1950s was the same as the administration’s policy toward civil rights at home: to avoid it as much as possible.”¹⁸⁰ Even in the face of international condemnation of South Africa’s extreme racial policies, the U.S. clung to its alliances with that country for decades to come.

The CAA linked the deal to President “Truman’s demand for a special billion-dollar appropriation to expand and speed up the manufacture of atomic weapons.”¹⁸¹ The pamphlet then asked: “Why? President Truman, General Eisenhower, and Governor Dewey, among others...have been busy explaining. ‘We’ must hold Africa, they all say, because it is the source of ‘materials that are absolutely essential to our existence, our way of life.’” The CAA “translated in plain language” the Cold War exigencies of the United States which disregarded the iniquities of racism: “what these gentlemen mean is that Africa, its resources and people must remain the property of the Western world to be

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 73.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 115.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 116.

¹⁸¹ Council on African Affairs, “What’s Behind the U.S. - South Africa Deal.”

freely exploited in the future as in the past, only more intensively and systematically. The statesmen of the Western powers talk a lot about ‘developing’ subject lands and “raising the living standards” of the inhabitants, but they say not a word about giving them their FREEDOM. When these gentlemen talk about preserving their ‘free world’ they mean preserving the freedom to exploit.”¹⁸² This economic calculus was succinctly expressed by the CAA in another of its publications: “U.S. Jim Crow and South Africa’s Apartheid have the same common denominator of super-profits for the Morgan, Rockefeller, and other giant American interests which share in the expropriation of Africa’s great resources.”¹⁸³ Such forceful critiques reached Congress and engendered the scrutiny of Senator Joseph McCarthy.¹⁸⁴

Undaunted by these witch hunts, the CAA pressed on using its monthly bulletin *New Africa*, to alert “it is high time that American progressives, Negro and white workers together, joined hands with their African brothers who are today organizing and fighting back against their oppressors, determined to smash the system and live as free men.”¹⁸⁵ The article quoted Liberal Party British Parliamentarian Dingle Foot (who soon defected to the anti-apartheid Labour Party). He contended, and the CAA agreed, that “Dr. [Daniel] Malan [Prime Minister of South Africa] is building up a Fascist State in South Africa. His attitude towards the Native peoples is not very different from that of Hitler

¹⁸² Ibid, 3.

¹⁸³ Council on African Affairs, “‘Racism Threatens Us in South Africa as Here’ Petition,” 1952, Box 39 Folder - Organizations 1952 - Council on African Affairs - Petitions, Paul and Eslanda Robeson Papers; Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University, 2.

¹⁸⁴ Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 122–123; Duberman, *Paul Robeson*; Ellen Schrecker, *The Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History With Documents*, 2nd ed., The Bedford Series in History and Culture (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin’s Press, 2002).

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 4.

towards the Jews. They are to be condemned to a perpetually inferior status.”¹⁸⁶ With the atrocities of fascism fresh in American minds, this comparison between the harsh treatment of Africans in the apartheid system and the murderous social engineering of Nazism was deliberate. Hinting that South African people might face genocide in the 1950s, only a few years removed from World War II, was not meant to sensationalize the plight of unfortunate “Native peoples.” The haunting implication “of Hitler towards the Jews” advanced a political strategy established by the CAA during the previous decade, which was to focus the ideological commitment of its supporters and friends, above all else, on the racial oppression of people of African descent.¹⁸⁷

From the start, the *New Africa* tagline revealed much about the embryonic organization. It was “[d]edicated to new relations with Africa – for victory over fascism, and in the interest of the African people.”¹⁸⁸ In the early 1940s Freida Neugebauer edited the maiden newsletter whose masthead promised *News of Africa*.¹⁸⁹ Hunton carried forward her work as the head of *New Africa*, bringing his considerable research skills and deep knowledge of Africa to the updated periodical with an annual subscription cost of \$1. Penny Von Eschen praises Hunton’s pioneering editorship for it “enabled the CAA to publish extensive coverage of trade union and political organizing throughout Africa,

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Council on African Affairs, “‘What of AFRICA’S Place in Tomorrow’s World?’ Brochure”; “‘Join the Council on African Affairs’ Brochure”; n.d., Box 39 Folder- Organizations-Council on African Affairs Publications - Brochures, Paul and Eslanda Robeson Papers; Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

¹⁸⁸ William A. Hunton, ed., “New Africa,” October 1943, Box 39 Folder - Organizations, Council on African Affairs, *New Africa* July 15, 1942 - October 1944, Paul and Eslanda Robeson Papers; Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

¹⁸⁹ Frieda Neugebauer, ed., “News of Africa,” September 1, 1942, Box 39 Folder - Organizations, Council on African Affairs, *New Africa* July 15, 1942 - October 1944, Paul and Eslanda Robeson Papers; Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

with an emphasis on southern Africa, Nigeria, and the Gold Coast.”¹⁹⁰ Touting the most comprehensive coverage of Africa affairs available in the U.S., the CAA functioned as an information clearinghouse for “black American newspapers and journals, and later . . . United Nations delegates from several countries including the United States.”¹⁹¹

On the cover of a 1952 public petition the CAA decried “Racism Threatens Us in South Africa as Here”¹⁹² and implored “the President of the United States” to take stock of a photograph of South African protesters holding Defiance Campaign signs announcing “Votes for All,” “We Demand Freedom,” “Away with Passes,” and “Equal Pay for All.”¹⁹³ In her seminal *Black Power in South Africa: the Evolution of an Ideology*, Gail M. Gerhart summarizes the major currents of the Defiance Campaign in South Africa:

“In late July, 1951 the national executive committee of the ANC and the SAIC [South African Indian Congress] met and agreed to form a Joint Planning Council to coordinate preparations for a national campaign of civil disobedience. Representatives of the Franchise Action Council, an organization of Coloured in

¹⁹⁰ Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 60.

¹⁹¹ Ibid. Lynch concurs: “In the United States *New Africa* was certainly the single most important source of information and enlightened opinion on Africa” At its peak, the circulation surpassed three thousand at home and abroad, though “its influence was considerably larger . . . because it was subscribed to by church, labor, educational and political organizations, and was read by U. S. government officials.” Lynch, Cornell University, and Africana Studies and Research Center., *Black American Radicals and the Liberation of Africa*, 24.

¹⁹² Council on African Affairs, “‘Racism Threatens Us in South Africa as Here’ Petition,” 1952, Box 39 Folder - Organizations 1952 - Council on African Affairs - Petitions, Paul and Eslanda Robeson Papers; Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University, 1.

¹⁹³ Ibid, 1. “Actions followed in 1952 to support the Defiance Campaign of the ANC in South Africa. Hundreds of organisations became involved over the years; many independent and local but working with national organisations. African-American entities played an important role in the national movement and linked the Civil Rights Movement in the USA with anti-apartheid activities: “United States of America (USA) Anti-Apartheid Organisations/People,” *AAMA – Nelson Mandela Foundation*, 2014, <http://www.nelsonmandela.org/aama/country/category/united-states-of-america>. The CAA attempted to support the Defiance Campaign in cooperation with the newly established, pacifist transnational organization, Americans for South African Resistance (AFSAR). However, AFSAR never responded to the invitation and did not associate with this radical leftist organization, despite the intention of the collaboration.

the Cape, were also present and pledged support. The famous Defiance Campaign, modelled on Gandhian passive resistance, was launched the following June [1952]. ANC membership soared, and over 8,000 defiers, the vast majority of whom were Africans, courted arrest. Towards the end of the campaign top African and Indian leaders were arrested and stood trial together, charged under the Suppression of Communism Act. All were found guilty but received suspended sentences. While the campaign could not be counted a success in terms of its stated goals – the repeal of discriminatory laws – it was unquestionably the most impressive campaign ever organized by the ANC and served to forge its alliance with the SAIC into a permanent relationship.”¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴ Gail M. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, 105. Gerhart explains the impetus for the Defiance Campaign, she contends the post-War “ANC after 1949 underwent a major transformation.” ANC membership skyrocketed from “25,000 to 100,000” members, largely attributed to “the Defiance Campaign of 1952.” Most notably, “the foundation had been laid for a mass movement potentially capable of affecting national politics through the force of organized numbers.” Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, 89. East London located in the Eastern Cape Province, boasted “one of the strongest areas of civil disobedience in 1952.” Largely due to the “Africanist-inclined Youth Leaguers [who] led the Defiance Campaign” in that region, fostered by relationships that “developed between young ANC activists and nationalist students at Fort Hare.” Lodge contends that police threatened local organization by interrupting gatherings, and sparking conflict which led “to riots and deaths.” Lodge, *Sharpeville*, 38. A common strategy used during and after the Defiance Campaign was to have “a conspicuously evident local police presence [to] discourage any local political activity.” Lodge, *Sharpeville*, 82. In response, mostly “prompted by fear of reprisals,” thousands of people “left the East London townships, and the ANC’s . . . popular base collapsed.” Lodge, *Sharpeville*, 38. Despite these government tactics, “Timid attitudes toward mass action were gone, and in their place had grown a determination to use the power of African numbers – in strikes, and other demonstrations of strength – to wring changes out of white South Africa.” Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, 89. ANC leadership, like Nelson Mandela, “visualized” that the government would respond to mass action by repealing discriminatory laws, giving “everybody in this country,” the right to vote. They assumed, whites would use their votes to insist on change, saying “we can’t go on with a government like this.” Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, 96. Like Mandela, Walter Sisulu had felt optimistic that there would be a “swing away from white extremism.” Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, 97. Instead, white repression intensified in the coming decades. Robert M. Sobukwe, an African nationalist and one of the leaders of the ANC Youth League, did not support the Defiance Campaign of 1952. Indeed, “he was critical of the Defiance Campaign, dismissing it as a ‘communist stunt’, professing distrust of its intention because African Nationalists ‘had not had a hand in planning it and the decision making was not theirs’.” Lodge, *Sharpeville*, 51. Sobukwe was later elected as the first president of the Pan African Congress (PAC); which was decidedly African-centered and did not embrace an ANC-style, multi-racial ideology. Lodge, *Sharpeville*, 48.

Explicit comparisons were also made between black urban communities that recently endured racist violence in the U.S. and South Africa: “It’s not as far as you think from Cicero, Illinois to Odendaalsrust, South Africa, where police recently machine-gunned African men and women.”¹⁹⁵ This and other language reminded black Americans that there were ties that bound them to black South Africans. Finally, this petition encouraged black Americans to heed the mobilization of “ten million African and other darker people of South Africa, by their Campaign of Defiance of Unjust Laws [who by their example] are contributing directly to OUR struggle for democratic rights and peace.”¹⁹⁶ Eslanda Robeson had her own interpretations of the “South African People’s Struggle.”¹⁹⁷ She elaborated on the “Women of Africa in Vanguard of Liberation Struggle” whose “Campaign of Defiance of Unjust Laws in South Africa” entailed “[h]undreds of [w]omen [taking] part in the heroic challenge of the country’s white-supremacy code. These African and Indian

¹⁹⁵ Council on African Affairs, “‘Racism Threatens Us in South Africa as Here’ Petition.” A resurgence of white mob violence was seen in American towns and cities after World War II. On July 11, 1951, a white mob of more than 4000 attacked an apartment building in Cicero, Illinois that housed a black family who had just begun to move in; war veteran Harvey Clark and his family were threatened and forced to leave by white local officials including police. This “race riot” that erupted in this Chicago suburb soon after a middle-class black family moved into an all-white residential area, was televised. Unlike similar riots of the 1940s, white mob violence was seen around the world. Odendaalsrust, located in the Free State province of South Africa, which is where the 1946 black miners’ strike was crushed by the South African government forces using live ammunition and batons against unarmed workers. For more on the racist violence in Cicero, see: Walter White, “‘This Is Cicero,’” *Crisis* 58, 7 (1951): 434-440; violent crackdown of black miners’ in 1946 South Africa: T. Dunbar Moodie, “The Moral Economy of the Black Miners’ Strike of 1946,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* Vol. 13, No. 1 (Oct., 1986), pp. 1-35.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. See also: Max Yergan, “Letter to Dr. Frazier, October 24, 1946,” October 24, 1946, Box 131-30 Folder 5, E. Franklin Frazier Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

¹⁹⁷ See also, Ransby, *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson*, 144.

women [gave] the raised-thumb 'Afrika' salute[,] volunteered in the Campaign[,] and served prison sentences.”¹⁹⁸

CAA leadership had long considered parallels between civil rights activism and racism in the United States and South Africa. Indeed, from the CAA's inception, South Africa was a focal point of its anti-racist and anticolonial foreign policy priorities. As efforts to address these concerns diplomatically, first through the State Department and later through the United Nations, faltered, the CAA moved toward a more militant strategy that clashed with Cold War politics.¹⁹⁹ These radical activists, understood raising issues about race and racism on an international stage had become synonymous with “un-American” and “Communist”, which angered the cold-warmongers, who in turn retaliated. Moreover, the CAA's uncritical stance on the Soviet Union exacerbated its problems.

Executive director Yergan, long considered a “fellow-traveler” first sought to show “neutrality” and move the organization in a direction more palatable to a government that benefited from “neutralizing” discordant voices. His shift led to a rift within the CAA. Yergan acquiesced to Cold War politics, leaving the CAA, taking a sharp right to become a leading conservative voice advocating anti-communism. His co-founders and CAA leadership, the Robesons, Hunton, and W.E.B. Du Bois, remained committed to anti-racist policies in the U.S. and throughout Africa, especially South

¹⁹⁸ Council on African Affairs, “Women of Africa in Vanguard of Liberation Struggle,” *Spotlight on Africa*, April 20, 1954, XIII edition, Box 39 Folder - “Spotlight on Africa” – 1948- 1955, Paul and Eslanda Robeson Papers; Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

¹⁹⁹ Ransby, *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson*, 144. During the war years, the CAA lobbied the State Department attempting diplomatic strategies on Africa; after the war, they were hopeful that the newly formed United Nations would affect a change and focused much of its efforts there

Africa. As U.S., South Africa alliances strengthened, the CAA became even more outspoken about America's complicity with South Africa's extreme repression of black South Africans. Indeed, in 1948 as the newly elected Nationalist Party formalized its segregationist policies, under a formal system of Apartheid, the world objected and so did the CAA. Saul DuBow contends, "[t]hroughout the cold war, and beyond, the iniquity of apartheid was one of the moral and political issues that countries, large and small, aligned and non-aligned, could mostly agree on."²⁰⁰ For this, Joseph McCarthy set out to destroy the organization and its leaders, for once and for all.

Cold War 'Witch Hunts', Black American Churches, and the Council on African Affairs

DANFORTH: Did you ever see anyone with the devil?

PROCTOR: I did not.

DANFORTH: Proctor, you mistake me. I am not empowered to trade your life for a lie. You have most certainly seen some person with the Devil. Mister Proctor, a score of people have already testified they

saw this woman with the devil...

PROCTOR: I speak my own sins, I cannot judge another.

Excerpt from *The Crucible*, By Arthur

Miller²⁰¹

In Arthur Miller's play, *The Crucible*, people are falsely accused of being with the devil and are swiftly brought before the courts to be judged. One of the central characters, John Proctor is asked to confess to seeing people with the devil. Danforth presses Proctor to name names, but Proctor refused to sign a confession to avoid execution. His friend

²⁰⁰ Saul Dubow, "Smuts, the United Nations and the Rhetoric of Race and Rights," *Journal of Contemporary History* 43, no. 1 (January 1, 2008): 45.

²⁰¹ Arthur Miller, *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts* (New York, N.Y.: Penguin Classics, 2003).

Hale warns him that he will “hang” if he doesn’t sign the confession. Proctor refuses. He is executed.

The Crucible, written in 1953 is a colonial-era drama ostensibly about the Salem witch trials, but it is really Miller’s take on McCarthyism during the Red Scare. Indeed, “*The Crucible* dramatized the phrase that was popularly being used to describe the Congressional hearings” on un-American activities, as “witch hunts.”²⁰² The Robesons, Hunton, Du Bois and other CAA supporters were targets of these “witch hunts” and while they persevered, Cold War politics took a toll on these anti-racist, anticolonial warriors.²⁰³

The U.S. government constructed a “sense of urgency that surrounded the issue of communism” in an “attempt to mobilize public opinion for the cold war.”²⁰⁴ In *The Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History With Documents*, Ellen Schrecker contends, “Projecting their own fears and insecurities onto a demonized “Other,” many Americans have found convenient scapegoats among the powerless minorities within their midst. Native Americans, blacks, Catholics, immigrants--all, at one time or another, embodied the threat of internal

²⁰² Henry Popkin, “Arthur Miller’s ‘The Crucible,’” *College English* 26, no. 2 (November 1, 1964): 140, doi:10.2307/373665. In his introduction to *The Crucible*, Christopher Bigsby points out two moments in which the government sought to apologize for its participation in the 1692 Salem witch hunts. In 1711 some victims were actually paid restitution, based on the Massachusetts General Court “declaring the proceeds to be the result of popular hysterical fear of the Devil.” [p. vii *The Crucible*] Centuries later, a 1957 resolution noted “more civilized laws had superseded those under which the accused had been tried.” [p. vii *The Crucible*] Unfortunately for the victims of 1940s and 1950s McCarthyism, there was no such apology and certainly no restitution for the loss of careers, finances, and lives.

²⁰⁴ Ellen Schrecker, “About McCarthyism,” academic, *Modern American Poetry*, (n.d.), <http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/mccarthy/mccarthy.htm>; Schrecker, *The Age of McCarthyism*. See “Communism and National Security: The Menace Emerges” – by Ellen Schrecker – from *The Age of McCarthyism* (chapter 3) <http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/mccarthy/schreker1.htm>.

subversion.”²⁰⁵ Individuals or organizations who put forth different perspectives on domestic or transnational issues, risked scrutiny and harassment, which for many kept them quiet. Black people who spoke of domestic racism, especially so, on an international stage, faced repercussions. Schrecker contends, “by the twentieth century, the American ‘Other’ had become politicized and increasingly identified with communism.”²⁰⁶ Black, radical, outspoken, anticolonialist and anti-racist, the leaders of the CAA, had indeed become the “demonized other”.

THE BLACK FAITH COMMUNITY and THE COLD WAR

How members of the black faith community managed to acknowledge and sustain CAA interest in Africa remains an unanswered question. What is better understood are the roles of black (and white) leaders in the NAACP who backed away from the organization that Yergan, the Robesons, and Hunton built throughout the 1940s and 1950s.²⁰⁷ The CAA was seen as a subversive front that opposed racial injustice at home in order to stir anti-colonial protests abroad, particularly in South Africa. This apartheid country was the new Cold War “Western” ally of the United States on a continent that was seen to be vulnerable to anti-Western Soviet propaganda.²⁰⁸ Plummer also argues that the CAA is enveloped in the superpower rivalry, if on Soviet terms. She describes the organization as having a “secular, Marxist orientation” that lacked the “Christian

²⁰⁵ Schrecker, “About McCarthyism”; Schrecker, *The Age of McCarthyism*. See “Communism and National Security: The Menace Emerges” – by Ellen Schrecker – from *The Age of McCarthyism* (chapter 3) <http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/mccarthy/schreker1.htm>.

²⁰⁶ Schrecker, “About McCarthyism”; Schrecker, *The Age of McCarthyism*. See “*The Growth of the Anti-Communist Network*” <http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/mccarthy/schrecker2.htm>

²⁰⁷ Yergan left by 1948 after the rift, Hunton joined in 1943; the Robesons were affiliated from its inception in 1937 through its dissolution in 1955.

²⁰⁸ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and The Color Line*, 73.

pacifism and nonviolent civil disobedience,” acceptable during the early Cold War period.²⁰⁹ However, the CAA rested on other fundamental values, too, and these values were nurtured on American soil.

An atmosphere rife with suspicion and accusations of subversiveness did not deter some outspoken black clergy who supported the CAA. Sometimes subjected to interrogation or government harassment, these clergy and their members remained loyal to the CAA. Radical in their own right, this did not hinder black clergy from continuing to speak out about the injustices committed against black Americans and Africans. Longtime CAA supporter, the Reverend Ben Richardson’s scheduled anti-bias lecture, in 1945, was cancelled amid accusations of un-Americanism; “the cancellation it is said followed protests lodged by the Catholic War Veterans that one of the speakers was “un-American and a subversive propagandist.”²¹⁰ The accusation was made against Richardson, a columnist for the *People’s Voice* and an associate editor of *The Protestant*, who was invited to deliver one of the lectures on April 27.”²¹¹ Ironically, his lecture titled “America overcomes bigotry” was part of a program for employees of the United States Employment Service War Manpower Commission. Richardson challenged the accusations against him and pointed out that “his work deals with combatting anti-

²⁰⁹ Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 233. Americans for South African Resistance (AFSAR), predecessor of the American Committee on Africa (ACOA), founded in 1952 was more palatable than the leftist CAA. Similar in mission to the CAA except ACOA was founded and led by an interracial group of pacifist, clergy.

²¹⁰ B. D. R. Richards, “N. Y. Anti-Bias Lectures Dropped: PV Religious Writer Called Un-American,” *The Afro American - Google News Archive Search*, April 14, 1945, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=2211&dat=19450414&id=TB0mAAAAIBAJ&sjid=wP0FAAAAI BAJ&pg=3335,4101510>, 10.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

Semitism.” An influential church leader, he asserted that “I assure you that the Protestant does intend to take action.”²¹²

Church Support in a Cold War Climate

In spite of the work being accomplished, Robeson was still a target because of his beliefs. This is evidenced by an attack on the multi-racial audience attending a Robeson concert in Peekskill, New York in 1949. Robeson was supported by members of the black clergy who joined CAA officers and others in signing an October 12, 1949 letter to President Truman asserting that “A criminal assault was made against the American people and their rights at Peekskill, New York, on the night of August 27, 1949. The criminal attack was repeated a week later on Sunday, September 4, in the same locality.”²¹³ The letter concluded by insisting “We are convinced that the time has come to put an end to this cold war against the American people; the time has come to utilize the agencies of our [government] in actual fact toward promoting democracy at home and peace abroad. The eyes of the world are upon you, Mr. President.”²¹⁴ In preparation for this important letter to President Truman, on behalf of the CAA officers, Hunton invited people to “join them in sending an open letter to President Truman expressing our demand that there must be no more Peekskill outrages. The text of the letter is enclosed herewith. You are no doubt familiar with the main facts of what happened on August 27th and September 4th at

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Paul Robeson, William A. Hunton, and W. E. B Du Bois, “Open Letter to President Truman,” October 12, 1949, Box 39 Folder - Organizations, Council on African Affairs, Correspondence, Paul and Eslanda Robeson Papers; Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

²¹⁴ Ibid, 2.

Peekskill, New York.” They went on to describe the attacks on the Robeson concert goers.²¹⁵ In closing they suggest:

Such is a brief recital of the Peekskill story as it stands as of September 15th. The end is not yet. What happens next depends on you and other Americans. The Council on African affairs, along with other organizations is taking action on this matter because it regards what happened at Peekskill as the most threatening sign of emerging fascism in the United States which has thus far made itself visible. Unless we all act in protest against this danger we face the complete fascist suppression of Negro people, other minorities, and all individuals and groups which speak out for the protection of our constitutional liberties, for full [sp] and equal rights for all peoples and for peace.²¹⁶

As was their modus operandi, the CAA provides the facts as they see them and reach out to their supporters and members to join them in taking action. In this case, black clergy joined CAA officers and others in signing the letter to President Truman. James Horace of Chicago and the Reverend Charles A. Hill of Detroit joined fellow clergy from New York, including the Reverend G. Chilton Christian, Arch Bishop Edwin H. Collins, the Reverend John Derr Jr.; the Reverend Charles C. S. England, the Reverend Edler Hawkins, and Bishop D. Ward Nichols.²¹⁷

Many of the black American clergy supporting the CAA were well-educated with progressive views, some even radical. A few years after its founding, Ebenezer Moravian Church became Union Congregational Church, changing its denomination because “this connection offered “a more liberal attitude and greater opportunity for growth and

²¹⁵ William A. Hunton, “Invitation to Join in Peekskill Letter to Truman,” September 16, 1949, Box 39 Folder - Organizations, Council on African Affairs, Correspondence, Paul and Eslanda Robeson Papers; Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University, 1.

²¹⁶ Ibid, 2.

²¹⁷ Robeson, Hunton, and Du Bois, “Open Letter to President Truman,” 2.

service.”²¹⁸ By 1950, Union Congregational Church , “Under the pastorage [sic] of [CAA supporter] Dr. Perry, the church is now one of Harlem’s established religious bodies, with a children training center and a membership of 700.”²¹⁹ These Black church people enabled the CAA and its leaders to survive and prevail during a time of rampant evils, whether one accepted the argument for or against communism. The Reverend Edward D. McGowan, a black American Methodist minister, spoke before the National Fraternal Council of Churches (NFCC) at its 1953 conference, declaring support for “the defense of all Negro leaders who are attacked,” by McCarthy. McGowan, made clear “no one else can tell me what I must think or believe about this great leader [i.e. Paul Robeson] of the Negro people.”²²⁰ Robeson’s outspoken support of anti-racism and his strong religious background gained him trust and respect in the black church community. Perhaps it was within the context of US government hypocrisy on democracy and civil rights, that clergy could ignore or discount his pro-Soviet views.

As Cold War anticommunism raged, some black clergy, like other groups, distanced themselves from the CAA and its leadership. When considering celebrities to include on the commemorative placard for the “forthcoming seventy-fifth anniversary of emancipation,” Robeson’s name had appeared for possible inclusion; however, strong

²¹⁸ James H. Hogans, “Union Congregational Marks 30th Anniversary,” *New York Age*, April 1, 1950, 14, <http://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%201/New%20York%20NY%20Age/New%20York%20NY%20Age%201950-1952%20%20Grayscale/New%20York%20NY%20Age%201950-1952%20%20Grayscale%20%200021.pdf>.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, 410.

anti-communist sentiments surfaced among some black clergy who were on the anniversary committee.²²¹

Yet Robeson remained a very popular artist and activist who was seen as someone who cared about ordinary people. Following the Peekskill incident, the CAA arranged a U.S. tour in which Robeson set out to perform, as well as, “saying a few words about things.”²²² While many wanted to hear Robeson sing, they did not want to engage in political discourse; cancellations followed. Alternative arrangements were made and the black community showed up in large numbers, new venues included churches, such as Chicago’s “Tabernacle Baptist Church on the South Side (where the bulk of Chicago’s black population lived).”²²³ The pastor Dr. Louis Rawls, “a man of deeply conservative religious and political values, had not hesitated to open his church to Robeson.”²²⁴ Duberman adds, Rawls recalled “I saw no reason...why this church that serves the community should not allow *these* people to come in. Who are we to judge? They say Robeson ‘believes in Communism.’ Now, he never told me that. He said he wants freedom.”²²⁵ Further, “Rawls not only agreed to lend his church, but also reduced the usual fee from \$150 to \$75.”²²⁶ Duberman argues that generally the “ordinary” black community regardless of affiliation was not against Robeson; he asserts that “some prominent black pastors and national leaders,” perhaps.²²⁷ Indeed, black American

²²¹ Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, 226 - 227.

²²² Ibid, 375-376.

²²³ Ibid, 375.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid, 375 -376.

²²⁶ Ibid, 376.

²²⁷ Ibid.

churches followed through by taking many of these concrete actions in support of the CAA and its leadership, in spite of the possibility of government backlash.

Detroit was a city that did not turn its back on Robeson. “Even as McCarthyite repression destroyed Robeson's acting and singing career in the 1950s, African American churches in Detroit stood by him. They may have felt that they owed him a debt of gratitude. Robeson had earned credibility “during the late 1930s and early 1940s, [he] visited Detroit on behalf of the autoworkers attempting to organize the union at Ford Motor Company. Robeson performed at local churches and theaters and in an outdoor rally of tens of thousands of city residents at Cadillac Square. Robeson was instrumental in building popular support for the workers' cause.”²²⁸

Through these early contacts, support and loyalty were built and remained over the years. Wheeler said, “When he couldn't travel and he couldn't sing, the Black churches in Detroit welcomed Paul Robeson. The Black churches did not succumb to the threats of the government.”²²⁹ In 1953, Robeson spoke and sang to an audience of “6,000 at Sacred Cross Baptist Church in Detroit.”²³⁰

To stem the tide of some of the negative publicity the CAA received during the “Red Scare,” black clergy assisted by hosting meetings and discussions designed to counter misinformation about the CAA and its leadership. In 1951, the Reverend Charles A. Hill, a Detroit based minister and activist, encouraged his “friends” to attend an event hosted at his home to hear Paul Robeson “discuss the issues which relate to his position”

²²⁸ Joel Wendland, “Detroit Exhibition Celebrates Paul Robeson’s Life,” *PA Political Affairs*, January 23, 2008, <http://www.politicalaffairs.net/detroit-exhibition-celebrates-paul-robesson-s-life/>.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

²³⁰ Foner, *Paul Robeson Speaks*, 41. This event was sponsored by Freedom Associates of Detroit.

and to “come and see whether he is an enemy or a friend to our Country, to real Democracy.”²³¹ Hill defended Robeson exclaiming, “this man, who has given up a most lucrative career in an effort to fight for our freedom, and against Discrimination and Segregation, and Second Class Citizenship for the Negro, deserves a chance to compete with the press and radio for your attention and understanding.”²³² The Reverend Hill continued to support Robeson, despite the accusations against him; indeed, “Detroit was one of the few places where he was invited to speak. Rev. Hill’s support of Robeson was one of the activities that resulted in Hill’s being called before the House Un-American Activities Committee.”²³³ Hill was also listed as an “Amici Curiae” in a brief arguing for Paul Robeson’s appeal for his passport to be reissued.²³⁴ Rev. Hill joined CAA leadership and other members in the Amici Curiae including “Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois, Dr. Alphaeus Hunton, Dr. Herbert Aptheker, Eslanda Goode Robeson, Dr. Samuel Sillen, Rev. Charles Hill, and others.”²³⁵ Their friendship continued years after the CAA folded; in 1963 Hill, still the pastor of Hartford Avenue Baptist Church, sent birthday wishes to Robeson and praised him for his work and asserted, “Someday America will wake up and realize the disservice she rendered by trying to crush one so outstanding.”²³⁶

²³¹ Charles A. Hill, “Letter of Invitation to Friends to Meet with Paul Robeson,” January 31, 1951, Box 1 Folder 2, Charles A. Hill Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ “Reverend Charles A. Hill,” *Detroit Free Press*, 1986, Box 1 Folder 2, Charles A. Hill Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

²³⁴ Friedman, Milton H. et al, “United States Court of Appeals, District of Columbia - Motion For Leave to File Brief and Brief Amici Curiae” (The Hecia Press: New York, n.d.), Box 131 - 14 Folder - Correspondence O - R, E. Franklin Frazier Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Charles A. Hill, “Birthday Wishes to Paul Robeson,” May 1, 1963, Box 1 Folder 2, Charles A. Hill Collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

Like black church people in Detroit, Harlem, and clergy from cities like Philadelphia, supported Robeson and the CAA during its most challenging and difficult years. William H. Gray Jr., Editor-Manager of the Philadelphia Afro-American and also the new pastor of Bright Hope Baptist Church in North Philadelphia, challenged a decision to exclude Robeson from an NBC program.²³⁷ A month later, on March 22, 1950, Gray wrote a letter of concern to Miss Christina Casserty Press Department National Broadcasting Company (NBC) regarding not allowing Paul Robeson to participate in a television program with Mrs. Roosevelt. Gray urged “I hope you will not take offence in my expressing the humble opinion that I feel that the National Broadcasting Company has made a most tragic mistake in not allowing Mr. Paul Robeson an opportunity to appear with other Negro leaders on the reported program previously planned for March 19 for Mrs. Roosevelt.”²³⁸ Gray insisted, “A great institution such as yours should be the bulwark for safeguarding the freedoms guaranteed in our great Constitution and certainly should not be swayed by emotional outbursts or personality conflicts to make decisions that can only inevitably lead to division and disruption among the peoples of our nation.”²³⁹ Duberman contends that the announcement of Robeson’s participation on the show, by Roosevelt’s son Elliot, was pounced on with so many “hostile phone calls” to NBC that “he might just as well have announced the imminent

²³⁷ Gray was the “past President of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) in Tallahassee, Florida, assumed the pulpit at Bright Hope Baptist Church,” in February 1950. Bright Hope Baptist is a prominent black American church in Philadelphia. “Bright Hope Baptist Church - Our History,” *Bright Hope Church History*, accessed February 15, 2014, <http://www.brighthopebaptist.org/page.php?id=30>.

²³⁸ William H. Gray Jr., “Letter to Miss Christina Casserty, NBC,” March 22, 1950, Box 39 Folder - Organizations, Council on African Affairs, Correspondence, Paul and Eslanda Robeson Papers; Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

²³⁹ *Ibid.* Rev. Gray was the father of the late Congressman William H. Gray III.

appearance of the devil.”²⁴⁰ Though Robeson was not included in the program, Gray’s example, demonstrates the determination of some black American clergy to assert their beliefs in fairness and justice regardless of looming threats of being labeled evil and “un-American.”

In his synopsis of why many in the black American church supported Robeson and believed he was not a Communist, Martin Duberman explains, “the churchgoing black masses were not automatically put off – as so many white churchgoers were – by accusations that Robeson was a “godless” Communist.”²⁴¹ The black church community knew, Robeson would have long been “hailed into court under the Smith Act,” if J. Edgar Hoover had any solid evidence that Robeson “was a ‘Communist’ with a capital ‘C’.”²⁴² He understands that “to the average black church goer, working for civil rights was an integral and proper part of the church’s business.”²⁴³ With a strong religious family background, a singer of the spirituals, and a willingness to sacrifice his career for the cause of liberation/justice, Robeson had credibility in the black American church community. Indeed, his life’s work reflected a moral imperative to address society’s injustices.

FRIENDS TURN AWAY

Many mainstream activists succumbed to the fear generated by the Red Scare. This was true for some of the CAAs female supporters. Gore reminds us that the number of black women affiliated with “CP-affiliated organizations [like the CAA] had shrunk

²⁴⁰ Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, 384.

²⁴¹ Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, 410.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 410.

²⁴³ Duberman, *Paul Robeson*.

dramatically” by the 1950s. She explained, “many black women activists, from Mary McLeod Bethune, national leader and founder of the National Council of Negro Women, to the more radical-leaning Ella Baker, conceded to the pressures of Cold War anticommunism and distanced themselves from communist associations.”²⁴⁴ Scholars like Carol Anderson and Eric Arnesen remind us that black leaders also disagreed with Robeson’s silence on Soviet Union policies and practices that were antithetical to his stated beliefs, such as “the Kremlin’s harrowing plans for [three African countries] Libya, Eritrea, and Somalia.”²⁴⁵ Therefore, motivations to disengage with the CAA also had to do with ideological differences.

The post-war anticommunist, anti-Soviet Union stance of the Truman administration challenged anti-colonial, anti-racism activist groups like the CAA, with accusations of being leftist, communist sympathizers, and therefore, un-American because they protested American domestic and international policies detrimental to blacks in the U.S. and internationally . “In 1947, the Truman Doctrine had made it clear that the United States would not tolerate criticism of its foreign policy while it was engaged in a struggle with the Soviet Union for the “hearts and minds” of newly decolonized countries in Africa and Asia.”²⁴⁶ Further, Truman appealed to moderate civil

²⁴⁴ Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads*, 4; See also, Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision*, Gender and American Culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, c2003).

²⁴⁵ Carol Anderson, *Bourgeois Radicals: The NAACP and the Struggle for Colonial Liberation, 1941-1960* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 145; See also Eric Arnesen, “Civil Rights and the Cold War at Home: Postwar Activism, Anti-Communism, and the Decline of the Left,” *American Communist History* 11, no. 1 (2012): 5–44.

²⁴⁶ Francis Njubi Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans Against Apartheid, 1946-1994* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004). Barbara Ransby argues, though Baker “never collaborated with government agencies to persecute alleged communists,” she was subject to FBI surveillance “throughout the 1950s.” Despite her hard fought efforts to stay above the anticommunist fray, during the

rights organizations like the NAACP, CORE, and the Urban League by agreeing “with civil rights concessions while marginalizing and eventually criminalizing leftist groups such as the CAA and the National Negro Congress.”²⁴⁷ This effectively created major cleavages between moderate and leftist groups, focusing attention away from the plight of colonized African people. Accused of subversive activities, the CAA and its leadership endured attacks, bannings, and being blacklisted by the government, organizations, and blacks and whites who had been earlier supporters. Never found guilty of actual misconduct, Robeson would become the victim of the times because of his leadership of the CAA and his “out spoken criticism of undemocratic aspects of American life.”²⁴⁸ Indeed, “Robeson was one of the first public figures to be victimized by the politics of fear and repression that swept America in the post-war years.”²⁴⁹ Ransby provides a cogent argument asking, “Why was Paul Robeson perceived as being such a threat to political elites in the United States that he had to be monitored, contained, and attacked so roundly when he spoke out?”²⁵⁰ She answers:

late 1950s Baker did cooperate “with the NAACP officials when the national organization began to purge communists from the organization.” Ransby, *Ella Baker*, 160

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Lynch, Cornell University, and Africana Studies and Research Center., *Black American Radicals and the Liberation of Africa*, 34.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, 34.

²⁵⁰ Ransby, *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson, 192*. Because the issues and often the context in which Robeson was speaking represented the CAA, Ransby’s comments are also applicable within the context of the CAA; while she begins with 1949, the HUAC “was created in 1938 to investigate alleged disloyalty and subversive activities on the part of private citizens, public employees, and those organizations suspected of having Communist ties. Reorganized from its previous incarnations as the Fish Committee and the McCormack-Dickstein Committee and with a new chairman, the cantankerous Martin Dies of Texas, HUAC’s strident attacks on the Roosevelt administration prior to the outbreak of the war did not suit the political mood of a nation that was largely in favor of [FDR’s](#) leadership. All that changed, however, in the postwar atmosphere of fear and contempt for the Soviet Union, at which time HUAC’s activities commanded broad popular support and consistently attracted major headlines.” Teaching Eleanor Roosevelt Glossary – The House Un-American Activities Committee

In 1949, the U.S. government under President Truman was eager to promote America's political and economic interests abroad, and an image of America as a multi-racial haven for democracy and freedom was central to that effort. In the competition with the Soviet Union for sympathizers and allies in the newly (or nearly) independent nations of Asia and Africa, one of America's great advantages was the fiction it had to peddle about a land of milk and honey for all. America's long history of racism and discrimination against peoples of color within its borders tarnished that image to say the least. And Paul Robeson was not only speaking about the reality of race in America with eloquence and effectiveness to an enormous international fan base but, moreover, painting a positive portrait of America's main economic and ideological rival. Perhaps not surprising, the U.S. government considered this combined message to be dangerously subversive.²⁵¹

Yergan became the counterpoint to all that Robeson represented. Indeed, he would travel around the world spewing anti-communism and anti-Soviet Union rhetoric on behalf of the U.S. Called upon to represent the U.S., Yergan would travel extensively giving speeches, interviews, writing articles, and defending himself against his more liberal critics. Ellen Schrecker, in the *Age of McCarthyism*, contends, "over time, even those men and women who had originally been leftists of one kind or another end up on the far right."²⁵² Yergan complied with the times.

Despite the image that the Truman administration wished to portray about race in America, the truth was during the war and post-war period, "few white Americans

<http://www.gwu.edu/~erpapers/teaching/glossary/huac.cfm>; See also Ellen Schrecker, *The Age of McCarthyism*, for more on HUAC post-War dynamics. She contends, congressional committees like the HUAC "most typified the McCarthy era" serving as "the most important vehicle for extending the anti-Communist crusade throughout the rest of society." Shifting from its focus on Roosevelt, to the broader society "their activities and the publicity they generated transformed what had initially been a devastating but nonetheless narrowly focused attack on a small political party and its adherents into a wide-ranging campaign that touched almost every aspect of American life." Congressional Committees and Unfriendly Witnesses – by Ellen Schrecker <http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/mccarthy/schrecker4.htm> .

²⁵¹ Ibid, 192.

²⁵² Schrecker, "About McCarthyism"; Schrecker, *The Age of McCarthyism*. "The Growth of the Anti-Communist Network", by Ellen Schrecker, from chapter 2: Ellen Schrecker, *The Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: St. Martin's Press, 1994) accessed January 2015; <http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/mccarthy/schrecker2.htm>

imagined African self-government as a viable option in the foreseeable future. Among white racial attitudes combined with economic and strategic considerations,” white America would see European ahead of African interests.²⁵³ Borstelmann argues that unlike white Americans, “black Americans...strongly supported the independence of colonies in Africa and everywhere else.”²⁵⁴ For black Americans, because of commonalities in experiences “independence in Africa would weaken logic of continued white supremacy in the United States, as black people demonstrated their ability to govern themselves.”²⁵⁵ Though criticized for their unrelenting fight against colonialism and racism at home and abroad, the CAA voiced what others were afraid to say. In turn, CAA leadership would suffer personal consequences.

One of the most damaging direct actions taken by the State Department, revoking Robeson’s passport in 1950, had lasting financial and emotional repercussions. His greatly diminished income affected his personal and professional life and the CAA because he was no longer able to contribute as much to the CAA. The CAA sought to counter some of these attacks through leaflets, newsletters, and public forums. In 1950 the Madison Square Garden Corporation “banned a concert and rally featuring Paul Robeson....after agreeing to lease the Garden to the Council on African Affairs for [the] September 14” event.²⁵⁶ The CAA complained, “The State Department has stopped Paul Robeson from travelling abroad. Now his right to be heard in his own country is threatened. Why? Because the dispensers of war-madness and red-baiting hysteria are

²⁵³ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and The Color Line*, 41.

²⁵⁴ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and The Color Line*.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Council on African Affairs, “Freedom of Speech?? Madison Square Garden Says ‘No!’,” September 1950, Box 131-30 Folder 7, E. Franklin Frazier Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

fearful of the things Paul Robeson stand for and the people he speaks for. They are fearful of mankind's deep desire for peace. They are fearful of the freedom aspirations of the Negro people in America. They are fearful of the independence demands and struggles of the colonial peoples of Africa and Asia."²⁵⁷ They encouraged citizens to "JOIN OUR DEMONSTRATION! SUPPORT THE RIGHT OF FREE SPEECH AND ASSEMBLY! PROTEST TO THE GARDEN AGAINST THIS BAN!" They also encouraged supporters to write their senators and the President to "defeat all police-state measures now before Congress."²⁵⁸

The state's labeling of the CAA as a subversive organization affected its ability to align and interact with black leaders who had been supportive in the past. Also, during this period the CAA was shunned by other anti-apartheid organizations. When the CAA approached Americans for South African Resistance (AFSAR) about building an alliance to support the ANC's Defiance Campaign of 1952, AFSAR rejected the offer and moved forward without collaborating with the CAA in its solidarity with South African protesters.²⁵⁹ AFSAR, whose leaders established the ACOA in 1953, were unabashedly anti-communist and requested assurances from the ANC that communists did not dominate their organization

Many notable black scholars, civil rights leaders, and clergy who were engaged with the CAA before and during the war, bowed out of invitations and distanced themselves from the organization and its leaders. Intensified scrutiny by the Un-

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 233.

American committee, which ruthlessly investigated individuals and organizations voicing concern about racial issues in the U.S. and who espoused anti-colonialism in Africa, and especially, to those who showed support of the Soviet Union made affiliating with the CAA risky. In this regard, the CAA and Robeson were targeted. Robeson remarks that although his views had not changed, he noted that black American leaders who had embraced him (and the CAA) early on when he supported the Soviet Union, now denounced him. He elaborates, “I had expressed a keen interest in the life and culture of the African peoples and a deep concern for their liberation before the “cold war” brought about a different atmosphere, those broader interests of mine were considered by Negroes to be quite admirable.”²⁶⁰ He further mentions the Spingarn Award he received from the NAACP, the “honorary degree by Morehouse College of Atlanta,” and the fact that during the acceptance of these awards he made positive comments about the people of the Soviet Union.²⁶¹ Before, and especially so, during the period in which Robeson was accused, but never charged, of being a communist sympathizer, mainstream black American leaders and organizations like the NAACP dropped their support and in fact, became outspoken critics of Robeson and the CAA. The NAACP was most publically concerned with domestic issues, seeking favor with the US government hoping for civil rights gains at home.²⁶² Truman responded well to “support from anti-communist African

²⁶⁰ Robeson, *Here I Stand*, 29.

²⁶¹ Ibid.30; Friedman, Milton H. et al, “Brief Amici Curiae, 12 - 13”

²⁶² Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 73, 87–89. In *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement*, Barbara Ransby contends that during the 1950 “National Emergency Civil Rights Mobilization in Washington, D.C.” in which the primary stated goal was to exert pressure on President Truman “on pending civil rights initiatives.” Ransby, *Ella Baker*, 150. To make their agenda more palatable to Truman’s administration, the NAACP officially distanced themselves from left-leaning allies and ideologies. During the January mobilization event and the annual conference, statements emphasizing its

American leaders like Walter White,” by not categorizing the NAACP with radical leftist groups like the CAA. After all, Truman owed blacks for his margin of victory and responded by setting up race commissions.

Robeson’s fraternity brothers also criticized him during a 1950 Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity meeting in Harlem; “several of those present reproved Robeson to his face for ‘not having been with us when you were at the height of your career,’ and one lawyer ... openly attacked him on the issue of Communism, Roberson simply responded (as [his friend Aaron] Wells recalls his words), “you know, brothers, you are really hitting at the wrong enemy. I am not your enemy. You’re hitting in the wrong direction.”²⁶³

White liberal progressives did the same; Lillian Hellman who had participated in a CAA rally with Robeson in 1942, was no exception. Not only black Americans, but “many whites... including some who called themselves political radicals were afraid to be in Robeson’s company. Helen Rosen recalls that Lillian Hellman upbraided her fiercely for having Paul as a fellow dinner guest, insisting his presence put them all in danger since the FBI was known to be following his movements.”²⁶⁴

Although some mainstream blacks distanced themselves during the postwar years, some remained loyal until the organization’s dissolution and throughout Robeson’s life.

“nonpartisan, non-leftist movement rejecting the persistent proffers of ‘cooperation’ and ‘assistance’ made by individuals and organizations long identified as apologists for communist doctrine and Soviet foreign policies,” made clear the NAACP’s anti-communist position. Ransby, *Ella Baker*, 150. This position was forced in many ways; right or wrong if the NAACP had aligned with left-wing organizations, they would likely have experienced similar government harassment. A price they were not willing to pay. Even outspoken, radical leaders like Ella Baker, sought to avoid engaging in “Cold War politics” that could stall important “efforts at coalition building” during the early 1950s. Baker who had served on NAACP’s national staff and later as president of the Harlem branch office, also had long-relationships with other black radicals in New York. This necessitated careful maneuvering on her part. Ransby, *Ella Baker*, 149 - 152

²⁶³ *Paul Robeson*, 409 - 410.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 409.

Robeson differentiated between black and white American responses to ideology he espoused; he insisted “let me point out that the controversy concerning my views and actions had its origin not among the Negro people [sic] but among the white folks on top who have directed at me the thunderbolts of their displeasure and rage.”²⁶⁵ He pointed out, “Although at various times certain Negro voices were heard joining in the condemnation that came from on high, it has been quite evident that the Negro community has its own way of looking at the matter.”²⁶⁶ This included clergy, notable black leaders, and the black press. Unlike mainstream, white press, the black press remained supportive of Robeson and as an extension the CAA. Black press covered CAA and Robeson activities during and well after the dissolution of the organization.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Not always credited with “anti-apartheid” activism, the CAA led protests, rallies, meetings, and fundraising campaigns in support of racially oppressed black South Africans and other racially oppressed South Africans. An anticolonial and anti-racist educational advocacy group, the CAA effectively disseminated well-researched and highly regarded information to its members and the general public, domestically and internationally. The CAA “made an enormous contribution to the definition of black American politics and its relation to Africa”²⁶⁷ While mainstream civil rights organizations and their leaders, took cover from an increasingly intolerant, anti-communist government, the CAA carried the torch insuring that

²⁶⁵ Robeson, *Here I Stand*, 28.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 43.

international/transnational issues remained a part of the anti-racist discourse. Indeed, the CAA challenged the status quo, and would not allow government harassment or Cold War policies to quiet their voices. As the first African American led anticolonial organization in the U.S., CAA leadership sought involvement from an interracial membership, and included women, clergy, educators, and civil rights and women's rights activists, from its conception to its dissolution. The organization benefited from the leadership of "the artist and citizen," Paul Robeson, who through his celebrity brought great attention to the cause of anti-colonialism, civil rights, and anti-apartheid activism in the U.S. Most importantly, through the CAA's transnationalism, oppression of black Americans, Africans and Asians was known around the world. CAA leadership understood the importance of alliances with the black church community, which supported the work of the Council through direct and active participation. Though eventually destroyed by constant harassment and accusations of subversive un-American activities, the CAA stuck by its principles and continued to fight for justice for black people in the U.S. and in Africa.²⁶⁸

These left-wing radical African American leaders fought for the rights of black people at home and abroad during the early Cold War. They suffered personal and professional loss, were ostracized by their own communities and were often misunderstood. Indeed, they took the brunt of government harassment in their efforts to address domestic and colonial injustices to African people, because they refused to play into the hands of a government that sought its anticommunist agenda at all costs. Some

²⁶⁸ Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, 307–308, 418.

mainstream and radical church people remained supportive and loyal, despite repercussions they also suffered. Like the CAA, black church people fought for African liberation in solidarity with South African anti-apartheid activists, as well as U.S. based organizations for decades to come. The groundwork of the CAA would benefit future organizations such as the American Committee on Africa, founded in 1953. The black faith community would similarly partner with this “white-led” group and influence the trajectory of the organization.

CHAPTER TWO

“A COMMON ENEMY”: THE AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON AFRICA (1953 – 2001)

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”
– Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., *Letter From A Birmingham Jail*

In the 1950s, the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) became the most well-known U.S. organization in the late-colonial period supporting African liberation movements particularly the nascent anti-apartheid struggle.²⁶⁹ ACOA would grow in prominence as the Council on African Affairs’ (CAA) fell victim to McCarthy-era government harassment and accusations of anti-Americanism. Though ideologically different, the anti-Communist ACOA pursued a similar agenda to that of the CAA: to educate the public about official U.S. backing for white-minority rule and government repression in southern Africa, and to lobby for policy changes. Moreover, ACOA sought to “expose and break the economic [investment in]...the apartheid regime by American financial institutions and corporations.”²⁷⁰ ACOA along with TransAfrica, the

²⁶⁹ During this same period, the U.S. experienced nationwide civil rights protests, as black American demonstrators insisted on full citizenship following their efforts during WW II (on foreign battlefields and in local factories) to protect US democracy against menacing fascist forces. Black Americans “coupled support of the war with the expectation that domestic improvement would occur afterward.” Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 85. Realizing that “the attainment of that objective demanded protracted struggle,” black Americans launched mass meetings immediately following the war. Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 125. Demands for civil rights, having a moral foundation in the WW II war effort, found a complex adversary in Cold War anti-Communist forces which exercised a stranglehold over American domestic politics, including the politics of racial equality in segregationist America.

²⁷⁰ Jennifer Davis, Introduction to Jennifer Davis Interview for No Easy Victories, interview by William Minter, December 12, 2004, http://www.noeasyvictories.org/interviews/int09_davis.php.

Washington Office on Africa, and other U.S. anti-apartheid organizations, worked to push an omnibus bill through the U.S. Congress, which overrode a presidential veto in 1986 and imposed the strongest sanctions on South Africa, until that time. It is no exaggeration to say that, ACOA's activism contributed greatly to passage of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 (CAAA). Indeed, "the law was a major victory for American anti-apartheid groups, which had labored for many years to pass tough sanctions legislation against South Africa."²⁷¹ This comprehensive law, undermined P.W. Botha's Pretoria regime and set the stage for the final phase of the anti-apartheid struggle: multi-party negotiations for a democratic future.

PROTESTANT, PACIFIST, AND PREDOMINANTLY WHITE

ACOA originated in a Protestant pacifist group called Americans for South African Resistance (AFSAR), a multi-racial organization established by members of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). One AFSAR founder and CORE member, George Houser, explained that in 1952 he "learned that the African National Congress was beginning a non-violent Defiance Campaign." Houser contacted a chief ANC strategist in South Africa, Walter Sisulu, who along with Mandela would be given a life sentence on Robben Island, "and said we want to help."²⁷² This fateful Houser-Sisulu exchange would

²⁷¹ Robert E. Edgar, ed., *Sanctioning Apartheid*, Conflict Resolution Collection (Trenton, N.J: Africa World Press, 1990), 1. For more details about the implementation of the CAAA, see Chapter 6 of this dissertation, on the Free South Africa Movement.

²⁷² Houser, George, interview by author, telephone, March 22, 2013; George M. Houser, "Meeting Africa's Challenge: The Story of the American Committee on Africa," *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 6, no. 2/3 (1976): 16, doi:10.2307/1166441. Houser's friend Bill Sutherland, an African-American pacifist and Pan Africanist activist who lived in Ghana, informed Houser that the ANC "was planning the nonviolent campaign against the unjust racial laws of South Africa . . . [because Sutherland] felt strongly that we ought to do something about it." "Meeting the Challenge," 16. While at a conference in England, Sutherland had met Jacob Nhlapo, editor of the South African newspaper *Bantu World*. Nhlapo informed Sutherland of the planned Defiance Campaign "and was given a list of contacts in South Africa, including

lay the foundation for subsequent vital communications between anti-apartheid campaigners in the United States and South Africa. At first, AFSAR's ideological aim was to be the avowedly non-communist alternative to the CAA. AFSAR had more practical objectives, as well: to raise funds for the ANC and disseminate information about the movement's dramatic Defiance Campaign, which was launched in 1952.²⁷³ However, a year later the Defiance Campaign ended in an apartheid government crackdown—a crackdown abetted and praised by regional white-minority regimes such as Rhodesia. Houser explains that the AFSAR executive committee concluded “we were not just dealing with South Africa, but dealing with the whole continent under colonial dominance.”²⁷⁴ As the campaign came to an end “top African and Indian leaders were arrested and stood trial together, charged under the Suppression of Communism Act. All were found guilty but received suspended sentences.”²⁷⁵

AFSAR leadership included liberal white clergymen and black American ministers with domestic and global aspirations. The Reverends Donald Harrington and Charles Y. Trigg served as co-chairs of the organization. Trigg pastored the Salem United Methodist Church in Harlem²⁷⁶ while Harrington ministered to the Community Church of New York in Manhattan. George Houser assumed the role of AFSAR secretary.²⁷⁷ He

Walter Sisulu of the ANC and Yusuf Cachalia of the South African Indian Congress (SAIC).” William Minter and Sylvia Hill, “Anti-apartheid Solidarity in United States - South Africa Relations: From the Margins to the Mainstream,” in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, Unisa Press, 755 (chapter copy provided by Sylvia Hill).

²⁷³ Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 112–113.

²⁷⁴ Houser, George, interview.

²⁷⁵ Gail M. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, 105.

²⁷⁶ Although ACOA distanced itself from the CAA, its co-chair Charles Y. Trigg had participated in a CAA sponsored welcome home rally for Paul Robeson in 1949. For more information see all CAA, “Welcome Home Rally.”

CAA, “Welcome Home Rally,” n.d., Box 39 Folder- Organizations, Council on African Affairs, Meetings,

and his colleagues “strongly believed in the struggle for freedom, both at home and abroad.”²⁷⁸ On May 14, 1953 civil rights campaigners, pacifists, and clergy—many of them members of CORE, the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), and AFSAR—drafted a joint statement titled, “A Call for the Formation of the American Committee on Africa [ACOA].”²⁷⁹ ACOA incorporated “as a not-for-profit organization” in the state of New York, with Houser continuing in his role as secretary.²⁸⁰ Homer Jack, James Farmer,

Welcome Home Rally, 1949, Script, Speeches, Flyers, Paul and Eslanda Robeson Papers; Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

²⁷⁷ Houser, “Meeting Africa’s Challenge,” 16; George M. Houser, *No One Can Stop The Rain: Glimpses of Africa’s Liberation Struggle*, African Studies (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989), 12. AFSAR recruited a list of prominent individuals to serve as sponsors, including Roger Baldwin (a founder of the ACLU); Pearl Buck (the famous author); Dorothy Day (leader of the Catholic Worker Movement); James Farmer (a leader of CORE); Congressman Adam Clayton Powell; Norman Thomas (a prominent socialist campaigner); A.J. Muste (a top pacifist); and Canada Lee (an actor who appeared in the 1951 film version of “Cry the Beloved Country”). Houser, “Meeting the Challenge,” 16. other executive committee members included Rayford Logan, Howard University, Walter Offutt (NAACP). Houser, *No One Can Stop the Rain*, 63.

²⁷⁸ Houser, “Meeting Africa’s Challenge,” 16.

²⁷⁹ George M. Houser and Homer Jack, “ACOA Minutes,” May 14, 1953, Temporary Folder 2212, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. Two women were present at this meeting, namely Carolyn Malin and Catharine Raymond. The now-famous black activist Bayard Rustin and William Sutherland also attended this meeting.

²⁸⁰ Houser remained ASFAR secretary. Homer A. Jack, “ACOA Executive Committee Minutes,” August 13, 1953, Temporary Folder 2212, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. Later the ACOA would establish the Africa Fund as a separate educational nonprofit. ACOA reflected “virtually the same executive committee . . . [as] AFSAR, with Trigg and Harrington remaining as cochairmen” : Houser, “Meeting Africa’s Challenge,” 16–17. Early involvement of interracial clergy and their congregations would serve the ACOA well, as white church organizations donated substantial funds and black churches opened their doors to black community support and legitimacy through its leadership. A. Philip Randolph, who had worked with Houser as a member of ACOA’s national committee, would join Harrington as ACOA’s co-chairman in 1961.: Houser, *No One Can Stop The Rain*, 265; George M. Houser and Homer A. Jack, “ACOA Press Release: A. Philip Randolph,” September 15, 1961, Box 42 Folder 33, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. Many distinguished civil rights, church, and union leaders served on ACOA’s national committee. ACOA intentionally sought the participation of very accomplished and well-known people “in order to help establish the organization,” thus notable individuals like “Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt . . . Dean James Pike . . . Martin Luther King” were brought on as “part of a sponsors’ group which we called the national committee.” Houser, “Meeting Africa’s Challenge,” 18. Many of these individuals actively engaged with special campaigns by serving as chair or co-chair, bringing attention to ACOA’s major initiatives. Similarly, board leadership included influential individuals like, A. Philip Randolph who contributed enormously by chairing, supporting, and conceptualizing key campaigns for the organization. This strategy would prove beneficial in fundraising, lobbying, and recruitment efforts. Membership of the national committee over the years included the most prominent people (a virtual who’s who) in the faith

Trigg, and Unitarian Universalist minister Harrington were the major signatories. Co-chairs, Trigg and Harrington, were at the top of ACOA.²⁸¹ Later, during the 1960s and 1970s, their positions would be filled by pioneers of the Civil Rights Movement: A. Philip Randolph, Wyatt Tee Walker, Moses William Howard Jr., and William Booth, respectively. These chairs and co-chairs were instrumental in embedding ACOA activities in a larger community comprised of black faith-based organizations and labor unions.

The ACOA Compass: George Houser

Of all ACOA founders, George Houser held the organizational compass most firmly and lastingly. The son of a Methodist minister, Houser walked in his father's footsteps by entering the clergy. George Houser's Methodist faith dovetailed with his belief in the non-violent resistance teachings of Mahatma Ghandi and David Thoreau. Simply put, Houser's "Social Gospel" entailed "putting the Christian ethic into

community, academics, politics, entertainment, sports, and the civil rights movement. Involving celebrities and other notable individuals would remain a practice throughout ACOA's existence. Over four decades, the ACOA was led by only four executive directors, which is quite unique in the revolving-door world of activist organizations, which like the CAA could be riven with internal conflicts and competing factions. Two of the ASFAR executive directors served in transitional roles during the early establishment of the organization. The Executive Directors of ACOA were "George Shepard [sic] (1952-1953), George M. Houser (1955-1981), Jennifer Davis (1981-2000) and Salih Booker (2000-2001)": "American Committee on Africa," History Archive, *African Activist Archive*, (n.d.), <http://africanactivist.msu.edu/organization.php?name=American%20Committee%20on%20Africa>; Houser, George, interview.

²⁸¹ Houser, George, interview; Richard Knight, interview by author, telephone, March 25, 2014. Houser, "Meeting Africa's Challenge," 16–17. Described as a "liberal crusader" the Reverend Donald Harrington had ties to the Liberal Party and at one point ran as Franklin D. Roosevelt's lieutenant governor of New York. Harrington had been the minister of the interfaith and interracial congregation of "the Community Church of New York, the Unitarian Universalist congregation, where he began preaching in 1944." An ardent pacifist, Harrington "delivered a presidential nominating speech for Norman Thomas, the Socialist Party candidate in 1948 and early opponent of the war in Vietnam." Sam Roberts, "Donald S. Harrington, 91, Liberal Crusader, Dies," *The New York Times*, September 20, 2005, sec. New York Region, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/20/nyregion/20harrington.html>. The tag line for the Community Church read "Knowing not sect, class, nation, or race, welcomes each to the service of all" [quotes in footnote about Harrington from Roberts article.]

practice.”²⁸² As a young man, he joined the Methodist Youth Movement, which emphasized “peace and racial justice.”²⁸³ In 1940, he spent a year in prison after refusing to answer the draft and prepare for World War II. While behind bars, he and fellow inmates protested segregation in the cell blocks and demanded reforms that unified black and white incarcerated populations in similar living quarters.²⁸⁴ Houser enacted the anti-racist ideologies that he learned as a member of the Young Socialist League,” an arm of the Socialist Party.²⁸⁵ Shortly thereafter, while studying at Union Theological Seminary in Harlem, Houser participated in the equal rights demonstrations of A. Philip Randolph’s Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.²⁸⁶ Perhaps Houser’s most notable early accomplishment was to assist in the establishment of CORE in 1942. He immediately associated this organization with a renowned Quaker group, the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), which was experienced, according to Houser, in “nonviolent campaigns against racism in the United States” through “civil disobedience projects.”²⁸⁷

²⁸² Houser, *No One Can Stop The Rain*, 6.

²⁸³ Houser, George, interview; George M. Houser, George Houser Oral History Interview (Tape 1), interview by Brenda B. Square, May 17, 2002, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

²⁸⁴ Houser, George, interview.

²⁸⁵ Houser, *No One Can Stop The Rain*, 6; Houser, George, interview.

²⁸⁶ Houser, *No One Can Stop The Rain*, 6.

²⁸⁷ Houser, “Meeting Africa’s Challenge,” 16; Houser, George, interview; Congress of Racial Equality, “CORE: George M. Houser,” Organization, *Congress of Racial Equality*, (n.d.), http://core-online.org/History/george_houser.htm. Houser credited CORE with pioneering “the first freedom rides in the South (in 1947 against bus and train segregation)”: Houser, George, interview; Congress of Racial Equality, “CORE: Houser.” Houser detailed the “Journey of Reconciliation” a “2-week pilgrimage through Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Kentucky” in which CORE tested a “Supreme Court ruling that declared [racial] segregation on interstate travel unconstitutional.” His troupe included eight whites and eight blacks; they were arrested and charged in some states with violating segregationist laws. It is important to note that their protest actions were opposed by the NAACP, [why?] which sought to work within a system of laws and change this legal system through court decisions http://core-online.org/History/george_houser.htm; Houser explained the rationale for the two-week trip into the South: “the supreme court outlawed discrimination on interstate buses in June, 1946,...but as we discovered on our trip, the decision didn’t take hold. It won’t unless people insist on seeing that it’s observed.” ACOA

He also built relationships with black Americans in CORE and FOR, and connected these partnerships to the global agenda of ACOA, which hoped to bring the energy of US civil rights struggles to the African continent.²⁸⁸

Houser positioned the ACOA as a vehicle “to support the African nationalist moves toward independence”²⁸⁹ and deal “with the problem of colonialism,” which included the apartheid system.²⁹⁰ To Houser, it did not matter that the white-minority government of the Union of South Africa, as the country was called then, exercised domestic control over its internal policies. He saw apartheid society as a patently colonial project that blatantly reflected colonial racism. Houser also understood that he was filling a void of the previous “organization on the American scene attempting to do anything to relate to the actual and potential struggle for freedom,” namely “the Council on African Affairs, which was driven out of existence as a communist front . . . by the actions of the Department of Justice.”²⁹¹ The CAA had sparked some of the first U.S.-

Papers, Box 41 Folder 46, Minneapolis Morning Tribune, January 14, 1949, p. 8 ‘He Defies a Mob’ “Crusader Seeks to Break Race Segregation Bans”. The article also reported that CORE members took down separate but equal signage in public places all around the country.

²⁸⁸ Brenda B. Square, George Houser Oral History Interview (Tape 3), Audio Tape, May 18, 2002, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

²⁸⁹Houser, “Meeting Africa’s Challenge,” 16–17.

²⁹⁰ Houser, George, interview. ACOA explained its purpose by framing it within the context of U.S. policy; a 1960 pamphlet states, “In 1955, the U.S. House of Representatives unanimously resolved: ‘The United States should administer its foreign policies so as to support other peoples in their efforts to achieve self-government.’” The pamphlet goes on to list its “main purpose” as “to interpret the meaning of African events to the American people. To support policies furthering democratic self-government, equal rights, and economic development in all parts of Africa. to support projects in Africa promoting these policies and to be of service to students and other visitors from Africa to this country.” In an atmosphere still judged in Cold War terms, this pamphlet represents using effective strategies for the times. See “Africa’s Decade...America’s Decisions: The Program and Purpose of the American Committee on Africa” pamphlet produced circa 1960/1961. Africanactivist.msu.edu, accessed 9/5, 2014, about 1960/1961, ACOA pamphlet Africa’s Decade.

²⁹¹ Houser, “Meeting Africa’s Challenge,” 17. Shepherd compares the CAA to the British based pan-African group created by “Nkrumah, Kenyatta, and Padmore” in 1948 called the Congress of Peoples Against Imperialism. [32 Shepherd]. From Houser’s perspective, “The Council on African Affairs provided

based anticolonial protests right after World War II. And, more significantly, during the Cold War the CAA rallied American public interest in African liberation struggles, which needed to outlive the organization's moribund state. By 1955, the CAA was heading for full dissolution and though functionally dead, the CAA model of activism survived. ACOA leaders shared similar strategic and programmatic concerns with Yergan and the Robesons. The ACOA advanced core elements of the CAA mission by "organis[ing] sanctions and disinvestment" protests at universities, in churches, and through state- and city-wide campaigns.²⁹² By the 1960s, ACOA had become "the only [U.S.] organisation devoting substantial efforts to building solidarity with African liberation and opposition to apartheid."²⁹³ In this regard, ACOA and CAA were similar, again. But unlike the CAA, ACOA embarked on a path of less societal resistance in Cold War America.²⁹⁴

Houser exemplified the prevailing ACOA leadership which endeavored "to give legal support and to raise funds" for those involved in anti-racist protest through religious

an early socialist critique of liberal internationalism, which was dismissed as subversive by the foreign-policy establishment." George W. Shepherd, *Anti-Apartheid*, 33.

²⁹² "Anti-Apartheid Organisations/People"; See also, Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 233 Plummer add, ACOA did "everything the CAA had done but not offer a Marxist critique of imperialism."

²⁹³ William Minter and Sylvia Hill, "Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in United States - South Africa Relations: From the Margins to the Mainstream," in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, vol. 3, International Solidarity, Part II (Unisa Press, 2008), 759. When the ACOA attempted to gain tax exempt status, the organization was informed that as long as it engaged in anti-apartheid lobbying activities it would not be granted this status. In response, ACOA established a separate nonprofit entity, the Africa Fund in 1966. Although there was some overlap, the ACOA and Africa Fund were separate organizations. ACOA's executive directors were "directors of both" organizations and Africa Fund staff salaries were paid with ACOA funds. Continually expanding its reach, the ACOA opened a Washington Office in 1968. The Washington Office on Africa (WOA) served as the ACOA headquarters in the nation's capital, but eventually became independent in 1972 and affiliated with the Africa Fund, which provided "humanitarian, educational and medical assistance for projects in liberated areas and newly independent African states." ACOA Chronology, 8.

²⁹⁴ Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 233 Plummer explained, ACOA set out to show how "liberals could uncouple communism and the pursuit of decolonization."

activism.²⁹⁵ In other words, he and his cohorts chose not to move further leftward politically to a space occupied at great cost by the Robesons, the couple most demonized as communist threats to America during the McCarthy decade (1950s). Beyond Houser, other ACOA members had witnessed the fatal decline of CAA and the concomitant rise of (bullying) American rhetoric that linked anticolonial sentiment with communist sympathy. The effects resonated broadly. By the 1960s, communist ideology was less and less appealing to black American activists who were increasingly focused on a domestic civil rights agenda; they were not willing to jeopardize potential progress at home by being labeled communist sympathizers more concerned with the global fight against colonialism, which the Soviet Union explicitly supported. ACOA received strong support from A. Philip Randolph and the NAACP's Walter White, both of whom were anti-Communist. Though the NAACP shifted its focus to domestic civil rights causes, Randolph was heralded among African labor leaders for his anticolonialism. Von Eschen elaborates on the ideological swing of organizations like the NAACP: "African American anticolonialism had been profoundly changed by liberal leaders' acceptance of the proposition that the United States was the legitimate leader of the 'free world.' As former critics of American foreign policy - Walter White, Rayford Logan, Channing Tobias - came to represent American interests abroad by countering the Soviet Union's portrayal of American racism. Historian Carol Anderson, points to multiple examples of White being "so intent on defending his nation's honor that he was ready to misrepresent the sad

²⁹⁵ Houser, George, interview. "Religious Action Network Brochure" (American Committee on Africa, 1989), Box 79 Folder Religious Action Conference - 1989, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. Houser, "Meeting Africa's Challenge," 17. Characteristic of other pacifist organizations such as CORE, ACOA worked closely with African leaders, unions, socialists, politicians, educators, and civil rights organizations.

state of affairs in black America.”²⁹⁶ Anderson explains, NAACP leaders succumbed to Truman’s campaign promises of improved civil rights that never came to fruition. Von Eschen contends, identity politics also influenced the turn-inward strategy to focus domestically on U.S. civil rights and away from transnational issues such as anticolonialism. Von Eschen further explains how “the politics of the African diaspora was eclipsed by the emphasis of African American leaders, intellectuals and journalists on differences between African Americans and Africans, rather than on the bonds that had been so forcefully articulated during and after World War II.”²⁹⁷

The rise of black American anti-communism did not sit well with the radical-minded W.E.B. Du Bois, who “complained that the post-New Deal American Negro leadership had no interest in Africa.”²⁹⁸ He refused to endorse the belief that anticolonial activism represented a communist plot; so did others, like Randolph, who did not have a pro-Soviet point of view. More pointedly, Du Bois criticized the ACOA as “a right-wing organization with Christianity and some big money behind it,” conceding that “naturally, it is doing some good work and publishing some facts about the present situation, but

²⁹⁶ Carol Anderson, “Bleached Souls and Red Negroes: The NAACP and Black Communists in the Early Cold War, 1948-1952,” in *Window on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1988*, ed. Brenda Gayle Plummer (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 93.

²⁹⁷ Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 145. In one vivid example, Ralph Bunche had “argued that there was no connection between the struggles in Africa and those in the United States” during an NAACP meeting in 1959. [p. 45, Nesbitt] Black American sentiment shifted again toward support of Africa after the 1960 Sharpeville massacre in South Africa. Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 45. See also, Ralph Bunche, *Model Negro*, 135 – 136. Charles P. Henry presents a different interpretation of Bunche’s statement, contending that Bunche sought to “delink the struggle of African Americans from that of the colonized [Africans].” Henry includes a longer version of Bunche’s statement, which emphasizes that “The Negro is an American, and his struggle is directed exclusively toward one objective: the full attainment of his constitutional rights as an American citizen. Unlike the colonial peoples, the American Negro, who is culturally American, has no nationalist and no separatist ambitions.”, 135. The ANC essentially had the same goal in South Africa; they advocated a multi-racial democratic society, in which African people were equal.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

fundamentally it is reactionary... You cannot depend on it to tell the whole African story... We have nothing in America that is at all worthwhile.”²⁹⁹ These statements, made a year after the dissolution of the CAA (i.e. 1956), reflected frustrations from the left due to increased government intrusion. What most distinguished the ACOA from the CAA was the CAA’s refusal, as a Marxist-oriented, anti-imperialist group, to disavow the Soviet Union.

ACOA had its own identity, rooted as it was deeply in American politics, and not in the international communism. ACOA was radical in its own right but its revolutionary approach to activism drew on a different conviction: pacifism. Furthermore, ACOA leaders differed from their CAA counterparts, who forged their politics in the early Cold War era marked by its closer ties with African liberation organizations engaged in anticolonial struggles. Both organizations, however, welcomed new and emerging African leaders.

Both organizations were founded by leaders who grew up in highly religious homes with parents or grandparents who were in the ministry. In many other ways, the work of ACOA resembled that of the CAA (i.e. hosting African leaders, educating the community, involving prominent black American leaders and church people, a special focus South Africa, lobbying). Like the CAA, ACOA “decided not to try to set up local affiliated groups...with limited staff, too much time would have to be spent in organizing

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 144. At the same time other groups labeled the ACOA as radical left, which they were neither radical in comparison to the CAA nor far right; see Houser article pg. 20/21. Some conservatives accused of being a “communist front.”

efforts to make the effort worthwhile.”³⁰⁰ Though the CAA was black-led and the ACOA was white-led, both groups had multiracial boards and staff at points throughout their existence. With a few exceptions, ACOA primarily operated out of its New York offices under the direction of George Houser, the executive director.³⁰¹ ACOA “saw itself as an international organization” with local and national roots.³⁰² Highly visible throughout the years, George Houser, Jennifer Davis, and other staff, like Dumisani Kumalo, a black South African journalist, traveled extensively and engaged in local, national, and international conferences, meetings, and events. Educating people about anticolonialism and U.S. alliances with the white supremacist government of South Africa were core values of radical pacifist clergy like George Houser.

From Pacifism to Support of African Liberation with Armed Struggle

The ACOA platform of radical pacifism espoused, social justice, egalitarianism, non-violence, racial justice, gender equality, anticolonialism, African independence, and internationalism.³⁰³ Influenced by the non-violent activism and egalitarianism teachings of A. J. Muste, who was also an AFSAR sponsor, ACOA advanced the tradition of radical pacifists who “stood on the cutting edge of a wide range of efforts for social and political change.”³⁰⁴ Following the advent of the apartheid system in South Africa in

³⁰⁰ Houser, “Meeting Africa’s Challenge,” 18. By 1962, the ACOA would shift its position and provide procedures for local and regional affiliates. Two chapters opened that year, one in Washington, D.C. and one in Northern California. africanactivist.msu.edu, ACOA collection, accessed September 2014, 1962 Annual Report – January 1, 1962 through December 31, 1962, p. 6. The ACOA later set up a Washington Office on Africa, which eventually became an independent entity; moreover, the ACOA established a separate nonprofit organization, the Africa Fund managed by the executive directors of ACOA.

³⁰¹ Maghan Keita, interview by author, telephone, May 24, 2014.

³⁰² Knight, interview.

³⁰³ George W. Shepherd, *Anti-Apartheid*, 36.

³⁰⁴ Marian Mollin, *Radical Pacifism in Modern America*, 1. Mollin elaborates, “Radical pacifists rejected war on an absolute and personal level, but as radicals who advocated a revolutionary transformation of

1948, radical pacifist organizations were established to challenge this system of institutionalized racism in the 1950s. George W. Shepherd explains, “pacific action sought to evoke immediate acceptance of independence for African states and nonviolent collective action against apartheid.”³⁰⁵ Transnationalist groups like ACOA “were largely motivated by a concern for human rights and were led by liberal pacifists who dissented sharply from the prevailing gradualism of government policy.”³⁰⁶ Regarding decolonization, the focus remained gradual with “growing pressure for organized condemnation of racism.”³⁰⁷ Ralph Bunche and Roger Baldwin of the United States advocated for this kind of gradualism.³⁰⁸

AFSAR, FOR, CORE, and ACOA represented pacifist organizations with which Houser was affiliated. Marian Mollin elaborates; “In all of these groups, the major leadership was predominantly Protestant, pacifist and white. There were, however, black [American] and African participants who were to emerge as major leaders.”³⁰⁹ Notable

American politics and society, their efforts went far beyond a purely pacifist agenda.” Members of American radical pacifism “dedicated themselves to the pursuit of social justice, a pursuit that they wed to the militant use of nonviolent Gandhian direct action.” Mollin, *Radical Pacifism*, 1.; George Houser was recruited by A.J. Muste who headed FOR. Houser admired Muste who, was a Presbyterian clergyman, a pacifist, a former Trotskyist, and a social and political radical.” Houser, *No one can Stop the Rain*, 7. Radical pacifists emerged during WWII through the Vietnam War. “. . .in their eyes violence against another human being was an unconscionable and immoral act akin to fratricide.” Mollin, *Radical Pacifism*, 2 “Uprooting violence in all its forms . . . defined their political agenda. This was a comprehensive perspective that led radical pacifists to promote cooperative economics, radical trade unionism, socialism, and interracial justice alongside world peace.” Mollin, *Radical Pacifism*, 2. Characteristic of radical pacifism is a “willingness of its adherents to put their bodies and their lives behind their rhetoric, often at great personal risk.” Mollin, *Radical Pacifism*, 5.

³⁰⁵ George W. Shepherd, *Anti-Apartheid*, 33.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 33. Mollin asserts that while radical pacifists were “militant activists” willing to risk their own “freedom and their safety” for social justice, they remained influenced by and indeed “mired in mainstream social and cultural values.” She adds, though they were “ardently egalitarian idealists, they nevertheless replicated many of the hierarchies of power they explicitly sought to undermine.” Mollin, *Radical*

black American pacifists included Bayard Rustin, Bill Sutherland, and Robert Browne; they brought their considerable experiences and organizing skills as cofounders of the ACOA.³¹⁰ Later Rustin would become a key strategist in the Civil Rights Movement, working closely with A. Philip Randolph and Martin Luther King, and carrying “the tactics and philosophy of radical pacifism’s distinct style of nonviolent direct action into the broader currents of American dissent.”³¹¹ Previously affiliated with the pacifist organization Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), Rustin had met George Houser years before.

However, as repression and violence increased in apartheid South Africa during the 1960s, the ANC was pushed to adopt military tactics.³¹² The devastation at Sharpeville, a township in Transvaal (now southern Gauteng), was just such a push. Historian Tom Lodge asserts, “The Sharpeville massacre happened in a national setting

Pacifism, 1. More specifically, Mollin argues “Despite its best efforts to the contrary, this deliberately democratic and countercultural force of rebellion ultimately betrayed the same fault lines of inequality that divided American society at large.” Mollin *Radical Pacifism*, 7. Though the ACOA certainly experienced tensions along racial lines, they persisted and worked through differences.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Marian Mollin, *Radical Pacifism in Modern America*, 2.

³¹² Originally distancing themselves from the ANC, AFSAR researched the work and tactics of the ANC before supporting the Defiance Campaign. It was not until increased violence of the South African regime that the ANC would move decisively to employing military tactics. After the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, African liberation organizations like the ANC moved from a nonviolent approach to militarism. Taking a black nationalist approach, the ANC formed Umkhonto we Sizwe “the Spear of the Nation,” better known as MK. Mandela explains, “the symbol of the spear was chosen because with this simple weapon Africans had resisted the incursions of whites for centuries.” MK represented a shift towards a military response to government violence in South Africa. MK was organized as a separate entity from ANC so that the ANC as an organization could maintain its nonviolent stance. Formed in 1961, Nelson Mandela became the chairman and worked closely with Joe Slovo and Walter Sisulu to form the “High Command.” (P.239 Nelson Mandela); a departure from the all black led ANC, Mandela reached out to the South African Communist Party (SACP) “who had resolved on a course of violence and had already executed acts of sabotage” successfully. See *Long Walk to Freedom* p.239 and www.nelsonmandela.org regarding ANC’s move to using military tactics; overview also provided at <http://www.sahistory.org.za/topic/african-national-congress-timeline-1960-1969> see also <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=206>; Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*, 1st paperback ed.. (Boston: Back Bay Books, 1995), 239.

in which the authorities had already repeatedly demonstrated a propensity to suppress with armed force even fairly peaceful kinds of collective protest.” This kind of violence was not new, “South African Police had fired into large assemblies before and at least on one occasion had killed more people. What was truly singular about the Sharpeville massacre was the political reaction the massacre elicited, both within South Africa and beyond its borders.”³¹³ Lodge addresses why the international community responded with such outrage, suggesting that we first “need to understand the social and cultural changes that helped to set the agenda for such widespread indignation in response to the killings outside South Africa. Agenda-setting was an indispensable requirement before public outrage. In Europe and North America, public reactions to comparably violent events elsewhere in Africa and even within Europe were relatively muted and confined.”³¹⁴ He points to long-established interactions and relationships between countries in these regions and South Africa as part of the rationale for this reaction to the tragedy in Sharpeville. As South African exiles arrived in European and North American societies, westerners gained first-hand knowledge of the impact of government repression on black South Africans. Lodge further explains, “the massacre and in particular the media images that depicted it generated an emotional public response. This was especially [true] in countries that were connected to South Africa by kinship affinities and political alliances.”³¹⁵ In this environment, in which “the shootings were followed by protests in every major town encouraged [the ANC] to believe there was a predisposition

³¹³ Lodge, *Sharpeville*, 26.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 234.

towards rebellion,” and the international community’s reaction to the declaration of a state of emergency, led to “an exodus of foreign investment.” These situations coupled with the banning of the ANC shortly “after the Sharpeville massacre... [created] an entirely new situation, leading inexorably to the use of violence.”³¹⁶

With this intensified violence, ACOA and other pacifists groups considered new tactics.³¹⁷ One such response included the Emergency Action Conference on South Africa; ACOA sponsored the conference with eight other organizations. The May 31, 1960 conference was in response to the Sharpeville massacre to raise funds for victims and their families. Over 300 people attended and developed a program of action called the “South Africa Emergency Campaign.”³¹⁸ Jackie Robinson served as the co-chair and provided the opening address. Robinson explained “the task of this conference, then, is to help to devise a program that can assist in mobilizing the forces in the United States to stand behind their brothers in South Africa in their desire to establish a democracy that will know not the differences of race, just as we are attempting to establish such a democracy here.”³¹⁹ More specifically, he explained their goal was to “devise a program for carrying out a boycott of South African goods, for discouraging United States investment in South Africa...,to discourage tourism or visits by American athletes or artists and actors to South Africa,[U.S.] protest against racism in South Africa.” and

³¹⁶ Ibid., 214.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 36. See George Shepherd’s, *Anti-Apartheid*, for a more detailed explanation of ACOA’s ideological move.

³¹⁸ American Committee on Africa, *Annual Report: American Committee on Africa, June 1, 1959 to May 31, 1960*, Annual (New York, N.Y, Fall 1960), 2, American Committee on Africa, African Activist Archive, Michigan State University, http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document_metadata.php?objectId=32-130-D89.

³¹⁹ Jackie Robinson, “Emergency Action Conference Speech,” 1960, 10, Box 42 Folder 28, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

raising funds to support opposition efforts in South Africa.³²⁰ The conference led to the “Action Against Apartheid” campaign, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.³²¹ Indeed, Houser explains ACOA raised funds and provided legal support to those on trial and for victim’s families. Funds had to be sent to South Africa in “devious ways...to support those who were involved in that work.”³²²

Shepherd describes ACOA as the most radical among the pacifist organizations. Moreover, he attributes this radicalism to ACOA ability to shift “from nonviolent pacific action to support for liberation with comparatively little strain.”³²³ International and American shock over the 1960 massacre at Sharpeville convinced many in the liberation struggle to turn “from non-violence to liberation tactics in support of armed struggle” in Southern Africa.³²⁴ Pretoria’s extreme tactics “caused a reconsideration of nonviolence as a philosophy and effective means by many groups, particularly those formed out of a pacific core.”³²⁵

By the 1970s many non-governmental organizations, like ACOA, had moved decidedly toward a “commitment to liberation” even when movements “turn[ed] to

³²⁰ Ibid., 10–11.

³²¹ “ACOA’s First 20 Years: A Chronology 1953-1978” (American Committee on Africa, n.d.), 8, Box 40 Folder 64, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

³²² Houser, George, interview.

³²³ George W. Shepherd, *Anti-Apartheid*, 36.

³²⁴ Ibid.; “African National Congress Timeline 1960-1969,” History, *South African History Timeline*, (n.d.), <http://www.sahistory.org.za/topic/african-national-congress-timeline-1960-1969>. Lodge adds, although international anti-apartheid activism may have grown even without the Sharpeville massacre, though he expressed doubt on that possibility. He asserts “perceptions of crisis generated by the shootings at Sharpeville and the accompanying tumult elicited strategic shifts by the state and its most important opponents. These altered the course of South African politics.” [Lodge p. 234] Indeed, South African nationalist political parties and unions (i.e. the PAC, ANC, and South African Council of Trade Unions), moved away from using “nonviolent tactics during the fifties, [which] led to exile and...armed insurrection” in response to increased government violence and suppression. [p. 37 Shepherd]

³²⁵ George W. Shepherd, *Anti-Apartheid*, 37.

armed struggle.”³²⁶ Not all ACOA members were on board, years earlier, Harold Oram led dissenters who also sought to oust radical pacifist A. J. Muste.³²⁷ Ultimately, the more liberal members maintained leadership and control of the organization’s direction. ACOA came to reconsider their position on armed struggle. The organization’s vice president, Hope R. Stevens argued, “The liberation movements in Southern Africa have ineluctably and correctly reached the conclusion that they must themselves generate the force to bring down the colonialist and white minority regimes in Southern Africa”³²⁸ Quoting Frederick Douglass, Stevens added, “he who would be free must first himself strike the blow.”³²⁹ Jennifer Davis explains, “By the time I came from South Africa, it was ACOA's position, I guess it was George's position, that you supported the right of armed struggle.”³³⁰

Houser describes a major shift in South Africa during the 1980s when P.W. Botha took over leadership in 1978 following Prime Minister Vorster.³³¹ Botha, a staunch segregationist showed little interest in shifting his priorities, “even under great domestic

³²⁶ Ibid., 11; Minter and Hill, “Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in United States - South Africa Relations,” 756; As relationships were built with African liberation groups, these U.S. organizations “with the support from African and OAU committees, ...began to transmit aid and funds for the continuing struggle, as it was called, after the FRELIMO slogan La Luta Continua.” George W. Shepherd, *Anti-Apartheid*, 16.

³²⁷ Minter and Hill, “Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in United States - South Africa Relations,” 756.

³²⁸ Hope R. Stevens, “International Seminar on Apartheid, Racial Discrimination and Colonialism in Southern Africa,” August 1967, 3, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Jennifer Davis, Interviews for No Easy Victories, interview by William Minter, December 12, 2004, http://www.noeasyvictories.org/interviews/int09_davis.php. Davis had come to the U.S. in exile in 1966. Davis provides an example of ACOA’s position on armed struggle, “And that was established by supporting the right of the Algerians to conduct an armed anti-colonial struggle... when confronted with the overwhelming military force of the French colonial regime in Algeria, ACOA supported the main group opposing French rule, the National Liberation Front, despite its use of guerilla warfare.” Davis interview with minter ; see also, http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_american_committee_on_africa_acoa/.

³³¹ Houser, *No One Can Stop The Rain*, 351.

and international pressure in the later years of his career, he only minimally loosened some of the government's most stringent racial policies directed towards South Africa's majority black population”³³² Botha might have felt supported in his intransigence by the Reagan administration. During this period the U.S. supported South Africa and “did not vote favorably on even one of the 38 UN resolutions concerning apartheid.”³³³ The newly instituted constitution of 1984, outraged black South Africans and the international community because it completely disregarded black participation in South Africa’s governance by adding two new houses for Indian and Coloured representation to the Parliament. Houser points out that, 80 percent of the Indian and Coloured population boycotted the elections.³³⁴ The Reagan administration remained loyal allies, as South African and U.S. anti-apartheid protests grew louder and stronger. Through the United Democratic Front (UDF), “600 organizations [in South Africa] came together to oppose the new constitution and set up the most formidable legal opposition yet seen” and banned groups like the ANC re-emerged.³³⁵ There were huge anti-apartheid protests in the United States recorded by unprecedented media attention. Houser attributes the international response and sustained pressure to South African opposition.³³⁶ He points to the Free South Africa Movement (FSAM), led by the African American foreign policy lobby TransAfrica, as one that “caught the imagination of U.S. opponents of

³³² “Pieter Willem Botha,” History, *South African History Online*, (n.d.),

<http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/pieter-willem-botha>; Houser, *No One Can Stop The Rain*, 352.

³³³ Houser, *No One Can Stop The Rain*, 352.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Ibid., 352–353.

³³⁶ Ibid., 353. Shepherd noted there was little press coverage of apartheid and other issues affecting liberation struggles in southern Africa during the 1970s. Shepherd, *Anti-Apartheid*, 40.

apartheid.”³³⁷ Furthermore, in 1986 ACOA raised funds to co-sponsor a U.S. tour with a South African representative from “the United Democratic Front and the End Conscription Campaign.” The purpose of the tour “to highlight the fact that in South Africa, resistance to militarism and resistance to apartheid are a common part of a broad-based movement for a new and just society.”³³⁸

RACE, GENDER, AND RADICAL PACIFISM

Radical pacifism, the core ideology and modus operandi of ACOA, influenced all aspects of the organization. Indeed, the ideals of radical pacifism shone in ACOA’s work over the years; at the same time, inherent issues in relationship to race and gender were manifest.³³⁹

An Interracial Organization

Mollin asserts that radical pacifists, “both black and white, believed that resistance to war and opposition to racism were integrally related in their struggle against violence and inequality.”³⁴⁰ The ACOA exemplified this commitment in the focus of its work [its priorities] as well as in the intentionally constructed interracial make up of its

³³⁷ Ibid. Prior coverage of U.S. anti-apartheid protests did not compare to the unprecedented media coverage of the Free South Africa movement.

³³⁸ Jennifer Davis, “Letter to Rev. Clarence Cave,” December 3, 1986, Box 30 Folder Presbyterian Church, 1989-81, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. The UDF brought together a coalition of more than 600 anti-apartheid organizations in South Africa who opposed the Tricameral parliament. Formed in opposition to Botha’s tricameral parliament, which left black South Africans out of the legislature, by the mid-1980s the UDF had some militant strands.

³³⁹ Marian Mollin, *Radical Pacifism in Modern America*, 3. Unlike other organizations represented in this dissertation, the architects of ACOA were predominantly male and clergy. Though the Council on African Affairs (CAA) was noticeably led by black American men, Eslanda Robeson was key in its founding, women were in leadership roles and ideologically influential; the architects of the Free South Africa Movement (FSAM) significant female participation, and Southern Africa Support Project (SASP) leadership was overwhelmingly female.

³⁴⁰ Marian Mollin, *Radical Pacifism in Modern America*, 3. See Mollin for more on how radical pacifists “led many early campaigns against segregation and other racist laws and practices, most notably in the 1940s during the formative years of the modern civil rights movement.”

board and honorary leadership. Houser makes clear that “the ACOA was interracial.”³⁴¹ Its 1953 board was co-chaired by a white minister (Harrington) and a black minister (Trigg). Sponsors represented white and black organizations, events were held at black and white churches and community venues. Key initiatives were co-chaired by black and white members, a few staff members over the years were black [e.g. Dumisani Kumalo, Prexy Nesbitt, and Charles Hightower were among black staff members], though predominantly white. Houser points out that over the years ACOA’s executive board “was about fifty-fifty black and white.”³⁴²

Staff changes were not unusual throughout the organization’s life; several black Americans served as associate directors or project directors.³⁴³ C. Sumner Stone, an associate director for a brief period in 1960, moved on to a position as the “editor of the *Washington Afro-American*.”³⁴⁴ ACOA hired Wendell Foster as its new associate director in September 1965, to work with Mary Louise Hooper on the upcoming anti-apartheid mass rally featuring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in December of that same year. Houser cites Foster’s civil rights background and the fact that he pastored “a predominantly Negro denomination, can help build the base on which changes in American policy must

³⁴¹ Houser, *No One Can Stop The Rain*, 265.

³⁴² Houser, George, interview; “ACOA Letterhead,” 1960s, Box 40 Folder 45, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. The 1960s ACOA letterhead, for example, shows diverse leadership with interracial co-chairmen, Donald Harrington and A. Philip Randolph. One of the three vice-presidents, Hope R. Stevens, a black American man, raised funds for the Africa Defense and Aid Fund, chaired African Freedom Day in 1960, and represented ACOA at the International Seminar in Zambia. Well-connected in the black community, Stevens was “a lawyer and president of the Uptown Chamber of Commerce in Harlem.” Houser, *No One Can Stop The Rain*, 265.

³⁴³ Many of these staff members stayed in the positions for three or less years (though many would maintain affiliation with ACOA, in some cases returning as board members). Some like Prexy Nesbitt left and returned to different staff positions and later became a board member. Others may have joined ACOA as they were transitioning to new opportunities.

³⁴⁴ American Committee on Africa, *Annual Report: ACOA 1959 to 1960*.

rest.”³⁴⁵ Houser described the hiring of Foster as a “step forward” for ACOA. He emphasized, “he will work to enlist the support of both the civil rights movement and the wider Negro community for vital African causes.”³⁴⁶ Prexy Nesbitt and Dumisani Kumalo, who are discussed later, represent black staff members who joined ACOA in late 1970s and 1980s.

Racial Dynamics Within

ACOA connected with the black community by engaging its leadership and champions in its major campaigns.³⁴⁷ ACOA had a “multiracial board and agenda,” and particularly, in the 1970s and beyond they “did a lot of work in the Black community.”³⁴⁸ Though sometimes challenged, faith activist Mark Harrison maintains, based on his close proximity to ACOA Offices in New York and with regular interaction with its staff in the 1980s, “they were still seen as a white organization.”³⁴⁹ The answer may lie in the individuals in leadership positions and the holders of the most visible positions. First,

³⁴⁵ George M. Houser, “Letter Introducing Wendell Foster,” Fundraiser Mailing, (October 5, 1965), Africa Action Archive, African Activist Archive, Michigan State University, http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-B7E. Foster had worked with the NAACP and CORE on various initiatives. He had been an AME minister for 12 years. In this letter, Houser mentions Hooper had joined the staff a year prior (i.e. 1964); however, earlier documents show Hooper serving as ACOA’s “West Coast representative...as well as for its Africa Defense and Aid Fund.” (africanactivist.msu.edu ,1962 Annual Report January 1, 1962 through December 31, 1962, p. 6).

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ “ACOA Letterhead.” Prominent black clergy such as Howard Thurman and Martin Luther King, celebrities like Sidney Poitier, Harry Belafonte, and Jackie Robinson, activists including Bayard Rustin, James Farmer, and political and civil rights leaders like Percy Sutton, and Charles C. Diggs, Jr. were among numerous black Americans listed as part of the national leadership.

³⁴⁸ Sylvia Ione Bennett Hill, interview by author, Washington, DC, June 1, 2013.

³⁴⁹ Mark Harrison, interview by Phyllis Slade Martin, Washington, DC, March 28, 2013; Harrison acknowledges/recalls there were some black staff members and expresses positive feelings about ACOA’s executive director, Jennifer Davis. During the 1980s he worked as a staff member of Clergy and Laity Concerned (CALC) housed one floor below ACOA’s office in New York; Maghan Keita and other black American activists would similarly characterize the organization adding that it was liberal and paternalistic. Keita suggests that some saw the organization as white because the key leadership (personality) of George Houser and Jennifer Davis. Maghan Keita, interview by Phyllis Slade Martin, May 24, 2014.

throughout its existence, ACOA's long-term executive directors were white, highly visible, and well-networked in the African liberation and anti-apartheid community. They represented the face of the organization nationally and internationally. With a couple exceptions long-term staff were predominantly white. Though the board always had black leadership, among which included chairs and co-chairs, they typically met only "about four times a year."³⁵⁰ Second, "the staff essentially ran the organization" handling the day-to-day responsibilities.³⁵¹ In *Proudly We Can Be African*, Meriwether contends, white liberals "firmly controlled ACOA" and "targeted the more affluent, liberal white audience."³⁵² Further, significant funding came from large white churches.³⁵³ Though the staff was still predominately white, in the 1970s and 1980s blacks, including Dumisani Kumalo, Prexy Nesbitt, and Charles Hightower, made lasting contributions. Kumalo traveled extensively in the 1980s and led a number of important outreach initiatives around the country.³⁵⁴

A New Generation: Black Power and Race

Tensions arose in the U.S. in the 1960s as the left turned to the Vietnam War and as "black-power ideas" grew.³⁵⁵ Mollin suggests, as dedicated as white radical pacifists were to racial equality, leaders often brought their cultural contexts to the organization operating in a manner contrary to what they espoused. Pointing to evidence of race and

³⁵⁰ Knight, interview.

³⁵¹ Richard Knight to Phyllis Slade Martin, "[Women On] ACOA Board (2)," September 6, 2014.

³⁵² Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 171.

³⁵³ Keita, interview.

³⁵⁴ Dumisani Shadrack Kumalo, Interview for No Easy Victories, interview by David Goodman, January 31, 2005, http://www.noeasyvictories.org/interviews/int14_kumalo.php; Davis, Introduction to Jennifer Davis Interview for No Easy Victories; Harrison, interview, March 28, 2013; Keita, interview.

³⁵⁵ Marian Mollin, *Radical Pacifism in Modern America*, 4.

gender bias sometimes derailing efforts and good intentions of radical pacifists, she explains, “This predominantly white pacifist movement also failed to see how racial blinders impeded their work with black activist communities.”³⁵⁶ During this period, ACOA experienced such tensions as well; the group responded by bringing in young activist staff, including more politically progressive, Afrocentric individuals and organizations as reflected in its mailing list and new board appointments. ACOA’s first executive director, George Shepherd recalls:

The black-white issue of control caused some tension among human-rights groups, especially among the gradualists who were not prepared to take an abolitionist stand on apartheid. The ACOA expanded its activities during this period. Its liberation-support programs reflected the populists drives of the blacks, radical young churchmen, and academics. Prexy Nesbitt opened a Chicago office as did Gary Gappert and later Charles Hightower in Washington, DC. Early in 1972, Edgar Lockwood undertook the running of the Washington Office on Africa (WOA) [a national lobby for independence and majority rule in Southern Africa], with the help of the ACOA and church groups.³⁵⁷

In *No One Can Stop the Rain*, Houser points out how activists during the black power movement period responded to the white establishment; in one example, when Cornell University’s president was “explaining why Cornell had voted not to sell its stocks in banks loaning money to South Africa” Houser recalls “two black students jumped onto the stage, collared him, and yanked him from the podium.”³⁵⁸ This particular incident stood out for Houser, as he faced racial and generational differences within the ACOA. He explains,

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ George W. Shepherd, *Anti-Apartheid*, 40; Keita, interview; Jean Sindab, “[Impact of U.S. Divestment from South Africa],” n.d., Box 485 [unprocessed], Walter E. Fauntroy Papers, The Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University; Nesbitt also served on ACOA’s board. Knight, interview.

³⁵⁸ Houser, *No One Can Stop The Rain*, 266.

Within the ACOA, black power made itself felt. A strong nucleus of black staff and board members felt deep ties with the black consciousness movement. They must have discussed among themselves the desirability of black leadership in ACOA. I myself thought it would have been a real advantage for the ACOA to have a black executive, and I seriously considered resigning. But I didn't, and the ACOA, unlike many groups affected by the black revolt, maintained itself as an interracial organization.³⁵⁹

In this example, Houser's use of "black revolt" may invoke images of insurrection or uprising, which would reflect a cultural misunderstanding of young black activist staff members asserting their point of view. To ACOA's credit, sometimes uncomfortable dialogue did occur and changes were made. The 1974 annual report of ACOA is revealing; six new board members were installed, at least two of which were African American (Ida Lewis founder of *Encore* magazine and Leonard Jeffries, who became well-known as a radical Afrocentric scholar).³⁶⁰ The annual report discussed increased contact with the black media including the press, television, and radio networks. Indeed, for many years ACOA had maintained an extensive mailing list of "Negro Newspapers" throughout the United States.³⁶¹ Working in coalitions with diverse allies, characterized ACOA's approach to reaching the masses. Gail Hovey explains, "One of the most important strengths of ACOA/AF's [Africa Fund's] work was to reach those who were not necessarily like-minded in their political analysis, to find common ground to

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 267.

³⁶⁰ ACOA, *ACOA [Annual Report] 1975*, Annual (New York, N.Y., 1975), American Committee on Africa, Robert E. Maurer Papers, African Activist Archive, Michigan State University, http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-6EE.

³⁶¹ ACOA, "Negro Newspapers in the United States, 1961," 1961, Box 44 Folder 20, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

accomplish a specific goal, such as the passage of divestment legislation in a state legislature or at a university's board of regents.”³⁶²

Charles Hightower and Prexy Nesbitt represented these more militant, young black voices in the ACOA. Nesbitt, began working with ACOA in 1970 in Chicago, as a “field staff [member]...organizing anti-apartheid groups in the Midwest.”³⁶³ When Nesbitt established the Chicago branch of the ACOA, “they always tried to make sure leaders of the group were both black and white,” demonstrating their commitment to interracial leadership.³⁶⁴ Unquestionably influenced by the black power movement and black pride, they unapologetically confronted biases they observed or felt existed in the organization’s leadership, both black and white.³⁶⁵ During this same period of growing black power ideology in the U.S., black consciousness and a new level of assertiveness became widespread among students in South Africa.³⁶⁶ Young black South African activists were more assertive in challenging the racist regime. Jennifer Davis recalled, “A new vibrancy in the anti- apartheid struggle inside South Africa was marked by the growth of the BCM [Black Consciousness Movement], new militancy among students, and the dramatic upsurge of worker militancy amongst African and other black workers,”

³⁶² Davis, Introduction to Jennifer Davis Interview for No Easy Victories. ACOA’s contact list for the “October 29, 1963 demonstration protesting the trial of Mandela, Sisulu, e. al. and demanding release of all political prisoners,” included SNCC, the NAACP, as well as pacifist organizations and other civil rights groups. (Box 44, File 23 ACOA)

³⁶³ Prexy Nesbitt, Interviews for No Easy Victories, interview by William Minter, October 31, 1998, http://www.noeasyvictories.org/interviews/int08_nesbitt.php.

³⁶⁴ Knight, interview.

³⁶⁵ Nesbitt had close ties with Robert Van Lierop, African American filmmaker, whose film "A Luta Continua," about the struggle for independence in Mozambique became the symbol for those fighting for African liberation. Nesbitt would co-found Africa Information Services with Van Lierop in 1972. (Nesbitt interview with Minter) Van Lierop was also a member of ACOA [Richard Knight]

³⁶⁶ Davis, Interviews for No Easy Victories. Jennifer Davis attributes Steven Biko’s Black Consciousness Movement, as well as the 1976 Soweto massacre of students (by police) during a peaceful protest, to increased “American awareness” influencing U.S. student activism (Davis interview by Minter).

during the 1970s and 80s.³⁶⁷ ACOA organized “large protests in solidarity with [the] Soweto uprising” around the country and at the United Nations.³⁶⁸ Strategically, ACOA “built close ties with many of the new unions” that grew out of this period.³⁶⁹

Challenging the status quo, these young black activists sometimes asserted their opinions in ways that made ACOA’s leadership uncomfortable. In a letter to the board, Richard P. Stevens a white professor at Lincoln University defends a letter written by Hightower and supported by Nesbitt, ACOA’s board HAD insisted that Hightower makes clear that he was not representing ACOA’s views. Stevens challenges this decision explaining:

From my particular perspective I have observed a growing cleavage between those Black Americans, generally regarded as “leaders,” and the younger element –a generation and ideological gap which of course also applies to White Americans, but not, I believe, in quite the same way. Among younger Blacks, the inclination to view their struggle more in terms of “liberation” and “Third World” identification is more pronounced. As this develops, they will insist upon carrying forth in a more total way the identification of those forces which seem to stand in the way of Black liberation everywhere. This might indeed involve singling out for attack states, persons, movements which liberal white opinion would not oppose.³⁷⁰

In this example, Stevens makes clear that not only do these young black men think differently from the leadership and staff of the organization, they will speak out against views they consider contrary to African liberation struggles. Stevens encourages the ACOA to consider these new voices. He asserts, “At this time in the history of ACOA we

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ “ACOA’s First 20 Years,” 9.

³⁶⁹ Davis, Interviews for No Easy Victories.

³⁷⁰ Richard P. Stevens to ACOA Staff and Board, “Letter to ACOA’s Board,” September 27, 1970, Box 71 Folder 56, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. At issue was ACOA’s response to a letter Hightower had written to “Black signers of a pro-Israel advertisement” in which Hightower questioned the stance of established black leaders in the context of the South African Jewish community identifying with the South African government

must not prevent new questions and approaches from developing which reflect new moods. We need Black community support.”³⁷¹ At the same time he acknowledges the financial challenges faced by organizations like ACOA, “we also need money. Perhaps we cannot have both; if not, we all stand to lose.”³⁷²

By 1972, Nesbitt would leave to work on other projects, returning to ACOA in 1976 as coordinator of the Committee to Oppose Bank Loans, a major divestment initiative. By 1979, Nesbitt describes having had “intense debates with George over the years on issue after issue.”³⁷³ Nesbitt reveals he continued “to work with George [until 1979], but he's driving me crazy by now.”³⁷⁴ Other staff observed this tension between Nesbitt and Houser.³⁷⁵ Maghan Keita describes Nesbitt as a genius. Indeed, while Nesbitt and other young black activists of the time introduced new analysis and critiques to the organization, he also “brought to the position a network of contacts with the Southern African movements. He also had credibility within many member churches of the World Council of Churches (WCC) because of the numerous church audiences he had addressed, preparing them to step up to the plate and support the program's material aid initiatives.”³⁷⁶

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Ibid. Stevens is referring to the fact that ACOA was funded by predominantly white churches and organizations; unions also supported ACOA's work. ACOA staff member, Richard Knight, recalls unions played a key role in the work of the organization, so much so that Knight concludes “if AFSME had not been out there supporting us it would not have happened.” Knight, interview.

³⁷³ Nesbitt, Interviews for No Easy Victories. Nesbitt points out their major disagreement over “the issue of [ACOA] no longer giving support to FNLA [National Front for the Liberation of Angola] and UNITA [National Union for the Total Independence of Angola].”

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Knight, interview.

³⁷⁶ Prexy Nesbitt, Introduction to Prexy Nesbitt Interview for No Easy Victories, interview by William Minter, October 13, 1998, http://www.noeasyvictories.org/interviews/int08_nesbitt.php.

In reflecting on this period, Nesbitt recognizes the benefits of not allowing the tensions to disrupt the important work of the liberation struggle that needed to continue:

The work we did in the anti-apartheid movement represented one of the finest hours of multiracial social movement work in this country. Not to say that it was without its tensions and its contradictions ... I'm very interested in trying to pass on to this next generation how you can ... not let these kinds of tensions—racial, ethnic, religious—divide people from fundamental ... goals that can only be reached by people banding together and overcoming the social barriers and the polarization. That's the only possible future that we have ... to bring in real change in the United States. —Prexy Nesbitt ³⁷⁷

Given the aforementioned factors, many of these tensions were generational and reflected racial differences.

Women Activists and Egalitarianism

Mollin suggests that “Like female activists in other egalitarian movements...the women of the radical pacifist movement took the language of equality to heart, believing it referred to them in the same way as it did their male counterparts in the struggle.”³⁷⁸

She argues that closer examination reveals “the activism promoted by the radical pacifist movement was a highly gendered phenomenon that shaped the experiences of women and men in different and unequal ways.”³⁷⁹ Though dominated by male clergy, women were an important and active part of the ACOA from its founding until its ending. These women, though typically not in the top leadership roles (i.e. executive director, board chair or co-chair), were present and influential throughout the existence of the organization.³⁸⁰ During the early years, Lydia Zamba was one of the few staff working

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Marian Mollin, *Radical Pacifism in Modern America*, 2.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 3.

³⁸⁰ In 1981 Jennifer Davis would become the first female executive director of ACOA]. Indeed, during its formative discussions in 1953, two women were present, Carolyn Malin and Catharine Raymond. [ACOA,

closely with Catharine Raymond, who had worked with Houser.³⁸¹ With the increase in staff by 1960 female participation also rose. Of five staff members listed shortly after 1960, two were women who served as “staff associates.”³⁸² Their work was applauded and acknowledged by ACOA’s leadership. Mollin contends “radical pacifists leaders over-whelmingly celebrated women in supportive roles, imagining them as faithful and nurturing companions who provided succor and assistance to the male activists.”³⁸³ On this point, we do see correlations within ACOA. Indeed, in 1960 of the 19 member executive board, three were women, of which one was the secretary. Prominent figures like, Eleanor Roosevelt and a few other women served on the mostly symbolic national committee and beginning in the late 1950s she co-chaired national campaigns with Martin Luther King, Jr. Also overwhelmingly male, the 1960 national committee included only a small percentage of women.³⁸⁴

Nevertheless, ACOA’s inclusion of women cannot be minimized particularly within the context of societal norms during the same periods. These women were engaged in noteworthy civil rights and human rights activism, often at the center of their life’s work. They were not passive observers. “Defying the prevailing patterns of their time, radical pacifist women stood shoulder to shoulder with male activists on the front

folder 2212; Minutes May 14, 1953, submitted by George Houser, Secretary: Catharine Raymond had worked with Houser in FOR and CORE; she worked with ACOA for 10 years.

³⁸¹ Houser, “Meeting Africa’s Challenge,” 17.

³⁸² ACOA, “Africa’s Decade...America’s Decisions” (American Committee on Africa, n.d 1960), 6, American Committee on Africa, African Activist Archive, Michigan State University, http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-FB8.

³⁸³ Marian Mollin, *Radical Pacifism in Modern America*, 3.

³⁸⁴ ACOA, “Africa’s Decade,” 6.

lines of protests.”³⁸⁵ Elizabeth Landis served as secretary of the board as early as 1959 and would by 1972 become a board vice-president; she served on the board for more than three decades until the end of apartheid.³⁸⁶ In these roles she participated in special meetings, representing the ACOA at special United Nations committee meetings. In one example, Landis was one of a five-person ACOA delegation in a UN meeting, which focused on American policy toward southern Africa.³⁸⁷ By the mid-1960s one of the three vice-presidents of ACOA was a woman, Sophia Yarnall Jacobs.³⁸⁸ Like Jacobs, many of the women on the board and staff were white women with long histories of civic activism. By the mid-1960s and later, ACOA increasingly placed women in roles beyond support positions. Like Mary Louise Hooper, who had worked closely with the ANC while in South Africa and led major campaigns for ACOA, radical pacifist “women simply assumed that this was where they belonged.”³⁸⁹ Hooper, a program director, and

³⁸⁵ Marian Mollin, *Radical Pacifism in Modern America*, 2.

³⁸⁶ American Committee on Africa, *Annual Report: ACOA 1959 to 1960*; ACOA, [*American Committee on Africa Annual Report - January, 1972*, Annual (New York, N.Y., January 1972), 5, American Committee on Africa, African Activist Archive, Michigan State University, http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-128B; Richard Knight to Phyllis Slade Martin, “[Women On] ACOA Board (1),” September 5, 2014. Women like Landis who served on the board for decades never rose to the position of chair; this should be more closely studied because many factors could inform why that was not the case (e.g. lack of interest, status, gender).

³⁸⁷ Houser, George, “Letter to UN Ambassador Arthur Goldberg,” October 20, 1965, American Committee on Africa, African Activist Archive, Michigan State University, http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-1033.

³⁸⁸ “ACOA Letterhead.” A civil rights and human rights and human rights activist, Jacobs was a member of the board for years and worked with many civil rights organizations over the years. For more on women in leadership, see ACOA annual reports on africanactivist.msu.edu beginning in 1960. e.g. ACOA Annual Report June 1, 1960 to May 31, 1961.

³⁸⁹ Marian Mollin, *Radical Pacifism in Modern America*, 3. Mary Louise Hooper was a wealthy, white American civil rights activist, who lived in South Africa for three years and was the first elected white member of the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa (she worked with Chief Luthuli for two years) and was briefly incarcerated in Johannesburg after challenging and losing against a deportation order. Hooper returned to the U.S. in 1957 and became the “director of the South Africa Programme” of ACOA and served as the West Coast representative for the ACOA. See Hooper’s testimony before the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, May 29, 1967 at <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=4928> (accessed September 2014). See also, Skinner, *The Foundations*

other women staff were acknowledged as having significant impact on the work of the organization. During the 1965 Human Rights Day rally, an ACOA speaker acknowledged the work of “two ladies whose efforts have meant so much to the success of this rally,” describing Mary Louise Hooper as a “firebrand” and “staff associate Emma Thomas,” for organizing the event logistics.³⁹⁰ Not only was she a gifted fundraiser, Hooper also edited the organization’s *South African Bulletin*.³⁹¹ For a short time, black American poet, author and artist Maya Angelou served as a project director during the late 1960s.³⁹²

A diversity of women led and supported ACOA’s initiatives during the organization’s last two decades. Jennifer Davis met George Houser in 1966 and joined the ACOA staff in 1967. As ACOA’s research director, she conducted research, wrote and edited publications of studies sponsored by the organization.³⁹³ Davis became the third (and first female) executive director of ACOA in 1981 and would lead the

of Anti-Apartheid, 149-150. She maintained communications with key ANC leaders, such as Z.K. Matthews who was accused in the 1956 Treason Trials and released from the trials in 1958. See, ZK Matthews papers <http://uir.unisa.ac.za/handle/10500/8578> and ZK Matthews bio <http://uir.unisa.ac.za/handle/10500/4181>. Matthews would write Hooper describing government actions to uphold the apartheid system and insure its total hegemony.

³⁹⁰ ACOA, “Human Rights Day Rally - Speaker Notes,” December 10, 1965, Box 41 Folder 4, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

³⁹¹ Davis, Introduction to Jennifer Davis Interview for No Easy Victories. Houser credited Hooper with successfully raising funds through the Africa Fund, which among its many accomplishments raised “\$25,000 to help construct [a] FRELIMO hospital in Tanzania. \$10,000 for aid to Rhodesian political prisoners, [and] funds to a school for Angolan refugee children.”[see 1975 ACOA annual report]; Houser established “the Africa Fund in 1967 [1966] with Frank Mantero, an American black, as chairman of a group to help Africans ‘to work against the injustices of colonial and white minority domination.’ The fund grew rapidly, providing assistance to schools and training institutes of liberation movements, legal assistance to those who were imprisoned, and developing research and analysis to assist this process. By 1975, the fund had a budget of \$263, 000.” Shepherd, *Anti-Apartheid*, 122. See also ACOA’s chronology. Conflicting dates found on the Africa Fund’s founding as 1967 and 1966. ACOA’s 20 year chronology which indicates it was “organized” in 1966.

³⁹² ACOA, *ACOA Report (Maya Angelou)* (New York, N.Y, December 15, 1967), Box 41 Folder 5, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. Angelou’s appointment may be an example of accomplished/notable people working short stints with ACOA, perhaps in transition or for special projects. Several black American staff seem to fit this pattern, however, closer analysis and research is needed to be more conclusive

³⁹³ Houser, “Meeting Africa’s Challenge,” 23.

organization for nearly two decades. A longtime activist from South Africa, Davis asserts, “I came from a very left group in South Africa,” eventually necessitating her departure from her home country.³⁹⁴ Having received a BA in English, economics, and economic history, from the University of Witwatersrand (Wits), Davis was well prepared for her roles in ACOA. Influenced by reading Eric Williams’s *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944), R. Palme Dutt’s *India Today*, and books on the South African economy, Davis attributes this early reading as helping to “lay solid foundations for the work we did many years later seeking to impose sanctions on South Africa.”³⁹⁵

Gail Hovey and Stephanie Urdang, both ACOA staff members, worked closely with Jennifer Davis and served in various capacities including that of research directors.³⁹⁶ African American activists, Marian Wright Edelman and Dorothy Height, were among the honorary co-chairs for the 1989 “Summit Conference on Apartheid” sponsored by the Religious Action Network. Phyllis Byrd co-coordinated the conference with Dumisani Kumalo. Dame Nita Barrow (president of the World Council of Churches)

³⁹⁴ Davis, Introduction to Jennifer Davis Interview for No Easy Victories. A white South African, in exile in the United States since 1966, Jennifer Davis, grew up in Johannesburg with her German born mother and South African father. Of Jewish heritage, Davis learned early on that “never again” came to mean “every Jew should be an activist, resisting religious and racial oppression wherever it occurred.” Her political activism began during her teenage years in South Africa; later she engaged in the trade union movement and the Unity Movement in South Africa. Davis joined the left-leaning Unity Movement while a student at Wits. The Unity Movement functioned through the Progressive Forum. She remained affiliated with this group into the 1960s. After college, she worked in the trade union movement and the organization that she worked with had a “sometimes quite militant anti-racist history.” As tensions increased for activists engaged in struggles against racial injustices in South Africa, organizing became more difficult, organizations banned, and scrutiny more intense; Davis knew she would have to leave the country, eventually moving with her family to New York. (quotes in this note from Jennifer Davis interview with Minter).

³⁹⁵ Davis, Interviews for No Easy Victories.

³⁹⁶ Knight to Slade Martin, “[Women On] ACOA Board (2).” See also ACOA correspondence from Urdang and Hovey on africanactivist.msu.edu

was a featured speaker and Davis and other women chaired or facilitated sessions.³⁹⁷

Women activists led important campaigns, conducted major research, testified before special United Nations committees, organized logistics, wrote articles, raised funds, and served on the board. Women never rose to the chairmanship of this four decades old organization. Still, ACOA women activists were central to devising ACOA strategies, often leading key strategic initiatives such as Hooper's leadership in fundraising efforts, and Davis's highly regarded research and writing on the African liberation struggle.

ORGANIZATION STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMS

Based in New York City, ACOA had easy access to major internationally minded organizations and institutions; in fact, their office was not far from the United Nations, which symbolizes international peace and security. As Mark Harrison has made clear, New York is the nation's international hub while Washington, D.C. is its political hub.³⁹⁸ ACOA was well placed to push forward its objectives on Africa and support African liberation leaders. Although ACOA eventually, reached outside of New York, many of its major programs and events took place there. "Africa, the United Nations, and US Policy" was the first of many conferences on Africa sponsored by the ACOA.³⁹⁹ Houser elaborated, "The United Nations was a focal point of action internationally against colonialism. Many liberation movements sent delegations to New York to present their

³⁹⁷ Religious Action Network, "Summit Conference on Africa Program Book," April 4, 1989, Box 79 Folder ACOA ADDN Projects – Summit Conference on Apartheid 1989-1988, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

³⁹⁸ Harrison, interview, March 28, 2013. Harrison also asserts, New York as the nation's financial hub proving strategically beneficial to ACOA's divestment campaigns.

³⁹⁹ Houser, "Meeting Africa's Challenge," 17 & 19.

case, and ACOA was often able to be helpful to these men and women.”⁴⁰⁰ ACOA assisted these delegations with travel, accommodations, and clerical needs, thereby building relationships and trust with emerging African leadership. ACOA often sponsored or joined civil rights organizations in their sponsorship of special celebrations and dinners for African dignitaries.⁴⁰¹ On one occasion a tape with a message to “the Fourth Committee at the UN, dealing with colonial questions,” was smuggled out of South Africa and sent to ACOA’s office in New York; the tape was safely delivered to the UN committee.⁴⁰² These acts of support brought visibility and credibility to the organization among anticolonial and African liberation advocates.

Africa Defense and Aid Fund

When the Defiance Campaign ended and ACOA was established, organizations and individuals who had supported AFSAR’s South Africa Defense Fund moved their support to the Africa Defense and Aid Fund. This fund provided financial support to the African liberation struggle and related initiatives for movements across Africa. Funds from the Defense and Aid Fund had been used to assist liberation movements as early as 1961. King raised considerable funds to support its anti-apartheid initiatives. In 1959, he agreed to serve as one of the sponsors of the new Africa Defense and Aid Fund and lent

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁰¹ In celebration of Ghana’s independence, ACOA sponsored a public celebration that drew more than 1,800 people, to mark “the independence of the first sub-Saharan country to win its freedom.” Upon his election as Ghana’s first president, ACOA sent a card containing 500 signatures of Americans, congratulating Kwame Nkrumah. They worked with the NAACP and the Urban League to host a dinner at New York’s Waldorf Astoria, with over 1100 guests, in honor of newly elected, Nkrumah. Responding to special requests, ACOA sought to accommodate these dignitaries; they arranged a Harlem Street rally for Nkrumah because he wanted to directly address the people. [quotes are from Houser, “Meeting Africa’s Challenge,” p. 19]Ibid.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

his name to the cause.⁴⁰³ Featured events and campaigns served as vehicles to raise funds from individuals and organizations; these events were often in solidarity with larger campaigns initiated both in and outside of the ACOA Human Rights Day and African Freedom Day rallies, were among the many fundraising events designed to support the struggle.

ACOA also addressed immediate needs using a variety of tactics to raise funds. Following the March 21, 1960 Sharpeville Massacre, ACOA placed a full page ad in the *New York Times* on April 4, 1960; the headline read “The Shame of South Africa.”⁴⁰⁴ Expressing outrage over the killing of “72 unarmed Africans and wounded hundreds” in a state sanctioned massacre; ACOA appealed to Americans to “contribute generously to the Emergency South Africa Appeal for the widows and orphans of those slain.”⁴⁰⁵ ACOA raised \$19,000 from this appeal. ACOA actively sought financial support whenever making public appearances. Hope R. Stevens urged the delegates of the 1967 International Seminar in Kitwa, Zambia, a conference on racism, apartheid, and colonialism in southern Africa, to “support the Fund’s special money-raising efforts.”⁴⁰⁶ Actively supporting African liberation throughout southern Africa, ACOA occasionally

⁴⁰³ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter to Miss Morrissett,” December 23, 1959, Originally in Folder 2212, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. Morrissett had asked for King’s support in a December 10, 1959 letter in which she mentioned that many of the sponsors of the Africa Defense and Aid Fund had served as sponsors of the South Africa Defense Fund. She also mentioned that she would like to include his name in the updated materials.

⁴⁰⁴ “The Shame of South Africa,” *New York Times*, April 4, 1960, Box 40 Folder 9, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.; “ACOA’s First 20 Years,” 8.

⁴⁰⁶ Stevens, “International Seminar on Apartheid, Racial Discrimination and Colonialism in Southern Africa,” 4.

provided emergency funds and other assistance to African “representatives such as Sam Nujoma and Jacob Kuhangua of SWAPO [South West Africa People’s Organization].”⁴⁰⁷

Protests, Conferences, and Massive Campaigns

Davis suggests that “organizing in the U.S. was always profoundly affected by what was happening in South Africa.”⁴⁰⁸ In response, ACOA co-sponsored and initiated many conferences, rallies, and campaigns in solidarity with the liberation struggle and in protest of unjust racist laws and government repression in South Africa. As part of key events and initiatives, ACOA “brought over many leaders from Africa to the United States” who could speak from personal experience about African freedom struggles.⁴⁰⁹ From its founding ACOA’s actions were in solidarity with African liberation organizations and activists; indeed, these outreach efforts were intended to build coalitions, educate, raise funds, and respond to calls for support from South African church, union, and liberation leaders.

Cognizant of problems at home, ACOA sometimes engaged in protests and demonstrations addressing both domestic and South African racial policies. In March of 1960, ACOA and CORE brought together a coalition of black and white protesters to picket a F.W. Woolworth store in New York “to protest the exclusion of Negroes from lunch counters of the company’s variety stores in the South.”⁴¹⁰ Immediately following the Woolworth’s protest, the group marched about a mile uptown to the South African

⁴⁰⁷ Houser, “Meeting Africa’s Challenge,” 19.

⁴⁰⁸ Davis, Interviews for No Easy Victories.

⁴⁰⁹ Houser, George, interview.

⁴¹⁰ “South Africans ‘Out to Lunch’ as Shooting Is Protested,” *New York Times*, March 24, 1960, Box 40 Folder 64, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

Consulate to protest the killings at Sharpeville.⁴¹¹ The consulate secretary refused to accept the letter written by the organizations.⁴¹² Shepherd asserts, during the 1960s “direct action through mass marches and campaigns became the new tactic. Large new groups, not committed to religious pacifist ideas, began to enter the movements against apartheid.”⁴¹³

African Freedom Day Rallies

Rallies celebrating African independence as well as protesting the continued struggle for freedom brought attention to the challenges faced by African people throughout the continent. Houser explains that “Of special importance were African Freedom Day rallies from 1959 to 1963 [which took place] in large halls including Carnegie Hall, Town Hall, Hunter College Auditorium,” as well as in churches.⁴¹⁴ An annual observance of Africa’s freedom struggle, held on April 15th, was founded at the “first All African People’s Congress in Accra, Ghana, December 8 -15, 1958,” and designated as “Africa Freedom Day.”⁴¹⁵ ACOA hosted the annual event mostly in New York and Washington, D.C. where politicians, artists, clergy, and African leaders participated. Emerging and established African political leaders were featured speakers at

⁴¹¹ Ibid. The consulate protest was in response to the Sharpeville massacre

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ George W. Shepherd, *Anti-Apartheid*, 37. These tactics were not new in black American protest; indeed, during the early 20th century Marcus Garvey was famous for his mass marches along the streets of Harlem, some argue his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) movement was larger than that of the civil rights movement of the 1950s [“Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association” by David Van Leeuwen, National Humanities Center <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/tkeyinfo/garvey.htm>]; the CAA had also used this tactic with many public rally’s and huge events at Madison Square Gardens in New York and events featuring Paul Robeson across the nation.

⁴¹⁴ Houser, “Meeting Africa’s Challenge,” 19.

⁴¹⁵ ACOA, “Press Release: Africa Freedom Day Rally, Metropolitan Baptist Church” (American Committee on Africa, April 15, 1961), Box 40 Folder 34, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

the rallies. Less than one month following the Sharpeville massacre in March 1960, Hope R. Stevens, ACOA vice-president and African Freedom Day chairman wrote, “The massacre in South Africa has shocked the world. ...Freedom for the millions still under racist or colonial rule is the cry of the day.”⁴¹⁶ He pointed out the importance of celebrating, “the achievement of independence this year for 60 million people in 7 new nations,” while reminding us “of the ugly human blight existing not just in South Africa, but in other parts of the continent: Algeria, East and Central Africa, Angola.”⁴¹⁷ Stevens encourages attendance at the event, emphasizing the intent to “Protest the cruel, inhuman massacre in Sharpeville.”⁴¹⁸ Reminding supporters that proceeds from the event will “benefit the Africa Defense and Aid Fund,” emphasizing “this is the most significant way you and your friends can contribute to Africa.”⁴¹⁹

ACOA not only held rallies in large public venues, the members understood the importance of bringing such events to the black American church community. The April 15, 1961 Africa Freedom Day Rally was co-hosted and sponsored by D.C. churches,

ACOA, “African Freedom Day 1959,” n.d. Tom Mboya spoke at the New York rally at Hunter College during his first trip to the United States in 1959. Artists and performers such as Eartha Kitt, William Warfield and activist/artist Harry Belafonte also participated in the event. ACOA hosted Mboya on his first trip to the United States; “one of ACOA’s objectives was to introduce him to American labor leaders,” such as Maida Springer. Yvette Richards, *Maida Springer: Pan-Africanist and International Labor Leader* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), 105. Maida Springer a union leader and pan-Africanist, though she was not a member of ACOA explained she “was involved in what they were doing,” made herself available to them and agreed to host Mboya at her mother’s home during his first visit to the states. Yvette Richards, *Maida Springer: Pan-Africanist and International Labor Leader* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), 105, 162,199. See also, Yvette Richards, *Conversations with Maida Springer: A Personal History of Labor, Race, and International Relations* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004).

⁴¹⁶ Hope R. Stevens to Dear Friend, “ACOA Africa Freedom Day Mailing,” April 1960, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid. Like other major ACOA events an African leader was the featured speaker, in this case Kenneth Kaunda, of Northern Rhodesia.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

Bibleway and Metropolitan Baptist Church, and held at Metropolitan.⁴²⁰ The Washington Chapter of the All-African Students Union, individual citizens, United States Senators and African ambassadors were also sponsors. Civil rights and social justice groups present included the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), CORE, Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Council of Churches and United Autoworkers International (UAWI).⁴²¹ Bibleway and Metropolitan Baptist Church, Washington D.C. based black churches hosted the event and were African leaders addressed audiences at annual African Freedom Day rallies; Thomas Kanza, Congolese political leader and United Nations minister and delegate of the Government of the Congo, was the featured speaker at the 1961 rally.⁴²² Black American church people, who were members of the sponsoring churches and other churches in the Metropolitan Washington Area better understood the issues when hearing directly from African leaders.

Transnational Advocacy

George W. Shepherd explains that, “These pacific, human rights groups were transnationalist in the sense of utilizing international structures to intercede actively on behalf of the rights of Africans in South Africa, with, of course varying interpretations of the appropriate measures and tactics to be used.”⁴²³ Working closely with and influenced by African nationalists, pacifists “demanded that representatives of the nationalists be

⁴²⁰ ACOA, “Africa Freedom Day Sponsors List, 1961,” April 15, 1961, Box 40 Folder 33, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁴²¹ ACOA, “Africa Freedom Day Rally Metropolitan Baptist Church.” See chapter 3 of this dissertation for a more detailed overview of the African Freedom Day rally at the historically black American church

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ George W. Shepherd, *Anti-Apartheid*, 34.

heard and issues debated. Their expectations concerning the speed of revolutionary change in South Africa were that rapid adoption of majority rule in South Africa must come and would lead to the complete abolition of separate development of the races, within a decade or two at the most.”⁴²⁴ ACOA sponsored many African leaders in U.S. tours and organized events and other opportunities for these leaders to give voice to what was happening on the ground. In addition, ACOA representatives including Kumalo, Davis, and Houser regularly testified before the United Nations and international conferences urging support of African liberation and challenging U.S. support of the South African regime. In one example regarding the 1963 arms embargo, “Jennifer Davis called attention to the failure of the United States to apply the same standards to South Africa as employed against the People’s Republic of China.”⁴²⁵ ACOA also called on clergy and prominent supporters, like King, to do the same.

ACOA worked in coalition with other organizations and individuals to challenge South Africa’s participation in professional sports events in the U.S. Working with professional American athletes, “ACOA organized opposition to South Africa’s reinstatement to the Olympic Games” in 1968.⁴²⁶ Black American professional athletes, voiced their opposition to South Africa’s participation in sports events, demanding upholding the ban on their participation in the Olympics and other U.S. games given their segregationist policies. Jackie Robinson, supported the full exclusion of South African athletes and represented ACOA at a 1968 press conference co-sponsored with South

⁴²⁴ Ibid., 35.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 95.

⁴²⁶ Hostetter, *Movement Matters*, 33.

African Non-Racial Committee for Open Olympic Sports (SANROC).⁴²⁷ Aligning with other like-minded groups like the NAACP and the Phelps Stokes Fund, they protested South Africa's participation in the Davis Cup match in Tennessee and later, their rugby team's scheduled games in the United States. The campaign was successful in that it "forced the cancellation of scheduled matches in New York, Chicago, and Rochester."⁴²⁸ These transnational boycotts were not limited to sports. In another example, "ACOA challenged the establishment of regular flights to the US by South Africa Airlines (SAA). In 1968 South Africa exercised its option, established by treaty in 1947, to begin flights to New York. By February 1969 SAA established regular flights to Kennedy Airport."⁴²⁹ "ACOA countered the SAA campaign with newspaper ads signed by more than 160 prominent black Americans who protested the conditions facing black tourists traveling in South Africa."⁴³⁰ ACOA also "mobilized several hundred protesters" to greet "the first incoming flight at JFK on February 23, 1969."⁴³¹ "In April 1969 the House Subcommittee on African Affairs, chaired by Congressman Diggs, held a hearing on the SAA issue at which George Houser testified. Diggs initiated legislation to block SAA flights while ACOA generated petitions that were sent to the Civil Aeronautics Board."⁴³² Although these actions did not, at that time, change the status of the SAA flights, they did

⁴²⁷ Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans Against Apartheid, 1946-1994*, 86; Houser, *No One Can Stop The Rain*, 274.

⁴²⁸ Houser, *No One Can Stop The Rain*, 351. See also ACOA's 1975 annual report.

⁴²⁹ Hostetter, *Movement Matters*, 34.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*

⁴³² *Ibid.*

result in major newspapers and magazines discontinuing publication of SAA advertisements.⁴³³

Publications on the African Liberation Struggle

ACOA established itself as the go to organization for well-researched and accurate information on liberation events in Africa. It published and distributed in-house pamphlets, reports, brochures, a newsletter, and a magazine, as well as materials from other reputable organizations. Indeed, they became the clearinghouse for distribution of these materials in the United States and abroad.⁴³⁴

Used to inform and educate individuals and organizations about liberation struggles in Africa and the impact of U.S. policy on the struggle, these publications were distributed individually and in bulk reaching thousands of readers. As research director, Davis edited the publication of studies sponsored by the organization; many of the studies focused on United States economic and corporate involvement in southern Africa, particularly in South Africa.⁴³⁵ *Partners in Apartheid*, published in 1964, focused on how the United States provided support to apartheid in South Africa.⁴³⁶ Davis also led the research efforts for divestiture campaigns. Colleague and activist, Gail Hovey described Davis as, “principled and rigorous, [she] insisted that publications be of practical use to

⁴³³ ACOA, *ACOA [Annual Report] 1975*.

⁴³⁴ American Committee on Africa, “Publications of the American Committee on Africa” (American Committee on Africa, Fall 1960), http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-19AA, African Activist Archive, Michigan State University, africanactivist.msu.edu. This brochure and order form lists ACOA and other organization’s pamphlets on Africa, which organizations could order in bulk. The pamphlets were described as an “authoritative series designed to inform the readers...about current African problems”

⁴³⁵ Houser, “Meeting Africa’s Challenge,” 23.

⁴³⁶ “ACOA’s First 20 Years,” 8.

activists and organizers and that everything that went out under ACOA/AF's name be fully vetted and referenced.”⁴³⁷ Davis was also seen as an “intellectual fire power.”⁴³⁸ Understanding the importance of these materials to local coalitions, ACOA provided printed, simplified handouts. ACOA fact sheets on divestments, for example, listed questions and answers, which were “key to local groups” helping “people figure out what to say and how to organize their campaign.”⁴³⁹ ACOA’s research strengthened the work of the organization. Among many groups benefiting from these materials, student activists used ACOA’s well researched information to challenge university investments in South Africa.

Africa Today, a magazine published by ACOA and first edited by Keith Irvine in 1954, was touted as the “oldest periodical in the United States devoted exclusively to African affairs.”⁴⁴⁰ By 1960 the monthly magazine distributed more than 5,000 copies to subscribers in the U.S. and abroad; ACOA’s mailing list continued to grow in the coming years. With its growing base, the magazine provided a source of income to the ACOA.⁴⁴¹ ACOA’s mailing list grew from 5000 in 1960 to more than 10,000 by 1963. Houser attributes the expansion to “a growing interest in African freedom from a section of

⁴³⁷ Davis, Introduction to Jennifer Davis Interview for No Easy Victories. Regarded as a respected resource, ACOA’s research files on Africa were used extensively “by students, activists, legislators, and journalists.” Davis, interview with Minter.

⁴³⁸ Keita, interview.

⁴³⁹ Knight, interview. Other organizations like TransAfrica relied on ACOA’s well researched materials for updates on Africa.

⁴⁴⁰ American Committee on Africa, “Publications of the American Committee on Africa”; “ACOA’s First 20 Years,” 8.

⁴⁴¹ American Committee on Africa, *Annual Report: ACOA 1959 to 1960*, 3. Activists of the 60s, 70s and 80s remind us during this pre-email era, mail was still used as major form of publicity and communication; thus, mass mailings were common methods of communicating with supporters.

liberal America.”⁴⁴² ACOA maintained contact with many faith-based organizations, civil rights organizations, and media groups including the black press. ACOA effectively used mailings to alert organizations of incidents in South Africa. For example, in response to an appeal from the Reverend Frank Chikane, who, a mailing went out to over 1000 organizations calling for protests after the bombing of the South African Council of Church’s Khotso House.⁴⁴³

African leaders were invited to write articles for the magazine, “Dr. Hastings K. Banda [Malawi], President Kwame Nkrumah [Ghana], Tom Mboya [Kenya], Prime Minister Sylvanue Olympio [Togo] and Kenneth Kaunda [Zambia]” were among the contributors. Houser often wrote articles for the magazine, covering stories of U.S. visits by African leaders, eyewitness accounts of situations in Africa (e.g. the Sharpeville massacre), many stories and studies on U.S. government and corporate involvement in boosting South Africa’s economy.⁴⁴⁴ During the early years, as ACOA sought to distance itself from any appearance of affiliation or sympathy to communists, it featured articles that reflected a Cold War perspective sometimes labeling “African liberation fighters as ‘terrorists.’”⁴⁴⁵ Davis points out that as late as the 1980s “any effort to support liberation movements ... was done in the context of the Cold War, where the movements were

⁴⁴² Houser, “Meeting Africa’s Challenge,” 21.

⁴⁴³ Wyatt Tee Walker and Jennifer Davis, “Letter to Supporters,” Mailing, (November 14, 1988), Box ACOA ADDN Project, RAN 1989 – 90 [unprocessed 012] Folder Religion Action Network (RAN), 1989 APR, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁴⁴⁴ Houser, *No One Can Stop The Rain*, 272.

⁴⁴⁵ Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans Against Apartheid, 1946-1994*, 25. Nesbitt points to a “a story titled ‘Terror in North Africa,’ for instance, which reported that ‘terrorism and violence’ were spreading throughout ‘French North Africa,’ pointing to the killing of five white settlers in Tunisia by ‘terrorists’.”

branded in Washington and most other establishment circles as terrorist, because they engaged in armed struggle, and communist, because they represented efforts to share in the wealth produced in their countries.”⁴⁴⁶

The *Africa-U.N. Bulletin*, designed to “call attention to issues affecting Africa to be considered by the General Assembly or other UN agencies” as well as, provide background information, make recommendations, and respond to UN actions affecting Africa, was first published in 1956. This comprehensive newsletter sought to cover information that other print media was “least adequate,” in covering.⁴⁴⁷ By 1960, ACOA merged the *Africa-U.N. Bulletin* with the *Africa Today* magazine.

First published in 1977, the quarterly newsletter *ACOA Action News*, covered news and information about ACOA’s efforts to support the struggle for independence in Africa. Newsletters featured stories on major ACOA initiatives and African liberation activities taking place across the U.S. Most articles were written by ACOA staff members, such as Kumalo and Davis; and edited by Richard Knight. Stories provided current information on events in South Africa, for example, with responses from U.S. organizations, as well as local and national divestment legislation. Articles provided insight on how ACOA staff worked to support community initiatives and educate and mobilize American participation. Readers were encouraged to get involved in local

⁴⁴⁶ Davis, Interviews for No Easy Victories.

⁴⁴⁷ Houser, George, “New’ Leaflet - Africa U.N. Bulletin,” 1956, http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-ACD, African Activist Archive, Michigan State University, <http://africanactivist.msu.edu/>. The *Africa U.N. Bulletin* first appeared in 1956 and was published through at least 1960.

efforts in their community and reminded “You Can Make a Difference.”⁴⁴⁸ Invitations to “help fight apartheid” and “support the American Committee on Africa,” were included in each newsletter.⁴⁴⁹ The newsletters also provided organization updates and names of the most current board leadership.

Fighting for Corporate Divestiture: An ACOA Strategic Priority

Not only was New York strategically convenient to the ACOA from an international perspective, it also proved beneficial from a financial perspective. Many of America’s major national and international financial institutions were based in the city, in close proximity to ACOA’s offices. ACOA, in collaboration with other anti-apartheid groups, was on the forefront of calling for socially responsible investment portfolios and challenging corporations, churches, and other organizations to divest from companies with interests in South Africa.⁴⁵⁰

When in 1966 ten banks revealed “they had made loans to South Africa, amounting to \$40 million,” ACOA and its partners—trade unions, college students, clergy, and at least one college president—challenged individuals and organizations “to protest to their banks and threaten to withdraw their deposits unless the banks changed their policy.”⁴⁵¹ Working with ACOA, students from Union Theological Seminary, initiated a campaign calling for “individuals and religious and educational groups to withdraw their accounts from First National City Bank. Ultimately, 300 people staged a

⁴⁴⁸ ACOA, “You Can Make A Difference,” *ACOA Action News*, Spring 1985, Number 19 edition, 6, Box 47 Folder SASP, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁴⁴⁹ ACOA, “Help Fight Apartheid,” *ACOA Action News*, Spring 1985, Number 19 edition, 5, Box 47 Folder SASP, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁴⁵⁰ Harrison, interview, March 28, 2013.

⁴⁵¹ George W. Shepherd, *Anti-Apartheid*, 146.

march on the Morningside Heights branch, and 80 accounts were closed.”⁴⁵² Following this initial success the students sought to replicate their efforts across the city and called on ACOA and the National Student Christian Federation to lead the effort by providing staff; these efforts led to the establishment of the Committee of Conscience Against Apartheid in 1966.⁴⁵³ A. Philip Randolph was selected to chair the campaign.⁴⁵⁴

In an October 7, 1966 letter to the Chairman of the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid, ACOA staffers Mary Louise Hooper and Wendell Foster, explained that the Committee of Conscience Against Apartheid campaign was initiated by ACOA and “the University Christian Movement, conceived as a protest by Americans against” Chase Manhattan and First National City banks of New York for their complicity in supporting the apartheid regime.⁴⁵⁵ Challenging Americans with investments in banks “which help[ed] undergird the South-African economy,” ACOA and its partners sought to encourage “Americans [to]...disengage themselves economically from the injustices of the apartheid regime.”⁴⁵⁶ Campaign supporters included students, concerned individuals, religious organizations, labor unions, and civil

⁴⁵² “Taconic Foundation [Grant Application],” 1966, 2, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁴⁵³ Ibid. Requesting \$10,000, from the Taconic Foundation, for this city-wide effort, they listed 5 objectives which focused on: 1. “arouse public conscience and awareness of how dollars saved and dollars invested may contribute to the apartheid system.” 2. “to discourage further investment...in South Africa” by the 2 banks. 3. To warn other banks and businesses “that to profit in apartheid is to risk censure by the American public.” 4. “to demonstrate the U.S. government that the immorality of profiting in apartheid will not be tolerated by the American public and that our foreign policy towards S.A. must be reshaped in accord with our belief in racial equality.” 5. “To demonstrate...methods of organization for other action against apartheid on a nationwide basis.” Taconic Grant Application, 2.

⁴⁵⁴ George W. Shepherd, *Anti-Apartheid*, 146.

⁴⁵⁵ Wendell Foster and Mary-Louise Hooper, “Letter to The Chairman of the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid,” October 7, 1966, Letters, African National Congress Online, <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=42>.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

rights groups.⁴⁵⁷ Account holders responded by initially withdrawing “tens of thousands of dollars” and participating in demonstrations at bank branches throughout New York City.⁴⁵⁸ Designed to “culminate with a withdrawal of accounts on Friday, December 9th, to mark Human Rights Day,” the campaign was a success.⁴⁵⁹ Shepherd estimates “some \$23 million were removed from the banks involved.”⁴⁶⁰ In turn the banks discontinued their financial arrangements with South Africa: however, “they proceeded to establish secret agreements,” which contradicted their public stance.⁴⁶¹ Following these initial victories, ACOA would challenge American banks and corporations for decades.

As violence escalated in South Africa during the late 1970s and 1980s, ACOA worked in coalition with other groups to strategize major divestment campaigns. In its 1975 annual report, ACOA discussed its success in divestiture campaigns; “ACOA in conjunction with the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, [a faith-based coalition], helped to organize a major campaign against those American, Canadian, European, and Japanese banks which loaned more than \$210 million to the South African government.”⁴⁶² The report also mentioned that some churches, universities, and other organizations had begun divestments or were moving toward divestment.⁴⁶³

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid. Later divestment campaigns would spread around the country.

⁴⁵⁹ “Taconic Foundation [Grant Application],” 1.

⁴⁶⁰ George W. Shepherd, *Anti-Apartheid*, 146.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

⁴⁶² ACOA, *ACOA [Annual Report] 1975*. The Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility is a faith-based organization that focuses on the social impact of investments. The ICCR responded to South Africa's human rights violations under the racist system of apartheid. Based in New York, the ICCR continues its work on addressing the “social impacts of corporate operations and policies.” <http://www.iccr.org/>, last accessed 4/19/2015

⁴⁶³ Houser, *No One Can Stop The Rain*, 350; Knight, interview.

Larger white denominations were called to divest their holdings in corporations doing business in South Africa; since “most of the black churches were not heavily invested in major corporations,” divestment

ACOA had campaigned against bank loans since the sixties but in 1977, as the pace of struggle accelerated in South Africa, and awareness in the U.S. responded, ACOA and Clergy and Laity Concerned [CALC] set up the Campaign Against Bank Loans to South Africa (COBLSA). Coordinated by Prexy Nesbitt and Gene Jones of CALC, COBLSA included a network of unions, churches, local anti-apartheid groups, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and other national organizations that urged state and local governments to sever any and all ties with institution involved in South Africa.⁴⁶⁴ In 1979, Dumisani took over the coordinator's role from Prexy Nesbitt and Gene Jones of CALC, who had shared the work.

Not only did ACOA lead divestment protests, it also publicized blatant corporate complicity with the South African regime. In 1978 ACOA released, “secret General Motors memos revealing [the] company’s plans to cooperate with [the] military to suppress black political action in South Africa.”⁴⁶⁵

During this same period, Mark Harrison represented CALC in coalition with ACOA. A strategically important collaboration, CALC was one of the few organizations with local chapters around the country. Harrison helped mobilize these chapters to

was not a major focus. [Jennifer Davis interview with minter] Lodge adds this was especially true for “Methodist and Episcopal congregations, and through these capillaries reached into university campuses.” He reminds us that through “the mid-1970s, American generational rebellion focused mainly on civil rights and opposition to the Vietnam War.” Lodge, *Sharpeville*, 243.

⁴⁶⁴ Davis, Interviews for No Easy Victories. “Among the movement’s major achievements was Chase Manhattan’s decision in July 1984 not to renew its \$500 million loan to South Africa, a move that precipitated a sharp devaluation of the Rand. Chase Manhattan’s chairman, Willard Butcher, denied his bank’s decision was motivated by political concerns but in fact Chase Manhattan was facing the threat of divestment by New York City and other major shareholders. The movement’s influence was evident in the various sanctions adopted by state legislatures.” Lodge, *Sharpeville: An Apartheid Massacre and Its Consequences*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York; 2011, 256.

⁴⁶⁵ “ACOA’s First 20 Years,” 9.

support divestment initiatives, with a particular emphasis on church groups and universities divesting funds from companies doing business with and in South Africa.⁴⁶⁶ He explained, “ACOA thought it was critical that they could talk to people around the country,” and CALC’s existing local networks proved beneficial.⁴⁶⁷ This type of collaboration allowed ACOA to build rapport and support in local communities.

ACOA hosted the first *Conference on Public Investment and South Africa* in June 1981 bringing together legislators and activists’ from 14 states along with key anti-apartheid organizations.⁴⁶⁸ These participants met in New York with trade unionists, city officials, and state legislators.⁴⁶⁹ This coalition of like-minded people led to “an explosion” of new legislation being introduced across the country.⁴⁷⁰ Prior to the conference, “no divestment legislation had passed in any state.”⁴⁷¹

Leaders of fairly new and established organizations served on the conference steering committee; Randall Robinson, executive director of TransAfrica, and George Houser were among the core committee members.⁴⁷² Each of these organizations brought with them their considerable networks of individual and organizational contacts. Davis attributes the success of this coalition to the work of Dumisani Kumalo’s “organizational skill and wisdom that against considerable odds we kept this committee together,

⁴⁶⁶ Harrison, interview, March 28, 2013.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁸ Davis, Interviews for No Easy Victories.

⁴⁶⁹ Lodge, *Sharpeville*, 256.

⁴⁷⁰ Knight, interview.

⁴⁷¹ Davis, Interviews for No Easy Victories.

⁴⁷² to Randall Robinson, “Letter from George Houser,” June 3, 1981, Box 14 Folder no#, TransAfrica Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University. Several other established organizations including CALC, Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR), AFSC, and WOA joined ACOA and TransAfrica to form the core membership of the conference steering committee. [see Davis interview]

working in a common direction until it was time to heed Nelson Mandela's call to lift sanctions."⁴⁷³

Outreach and Divestment

Joining the ACOA in the summer of 1979, Kumalo, brought with him experiences and first-hand accounts of life inside apartheid South Africa, which helped American audiences to better understand what was happening on the ground.⁴⁷⁴ Furthering ACOA's commitment to reaching students, Kumalo visited over 1000 campuses covering all 50 states.⁴⁷⁵ Davis asserts, Kumalo "worked constantly to get very disparate groups, individuals, ideological opposites to find common ground on the issue of ending U.S. collaboration with apartheid. Sometimes I think our success grew out of this extended effort to bring them together on the one issue."⁴⁷⁶ ACOA met with a high rate of success when it paired black and white legislators to sponsor local and state divestment legislation.⁴⁷⁷ Kumalo is credited with the success of these efforts.⁴⁷⁸ Indeed, although ACOA had initiated and facilitated many campaigns over the years, Kumalo's full-time attention to working with anti-apartheid activists and local groups "helped nurture a nationwide grassroots network" poised to participate in the 1984 Free South Africa

⁴⁷³ Davis, Interviews for No Easy Victories.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid. Kumalo's organizing skills shone through in his role as project director.

⁴⁷⁵ Kumalo, Interview for No Easy Victories.

⁴⁷⁶ Davis, Introduction to Jennifer Davis Interview for No Easy Victories.

⁴⁷⁷ Kumalo, Interview for No Easy Victories. Kumalo also oversaw the state and local legislative campaign through the Africa Fund. He remembers supporters from conservative states like Alaska and Idaho; in fact, some conservatives aligned with progressives to pass legislation. For example, Kumalo contends the Lutherans were successful in getting the Midwest votes in support of sanctions legislation. He explains, both conservative and progressive branches of the Lutheran church in the Midwest were "instrumental in bring[ing] up the issues of South Africa." Kumalo, interview with Goodman.

⁴⁷⁸ Wyatt Tee Walker, interview by author, Richmond, March 8, 2013; Knight, interview; Davis, Interviews for No Easy Victories.

Movement (FSAM) that would change the direction of anti-apartheid activism in the United States.⁴⁷⁹

Kumalo reiterates “we lobbied on the ground” while other organizations lobbied in Washington.⁴⁸⁰ Some anti-apartheid activists insist that legislators who supported sanctions were more likely to be reelected. Kumalo contends Senator Harry Reid, “leader of the Democratic Party...owes his election to us.”⁴⁸¹ He explains, legislators “were getting calls from their local voters and their local people saying sanctions matter;” asserting, “we cultivated” these people by being “an integral part of ...movements” that mattered to them.⁴⁸² Because of these networks, ACOA/Africa Fund “knew... by lunchtime that we would reverse the veto, even though the vote was in the afternoon.”⁴⁸³

There is no question ACOA’s outreach work, with local coalitions influenced local, state, and national responses to anti-apartheid legislation. Central to their message was “people in South Africa were no different from them, especially black South Africans.”⁴⁸⁴ People connected with the movement when they could see commonalities between themselves and black South Africans.

Local Divestment Networks across the Country

⁴⁷⁹ Dumisani Shadrack Kumalo, Introduction to Dumisani Kumalo Interview for No Easy Victories (Hovey), interview by David Goodman, January 31, 2005, http://www.noeasyvictories.org/interviews/int14_kumalo.php.

⁴⁸⁰ Kumalo, Interview for No Easy Victories.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid. Grassroots activists “generated calls from these rural Nevada towns to Senator Reid,” who ultimately voted to override Reagan’s veto. African American State Senator Joe Neal was instrumental in advocating for anti-apartheid activism in Nevada. Kumalo, interview, No Easy Victories.

⁴⁸² Ibid.

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

Those in the anti-apartheid establishment, emphasize the CAAA passed, not because of what happened in Washington and New York, but because of campaigns happening in local communities around the country. Knight reminds us that ACOA's "focus really was working with divestment" with local groups.⁴⁸⁵ Sylvia Hill, an architect of the FSAM and a founder of the Southern Africa Support Project (SASP), concurs that ACOA had done significant work on divestment and led such efforts in the anti-apartheid establishment in the U.S. Lodge asserts "Together with the ACOA, TransAfrica would play a leading role in a campaigns directed at corporate divestment of South African financial interests."⁴⁸⁶ Others in the anti-apartheid community acknowledge that ACOA was the longest continuously operating anti-apartheid organization, with strong ties "to certain state legislators [and] corporate people" which proved beneficial to the movement.⁴⁸⁷ At the same time, Knight asserts "the FSAM strengthened [ACOA's] work."⁴⁸⁸

Wrangling Over Divestment Strategy

ACOA staff attribute much of the legislative success of the 1980s to their work with local grassroots groups around the country. Kumalo explains "the reason why we have the biggest success of this movement, reversing the Reagan veto on sanctions, was precisely because we had this [sic] grassroots."⁴⁸⁹ Hill explains that each organization played an important role in successfully moving sanctions legislation forward based upon

⁴⁸⁵ Knight, interview; Davis, Interviews for No Easy Victories; Kumalo, Interview for No Easy Victories; Keita, interview. These anti-apartheid activists, felt strongly that FSAM should not be solely credited with the passage of the CAAA.

⁴⁸⁶ Lodge, *Sharpeville*, 254.

⁴⁸⁷ Cecelie Counts, interview by author, Washington, DC, March 22, 2013.

⁴⁸⁸ Knight, interview.

⁴⁸⁹ Kumalo, Interview for No Easy Victories.

the work that they did best over time. Anti-apartheid activists, including TransAfrica and ACOA staff knew each other and “worked together.”⁴⁹⁰ Cecelie Counts recalls working “with Jennifer” and “there were often press conferences” and “one big massive march in New York.”⁴⁹¹ Although, they did not work together on a daily basis, the staff interacted and were in regular contact.⁴⁹² Viewing their role somewhat differently, some other activists noted, the ACOA “took on doing a lot of the research, which is what they were good at doing.”⁴⁹³ The WOA and TransAfrica were best at working on “the Hill,” while SASP had built strong connections with the local community in the Washington Metropolitan Area and was effective in “getting people to the [daily] demonstrations.”⁴⁹⁴ Kumalo described the FSAM as “a drama” highlighting celebrity arrests and asserts that its major weakness was “that it was very celebrity-oriented.”⁴⁹⁵ He credit’s ACOA’s non-profit arm, the Africa Fund, with cultivating “the people who got arrested and were on the six o’clock news.”⁴⁹⁶ Many tensions arose due to perceptions that the media attributed the legislative success to the sustained public protests led by the FSAM. In reality, each organization played an important role, including TransAfrica’s FSAM. Indeed, TransAfrica’s strategy which yielded unprecedented media coverage must not be minimized.

⁴⁹⁰ Counts, interview.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid. ACOA was on SASP’s mailing list, receiving leaflets about events like their annual “Southern Africa Week.” (See ACOA papers, box 47 folder 1988 – 1982).

⁴⁹² Knight, interview.

⁴⁹³ Hill, interview.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁵ Kumalo, Interview for No Easy Victories.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid. While that may have been the case in some instances, FSAM and SASP did the same, with major emphasis in the Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area.

Though *ACOA Action News* articles reflected major happenings in the US anti-apartheid movement, headlines about the Free South Africa Movement (spearheaded by TransAfrica) were noticeably understated in the fall 1985 issue. Moreover, the fall 1986 edition which covered the passage of the CAAA, over Reagan's veto, gave little recognition to TransAfrica. The protests are mentioned, however, FSAM is not. The editors reported, "The fight was won after an intense campaign that joined such antiapartheid organizations as the ACOA, the Washington Office on Africa and TransAfrica, with religious, labor and other national and grassroots forces in a powerful movement to demand sanctions now."⁴⁹⁷ The article rightfully reminds us that "the legislation ...fell far short of the comprehensive economic sanctions supported by ACOA," and most other U.S. anti-apartheid groups; however, they still acknowledge "the unprecedented level of grassroots pressure in the U.S. combined with the growing rebellion in South Africa to force Congress to deliver a sharp rebuke of the Reagan administration's alliance with South Africa."⁴⁹⁸

While acknowledging the "accelerated" pressure during this period, ACOA's stories focus on events and efforts it spearheaded and had been working on for years. For example, in the "annual Two Weeks of Anti-Apartheid Action, March 21-April 6," the editors listed demonstrations, marches, and rallies including one "in Washington, DC, [where] an estimated 4,000 people, including students from six area colleges, [who] rallied outside the South African embassy," however, there is no connection made to

⁴⁹⁷ ACOA, "Congress Rebukes Reagan," *ACOA Action News*, Fall 1986, Number 22 edition, 1, American Committee on Africa, African Activist Archive, Michigan State University.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.

TransAfrica or the Free South Africa Movement which had initiated, coordinated, and continued to encourage protests at the embassy during this same period.⁴⁹⁹ Davis does acknowledge the protests in an article titled “Reflections.” She states, “the drama and publicity of the embassy arrests have drawn hundreds of prominent individuals...to publicly demonstrate their abhorrence for apartheid. The arrests have helped to awaken the American conscience to the evil of apartheid. But the students from Berkeley to Rutgers demanding an end to university investment in South Africa...have shown the need to translate this moral outrage into substantive action.”⁵⁰⁰

Noticeably FSAM is not mentioned in the article, which applauds the students’ actions, sparking a letter from Sylvia Hill, SASP member and one of the architects of the FSAM. Reacting to the article, Hill writes to Davis:

I am, to say the least, very shocked at your article in your recent newsletter. Did your editor omit some passage or did you intend to pit one kind of direct action against the other? I hope this limited (moral outrage) character of what has been happening for the past seven months is not your only assessment of what FSAM has as its objectives. The student movement doesn’t need to be spotlighted by implying that another form of action is less pointed. This is the kind of characterization that really sow/seeds of conflict within the anti-apartheid struggle.⁵⁰¹

Many activists working with various nongovernmental organizations during this period would agree that the work of organizations like ACOA, WOA, the American

⁴⁹⁹ ACOA, “Thousands Demonstrate in Two Weeks of Action,” *ACOA Action News*, Spring 1985, Number 19 edition, 2, Box 47 Folder SASP, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁵⁰⁰ Jennifer Davis, “Reflections,” *ACOA Action News*, Spring 1985, Number 19 edition, 3, Box 47 Folder SASP, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁵⁰¹ Sylvia Hill, “Letter to Jennifer Davis,” n.d 1985, Box 47 Folder SASP, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. Despite her frustration, Hill ended the letter on a positive note stating, “Hope your work is going well. We are very pleased that the political climate is raising the economic sanction thrust of our work.”

Friends Service Committee (AFSC), National Council of Churches, World Council of Churches, as well as churches, unions, students, and local grassroots organizations were instrumental in fighting apartheid in the U.S. However, given the renewed energy and unprecedented coverage of the “Free South Africa Movement” in many US media outlets, for there to be no explicit mention in ACOA’s newsletter is noticeable. Hill acknowledges ACOA felt left out of the initial protest (and planning) at the South African embassy, however, as an architect of FSAM she asserts the organization wanted to avoid becoming a “bureaucracy,” as well as insure an “element of surprise” to achieve their goal.⁵⁰²

Despite, tensions that existed internally and externally between various anti-apartheid organizations, the community continued its important work and came together for a common goal.⁵⁰³ During the period following the passage of the CAAA, corporations dealing with South Africa found ways around the law, allowing them to continue selling their products to South Africa. United States anti-apartheid leadership, including Jennifer Davis and Randall Robinson, came together in 1987 issuing “a joint statement that spelled out a broad interpretation of divestment,” followed by efforts to ensure compliance to this broader definition.⁵⁰⁴ These organizations, committed to seeing the end of South Africa’s state sanctioned apartheid system would continue joint efforts to protest escalations in violence in the late 1980s and support the move to a democratic

⁵⁰² Hill, interview. In fact, the pre-Thanksgiving act of civil disobedience was not shared with TransAfrica’s full board, which angered some of its members.

⁵⁰³ Harrison, interview, March 28, 2013. Tensions were not new to the anti-apartheid establishment, such as those between WOA and ACOA over organizational leadership. Staff who worked in these organizations knew each other well, some had worked together on special projects and campaigns, and in some cases more formally as colleagues. Therefore, they were fluid in addressing issues and confronting each other.

⁵⁰⁴ Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 631.

South Africa. Indeed, it was “a common enemy” that helped these sometimes disparate groups and individuals come together in their fight against apartheid.

FAITH IN ACTION: ACOA AND BLACK AMERICAN CHURCH PEOPLE

Black American church people were among the founders, strategists, and early supporters of the American Committee on Africa. The organization (and its predecessor AFSAR) connected early on with the black church community seeing it as an important ally.⁵⁰⁵ Although, black churches did not have large investment portfolios, like their white counterparts, their involvement was influential, significantly impacting the success of many of ACOA's campaigns. Most importantly, involvement of black American church people brought a level of credibility to the ACOA and strengthened its position as an interracial organization.

The black church was the keystone of the black community, and ACOA recognized that black American clergy could galvanize parishioner involvement. As a result, ACOA actively recruited prominent black ministers and their congregations, a key to the organization's success for four decades.⁵⁰⁶ Church people served as active members of the board and national committee, chaired special campaigns, hosted community educational events, attended and presented at conferences, signed petitions, donated and raised funds, worked as staff, and served as representatives before United Nations and Congressional subcommittees. In addition, they volunteered countless hours

⁵⁰⁵ ACOA worked with both black and white churches and faith-based organizations to connect with the masses and gain financial as well as grassroots support. Davis adds, “most of the black churches were not heavily invested in major corporations, but rather in local projects like providing community housing.” [Jennifer Davis interview with William Minter] While ACOA had access to the black church, it did not have broad ties to the black community in ways that the CAA did.

⁵⁰⁶ Harrison, interview, March 28, 2013.

on behalf of their church and organization affiliates in solidarity with ACOA and black South Africans. Additionally, many of these black American parishioners along with their clergy were veterans of the U.S. civil rights movement, which informed their decision to participate in the anti-apartheid movement.

The work of the Reverend Drs. Martin Luther King Jr. and Wyatt Tee Walker illuminates the wide-reaching impact of black clergy involvement in the ACOA. Actively recruited, King became a member of ACOA's national committee in 1957, lending his time, image, and resources to support the organization by co-chairing numerous special campaigns, providing keynote addresses, and sponsoring and supporting special programs and conferences. Lewis Baldwin, professor of Religious Studies, lists the many reasons King "was drawn to the ACOA..., aside from its advocacy of peaceful change and organized resistance against South African apartheid":

First, was an interracial organization committed to the realization of an ethical ideal of the beloved community... Second, the ACOA was a national organization with international connections... Third, the ACOA did not isolate its moral concern for South Africa from the civil rights movement and anticolonial struggles throughout Africa... Finally, the organization comprised clergymen who shared King's belief of the morality and practicality of nonviolence as both a personal and social ethic.⁵⁰⁷

ACOA's Human Rights Day rally planning committee, highlighted benefits of having King's involvement. The committee discussed the "connection" between King and Chief Albert J. Luthuli⁵⁰⁸ of South Africa (both were Nobel Peace Prize winners; in

⁵⁰⁷ Baldwin, "Martin Luther King, Jr., a 'Coalition of Conscience,' and Freedom in South Africa," 55. Like, Martin Luther King, membership of ACOA's national committee included the most prominent people (a virtual who's who) in the faith community, academics, politics, entertainment, sports, and the civil rights movement.

⁵⁰⁸ The spelling of Chief Albert Luthuli's name, appears without the "h" in many primary source documents, however, on reputable South African websites (e.g. www.nelsonmandela.org) and official publications his name is spelled with the "h," therefore, I have used this version of his name in this chapter.

fact, during his 1964 acceptance speech King mentioned similar struggles Chief Luthuli faced in South Africa. Luthuli, president of the banned ANC, was under house arrest).⁵⁰⁹ King, according to Luthuli, “possibly more than any other man in the world today, ...represents faith not only in the relevance but the imperative of morality in the solution to our problems. His interest – and the interest in him --- is worldwide.”⁵¹⁰ The planning committee went on to say, his “insistence on truth” in the Ghandian sense goes far beyond American racial equality and embraces the brotherhood of the world of men.”⁵¹¹ King represented radical pacifist values, so important to the identity of the ACOA. In 1965, King traveled to New York to give his first major speech on South Africa in the US. He had been involved before,⁵¹² with other ACOA campaigns, and had delivered a speech on South Africa while in London in 1964.

As a prominent civil rights activist and pastor, Walker was involved with ACOA beginning in the 1950s and worked closely with its executive directors, George Houser and Jennifer Davis through the 1990s. Walker explains that he worked closely with Houser “when he first” started the ACOA.⁵¹³ Prior to becoming an ACOA board member, he performed a variety of leadership roles in and on behalf of the organization.

⁵⁰⁹ Hostetter, *Movement Matters*, 2; Martin Luther King Jr, *A Testament of Hope : The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 1st ed.. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 224–226.

⁵¹⁰ Human Rights Day Planning Committee, “Human Rights Day Rally - Planning Committee Notes,” 1965, Box 41 Folder 2, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² Houser, George, interview.

⁵¹³ Walker, interview.

He attributes his involvement in the African liberation struggle as “a natural outgrowth of my involvement in the [civil rights] struggle.”⁵¹⁴

Reaching the Masses: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the ACOA and South Africa

ACOA made special efforts to engage King in its anti-apartheid initiatives and special programs. Influential in the black American community, King’s participation and endorsement of ACOA’s work brought huge credibility to the organization. C. Eric Lincoln contends, “it was Martin Luther King who made the contemporary Black church aware of its power to effect change.”⁵¹⁵ King was the leader of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), a grassroots organization behind the successful 1955 Montgomery bus boycott and as such “was the first to put together a sustained coalition of Christian leadership at the pulpit level.”⁵¹⁶ Bayard Rustin posed the question of forming a nationwide organization that would replicate the success of the MIA. King initiated a meeting of black clergy to discuss the possibility of such an organization.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid. Wyatt Tee Walker was also affiliated with CORE as the founding state director of Virginia’s chapter in 1950s ; he served as Martin Luther King’s chief-of-staff, executive director of the SCLC, and is credited with the creation of “Project C” (i.e. the civil rights campaign strategy used in Birmingham against segregation). Long-time pastor (1967 - 2004) of Canaan Baptist Church in Harlem, serving for 37 years, Walker continued his activism for social justice and African liberation with organizations like ACOA, TransAfrica’s Free South Africa Movement, and International Freedom Mobilization, which he founded in 1978. Walker served on TransAfrica’s board and was active in the FSAM. [counts interview] Many South Africans in exile would become members of Canaan Baptist upon arriving in the U.S.

⁵¹⁵ C. Eric Lincoln, “The Black Church Since Frazier,” in *The Negro Church in America/The Black Church Since Frazier*, Edition Unstated edition (New York: Schocken, 1974), 114. Lincoln also reminds us that many activist black clergy came before King, “from Nat Turner to Adam Clayton Powell.” (C. Eric Lincoln, “The Black Church Since Frazier, 115) .

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., 115. Elected president, King led the SCLC through the tumultuous 50s and 60s fight for civil rights for black Americans. For an overview of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, see http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_southern_christian_leadership_conference_sclc/

Founded in 1957 by black clergy and anchored by black churches, SCLC embraced “King’s commitment to nonviolence...[as its] operating philosophy.”⁵¹⁷

Correspondence between King and Houser reveal ACOA’s aspirations and priorities in relation to involving King in its initiatives. Not new to anti-apartheid sentiments, Lewis Baldwin contends that “King addressed the problems of the oppressed in South Africa from the time he assumed the pastorate of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama in the mid-1950s.”⁵¹⁸ Like his father and other influential black clergy in his life, King was committed to social justice. In his earliest speeches and sermons he made clear the connection between the need to abolish Jim Crow in the US with the need to eradicate apartheid in South Africa.⁵¹⁹ Baldwin points out King’s comparison of the domestic struggle against U.S. and South African racial segregation with “the struggle of Moses” and “his devoted followers as they sought to get out of Egypt.”⁵²⁰ In a 1961 address to the interracial Fellowship of the Concerned, King discusses civil disobedience explaining, “the early Christians practiced civil disobedience in a superb manner, to a point where they were willing to be thrown to the lions. They were willing to face all kinds of suffering in order to stand up for what they knew was right even though they knew it was against the laws of the Roman Empire.”⁵²¹ King then declared, “If I lived in South Africa today in the midst of the white supremacy law in

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., 117.

⁵¹⁸ Baldwin, “Martin Luther King, Jr., a ‘Coalition of Conscience,’ and Freedom in South Africa,” 54.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

⁵²¹ Martin Luther King Jr, *A Testament of Hope*, 50. The Fellowship of the Concerned was an interracial group affiliated with the Southern Regional Council, established in 1944, succeeding the Commission on Interracial Cooperation.

South Africa, I would join Chief Luthuli and others in saying break these unjust laws.”⁵²²

King defined an unjust law as “one that is out of harmony with the moral law of the universe. More concretely, an unjust law is one in which the minority is compelled to observe a code that is not binding on the majority. An unjust law is one in which people are required to obey a code that they had no part in making because they were denied the right to vote”⁵²³

In a December 7, 1964 address in London, King compares and contrasts the struggle for freedom in the United States and South Africa. He asserted “In our struggle for freedom and justice in the U.S., which has also been so long and arduous, we feel a powerful sense of identification with those in the far more deadly struggle for freedom in South Africa.”⁵²⁴ King acknowledged the difficulties black Americans face in the U.S., however, he points out that any form of resistance in South Africa can have dire consequences. King contended that though “the militant opposition inside South Africa seems for the moment to be silenced” that “emotions and plans must be seething below the calm surface of that prosperous police state.”⁵²⁵ King then highlights the United Kingdom and the United States governments’ complicity in the problem and makes clear “for it is we, through our investments, through our governments’ failure to act decisively, who are guilty of bolstering up the South African tyranny.”⁵²⁶ More pointedly, King contended, “If the U.K. and the U.S. decided tomorrow morning not to buy South African

⁵²² Ibid.

⁵²³ Ibid., 164.

⁵²⁴ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Address By Dr. M.L. King Jr.,” December 7, 1964, Box 71 Folder 43, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁵²⁵ Ibid. Here King refers to the period of quiescence that enveloped black South Africans after the brutal massacre in Sharpeville and acts of violence. He emphasizes “seems” quiet.

⁵²⁶ Ibid.

goods, not to buy S.A. gold, to put an embargo on oil; if our investors and capitalists would withdraw their support for that racial tyranny, then apartheid would be brought to an end.”⁵²⁷ King’s solidarity with anti-apartheid activism was clear and unapologetic.

King supported and endorsed a wide-range of ACOA’s special campaigns. In 1957, he backed the Declaration of Conscience Against Apartheid campaign chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt.⁵²⁸ An education campaign, the organizers sought to obtain the signatures of world leaders who opposed apartheid. In response, “one hundred twenty-three leaders, representing thirty-eight nations from every continent signed” the statement.⁵²⁹ Houser adds, though mild in language, the campaign was a success and achieved the goal of bringing international attention to concerns about human rights in South Africa. Furious with the ACOA, the South African government went on the defensive and set out to discredit the ACOA accusing them of attempting to “propagate” an attack on South Africa alleging racism. Headlines in a Cape Town newspaper read, “Louw Blames Leftist for Attack on South Africa.”⁵³⁰ This type of response did not interrupt the work of ACOA, nor did it discourage supporters.

A second Declaration of Conscience Campaign was launched in 1962. This time Houser appealed to King to join Eleanor Roosevelt and Chief Luthuli as a co-chair.⁵³¹ In

⁵²⁷ Ibid.

⁵²⁸ Houser, “Meeting Africa’s Challenge,” 20. Signatures on statements, celebratory cards, petitions, and listing in full-page newspaper advertisements were ways to involve large numbers of Americans in pressing the government to take action against South Africa. In 1957, a full page ad taken out in the New York Times included signatures of leaders representing 38 countries in support of the Declaration of Conscience Against Apartheid. See also “ACOA’s First 20 Years,” 8.

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

⁵³⁰ Ibid. Eric Louw was South Africa’s Minister of Educational Affairs.

⁵³¹ George M. Houser to Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter to Martin Luther King Jr. - Declaration of Conscience Campaign,” February 6, 1962, Temporary Folder 2212, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

letters to King, George Houser explains that “those who struggle for justice inside South Africa tell us that they cannot win without the outside world taking action against apartheid.”⁵³² Houser recalled, ACOA “put together a very fine looking pamphlet on the Declaration of Conscience Against Apartheid,” prominently displaying King’s image.

Appeal for Action Against Apartheid 1962

Concerned that “the United States voted negatively on the resolution which passed the General Assembly” regarding sanctions against South Africa, ACOA launched “An Appeal for Action Against Apartheid” campaign in 1962.⁵³³ Co-chaired by King and Luthuli, the campaign “called on the U.S. government to support United Nations sanctions against South Africa; to impose a total arms embargo; and to discourage public and private investment in the regime.”⁵³⁴ Houser sought King’s support by asking him to help with publicizing the effort.⁵³⁵ As with other requests made of King, Houser often listed specific suggestions of ways King could be instrumental in encouraging public participation. Houser suggested that King appeal to other clergy asking them to observe the campaign during church services on Sunday, December 9th or send a mailing to members of the SCLC.⁵³⁶ He was careful to acknowledge that King was “in the midst of your own struggle in the South.”⁵³⁷ ACOA sent a similar letter to faith-based groups and student organizations. ACOA also supplied well-researched brochures

⁵³² Ibid.

⁵³³ George M. Houser, “Letter to Martin Luther King Jr. - An Appeal for Action Against Apartheid,” November 15, 1962, Temporary Folder 2212, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁵³⁴ Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans Against Apartheid, 1946-1994*, 48.

⁵³⁵ Houser, “Letter to Martin Luther King Jr. - An Appeal for Action Against Apartheid.”

⁵³⁶ Ibid.

⁵³⁷ Ibid.

and fliers to accompany invitations for participation in various campaigns. Houser kept King up-to-date on the progress of the campaign, indicating that “a good supply” of information folders would be sent to King’s chief of staff, Wyatt Tee Walker, for the purpose of mailing to clergy affiliated with the SCLC.⁵³⁸ Houser’s persistence and follow-up was strategically prudent given the time limitations of high level leaders like King. As part of the campaign ACOA planned “to send a delegation to the White House on the 10th of December 1962 and a delegation to see Ambassador Stevenson” in New York.⁵³⁹ Pleased with the response, Houser revealed to King that clergy throughout the country would discuss the campaign during church services on the designated Sunday. Still he encouraged King to reach out to fellow clergy.⁵⁴⁰ Not only did King encourage clergy to participate in the campaign, he sought opportunities to testify before the United Nations. In his capacity as co-chair of the campaign, King wrote to H.E. El Hadj Diallo Telli, Chairman of the Special Committee on the Policies of Apartheid of the Government of the Republic of South Africa, United Nations Secretariat requesting an opportunity “to testify on the policies of apartheid of the Government of the Republic of South Africa.”⁵⁴¹ Telli acknowledged receipt of the request, responding he would respond with a decision “as soon as it is taken.”⁵⁴²

⁵³⁸ George M. Houser, “Letter to Martin Luther King Jr. - An Appeal for Action Against Apartheid #2,” November 26, 1962, Temporary Folder 2212, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁵³⁹ Houser, “Letter to Martin Luther King Jr. - An Appeal for Action Against Apartheid.”

⁵⁴⁰ Houser, “Letter to Martin Luther King Jr. - An Appeal for Action Against Apartheid #2.”

⁵⁴¹ Martin Luther King Jr. to H.E. El Hadj Diallo Telli, “Letter to H.E. El Hadj Diallo Telli,” June 10, 1963, Temporary Folder 2212, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁵⁴² H.E. El Hadj Diallo Telli to Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter to Martin Luther King Jr.,” June 18, 1963, Temporary Folder 2212, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

Houser even used humor in some of his efforts to involve King. In a letter dated, September 4, 1963, shortly after the very successful August 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, Houser wrote to King, “If you will pardon me for plagiarism, I HAD A DREAM, just like you did. I dreamed that Martin Luther appeared before the UN Committee on Apartheid and made a tremendous impact on the international level in the cause of racial justice. Seriously, Martin, is there any chance that, even in your busy schedule, this appearance can be worked out by sometime next week?”⁵⁴³ Houser understood King’s influence nationally and internationally. He requested King’s participation in a 1963 petition calling for the U.S. “to place an embargo on trade with South Africa, to support in the United Nations resolutions calling for boycotts and sanctions against South Africa, and to suspend recognition of the South African Government.” Houser emphasized, more than “5,000 persons across the United States” had already signed the petition.⁵⁴⁴ Recognizing King’s influence, Houser persisted in securing his signature.

Human Rights Day Rally, 1965

Dr. King was interested in supporting a variety of ACOA’s initiatives, but his first priority was his position as head of the SCLC. Houser understood this, so when requesting King’s support, Houser often offered ACOA’s help in researching information that would be helpful in speech preparation. This was true for the speech that King delivered at the December 10, 1965 Human Rights Day. Houser sent him a detailed

⁵⁴³ George M. Houser to Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter to Martin Luther King Jr. - UN Committee on Apartheid,” September 4, 1963, Originally in Folder 2212, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

overview about the meeting and background on the current state of affairs in South Africa.⁵⁴⁵

New York Amsterdam News announced that King would be the main speaker at ACOA's Human Rights Day rally in 1965. Adding that, "the program is being presented...as a benefit for the victims of Apartheid in South Africa."⁵⁴⁶ King spoke before a crowd of more than 1,800 people raising a "bumper cash offering"... "which swelled to \$7,000 the net total available to send, through the Africa Defense and Aid Fund, to the families of South African political prisoners."⁵⁴⁷

In his speech, King pointed to the United States' complicity in supporting South Africa's racial policies, "we pat them on the wrist in permitting racially mixed receptions in our embassy, and by exhibiting films depicting Negro artists,"... "but we give them massive support through American investments in motor and rubber industries and by extending millions in loans through our most distinguished banks and financial institutions."⁵⁴⁸ King suggested a boycott of South Africa and other countries, insisting "nor should the boycott be confined to South Africa... 'Rhodesia has earned a place as a

⁵⁴⁵ George M. Houser to Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter to Martin Luther King Jr. - Human Rights Day Rally," November 23, 1965, Temporary Folder 2212, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁵⁴⁶ "Hunter Rally to Hear King," *New York Amsterdam News*, November 27, 1965, 48, Temporary Folder 2212, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁵⁴⁷ Collin Gonze, "Human Rights Day in New York" (American Committee on Africa, n.d.), 1, Box 41 Folder 2, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. ACOA reports \$9,500 was the total amount raised during this event. (ACOA Chronology 1953-1978 in *ACOA's First 20 Years*; p. 8); one article suggests 3,500 were in attendance – (ACOA papers, Box 41 Folder 2, "King Urges Boycott of Africa Racists" – N. Y. Post 12/11/65 no page # given. by Herb Goldstein).

⁵⁴⁸ Herb Goldstein, "King Urges Boycott of Africa Racists," *New York Post*, December 12, 1965, Box 41 Folder 2, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University; Martin Luther King Jr., "A Speech by The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: Call for an International Boycott of Apartheid South Africa" (New Orleans Anti-Apartheid Coalition, December 10, 1965), Box 71 Folder 44, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

target, as has Portugal, colonial master of Angola and Mozambique. The time has come for an international alliance of peoples of all nations against racism.”⁵⁴⁹ King reminded the audience of America’s own dark history participating in the African slave trade and asserted “we have an obligation of atonement that is not canceled by the passage of time.”⁵⁵⁰

In a February 2, 1966 letter to King, Houser emphasized the importance of a meeting that the Sub-Committee on Africa of the House Foreign Affairs Committee was holding. Scheduled to begin a month later, Houser wrote, “These hearings are being looked upon by certainly all people interested in South Africa, as of great importance. Therefore I do want to urge you again to find the time somehow to appear before the Sub-Committee to discuss the general question of South Africa’s apartheid and American policy towards it. If you would like some help in preparing the testimony, perhaps we can find some people to do some of the research.”⁵⁵¹ While King had expressed an interest in the meeting, Houser explained that King, “never met with the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid,” due to shifting priorities in his schedule.⁵⁵²

Occasionally, King declined ACOA’s invitations always expressing his appreciation for the invitation and assuring that they had his “abiding concern.”⁵⁵³ In a January 5, 1965 letter, Houser invited King to what he described as “the first national conference held in the United States specifically about the South African situation and

⁵⁴⁹ Goldstein, “King Urges Boycott.”

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.; King Jr., “A Speech by The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.”

⁵⁵¹ Houser, George, “Letter to Martin Luther King Jr.,” February 2, 1966, Temporary Folder 2212, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁵⁵² Square, George Houser Oral History Interview (Tape 3).

⁵⁵³ Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter to George Houser,” March 21, 1963, Temporary Folder 2212, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

what we as Americans ought to do about it.”⁵⁵⁴ King was unable to attend and participate in the conference, which was just months before the signing of the groundbreaking Voting Rights Act of 1965, for which King had fought so long and hard.⁵⁵⁵ Despite these exceptions, King lent his name to fundraising endeavors, spoke at major events, encouraged the participation of other clergy, served as honorary chair or co-chair of major campaigns, brought attention on other platforms to apartheid in South Africa, and was even asked to help identify candidates for ACOA positions. King delivered in many ways, even in the midst of the huge demands he faced fighting for domestic civil rights. King supported the ACOA for many years and was a member of the national committee until his death in 1968.

The American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa [ANLCA], 1962 - 1968

King co-chaired several ACOA initiatives with other prominent civil rights, religious, and union activists, and he did so with the newly formed American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa (ANLCA) in 1962. Conceived by A. Philip Randolph as early as 1958, ANLCA became “a mass organization that would promote awareness of and identification with Africa as well as influence policy toward Africa.”⁵⁵⁶ Randolph envisioned an organization led by black Americans focused on African nationalism. A civil rights pioneer and labor leader, Randolph discussed his vision with fellow labor

⁵⁵⁴ Houser, George, “Letter to Martin Luther King,” Invitation, (January 5, 1965), American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. The conference titled, “South African Crisis and American Action” scheduled for March 21 – 23, 1965 featured religious, civil rights, and South African activists such as the Right Reverend James A. Pike of California, Jim Farmer, and Oliver Tambo (Deputy President of the ANC).

⁵⁵⁵ Houser, George, “Letter to Martin Luther King Jr. (Conference),” July 14, 1965, Temporary Folder 2212, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁵⁵⁶ Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 204.

leaders Ted Brown, George McCray, and Maida Springer. Ted Brown would become the executive director of ANCLA. More than seventy-five organizations were invited to sponsor the first conference; the response was overwhelmingly positive. Martin Luther King Jr. and A. Philip Randolph co-chaired ANLCA.⁵⁵⁷

In spite of its esteemed leadership, ANLCA “never lived up to its potential, however, because as an elite group, it was never able to establish an independent base in the black community.”⁵⁵⁸ This hindered the group from raising enough funds to sustain its work, greatly depending on member organizations to support its work, “gradually the

⁵⁵⁷ ANLCA recognized the need to engage the broader black American community in “United States – Africa Relations”; their goal was “to provide the American Negro community with as much information as possible on Africa, in order to develop an enlightened public opinion concerned with the United States – Africa relations.” Of major importance was the reality that “in the United States resides a large segment of American people who not only identify ethnically with black Africa but have equal concern for the prompt elimination of inequities based on race or color.” (“American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa Resolutions” (American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa, 1967), 2, Box 42 Folder 43, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.); The 1967 ANLCA conference resolutions centered on “The Negro Role in African-American Relationships,” including Rhodesia, U.S. Role in The Racial Policies of South Africa, Human Rights in South Africa, United States Aircraft Carrier Franklin Delano Roosevelt, The Portuguese Territories in Africa, Economic Aid to Africa, The African Student in America, and Trade Union Movement in Africa. (Ibid., 2–5.); During the third biennial conference, co-chairman, A. Philip Randolph highlights the “fight against apartheid,” and credits “Black Africans” with disseminating information “pointing out the evils and inhumanities of apartheid.” (A. Philip Randolph, “Africa - Challenge and Crisis,” 1967, 6, Box 42 Folder 33, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.); Randolph emphasized “the value of and need of Negroes of the United States and the West Indies joining hands with our Black African brothers in warning the world of the grave dangers of apartheid to the peace of the world.” (Ibid.); Randolph commends ANLCA leaders “who have seen the wisdom of forming and developing this movement to awaken, inform and arouse the mind and conscience of black and white America to the menace of apartheid.” He adds, “A strong, aggressive and dedicated Negro movement committed to the abolition of apartheid in Africa can exercise effective and meaningful influence on the foreign policy of the United States in behalf of Black Africa.” (Ibid.) check ; Some equated the work of ANLCA as an extension of the civil rights struggle in the U.S. ANLCA member Whitney Young asserted, “the ‘decision to link the integration struggle in the United States with the fate of the sub-Saharan African states would represent a new phase in the civil rights struggle.” (Michael Krenn, “The Unwelcome Mat: African Diplomats in Washington, D.C., during the Kennedy Years,” in *Window on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1988*, ed. Brenda Gayle Plummer (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 173.)

⁵⁵⁸ Houser, *No One Can Stop The Rain*, 266.

effort died out.”⁵⁵⁹ Baldwin contends that one of the reasons ANLCA never got a strong footing in the black community was partially due to the fact that it was not anchored by the church community.⁵⁶⁰ Black churches were central to galvanizing black American community support for social justice and civil rights initiatives.

Unlock Apartheid’s Jails Campaign

As unprecedented numbers of black South Africans protested heavy-handed government repression and segregationist policies in the late 1980s, “more than 30,000 people, a third of them children, were detained without charge, and many were tortured,” under a State of Emergency declared by the Botha administration.⁵⁶¹ ACOA responded with the nationwide Unlock Apartheid Jails Campaign to force the release of South African political prisoners. Keys were to be collected as a symbol of unlocking jails and dumped on the steps of the South African embassy and consulates around the country.⁵⁶² Chaired by Bill Cosby, the campaign fostered major media attention and stirred grassroots activity.⁵⁶³

The kick-off campaign took place in September 1987, with Cosby and mayors from eight cities; at the height of his popularity, Cosby acknowledged that his participation “would give the event a little boost.”⁵⁶⁴ RAN participated by engaging its

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁰ Baldwin, “Martin Luther King, Jr., a ‘Coalition of Conscience,’ and Freedom in South Africa,” 61.

⁵⁶¹ Walker and Davis, “Letter to Supporters.”

⁵⁶² Knight, interview.

⁵⁶³ Jennifer Davis to W. Somplatsky-Jarman, “Letter to Rev. W. Somplatsky-Jarman,” December 4, 1987, 1, Box 30 Folder Presbyterian Church 1989 -81, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁵⁶⁴ Rick Lyman, “Cosby, Mayors Kick Off Campaign to Help ‘Unlock Apartheid’s Jails,’” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 29, 1987, http://articles.philly.com/1987-09-29/news/26209200_1_bill-cosby-keys-apartheid.

strong network of black churches, bolstering the campaign. Davis asserts, “the Religious Action Network was central to our campaign demanding the release of the thousands of political detainees South Africa held, without charge or trial, in the mid-eighties. We collected hundreds of thousands of keys all across the U.S. to “Unlock Apartheid’s Jails.”⁵⁶⁵ Congregations responded to ACOA’s call for support; RAN “organized congregations from coast to coast to collect keys...as a concrete way of demanding that these prisoners be freed. We...dumped more than 100,000 keys on the doorsteps of South Africa’s Consulate in New York and its Embassy in Washington, D.C., Because [sic] of our action and those of others, South African censorship could not turn the detainees into a forgotten people.”⁵⁶⁶

Black Power and Black Pride in the Church

Considered an integrationist and non-violent advocate of civil rights, King emerges in a post-mortem context, as more of a radical. James H. Cone places King front-and-center in a turn toward black militancy among black American clergy. Indeed, after King was assassinated on April 4, 1968, black clergy, especially those affiliated with white denominations and who participated in the National Conference of Black Churchmen (NCBC), an activist organization, lashed out against white clergy.⁵⁶⁷ Led by black clergy in predominantly white denominations, this group embraced the new emphasis on black liberation theology, determined to attack white racism within the church.⁵⁶⁸ These clergy and others began to emphasize black pride and power within the

⁵⁶⁵ Davis, Interviews for No Easy Victories.

⁵⁶⁶ Walker and Davis, “Letter to Supporters.”

⁵⁶⁷ Cone, *For My People*, 46.

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 40–48.

black community. During the 1970s, black church people and community leaders (often those working within white denominational structures), began to assess how they would respond to calls for black power and pride in black identity in terms of liberation at home and in Africa. The Reverend Joseph L. Roberts Jr. recalls that after hearing Stokely Carmichael say, “we’ve got to liberate the turf we occupy” he began to reassess his involvement “in a predominantly white denomination.”⁵⁶⁹

As South African churches against apartheid experienced increased assaults and government repression, “church leaders...appealed for support and solidarity from their sisters and brothers in the United States. They...called on the religious community in this country to stand together with them in their struggle for justice.”⁵⁷⁰ In response, the ACOA formed the Religious Action Network. In an August 31, 1988 memo to Walker and Canon Frederick Williams, pastor of the Church of the Intercession in Harlem, William “Bill” Howard called on Walker to take the lead in “designing and implementing” a national network of churches to address apartheid.⁵⁷¹ Williams, who was also on ACOA’s advisory council, knew Walker well.⁵⁷² Jennifer Davis, argues that

⁵⁶⁹ Joseph L. Roberts, “A Free Platform,” *Southern Exposure*, 1976, 40.

⁵⁷⁰ “RAN Brochure,” 2.

⁵⁷¹ M. William Howard, Wyatt Tee Walker, and Frederick William, “Letter to Wyatt Tee Walker and Frederick Williams,” August 31, 1988, Box 79 Folder ACOA ADDN Project, RAN 1989 – 90, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. Bill Howard was the executive director of the [Dutch] Reformed Church in America’s The Black Council he was also past president of the National Council of Churches; see more of his biography at <http://www.bethany-newark.org/pastor.html>; Many of the black clergy engaged in the African liberation struggle, knew each other and joined together to stand against apartheid.

⁵⁷² Knight, interview. Canon Williams was the head pastor at the Church of the Intercession “one of the biggest churches in New York”; which is under a white denominational structure. see more on Canon Williams at http://www.episcopalarchives.org/Afro-Anglican_history/exhibit/leadership/williams2.php

Walker and Williams were “determined to take the message of the struggle against apartheid into the black churches.”⁵⁷³

Wyatt Tee Walker and the Religious Action Network (RAN), 1988

Walker chaired ACOA’s Religious Action Network (RAN) beginning in 1988, galvanizing black American church people from around the country to participate. Ideal for this position, Walker’s record on civil rights and solidarity work with the African liberation struggle spoke for itself and served ACOA well. Many South Africans in exile became members of Walker’s church, Canaan Baptist Church in Harlem, making it “the lead congregation in New York having to do with anti-apartheid activism.”⁵⁷⁴ Dumisani Kumalo, a key ACOA staff member in the 1980s, was a member and the liaison between ACOA and the ANC.⁵⁷⁵ He was the first staff director of RAN, and he coordinated the day-to-day operations of the organization and the logistics of its related activities.⁵⁷⁶

Walker was a successful recruiter. Mark Harrison asserts, “Even though the ACOA was mainly this white institution that had Wyatt Tee Walker... [he] was key, no ifs and about that. ...you just can’t send a white man in there to talk to black church leaders, he ...[won’t] get heard the same way a Wyatt Tee Walker is going to be heard.”⁵⁷⁷ ACOA recognized Walker’s ability to attract other black clergy; his leadership

⁵⁷³ Davis, Interviews for No Easy Victories.

⁵⁷⁴ Walker, interview. Walker explains, through his connections with the ANC, “we [i.e. Canaan Baptist] were the first ones to be contacted” by exiled South Africans.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.; Knight, interview.

⁵⁷⁷ Harrison, interview, March 28, 2013.

in the PNBC and the civil rights movement gained him respect among his colleagues.⁵⁷⁸

Moreover, other black clergy leaders were encouraged to recruit their colleagues, endorse the network, and financially contribute to the cause.⁵⁷⁹

Walker explained the impetus behind establishing RAN during these final years of apartheid. According to Walker, “we saw we had the forces of apartheid on the run and we became more aggressive and more confident that we could make a difference.”⁵⁸⁰ Black churches and their parishioners were “very enthusiastic [about supporting RAN], they saw the connection between civil rights and South African apartheid.”⁵⁸¹ A project of ACOA, RAN made an annual contribution to ACOA; in turn, ACOA supported this initiative by providing staff, facilitating introductions to South African church leaders, assisting with logistics, and seeking contributions.⁵⁸²

ACOA had long engaged with black American churches, as clergy and parishioners supported its major initiatives; thus, RAN represented a continuation of this work in a collective effort. Much of RAN’s focus was on education and awareness, building important coalitions within the faith community to address US policy on South Africa. According to Williams, Davis was “the one who made it possible for the Religious Action Network to do its work, this coalition of primarily black, male clergy and their churches.” He went on to describe her as “cold to some, aloof, hard to connect

⁵⁷⁸ Davis, Interviews for No Easy Victories.

⁵⁷⁹ Jennifer Davis, “Letter to Rev, William Howard,” November 3, 1988, Box 80 Folder Religious Action Network 1988, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁵⁸⁰ Walker, interview.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid.

⁵⁸² Davis, Interviews for No Easy Victories.

to , yes, but so reliable as the one to look more deeply, to insist on principle, to keep focused even in the face of terrible opposition.”⁵⁸³

Black American church congregations supported RAN through financial donations, membership enrollment, conference and workshop participation, hosting events, facilitating sessions, among many other ways. Churches enrolled as members of RAN for annual dues of \$250 [\$50 for individuals]; membership dues covered the church’s congregation. In turn, not only did the congregation pledge “to become engaged in the struggle for freedom in Southern Africa,” they agreed “that the Religious Action Network is an urgent priority” for the church.⁵⁸⁴ The Reverend Leonard Chapman enrolled his congregation at Grace Congregational Church of Harlem and committed to incorporate information about southern Africa during church Bible study, using the “Four Week Educational Package on Southern Africa,” provided by RAN.⁵⁸⁵

In agreeing to the terms of membership in RAN, black pastors were more likely to insure participation of church members. Mark Harrison reminds us that “Black churches can bring out their members,” because pastors had a great deal of influence; committed black clergy “were able to get their members to be very active in the anti-apartheid movement.”⁵⁸⁶ The Reverend Victor T. Hall Sr. saw the work of RAN as “vital and crucial” and stated “our congregation is willing to do all it can to abet the struggle for

⁵⁸³ Davis, Introduction to Jennifer Davis Interview for No Easy Victories. Well networked and respected in the black community, Canon Williams had a wide sphere of influence.

⁵⁸⁴ “RAN Membership Enrollment Form” (American Committee on Africa, 1989), Box 79 Folder RAN – Churches and Related 1989, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁶ Harrison, interview, March 28, 2013.

justice in South Africa.”⁵⁸⁷ Congregants of black American progressive churches like St. John Baptist Church in Buffalo, New York, a member of the PNBC, felt a cultural connection to black South Africans. St. John sent in a pledge stating this is “to help you continue the struggle against apartheid. We are confident that one day our brother[s] and sisters in South Africa will be free. We here at Saint John Baptist Church are committed to the struggle.”⁵⁸⁸

Not all black American church people identified nor concerned themselves with – or even understood—some of the issues faced by black South Africans. In 1989, the Reverend Mary Anne Bellinger, of Atlanta argued that “African Americans, are still struggling to accept ourselves as a people of worth, power and possibility,” therefore, attention to or concern for what is happening in South Africa was not always a priority.⁵⁸⁹ In her presentation before the United Nations, Bellinger acknowledged that in Atlanta members of black churches had little interaction with Africans and knew little about the issues they faced. She encouraged members of the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid, “to be ambassadors to us to help lift our veil of fear and ignorance. We need you to stand shoulder to shoulder with us so we can begin to know one another.”⁵⁹⁰ Her request was very much in line with strategies ACOA and other US anti-apartheid

⁵⁸⁷ Victor T. Hall Sr. to Wyatt Tee Walker, “Letter to Wyatt Tee Walker,” November 29, 1988, Box 79 Folder RAN – Churches and Related 1989, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁵⁸⁸ Bennett W. Smith Sr. to Dumisani Shadrack Kumalo, “Letter to Dumisani Kumalo,” May 3, 1989, Box 79 Folder RAN – Churches and Related 1989, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁵⁸⁹ Mary Ann Bellinger to Dumisani Shadrack Kumalo, “Letter to Dumisani Kumalo,” May 3, 1989, 1, Box 79 Folder RAN – Churches and Related 1989, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

organization recognized as effective, that is, in-person interactions between Africans fighting for liberation and African Americans brought the struggle to life. Through these interactions black Americans could better relate their own experiences and observations with those of oppressed South Africans.

The Summit Conference on Apartheid

The Summit Conference on Apartheid, held at the United Nations in April 1989, attracted between 200-300 religious and community leaders, who were included as founding members of RAN. Walker saw the gathering as an opportunity to mobilize “the final assault on the racist regime in Pretoria.”⁵⁹¹ Numerous clergy sent their regrets to the conference invitation, in many cases citing “schedule conflict” as the major reason for not attending, some included a donation with their response. Despite those who could not attend, the organizers were pleased with the turnout. . Indeed, the 1989 conference included clergy from southern Africa as workshop panelists; Ambassador Joseph Garba of Nigeria, convened a “meeting of the Special Committee Against Apartheid,” in which clergy leaders presented anti-apartheid statements. The Reverend Allan Boesak, of South Africa, and Bishop Zephaniah Kameeta, of Namibia were among keynote speakers.⁵⁹²

As conference chair, Walker asserted in his statement of purpose, “African – American religious congregations, along with other concerned Americans in several denominations, have long provided core support with the United States for the African

⁵⁹¹ Wyatt Tee Walker, “RAN Summit Conference -Letter #2,” Mailing, (n.d 1989), Box 80 Folder Religion Action Network 1989, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. Benjamin L. Hooks, the executive director of the NAACP indicated the conference conflicted with “the 21st anniversary of the assassination of Dr. King.” Benjamin L. Hooks, March 21, 1989, letter.

⁵⁹² Religious Action Network, “Summit Conference Program Book.”

struggle for justice and liberation.”⁵⁹³ Walker added, “as the confrontation between the forces of apartheid and the liberation movements intensifies in southern Africa, there is an urgent need to expand and empower such an active network of religious congregations to ensure both the isolation of apartheid and strong US support for the freedom struggle.”⁵⁹⁴ Walker emphasized the goal of participants was to link “local activist congregations in increasingly powerful action,” and employ participants to “carry home the spark of a new dedication to the destruction of apartheid. He continued, “And from those sparks, carefully kindled in the hundreds of congregations across our land, can come a new light, a new energy, to help South Africa’s people claim their birthright: freedom and justice for all.”⁵⁹⁵

The president of the PNBC, Dr. J. Alfred Smith, also spoke at the Religious Action Network (RAN) Conference to the United Nations on April 4, 1989 detailing how his church, Allen Temple Baptist Church in Oakland, California, engaged in anti-apartheid activism. Smith described himself “as a third world pastor of third world people in a first world country that practices deception and duplicity in a program of destructive engagement with Black South Africans.”⁵⁹⁶ Smith’s comments reflected tenets of black liberation theology and the spirit of activist black clergy engaged in the domestic and anti-apartheid struggles. In this highly charged statement, Smith not only criticized the Reagan administration’s policy of “constructive engagement,” which anti-

⁵⁹³ Ibid., 2.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁶ J. Alfred Smith, “Address of Doctor J. Alfred Smith Sr. to the United Nations,” April 4, 1989, Box 79 Folder Conference, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

apartheid activists and many in the black community saw as “destructive,” he made it clear that black Americans continue to struggle for justice in this “first world country.”⁵⁹⁷

Based in Oakland, California, the birthplace of the Black Power Movement, Smith embraced Cone’s black liberation theology. He informed the audience of his ideology “as a justice oriented preacher of the gospel of liberation for both the oppressed and the oppressor,” and how the plight of black South Africans is relevant to his congregation. Indeed, black clergy like Smith had great influence on their congregants and the broader community. Smith describes “the intensity of convictions of thousands in Allen Temple Baptist Church and in Oakland, California who are broken in spirit and bruised in emotions” as they wait for justice “while Black South Africans are painfully and destructively trapped in the degrading, dehumanizing oppressive structures of Apartheid.”⁵⁹⁸

Proponents of black liberation theology draw from the Bible to explain Christians’ responsibility to advocate for social justice (i.e. a moral imperative) and the understanding that there are consequences for mistreating the oppressed. In closing his speech at the RAN conference, Smith quoted from the Old Testament book of Zechariah “Come, O Zion! Escape, you who live in the Daughter of Babylon. For this is what the Lord Almighty says: After he has honored me and sent me against the nations that have plundered you---for whoever touches you touches the apple of His eye. I will surely raise

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid.

my hand against them so that their slaves will plunder them. Then you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me! Zechariah 2:7 – 9, NIV.⁵⁹⁹

Active in the anti-apartheid struggle, Smith had “spent time in jail...for protesting and demonstrating against apartheid,” led PNBC “churches in a boycott of Shell Oil for its refusal to divest in South Africa,” and his church participated in “the Free the Children of South Africa Campaign.”⁶⁰⁰ In Smith’s example, we see the motivations of some black church leaders and parishioners for engaging in the anti-apartheid struggle, and we see specific ways they supported (stood in solidarity with) black South Africans, and how black liberation theology influenced ideology and practice.

The Summit was not simply a time for RAN leaders. Black parishioners participated as panelists in workshops focused on “Building a Religious Action Network.” They provided perspectives of the “view from the pew” and clergy provided perspectives on the “view from the pulpit.”⁶⁰¹ The Summit was the beginning of broad church involvement with RAN. Member clergy kept informed through regular mailings, and this in turn aided black clergy in communicating accurate information to their parishioners. In a post-conference letter, Walker followed up on his conference statement encouraging attendees to “develop a Southern Africa interest group in your congregation

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid. Smith’s congregation also provided financial assistance to South African students and families, and he was presented with the A.N.C. “Freedom Charter.” (pp. 1-2 address).

⁶⁰¹ Religious Action Network, “Summit Conference Program Book.”

and community.”⁶⁰² ACOA would disseminate news and information on southern Africa, directly to these local groups.

RAN sought to counter propaganda suggesting the apartheid system “wasn’t so bad.” Walker asserted “that’s why we worked against the Sullivan principles,” which he and other progressive clergy saw as ineffective in addressing South Africa’s institutionalized segregation.⁶⁰³ Walker explained, Sullivan attended the International Mobilization conference at the UN and was criticized by fellow clergy to the point that “he cried.”⁶⁰⁴ The Reverend Leon Sullivan, a black minister from Philadelphia and a member of General Motor’s board of directors developed “a six-point code of corporate conduct in 1977” for corporations doing business in South Africa; these codes became known as the Sullivan Principles. The six principles required:

Principle 1: Nonsegregation of the races in all eating, comfort, locker rooms, and work facilities; Principle 2: Fair and equal employment practices for all employees; Principle 3: Equal pay for all employees doing equal or comparable work for the same period of time; Principle 4: Initiation and development of training programs that will prepare blacks, coloureds, and Asians in substantial numbers for supervisory, administrative, clerical, and technical jobs; Principle 5: Increasing the number of blacks, coloureds, and Asians in management and supervisory positions; Principle 6: Improving the quality of employees’ lives outside the work environment in such areas as housing, transportation, schooling, recreation, and health facilities.⁶⁰⁵

Corporations quickly “endorsed the code” and about a third of U.S. corporations in South Africa began implementing the codes in their workplace. Essentially, the principles were viewed by anti-apartheid organizations, churches, and unions as a band-aid approach to a much bigger problem and saw them as having little impact on remedying the ills of the

⁶⁰² Wyatt Tee Walker, “Post-Conference - Letter #1,” Mailing, (n.d.), Box 80 Folder Religion Action Network 1989, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁶⁰³ Walker, interview.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁵ Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 701.

apartheid system.⁶⁰⁶ M. William Howard, past president of the National Council of Churches of Christ, U.S.A. and ACOA board member, added, “churches have soon understood...that Dr. Sullivan’s approach is not particularly threatening; even the South African government admits to this. For a South African to advocate the Sullivan Principles is not a legal offense, but to advocate divestiture is considered a subversive act.”⁶⁰⁷

The RAN brochure, served as a major vehicle to communicate accurate information about the major issues affecting the religious community in South Africa and a list of what U.S. church people “can do” to show solidarity. The major points included: “1) Support the call for the isolation of apartheid South Africa 2) Protest detentions and jailing of religious leaders and all other opponents of apartheid and 3) Send prayers and messages of solidarity.”⁶⁰⁸

During and following the 1989 Summit Conference on Africa, RAN conducted workshops for black clergy and church leaders, focusing on the expansion of RAN, economic sanctions, and southern African liberation.⁶⁰⁹ Black clergy from churches throughout the New York region and across the country participated in this full day workshop.⁶¹⁰ Presentations and discussions focused on “projects and action,” “reports from inside South Africa,” “sanctions and dismantling apartheid,” with a closing sermon

⁶⁰⁶ Donald R. Culverson, *Contesting Apartheid: U.S. Activism, 1960-1987* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1999), 84–85.

⁶⁰⁷ M. William Howard, “CALC Report” (Church and Laity Concerned, December 1983), 51, Box 3, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

⁶⁰⁸ “RAN Brochure.”

⁶⁰⁹ Religious Action Network, “Present at RAN Workshop #3,” 1989, Box 80 Folder Religion Action Network 1989, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁶¹⁰ Religious Action Network, “Workshop II Building the Network, Chair Calvin Butts,” 1989, Box 80 Folder Religion Action Network 1989 Summit Conf. Resolutions, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

titled “the theological basis for a struggle against apartheid.”⁶¹¹ Prominent clergy, ACOA staff, and RAN leadership, including Howard, Walker, and Williams facilitated these workshops.

Allen AME Church in New York hosted a December 7, 1989 regional training workshop. RAN leadership participated and keynote speakers included the Honorable Floyd Flake, pastor of the church, and Kumalo. Although the leadership was predominantly male, women clergy did preside over several of the sessions and the executive director, Jennifer Davis participated in the luncheon program.

In a letter requesting funding support for RAN, associate director of ACOA, Jim Cason stated “After two years of organizing work we have built a strong, predominantly African American network of clergy supporting the people of South Africa, and particularly the religious community, as they work to bring democracy to their country.”⁶¹² By 1990 RAN membership included “100 member congregations nationally “and a mailing list of “over one thousand” supporters. Cason listed some of the accomplishments of RAN, which included “A Summit Conference at the United Nations” in 1989; “a one-day training for one hundred New York-area congregations on strategies for working for sanctions at the national and local level, and strengthening congregational efforts against apartheid”; “a trip to South Africa by 22 African-American religious leaders which featured meetings with Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the South African

⁶¹¹ “RAN Regional Training Workshop” (Religious Action Network, December 7, 1989), Box 79 Folder Religious Action Conference – 1989, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁶¹² Jim Cason, “Letter to The Right Reverend John Krumm,” Fundraiser, (November 15, 1990), 1, Box 28 Folder Churches – Episcopal Church 1990-1980, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

Council of Churches, and Nelson Mandela. These pastors have returned to brief their colleagues across the country, on the need for continued activism in support of the struggle for justice in South Africa”; “Soweto Sabbath services in Christian and Jewish congregations from coast to coast in 1989 and 1990”; “helping to organize the Ecumenical Service for Nelson Mandela at the Riverside Church”; and “the ‘End Apartheid: Vote for the People Campaign’ in which local congregations have asked the members to cast a dual vote: one for democracy in South Africa and one for continuing sanctions against apartheid. Over 50,000 campaign ballots were delivered to Congress on September 24, [1990], the day President de Klerk met with President Bush at the White House.”⁶¹³

Executive Director, Jennifer Davis, actively sought funding to support ACOA’s general and religious initiatives, such as RAN. In an August 22, 1988 letter to the Ecumenical Documentation and Information Center for Eastern and Southern Africa (EDICESA), Davis emphasized ACOA’s long history of collaborating with the religious community “for over 35 years in efforts to build a U.S. policy supportive of the movement for justice and liberation in all Africa, and in particular in southern Africa.”⁶¹⁴ She pointed to their “long working relationship with many religious congregations,” and the purpose of establishing the RAN “to better empower people at the local congregational level both to become engaged in the struggle to cut off all aid to apartheid

⁶¹³ Cason, “Letter to The Right Reverend John Krumm.”

⁶¹⁴ Jennifer Davis, “Letter to Ecumenical Documentation and Information Center for Eastern and Southern Africa (EDICESA),” Fundraiser, (August 22, 1988), Box 80 Folder Religious Action Network 1988, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

and to actively support those engaged in struggling for liberation and justice.”⁶¹⁵ Small and large donations came from churches, individual clergy and congregants, faith-based organizations, as well as new and longtime supporters.⁶¹⁶ Significant funding support came from well-heeled white church denominations and organizations.⁶¹⁷ Some black churches donated a portion of the proceeds from special services to RAN. Canaan Baptist Church, donated “half of the proceeds” amounting to \$422.95 from their Good Friday service in 1989.⁶¹⁸ Walker explains that many black parishioners supported anti-apartheid efforts “primarily by giving funds to help.”⁶¹⁹

At the same time, black churches, parishioners, and their affiliated organizations contributed financially to the work of ACOA, however, typically on a smaller scale than white denominations. Mrs. Willie J. Dell, president of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus (NBPC), responded to ACOA’s fundraising appeal with a “small personal donation” with assurances that the information would be included “on the agenda” for NBPC’s next board meeting.⁶²⁰ These individual donations, though smaller than institutional donations, helped sustain ACOA’s operations and initiatives.

ACOA lived up to their stated goals; they successfully engaged black church people in the legislative process. Davis acknowledges, black churches

⁶¹⁵ Ibid.

⁶¹⁶ Richard Knight to Phyllis Slade Martin, “African American Institute,” August 15, 2014. Knight explains, ACOA did not receive nor accept funds from the United States nor South African government to support its initiatives.

⁶¹⁷ Harrison, interview, March 28, 2013; Keita, interview.

⁶¹⁸ Wyatt Tee Walker, “Letter to Jennifer Davis,” April 21, 1989, Box 79 Folder RAN – Churches and Related 1989, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁶¹⁹ Walker, interview.

⁶²⁰ Willie J. Dell, “Letter to Jennifer Davis,” December 6, 1988, Box 79 Folder RAN – Churches and Related 1989, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

partnership with us gave a penetration into the black community that enabled and reinforced in many ways the pressures that could be put on state legislators. [And] eventually on Congress. Because it was not me going up on the Hill [Capitol Hill, the location of Congress] with my three staff people... Through the [RAN] network we could get ten black churches, in many constituencies, to go when either the senator or the congressperson went back home, and ask hard policy questions, demand that the representatives stop allowing the administration and the corporations to collaborate with apartheid.⁶²¹

In 1989, RAN and Walker received accolades for its work. Robert P. Marasco, City Clerk of Newark, New Jersey wrote “the Municipal Council adopted a “Motion Congratulating the Reverend Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker, Chairman of the Religious Action Network for Justice and Peace in Southern Africa, on a most successful Summit Conference of religious leaders against apartheid held recently at the United Nations Church Center.”⁶²² These recognitions, though symbolic, show the reach of RAN to the community beyond the walls of the church.

After the release of Nelson Mandela in February 1990 the RAN continued its work, because, the leadership stated, “the danger we face is that today many Americans believe the struggle for justice in South Africa is over. We believe the Religious Action Network will serve an important role [sic; in the] coming months in mobilizing Christian action in this country in support of the people of South Africa.”⁶²³ Cason contends that the RAN “enabled congregations to overcome a sense of powerlessness engendered by distance and isolation and has produced a flowering of local initiatives.”⁶²⁴

⁶²¹ Davis, Interviews for No Easy Victories.

⁶²² Robert P. Marasco, “Letter to Wyatt Tee Walker,” April 25, 1989, Box 79 Folder RAN – Churches and Related 1989, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁶²³ Cason, “Letter to The Right Reverend John Krumm,” 3.

⁶²⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

Through many campaigns, initiatives like the RAN and individual collaborations, black American church people engaged in, initiated and supported the work of the ACOA. These church people brought a local, national, and in some cases international sphere of influence to engage the masses, that was simply unmatched. These formal and informal networks, harnessed through the leadership of black clergy and black staff members, allowed the ACOA to bear fruit from and witness to the benefits of involving black American church people in the anti-apartheid struggle in the U.S.

By aligning with prominent clergy like King and Walker, as well as black clergy from local communities, ACOA gained trust and entry into the broader black American community who demonstrated interest in and solidarity with the African liberation struggle. By reaching out to the black church community, ACOA strengthened its network and credibility as radical pacifists. As Mark Harrison has asserted, black clergy often influenced the actions of their parishioners and served as trustworthy liaisons to the community. Indeed, by reaching black parishioners ACOA was able to reach the black community because churches were often the social center of the community. Walker attributes his and other black American church people's motivation to engage in anti-apartheid activism to their "African ancestry and similarity [between] apartheid and segregation."⁶²⁵ He asserts, "it was a common enemy."⁶²⁶

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

ACOA built a large prominent network of supporters, including black American church and community leaders who had engaged in civil rights since the 1940s. By

⁶²⁵ Walker, interview.

⁶²⁶ Ibid.

leveraging relationships built through affiliations with CORE, FOR, and AFSAR, ACOA recruited civil right icons like Martin Luther King Jr. and A. Philip Randolph, a host of clergy, union and community leaders and organizations. By aligning with these leaders, ACOA gained entry into the black community because the black community, particularly church parishioners, trusted and followed the civic actions of their pastors. Together, these church people helped to build the grassroots movement.

Although the leadership was dominated by protestant, pacifist men, women also held important leadership roles throughout the organization's existence. Like the radical pacifists examined in Marian Mollin's work, ACOA valued gender equality, however, in practice evidence of full equality was uneven. Nonetheless, black and white women chaired major conferences and managed critical initiatives. By 1981, the first female executive director was hired.

ACOA was the longest standing anti-apartheid organization in the United States, spanning more than four decades (i.e. 1953-2001).⁶²⁷ ACOA's longevity is partly attributed to its willingness to change over time. As circumstances changed on the ground in South Africa, ACOA reconsidered its pacifist stance eventually moving to support

⁶²⁷ Knight, interview; Walker, interview. ACOA would close its longstanding offices in New York in 2002, having merged with the Africa Fund and the Africa Policy Information Center (APIC), together forming Africa Action in 2001. The newly merged organization would have its headquarters in Washington, DC. See more information about the organization at: africanactivistarchive.msu.edu/organization/; <http://www.nelsonmandela.org/aama/country/category/united-states-of-america>; "The Washington Office on Africa Educational Fund (WOAEF) was formed and registered as a 501(c)(3) organization in 1978. WOAEF was the non-profit educational and research arm of the Washington Office of Africa (WOA). WOAEF organized educational events and produced resources on Southern Africa. In 1992 the name was changed to the Africa Policy Information Center (APIC). In 1997 the WOA separated organizationally from APIC. In 2001 APIC merged with the American Committee on Africa and The Africa Fund to form Africa Action." <http://africanactivist.msu.edu/organization.php?name=Africa%20Policy%20Information%20Center>, accessed 8/19/2014]]

liberation movements, even those involved in armed struggle. This was not without major internal and external tensions. The organization unabashedly provided financial and legal support to victims of government repression and leaders of southern African resistance, even when military tactics were employed. Furthermore, when challenged by young black American activists who brought new perspectives to the movement, (though uncomfortable, sometimes resistant and not always effective) ACOA sought to work through ideological differences.

Many of the church people who led and supported ACOA initiatives during its last two-decades, also had ties to the African American led foreign policy lobby, TransAfrica, based in Washington, D.C. Some like Wyatt Tee Walker, who served on TransAfrica's Board of Directors and participated in the Free South Africa Movement, had more formal ties. Walker's active involvement in both the more established multi-racial anti-apartheid ACOA and the newly established FSAM, appeared to be seamless. Walker managed to navigate through the sometimes rocky terrain of tensions between the organizations by focusing on the campaigns which he led.

Like the CAA, ACOA brought African liberation leaders and activists to the U.S. to engage with Americans; by hearing stories from first hand experiences, people believed and better understood the issues and what was happening on the ground.⁶²⁸ Indeed, ACOA helped educate the American public by connecting "people here to what

⁶²⁸Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans Against Apartheid, 1946-1994*, 48. Though both groups engaged prominent African leaders, the CAA with Paul Robeson's participation, often held huge events reaching massive numbers of everyday citizens and progressive (left-leaning) activists.

was happening in South Africa, and enable[ing] them to see the commonality of the struggles being fought on the two continents.”⁶²⁹

Maghan Keita reminds us that the movement was national and its success did not rest only on happenings in Washington, D.C.⁶³⁰ Through coalition work inside and outside of the beltway [i.e. Washington, D.C.], ACOA and other anti-apartheid organizations kept the pressure on local and national legislators. ACOA recognized, “people tended to work very locally,” therefore, outreach focused on educating local networks around the country.⁶³¹ Davis elaborates on ACOA’s strategy:

We kept very close working relationships with sympathetic members of congress like Charles Diggs, Howard Wolpe, and key staff people on both sides of the aisle. But we always focused our organizing outside the beltway...So the long years of organizing to build grass roots understanding of the need to cut all economic linkages with apartheid paid off as the struggle moved from the local to the national—and we could usually count on local allies to move into action when it was time to “keep the pressure on.”⁶³²

As establishment organizations like the ACOA continued their outreach efforts, TransAfrica’s leadership decided to break the mold in the anti-apartheid fight, by taking it to the streets. Their mass-media civil disobedience actions accelerated passage of congressional legislation. The confluence of these campaigns was significant in the passage of the CAAA of 1986.

⁶²⁹ Davis, Interviews for No Easy Victories.

⁶³⁰ Keita, interview. Keita suggests that the Washington Office on Africa (WOA), was seen as middle ground between groups like the ACOA and TransAfrica and was more palatable to a broader audience. Though mentioned in this study, the WOA is not fully treated here and should be considered for future anti-apartheid studies.

⁶³¹ Knight, interview.

⁶³² Davis, Interviews for No Easy Victories.

CHAPTER THREE
PROTESTS, POLITICS, AND POWER: TRANSAFRICA’S FREE SOUTH
AFRICA MOVEMENT (1984 – 1990)

What’s the word? Tell me brother, have you heard from Johannesburg?...They may not get the news but they need to know we’re on their side. Now sometimes distance brings misunderstanding, but deep in my heart I’m demanding. Somebody tell me[,] what’s the word? Sister/woman have you heard ‘bout Johannesburg? I know that their [sic] strugglin’ over there. But we all need to be strugglin’. If we’re gonna be free. Don’t you want to be free?

“Johannesburg” by Gil

Scott-Heron

In *Black Liberation: A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in the United States and South Africa*, George Frederickson contends that the Black Power movement of the 1960s made “a significant difference in the attitudes of black America. By the “conservative ‘70s,” not only were black Americans celebrating their “racial pride and self-esteem,”⁶³³ they were also exhibiting “an increasing willingness to identify with African culture.”⁶³⁴ After “the radical alienation from the American political and social system that had characterized the black nationalism of a Stokely Carmichael, a Huey Newton, a James Foreman, or an Imamu Baraka,” black Americans sought to vindicate, in Frederickson’s words, the “liberal pluralist society.”⁶³⁵ This sentiment departed from the ‘60s manifesto, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*, a book by

⁶³³ Fredrickson, *Black Liberation*, 297.

⁶³⁴ Ibid.

⁶³⁵ Ibid.

Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton that “likened the internal form of colonialism that characterized black-white relations in the United States to the oppressive system of white domination that prevailed in South Africa and Rhodesia.”⁶³⁶ *Black Power*’s prescription counseled: “Before a group can enter the open society, it must first close ranks.”⁶³⁷

As the voices of Carmichael and Hamilton receded in the 1970s, black American leaders channeled their expression of pride and self-esteem into another signal movement that sought to change another plural segregated society, South Africa, which cried out for racial justice. Such international aspirations motivated TransAfrica to launch a campaign known as the Free South Africa Movement (FSAM). The Reverend Wyatt Tee Walker, noted clergy and civil rights activist, described TransAfrica’s leadership as “more intellectual” and their protest strategy as very “effective.”⁶³⁸ TransAfrica, along with its

⁶³⁶ Ibid., 295.

⁶³⁷ Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*, No Edition Stated edition (Vintage Books, 1967), 44.

⁶³⁸ Walker, interview. Walker was an active member of the American Committee on Africa (ACOA); he also, worked closely with Randall Robinson on FSAM initiatives. Brenda Gayle Plummer characterizes the 1970s as a time in which, “an exuberant ethnic identity politics burst upon the scene. White Americans began a rediscovery of “roots” in immigrant communities.”...This enthusiasm looked to the Afro-American example of militant nationalism, but in reality it rejected that path. Ethnic lobbying within the U.S. system became the political arm of the ethnic revival. Malcolm X would scarcely have recognized the Afro-American interest group TransAfrica, founded in 1976. This registered lobby leans for support on the black press, celebrities, academics, black organizations, civil rights establishment officials, and the remnants of the liberal coalition of the past. The armed nationalists and people’s brigades that marched through the visions of the 1960s would have little place in the coolly professional interest group politics of a new era.” Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 323. TransAfrica’s leadership did personify the more polished image Plummer paints; however, the work of the local grassroots organization, Southern Africa Support Project (SASP) brought ordinary residents of Washington, DC into the FSAM. Indeed, the strength of this grassroots organization [SASP] was mobilizing the masses to participate in FSAM and other southern African liberation initiatives. Co-founder, Sylvia Hill explains, SASP’s “years of strategic organizing had permitted them to develop a base of institutional support in the city of Washington. This is why SASP was a critical base of support for the daily protests at the embassy.” Sylvia Hill “Presentation: The Free South African Movement,” 5; <http://www.anc.org.za/un/conference/shill.html>, paper presented _UN Conference, accessed 2/25/2010. Though, Plummer is correct in her view that Black Power nationalists would probably

more left-leaning sister organization, the Southern Africa Support Project (SASP), relied on the vision and energy of Randall Robinson, who channeled this resurgent phase of anti-racism and anti-colonialism into a movement that helped topple the apartheid system.

Though Robinson had never gone to South Africa, he experienced white supremacy firsthand. Born in 1941, Randall Robinson grew up in Richmond, Virginia. He attended segregated schools, rode in the back of segregated buses, watched movies in segregated theaters, and lived in all-black neighborhoods, most of them poor. His mother and father were school teachers.⁶³⁹ Robinson revered his parents; they were “the only heroes I’ve ever had.”⁶⁴⁰ A child of the church, Robinson and his siblings attended Fifth Street Baptist Church. The Robinson home was filled with books, which “everyone read, and talked incessantly about.”⁶⁴¹ After finishing high school in 1959, Robinson enrolled in historically black Norfolk State College but dropped out in 1963. Answering the draft, he served the army in 1963 during the nascent Vietnam War. While in the military, he remembers delving into *A Kind of Homecoming*, by the Guyanese writer E. R. Braithwaite. It provided the “first positive” eye-opening account he “had ever read about the continent.”⁶⁴² With an honorable discharge, Robinson completed his undergraduate

not identify with TransAfrica’s leadership or style, the African American centeredness of TransAfrica coupled with SASP’s more radicalized leadership, challenges that critique.

⁶³⁹ Robinson’s mother would leave her profession shortly after marrying Randall’s father.

⁶⁴⁰ Randall Robinson, *Defending the Spirit: A Black Life in America*, 1st Edition, Ex-lib edition (New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Dutton Adult, 1998), 11. Robinson saw his father work long hours teaching during the day, coaching in the evening, and working at a recreation center: *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶⁴¹ Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 21.

⁶⁴² *Ibid.*, 47–48.

degree at Virginia Union University.⁶⁴³ He then attended Harvard Law School, where he showed deeper interest in the “motherland” and contacted the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) “for information on the anticolonial wars flaring in Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and Angola against Portugal”; ACOA responded by sending him a prodigious amount of information.⁶⁴⁴ After receiving his Juris Doctor in 1970, he won a Ford Foundation grant to spend six months on a research fellowship in Tanzania. The Tanzanian sojourn introduced Robinson personally to “several southern African liberation movements in exile.”⁶⁴⁵ Upon his return to the U.S., Robinson briefly practiced law in Boston. He then formed the Pan African Liberation Committee with former Harvard Law classmate, James Winston, and Harvard Divinity School alumni, Christopher Nteta from South Africa.⁶⁴⁶ In 1972, they mobilized “thirty-six black undergraduates . . . [to take] over Massachusetts Hall, Harvard’s oldest building, which housed the office of the university’s president. The students demanded that Harvard divest its \$300 million investment in Gulf Oil, a major investment in Angola and South Africa.” Their demonstration received media coverage and sparked a wave of similar protests at other colleges across America.⁶⁴⁷ The founder of the Congressional Black

⁶⁴³ Ibid., 53.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid., 64. During his time at Harvard, Robinson would also study the great radical intellectuals of African descent, among them Franz Fanon, C. L. R. James, and W. E. B. DuBois; these thinkers enlarged his global understanding of race and colonialism: Ibid. These writers – Fanon (*Wretched of the Earth*), C.L. R. James (*The Black Jacobins*) and W.E.B. Du Bois (*The Souls of Black Folk*) showed the impact that being black had on the psychological development of blacks; James’ book on Toussaint L’Ouverture and the Haitian Revolution would be banned reading in countries like South Africa.

⁶⁴⁵ Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans Against Apartheid, 1946-1994*, 104.

⁶⁴⁶ Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 90. The Pan African Liberation Committee consisted of about one hundred activists. Robinson positioned himself “as an activist and architect of the Gulf oil boycott in support of Angolan independence” from Portuguese colonialism: Joseph Jordan, “That Covenant Was Kept,” *CrossRoads: A Contemporary Political Analysis & Left Dialogue*, April 1995, 10.

⁶⁴⁷ Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans Against Apartheid, 1946-1994*, 104.

Caucus and “first African-American chairman of the full House Committee on Foreign Affairs,” U.S. representative Charles C. Diggs Jr., took note of Robinson’s Pan African Liberation Committee, as well, and invited him down to Washington, D.C., to work in his office.⁶⁴⁸

Beginning shortly after the dismantling of the formal structures of apartheid and the end of the Cold War, scholars wrote about the U.S. anti-apartheid movement and the organizations that pushed for sanctions against South Africa. Black Americans’ interest and participation in internationalism and foreign policy, dominated these studies. Several important studies examined TransAfrica and FSAM, within this context. Most focused on this black-led organization using new tactics to reenergize the anti-apartheid movement and lobby Congress to bring about major legislative victories that would impose sanctions against South Africa. Scholars titled chapters and books to illuminate this major shift in the anti-apartheid movement. In *Loosing the Bonds* (1997), Robert Kinloch Massie’s chapter on FSAM was titled “The Explosion.” Almost a decade later David Hostetter’s *Movement Matters* (2006), included a chapter on TransAfrica titled, “Black Power on Embassy Row: TransAfrica.” Political science scholar, Donald R. Culverson’s, *Contesting Apartheid* (1999), examines the anti-apartheid movement in broader terms; race is one of many factors in his political analysis. Francis Njube Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions* (2004) more closely examines TransAfrica and FSAM within the context of black leadership in this global movement. These scholars generally, examine

⁶⁴⁸ Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 94. Two years later, Diggs “was forced to resign from Congress and sent to prison for payroll-related crimes committed during the years before [Robinson] was invited to reorganize and run his staff.” Diggs’ downfall, “came as a major blow to the interests of African-Americans and the peoples of Africa as well.” He was in line to become the first African American chair of the “full House Committee on Foreign Affairs.”

the founding, development and strategies of TransAfrica and FSAM, the influences of black pride and black power, and the legislative victories attributed in large part to FSAM.

Contrary to perceptions, TransAfrica's focus on black Americans and foreign affairs was not new. It was preceded by the black-led policy and lobbying organization, the Council on African Affairs (CAA), discussed in chapter one. Brenda Gayle Plummer asserts part of the reason lies in the fact that, "research and writing on this foreign affairs interest remained largely casual and did not explore the rich past that underlay these seemingly new departures" referring to TransAfrica and the Joint Center for Political Studies. As a black led and black administered organization, TransAfrica, was unique from earlier organizations in this study in two important ways: CAA, though black-led had considerable interracial participation and influence in its early years, and ACOA, though an interracial staff and board, was often seen as a white organization. Oral history interviews with past staff and members of ACOA, FSAM, and SASP including George Houser, Richard Knight, Sylvia Hill, Cecelie Counts, and Mark Harrison shed new light on what the extant scholarship says about the perceptions of and interactions between key organizations represented in this study.

FOUNDATIONS OF TRANSAFRICA

In 1976, the U.S. Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Representative Diggs encouraged the establishment of TransAfrica as a foreign policy lobbying organization.⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴⁹ Hill, interview. The Congressional Black Caucus was established in 1971. The idea of a black foreign policy lobby was not new. The American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa (ANLCA) "convened foreign policy conferences in 1964 and 1967 that featured African nationalists and the foreign policy community in Washington, D.C. It was clear, however, that the civil rights groups were losing ground both

Robinson explained, during the CBC weekend in September of that year, “Diggs and Congressman Andrew Young convened a meeting of thirty leaders of national black organizations to discuss and respond to [Secretary of State Henry] Kissinger’s diplomacy in Rhodesia,” a nation in the throes of a liberation war waged by black guerillas against the white supremacist government of Ian Smith. Robinson recalled that “[a]mong those represented were the NAACP, black church groups, labor unions, Greek-letter organizations, the National Council of Negro Women, and the black business community.”⁶⁵⁰ He elaborated: “After the first day Herschelle Challenor, counsel to the Africa Subcommittee, Charles Cobb, and I worked through the night with the meeting rapporteur, producing from discussion notes a policy paper to be formally taken up the following morning. Entitled, *The Afro-American Manifesto on Southern Africa*, it called for nothing short of one-person-one-equal-vote democracy for Rhodesia, South Africa, and Namibia.” *The Manifesto* criticized Kissinger’s position on Rhodesia; asserting that he hindered progress toward African independence and majority rule.⁶⁵¹

A key recommendation of the *Manifesto* was to launch “an African-American foreign policy advocacy organization,” which would be run by an executive director, in this case Randall Robinson. This organization became known as TransAfrica. The prefix in TransAfrica’s name announced the intention of the organization to foster anti-racist

in government circles and in the black community, where a new generation of leaders was emerging. In 1964, a decade before the formation of TransAfrica, an ANLCA conference called for the formation of a permanent African –American lobby to influence U.S. foreign policy toward Africa. The conference, held at Howard University 24-27 September 1964, recognized “the evolution of United States’ policy toward South Africa in past years, but called for bold initiatives and a more dynamic approach in the immediate future.” Nesbitt, *Race For Sanctions*, 52. See also: Sylvia Hill, “Presentation: The Free South Africa Movement” (Conference Paper, Anti-Apartheid Movement Conference, Durban, South Africa, October 10, 2004), 6, <http://www.anc.org.za/un/conference/shill.html>.

⁶⁵⁰ Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 96.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid.

solidarity everywhere, even across heavily guarded national boundaries.⁶⁵² Incorporated as a nonprofit in Washington, D.C., on July 1, 1977,⁶⁵³ TransAfrica initially advocated for black American constituencies who had concerns about U.S. foreign policy toward the African continent and Caribbean region, but soon focused largely on Southern Africa.⁶⁵⁴ Nesbitt, likens TransAfrica to the Council on African Affairs, describing the newly formed group as a “liberal version” of the radical left organization of the 1940s and 1950s.⁶⁵⁵

During the 1976 presidential campaign, Carter connected to the black electorate by openly embracing “the civil rights experience and black community interest in foreign affairs as tools for sharpening America’s interest in Africa.”⁶⁵⁶ Carter and Reagan had distinctively different ideologies and policies toward South Africa. The Carter administration policy tended to align more with the goals of black South Africans, while Reagan’s policies supported the white South African regime.⁶⁵⁷ Early in the Carter administration, Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, articulated his position on Africa, “The

⁶⁵²There was a coterie working with Robinson. The Howard professor of political science Ronald Walters, “Herschelle Challenor, the Africa Subcommittee counsel, and . . . C. Payne Lucas, president of Africare. Challenor had suggested naming “the organization TransAfrica.” In addition Richard Hatcher, the black mayor of Gary, Indiana, was made chair of the board: Ibid., 108.

⁶⁵³ “Mission, Vision & History,” *TransAfrica*, n.d., <http://transafrica.org/mission-history/>. TransAfrica had received its mandate from the CBC, in 1976 and was founded in 1977.

⁶⁵⁴ Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 96–97.; Alvin B. Tillery, *Between Homeland and Motherland: Africa, U.S. Foreign Policy, and Black Leadership in America*, Cornell Paperbacks (Ithaca [N.Y.]; London: Cornell University Press, 2011), 97, 139.

⁶⁵⁵ Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans Against Apartheid, 1946-1994*, 99. Nesbitt contends, there were three main reasons TransAfrica succeeded “where the CAA failed.” He points to “the high level of black consciousness, the presence of a critical mass of African Americans in Congress, and the mobilization of black leadership on the question of South Africa.”

⁶⁵⁶ Donald R. Culverson, “From Cold War to Global Interdependence: The Political Economy of African American Antipartheid Activism, 1968-1988,” in *Window on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1988*, ed. Brenda Gayle Plummer (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 231.

⁶⁵⁷ Gerald J. Bender, James Smoot Coleman, and Richard L. Sklar, eds., *African Crisis Areas and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 44.

most effective policies toward Africa are affirmative policies...A negative, reactive American policy that seeks only to oppose Soviet or Cuban involvement in Africa would be futile.”⁶⁵⁸ Hopeful that the Carter administration would be more supportive based on their position on human rights, black Americans sought action on the struggle in southern Africa. A task force representing key organizations recommended, “compulsory sanctions against Americans doing business in South Africa...a mandatory embargo against arms sales to South Africa; a ban on participation by Americans in athletic and cultural events with South African teams; and revocation of landing rights for South African Airways in the U.S.”⁶⁵⁹ They also encouraged individual and business divestments. There was optimism during the first two years of Carter’s administration, as black American leadership was brought in as experts on Africa, including the appointment of Andrew Young as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.⁶⁶⁰ Unfortunately, Carter did not have the support to effectively pressure the South African government.⁶⁶¹ Still Carter opposed exerting economic pressure to impose sanctions

⁶⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁶⁵⁹ “New Push for Sanctions,” *U. S. News & World Report*, March 6, 1978, Box 73 Folder 20, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁶⁶⁰ Culverson, “From Cold War to Global Interdependence: The Political Economy of African American Antipartheid Activism, 1968-1988,” 231.

⁶⁶¹ Gerald Horne, “Race From Power: U.S. Foreign Policy and the General Crisis of White Supremacy,” in *Window on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1988*, ed. Brenda Gayle Plummer (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 57–58. Chester Crocker’s had personal connections to southern Africa, his wife and in-laws were white Rhodesians. During a visit to Rhodesia in 1979, Crocker suggested “that a GOP administration could seek dialogue with the white minority government rather than condemn it, partly because a Republican president would have minimal dependence on minority voters.” Horne, “Race From Power,” p. 57.

against South Africa, and his attention began to shift to “Cold War containment of the region.”⁶⁶²

Like other anti-apartheid organizations, TransAfrica participated in many conferences which issued policy statements and resolutions that documented efforts in the U.S. to foster awareness of South Africa’s oppressive rule. These methodical efforts built productive relationships between TransAfrica and other anti-apartheid organizations, domestically and internationally, especially SASP, a Washington, D.C. based grassroots organization. Yet, these meetings yielded “no visible effect.” Robinson acknowledged “Edgar Lockwood and Chris Root of the Washington Office on Africa (WOA)” for lobbying “Congress tenaciously for sanctions.” This appeal “produced no result beyond valuable public education.” Jennifer Davis, of ACOA was able to “disseminate research materials nationally that sharpened public advocacy but accomplished little else.”⁶⁶³ In short, Robinson noted with frustration, “the *talk* [his italics] about the fight against apartheid *was* the fight against apartheid,” certainly up to 1984.⁶⁶⁴

⁶⁶² Bender, Coleman, and Sklar, *African Crisis Areas and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 58; Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 102; Culverson, “From Cold War to Global Interdependence: The Political Economy of African American Antipartheid Activism, 1968-1988,” 232.

⁶⁶³ Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 143. See also, the Washington Office on Africa Education Fund’s (WOAEF) symposium program for a more detailed description of WOA. Founded in 1972, the Washington Office on Africa was a major player in the U.S. anti-apartheid movement. Funded and “supported by U.S. churches and trade unions,” WOA sponsored “congressional briefings on legislation and [coordinated] lobbying in support of comprehensive sanctions against South Africa, aid to Southern Africa, freedom for Namibia, and the termination of U.S. support to South African backed rebels in Angola.” It also published the newsletter “Washington Notes on Africa.” Maghan Keita explains the “WOA began through ACOA” however, it operated independently and became its own entity.

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.*; Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 558. While many of the organizations focused a great deal on education, research, and legislation, they also engaged in actions to thwart apartheid, much of the early groundwork and relationships built in that earlier period brought attention to the struggle in southern Africa.

With the election of President Ronald Reagan, TransAfrica would confront another problem: apartheid intransigence being abetted by U.S. foreign policy. The fledgling Reagan administration dealt with South Africa through “constructive engagement.” This delicate, even comforting approach did not impose any demands on a Western ally that had lurched into pariah status. After vicious crackdowns on unarmed demonstrators in 1976, which started in June when primary and secondary schoolchildren in the largest black township outside Johannesburg ignited the “Soweto Uprising” to protest their inferior education, the international community was outraged.⁶⁶⁵ The mastermind of constructive engagement, Secretary of State for African Affairs Chester Crocker, urged the White House to heed the implications of this violence and gently encourage South Africa to consider the gradual inclusion of black people in white-minority rule, which might one day see the benefits of a plural society. Crocker announced this policy in a 1979 article published in *Foreign Affairs*. For him, the apartheid regime represented “an integral and important element of the Western global economic system. Historically, South Africa is by nature part of us.”⁶⁶⁶ Crocker

⁶⁶⁵ Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Chester Crocker, had coined “constructive engagement” in a *Foreign Affairs* article published in 1979. The concept essentially meant that the U.S. would support gradual change in South Africa’s racial policy because pressure from the U.S. would be met with resistance from the white-minority leadership. Crocker’s idea “rested on three assumptions that recalled NSSM 39: that whites of South Africa were there to stay; that the whites were staunch anticommunist allies and part of Western civilization; and that independence of Namibia should be tied to the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola.” Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 115. The “National Security Study Memorandum No. 39. formulated under the direction of Henry Kissinger, outlined, the guiding policy for the Nixon-Ford administration. NSSM 39 argued that United States policy in southern Africa should “tilt” towards supporting the white minority regimes and Portuguese colonial domination on the ground that they were stable and would be in control for the foreseeable future.” George Houser, *Southern Africa Perspectives*, The Africa Fund, NY #2/ 79; “Carter’s Africa Policy” [africanactivistarchive.msu.edu].

⁶⁶⁶ Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans Against Apartheid, 1946-1994*, 113–114. Defending Crocker’s position in an interview with the newsman Walter Cronkite, President Reagan insisted, “we cannot abandon a country that has stood by us in every war we ever fought – a country that is strategically

understood that his president's hawkish advisers reflexively backed the anti-communist South African Prime Minister, P.W. Botha.⁶⁶⁷ The renowned Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu, who would win the Nobel Prize for Peace during Reagan's time in office, ruefully pointed out that Reagan "is concerned about Soviet expansionism, and almost everything else is subordinated in his foreign policy to this almost obsessional concern to stem the tide of Communism."⁶⁶⁸ As constructive engagement took hold, Tutu presented a less-veiled critique. He assailed "the Reagan administration for refrain[ing] by and large from rebuking South Africa from her violations of human rights" and finding "occasions where it positively commended South Africa for things which we Blacks must say we found difficult to see as commendable at all."⁶⁶⁹ Reflecting decades later on Crocker's strategy, Robinson remarked almost gratefully that the "cavalier" decision to embark on constructive engagement "would ultimately catalyze the American antiapartheid

essential to the free world in its production of minerals we must all have": *ibid.* Ignoring established international policy, "on 25 March, [1981] the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, met with South African military officials despite a United Nations arms embargo that prohibited military involvement with South Africa. A week later, the South African military bombed civilian targets in Angola. Anti-apartheid groups immediately called for Kirkpatrick's resignation for violating international sanctions." Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 114. Further the Congressional Black Caucus, "said that it considered the Reagan administration's actions 'a slap in the face of 26 million black Americans' and warned that the rapprochement with South Africa would 'isolate us from the peoples, markets and resources of the third world.' The CBC representatives also vowed to introduce a resolution opposing President Reagan's plan to invite Prime Minister Botha for an official visit 'until that country renounces its policy of apartheid.'" Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 115. Reagan ignored the CBC's warning and moved forward with his plans and invitation to Botha. Not only did Alexander Haig, Secretary of State, meet with Botha, "The Haig-Botha talks were a major milestone in U.S. – South Africa relations. On 17 May [1981], the Reagan administration formally announced its "constructive engagement" policy." Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 115.

⁶⁶⁷ Chester A. Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa: Making Peace in a Rough Neighborhood*, 1st ed (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992). Chester Crocker discusses his uneasy relationship with Cold War "Hawks" Casper Weinberger, Al Haig, and others..

⁶⁶⁸ Desmond Tutu, *Hope and Suffering: Sermons and Speeches* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 1984), 107.

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 106.

movement.”⁶⁷⁰ Whatever the case, there was a fundamental calculus at work. Pretoria ensured the U.S. that a militarily-capable country in Southern Africa could combat Soviet-bloc influence and halt the spread of regional communism.

Yet Botha’s tyranny had engendered many more enemies than friends. South Africa’s greatest foes were its national neighbors. In Angola an anti-colonial Marxist government had expelled its Portuguese overlords in 1975. It would be defended by Cuban troops commanded by Fidel Castro who fiercely condemned Botha. A former Portuguese possession, Mozambique became independent and Marxist in 1975, as well and welcomed guerillas of the African National Congress to launch raids on apartheid infrastructure. The year Reagan won the national election white-minority Rhodesia disappeared altogether. In its place socialist Zimbabwe emerged as an opponent of Botha’s racism. Yet Cold War rivalry was not the only concern dictating constructive engagement. The Reagan administration aimed to safeguard profitable corporate investments in the mineral-rich apartheid economy, which were considered vulnerable to popular unrest and anti-capitalist.⁶⁷¹

The 1976 student-led Soweto Uprising instigated subsequent national protests, mostly driven by youth.⁶⁷² At issue was an educational policy change levied by the Nationalist Party, reflecting white nationalist values that “culminated in the volatile issue of Afrikaans as a mandatory medium of instruction for black school children.” In an atmosphere, where, black South Africans were stripped of so many basic liberties,

⁶⁷⁰ Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 131.

⁶⁷¹ Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans Against Apartheid, 1946-1994*, 117..

⁶⁷² C. R. D. Halisi, *Black Political Thought in the Making of South African Democracy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 107.

teaching in the language of the oppressors “proved to be the catalyst for the watershed Soweto Rebellion of June 16, 1976, an event that set South Africa on the path of irreversible change.”⁶⁷³ Historian C.R.D. Halisi, best captures the sentiments of the African students and educators:

At issue was whether black students would be allowed to learn in English, an international language, or forced to study in Afrikaans, a parochial language that they associated with racial domination. Moreover, most African teachers were not proficient in Afrikaans. A famous 1976 slogan encapsulated black student rejection of Afrikaner parochialism: “Afrikaans is not spoken north of the Limpopo River” (which separates South Africa from Zimbabwe). The Afrikaans language requirement prefigured linguistic isolation of African students, thus allowing the government to pursue its anti-internationalist, apartheid agenda under the guise of educational policy. As John Samuel observed, the system of black education was already hopeless – the new language policy now added humiliation.⁶⁷⁴

These protests intensified into a national rebellion that spilled over into the next decade. Black Consciousness Movement leaders of the 1976 uprising fled the country “to join the armed struggle” in nearby ANC camps and brought along their new ideas, which clashed with the old left.⁶⁷⁵ The early 1980s would become a time of the “People’s War”

⁶⁷³ Ibid., 89. Following the Soweto uprising different groups sought to take credit for organizing the massive student protest. In *Lessons of the Struggle* Anthony Marx contends, that because of “the absence of a more coherent organizational involvement by BC in the events of June 1976 has enabled other groups, most prominently the ANC, to claim that they had clandestinely filled this gap.” Anthony Marx, *Lessons of the Struggle*, 67. Halisi adds, “Journalists and scholars...assert what once sparked controversy – that the BCM was central to the revitalization of internal protest in the 1970s.” The BCM and ANC were known to have a strained relationship, which had to do with philosophical and “generational differences between a new and old left.” Halisi, *Black Political Thought in the Making of South African Democracy*, 8.

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid. Afrikaner nationalists, led by H. F. Verwoerd, the major architects behind the formal Apartheid system of racial segregation in South Africa, advocated Christian Nationalism, a rejection of internationalism and in “direct opposition to the major internationalist doctrines” of the post-War period.

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid., 107. SASO operated with a transparency “promoting black nationalist ideas” publically that was uncomfortable for and “alarmed the white liberal left and the multiracial ANC.” Halisi, *Black Political Thought*, 108. SASO’s influence spread to student groups, one of which was based in Soweto. “By merely attempting to operate openly inside the country, SASO was immediately forced to explore the limits of government repression. With respect to the larger community, in July 1972 SASO launched the Black People’s Convention in an effort to expand beyond the campus, help build autonomous community organizations, and bridge both the class divide and the generation gap.” Halisi, *Black Political Thought*, 109.

when sustained protests, waged by the United Democratic Front (UDF), sought to make South Africa “ungovernable.” In 1982, the Reverend Allan Boesak, newly elected president of the World Alliance (of the Reformed Church) and an influential coloured South African, suggested a banning together of all groups opposed to the tricameral constitutional proposals, which blatantly excluded the black majority.⁶⁷⁶ Launched in 1983 the UDF “and its offspring, the Mass Democratic Movement, were aligned with the ANC.”⁶⁷⁷ Botha would later declare a state of emergency in 1985, triggering a massive response from the UDF. A major achievement of the UDF was that it:

...not only brought together an exceptional range of South Africans from many ideological, racial, and economic categories but also combined two powerful traditions in the history of South African resistance. The choice of Nelson Mandela as patron and Albertina Sisulu as president indicated a strong commitment to the goals of the African National Congress. At the same time, the UDF’s strategy – that of boycotting all government structures, including elections –was in direct line with the tradition of the Non-European Unity Movement of the 1950s and all the other “noncollaborationists” who had emerged in the previous two generations.⁶⁷⁸

South Africa’s tricameral parliament included Indian and Coloured participation for the first time in 1984, under its newly adopted constitution. Glaringly, the majority black population was denied a seat in the nation’s governing body. As South Africa shifted its leadership structure from prime minister to president, P. W. Botha seamlessly became South Africa’s first president by a unanimous electoral college decision. Botha’s continuation as South Africa’s leader represented a continuation of his reign of terror. This reality coupled with no representation in the new parliament outraged black South Africans. Boycotts and protests escalated during this period. Black students boycotted

⁶⁷⁶ Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 517.

⁶⁷⁷ Halisi, *Black Political Thought*, 117.

⁶⁷⁸ Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 519–520.

“classes spread[ing] from the Eastern Cape and eventually the Orange Free State” and were later joined by hundreds of thousands of Coloured students.⁶⁷⁹ As government repression continued, “tensions rose within townships.” To quell these acts of massive resistance, Botha “instructed the minister of law and order, the commissioner of police, and the commanders of the South African Defence Force to work together,” to control the protests by any means necessary. Hundreds of black people were dragged from their homes and jailed, others faced police sanctioned beatings and killings. These incidents were barely covered in the American press. After Tutu won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984, bringing international attention to South Africa, media around the world reported on the plight of black South Africans. Often compared to Martin Luther King Jr., Tutu was held in high-esteem by U.S. blacks. One columnist wrote, “another black preacher struggling for the rights of his people.” Media and the American public, latched on to these comparisons.⁶⁸⁰ The combination of escalated police violence against black South Africans, Bishop Tutu’s message reaching more sympathetic ears, and a frustration among concerned black leaders that the U.S. anti-apartheid movement was moving without significant gains, influenced TransAfrica’s decision to consider different tactics.

The Reagan administration’s mute reaction to Botha’s repression in the early 1980s angered large numbers of anti-apartheid activists, including the chairman of TransAfrica, Richard Hatcher, who insisted things were “going too slow[ly],” adding, “we have got to do something.”⁶⁸¹ In 1984, they sought to galvanize “mainstream

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid., 552.

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid., 557.

⁶⁸¹ Counts, interview; Hill, interview.

America” by shifting the policy debate toward open denunciations of Botha’s regime.⁶⁸² Sylvia Hill, Robinson’s intellectual comrade, similarly felt the urgent need to confront the ruthless South African government.⁶⁸³ Hill worried that Botha’s “regime seemed ready to commit genocide against a generation of political youth.”⁶⁸⁴ Hill, Robinson, Cecelie Counts, the legislative liaison for TransAfrica, and other SASP leaders planned a bold act of civil disobedience at the South African Embassy in Washington, D.C.

Robinson proceeded to have conversations with three key people about this proposed event. First, he chose to meet with the Reverend Walter E. Fauntroy, the Representative of Washington, D.C., in Congress. The beloved pastor of the New Bethel Baptist Church (NBCC) on Ninth Street in the Shaw community, Fauntroy had also been “a trusted lieutenant to the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. during the civil rights movement.”⁶⁸⁵ A founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC),

⁶⁸² Cecelie Counts-Blakey, “The FSAM Story,” *CrossRoads: A Contemporary Political Analysis & Left Dialogue*, April 1995, 11. See Chapter eight of this study for more details on how SASP successfully galvanized the local community.

⁶⁸³ It is interesting to note that Robinson and Hill shared admiration for a multi-racial roster of heroes, among them C.L.R. James, Franz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, Albert Camus, and Jean Paul Sartre: Joseph Jordan, “Solidarity as an Organizing Principle,” *CrossRoads: A Contemporary Political Analysis & Left Dialogue*, April 1995, 19–20. Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 64. Similarly, Black Power activists Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton drew upon the writings of intellectuals like Frantz Fanon, Sartre and Camus. Carmichael and Hamilton, *Black Power* xi-xii. Theologian James H. Cone asserts, “Fanon captured our imagination because his analysis rang true and he convinced us that black thought could create no genuine future for its people by looking to Europe for support”: Cone, *For My People*, 71. During the 1970s, “the South African Black Consciousness movement borrowed some of the new African-American language of black pride and self-determination to question in a new way the ANC’s insistent nonracialism. Both movements – Black Power and Black Consciousness – sought to encourage what Jean-Paul Sartre has called an “anti-racist racism”; they accepted the racial identity constructed for them by white oppressors and turned it against its creators by using it as a basis of solidarity and struggle against white domination.” Fredrickson, *Black Liberation*, 278.

⁶⁸⁴ Sylvia Hill, “Free South Africa! Notes from My Diary,” April 1995, 15.

⁶⁸⁵ Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 148.

King chose Fauntroy to direct its Washington Bureau.⁶⁸⁶ In this capacity, Fauntroy helped coordinate the 1963 March on Washington, the 1965 Selma-to-Montgomery March (for voting rights that crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge), and the Mississippi Freedom March in 1966.⁶⁸⁷ Fauntroy was a native Washingtonian who in 1982 was re-elected the District of Columbia's non-voting Congressional representative, the same day his father William T. Fauntroy Sr. passed away.⁶⁸⁸ Fauntroy Sr., had retired from the United States Patent Office after 44 years of service.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸⁶ Special Collections Research Center, "Biographical Notes - Walter E. Fauntroy," University Library Special Collections, *George Washington University - Special Collections*, accessed April 8, 2014, <http://library.gwu.edu/ead/ms2070.xml>; See also The History Makers which dates his appointment to 1961 instead of 1960.

⁶⁸⁷ "Hon. Walter Fauntroy," African American History, *The History Makers*, accessed April 8, 2014, <http://www.thehistorymakers.com/biography/hon-walter-fauntroy-39>; Special Collections Research Center, "Biographical Notes - Walter E. Fauntroy," The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom attracted over 200,000 diverse people from around the nation and where King delivered his famous "I Have A Dream Speech"; the Selma-to-Montgomery March named "Bloody Sunday" because of the brutality waged against the marchers by the police before the group reach the Edmund Pettus Bridge; a second march was held two days later led by Martin Luther King Jr. Fauntroy also coordinated the Poor People's Campaign in 1968. Committed to his local community, Fauntroy is credited with the "design and implementation of the Shaw Urban Renewal Project," as well as, "the effort to win Home Rule for residents of the District of Columbia": "Our History - New Bethel Baptist Church," Church, *New Bethel Baptist Church*, accessed April 10, 2014, <http://www.nbbc-dc.org/inside-nbbc/church-history.php>.

⁶⁸⁸ Born on February 6, 1933, Fauntroy "graduated from Dunbar High School in 1952 and received his Bachelor of Arts from Virginia Union University in 1955: Special Collections Research Center, "Biographical Notes - Walter E. Fauntroy." For additional biographical information; see also <http://www.thehistorymakers.com/biography/hon-walter-fauntroy-39>. Later he earned, "a bachelor of divinity from Yale University Divinity School in 1958," which would prepare him to become pastor of his childhood church, New Bethel Baptist Church. Indeed, "in 1959, the church unanimously voted to name Rev. Fauntroy as the third pastor of New Bethel. Under Rev. Fauntroy's leadership, both New Bethel and the Shaw community were revitalized": "Our History - NBBC."

Rev. Fauntroy was one of seven children of William (Sr.) and Ethel. Fauntroy held numerous leadership positions during his 20 year tenure in Congress, including chair of the Congressional Black Caucus: "In 1970, Congress passed the Delegate Act enabling citizens of Washington D.C. to have representation in the United States House of Representatives. Subsequently in 1971, D.C residents elected Fauntroy to represent the District. Strongly supporting the right for full representation of the District, Fauntroy immediately began a legislative campaign in support of home rule. As a result, in 1973 the District of Columbia Self-government and Government Reorganization Act became law. D.C. citizens were given the authority to elect a mayor and a city council." <http://library.gwu.edu/ead/ms2070.xml>.

⁶⁸⁹ Washington (UPI), "William T. Fauntroy Sr.," *The New York Times*, September 16, 1982, sec. Obituaries, <http://www.nytimes.com/1982/09/16/obituaries/william-t-fauntroy-sr.html>.

Fauntroy agreed to join Robinson.⁶⁹⁰ Their partnership naturally embedded Fauntroy in what would become FSAM and gifted Robinson with one of his most formidable strategists. Fauntroy knew the galvanizing strengths of Washington, D.C. intimately, namely its legislators, faith communities, and civil rights pioneers. Fauntroy's New Bethel parishioners and his fellow clergy in the nation's capital expressed solidarity with him by joining TransAfrica's Free South Africa Movement.

With Fauntroy in the ranks, Robinson approached "Mary Frances Berry, a lawyer, college professor, and member of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission"; she too joined TransAfrica's campaign. Finally, Robinson convinced Eleanor Holmes Norton, "Georgetown University law professor, former chairwoman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and member of several Fortune 500 corporate boards," to join in this act of civil disobedience against South African racism.⁶⁹¹

TransAfrica requested a discussion with South African Ambassador Fourie at his Embassy in Washington, D.C. The agenda focused on the "current problems in South Africa and how the United States might be more helpful."⁶⁹² The meeting was difficult to arrange. It was finally scheduled for Wednesday November 21, 1984 the eve of the Thanksgiving holiday. TransAfrica members approved of this date, hoping to become the media story "on a slow press day in the nation's capital."⁶⁹³ The meeting with Fourie, a "conservative Afrikaner," went well enough until Norton left the room, exited the building, and informed the media that her three colleagues refused to leave the Embassy

⁶⁹⁰ Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 148.

⁶⁹¹ Ibid. Eleanor Holmes Norton would follow Fauntroy as the Delegate for Washington, DC.

⁶⁹² Ibid.

⁶⁹³ Ibid., 150.

until their demands were heard by the South African government. Norton addressed the media in front of the South African Embassy, while nearby marchers chanted “Freedom yes! Apartheid no! Freedom yes! Apartheid no!”⁶⁹⁴ Norton highlighted the Reagan administration’s inaction and problematic policy of constructive engagement. The brinkmanship shook Fourie. Robinson remembered the thick-accented Afrikaner displaying “embarrassment, rage, confusion, and a hint of fear” as he was told “your . . . political prisoners must be released immediately. These would include, among others, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, the thirteen labor leaders arrested recently without charge, and the three black leaders who have taken refuge in the British consulate in Durban.”⁶⁹⁵ Robinson further demanded the “speedy dismantlement of the apartheid system.”⁶⁹⁶ Fourie questioned the participation in this protest of a U.S. Representative from the House, singling out Fauntroy who stood with Robinson and Berry. Unfazed, Fauntroy responded, “I am indeed a member of the United States Congress and . . . I have devoted my life to civil rights and the pursuit of racial justice. I am here for the same reason.”⁶⁹⁷ Berry, Fauntroy, and Robinson were eventually approached by “six uniformed U.S. Secret Service officers” who “handcuffed, removed [them]. . . , and led [them] through a thick crowd of press and cheering demonstrators.”⁶⁹⁸

This dramatic act of civil disobedience was captured in one descriptive phrase.

Fauntroy explained, “We believe we have no choice but to present our bodies in

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid., 153. See also Hill and Counts interviews.

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid., 152.

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid., 153.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid., 154.

protest.”⁶⁹⁹ The TransAfrica Four emboldened anti-apartheid activists “to stage protests daily until . . . a number of demands” were met, including “the release of the South African labor leaders and political prisoners, negotiations with the Pretoria government and a more activist role by the Reagan administration in opposing apartheid.” Congressional sanctions against South Africa were also pursued.⁷⁰⁰ Seizing the moment, Robinson and his colleagues moved forward the day after Thanksgiving and “announced the founding of the Free South Africa Movement [FSAM]. Its principal objective would be the passage of comprehensive economic sanctions against South Africa.”⁷⁰¹ Cecelie Counts set about coordinating daily demonstrations at the South African Embassy in Washington, D.C.; simultaneously, local TransAfrica chapters and other organizations coordinated protests in front of South African consulates in other U.S. cities.⁷⁰² While enfolded into TransAfrica, FSAM had specific organizational objectives: to build a broad anti-apartheid coalition with a FSAM “Steering Committee” answerable to “a core group acting as an executive committee.”⁷⁰³ This nucleus included Berry, Fauntroy, Robinson, Hill, President of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists William (Bill) Lucy and Johns Hopkins University Institute of Public Policy Studies Senior Fellow Roger Wilkins.⁷⁰⁴ As

⁶⁹⁹ Washington (AP), “Fauntroy and Others Vow Further Protests,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 24, 1984, sec. A, 3, America’s Historical Newspapers.

⁷⁰⁰ Washington (AP), “Dellums Is Arrested,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 29, 1984, sec. A, 6, America’s Historical Newspapers.

⁷⁰¹ Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 155.

⁷⁰² Counts explained the main difference between the two organizations; SASP maintained close connections with the community as a grassroots organization, while TransAfrica focused on foreign policy lobbying.

⁷⁰³ Counts-Blakey, “The FSAM Story,” 13.

⁷⁰⁴ Alhaji Conteh, “A Chronology of the Free South Africa Movement” (TransAfrica Forum, 2009), 1, Reading Room, TransAfrica Forum Reading Room.

it happened, “only a few of the[se] individuals were known for their anti-apartheid activism, but each played a critical role in the [FSAM] . . . success.”⁷⁰⁵

PROTESTS, ARRESTS, AND MASS MOBILIZATION

After the triumphal defiance of the first act of civil disobedience at the South African Embassy, TransAfrica’s leaders effectively set in motion a movement that swept along eager participants. Daily protests commenced the week after Thanksgiving 1984; the initial plan was to protest for five to seven days outside of the South African Embassy in Washington, D.C. By 1985, labor unions, churches, organizations, students, and individuals from all walks of life (celebrities and ordinary people), ethnicities, and religious backgrounds participated. Quickly taking root in cities across the United States, protests would spread to South African consulates, corporations with interests in South Africa, university campuses, and dealers of South African currency, Krugerrands. Daily arrests ranged from a few to over 200 people; celebrity arrests effectively kept the media engaged, thus keeping the protests in the headlines. Civil rights icons like Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King,⁷⁰⁶ popular artists like Tony Randall and Harry Belafonte, and activists like Gloria Steinham and the Reverend Jesse Jackson were among those arrested.⁷⁰⁷ Undoubtedly, FSAM’s call to fight South Africa was on Stevie Wonders

⁷⁰⁵ Counts-Blakey, “The FSAM Story,” 13.

⁷⁰⁶ Kirk Jackson, “Church Leaders to Join Protest,” *The Washington Informer*, December 13, 1984, Box 503 Folder No# (Free South Africa Movement 1984) [unprocessed], Walter E. Fauntroy Papers, The Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University; “Coretta King Arrested at Embassy,” *The Washington Post*, July 27, 1985, Box 521 folder no #, Walter E. Fauntroy Papers, The Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University.

⁷⁰⁷ Conteh, “Chronology of FSAM,” 1; Counts, interview. Harry Belafonte and Arthur Ashe co-chaired Artists and Athletes Against Apartheid, which encouraged artists and athletes to pledge they would not perform in South Africa during apartheid. Counts mentions, TransAfrica “set up” the committee, which opened doors to the “Hollywood network.” Counts interview.

mind as he accepted an Oscar in 1985 “in the name of Nelson Mandela.”⁷⁰⁸ Fauntroy was instrumental in recruiting his colleagues; Congressman Ronald Dellums of California, recalls receiving a telephone call from Walter Fauntroy, knowing exactly why he was calling, Dellums responded, “Hello Walter....It’s a good day to go to jail. Where do you want me to be and what time?”⁷⁰⁹ Response to FSAM’s call to action far exceeded expectations; “over the course of a year, more than 4,500 people [were] arrested nationwide and grassroots campaigns develop[ed] in more than 40 cities.”⁷¹⁰ The demonstrations went uninterrupted for close to two years. Minter observes, “Getting arrested at FSAM demonstrations became a rite of passage for public figures and celebrities who wanted street credibility with progressives; scheduling these high-profile actions became a logistical headache – albeit a welcome one-for FSAM activists.”⁷¹¹

TransAfrica staff person Cecelie Counts coordinated the daily protests and managed the pre-protest training of arrestees, and on-site logistics.⁷¹² Organizations and individuals would work closely with TransAfrica, sometimes bringing large groups of their constituents to lead the embassy protests. Robinson recalls, “Peggy Cooper Cafritz, a prominent figure in the Washington arts community, organized large demonstrations on

⁷⁰⁸ Dr. Conrad W. Worrill, “The Genius of Stevie Wonder,” *Chicago Metro News*, April 13, 1985, Vol. XX Issue 23 edition, 9, America’s Historical Newspapers. The South African government responded by banning Wonder’s albums and Stevie himself. The *Chicago Metro News* quipped, “if South Africa can censor Stevie, Stevie’s fans can censor South Africa and support Stevie in the process.”

⁷⁰⁹ Ronald V. Dellums and H. Lee Halterman, *Lying Down With the Lions: A Public Life from the Streets of Oakland to the Halls of Power* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 128.

⁷¹⁰ Conteh, “Chronology of FSAM,” 1. These figures represent those arrested, however, thousands of others participated in protests, boycotts, sit-ins, letter writing, logistics, lobbying, and educational events that were not arrested, however they impacted the success of the movement.

⁷¹¹ William Minter, Gail Hovey, and Charles E. Cobb Jr., eds., *No Easy Victories: African Liberation and American Activists Over a Half Century, 1950-2000* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 2007), 160.

⁷¹² Counts, interview. Counts had become a full-time staff member in 1983 after having worked at TransAfrica through a law school fellowship. She worked with TransAfrica until 1988.

Mother's Day to remember the travails of South African mothers and celebrate the blessings of her own baby's birth."⁷¹³ Citizens like drummer Baba Ngoma, retirees "Mr. Jones and Mr. Wells", and disabled citizens like Mark Sharp and his family regularly participated.⁷¹⁴ On one occasion, Gay McDougall, an activist lawyer, "brought a thousand lawyers to march."⁷¹⁵ Leaders from other anti-apartheid organizations—George Houser and Jennifer Davis of ACOA, Jean Sindab, WOA, and leaders of the National Council of Churches (NCC) and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)—also joined the daily protests in support of FSAM.

FSAM reached American households and hearts largely due to unprecedented media coverage, coupled with longstanding local outreach efforts. The success of this more dramatic and strategic approach surpassed decades of U.S. anti-apartheid efforts, however, past efforts must not be pushed to the margins. Relationships built by local groups like SASP and national groups like ACOA, WOA, AFSC, and NCC proved beneficial during this intensifying collective push for action against South Africa, which centered on comprehensive sanctions.

Counts reminds us that it was not only the notable people, but also everyday people who participated on a regular basis that sustained the momentum of the daily protests.⁷¹⁶ Indeed, Counts and Hill were founders of SASP, which had extensive experience in garnering grassroots support from the local Washington, D.C. community.

⁷¹³ Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 158.

⁷¹⁴ Ibid.; Counts, interview. Baba Ngoma was a longtime supporter of SASP.

⁷¹⁵ Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 156. McDougall led the anti-apartheid organization Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights under Law Southern Africa Project, "an African American who had close ties with ANC leaders dating back to the 1970s," was instrumental in South Africa's transition to a democracy. Minter and Hill, "Anti-apartheid Solidarity in United States – South Africa Relations", 820.

⁷¹⁶ Counts, interview.

Their earlier work on southern African liberation benefited the efforts of FSAM. SASP's strategic significance is discussed in detail in the next chapter. The Baltimore Anti-Apartheid Coalition (BAAC), a local community-based organization, brought busloads of protesters to the embassy on several occasions. Mary Gresham, community activist and co-founder of BAAC, recalls singing spirituals, freedom songs like "We Shall Not Be Moved," as well as the South African National Anthem during their trip from Baltimore to Washington, D.C. Upon arrival they got off the bus, fell in line with other protesters, and carried "Free South Africa" and "Free Nelson Mandela" placards.⁷¹⁷ Many BAAC protesters were members of Baltimore area churches.

Washington Post writer Karlyn Barker observed, "In Washington and New York, where the largest demonstrations are seen each day, participants range from novices to protest veterans of the civil rights and antiwar era. They are all ages, many races and several faiths. They are uniformly angry."⁷¹⁸ The embassy protests took place regardless of weather or other organization activities. Mark Harrison, a native Washingtonian and New York faith-based activist remembers "when Reagan's [1985] inauguration was so cold they canceled it...[however,] they still did the demonstration in front of the embassy that day."⁷¹⁹ Indeed, Hill explains, "we marched to demonstrate that weather would not stop our protests," against Reagan's constructive engagement policies and the injustices in South Africa.⁷²⁰

⁷¹⁷ Mary V. Gresham, interview by author, telephone, May 8, 2014.

⁷¹⁸ Karlyn Barker, "Background Troops Of Antipartheid; Hundreds Provide Supportive Presence At Embassy," *The Washington Post*, December 16, 1984, sec. Metro, 1.

⁷¹⁹ Harrison, interview, March 28, 2013.

⁷²⁰ Hill, "Presentation: The Free South Africa Movement," 3.

The established and grassroots anti-apartheid community quickly joined in to support the Free South Africa Movement in cities and towns around the country. Many organizations followed up by joining protests at the embassy in Washington or at their local consulates, writing articles in organizational newsletters, and holding education and protest planning sessions. In most cases, churches, labor unions, civil rights organizations, and students collaborated and participated in the efforts. During their protests of the honorary consulate in Portland, Oregon, 14 people were arrested by early January 1985 including the Reverend John Jackson, Minister of Mt. Olive Baptist Church and Co-chair of the Portland Chapter of the National Black United Front, as well as local academic, political and union representatives.⁷²¹

Some activists created branches of the Free South Africa Movement, though not closely managed by TransAfrica, these groups adhered to the general guidelines laid out by the umbrella organization. The Chicago Free South Africa Movement and the Boston chapters were particularly active, hosting demonstrations, fundraisers, and events throughout the year. Additionally, many local grassroots anti-apartheid organizations incorporated FSAM protests in their community activities. In a pre-protest planning announcement, the Albany, New York based Capital District Coalition Against Apartheid and Racism (CD-CAAR) and NAACP Albany Branch, emphasized “the protest will consist of a legal picket line and a few preselected people crossing the picket line to get

⁷²¹ Avel Gordly and Elizabeth Ussher Groff, “Letter from American Friends Service Committee Pacific Northwest Region,” Mailing, (January 3, 1985), 1, Oregon Anti-Apartheid, African Activist Archive, africanactivist.msu.edu.

arrested.”⁷²² Like other supportive organizations, they pointed out “this action, [is] in solidarity with the Free South Africa Movement.”⁷²³ In line with the mission of the FSAM, the local protests focused on opposition to the Reagan administration’s policy of “constructive engagement,” as well as a demand to release political prisoners jailed in South Africa, economic sanctions against South Africa and divestiture of U.S. companies doing business in South Africa.

The arrests of FSAM protesters were generally peaceful and resulted in almost no legal trials; protesters were typically arrested, charges were dropped, and they were released. Protesters who volunteered to be arrested, received training and instructions prior to the arrests.⁷²⁴ Organizers worked to keep the demonstrations in the headlines, “frequently drawing on the popular appeal of celebrities, these marches and sit-ins were made-for-media events.”⁷²⁵ Houser, recalls “Being arrested became the thing to do. Even the police and judges usually cooperated with the protest. When I was arrested in a group outside the South African consulate in New York, charges were dropped in court and the judge made sympathetic remarks.”⁷²⁶ Houser, like many other anti-apartheid activists participated in FSAM’s protests around the country. The *Richmond Times Dispatch* reported, “22 people were taken into custody during a peaceful anti-apartheid

⁷²² “Capital District Coalition Against Apartheid and Racism Protest Planning Meeting,” *Capital District Coalition Against Apartheid Newsletter*, January 1985, 1, CD-CAAR, African Activist Archive.

⁷²³ “CD-CAAR Protest Planning Meeting.”

⁷²⁴ Counts, interview. Daily pre-protest training took place at New Bethel Baptist Church.

⁷²⁵ Tillery, *Between Homeland and Motherland*, 139.

⁷²⁶ Houser, *No One Can Stop The Rain*, 353.

rally outside the South African Consulate in New York. A similar demonstration was held in Newark, N.J.”⁷²⁷

Arrests of protesters were not always routine. A Houston, Texas activist, “was arrested... during a demonstration. But, unlike in Washington, prosecutors there refused to drop the charges and he was sentenced to a term in jail.”⁷²⁸ Chicago was the backdrop for one such case, in which “A historic trial[which began] on Monday, May 13, [1985] in the Chicago courtroom of Cook County (IL) Municipal Court judge J.J. McDonald when nine residents charged with trespassing at the office of the South African consulate[sought] to prove that they acted out of necessity in an attempt to prevent a more serious crime.”⁷²⁹ In the Chicago case, the defense argued “that the Reagan Administration policy of ‘Constructive Engagement’ [was] in violation of the U.S. Constitution and International Law as defined by the Nuremberg principles.”⁷³⁰ They also argued “that the defendants were obligated by necessity...to commit the alleged act of trespass in order to attempt to avoid a greater public injury.”⁷³¹ Leaders of FSAM and political leaders came out to support the defendants and serve as witnesses. Witnesses for the defense included Randall Robinson, Harry Belafonte, U.S. Senator Paul Simon, Dr. Dennis Brutus, Congressman Charles A. Hayes, and Marjorie Benton.⁷³²

⁷²⁷ “Three Officials Arrested in Apartheid Protest,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, December 19, 1984, sec. A, America’s Historical Newspapers.

⁷²⁸ Hill, “Notes from My Diary,” 18.

⁷²⁹ “Free South Africa Movement Protesters to Be Tried in Chicago,” *Chicago Metro News*, May 11, 1985, Vol. XX Issue 27 edition, 1, America’s Historical Newspapers.

⁷³⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁷³¹ *Ibid.*

⁷³² “Delta’s Social Action Commission Endorses Apartheid Drive,” *Chicago Metro News*, January 5, 1985, Vol. XX Issue 7 edition, 6, America’s Historical Newspapers.

The arrests were designed to bring attention to the killings, brutality, unfair imprisonment, and unjust racial policies in South Africa. Using the strategy of arresting prominent people caught the attention of the media; however many of those arrested were “unheralded area residents.” These ordinary people from “college campuses, from around kitchen tables, from church sanctuaries and corporate boardrooms” were the “mainstays” of the daily protests.⁷³³ Although anti-apartheid protests and events had taken place off and on for decades in the U.S., coverage during FSAM was unprecedented. Newspapers, radio, and television coverage skyrocketed. Randall Robinson frequently appeared on national and local news programs.

FSAM organizers discouraged distribution of unrelated materials at the embassy and consulate protests. Concern over attempts to derail or disrupt the peaceful protests was always considered, given the tensions from organizations and government entities that opposed anti-apartheid activities. Indeed, “Over the course of the [first] year there actually were several incidents where provocateurs tried to disrupt the demonstrations.”⁷³⁴ Attempts to discredit and disrupt the work of TransAfrica and FSAM, through infiltration were all too familiar to people who had lived through the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements; therefore, organizers proceeded cautiously. FSAM organizers remained firm in their opposition of non-anti-apartheid literature and banners being brought to the protests.

⁷³³ Lynda Richardson, “Heartfelt Outpouring for Mandela; Anti-Apartheid Activists, Public Energized by Today’s Visit,” *The Washington Post*, June 24, 1990, sec. First Section, A, 2.

⁷³⁴ Counts-Blakey, “The FSAM Story,” 12.

CAPITALIZING AND STEERING MEDIA COVERAGE

FSAM accomplishments were measured in various ways: arrests, disruptions and, of course, media coverage at home and abroad.⁷³⁵ A core member of TransAfrica's steering committee, Roger Wilkins, observed that FSAM protests made the big dailies "pay attention." Concerned that too many articles credited white Americans with TransAfrica's success, Wilkins countered with op-ed pieces pointing out that "black Americans created" the FSAM phenomenon, and "kept it alive."⁷³⁶ He appealed to *The Washington Post*, where he submitted articles, to devote greater coverage to FSAM in the international pages. The newspaper demurred, according to Wilkins, who said TransAfrica was too often relegated to "a Metro desk story."⁷³⁷ Nonetheless, FSAM had a name and reputation that garnered support from a range of faith and political groups seeking sanctions against South Africa.

Between 1985 and 1986 the media extensively reported on the blatant violence and repression of South Africa's black population and brought the brutality of the Botha administration into America homes. A March 1985 news article titled, "A Bloody New Emphasis – South Africa Racism Brings More Death and USA Protests," was illustrative of the headlines permeating American media during the FSAM in the mid-1980s. As racial tensions and government sanctioned brutality escalated, "a growing awareness...of South Africa's racial policies" that led to the murders of 17 black South Africans in 1985, "prompted protest here, highlighted by demonstrations at the South African

⁷³⁵ Washington (UPI), "Anti-Pretoria Drive to Spread Across U.S.," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, December 3, 1984, sec. A, 8, America's Historical Newspapers.

⁷³⁶ "Interview with Roger Wilkins," *TransAfrica Forum Issue Brief*, July 1985, 1–2, Box Newsletters, TransAfrica Forum Reading Room.

⁷³⁷ "Interview with Roger Wilkins."

Embassy...and consulates across the U.SA.”⁷³⁸ The descriptive article went on to say, “South African police in an armored truck Thursday opened fire on thousands of blacks in Uitenhage who fled a ban on demonstrations. At least 22 were wounded.” This brutal act of government repression, characterized as “the worst clash since the massacre of sixty-nine blacks in Sharpeville, South Africa, exactly 25 years earlier,” was covered by media outlets around the world.⁷³⁹ Countless protesters in cities, states, and universities joined the FSAM around the country, demanding an end to US complicity in supporting the apartheid regime. One protester in Atlanta held a poster that read “Apartheid is inhuman and ungodly Stop It!”

FSAM was both aware of capitalizing on this coverage and steering its content and analysis. Though uneven in some markets, media coverage included radio, television, and newspapers. When asked if he had been satisfied with media coverage of South African issues over the past year (1985), Roger Wilkins responded, “no, I have not.”⁷⁴⁰ Viewing the movement as a major action by the black community, Wilkins asserted, “The past year saw in this country the birth of the Free South Africa Movement. Now, I think that the FSAM, with the exception of the Jackson campaign, is arguably the most important initiative undertaken by black private citizens since Martin Luther King died, and it’s one of the most successful.”⁷⁴¹ Within this context, Wilkins posits his response about too little media coverage. While major newspapers covered the story, rarely would this mass mobilization of civil disobedience make their front page. Still, national

⁷³⁸ “A Bloody New Emphasis - South African Racism Brings More Deaths and USA Protests,” *USA Today*, March 22, 1985, sec. A, 3.

⁷³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁰ “Interview with Roger Wilkins.”

⁷⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1–2.

coverage of FSAM surpassed previous coverage of other anti-apartheid movement events.

Local black newspapers often covered FSAM protests and events in their communities. The *Chicago Metro News* regularly featured Chicago chapter stories on anti-apartheid marches, rallies, Nelson Mandela Day activities, and related court cases. Organizers of demonstrations in Portland, Oregon and other parts of the Pacific Northwest Region “believe[d] that the South African Consulate in Los Angeles and the honorary consul [in Portland] used their long-standing contacts with Portland’s media to suggest downplaying the actions.”⁷⁴² While they were suspicious of mainstream media’s inattention, AFSC praised “the local black weekly newspapers and [community radio station] KBOO” for their “outstanding job of coverage,” encouraging activists “to refer to them for [reliable] information.”⁷⁴³

National television news covered the protests in ways that were generally seen as acceptable and more balanced than some other forms of media. Wilkins explained, “TV has been somewhat better. We’ve had a pretty consistent effort ...NBC News back in April did a good solid piece on the nightly news. ABC did a good piece the day we were all rearrested. “Nightline” has been good. Randall has been on “This Morning with David Brinkley.”⁷⁴⁴ One major exception was a feature story that *60 Minutes* did shortly after the embassy protests began. The show attacked, among other things, the World Council of Churches for supporting the ANC, which it labeled a terrorist organization. When in

⁷⁴² Gordly and Ussher Groff, “Letter from AFSC Pacific NW Region,” 2.

⁷⁴³ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁴ “Interview with Roger Wilkins,” 1–2.

reality, the WCC “was sending humanitarian aid to the refugee camps” in southern Africa.⁷⁴⁵ Wilkins characterizes *60 Minutes*’ coverage as an “atrocious pro-apartheid propaganda piece.” He reiterates, “But the press still doesn’t do a very good job in covering ‘black things.’ When you get past the big national papers, it’s pretty pitiful.”⁷⁴⁶

The conservative, *Washington Times* covered “the 10th anniversary of the Soweto riots” on the front page, in an article titled, “Protesters Throng South African Embassy.” The article included the observations of South African Afrikaner exchange students who “were angered by the media attention the protest was receiving.”⁷⁴⁷ In this example, the paper showed empathy for the Afrikaner students who were not ready for change.

Conservative media like the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New Republic* were especially critical of black leaders; in one case “telling African Americans to stay out of foreign policy and ‘turn their attention back home’ because ‘agitation against South Africa is no substitute for the reckoning that American blacks must make with their own political mistakes.’”⁷⁴⁸

WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP: ON THE FRONT LINES

As Eslanda Robeson had been influential in founding and shaping the Council on African Affairs in 1937, Sylvia Hill, Cecelie Counts, and Mary Frances Berry played a similar role for the Free South Africa Movement. From the early secret planning stages, through the launching of FSAM, women played key roles in all phases of the movement,

⁷⁴⁵ Bernice Powell Jackson, interview by author, telephone, April 2, 2014.

⁷⁴⁶ “Interview with Roger Wilkins,” 1–2.

⁷⁴⁷ “Protesters Throng South African Embassy,” *The Washington Times*, June 17, 1986, sec. A, 4, Box 485 [unprocessed], Walter E. Fauntroy Papers, The Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University.

⁷⁴⁸ Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans Against Apartheid, 1946-1994*, 130–131.

not least the sanctions period. First, FSAM drew on the solidarity networks fostered by the predominantly women led Southern Africa Support Project, which had long engaged with local community organizations. With little notice about the secretly planned act of civil disobedience, “SASP organized a picket line.”⁷⁴⁹ Counts explains, “because SASP was known in the community... as an organization that did things around South Africa and we had all kinds of reasons to protest, we had enough credibility” to galvanize volunteers with little notice.⁷⁵⁰ Indeed, SASP called upon people who had worked with them on other initiatives; of the fifty supporters invited to participate in the first Embassy protest, thirty-five showed up. The earlier established connections of SASP proved critical to the full implementation of the protest plan. Counts’ expertise in organizing brought invaluable assets to TransAfrica and the success of FSAM.⁷⁵¹

Counts and Hill worked especially closely with Randall Robinson and SASP leaders to decide whether it was the right time to engage in an act of civil disobedience.⁷⁵² Given the highly sensitive nature of the plan, and with concern that bugs may have been planted in Robinson’s home, talks took place outside on his sidewalk.⁷⁵³

The women of FSAM were key to the organization’s successful protests. Hill was one of the core “architects of the Free South Africa Movement and served on the Steering Committee that led the campaign of civil disobedience at the South Africa[n] Embassy

⁷⁴⁹ Counts, interview.

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid. These individuals were not aware of the details of the plans, however, because they trusted and had close relationships with SASP they showed up anyway.

⁷⁵¹ Hill, interview; Counts, interview; Conteh, “Chronology of FSAM,” 6. Close colleagues of Roger Wilkins, Counts and Hill brought their strong organizational skills to help plan Nelson Mandela’s first U. S. tour after his release from prison.

⁷⁵² Hill, interview. SASP members Sandra Hill and Adwoa Dunn also attended this meeting.

⁷⁵³ Ibid.

that was a catalyst for a worldwide escalation in campaigns of anti-apartheid protests.”⁷⁵⁴ While the others were “meeting” with South African Ambassador Fourie, Counts was outside organizing the protesters. Dr. Mary Frances Berry, not only served on FSAM’s steering committee, she was arrested along with Robinson and Fauntroy, while Holmes Norton spoke with the press outside of the Embassy. These fearless women, together with their male colleagues, created a winning strategy that led to U.S. sanctions against South Africa.

In the following year, many women volunteered to be arrested at the embassy and consulates around the country.⁷⁵⁵ “Evelyn Lowery, the wife of Southern Christian Leadership Conference president Joseph Lowery and National Organization of Women President Judy Goldsmith” were among those arrested outside of the Embassy in December 1984.⁷⁵⁶

Women also joined in other acts of civil disobedience, which led to their arrest. Several FSAM steering committee members, including Sylvia Hill staged a sit-in against the sale of Krugerrand coins to dealers in the U.S. Though Mary Gresham, who had participated in three demonstrations in front of the South African Embassy was never among those arrested there, she was arrested on the campus of Johns Hopkins University for forming a “human chain around shanties.”⁷⁵⁷ She remembers police had to physically pick them up to arrest them; she spent the night in a Baltimore jail.⁷⁵⁸ Women from other established anti-apartheid and social justice organizations provided individual and

⁷⁵⁴ Sylvia Hill, “Bio Sketch for Dr. Sylvia Hill,” March 1, 2014; Conteh, “Chronology of FSAM,” 1.

⁷⁵⁶ Jackson, “Church Leaders to Join Protest,” 1.

⁷⁵⁷ Gresham, interview.

⁷⁵⁸ Ibid.

organizational support for FSAM. Jean Sindab, executive director of the Programme to Combat Racism for the WCC and earlier, ran the Washington Office on Africa and “was very instrumental” in the anti-apartheid movement.⁷⁵⁹

Women’s organizations like Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. went “on record in support of the ‘free [sic] South Africa Movement’.”⁷⁶⁰ Mirroring FSAM’s initial list of demands, the sorority demanded release of the thirteen labor leaders and political prisoners, changes in the constitution to include blacks in the political process, and passage of U.S. sanctions legislation.⁷⁶¹ Further, “The [Delta Sigma Theta] Commission also stated that ‘22 million Black inhabitants of South Africa are constitutionally denied basic citizenship by a white minority government representing four million white citizens’.”⁷⁶² As in the case with the Deltas, TransAfrica provided key talking points to insure consistency of messaging. Marquita Sykes of the Black Women’s Self-Help Collective, picketed at the embassy with other members of her group, she reflected on her motivation for participating explaining “I don’t know whether I came because of being a black person living in America or because I’m a human being. I guess they can’t be separated.”⁷⁶³ Dorothy I. Height, president of the National Council of Negro Women, served on TransAfrica’s board of directors.

A key strategy of FSAM focused on placing “pressure on the legislative process. Ultimately, the movement wanted sanctions.”⁷⁶⁴ In order to get a bill on the table,

⁷⁵⁹ Powell Jackson, interview; Knight, interview.

⁷⁶⁰ “Deltas Endorse Apartheid Drive,” 6.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid.

⁷⁶² Ibid.

⁷⁶³ Barker, “Background Troops of Antiapartheid,” 1.

⁷⁶⁴ Hill, “Notes from My Diary,” 16.

successfully maneuvering through the legislative system was imperative; thus having ties with “legislative staffers in both the House and Senate, many of whom were African American,” proved beneficial to the goals of FSAM. Adwoa Dunn-Mouton, a member of SASP and FSAM volunteer, worked with Congressman Howard Wolpe on the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa; her role was to help craft the actual language of the bill. Robinson and other FSAM leaders met with members of Congress weekly, “to discuss legislative strategy” for a sanctions bill. Wolpe, a democrat from Michigan, was among the Representatives regularly attending.⁷⁶⁵ Wolpe was the chairman of the subcommittee; his support of Congressional sanctions was imperative.⁷⁶⁶ Dunn-Mouton explains that it was also important to have an idea of what “other House and Senate members were thinking and how they were crafting their resistance or support for legislation.”⁷⁶⁷ This knowledge was necessary to secure enough votes to override a possible presidential veto. In the end, Wolpe and other liberal democrats agreed to a milder bill, the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 that passed the House and Senate.

SPECIAL CAMPAIGN TO BOYCOTT CORPORATIONS: SHELL OIL

Early on, FSAM leaders discussed protesting U.S. corporations as part of a comprehensive strategy.⁷⁶⁸ After more than a year of embassy and consulate protests, over 4,000 arrests, FSAM refocused their attention on a campaign to boycott corporations

⁷⁶⁵ Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 159.

⁷⁶⁶ Bender, Coleman, and Sklar, *African Crisis Areas and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 89; See also, Adam Bernstein, “Ex-Congressman Howard Wolpe of Michigan Dies at 71,” *The Washington Post*, October 27, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/obituaries/ex-congressman-howard-wolpe-of-michigan-dies-at-71/2011/10/27/gIQAEM9INM_story.html.

⁷⁶⁷ Hill, “Notes from My Diary,” 16.

⁷⁶⁸ See, “Three Officials Arrested in Apartheid Protest,” 7. This article stated, “Randall Robinson, head of the Free South Africa Movement, said his group would protest U.S. corporations doing business in South Africa. He did not specify which companies or when the protests would begin.”

and other private sector institutions benefiting from investments in South Africa. “The new FSAM Corporate Campaign is an addition to previously launched anti-apartheid initiatives endorsed by FSAM, calling on corporations to terminate their business relationships in South Africa. These include: the Southern Christian Leadership Conference’s boycott of the Winn Dixie Corporation, the Northern Virginia Coalition Against Apartheid’s demonstrations against the Control Data Corporation, and the National Council of Churches campaign against its list of “dirty dozen” corporations active in the U.S. and South Africa.”⁷⁶⁹ Explaining the goal to their supporters, TransAfrica asserted FSAM “private sector campaign aims to be a catalyst for generating popular support for complete corporate withdrawal from South Africa (unless the South African government negotiates with legitimate black leaders for a new political and economic order), much in the way as the South African Embassy demonstrations helped achieve overwhelming support for the imposition of U.S. sanctions against South Africa.”⁷⁷⁰ Headlines followed, “the demonstrators have shifted their attack from the embassy sidewalks to Capitol Hill offices, to headquarters of corporations that do business in South Africa and to universities and other institutions that hold stock in companies doing business in South Africa.”⁷⁷¹ Campaigns against Shell Oil rippled throughout the anti-apartheid activist community in the U.S. and Europe, with a sit-in at Shell Oil’s corporate offices in Washington, D.C. by FSAM leadership; gaining “support

⁷⁶⁹ “Free South Africa Movement Launches Corporate Campaign,” *TransAfrica News Report*, Winter 1986, Vol. 5, No. 1 edition, 3, Newsletters, TransAfrica Forum Reading Room, TransAfrica Offices, Washington, DC.

⁷⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷¹ “New Tactics on South Africa,” *The New York Times*, May 10, 1986, sec. 1, 8.

not only from the United Mine Workers, but also other unions, including the AFL-CIO trade union federation.”⁷⁷²

A protest leaflet endorsed by FSAM, WCC, AFL-CIO and the United Mine Workers, best captures the rationale for these protests, “South Africa does not have its own oil supplies. Without companies like Royal Dutch/Shell, apartheid could not survive.”⁷⁷³ They further explain, “Citizen groups have targeted Royal Dutch/Shell because it supplies fuel to the apartheid economy and to the South African military and police who enforce the apartheid slave labor system.”⁷⁷⁴ Protest brochures, flyers, and bumper stickers were designed using Shell Oil colors, which were yellow and red. Always seeking to educate the community, materials supported by FSAM and other sponsors, contained substantive details. The brochure, for example, was a comprehensive “Guide to the Shell Boycott Campaign.”⁷⁷⁵ “Desmond Tutu joined the press conference launching the boycott, and churches joined actively in the coalition. The Interfaith Centre for Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) added Shell to its list of 12 key corporate ‘partners in apartheid’ targeted for divestment actions.”⁷⁷⁶

On January 15, 1986, several FSAM demonstrators occupied Shell Oil’s corporate offices in Washington, D.C. The protesters, including Fauntroy, “left [the next day]

⁷⁷² Minter and Hill, “Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in United States - South Africa Relations,” 803–804.

⁷⁷³ “Stop Apartheid in South Africa, Protect Jobs in the U.S.A.” (Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO, n.d.), Box 307 Folder No# (Free South Africa Movement - 2nd Phase) [unprocessed], Walter E. Fauntroy Papers, The Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University.

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁵ “Boycott Shell: A Guide to the Shell Boycott” (United Mine Workers and FSAM, n.d.), Box 22 Folder 4, Walter E. Fauntroy Papers, The Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University.

⁷⁷⁶ Minter and Hill, “Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in United States - South Africa Relations,” 803–804.

without incident.”⁷⁷⁷ On this occasion, “Shell made no attempt to evict them.”⁷⁷⁸ Fauntroy and “Glenn McKeown, legislative liaison for Holland-based Trans Africa,” explained that the company “was targeted because of the strategic role oil plays in supporting the military in South Africa.”⁷⁷⁹ Shell Oil representatives attempted to distance themselves from the parent company. McKeown explained the action was “an initial campaign to sensitize the American people to the role corporations play in supporting apartheid.”⁷⁸⁰ McKeown added, there would be more protests against such corporations “doing business with South Africa” as determined by the leadership of FSAM.⁷⁸¹ In a later sit-in, FSAM protesters were charged with criminal trespass. In May 1986, Fauntroy and three other FSAM leaders were arrested for trespassing as they “sat in the hallway outside of Shell’s offices to protest the multinational corporation’s involvement in South Africa.” FSAM steering committee members Hill, Berry, and Robinson were arrested with Fauntroy. They were scheduled to go to court, which was their intended strategy, however, to their disappointment the case against them was dismissed prior to the hearing.⁷⁸²

BEYOND THE DAILY PROTESTS

Although the daily protests at the South African Embassy and consulates were a major strategic focus of FSAM, their work was not limited to demonstrations; nor was it

⁷⁷⁷ “SHELL PROTEST SIT-IN ENDS,” *Platt’s Oilgram News*, January 16, 1986, Vol. 64, No. 11 edition, 5, <http://www.lexisnexis.com.mutex.gmu.edu/lnacui2api/api/version1/getDocCui?lni=3SJB-1BF0-0010-4547&csi=8046&hl=t&hv=t&hnsd=f&hns=t&hgn=t&oc=00240&perma=true>.

⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸⁰ “SHELL PROTEST SIT-IN ENDS.”

⁷⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷⁸² “FSAM Leaders Denied Day in Court” (Fenton Communications Inc., July 18, 1986), Box 307 Folder No# (FSAM Leaders Denied Day in Court) [unprocessed], Walter E. Fauntroy Papers, The Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University.

limited to lobbying Congress to impose sanctions on the South African government. FSAM employed additional strategies to intervene in the Reagan administration's policy on South Africa. It blocked the sale of South African gold Krugerrands, by "currency exchange dealer Deak-Perera, occupying their offices by day and sleeping nights on a cold slate floor, in protest of the coin marketer's" sales. These protests by "Sylvia Hill, Congressman Fauntroy, Mary Frances Berry, Roger Wilkins, Bill Lucy and" Robinson disrupted business for days.⁷⁸³ The protesters, "who had spent two nights in [the] currency exchange...were arrested after their second night at the office."⁷⁸⁴

Countering pro-apartheid rhetoric from conservatives, FSAM "launched a nationwide U.S. drive to collect one million signatures on a 'Freedom Letter' in support of Bishop Desmond Tutu, the Nobel Peace Prize winner who is leading the liberation protests. The letter repudiates the government of South Africa and disavows recent pro-apartheid statements by Rev. Jerry Falwell and other Americans including President Ronald Reagan."⁷⁸⁵ The signatures were to be delivered to Tutu "during the week of November 21, which marks the one year anniversary of civil disobedience outside the South African embassy [in Washington, D.C.]." Unfortunately, neither Tutu nor Boesak could leave South Africa to attend the CBC awards dinner. "At a [Freedom] letter-signing ceremony on Capitol Hill" Robinson explained the purpose of the letter writing campaign. He said, "Through this campaign, we hope to mobilize millions of freedom-

⁷⁸³ Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 159.

⁷⁸⁴ "500 Arrested in Second Day of Protests," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, May 9, 1985, 4, America's Historical Newspapers.

⁷⁸⁵ Capitol News Service, "Black, White Leaders Sign Freedom Letter for South Africa," *Chicago Metro News*, November 9, 1985, XIX, Issue 52 edition, 9, America's Historical Newspapers.

loving Americans who oppose South Africa's obscene perpetuation of racism.”⁷⁸⁶

Robinson “chastised Falwell for ‘embracing the world’s most contemptible form of racism’,” asserting that Falwell’s “Old Time Gospel Hour” had turned into the “New Time Apartheid Hour” and pointed to Reagan for “his continued insensitivity to the human rights of South African’s Blacks.”⁷⁸⁷

Student Coalition Against Apartheid and Racism (SCAR), a network of colleges and universities in the Washington Metropolitan Area, endorsed “The Freedom Letter” and encouraged fellow students to sign, explaining “the letter is expected to gain one million signatures by November 27 [sic], the date of the anniversary march on the South African Embassy.” They further explained the letter was written to appeal to “Americans who might not otherwise become involved in the solidarity movement to voice their opposition to apartheid and U.S. policy toward South Africa.”⁷⁸⁸

Letter writing, in general, was a strategy used to keep legislators informed and engaged in FSAM; “Trans Africa encouraged its supporters to keep the pressure on both the Congress and the White House through mass-letter-writing campaigns.”⁷⁸⁹ By the close of the year, FSAM had become such a potent force in U.S. politics that it forced almost every Democrat on the Hill to try to establish anti-apartheid credentials.

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁸ “Campus Update,” *SCAR News*, November 12, 1985, Vol. 1 Issue 2 edition, 7, African American Periodicals, 1825-1995; Editorial, “The Freedom Letter,” *SCAR News*, November 12, 1985, 2, African American Periodicals, 1825-1995.

⁷⁸⁹ Tillery, *Between Homeland and Motherland*, 139. See also p. 7 for a list of member colleges and universities which included American University, Bowie State, Catholic University, George Washington University, Georgetown University, Howard University, Northern Virginia Community College, Trinity College, U.D.C., University of Maryland, and U.M.B.C. Each school reported its upcoming activities many of which included anti-apartheid events (e.g. Trinity College announced Dr. Sylvia Hill, a member of the FSAM Steering Committee, would be the keynote speaker for an event on their campus).

Representative Dellums who emerged as the most active CBC member on the sanctions issue after a federal investigation forced Representative Diggs to resign from the House in 1980, described the impact of FSAM: “It was very interesting to see colleagues from both sides of the aisle and of all races, who had previously paid little attention to our efforts, scramble to get arrested in front of the South African embassy and introduce sanctions bills when the [effects of the] movement hit home in their districts. It really was amazing how quickly the environment [in Washington, D.C.] changed.”⁷⁹⁰ Counts concurs:

As popular expressions of anti-apartheid sentiment began to spread, signs appeared that members of Congress were feeling constituent pressure. Members rushed to attach themselves to various sanctions bills. A group of conservative Republicans (led ironically by Newt Gingrich) wrote Reagan to warn that if the Republican Party maintained its constructive engagement policy it would lose a great deal of support. Subsequently, the comprehensive sanctions bill Ron Dellums had introduced for years passed the House by voice vote.⁷⁹¹

TransAfrica produced a quarterly journal, *TransAfrica Forum*; a quarterly newsletter, *TransAfrica News Report*; and monthly news brief, *TransAfrica Forum Issue Brief*, all of which focused on “matters pertaining to Africa and the Caribbean.”⁷⁹² These publications provided well-researched articles, interviews, and news on domestic and foreign policy issues. U.S. Senator Paul Tsongas concisely captures the intent of the publications to “produce news and information which have been often exclusive, provocative, and helpful in our deliberations.” Designed to provide “an expanded analytical framework...useful to a broad audience,” these publications were a go-to

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁹¹ Counts-Blakey, “The FSAM Story,” 13.

⁷⁹² The Issue Brief and TransAfrica News were published in Washington, DC by TransAfrica Forum and the TransAfrica Forum quarterly journal was published in New Brunswick, NJ by Transaction Periodicals Consortium, Rutgers University. The journal was discontinued and the monthly Issue Brief is now called the Policy Brief.

resource for academics, politicians, and individuals interested in foreign affairs and the African diaspora. Managed by Robinson and a small research team, the publications contain interviews, an in-depth discussion of special topics, and campaigns led by TransAfrica and other groups.⁷⁹³ Announcements about fundraisers like the 1980 “National Sign Campaign,” provided opportunities for community organizations, churches, and businesses to support the anti-apartheid movement.⁷⁹⁴

THE ANTI-APARTHEID COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO FSAM STRATEGY

FSAM and SASP leaders valued being black-led organizations and initially limited their coalitions to a tight orbit of black activists. This may have resulted in tensions in the more established anti-apartheid community. Yet there were already considerable tensions within the movement, which had existed before FSAM. When TransAfrica launched the first act of civil disobedience at the South African Embassy without collaborating with longstanding established anti-apartheid organizations, many took offense. Strategically, TransAfrica’s leadership decided against informing the anti-apartheid community about this planned act of civil disobedience at the embassy. Not only did they surprise embassy officials, they stunned the anti-apartheid community. Some felt efforts to have a multicultural/multiracial alliance in the anti-apartheid movement were disregarded since TransAfrica was led and managed by African Americans.⁷⁹⁵ Looking back, key planners recall “other activists felt dispossessed as

⁷⁹³ See the August 1982 *TransAfrica Forum Issue Brief* provides a good example, in that it focuses on “Our Views, Our Voices: Black Americans’ Role in Shaping U.S. Foreign Policy,” featuring ten black leaders and their thoughts on the subject.

⁷⁹⁴ “TransAfrica and Black Church in Antiapartheid Campaign,” *TransAfrica News Report*, 1980, Fall edition, 8, Newsletters, TransAfrica Forum Reading Room, TransAfrica Offices, Washington, DC.

⁷⁹⁵ Counts-Blakey, “The FSAM Story,” 14.

FSAM attracted new grassroots support and celebrity involvement far beyond the traditional network of long-term activists. So, even though FSAM's policy of moderation resulted in a major movement victory, many anti-apartheid activists were ambivalent, if not hostile towards it.⁷⁹⁶ TransAfrica's leadership and their close organizational colleagues in SASP felt they "had to protect elements of surprise...[we] didn't tell members of the TransAfrica board."⁷⁹⁷ Hurt feelings of not being included linger to the present, "about the extent to which people felt they were not celebrated enough or recognized enough or included enough in the strategy and the discussions," prior to launching the first sit-in.⁷⁹⁸

Counts captures the key points describing tensions around FSAM, Randall Robinson, and the established anti-apartheid community:

There were many layers of tension between TransAfrica, the Free South Africa Movement, and other members of the anti-apartheid movement. FSAM, though successful in some respects, exacerbated existing tensions between TransAfrica, a relatively new Black foreign policy lobby, and the older, hardworking, solidarity organizations (American Committee on Africa, Washington Office on Africa, American Friends Service Committee). Randall Robinson, executive director of TransAfrica, led what ostensibly was an African American foreign policy lobby. But the organization was treated by the media as an anti-apartheid organization, while Robinson was depicted as the representative of the anti-apartheid movement. TransAfrica's Board of Directors expected him to devote more time to development of the organization's overall capacity, while anti-apartheid activists felt that TransAfrica should devote more of its resources to nurturing and sustaining the Free South Africa Movement.⁷⁹⁹

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁷ Hill, interview.

⁷⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁹ Counts-Blakey, "The FSAM Story," 13–14.

Robinson did not describe himself as an anti-apartheid leader; the media forced that label on him.

The Board of Directors' primary concern was "that other important issues affecting Africa and the Caribbean were being ignored."⁸⁰⁰ These pulls in different directions forced Robinson to make a difficult decision; full-attention would be poured into pushing for an end to apartheid in South Africa.

Following the initial surprise and disappointment about being excluded, other organizations offered their support in solidarity with the goals of FSAM. ACOA fielded inquiries about corporations, because they focused a majority of its work on corporate divestment.⁸⁰¹ Knight explains they did not work together "on a day-to-day basis" because it was not "TransAfrica's style."⁸⁰² Ultimately, the collective work of all of these groups collaborating at this critical juncture, led to success. Hill reminds us "that the ultimate success of the legislative sanctions strategy depended on all of these long term organizations that had honed their expertise and capability in ways that could sustain pressure against the USA government and transnational Corporations."⁸⁰³ Though African Americans were indeed in the forefront of the embassy protests and in leadership positions within other anti-apartheid organizations, people participating in anti-apartheid activism during this period remained diverse.

External tensions also existed as African Americans actively protested and were seen as the instigators and leaders of this more public fight against apartheid. The "white

⁸⁰⁰ Ibid., 13.

⁸⁰¹ Knight, interview.

⁸⁰² Ibid.

⁸⁰³ Hill, "Presentation: The Free South Africa Movement," 5.

establishment types” would respond, “Why aren’t you dealing with domestic issues? Why are you dealing with apartheid?”⁸⁰⁴ Harrison asserts, “they didn’t want us doing this work.”⁸⁰⁵ Wilkins recalls, “In the beginning, the press couldn’t even understand it. People like (columnists) Joseph Kraft and Richard Cohen were writing that it was just a bunch of civil rights people out there who should stick to (protesting) budget cuts in domestic programs.” Wilkins argued that the media looked at FSAM leadership “and just [saw] one dimension...The fact is that all of us have cared about South Africa; it is a large part of the historical black foreign policy interest.”⁸⁰⁶

Leaders of FSAM remained determined to proceed despite tensions and criticisms from the anti-apartheid community, the white establishment, activists who “disparage[d] the acts of civil disobedience as not militant and rather rehearsed,”⁸⁰⁷ and members of TransAfrica’s Board who reminded Robinson not to lose focus of the overall mission on Africa and the Caribbean. Yet despite these internal and external tensions, the anti-

⁸⁰⁴ Harrison, interview, March 28, 2013.

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁶ “Interview with Roger Wilkins,” 1–2; “Randall Robinson: Executive Director of TransAfrica,” *Washington Post Magazine*, September 16, 1979, 14, Box 71 Folder 55, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. Following are excerpts that represent Randall Robinson’s position on blacks and U.S. foreign policy: “Foreign policy is not made in a vacuum.” says Robinson. “It’s made by people, by citizens. Blacks comprise 12 percent of the citizenry and a natural consequence of this is that we have a responsibility and duty to participate in the formulation of foreign policy. There’s a core in this country that is largely WASP that sees itself as the standard American. They say, ‘We are American and we make foreign policy. All these other ethnic groups...want to distort American policy in their own interests, in response to whatever terrestrial fountain head that they came from.’” He adds, “We are as authentically American citizens as they. It’s ridiculous to ask what black Americans are doing getting involved in foreign policy, as if we were made on the moon...Robinson says his board of directors of prominent black leaders is most concerned about America’s dealing with South Africa...When Africa looks at the U.S. and its South African policies, it sees the U.S. receiving Smith and Muzorewa. It sees investments, diplomats there, American companies making enormous profits because of slave wages paid under apartheid to the black majority. It sees no willingness on the part of Western parties to apply sanctions to South Africa or to seriously apply them to Rhodesia.” Says insists, “No black American believes were the tables reversed in South Africa – were blacks repressing whites the way whites are repressing blacks – would America be so deeply and profitably invested in that system.” [*Washington Post Magazine*, September 16, 1979, 14].

⁸⁰⁷ Hill, “Notes from My Diary,” 15.

apartheid community, representing a diversity of organizations and individuals, endorsed and supported the Free South Africa Movement. George Houser asserts, “The opposition inside South Africa inspired renewed activity internationally on a much larger scale and with sustained pressure. U.S. action escalated. Initiated by the black lobby organization TransAfrica, the Free South Africa Movement caught the imagination of U.S. opponents of apartheid.”⁸⁰⁸ Houser, like many other anti-apartheid leaders around the country, participated in FSAM’s protests.

Prior to and during FSAM, Robinson and his colleagues interacted with leaders of established anti-apartheid organizations. They co-sponsored events, served on conference committees, and shared expertise and resources. ACOA’s executive director and Randall Robinson served on the conference steering committee for the inaugural Conference on Public Investment and South Africa. The “Programme to Combat Racism of the World Council of Churches” financially contributed to the conference.⁸⁰⁹ Anti-apartheid organizations such as WOA and ACOA, with sponsors from major Protestant denominations, and “three national trade unions,” supported FSAM initiatives. In fact, WOA under the leadership of Jean Sindab, served “as the research and legislative arm of the Free South Africa Movement.”⁸¹⁰

Major established black American organizations also came forward to lend their support throughout the movement. FSAM organized a massive demonstration at the State Department “to focus public attention on” constructive engagement, a laissez faire policy.

⁸⁰⁸ Houser, *No One Can Stop The Rain*, 353.

⁸⁰⁹ to Robinson, “Letter from George Houser.”

⁸¹⁰ Sindab, “[Impact of U.S. Divestment from South Africa],” 1.

In anticipation of Reagan's veto of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, a massive protest took place..... This time "the NAACP bussed in thousands of members to demonstrate against" his efforts to kill the antiapartheid bill [legislation].⁸¹¹ Students from local colleges and universities in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area also joined this protest. The protesters including "Paul Newman, Jesse Jackson, major civil rights and labor leaders join[ed] 10,000 people in a 'funeral march' ... to protest the Reagan administration's policy of "constructive engagement."⁸¹² Though the embassy arrests were made in Washington, D.C., "it was important that the Mayor's office was in sympathy with the struggle."⁸¹³ Indeed, "there was even a government workers day on the picket line when some 4 – 5,000 D.C. workers protested apartheid."⁸¹⁴

Not only did long-standing mainstream organizations support FSAM, more radical groups like the National Black Independent Political Party [NBIPP] "applaud[ed] the efforts of the Free South Africa Movement." The Afrocentric/Pan-Africanist NBIPP applauded FSAM for bringing attention to "the plight of our brothers and sisters in South Africa [who are] fighting for freedom and majority rule." They added that "since September, at least 160 Blacks have been killed by South African police and troops. Hundreds of others have been arrested." They also pointed to U.S. government complicity in supporting the South African regime.⁸¹⁵

⁸¹¹ Counts-Blakey, "The FSAM Story," 13.

⁸¹² Conteh, "Chronology of FSAM," 2.

⁸¹³ Hill, "Notes from My Diary," 15.

⁸¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁸¹⁵ "Birth of National Black Independent Political Party," *Baltimore Afro-American*, December 2, 1980, 15. The founding convention, was held at Malcolm X High School in Philadelphia in November 1980. "The convention brought together representatives from every major black power, Pan-Africanist, and progressive

While the Reagan administration (1981-1989) fully embraced the South African government as a trusted ally, it also espoused a conservative domestic agenda throughout the 1980s.⁸¹⁶ Reagan's unpopular domestic policies were seen as detrimental to the black community; moreover, his well-known and highly criticized policy of "constructive engagement" toward South Africa scored him no points. Indeed, the Reagan administration created an atmosphere of near hostility to the black community at home and abroad, as the government became "a vigorous opponent of progress in race relations."⁸¹⁷ Reagan's far right policies, conservative judicial appointments, threats to civil rights policies (including voting rights and affirmative action), assault on social welfare programs, and his unconditional allegiance to South Africa's racist regime, angered black Americans. Not only were there efforts to undo legislative achievements, the Reagan administration was thorough in their assault. They reversed "public policies and emasculate[d] administrative or enforcement agencies that were directed at eliminating racism and ensuring civil rights for blacks."⁸¹⁸ The "Reagan White House and its Department of Justice's efforts to turn the clock back to undo the gains achieved in the civil rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s" exemplified this conservatism, which disproportionately harmed black citizens.⁸¹⁹ While black Americans fought Reagan's far right domestic policies that threatened equality at home, they were emboldened to stand up against injustices in South Africa that in some ways mirrored their plight.

grouping in the United States." though short-lived the NBIPP was launched as an alternative to the Democratic and Republican Parties.

⁸¹⁶ Eddie N. Williams and Milton D. Morris, "Racism and Our Future," in *Race in America: The Struggle for Equality*, ed. Herbert Hill and James E. Jones (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 84.

⁸¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 419.

⁸¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 419-420.

⁸¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 85.

Black Americans were eager to support campaigns, which countered this sharp turn to the right. In this atmosphere, the Free South Africa Movement was launched and would strike a major blow to Reagan's hardline policy of "constructive engagement." The black community took pride in the fact that FSAM was spearheaded and led by black Americans. Local activist and WOA staffer, Nkechi Taifa reflected, it was "very important for the movement, . . . to have a high profile organization not only run by Black people, but one whose board also reflected that reality."⁸²⁰

As Reagan's domestic policies sought to strip away civil rights achievements, the black church community marched for liberation of their brothers and sisters in South Africa. The black faith community was crucial to achieving the goals of FSAM. Fauntroy's influence and connections to black churches in and beyond Washington, D.C. all but guaranteed this important base of support. Moreover, SASP had established trusted networks through its ongoing grassroots work with local black churches.

PASTORS, PARISHIONERS, AND PROTESTS

A major motivation for black American involvement in the anti-apartheid movement was identifying with the plight of black South Africans who suffered racial and social injustices at the hands of white oppressors (i.e. racial segregation systems of apartheid and Jim Crow; the Civil Rights Movement and the Anti-Apartheid Movement) and feeling a moral obligation to support liberation efforts. Moreover, black Americans had long been engaged in and concerned with foreign affairs, as Brenda Gayle Plummer so aptly shows in *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960*.

⁸²⁰ Nkechi Taifa, interview by author, email, November 28, 2014.

Black pride and increased celebration of an African heritage, emerging from the late 1960s and 1970s, also resonated with the black church community. Just as FSAM founders were influenced by tenets of black pride, so were black clergy; “The rise of black power had a profound effect upon the appearance of black theology.”⁸²¹

Black church people did not always embrace the ideology of Black Power, “ministers at most churches didn’t and they also had a big suspicion and didn’t like black liberation theology either,” nonetheless, they “were against segregation, racism and white supremacy.”⁸²² Theologian, James H. Cone asserts, “I think African Americans have always seen the connection between what was happening in South Africa and what is happening here. And one thing black churches are very progressive about and that is participating in the struggle for justice of black people all over the world.”⁸²³ FSAM influenced activism on college campuses and served as a catalyst in mobilizing black church activism in the mid-1980s.⁸²⁴

Cone reminds us that African American churches, like the AME church were already in South Africa, “so that was...natural to become involved,” in anti-apartheid activism.⁸²⁵ Cone suggests that “after the Civil Rights Movement in the ‘60s, in which King clearly demonstrated that being involved in the struggle was actually doing the work of the Lord” it was more palatable “for black churches and the rank and file and

⁸²¹ Cone, *For My People*, 10.

⁸²² James H. Cone, interview by author, telephone, October 1, 2013.

⁸²³ Ibid.

⁸²⁴ Mark W. Harrison, interview by author, telephone, February 23, 2010.

⁸²⁵ Cone, interview. Cone interview: the AME Church had been in South Africa as early as 1896, see AME Church history at <http://www.ame-church.com/our-church/our-history/>, accessed 5/13/2014; Fredrickson points out “the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the black Baptists” as well as “A number of smaller African-American sects” were among American churches attended by black South Africans in the early twentieth century. P. 165 Frederickson.

normal ministers to be involved as long as it wasn't too risky."⁸²⁶ Indeed, involvement in the anti-apartheid movement of the 1980s was less risky. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s presented physical threats to black people, in which homes and churches were bombed and people were beaten or killed for participating in nonviolent demonstrations.

Black clergy were concerned with change that would have meaningful impact on the quality of life for black South Africans. Protest participant, "The Rev. Jerry Hargrove, chaplain for a graduate chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha...fraternity, said he hopes the antiapartheid struggle will result 'not only in equality but equity' for South African blacks."⁸²⁷ Hundreds of protesters chanted "none of us are free until all of us are free," during a demonstration at the South African Embassy commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Soweto uprising.⁸²⁸ In their chant, protesters tied the plight of black South Africans to all of us. The event program cover of a 1986 Independence Day Rally held in Baltimore read "Make Their Dream of Freedom...Reality; South Africa Independence Day Rally." Using language reminiscent of the civil rights movement this program was designed to build bridges of understanding and empathy for blacks in South Africa.⁸²⁹ Parallels were often drawn between the U.S. and South Africa; "Archbishop Tutu's charismatic nonviolence and his winning of the Nobel Peace Prize reminded many Americans of Martin Luther King, Jr., a Nobel laureate two decades before. Indeed, the

⁸²⁶ Ibid.

⁸²⁷ Barker, "Background Troops of Antiapartheid," 1.

⁸²⁸ "Protesters Throng South African Embassy," 4.

⁸²⁹ "South Africa Independence Day Rally (Program Book)" (Congressman Walter E. Fauntroy's Office, n.d.), Box 307 Folder No# (S.A. Independence Rally)[unprocessed], Walter E. Fauntroy Papers, The Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University.

anti-apartheid movement that grew rapidly in the United States in the mid-1980s seemed to many of its participants to be a renewal of the American civil rights movement of the early 1960s.”⁸³⁰

Involvement of black clergy like Congressman and FSAM co-chair Walter Fauntroy proved invaluable to TransAfrica. Robinson understood Fauntroy’s strategic importance to the movement. Harrison concurs. He explains, Robinson “didn’t have the rapport with the black leadership that Walter Fauntroy had, Walter knew everyone on a first-name basis.”⁸³¹ He adds that in “Walter Fauntroy’s role... he helped really mobilize the black churches.”⁸³² Indeed, civil rights activists from black churches played a crucial role in U.S. anti-apartheid activism. They brought their well-established strategies, respect of and connection to the black faith community, and experience in mass mobilization to the movement. Fauntroy’s connection to the community and his role as pastor of NBBC proved invaluable. Influential, he informed and recruited members of the black church community to actively participate in FSAM’s initiatives, with an expectation of full participation. Churches were asked to actively participate in the demonstrations by committing to “join the picket lines on a regular basis in their cities.”⁸³³

⁸³⁰ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and The Color Line*, 262.

⁸³¹ Harrison, interview, March 28, 2013.

⁸³² Harrison, interview, February 23, 2010.

⁸³³ “Religious Community Supports Anti-Apartheid Demonstrations,” *The Washington Informer*, December 13, 1984, 27, Box 503 Folder No# (Free South Africa Movement 1984) [unprocessed], Walter E. Fauntroy Papers, The Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University. Large numbers of white church leaders and parishioners participated in FSAM protests, often through their large church denominations.

Other influential black clergy joined in the demonstrations, and participated in other anti-apartheid activities. Some black clergy pastored churches with long histories of activism; Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church and Canaan Baptist Church of Christ share rich traditions of transnational civil rights activism. Their congregants enthusiastically participated in protests at the South African Consulate in New York.⁸³⁴ TransAfrica recognized "the importance of the church in our community" and what they brought to anti-apartheid work.⁸³⁵

Many factors influenced black church people's interest in engaging in anti-apartheid activism. Biblical belief in helping the oppressed and responsibility to help the poor and downtrodden and as in the book of Exodus, that God "will deliver us from our oppression."⁸³⁶ General secretary of the PNBC, the Reverend Tyrone Pitts asserts, "Luke 4 was one of the key components, old and new testament came together, peeling back the onion."⁸³⁷ Contact and interaction with black South Africans was also significant. The Black Theology Project which, "sought to connect the dots between theology and practice," included tours to African countries allowing for dialogue with Africans in the struggle.⁸³⁸ Pitts attributes his support of the ANC as a direct result of conversations he had with an ANC leader in exile, Thabo Mbeki, during a 1978 conference in Canada. Black South Africans could provide important interpretations and observations helpful to

⁸³⁴ Yussuf J. Simmonds, "Adam Clayton Powell & Wyatt Tee Walker: 'Two Pastors Who Served Beyond the Four Walls,'" November 29, 2012. http://www.lasentinel.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=10042&catid=79&Itemid=164.

⁸³⁵ Howard Manning Jr., "Letter to Rev. Frank Reid III," Thank You, (March 6, 1984), Box 14 Folder no#, TransAfrica Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

⁸³⁶ Tyrone S. Pitts, interview by author, telephone, March 31, 2014.

⁸³⁷ Ibid.

⁸³⁸ Ibid.

church leaders. Mary Gresham, co-founder of the Baltimore Anti-Apartheid Coalition, asserted, “we had to do a lot of talking” to inform the community of what was happening in South Africa. Presentations contextualizing the plight of black South Africans with the experiences of African Americans motivated many black church parishioners to join in anti-apartheid activities.⁸³⁹ She added, black church people “made up a lot of participants” in BAAC’s demonstrations and marches. African American parishioners followed the leadership of their pastors.

Some black churches had been involved in anti-apartheid activism long before FSAM. They engaged in local, state, and national conferences, divestment campaigns, rallies, and church-based initiatives. The black church community expected gospel groups to adhere to the principles of the cultural boycott by joining in with artists from the U.S. and around the world who showed solidarity with the anti-apartheid movement by not performing in South Africa. Clergy often announced, to their congregations, major upcoming events and concerts in support of gospel artists scheduled to perform locally; this kind of free publicity was highly sought after. Mankekolo Mahlangu-Ngcobo, a South African exile and member of Bethel AME, recalls of her pastor the Reverend “John Bryant took a stand to boycott Brook Benton and Andre’ Crouch’s Concerts in Baltimore because they crossed the [cultural] boycott line and performed in South Africa.”⁸⁴⁰ This act was viewed as a betrayal against black South Africans and a betrayal against black Americans. Mahlangu-Ngcobo adds, “when their managers approached

⁸³⁹ Gresham, interview.

⁸⁴⁰ Mahlangu-Ngcobo, interview by author, Baltimore, Maryland, April 9, 2014. The Reverend John Bryant pastor of Bethel AME and his wife Dr. Cecelia Bryant were at the forefront of anti-apartheid activism in Baltimore.

[Rev. Bryant], he referred them to me.”⁸⁴¹ She educated the pastor who educated the church about the cultural boycott and what the artists needed to do to regain support from the African American community.⁸⁴² Mahlangu-Ngcobo explained, artists who violated the boycott had to go before the UN Boycott and Divestment Committee; in the case of Benton and Crouch, at a news conference organized by the UN committee they made a public apology, after which, their names were removed from the boycott list and restored to good standing. Bethel AME then considered supporting their upcoming concerts. Through the leadership of Bryant and parishioners like Mahlangu-Ngcobo, Bethel AME congregants enthusiastically joined FSAM demonstrations at the South African Embassy.

As illuminated in the previous chapters, black clergy and their parishioners played a critical role in supporting the anti-apartheid movement. As with earlier groups, the black faith community supported TransAfrica’s anti-apartheid initiatives, including FSAM. More importantly, TransAfrica galvanized black clergy participation. In a planning and strategy meeting with local and national leaders from the faith community, Fauntroy encouraged support of FSAM. During this meeting Fauntroy asserted, “no tourist, member of Congress, or official of the Reagan Administration will travel in the nation’s capital without seeing a “Free [South] Africa” sign.”⁸⁴³ Pastors attending the

⁸⁴¹ Ibid.; Mahlangu-Ngcobo, Email Correspondence, interview by Phyllis author, Email, April 29, 2014.

⁸⁴² Mahlangu-Ngcobo, interview; Mahlangu-Ngcobo, Email Correspondence.

⁸⁴³ “Religious Community Supports Anti-Apartheid Demonstrations,” 25–27. The “Free South Africa” sign campaign had existed for several years before the launching of the FSAM. International Freedom Mobilization (IFM), a clergy led organization and TransAfrica grew concerned over the anticipation that the Reagan Administration would be sympathetic with the white South African government. To counter Reagan’s pro-South Africa stance, “TransAfrica and the International Freedom Mobilization, a coalition of black churches, ... [sponsored] a national sign campaign for black religious, educational and community institutions. The campaign [was] set up to place hundreds of permanent signs along public thoroughfares across the United States that ... serve[d] to educate a broader public and indicate at the same time black America’s deep commitment to the cause of freedom in South Africa.” The 4 x 4 aluminum signs could be

meeting ordered or pledged to order signs to be displayed in front of their churches. The ministers in attendance represented the Washington, D.C. area and “13 American cities where South African consulates are located.”⁸⁴⁴ Pitts contends, that the Reverend Jeremiah Wright’s church, Trinity United Church of Christ, was the first church in Chicago to display “Free South Africa” signage in front of his church.⁸⁴⁵ Similarly, FSAM signage posted in front of churches all around the country, demonstrated active support of the church community. Mahlangu-Ngcobo points out, “Bethel AME Church was the first Church to have two big boards in front of the church written Free South Africa and the other Divest from South Africa.”⁸⁴⁶

Not only was the intent to “call attention to the plight of Blacks in South Africa,” the Free South Africa signage campaign served as a fundraiser for FSAM, and was used to “enlist the support and participation of their members.”⁸⁴⁷ Some church organizations bought multiple signs or made an additional donation to TransAfrica. The Reverend William H. Gray III, minister of Bright Hope Baptist Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania sent a “check in the amount of \$500, additional payment for ‘Free South Africa’ signs.”⁸⁴⁸ As in the case with Gray, several of the church leaders were active in the Civil Rights Movement and were influential members of Congress. Shiloh Baptist

purchased through TransAfrica, at a cost of \$175 and were shipped to churches and other organizations. (TransAfrica Reading Room, TransAfrica (News Report) Fall, 1980, “TransAfrica and Black Church in Anti-Apartheid Campaign,” 4).

⁸⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁵ Pitts, interview.

⁸⁴⁶ Mahlangu-Ngcobo, Email Correspondence.

⁸⁴⁷ “Religious Community Supports Anti-Apartheid Demonstrations,” 27.

⁸⁴⁸ Gray III William H. to Randall Robinson, “Letter from William H. Gray,” Thank You, (February 28, 1983), Box 14 Folder no#, TransAfrica Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University. Gray came from a long-line of black clergy who supported anticolonial/ant-apartheid activities. See references to his father in the CAA chapter of this dissertation.

Church pastor, the Reverend Henry Gregory, posted a “Free South Africa” sign at his church located on P Street in Washington, D.C. He and “members of his congregation” posed for a photo next to the sign that read “Let’s end U.S. Support for South Africa.”⁸⁴⁹

Parishioners and clergy from churches throughout the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Area and across the country, assisted TransAfrica with FSAM logistics. They volunteered their time, space, and resources to the cause. Two members of Shiloh Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. volunteered at the daily embassy demonstrations.⁸⁵⁰

Fauntroy’s church, NBBC, served as the staging area for FSAM throughout the almost two-year period that demonstrations were held at the South African Embassy. People who were to be arrested would receive their orientation and training at NBBC.

Throughout this period, the Reverend Ernest Gibson’s church, First Rising Mount Zion Baptist Church in NW Washington, provided a bus to transport protesters from NBBC to the South African Embassy.⁸⁵¹ In preparation for a February 6, 1985 vigil and protest before President Reagan’s State of the Union Address, participants were directed to park at Bibleway Church on New Jersey Avenue in Washington, D.C. The event’s agenda suggested a well-organized program with the help of black churches. “Vehicle protection and parking” took place at Bibleway Church. Sponsored by Fauntroy, the event also included the help of traditionally white organizations like the United Methodist Church, which served “coffee and donuts” from the organization’s Washington agency located

⁸⁴⁹ “Religious Community Supports Anti-Apartheid Demonstrations,” 25–27.

⁸⁵⁰ Hill, interview.

⁸⁵¹ Counts, interview.

across the street from the Capitol building.⁸⁵² Other churches regularly involved in the D.C. area included Metropolitan AME, Union Temple AME, New Bethel Baptist, First Rising Mount Zion Baptist Church, Metropolitan Baptist, People's Congregational, UMUC, Church of the Redeemer, and many others.

Black clergy pastored churches considered historically black, as well as churches under white denominational umbrellas. Black pastors under white denomination umbrellas were sometimes more militant and engaged in transnational civil rights activism, because they encountered issues of race and discrimination within the church.⁸⁵³ Cone posits that these pastors experienced a loss of power after denominational integration and “saw close up what white supremacy was”; in turn they responded by forming black caucuses where “black theology was basically given its vision and its power.”⁸⁵⁴ Jeremiah Wright, a well-known proponent of black theology, encouraged clergy in the Chicago area to engage in anti-apartheid activism.⁸⁵⁵ The Reverend Bernice Powell Jackson offered that there were black clergy under black and white denominational umbrellas who were active in the anti-apartheid movement and

⁸⁵² “Join the Free South Africa Movement as We ‘Ring the Capitol’” (The Office of Congressman Walter E. Fauntroy, February 6, 1985), Box 22 Folder 7, Walter E. Fauntroy Papers, The Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University; “FSAM ‘Ring in the Capitol’ Meeting Agenda,” February 1985, Box 22 Folder 7, Walter E. Fauntroy Papers, The Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University.

⁸⁵³ Mark Harrison and James H. Cone concur, Black clergy under predominantly white denominations dealt with a different set of issues than black clergy at historically black churches. Issues of race and segregation were challenged by black clergy. Because of large institutional structures with more money invested in South Africa, debates about divestiture were at the forefront. These pastors, perhaps more than those in historically black churches who were not confronted with issues of race to the same extent within the church, these pastors embraced the tenets of black liberation theology.

⁸⁵⁴ Cone, interview.

⁸⁵⁵ Powell Jackson, interview.

there were others who were not. She asserted that she saw no major differences between the level of activism, whether under a white or black denomination.⁸⁵⁶

Powell Jackson recalls her husband, Robert Powell an Episcopal priest and the Africa Secretary for the National Council of Churches, being very involved in the anti-apartheid movement and interacting with TransAfrica and supporting the organization by “making the first church donation” through the National Council of Churches.⁸⁵⁷ Pitts asserted that significant funding for TransAfrica came from organizations like the WCC. TransAfrica received funds from the executive director’s speaking engagements. After a speaking engagement by Randall Robinson at the Ward African Methodist Episcopal Church in Los Angeles, TransAfrica sent a thank you letter to the Reverend Frank M. Reid III declaring “due to your enthusiastic support in this great cause we are happy to report an increase of our membership and sorely needed funds to help us to continue our work to eradicate the policy of Apartheid ...in South Africa.” He went on to thank the pastor’s family, staff, and membership.⁸⁵⁸

Black church leaders and parishioners engaged in low and high visibility activism and civil disobedience to support FSAM initiatives. Black clergy representing “the religious community of the Washington metropolitan and Baltimore areas”⁸⁵⁹ led the embassy protest on Interfaith Day. Gibson, also the executive director of the Council of Churches of Greater Washington, led sixty ministers in the protest, along with “boxing

⁸⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁸ Manning Jr., “Letter to Rev. Frank Reid III.”

⁸⁵⁹ “Religious Leaders Demonstrate Outside South African Embassy,” *The Washington Informer*, December 20, 1984, Box 503 Folder No# (Free South Africa Movement) [unprocessed], Walter E. Fauntroy Papers, The Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University.

champion Larry Holmes and 250 other demonstrators.”⁸⁶⁰ Embracing tenets of black theology, Gibson reminded demonstrators that, “We believe that Almighty God has created mankind in his own image, and that no nationality, race or color of people is outside the realm of His creation.” He added “every human being is equal in God’s sight.”⁸⁶¹

Black clergy were prepared to be arrested during the embassy protests. Rev. Gibson and a delegation of clergy sought to meet with the South African Ambassador “to discuss the release of additional political prisoners and the start of good faith negotiations between legitimate leaders of the South African people and the South African government.”⁸⁶² Gibson made clear that his delegation would not leave the embassy until they met with the South African Ambassador.⁸⁶³ Gibson along with fellow clergy “Rev. Edward White, executive director of the National Capital Presbytery, and Rev. Milton A. Covington, president of Baptist Ministers’ Conference of Washington, D.C. and Vicinity, Inc., were arrested as they knelt to pray at the South African Embassy, while their colleagues and members demonstrated and shouted their protest of the racist regime.”⁸⁶⁴ Many arrestees such as the Reverend Emmett Burns, pastor of Rising Sun First Baptist Church, said he was “a ‘proud jailbird,’ following his arrest in Washington during an

⁸⁶⁰ “Clergy Boxer Protest at Embassy,” *The Washington Post*, December 14, 1984, Box 503 Folder No# (Free South Africa Movement 1984) [unprocessed], Walter E. Fauntroy Papers, The Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University.

⁸⁶¹ “Religious Leaders Demonstrate.”

⁸⁶² Jackson, “Church Leaders to Join Protest,” 1.

⁸⁶³ Jackson, “Church Leaders to Join Protest.”

⁸⁶⁴ “Religious Leaders Demonstrate.”

anti-apartheid march in the early 1980s.”⁸⁶⁵ Burns viewed the arrest as a badge of honor. Not only did clergy join in FSAM protests at the SA Embassy in Washington, D.C., they also took advantage of opportunities to protest as part of their association with organizations like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The Reverend Joseph Lowery and fellow clergy attending the SCLC convention of Alabama went to the South African consulate with the intention of its leadership meeting with the consul general. Although they were not allowed to meet with the consulate, they did make two attempts to do so during the convention.⁸⁶⁶

In addition to honoring the Interfaith Day, Gibson, “declared Sunday, Dec. 23, as “Free South Africa Sunday” and called upon “each church, synagogue, and mosque” in the city to take part in a candlelight vigil...outside of the embassy during Christmas week.”⁸⁶⁷ Gibson asserted “the churches of Washington want to be among the first to respond” to this FSAM sponsored event. The Jewish faith community supported the Christian community by volunteering to “organize the antiapartheid demonstration...on Christmas Day, ‘so that our Christian friends can take the day off’” said Hyman Bookbinder of the American Jewish Committee. Also joining the demonstration were members of the progressive organization, New Jewish Agenda. No arrests were made during this demonstration. Indeed, “about 250, demonstrators, some chanting Hebrew

⁸⁶⁵ Campbell Colin, “Maryland Delegate, Pastor Urges Congregation to Enroll in Obamacare in Mandela’s Memory,” *Baltimore Sun*, December 15, 2013, http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2013-12-15/news/bs-md-local-mandela-memorial-20131215_1_nelson-mandela-health-care-law-obamacare.

⁸⁶⁶ “SCLC Convention Brings Well Known Heads to Mobile,” *The Washington Informer*, December 13, 1984, Box 503 Folder No# (Free South Africa Movement 1984) [unprocessed], Walter E. Fauntroy Papers, The Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University.

⁸⁶⁷ “Clergy Boxer Protest at Embassy,” 44.

prayers and carrying menorahs...picketed near the South African embassy [on Christmas Day] in a Jewish ‘community vigil’ as part of the six-week old demonstration here against apartheid.”⁸⁶⁸

Not always pleased with follow-up of black church leaders coming as groups to protest, FSAM organizers sometimes experienced frustration. On one occasion, black clergy attending their convention in Washington D.C. were the featured protesters on a Good Friday before Easter. A group of at least two hundred was expected, therefore, special arrangements were made to welcome and accommodate the “large” group of clergy at NBBC. Less than ten showed up, surprising and deeply disappointing the organizers, who had prepared for a much larger group.⁸⁶⁹ This experience and others resulted in perceptions of some black clergy as being unreliable. Some of the reasons black clergy may have chosen not to participate include: previous arrests during the Civil Rights Movement were enough, a lack of trust in the judicial system, and the Friday before the high holy day of Easter was not an opportune time for clergy to be arrested. Although churches and church people played a central role in the FSAM, the negative perceptions lingered.

Clergy and congregations of many faiths and ethnicities participated in the protests. Robinson noticed, “a clergyman drove a busload from a small town in the Midwest.”⁸⁷⁰ Black American clergy like “The Reverend Herbert Daughtry...and others organized massive turnouts at South Africa’s consulate in New York City,” supported

⁸⁶⁸ “[Jewish Community Vigil],” *The Washington Post*, December 26, 1984, Box 503 Folder No# (Free South Africa Movement) [unprocessed], Walter E. Fauntroy Papers, The Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University.

⁸⁶⁹ Counts, interview.

⁸⁷⁰ Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 156.

FSAM from its inception and over the course of its existence.⁸⁷¹ Like the NBBC, other churches hosted, initiated, and supported anti-apartheid events on and off their premises. Several major events were held at the Reverend Willie Wilson's church, Union Baptist in Washington, D.C. Fautroy's church, NBBC, sponsored a candlelight vigil outside of the South African Embassy during the Christmas holidays; the *Washington Post* showed a young boy holding a candle at the vigil as he was "joined [by] about 150 apartheid protesters."⁸⁷² No arrests were made.

Prayer breakfasts focused on educating clergy and other church leaders. A minister's breakfast, held on January 22, 1986 in Washington, D.C. focused on the situation in South Africa. This program included clergy, educators, representatives from TransAfrica, and community leaders. The Reverends Knighton Stanely, Quasi Thornell, and Clyde Hargraves participated in the program. Several panelists provided information and updates on South Africa, including distinguished professor John Franklin, Ellen Washington, and TransAfrica staff member, Common Constant. Additionally, educational information "From the United Nations Pamphlet entitled: A Crime Against Humanity. Questions and answers on APARTHEID in South Africa," was included in the program booklet.⁸⁷³

⁸⁷¹ Ibid., 157. Rev. Daughtry a long time social activist and pastor lives in Brooklyn, NY, see his biography at <http://www.thehistorymakers.com/biography/rev-herbert-d-daughtry-41>

⁸⁷² "Flame of Protest," *The Washington Post*, December 27, 1984, Box 503 Folder No# (Free South Africa Movement) [unprocessed], Walter E. Fautroy Papers, The Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University.

⁸⁷³ "Ministers Breakfast - Program Book," January 22, 1986, Box 307 Folder No# (Free South Africa Movement - 2nd Phase) [unprocessed], Walter E. Fautroy Papers, The Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University.

Black clergy used their positions to encourage participation in anti-apartheid events and solidarity with black South Africans. A presidential candidate in 1984, the Reverend Jesse Jackson, made apartheid in South Africa an election issue, in which “he had raised the question of U.S. support for the white minority regime and successfully made it an election issue.”⁸⁷⁴ An influential civil rights leader, Jackson had worked closely with Martin Luther King. Fauntroy and Michael D. Barnes, U.S. Representative from Maryland, co-sponsored and planned the South Africa Independence Day rally to be held on July 6, 1986 at Bethel AME Church in Baltimore, Maryland. They coordinated the event through the Reverend Charlotte Clemons, inviting her to also take part in the event.⁸⁷⁵ In a letter to “Fellow Supporters of a Free South Africa,” they explained, “As the situation in South Africa worsens, it has become vital for those of us who oppose apartheid to take action. Along with supporting strict, economic sanctions, we must publicly voice our concern for the people of South Africa and urge the South African government to act responsibly to solve this crisis.”⁸⁷⁶ A special appeal was made to church leaders urging them to “take time during your services to encourage your congregation to participate in this event as the situation in South Africa grows more

⁸⁷⁴ Hill, “Notes from My Diary,” 15.

⁸⁷⁵ Michael D. Barnes, “Letter to Rev. Charlotte Clemons, Bethel A.M.E. Church,” June 24, 1986, Box 307 Folder No# (S.A. Independence Rally)[unprocessed], Walter E. Fauntroy Papers, The Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University.

⁸⁷⁶ “South Africa Independence Day Rally (Program Book)” ; Walter E. Fauntroy and Michael D. Barnes, “Letter to Fellow Supports of a Free South Africa,” June 19, 1986, 307 Folder No# (S.A. Independence Rally)[unprocessed], Walter E. Fauntroy Papers, The Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University; Barnes, “Letter to Rev. Charlotte Clemons, Bethel A.M.E. Church.”

desperate.”⁸⁷⁷ They went on to describe the situation as “very critical” because “...the police and the military have intensified the state of siege against the 28 million oppressed people of South Africa.”⁸⁷⁸ The interdenominational program included three Congressmen (i.e. Fauntroy, Barnes, and Parren Mitchell), clergy, gospel and the South African “Nkosi Sikeleli Africa” (God Bless Africa), and several South African speakers including African exile, Mankekolo Ngcobo a parishioner of Bethel AME.⁸⁷⁹

COLD WAR: REAGAN’S POLICY OF “CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT”

Towing the conservative Reagan administration position, conservative journalist Allan C. Brownfeld accused Robinson of supporting far-left radical politics, insisting “The fact is that the South African government is now in the process of reform.”⁸⁸⁰ This view espoused by conservatives advocated gradual reform. Aptly titled, “*TransAfrica in the Eye of the Storm*,” the author reported “TransAfrica does have its critics, who say the group is prone to leftist politics that win as many enemies as friends.”⁸⁸¹ With conservative backing, Reagan ruthlessly pushed forward his agenda in support of the South African regime. Nesbitt posited that:

With a compliant media cheering on a wrong-headed administration’s view that the Nationalist Party was the agent of racial reform in South Africa, the Reagan administration plunged into a full-scale partnership with the racist regime. It

⁸⁷⁷ Walter E. Fauntroy and Michael D. Barnes, “Letter to ‘Dear Church Leader,’” Mailing, (June 26, 1986), 307 Folder No# (S.A. Independence Rally)[unprocessed], Walter E. Fauntroy Papers, The Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University.

⁸⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁹ “South Africa Independence Day Rally (Program Book).” Leaders from the Catholic, United Methodist, AME, and Baptist churches were speakers at the Independence Day Rally.

⁸⁸⁰ Allan C. Brownfeld, *The Washington Inquirer*, December 14, 1984, Box 503 Folder No# (Free South Africa Movement 1984) [unprocessed], Walter E. Fauntroy Papers, The Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University.

⁸⁸¹ “TransAfrica in the Eye of the Storm,” *The Washington Post*, December 12, 1984, Box 503 Folder No# (Free South Africa Movement 1984) [unprocessed], Walter E. Fauntroy Papers, The Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University.

increased military and nuclear collaboration, eased restrictions on the exports of U.S. goods to South African security forces, colluded with South Africa against UN Security Council Resolution 435, and blocked a censure of South Africa for bombing Angola.⁸⁸²

By using anti-American far-left labels that so effectively caused cleavages and the eventual down fall of CAA, attempts were made to do the same to halt FSAM's progress. South Africa "paid US lobbyists, including African Americans" to present a more positive view of Pretoria. Claiming "to represent 'moderate' black opinion in South Africa" these lobbyists "caused considerable confusion when they spoke to black communities. Indeed, "these agents attempted to penetrate the Black community with positive messages about South Africa's reforms and the puppet Savimbi."⁸⁸³ Black South African conservative leaders like Chief Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi developed alliances with the National Party and was outspoken about his opposition to sanctions. Though ultimately unsuccessful, Buthelezi was "far more effective in presenting contrary views" in favor of Pretoria.⁸⁸⁴ These Cold War tactics did not take hold during the 1980s as they had against CAA; anti-apartheid organizations were relentless in countering misinformation with the facts. FSAM continued to garner major media attention, organizational support, and support from the American people, which led to congressional action.

Still, efforts were made to not only interrupt the progress of FSAM, but also to discredit its leaders, including Robinson. A conservative lobbying group, the Lincoln Institute for Research and Education, attempted to derail Robinson's anti-apartheid

⁸⁸² Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans Against Apartheid, 1946-1994*, 115.

⁸⁸³ Hill, "Notes from My Diary," 17.

⁸⁸⁴ Minter and Hill, "Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in United States - South Africa Relations," 799.

efforts by using Cold War tactics similar to those used to derail Paul Robeson's career and the Council on African Affairs in the late 1940s and 1950s.⁸⁸⁵ Conservative journalists like Allan C. Brownfeld made accusations that "Mr. Robinson and TransAfrica have been vocal supporters of the Marxist regime in Angola, of Castro's Cuba, of Grenadian Marxist leader Maurice Bishop, and almost every radical group in the world which is either in power or seeking to come to power."⁸⁸⁶ Similarly, the Lincoln Institute accused TransAfrica "of abusing the moral mantle of the civil rights movement in order to support Marxist terrorism in southern Africa for the purpose of undermining the geopolitical objectives of the US."⁸⁸⁷ Tutu observed "Mr. Reagan obviously is concerned about Soviet expansionism, and almost everything else is subordinated in his foreign policy to this almost obsessional concern to stem the tide of Communism."⁸⁸⁸ Espousing Reagan's rhetoric, "conservative ministries like the Worldwide Church of God and prominent Christian Rightists like Jerry Falwell, characterized the anti-apartheid movement as communist-led and cautioned their followers to stay clear."⁸⁸⁹ Hostetter shows how the religious community responded to apartheid based upon their positions on American domestic issues. Falwell's emphasis on Cold War anti-communism and

⁸⁸⁵ Hostetter, *Movement Matters*, 85. See also, *TransAfrica: A Lobby of the Left*, a publication by the Lincoln Institute for Research and Education and a description of TransAfrica in the annotated bibliography *U.S. Relations with South Africa*.

⁸⁸⁶ Brownfeld.

⁸⁸⁷ Hostetter, *Movement Matters*, 85.

⁸⁸⁸ Tutu, *Hope and Suffering*, 107.

⁸⁸⁹ Mark Harrison, "Churches at the Forefront," *CrossRoads: A Contemporary Political Analysis & Left Dialogue*, April 1995, 23.

Jackson's support and involvement in the Civil Rights Movement reflected different "visions of America."⁸⁹⁰

In an atmosphere, in which South Africa was seen as extreme, TransAfrica and Randall Robinson received international attention for tipping off the media about the Reagan administration's plan to bolster South Africa's international status. Documents leaked to the media revealed the administration's intentions that "if South Africa were to cooperate on an acceptable settlement on Namibian independence, the U.S. would "work to end South Africa's polecat status in the world and seek to restore its place as a legitimate and important actor with whom we can cooperate pragmatically."⁸⁹¹ Nesbitt notes, "A recurring theme in the papers was the role that South Africa could play in countering Soviet influence in the southern African region."⁸⁹² Essentially, Robinson retorts, "the administration had asked for virtually nothing. Pretoria had historically been rabidly anti-Soviet, and a promise on Namibia would be just a promise."⁸⁹³ "The release of these documents brought worldwide condemnation on the Reagan administration."⁸⁹⁴ The State Department considered "legal action against TransAfrica for releasing 'stolen' documents."⁸⁹⁵ On the other hand, Robinson was cheered by the international community and "was invited to address the Organization of African Unity's Heads of State Summit

⁸⁹⁰ Hostetter, *Movement Matters*, 125.

⁸⁹¹ Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans Against Apartheid, 1946-1994*, 116.

⁸⁹² Ibid.

⁸⁹³ Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 131.

⁸⁹⁴ Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans Against Apartheid, 1946-1994*, 116.

⁸⁹⁵ Ibid.

in Nairobi in 1981, becoming the first African American to address the OAU since Malcolm X in 1964.”⁸⁹⁶

Re-elected in 1984, Reagan did not shift his foreign policy position on South Africa. Although not surprising to anti-apartheid activists, four more years of “constructive engagement” was unacceptable. Bishop Tutu, “called constructive engagement ‘immoral, evil and totally un-Christian’ and accused the United States of being ‘an accessory before and after the fact’ of apartheid.”⁸⁹⁷ After a December 7, 1984 meeting with Reagan, Tutu revealed there was no substantive consideration of changes in Reagan’s position on U.S. policy on South Africa. Tutu was admired by both black South Africans and black Americans as an outspoken critic of Pretoria and Washington, therefore, his meeting with Reagan brought major visibility to the U.S. movement. Following the meeting, Reagan announced South Africa’s release of eleven prisoners.

Though Reagan did not change his policy position as the embassy protests grew, he “broke his tradition of quiet diplomacy,”⁸⁹⁸ in a speech marking International Human Rights Day and “denounced apartheid and called on Pretoria to ‘reach out’ to its black majority. Reagan said that his administration wanted South Africa to end forced removal of Africans from their communities, detention without trial, and lengthy imprisonment of black leaders.”⁸⁹⁹ “Reagan’s unusual utterance was seen as a sign that the demonstrations, and the extensive coverage they received worldwide were having an effect on the administration. *Time* reported on December 24 that “there was widespread suspicion that

⁸⁹⁶ Ibid. See also Mark Harrison interview.

⁸⁹⁷ Ibid., 127.

⁸⁹⁸ Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 563.

⁸⁹⁹ Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans Against Apartheid, 1946-1994*, 129.

Reagan was bowing to a wave of antiapartheid protest that continued to grow...in the capital and at least 13 other cities.”⁹⁰⁰ Mark Harrison recalls, “The Free South Africa Movement came along right after [Ronald Reagan] was elected... It just threw them off because this was a time when you had African American leadership to include the black churches...changing the direction of U.S. foreign policy and that was historic.”⁹⁰¹

Despite all that was happening in the U.S., the Botha administration dug their heels in deeper and remained defiant, continuing to jail, beat, and massacre blacks who they deemed stepped out of line. Most appalling the Botha regime gunned down 19 people in a funeral procession, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the 1960 Sharpeville massacre.⁹⁰² This action sparked mock funeral processions around the country, like that of the BAAC, which staged a mock funeral procession in Baltimore.⁹⁰³ Reagan continued to support Botha and in some cases justify the continued brutality, by placing blame on the victims. His refusal to budge in light of this heightened situation, escalated calls for sanctions and the international outcry ballooned.⁹⁰⁴ Reagan, too, dug his heels in and continued his policy of constructive engagement.

As Pretoria squeezed black South Africans’ rights, they responded with increased resistance and mass mobilization that became known as the People’s War. In response Pretoria, “declared a State of Emergency in 36 magisterial districts in the Eastern Cape and PWV (now Gauteng) areas. This was the first State of Emergency since 1960, and gave the police powers to detain, impose curfews and control the media and, a few days

⁹⁰⁰ Ibid., 130.

⁹⁰¹ Harrison, interview, March 28, 2013.

⁹⁰² Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans Against Apartheid, 1946-1994*, 132.

⁹⁰³ Gresham, interview.

⁹⁰⁴ Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans Against Apartheid, 1946-1994*, 132.

later, to control funerals.”⁹⁰⁵ Anti-apartheid groups swiftly responded to this heightened repression. The next day Fauntroy announced “the Free South Africa Movement will bring coffins to the South African Embassy bearing the names of all those who have made the supreme sacrifice in pursuit of their freedom in South Africa.”⁹⁰⁶ The state of emergency continued as increased government repression alarmed the international anti-apartheid community. As black South Africans continued to push back against increased government repression, a second state of emergency was declared in South Africa in June of 1986. This second state of emergency “outlawing all gatherings appeared to reinvigorate protesters here,” more importantly influenced the outcome of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986.⁹⁰⁷ The religious community responded, taking the fight back to Capitol Hill, where “officials of several U.S. religious denominations and church groups who are preparing to lobby for proposals that would legislate stiffer sanctions against South Africa, were briefed by congressional leaders.”⁹⁰⁸ The Reagan administration was criticized for condemning Pretoria’s actions and at the same time, imposing no sanctions. “Five years of ‘constructive engagement’ yielded no evidence by 1986 of reform within the Pretoria regime, which instead continued to resist

⁹⁰⁵ “Partial State of Emergency, July 1985,” Education and Research, *South African History Online*, accessed April 12, 2014, <http://www.sahistory.org.za/partial-state-emergency-july-1985>. This new policy, imposed July 1985, was a major blow; “Funerals ...had become a rallying point for resistance.” Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 584. The Commissioner of Police declared “funerals could not be held for more than one person at a time, he declared and must be conducted indoors.” Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 585-586

⁹⁰⁶ Congressman Walter E. Fauntroy, “Free South Africa Movement Bears First Fruit,” June 6, 1985, Box 485 [unprocessed], Walter E. Fauntroy Papers, The Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University.

⁹⁰⁷ “10th Anniversary of the Soweto Uprising,” *The Washington Post*, June 17, 1986, sec. A, Box 485 [unprocessed], Walter E. Fauntroy Papers, The Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University.

⁹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

change. The self-evident failure of the Reagan administration's policy opened the door to a new consensus in American politics on disengagement from South Africa."⁹⁰⁹

Senator Edward Kennedy "praised FSAM for bringing the issue of apartheid 'home' and declared constructive engagement a failure. He also warned Pretoria that it would be a serious mistake to think that the only action against apartheid would be in Congress, because many cities, states, and colleges were taking their own steps to divest themselves of any business interests in South Africa."⁹¹⁰ Initially, businesses continued to maintain the position that their presence in South Africa was beneficial to "black workers because of their voluntary adherence to the Sullivan principles."⁹¹¹ Activists saw this interpretation as a means for businesses to rationalize their continued relationship with South Africa. Jean Sindab testified that the Sullivan Principles "have been overcome by the events in South Africa and are irrelevant to the process of change underway."⁹¹²

SANCTIONING SOUTH AFRICA

U.S. anti-apartheid activist organizations had long sought legislation to impose sanctions against South Africa, with little overall success. Indeed, "Opponents of sanctions, in the government and among private interests, prevented them for years by arguing that U.S. security depended upon continued engagement with South Africa as a strategic regional partner."⁹¹³ The 1980s would provide fertile ground for sanctions against South Africa. The televised brutality of the Botha administration, the unrelenting

⁹⁰⁹ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and The Color Line*, 262.

⁹¹⁰ Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans Against Apartheid, 1946-1994*, 132.

⁹¹¹ Ibid.

⁹¹² Sindab, "Impact of U.S. Divestment from South Africa," 9.

⁹¹³ Joseph Jordan, "Crucial to the Defeat of Apartheid," *The New York Times*, November 19, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2013/11/19/sanctions-successes-and-failures/sanctions-were-crucial-to-the-defeat-of-apartheid>.

protests and defiance of black South Africans, and the determination of the Reagan administration's support of South Africa's regime, alongside the highly visible actions of FSAM equaled stronger possibilities for passage of sanctions. Further, the unusual alliance between the Congressional Black Caucus and their conservative Republican colleagues sealed the deal.

State legislatures had begun to move toward divestiture, with some success, before the federal government. Far ahead of other states, Massachusetts prohibited investments in South Africa in 1979, and in 1983 became "the first state legislature to pass and override the [Governor Edward King's] veto of legislation that would require divestment of all holdings in companies doing business in South Africa." In 1983, this legislation was "the most comprehensive pension divestment bill to become law."⁹¹⁴ Love explains that the "Mass Divest" coalition, included a statewide support system consisting of "churches, labor, and community groups including the Black Ecumenical Commission, the Catholic Archdiocese of Boston, and the public employees' and teachers' unions."⁹¹⁵ She adds that much of the work was carried out by "the Boston Coalition for the Liberation of Southern Africa...and the TransAfrica Boston Support Group."⁹¹⁶ TransAfrica chapters worked with other local organizations to push for state

⁹¹⁴ Love, *The U.S. Anti-Apartheid Movement*, 41. See also TransAfrica's early efforts to encourage black mayors and legislators to introduce divestment legislation in their cities and states; TransAfrica News Report - Winter 1980/1981; TransAfrica Forum, Reading Room, Washington, DC -*Black Elected Officials Take Stand on South Africa*, 5.

⁹¹⁵ Ibid.

⁹¹⁶ Ibid. The Boston chapter of TransAfrica, led by MIT political science professor Willard Johnson and community activist, Mel King. These African American men, set up the Boston FSAM with the goal of having a more diverse leadership than the national organization in Washington. A very active chapter, they were effective in achieving local goals. When they demonstrated at the Boston Consulate, "the consul agreed to meet with them. To their surprise, he met their demands and resigned on the spot." No Easy Victories, 155-156.

action. As mentioned in chapter three, ACOA staff traveled around the country educating local groups on divestment strategies and in some instances, testified before, local, state, and national committees.

Republican lawmakers began to pressure Reagan about voting “for sanctions if South Africa did not change its policies.”⁹¹⁷ Members of the CBC applauded their position, which opened doors for bipartisan support of the issue. Republicans and Democrats began to share similar views in statements to media: in December “senators Richard G. Lugar (R-Indiana) and Daniel Moynihan (D-New York) appeared on NBC’s ‘Meet the Press,’ where they both called for stronger action against apartheid. Lugar, who was chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee, called on Reagan to denounce apartheid ‘more sharply and more often.’”⁹¹⁸ In a stronger more direct statement, “Moynihan said the U.S. should ‘have nothing whatever to do with the South African government.’”⁹¹⁹ More significantly, “Lugar and Republican Nancy Kassebaum, chairwoman of the House Foreign Relations subcommittee on Africa, sent a letter to Reagan urging him to speak out more forcefully on apartheid. The senators said the U.S. failed to attack the “evils of apartheid and the human rights violations in clear and understandable manner.”⁹²⁰

Legislative sanctions victories were often attributed to FSAM. When the House of Representatives voted in favor of H.R. 1460, the Anti-Apartheid Act of 1985, on July 5th, Congressman Fauntroy made clear, “without these demonstrations passage of this

⁹¹⁷ Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans Against Apartheid, 1946-1994*, 128.

⁹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹²⁰ *Ibid.*

bill would not have been possible.”⁹²¹ Similarly, when a revised Senate bill passed on July 11, 1985, “banning new bank loans and exports of nuclear technology to South Africa, and requiring American companies with interests in South Africa to take an active role in opposing its apartheid policy of racial segregation,” media acknowledged FSAM.⁹²² Ultimately, hopes for the passage of the 1985 sanctions bill “vanished.”⁹²³ Despite this loss, *Washington Post* reporter Barry Sussman offered, “what does seem apparent is that there would have been no action at all except for the work over the past eight months of a group known as the ‘Free South Africa Movement.’”⁹²⁴ The South African ambassador to the United States, Herbert Beukes, made clear “that his government will not be intimidated by protests ‘half a world away,’ and says the motives of Robinson’s group are domestic, political ones.”⁹²⁵ Sussman countered, “whether or not that is true, the activists’ domestic success is beyond dispute.” He argued opinion polls revealed strong support of sanctions.⁹²⁶

Historian Thomas Borstelmann explained, as violence escalated in South Africa “The televised pictures and reports of police brutality . . . , based solely on the color of one’s skin, dismayed American audiences.” He contends, “despite the opposition of the president and of hard-line sympathizers with white rule like Jesse Helms, even most conservative Republicans decided to distance themselves from virulent white

⁹²¹ Congressman Walter E. Fauntroy, “Free South Africa Movement Bears First Fruit.”

⁹²² Barry Sussman, “Activists Stimulate S. African Sanctions; Picketing Helps Prod Congress Into Voting; News Analysis,” *The Washington Post*, July 24, 1985, Final Edition edition, sec. A, 25.

⁹²³ Dellums, provides a more detailed overview of what happened in the House and Senate that ultimately blocked the passage of the 1985 Anti-Apartheid Act, 130 – 131.

⁹²⁴ Sussman, “Activists Stimulate S. African Sanctions,” 25.

⁹²⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹²⁶ *Ibid.* The Washington Post-ABC News conducted the opinion polls finding that by mid-June 1985 “up to 62 percent” of respondents aware of the protests in which 46 percent indicated approval.

supremacy.”⁹²⁷ Robinson would attribute a major shift in American attitudes following the beginning of the embassy protests. He explained “no longer was the question whether the United States would impose sanctions, but rather how severe the sanctions would be.”⁹²⁸ By 1986, bi-partisan momentum had gathered and there was no turning back, “the successful legislative initiatives of [Congressmen] William Gray, Ronald Dellums, Steven Solarz, Julian Dixon, Edward Kennedy, Richard Lugar, Nancy Kassebaum, Charles Rangel, and others had been folded into the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986, which for the first time mandated serious American economic measures against South Africa.”⁹²⁹ Like many of his fellow lawmakers, FSAM co-chair, Congressman Walter Fauntroy spoke from the House floor, on June 18, 1986, in support of the CAAA of 1986, he stated, “H.R. 4868 Strikes at the very heart of the system we all deplore.”⁹³⁰ He went on to detail provisions of the bill and urged Congress to vote in favor and “stand for justice and equality.”⁹³¹ The bill passed the House and the Senate, and was immediately vetoed by Reagan. This would not be the end of the fight, anti-apartheid activists had not come this far to be stopped by a presidential veto. The major hurdle of passing the Republican led Senate, remained a question. Awaiting this historic vote, Robinson sat, “between Coretta Scott King and Jesse Jackson.”⁹³² The Senate concurred

⁹²⁷ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and The Color Line*, 263.

⁹²⁸ Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 160.

⁹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 160–161.

⁹³⁰ Walter E. Fauntroy, “Statement of Walter E. Fauntroy on the Floor of the House of Representatives on H.R. 4868,” June 18, 1986, Box 3 Folder 10, Walter E. Fauntroy Papers, The Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University. Fauntroy lists key provisions of the bill, which include banning new investments, eliminating bank loans, not allowing South African airlines to land in the U.S., no energy contracts, and disallowing the importation of uranium, coal, and steel.

⁹³¹ *Ibid.*

⁹³² Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 161.

with the House, overriding Reagan's veto on October 2, 1986.⁹³³ Relieved, Robinson celebrated, "The Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 had become law and with its passage was sounded that evening the death knell of apartheid."⁹³⁴ Robinson reiterated, "We had won. We had turned the course of the most powerful country on earth."⁹³⁵

Black South African leaders had made clear what they needed, "Sanctions... from the United States," Johnny Makatini, the longtime ANC representative to the United States, would tell [Randall Robinson] time and again, "if black Americans will lead the effort to deliver economic sanctions, it will make for us a big difference. If you can do the job here, we can do the job at home."⁹³⁶ Robinson makes it clear, "African-Americans had led the Free South Africa Movement. U.S. economic sanctions had been imposed on South Africa. We had delivered."⁹³⁷

In *Sanctioning Apartheid*, Robert Edgar explains, "The Anti-Apartheid Act" won passage because it was worded in such a way as to appeal to the widest number of legislators, especially moderate Republicans, who had to be convinced that it was important enough to override an anticipated Reagan veto."⁹³⁸ The Reagan

⁹³³ Dellums and Halterman, *Lying Down With the Lions*, 137; Conteh, "Chronology of FSAM," 3.

⁹³⁴ Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 161.

⁹³⁵ Ibid.

⁹³⁶ Ibid.

⁹³⁷ Ibid., 162.

⁹³⁸ Edgar, *Sanctioning Apartheid*, 1. Edgar outlines key components of the law, which included: "1. Providing financial assistance through scholarships for "victims of apartheid," grants for community organizations in "disadvantaged communities," and assistance for political detainees and their families. 2. Directing the Export-Import Bank to assist black business and making sure that American businesses strictly adhered to the Code of Conduct (formerly known as the Sullivan Principles) on fair employment practices for black employees. 3. Prohibiting the following: the importation of the Krugerrands; the importing of South African-made weapons or military vehicles or any product made by a South African parastatal; loans to the government of South Africa; air links between the United States and South Africa;

Administration remained opposed to sanctions and as Edgar shows, “the Act has not been as effective as it might have been because of how it has been interpreted and implemented, compared to its original intent.”⁹³⁹ The Reagan administration’s enforcement of the new sanctions would be slow to come; indeed, they used every strategy to block full implementation of the sanctions bill. At the same time, Edgar reminds us that the Anti-Apartheid Act did serve an important “role in forcing the Reagan administration to reexamine its decided tilt in favor of the South African regime.”⁹⁴⁰ A large part of the problem with fully implementing sanctions against South Africa is the reality that many world governments want what South Africa has, minerals. He concluded, “Until governments are willing to take the necessary steps to challenge the apartheid regime, they will go on “sanctioning” apartheid instead of imposing the sanctions necessary to help bring about its demise.”⁹⁴¹

The anti-apartheid community did not “rest on their laurels” after the 1986 legislative victory. After the daily embassy protests ended, media coverage of the anti-apartheid movement declined. The level of coverage seen in 1985 and 1986 was over; meanwhile, “the State Department continued its opposition to stronger sanctions that might increase pressure on Pretoria.”⁹⁴² FSAM continued its work to insure full implementation of the sanctions, the struggle was not over. The group planned a

the sale of computers to various arms of the South African government (military, police, prison system); the sale of nuclear material or technology; importing of uranium, coal, iron, and steel; no new investments in South Africa; and the export of crude oil and petroleum.” Edgar, *Sanctioning Apartheid*, 1 -2.

⁹³⁹ Ibid., 7.

⁹⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁴¹ Ibid., 16.

⁹⁴² Minter and Hill, “Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in United States - South Africa Relations,” 809.

“National Summit on South Africa...to add momentum to the sanctions initiative.”⁹⁴³

FSAM leaders continued to work with legislators to pass more stringent sanctions. In 1988, Dellums sponsored a bill with “strong sanctions against the apartheid regime,” that would pass the House with bi-partisan support; however, the Senate would move to defeat the bill.⁹⁴⁴ Finally, FSAM would organize Nelson Mandela’s U.S. tour following his release from prison in 1990.⁹⁴⁵

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Though tensions existed among U.S. anti-apartheid organizations, in response to TransAfrica’s launching of FSAM without collaboration with, or input from the more established anti-apartheid community, the AAM community came together to demand sanctions against South Africa. In solidarity with black South Africans, the ultimate goal was to force an end to the brutal system of apartheid in South Africa. This cooperation and persistence from established organizations like WOA, ACOA, AFSC, NCC, and numerous grassroots anti-apartheid organizations, churches, students, politicians, and labor unions resulted in U.S. sanctions against South Africa. Most notably, TransAfrica’s collaboration with and close ties to SASP, and church leaders like Walter Fauntroy opened doors to the community, resulting in sustained local support. Relationships with local churches proved invaluable.

⁹⁴³ Walter E. Fauntroy, “Letter About National Summit on South Africa,” February 2, 1989, Box 22 Folder 6, Walter E. Fauntroy Papers, The Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University.

⁹⁴⁴ Dellums and Halterman, *Lying Down With the Lions*, 141. See also, *Sanctioning Apartheid* for more discussion on the Anti-Apartheid Act Amendments of 1988, pp. 9-10.

⁹⁴⁵ Hill, interview; Minter and Hill, “Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in United States - South Africa Relations,” 815 Roger Wilkins served as the director of the Mandela Tour along with Sylvia Hill and Cecelie Counts as associate directors.

Through sustained protests at the South African Embassy and consulates around the country, FSAM brought an unprecedented level of continuous media attention to the U.S. anti-apartheid movement.⁹⁴⁶ Reminiscent of the civil rights movement, these highly visible protests combined with grassroots education in local communities motivated Americans to pressure legislators to take action. Legislative victories followed. Indeed, “Under the leadership of TransAfrica and the Congressional Black Caucus, the movement focused with considerable success on two goals: getting American institutions to withdraw their investments from South Africa and from any companies engaging in business with South Africa, and moving Congress to enact broad economic sanctions on the apartheid state.”⁹⁴⁷

Despite decades of efforts by U.S.-based anti-apartheid organizations, legislative sanctions against South Africa had not come to fruition. A bold, unpopular move by the African American foreign affairs lobby reenergized the movement. Indeed, if given no other credit, TransAfrica was successful in bringing awareness to the masses. The passage of the CAAA of 1986 marked a significant milestone in legislative victories for the anti-apartheid community; the black-led FSAM had indeed “delivered.”

Democracy would not come to South Africa until the 1994 election, U.S. sanctions against South Africa and corporations doing business with them, though not fully enforced, did have an impact. Counts summarizes “FSAM represented the greatest triumph for the U.S. anti-apartheid movement but also revealed its deepest problems. In one sense it was the realization of all of the work done in the previous 30 years and could

⁹⁴⁶ “New Tactics on South Africa.”

⁹⁴⁷ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and The Color Line*, 262.

not have been successful without that groundwork. But its promise as the vehicle for bringing disparate elements of the AAM into a more coherent and continuous effective force was never realized.”⁹⁴⁸

⁹⁴⁸ Counts-Blakey, “The FSAM Story,” 14.

CHAPTER FOUR

“PEOPLE TO PEOPLE”: GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM AND THE SOUTHERN AFRICA SUPPORT PROJECT (1978 – 1990)

“The time has come for our own theologians to take up the cudgels of the fight by restoring a meaning and direction of the black man’s understanding of God. No nation can win a battle without faith.” – Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like*⁹⁴⁹

The South African Support Project (SASP) brought local community activists and ordinary citizens of Washington, D.C. to TransAfrica’s Free South Africa Movement (FSAM) and more broadly in solidarity with the southern Africa liberation movement. This base of support strengthened TransAfrica’s groundbreaking moment in U.S. anti-apartheid activism. Building upon previous chapters on FSAM, this chapter illuminates how SASP’s grassroots approach to education brought awareness and action to the local black community.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER: FROM CONSCIENTIZATION TO MOBILIZATION

The Black Power and Black Consciousness movements in the U.S. and South Africa, informed SASP’s approach to anti-apartheid activism in the Washington, D.C. area during the latter part of the 1970s through 1990.⁹⁵⁰ Like Black Consciousness

⁹⁴⁹ Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like*, ed. Aelred Stubbs, 1st U.S. ed.. (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 60.

⁹⁵⁰ George M Fredrickson, *Black Liberation: A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in the United States and South Africa* (New York; Oxford: Oxford university press, 1995), 302. Franz Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth*, first published in 1961 left an indelible mark on activists of both movements and those who followed in the late 1970s and 1980s. In his “widely read” seminal work “Fanon analyzes settler colonialism and its psychological consequences for rulers and the ruled.” Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology*, 274. Fanon’s psychological analysis resonated with black power activists in the U.S. and abroad. Gerhart contends, this was considered the most relevant

leaders of 1970s South Africa, SASP sought to conscientize members of the black community in Washington, D.C. The group's ultimate goal was to mobilize the local community toward solidarity with liberation struggles in southern Africa by bringing awareness to key issues. Introspection also characterized SASP's approach to solidarity work. Regular self-assessment made room for building trust with the local community. Black American church people, also influenced by ideologies and events of the 1960s and 1970s, were a receptive audience.

U.S. Black Power leaders believed black Americans required, "psychological rehabilitation as a precondition for political resistance."⁹⁵¹ South African Black Consciousness leader, Steve Biko concurred explaining, "We try to get blacks in conscientisation to grapple realistically with their problems, to attempt to find solutions to their problems, to develop what one might call an awareness, a physical awareness of their situation, to be able to analyze it, and to provide answers for themselves."⁹⁵² Biko, a co-founder of the South African Students Association (SASO) and its first president in 1968, "exemplified" Black Consciousness advocacy, "inspired black South Africans with new ideas about dignity and self-worth, and these in turn inspired a resurgence against apartheid."⁹⁵³ Biko explained the primary purpose of their approach was to "provide some kind of hope."⁹⁵⁴

book "both in analyzing root causes and in suggesting possible scenarios for future change," in South Africa. Gerhart, *Black Power*, 275.

⁹⁵¹ Fredrickson, *Black Liberation*, 302.

⁹⁵² Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like*, 114.

⁹⁵³ Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets*, 3. Following a decade long period of quiescence after the 1960 massacre at Sharpsville, the South African Student's Organisation (SASO) and the Black People's Convention (BPC) – two organizations "known collectively as the Black Consciousness Movement" emerged. Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets*, 1. Black students broke off from the "multiracial National

Paulo Freire defined conscientization “as ‘critical self-insertion into reality’ by the oppressed”... “to be conscientized was not simply to be made aware but to make oneself aware.”⁹⁵⁵ Most importantly, Freire posits self-awareness coupled with action is essential to fully realized conscientization; action is transformative. Black consciousness activists, adapting “Freire’s teaching and the dictates of Black Consciousness (“Black man, you are on your own”) endeavored to inculcate the “self-help spirit” rather than solve the people’s problems. In practice among South Africa’s black consciousness activists, “conscientization was ‘consulting the mind’; it was listening to the people and raising questions in hopes that ‘they would think.’”⁹⁵⁶ Conscientization, which became the primary mode of bringing political awareness to the metropolitan Washington, D.C. community, proved effective for SASP. Indeed, for SASP, “raising consciousness for social change in the U.S. using Southern Africa as a means of providing ways we should struggle” served as an effective model.⁹⁵⁷ With awareness, came action. Daniel Magaziner contends, “The politically conscious few were not the agents in Freire’s

Union of South African Students (NUSAS)” to form SASO in 1969 (a branch off of NUSAS in 1968), “and emerged by the early 1970s as the critical center of internal resistance to apartheid during that decade.” Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets*, 3. Magaziner explains, BC activists were largely mission-educated, middle-class thinkers, who spent time at universities and “these 1970s activists develop[ed] ways of thinking through and beyond their predicament.” Magaziner’s study “dwells on the thinking without which progress was impossible.” Magaziner points out, the purest form of Black Consciousness was “thinking, analyzing, but not determining. Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets*, 6. Telling people what to believe was not the point.” Initially, SASO’s educational “emphasis was on slow, methodical work in order to help people generate analysis and only then to interrogate and act against the roots of their situation.” Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets*, 130. SASO held listening sessions, which white liberal activists and other anti-apartheid activists saw as unproductive given the crisis (and needs) at hand. Having been banned and harassed by police, SASO’s leader, Steve Biko was assassinated at the hands of the state, while in police custody, in September 1977.

⁹⁵⁴ Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like*, 114.

⁹⁵⁵ Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets*, 129.

⁹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 131. In its purest form (i.e. a gradual process to awareness), conscientization in apartheid South Africa would prove “hard to maintain” in an environment engulfed by a sense of urgency for action.

⁹⁵⁷ Southern Africa Support Project, “SASP Retreat 1982,” June 8, 1982, 5, Box 4 Folder 6, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

scheme. Instead they were facilitators who were supposed to create the condition under which conscientization – “self-insertion into reality”- might occur.”⁹⁵⁸ SASP’s crucial leadership in solidarity with southern African liberation, especially so, in FSAM provides an opportunity to see how these transnational ideologies manifested in the anti-apartheid movement.

Since the 1970s, scholars have written about the meanings and intended effects of black consciousness on black communities in the U.S. and South Africa. The “primary task of black consciousness was to “conscientize” black people, which meant giving them a sense of pride or belief in their own strength and worthiness.”⁹⁵⁹ In *Black Liberation: A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in the United States and South Africa*, George M. Fredrickson compares and contrasts the two movements pointing out, their shared slogans and symbols like “Black is beautiful” and “Before a group can enter [or create] the open society, it must first close ranks,”⁹⁶⁰ and the “clenched-fist Black Power salute.”⁹⁶¹ Earlier studies like Gail Gerhart’s *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology*, examined the political history of black consciousness. Magaziner departs from Gerhart’s 1978 political history of black power in South Africa, by elevating theology to the center of his analysis of the Black Consciousness movement in South Africa. In *The Law and the Prophets: Black Consciousness in South Africa 1968 – 1977*, Magaziner, delves more deeply into the Christian theological underpinnings of the black consciousness movement as practiced in South Africa. He argues, “these young activists

⁹⁵⁸ Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets*, 129.

⁹⁵⁹ Fredrickson, *Black Liberation*, 302.

⁹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 313.

⁹⁶¹ Gail M. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, 295.

appeared to have drawn rather interesting conclusions about the theory and practice of resistance to apartheid, based not exclusively on politics or ideology, but on theology.”⁹⁶² Often drawing on Biblical stories and passages, to argue, defend or explain their point, many of these mission educated activists were also influenced by U.S. Black liberation theology. Indeed, in 1973, SASO passed a controversial resolution, “which described Christ as ‘the first freedom fighter to die for the liberation of the oppressed.’”⁹⁶³ Given that the Afrikaner state used Christianity to suggest God’s favor of whites, Black Consciousness activists in turn, argued Jesus was a freedom fighter, who favored the oppressed.

The achievements of FSAM drew on the vitality of SASP’s ability to rally daily protests at the South African Embassy in Washington, D.C. TransAfrica recognized early on that SASP should play a pivotal role in galvanizing not only vocal support for the embassy protests, but also support for other major campaigns of FSAM, particularly between 1984 and 1986. Sylvia Hill, one of the architects of FSAM and a founder of SASP, makes clear “when we were doing our organizing, we were really building a kind of social infrastructure of ties to institutions and sectors in the city, which later enabled us to...carry on those demonstrations at the [South African] Embassy. And later the demonstrations at Deak Perera [because of their sale of South African] Krugerrands and at the corporate offices of Shell Oil [because of its investments in South Africa].”⁹⁶⁴ This

⁹⁶² Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets*, 2.

⁹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁹⁶⁴ Sylvia Hill, Interview II for No Easy Victories, interview by William Minter, Transcript, August 12, 2004, Southern Africa Support Project, African Activist Archive, <http://kora.matrix.msu.edu/files/50/304/32-130-13A3-84-Sylvia%20Hill%202004%2010-22-11.pdf>. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Randall Robinson consulted with key members of SASP as he was

period basically commenced with Eleanor Holmes Norton's announcement to the media on November 21, 1984 (the Eve of Thanksgiving), that "the Reagan policy of constructive engagement" was ineffective and complicit with South Africa's repressive government. Meanwhile, addressing South African Ambassador Fourie inside the Embassy, Walter Fauntroy, Mary Frances Berry, and Randall Robinson demanded "your government's political prisoners must be released immediately. These would include, among others, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, the thirteen labor leaders arrested recently without charge, and the three black leaders who have taken refuge in the British consulate in Durban."⁹⁶⁵ This act of civil disobedience, alongside nightly network news coverage of apartheid brutalities following South African Prime Minister Botha's crackdown on the People's War in the 1980s, moved ordinary people to action.⁹⁶⁶ In fact,

considering ways to address the escalating violence and repression against blacks in South Africa, alongside Reagan's steadfast support of the South African government in the fall of 1984. As revealed in the previous chapter, key SASP leaders also played important roles in TransAfrica's move to launch the Free South Africa Movement in 1984. After TransAfrica's board chair, Mayor Hatcher, expressed major concerns about the escalated state of racial affairs in South Africa with founder and executive director, Randall Robinson, a meeting with SASP leaders took place at Robinson's house. Fearing the strong possibility of being bugged, this highly secretive strategic planning meeting took place on the sidewalk outside of Robinson's home, "just in case someone was listening." [Hill interview] During this and subsequent meetings, they determined and agreed that different, more radical strategies were necessary to support the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. Joseph Jordan asserts, "At its height in the 1980s the anti-apartheid movement (AAM) in the U.S. was a substantive, politically potent and effective force for change. Indeed, it was one of the most powerful and broad-based progressive movements of the Reagan-Bush years." This period of the anti-apartheid movement "became both a movement and a social phenomenon on the strength of a single act of civil disobedience. This event became enshrined in AAM history as the Free South Africa Movement." (Jordan, "That Covenant Was Kept," 9.

⁹⁶⁵ Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 152.

⁹⁶⁶ A second State of Emergency was declared on July 25, 1985, in which, South African police were given broad powers, squashing any remnants of protections and rights of the people. In response to large scale protests (i.e. the People's War") the South African regime responded by imposing a State of Emergency. During this second "state of emergency declared in 36 of the country's 260 magisterial districts," over 665 people were detained. States of Emergency in South Africa during the 1960s and 1980s served as the "key instrument used by the apartheid government to neutralize political dissent...when the government faced unprecedented internal revolt." These states of emergency often resulted in increased political violence and killings of black South Africans. The 1986 State of Emergency restricted television and news coverage of the brutalities, which alarmed the international community. Indeed, hundreds were detained and hundreds

the major feats of FSAM, which included passage of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act (CAAA) in 1986, depended on not only celebrities, large organizations, and unions, but also the demonstrators that SASP called upon through local “community network[s] of activists who were willing to picket and get arrested.”⁹⁶⁷ SASP activists were called to meet at the embassy on the evening before Thanksgiving in 1984. Mark Harrison recalls, “I was here in Washington, D.C. [for] the weekend, it was Thanksgiving weekend and I was here with family, and the Free South Africa Movement took off.”⁹⁶⁸ Not knowing the specifics, he reveals receiving a phone call urging him, “Mark you gotta come here,...can’t tell you what it is, - just come up to the South African Embassy”⁹⁶⁹ Harrison was one of 50 people contacted by SASP “to show up at 30th and Massachusetts Avenue along Embassy Row – [to demonstrate] 500 feet away from the Embassy – without any questions and to maintain secrecy.”⁹⁷⁰ Harrison answered the call and showed up to participate in what would become the first act of civil disobedience leading to the Free South Africa Movement. Out of the fifty SASP activists called, at least thirty showed up, fell in line, and engaged in the demonstration outside of the South African Embassy.⁹⁷¹ The willingness of these activists to participate in the protests without notice or specific details attests to the trust and loyalty SASP had built in the community. Upon his return

were killed in this state sanctioned political violence. In the case of the 1980s, the United Democratic Front (UDF) led the fight against government repression. [sahistory.org/topic/udf accessed October 2014; See also Massie, p. 584-585.

⁹⁶⁷ Margaret Summers, “Southern Africa Support Project Marks a Decade of Struggle,” *Black Networking News*, March 1, 1989, Volume: 1, Issue 3 edition.

⁹⁶⁸ Harrison, interview, March 28, 2013.

⁹⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁷⁰ Hill, “Notes from My Diary,” 15.

⁹⁷¹ Counts, interview; Hill, interview.

to New York, Harrison engaged in FSAM demonstrations “at the Africa UN offices” and the South African Consulate in New York.⁹⁷²

In crucial ways the grassroots relationships which SASP built with the local D.C. government, churches such as Shiloh Baptist, Metropolitan AME, Union Temple Baptist Church, People’s Congregational United Church of Christ, and schools broadly “conscientized,” to use Magaziner’s term by way of Paulo Freire, black Americans in the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area. SASP serves as an example of an anti-apartheid organization, in which engagement with the black American church was central. Indeed, one of the key sectors through which SASP focused its education and outreach activities was the black church. Not by any means a “religious” organization, however, SASP recognized the importance of the church in reaching members of the black community. Unlike, the other organizations discussed in this dissertation, SASP built an infrastructure that integrated local black American churches from the start and this integration was evident in outreach efforts, administrative and logistical support, meeting and event venues, fundraising support, collaborations, and public protests. These churches often served as the base of SASP operations. D.C. resident and activist Nkechi Taifa, a member of the Temple of the Black Messiah, recalls “I have nothing but fond memories of SASP.” She commended SASP for the instrumental role they played in community political education and specifically gave praise to three leaders, “Sylvia, Sandra [Hill] and Cecelie” as “strong Black women dedicated to this critical cause.”⁹⁷³

⁹⁷² Harrison, interview, March 28, 2013.

⁹⁷³ Taifa, interview.

These residents of the nation's capital, who faced their own local crisis, learned what was happening inside South Africa and what was unfolding on its borders, namely liberation movements either fighting or conquering white supremacy in Namibia, Angola, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. Still recovering from the 1968 riots, sparked by the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., sections of Washington, D.C. had not been restored and remained destroyed through the 1980s. D.C. residents observed, "starting with the early seventies, revitalization efforts were underway but progress was extremely slow."⁹⁷⁴ Further, 1970s Washington had been riddled with loss of lives and protests over the Vietnam War, "riots and division," followed by "a feeling of promise, calm, and relative harmony" toward the end of the decade and into the early 1980s.⁹⁷⁵ The election of Walter E. Fauntroy as the D.C. (at-large) Delegate to the United States House of Representatives in 1971, opening of D.C.'s metro rail system, and election of much beloved mayor Marion Barry in 1979 were bright spots for D.C. residents. While D.C. residents protested South Africa's escalating violence against the majority black population who sought basic civil rights, they also challenged the U.S. government on "taxation without representation," in their majority black city. As anti-apartheid activists experienced unprecedented media coverage during the mid-1980s, residents of Washington, D.C. were faced with an unprecedented drug epidemic.⁹⁷⁶ Yet SASP did

⁹⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁷⁵ WETA Public Television, "Washington in the '70s," Public Television, *WETA*, (n.d.), <http://www.weta.org/tv/program/washington-70s>.

⁹⁷⁶ See also, Rebecca Sheir, "Crack: The Drug That Consumed The Nation's Capital," News, *WAMU* 88.5, (January 31, 2014), http://wamu.org/crack_the_drug_that_consumed_the_nations_capital Crack cocaine use had skyrocketed "bringing hundreds of open air drug markets, addictions [that] swept across entire neighborhoods, and the city came to be known as the 'Nation's Murder Capital'." The black American

more than broadcast and normalize the anti-apartheid message in American politics. It led TransAfrica's mobilization efforts by organizing events, recruiting and training activists, and forging strategic alliances with church people. The people touched by SASP such as the congregants of People's Congregational United Church of Christ and Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, and community activists associated with the D.C. government and the southern African freedom movement, truly made FSAM a success.⁹⁷⁷ Their history has yet to be told.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF SASP

SASP was an offshoot of the Southern Africa News Collective (SANC) founded in 1975 by black American women in Washington, D.C. Many activists, including several SANC members, who had participated in African liberation and U.S. freedom struggles moved to Washington, D.C. following the Sixth Pan-African Congress, in 1974.⁹⁷⁸ In 1975, seven SANC leaders sought to inform individuals, community organizations, and black churches through informational newsletters, which documented U.S. government foreign policy interests and the struggles of liberation movements in southern Africa. The News Collective "tried to break down rather complex foreign policy issues into a level that [local] people could understand."⁹⁷⁹ Initially, this conscientizing effort did not result "in anything concrete."⁹⁸⁰ The readership of SANC newsletters

church community would, too, join in the fight against drugs in their community, which lingered until the 1990s. In the end, communities were transformed through church activism.

⁹⁷⁷ William Minter and Sylvia Hill are among the few scholars who mention SASP in their work on southern African liberation in the U.S. Hill, a professor at the University of the District of Columbia, served in leadership roles in TransAfrica and in SASP.

⁹⁷⁸ Hill, interview.

⁹⁷⁹ Counts, interview.

⁹⁸⁰ Ibid.

probably included a few hundred households, at most.⁹⁸¹ Although SANC lasted no more than three years and motivated a small audience, its members nonetheless developed effective “political and organizational skills,” as well as outreach strategies crucial to their later work with SASP.⁹⁸² Most important, SANC devised a direct “people to people” approach that “could really share” key “insights” with DC communities, often in their places of worship.⁹⁸³ In the summer of 1978, leaders initiated the Southern Africa Summer Project, which would extend beyond the summer prompting SANC to restructure its activities under a new name. Thereafter, SANC became the Southern African Support Project.⁹⁸⁴ SASP’s broader anti-imperialist aspirations “mobilize[d] public support for the liberation movements in southern Africa and public opposition to U.S. foreign policy” supporting white-minority regimes.⁹⁸⁵ By the fall of that year, SASP had enlarged its ranks⁹⁸⁶ with additional members whose “collective efforts, along with those of the Washington, D.C. community,” gave “material aid to the people fleeing Rhodesia” (now Zimbabwe) through the “purchase [of] medical and educational supplies for our people fighting for liberation and socialist reconstruction in Southern Africa.”⁹⁸⁷

⁹⁸¹ Ibid. SANC produced about 500 copies of the newsletter; copies were often shared within a larger group ultimately reaching more people.

⁹⁸² Sylvia Hill, Interview I for No Easy Victories, interview by William Minter, Transcript, September 23, 2003, Southern Africa Support Project, African Activist Archive, http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-13A2.p.24; also note, SANC was instrumental in helping launch the June 16th coalition to commemorate the June 16, 1976 Soweto uprising.

⁹⁸³ Ibid.

⁹⁸⁴ Although this restructuring occurred in 1978, there is evidence that SANC still existed in some form as late as 1982.

⁹⁸⁵ Cecelie Counts, Sylvia Hill, and Sandra Hill, “Notes on Building International Solidarity in the United States,” *The Black Scholar*, CRISIS IN SOUTH AFRICA, 15, no. 6 (December 1984): 44–52. P. 44

⁹⁸⁶ Hill, interview; Counts, interview.

⁹⁸⁷ Southern Africa Support Project, “What Is SASP?,” *Struggle: Newsletter of the Southern Africa Support Project*, November 1983, Box 4 Folder 3, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.; Counts, interview.

SASP effectively appealed directly to ordinary people who by doing small acts could support the struggle of blacks in southern Africa.⁹⁸⁸ Indeed, from the start SASP deliberately chose to “emphasize the role the American public can play in stopping U.S. government and corporate assistance to the minority-controlled Rhodesian regime.”⁹⁸⁹ A newsletter (announcing “YOU can be part of the struggle!”) dramatized three local objectives of SASP: “the Southern Africa Support Project – a community-based activist force whose primary functions are organizing, educating, and informing the community about the struggles of our people in Southern Africa.”⁹⁹⁰ SASP would eventually publish a how-to manual on “further[ing] the goals of southern African liberation struggles . . . by contribut[ing] . . . material aid, moral support and a commitment to work for a responsible foreign policy towards the countries of the region.”⁹⁹¹ These ends entailed creating a “lobby for legislation that will end U.S. diplomatic and economic backing of South Africa.”⁹⁹²

SASP’s community activism included appeals for D.C.-based black Americans and South Africans to join together in the liberation struggle and “share their experiences

⁹⁸⁸ Counts, interview.

⁹⁸⁹ Southern Africa Support Project, “SASP Annual Report 1978 - 1979,” 1979, 2, Box 1 Folder 4, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University. See also: Southern Africa Support Project, “SASP 10th Anniversary Dinner Program ‘Ten Years of Solidarity and Commitment,’” December 1988, 1, Box 4 Folder 2, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

⁹⁹⁰ Southern Africa Support Project, “Struggle,” November 1983. See also: Southern Africa Support Project, “SASP Retreat 1981,” August 1, 1981, Box 4 Folder 6, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

⁹⁹¹ Jordan, “Solidarity as an Organizing Principle,” 21.

⁹⁹² Ibid. *CrossRoads* magazine’s special edition on the Free South Africa Movement featured articles written by frontline activists and leaders of the FSAM. This magazine written to promote “left dialogue and renewal,” with the intention of “regrouping activists from different socialist radical traditions” ceased operations with its final issue #62 in August 1996. Max Elbaum was the executive editor. For more about the magazine visit <http://www.revolutionintheair.com/histstrategy/crossroads.html>

and resources.”⁹⁹³ Events took place at local churches, including those with large and small congregations, such as Union Temple Baptist Church and First Rising Mount Zion Baptist Church, respectively. In SASP correspondence with Prexy Nesbit, then a representative of the World Council of Churches’ Commission on the Programme to Combat Racism, Sylvia Hill a founder of SASP and an architect of FSAM, opined “the more we work; the more we see the need to link the local situation with the international. This takes considerable capability to place educational materials in a content and form which is appealing.”⁹⁹⁴

Not only did SASP members embrace international solidarity as their clarion call, they also developed a “work style” that sought to avoid internal “differences.”⁹⁹⁵ SASP leaders recognized the need to promote “unity despite” local impediments, among them “lack of funds, lack of full-time staff, [and] varying political ideologies and priorities.”⁹⁹⁶ This unity required a practical foundation, as well. SASP recruited volunteers, many of whom had full-time jobs and other obligations. Reducing possible internal adversity and tensions was paramount. With “no paid staff,” SASP relied on their “political commitment and discipline” to implement the organization’s initiatives.⁹⁹⁷

CIVIL RIGHTS, BLACK POWER, PAN-AFRICANISM, AND SASP LEADERSHIP

⁹⁹³ Southern Africa Support Project, “SASP Retreat 1982”; Southern Africa Support Project, “SASP Retreat 1981.”

⁹⁹⁴ Sylvia Hill, “Letter to Prexy Nesbitt,” July 28, 1981, Box 4 Folder 10, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University. Counts, interview. Southern Africa Support Project, “SASP Retreat 1982,” June 8, 1982, Box 4 Folder 6, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University; Southern Africa Support Project, “SASP Retreat 1981.”

⁹⁹⁵ Southern Africa Support Project, “SASP Retreat 1982,” 10. Ibid., 12.

⁹⁹⁶ Southern Africa Support Project, “SASP Retreat 1982,” 12.

⁹⁹⁷ Counts, Hill, and Hill, “Notes on Building International Solidarity in the United States.” P. 44

Sylvia Ion Bennett Hill

Sylvia Hill, an original SANC member and a SASP founder, was one of the key leaders representing SASP in various capacities. Raised in segregated Jacksonville, Florida, Sylvia Ion Bennett Hill's mother was "agnostic" while her father was a "very religious" worshipper in the AME church.⁹⁹⁸ When Sylvia Hill was in her childhood, she remembers her friend's father was lynched. "Very conscious of the fear in the black community of white violence," these memories stayed with her all her life.⁹⁹⁹ During her freshmen year at Florida A&M, Hill participated in a civil rights sit-in protesting "discrimination in [local] eating places" and experienced first-hand the dangers of the fight for civil rights.¹⁰⁰⁰

As an undergraduate she transferred to Howard University and walked the campus with then students and SNCC leaders Stokely Carmichael, Ed Brown, and Courtland Cox.¹⁰⁰¹ Hill eventually worked more closely with these activists during the black power movement. At Howard, she heard influential black speakers like Malcolm X and E. Franklin Frazier. Committed to civil rights, Hill volunteered as a foot soldier for the 1963 March on Washington .

Hill went to the West Coast to attend graduate school, just as pride in black and African identities was transforming major campuses. She studied Black Power and pan-

⁹⁹⁸ Hill, Interview I for No Easy Victories, 4.

⁹⁹⁹ Hill, interview.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰¹ Ibid.; Hill, Interview I for No Easy Victories, 5. Though not a Howard University student, H. Rap Brown, Ed Brown's brother was also around campus. H. Rap Brown, followed Stokely Carmichael as chairman of SNCC in the 1960s. Stokely Carmichael (president of SNCC 1966-1967) later used the term "Black Power" at a large SNCC rally and the term became popular among young and more radical blacks, Courtland Cox, and Ed Brown's brother H. Rap Brown would later be central figures in the Black Power movement of the late 60s – early 1970s, see also *Black Power* by Stokely Carmichael and Hamilton.

Africanism, as well, and drew connections between what was happening to people of color in the U.S. and what was happening to people of color in other parts of the world, including Rhodesia and South Africa.¹⁰⁰² During the black student movement the writings of radical intellectuals further influenced Hill's perspectives. She read "Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, [Antonio] Gramsci, and Karl Marx, and others."¹⁰⁰³ Their ideas highlighted the fact that the "United States' imperial nature could not be challenged unless third-world countries were stronger. So that as long as the United States thought they were an imperial power and everybody else was dependent, they would have this false illusion of white superiority." This "false illusion of white superiority," she asserts, "was of no help to people of color in this country . . . we saw the struggle externally in terms of international solidarity and Pan Africanism as part of the larger struggle of African Americans in the United States."¹⁰⁰⁴ Hill makes clear, "I never saw myself working on the struggle that was different than the Civil Rights Movement."¹⁰⁰⁵ Like her peers and those before her, Hill understood the importance of helping the community build strength through unity. She explains, "the task was to link the two and to get people in this country to see that, the two struggles were [interconnected and] important to our political strength."¹⁰⁰⁶

As a doctoral candidate in education at the University of Oregon, Hill pushed for more black students to be admitted to predominantly white colleges. She worked with an

¹⁰⁰² Hill, interview.

¹⁰⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Ibid.

innovative program designed to “bring urban black youth to campus.”¹⁰⁰⁷ “Project 75” emerged from a campus demonstration, which for Hill was “one of the most unbelievable political experiences, bringing 75 kids from everywhere...to that campus.”¹⁰⁰⁸ She and her husband James Hill met and married in Oregon. Though older than some other students, they were involved in the Black Student Union and encouraged a political education focus, that she would later emphasize with the local community in Washington, D.C. Hill explains “we created a political process that encouraged [students] to want to return to their communities and use their education to improve their communities.”¹⁰⁰⁹

After completing her doctorate, Hill ran an institute for African education at Macalester College in Minnesota in 1971, which “engaged black students...in tutoring positive consciousness activities with black children,” who participated in a Saturday and afterschool program at the university. These conscientizing efforts remained at the core of solidarity work led by Hill through the years. Hill participated in the African Liberation Day (ALD) demonstrations in 1972 that brought tens of thousands of activists to Washington, D.C. to “show support for African Liberation struggles.”¹⁰¹⁰ Around this

¹⁰⁰⁷ Hill, Interview I for No Easy Victories, 9.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Ibid., 10. Hill had married ___ Belton when she was 15 years old and earned her GED before attending Florida A&M. Her second husband, James Hill, whom she met in Oregon had worked with SNCC. Hill lived in Oregon from 1966 – 1971, during the growth of the black power movement

¹⁰¹⁰ Hill, interview. For more information on the African Liberation Support Committee see, <http://africanactivist.msu.edu/organization.php?name=African+Liberation+Support+Committee> “The African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC), a black activist organization that supported Pan Africanism, was organized at a conference in September 1972 in Detroit, Michigan. ALSC grew out of the first African Liberation Day (ALD) on May 27, 1972 that drew some 60,000 demonstrators in cities across the U.S. and Canada. The first ALD grew out of a trip of a group of black activists to Mozambique’s liberated areas in the summer of 1971. One of the activists on that trip was Owusu Sadaukai who, upon his return, convened a meeting...that led to the first ALD demonstration.”

same time, she would begin working on the “central coordinating committee for the Sixth Pan African Congress.”¹⁰¹¹

Secretariat of the Central Coordinating Committee for the congress, which brought “together people from around the world” was a huge undertaking for Hill. She explains, as members of The Center for Black Education, based in Washington, D.C., “we decided that we would take on the organizing of the Sixth Pan African Conference.”¹⁰¹² The congress, held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in 1974, was the first to be held in Africa. The central coordinating committee was composed of Charlie Cobb, Courtland Cox, Jimmy Garrett, and members of The Center for Black Education. Their “focus was on the political education conscious raising of Black people.”¹⁰¹³

¹⁰¹¹ Ibid. Like many of her peers, Hill was greatly influenced by Robert Van Lierop’s 1972 film “A Luta Continua,” she recalls the film’s impact, “I remember for the first time having this sense that you can have a science of change because you have to think methodologically about what you’re doing. It’s not just haphazard.” [William Minter interview with Sylvia Hill, p. 11] Now a professor at the University of the District of Columbia, Hill asserts that in SASP “[w]e were purposeful, theory, analysis [we] brought our social science theory into practice.” [Hill, interview] Bringing her methodological approach and philosophical belief in building solidarity bolstering SASP’s efforts to marshal grassroots support for the FSAM. See also, The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Robert Van Lierop Papers, for more information on Robert Van Lierop. An “African-American filmmaker, political activist and Permanent Representative of the Republic on Vanuatu at the United Nations. Robert Van Lierop began his professional career in 1967 as an Assistant Counsel for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in the areas of civil rights and school desegregation. He travelled to Africa in 1971 and produced his first film on the struggle for independence in Mozambique, “A Luta Continua.” A second film, “O Povo Organizado,” was completed in 1976. As co-producer of “Like It Is,” a weekly black television news and documentary program, he produced several documentaries, including an analysis of the United Nations and a conference on Southern Africa.”; The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Robert Van Lierop Papers description, <http://archives.nypl.org/scm/20846> website accessed 5/2/2014.

¹⁰¹² Ibid.

¹⁰¹³ Ibid.; The Center for Black Education and the Drum and Spear bookstore, led and founded by former SNCC “veterans”, many of whom had met at Howard University in Washington, DC and in San Francisco in the 1960s. The Center for Black Education, emphasized the need for the black community to take “control of their own education” and “international solidarity.” Ibid.; More specifically, the Center “focused on developing self-reliance projects to empower communities, rejecting what was viewed as an education for the colonized mind at traditional universities.” Minter and Hill, “Anti-Apartheid Solidarity in United States - South Africa Relations,” 766.

Following the congress, C.L.R. James “attended meetings to discuss the formation of solidarity groups” while in Washington, D.C. A mentor to Hill at the University of the District of Columbia (UDC), James encouraged her and other activists to “read important writings and to discuss and expand our vision for society and how to make change.”¹⁰¹⁴ As a result, Hill focused more intently on “international solidarity.”¹⁰¹⁵ Indeed, like many African American activists emerging from the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement, Hill and other leaders of SASP, had “a strong radical, progressive and expressly political consciousness” that had “matured and developed deeper international perspectives, gaining a fuller understanding of racism, capitalism, imperialism and 20th century colonialism in countries like Vietnam, Namibia, and South Africa.”¹⁰¹⁶ Collectively her organizing experiences, interactions, and exposure to more radical ideologies would greatly influence her approach to work in SASP and in FSAM. Indeed, Hill’s strong organizational skills, commitment to conscientization of the black community, and deeply rooted commitment to solidarity work proved beneficial to the movement.¹⁰¹⁷

Other members of SASP brought organizational skills, a long-held progressive and pan-Africanist philosophy, and grassroots experience to TransAfrica and FSAM.

¹⁰¹⁴ Jordan, “Solidarity as an Organizing Principle,” 20. C. L. R. James well known author of *The Black Jacobins*, a history of Toussaint L’Ouverture and the Haitian Revolution, which was viewed by some as an instruction booklet for revolutionaries. James was a highly regarded radical intellectual originally from Trinidad; as a Pan-Africanist James was concerned with the plight of black people in Africa and the African diaspora. During his return to the U.S., in 19 he taught at the University of the District of Columbia.

¹⁰¹⁵ Hill, interview.

¹⁰¹⁶ Jordan, “Solidarity as an Organizing Principle,” 19–20.

¹⁰¹⁷ Sylvia Hill’s early work with students at Macalester College in Minnesota and with the Black Education Center in Washington, DC provide examples of youth initiatives with conscientizing objectives .

Like Sylvia Hill, Cecelie Counts had formal ties to TransAfrica as well as to SASP. Her unique role in melding the work of SASP with that of TransAfrica's FSAM warrants closer examination.

Cecelie Counts

Randall Robinson described TransAfrica staff member and SASP leader, Cecelie Counts, as “a Harvard Law graduate and superb organizer.” She accompanied Robinson to the South African Embassy on November 21, 1984, the first day of civil disobedience. While Robinson, Berry, Holmes-Norton, and Fautroy met with South African Ambassador Fourie, Counts was outside the embassy organizing the protesters and handling the logistics.¹⁰¹⁸ Counts coordinated the daily protests, which extended for more than one year.¹⁰¹⁹ Well-orchestrated, “the protests...proceeded like clockwork.”¹⁰²⁰ Like Hill, Counts brought strong organizational and management skills to her work in SASP and TransAfrica.

Count's early years shaped her perspectives and activism in solidarity work. During her time in high school (1969 – 1973) in New Jersey, also the height of the Black Power movement and black consciousness, Counts recalls “a lot of political activity [was] going on” and “[we were] protesting to be taught Swahili as one of the languages”

¹⁰¹⁸ Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 149; Counts, interview.

¹⁰¹⁹ Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 156; Counts, interview.

¹⁰²⁰ Barker, “Background Troops of Antiapartheid.” A typical day of demonstrations involved a training session for those volunteering for arrest, facilitated by Counts at New Bethel Baptist Church. These volunteers were then transported by bus to the embassy; upon arrival, they joined other protesters already demonstrating. Typically the trained protesters would approach the doors of the embassy, violating the prescribed acceptable distance from the embassy, they were “arrested – after two warnings – when they refuse[d] to leave the front of the embassy and, instead, [sang] verses of ‘We Shall Overcome’.” [Karyln Barker, “Background Troops”] A team of lawyers would facilitate their release. This process took place for more than a year resulting in over 4,000 arrests around the country.

offered in school.¹⁰²¹ Influenced by her grandmother, “who did not have a lot of formal education,” yet stayed informed on national and international events and held strong “anti-imperialist” views, Counts would follow suit.¹⁰²² Counts recalls her grandmother’s objection to the Vietnam War and the Spanish American War. On one occasion Counts sang a song she learned in kindergarten, “We are marching to Pretoria,” her grandmother quickly explained, Pretoria “was not a place you’d want to go or to sing about.”¹⁰²³ Her grandmother knew activists like Paul Robeson and Adam Clayton Powell Jr., though Counts does not recall meeting them; like Robeson and Powell, her grandmother espoused more radical views on international issues. Growing up in this environment, Counts “first became active in Southern African solidarity work in East Orange, New Jersey where of course we were influenced by activism in New York and in Newark.”¹⁰²⁴ Initially protesting the Vietnam War, Counts’ focus “quickly moved to anger about the role of U.S. multinational corporations in propping up the white regimes in southern Africa.”¹⁰²⁵

Influenced by “politically engaged” teachers “who let us know that the U.S. was on the wrong side in many places,” Counts would dedicate her life to solidarity work.¹⁰²⁶

After completing law school at Harvard University in 1983, Counts went to work on

¹⁰²¹ Counts, interview.

¹⁰²² Ibid.

¹⁰²³ Ibid. The song “Marching to Pretoria” was often taught in American classrooms. Pretoria, was the seat of government for the apartheid regime. See also, http://www.flatinternational.org/template_volume.php?volume_id=150 to learn more about and the original song and its history as a song sung by both British and Afrikaner soldiers during the Anglo-Boer war in South Africa.

¹⁰²⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰²⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰²⁶ Ibid. Like Hill, Counts was influenced by Robert Van Lierop films, most notably “Aluta Continua.”

southern Africa issues fulltime for TransAfrica, based in Washington, D.C.¹⁰²⁷ Soon after coming to TransAfrica, government repression and violence escalated in South Africa. During this crucial time, Counts brought her grassroots experience, organizational skills, and community connections from SASP to her work at TransAfrica.

LEADERSHIP STRUCTURES: PARTNERS AND COALITIONS

SASP leadership included educators, scholars, government workers, students, and attorneys, who were instrumental in cultivating their relationships with key local leaders to support FSAM. Sandra Hill, a SANC member and SASP co-founder, worked for the D.C. government in a logistical position that would prove invaluable to supporting SASP and FSAM. Male members, Joseph Jordan and Ira Stohlmann would later join the core group.¹⁰²⁸ A D.C. insider, Stohlmann worked for the Washington, D.C. government and was secretary of the D.C. Council. Both Stohlmann and Sandra Hill, assisted SASP in navigating the D.C. bureaucracy when planning events, securing permits, and organizing marches. Sandra Hill, a well-regarded logistical expert, knew D.C.'s leadership (i.e. Mayor Barry and the Chief of Police) personally. She played an important role planning and orchestrating logistics related to the daily embassy protests and how people would be

¹⁰²⁷ Ibid. Prior to being hired fulltime, Counts had worked with TransAfrica through a student funded fellowship. Counts also participated in the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, working closely with Gay McDougall during the 1980s. The Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law was established in 1963 following a lawyers conference on civil rights at the White House. President John F. Kennedy encouraged the creation of the committee as there was no legal civil rights . Under Gay McDougall's leadership of the Southern Africa Project, the committee endorsed the FSAM and provided "legal observers" during the embassy protests. The Southern Africa Project "was a key player in the successful evolution to majority rule in Namibia and South Africa." Later McDougall would serve, as the only American, on the South African Electoral Commission during South Africa's first democratic election. (www.lawyerscommittee.org, accessed January 2015)

¹⁰²⁸ Hill, Interview I for *No Easy Victories*, 28. Joseph Jordan a SASP co-chair from 1982-1986, was a professor and "chair of African and African American Studies at Antioch College and a CORE faculty member of the Union Institute." "The Covenant Was Kept," *CrossRoads*, .9.

treated by city officials during the protests and when arrested.¹⁰²⁹ Though a local grassroots organization, SASP's relationships buoyed the success of FSAM.

Founders of SASP were influenced by personal observations, events and experiences happening during their early years, particularly growing up in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Indeed, the fight for civil rights in the Jim Crow South and racial disparities in the North, along with roots in black radicalism associated with the Black Power movement of the late 1960s and 1970s, shaped their philosophical and ideological perspectives. Long-term activists, SASP members were committed to domestic and international liberation and solidarity with southern Africans. Skills learned along the way proved beneficial to the grassroots success of SASP and FSAM. The eventual sanctions against South Africa, resulted as SASP members worked in various capacities to support the movement that would lead to unprecedented demonstrations, media coverage, and sanctions.

SASP structured its leadership according to a "collective model," which had worked well for SANC. Their approach to solidarity work "had a set of features that distinguished them from other groups."¹⁰³⁰ Like SANC, SASP continued to embrace "a political perspective that would allow them to offer consistent and timely analysis" of issues in the struggle requiring members "to engage in ongoing study and political education using skills, contacts, and resources" previously cultivated. As a black led group, they centered their attention and "work on the African American community."¹⁰³¹

¹⁰²⁹ Adwoa Dunn-Mouton, interview by author, telephone, May 20, 2014.

¹⁰³⁰ Jordan, "Solidarity as an Organizing Principle," 20.

¹⁰³¹ Ibid.

Further, in keeping with key elements of conscientization, SASP “committed [them]selves to an organized and continuous process of self-critique of our mission, philosophy and practice.”¹⁰³²

SASP kept its core membership small (i.e. 15 – 20 members), to maintain a collective and manageable work style within a solidarity model. Though encouraged by others to broaden the membership, they attribute their success to remaining small. This was strategically intentional, to quell possible infiltration of the group as seen throughout the civil rights and Black Power movements. Attendance at monthly meetings included a broader group of supporters. SASP’s recruitment occurred “twice a year, in September and immediately following [its] week-long material aid campaign.”¹⁰³³ New members were vetted; individuals could not simply fill out a form and declare themselves full members of SASP. Notably, the recruitment of new members was “selective.” Potential members were “asked to attend general meetings held every 3 months, and [participate in] a process devised to find out general information and history on individuals.”¹⁰³⁴ Though not always easy to balance the demands of their schedules, Jordan insists they “were able to develop a model for working with crucial sectors of the community including church, youth, education and labor.”¹⁰³⁵ Adding, SASP’s “structure also dictated the way we interacted with representatives of liberation organizations and

¹⁰³² Ibid. SASP enumerated the “pros” and “cons” of their major events, they revealed internal and external achievements and concerns with logistics, venues, timing, speakers, attendance, and staffing. As part of their self-evaluation, they included specific suggestions to enhance future activities. SASP understood many of their concerns reflected challenges faced by small grassroots, all volunteer organizations. From these experiences SASP developed effective strategies for organizing and involving the local community. Moreover, their philosophical self-critique, reflected tenets of Black Power and Black Consciousness, in that they were always questioning, reflecting, and improving.

¹⁰³³ Southern Africa Support Project, “SASP Retreat 1981.”

¹⁰³⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰³⁵ Jordan, “Solidarity as an Organizing Principle,” 20.

national and international groups.”¹⁰³⁶ A core coordinating committee provided overall organizational leadership and determined policy and protocols; the general membership attended monthly meetings, served on subcommittees, and assisted with a broad range of tasks. Three core sub-committees focused on information, administrative, and community work.¹⁰³⁷ In the beginning, a need for “internal education” became a value and practice of SASP. They determined that to do solidarity work, members needed to know the facts, thus “education sessions [were] held once a month” for members.¹⁰³⁸ Jordan summarizes, “What was critical to us was the community folk be able to make their political analysis the basis for action, which led to longer term participation and more committed work.”¹⁰³⁹

SASP correspondence and materials reveal several co-chairpersons led the organization or major initiatives, during its twelve years. Sylvia Hill, Adowa Dunn-Mouton, Karen Jefferson, Kathy Flewellen,¹⁰⁴⁰ and Joseph Jordan, served in leadership positions. Though entirely separate organizations, many in SASP leadership also served in some capacity with TransAfrica and other key organizations with strategic value to FSAM. For example, as previously mentioned, Cecelie Counts held one of TransAfrica’s few fulltime staff positions. Hill was a member of FSAM Steering Committee and of TransAfrica’s Board of Directors, where she continues to support the organization. Further, Sandra Hill and Ira Stohlman held strategically valuable positions within

¹⁰³⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰³⁷ Southern Africa Support Project, “SASP Retreat 1982,” 8.

¹⁰³⁸ Southern Africa Support Project, “SASP Retreat 1981.”

¹⁰³⁹ Jordan, “Solidarity as an Organizing Principle,” 21.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Kathy Flewellen, student of Sylvia Hill’s at Macalester University in Minnesota, helped with organizing the pan African congress in Dar es Salaam; she later moved to Washington, DC joining in the work of SASP.

Washington, D.C.'s government. Adwoa Dunn-Mouton, a legislative aide for the House Sub-committee on Africa, and Kathy Flewellen, who represented the Washington Office of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), brought invaluable resources and knowledge to the group. Though a local grassroots group, collectively SASP's core-leadership team brought considerable influence to the anti-apartheid movement.

Local, national, and international organizations endorsed the work of SASP and co-sponsored events with them over the years. Labor unions, associations, student organizations, politicians, African liberation organizations like the Washington Office on Africa (WOA), faith-based organizations including the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC), and local churches were among these groups. As discussed in the previous chapter, Bill Lucy, president of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists worked closely with SASP leadership in support of FSAM. Black faith-based organizations including the Baptist Ministers Alliance, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, National Office of Black Catholics, and the Commission for Racial Justice – United Methodist Church, endorsed the work of SASP.¹⁰⁴¹ More than ten local churches regularly supported SASP initiatives.¹⁰⁴² In an April 19, 1984 letter from the New York Office of the ANC of South Africa addressed to Hill, Mfanafuthi J. Makatini, wrote:

On behalf of the A.N.C. I have the honour to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to you and the southern [sic] Africa Support Project for the hospitality and assistance you accorded our representative, Mr. Themba Ntinga, during his visit to U.D.C. on the 11th of April, 1984. We welcome this as yet

¹⁰⁴¹ Rubin L. Tendai, "Letter to the Commission on the Program to Combat Racism, World Council of Churches," July 23, 1981, Box 4 Folder 9, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University. See the template of this letterhead, which lists SASP supporters.

¹⁰⁴² Hill, interview.

another testimony of the S.A.S.P.'s unswerving commitment to the struggle against apartheid waged by the people of South Africa under the leadership of the A.N.C. We look forward to continued cooperation between our organisations.¹⁰⁴³ These local, national, and international organizations appreciated that through its actions and philosophy, SASP was fully committed to the liberation of southern Africans. In turn members of these organizations served as foot soldiers, in and outside of the Washington Metropolitan Area, during FSAM.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE: STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMS

Operational transparency, too, fostered the camaraderie of the SASP. It reported fundraising results in its newsletters.¹⁰⁴⁴ Monthly meetings with members and the general community offered updates on “ways of being a part of the struggle to liberate Southern Africa.”¹⁰⁴⁵ Moreover, SASP worked collaboratively, as opposed to hierarchically, when running meetings and planning policy.

Perhaps SASP was concerned with fostering solidarity because it was aware that internal conflict as much as social justice shaped the anti-apartheid movement. SASP

¹⁰⁴³ Mfanafuthi J. Makatini, “Letter from Mfanafuthi J. Makatini to Sylvia Hill,” April 19, 1984, Box 3 Folder 3, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University. Makatini was the Director of the African National Congress International Department and Chief Representative to the U.N. & U.S.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Southern Africa Support Project, “What Is SASP?,” *Struggle: Newsletter of the Southern Africa Support Project*, Fall 1982, 2, Box 2 Folder 1, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Southern Africa Support Project, “Monthly Meeting Agenda,” May 18, 1982, Box 4 Folder 21, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University. The Fall 1982 newsletter, illustrates these objectives. They pose questions and provide many details in a concise format by asking and answering, for example, “What is SASP? – The Southern Africa Support Project is a community based activist organization which works to encourage community support of the liberation struggle taking place in southern Africa. Formed in 1978, SASP with the help of the Washington Community has raised over \$85,000 in cash and medical and educational supplies for the youth, women and children of southern Africa.” SASP, *Struggle*, Fall 1982, 2. In March 1985, they were more explicit about being a “Black Community-Based Activist Organization” and reported raising “over \$100,000” and in a later brochure, they reported raising “over \$200,000.” In each of these articles, SASP acknowledges the “help of the Washington Community,” in achieving their goals. SASP, *Struggle*, March 1985. Gestures such as this strengthened ties between SASP and the local community.

leaders certainly knew of the history of the CAA in New York City as well as the pioneering success produced by the estranged partners, Yergan and the Robesons, who galvanized nineteen thousand people to participate in “a public rally in support of South African miners” at Madison Square Garden in 1946.¹⁰⁴⁶ Like the CAA and ACOA before them, SASP balanced various racial, gender and class interests, which clashed and converged. This restless reality reminded and inspired SASP “organizers . . . [to] find ways to structure their political messages in the popular cultural forms which will attract the public,” with particular interest in the local black American community.¹⁰⁴⁷ SASP’s outreach efforts would extend primarily to churches, labor unions, and youth. At the same time, diverse individuals and organizations, such as white government civil servants became SASP members.¹⁰⁴⁸

Race Dynamics

Though SASP’s, “early base was mixed” racially and SASP worked with diverse progressive groups throughout the life of the organization, racial tensions did emerge.¹⁰⁴⁹ As attendance at monthly gatherings was multi-racial, managing the sometimes awkward “white-black coalition” became a distraction in the early 1980s.¹⁰⁵⁰ Hill remembered that some meetings “had many white males who would come to the group. And some were working in the Commerce Department or somewhere, a bureaucratic job, but they had

¹⁰⁴⁶ Counts, Hill, and Hill, “Notes on Building International Solidarity in the United States,” 51; Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 65. SASP leaders attributed part of that success “to do with the rally being rooted in the cultural reality of Harlem.” The article refers to a strike in the 1930s, which is an earlier date than the strike actually occurred.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Counts, Hill, and Hill, “Notes on Building International Solidarity in the United States,” 51.

¹⁰⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴⁹ Dunn-Mouton, interview.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Hill, Interview I for No Easy Victories.

extraordinary analytical skills.”¹⁰⁵¹ She appreciated their personal commitment and professional talents though, she noted, they would apparently “end up talking all the time,” consuming too much of the meeting time.¹⁰⁵² The SASP mix presented other challenges. Hill further explained: “we felt we had so much complexity, because the black community is so complex. We just couldn’t take the time, given that we were all working . . . to devote to interracial organizing. We couldn’t add the extra level.”¹⁰⁵³ Besides, Hill admitted, SASP was making “a political statement . . . [that] it was more important to organize the African-American community in order to change U.S. foreign policy . . . in the anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggles.”¹⁰⁵⁴ In this way, SASP was “able to penetrate diverse and influential sectors of the local community through unprecedented access” to black communities in Washington, DC.¹⁰⁵⁵ That is why TransAfrica and other liberation organizations “always consulted” SASP members because “they could bring out the troops.”¹⁰⁵⁶

Gender Dynamics

Like activists in the Civil Rights Movement, SASP grappled with unavoidable gender issues. Majority female led, SASP sought to create gender balance in their community outreach work and public presentations. At one point SASP had co-chairs “it had to be a man and a woman. And when we went out to do presentations, it had to be a man and a woman, because we were trying to show people that both men and women

¹⁰⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵² Ibid. See also, Dunn-Mouton interview.

¹⁰⁵³ Ibid., 30.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Counts, Hill, and Hill, “Notes on Building International Solidarity in the United States.”

¹⁰⁵⁶ Keita, interview. Dr. Keita had been affiliated with the WOA, AFSC, and NCC.

could know information and talk out issues.”¹⁰⁵⁷ Hill describes an instance in which she and a white male member (Kevin) presented at Union Temple Baptist Church in the Anacostia community of Washington, DC, after the presentation she explains “a woman came over to me and she says, ‘now baby’, you can speak by yourself, you speak very well, you really don’t need a white man to make you feel stronger [laughter].”¹⁰⁵⁸ In this example, SASP’s efforts to show gender balance were perceived differently than intended. Hill acknowledges, “people see through this lens – you think you’re doing something politically, but the symbolism maybe [seen] completely different.”¹⁰⁵⁹ SASP leadership recognized the importance of people’s perceptions and interpretation of information. Core leaders regularly challenged their own filters to make sure they were in solidarity with the community.

Class Consciousness and Activism

Grassroots efforts involved using practical strategies and untangling unnecessary complexities that might otherwise discourage community participation. SASP leadership tended to be well-educated and most were not native Washingtonians. SASP was particularly sensitive to assessing their effectiveness in connecting with the community. Indeed, some would describe key SASP members as “black intelligentsia.”¹⁰⁶⁰ During its 1981 retreat, SASP leadership discussed their “need to be more community oriented” and

¹⁰⁵⁷ Hill, Interview for No Easy Victories, 29.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Ibid., 29.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Hill, Interview I for No Easy Victories.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Keita, interview.

recognized class differences must be discussed.¹⁰⁶¹ SASP “had a kinship with TransAfrica” and though both groups had what some might describe as elite-educated leadership, they agreed on establishing a broader involved constituency, including working and middle-class people who sought to be conscientized.¹⁰⁶² Hill elaborates: “SASP designed conscious raising activities that were rooted in the popular cultural activities of different strata within the African-American community.”¹⁰⁶³ In this regard, SASP sponsored South African-themed events during the week of Kwanzaa, a black American cultural celebration spanning from December 26 to January 1. One flyer inviting the community announced, “You are invited to spend an evening of revolutionary dialogue and culture with SASP as we celebrate Kwanzaa with the community on Tuesday Evening 27 December 1983 at the Lansburgh Cultural Center...[in] Northwest, Washington, D.C.”¹⁰⁶⁴ The featured speaker was [Mr.] Damu Smith, a well-known D.C. civil rights activist and co-host of the radio show “Spirit in Action” on WPFW, a popular station among activists.¹⁰⁶⁵ SASP also directed its

¹⁰⁶¹ Southern Africa Support Project, “SASP Retreat 1981.” SASP self-assessed to determine if class differences and other factors influenced their approach or expectations that could lead to cleavages with the local community.

¹⁰⁶² Hill, interview. see also “*Presentation: The Free South Africa Movement*” by Sylvia Hill, UN Conference presentation posted on <http://www.anc.org.za/un/conference/shill.html>; 6.

¹⁰⁶³ Hill, “Presentation: The Free South Africa Movement,” 6.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Southern Africa Support Project, “Kujichagulia – Self Determination’ Kwanzaa Celebration,” December 1984, Box 4 Folder 39, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University. Please note, founded by Dr. Maulana Karenga, Kwanzaa celebrations, rooted in African American culture, are often held in homes and community venues beginning on December 26 – January 1; also note Damu Smith was a highly regarded “internationally known D.C. peace activist who advocated for a Martin Luther King Jr. holiday in the 1980s, fought chemical pollution on the Louisiana Gulf Coast in the 1990s and campaigned against the war in Iraq in the new century,” as well as, an anti-apartheid activist, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2006/05/06/AR2006050601282.html>; accessed 4/29/2014

¹⁰⁶⁵ Darryl Fears, “Activist, Radio Show Host Damu Smith,” *Washington Post*, May 7, 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2006/05/06/AR2006050601282.html>.

message at “the upper middle class as they grappled with how they wanted to view themselves in the struggle.”¹⁰⁶⁶ Hill explains, “for many, this struggle represented an opportunity to right their failure to act during the civil rights struggle.”¹⁰⁶⁷ Thus, black corporate executives answered the call of SASP to speak out about their employer’s position vis-à-vis doing business in the apartheid system.¹⁰⁶⁸ SASP’s catholic approach caught the attention of *Washington Post* journalist Karlyn Barker. She wrote that “for every celebrity who goes to jail or holds a news conference denouncing apartheid and U.S. investments in South Africa, there are dozens of the not-so-famous who march and chant and provide a supportive presence” in FSAM protests.¹⁰⁶⁹ For his part, retired D.C. postal worker, Thomas Reid, who had participated in the 1963 March on Washington, joined the embassy demonstrations because SASP brought home to him that “blacks in South Africa cannot vote or own land or enjoy any of the rights he now takes for granted.”¹⁰⁷⁰ The “participants range[d] from novices to protest veterans of the civil rights and antiwar era,” Barker remarked, adding that “they are all ages, many races and several faiths. They are uniformly peaceful and collectively angry.”¹⁰⁷¹ The *New York Times* similarly reported, “From its start the movement has attracted broad backing from such diverse groups as the A.F.L.-C.I.O., National Organization for Women, and

¹⁰⁶⁶ Hill, “Presentation: The Free South Africa Movement,” 6.

¹⁰⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶⁹ Barker, “Background Troops of Antiapartheid.”

¹⁰⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷¹ *Ibid.*

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Perhaps more important, Miss Counts said, is the continuing support of ‘middle America.’”¹⁰⁷²

SASP leaders channeled the local groundswell of protest, before and during FSAM, into lobbying trips which aimed to “change national laws about [the United States’] dealing with South Africa” and apply pressure on international bodies to do the same.¹⁰⁷³ During one appearance in New York City before a UN Special Political Committee on November 8, 1983, Hill “respectfully ask[ed] the distinguished delegates . . . to join SASP and so many other American organizations in working to further isolate the apartheid regime, and support the freedom struggle in southern Africa.”¹⁰⁷⁴ Members of faith-based organizations joined SASP in its lobbying efforts. Since, D.C. native and SASP supporter Mark Harrison was based in New York he would sometimes, “represent them [SASP] at the UN.”¹⁰⁷⁵ In coalition with other Washington, D.C. based groups, SASP also approached David Clark regarding the D.C. government supporting an upcoming divestment bill.¹⁰⁷⁶ Activist Nkechi Taifa, adds, “The Southern African Freedom Movement in D.C., led principally by SASP, helped to bring about the passage

¹⁰⁷² “New Tactics on South Africa.”

¹⁰⁷³ Sylvia Hill, “Petition to the Political Committee of the United Nations,” November 8, 1983, Box 4 Folder 40, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Ibid., 12. Note: Then chairman of the Special Political Committee on General Assembly was Dr. Ernesto Rodriguez-Medina of Colombia

¹⁰⁷⁵ Harrison, interview, March 28, 2013; While in New York, Harrison worked for Clergy and Laity Concerned (CALC); no longer operational, CALC was “an action oriented, interfaith, peace and justice organization,” based in New York city; “CALC was founded in 1965 to mobilize opposition to U.S. intervention in South-east Asia,” later focusing its work on challenging “government and corporate policies that oppress people personally, politically, and economically.” Harrison also worked in various capacities for the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, where he continues as the Director of the Peace with Justice Program. Howard, “CALC Report,” 2 Harrison also worked in various capacities for the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, where he continues as the Director of the Peace with Justice Program.

¹⁰⁷⁶ D.C. Divestment Coalition, “Letter to David Clark, Chairman of the D.C. City Council,” September 1, 1983, Box 3 Folder 17, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University; Hill, “Petition to the Political Committee of the United Nations,” 11.

of a comprehensive divestment bill in the D.C. City Council in 1983.”¹⁰⁷⁷ Hill explained that SASP “also cooperates with other groups working for similar objectives.”¹⁰⁷⁸ She added, “recently SASP was one of 24 American labor, political[,] religious, civil rights and women’s organizations representing a combined constituency of 15 million American[s] which issued the report: Namibia – the Crisis in U.S. Policies Towards Southern Africa. This report led directly to the introduction of legislation calling for a new U.S. policy towards the Namibia negotiations, and an end to linkage and constructive engagement.”¹⁰⁷⁹ The Reagan administration’s policy of “constructive engagement” was considered particularly egregious, and the activists in the anti-apartheid movement fought a long and hard battle lobbying against that policy. Adowa Dunn-Mouton, longtime SASP member, worked on Capitol Hill during the push for sanctions against South Africa and U.S. companies doing business in South Africa. Dunn-Mouton served in key staff positions, on Capitol Hill, during the period in which FSAM and members of Congress pushed for stronger legislation; “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 – 1993.”¹⁰⁸⁰ Her interactions and connections on the Hill proved strategically beneficial in assessing the leanings of legislators on supporting or not supporting sanctions. Dunn-Mouton reminds us that many lawmakers put forth their individual bills, the “task of the sub-committee was to pull everything together to make

¹⁰⁷⁷ Taifa, interview.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Hill, “Petition to the Political Committee of the United Nations,” 11.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Minter, Hovey, and Cobb Jr., *No Easy Victories*, 195.

one bill.”¹⁰⁸¹ During this process, they were able to hear recommendations from members of FSAM Steering Committee, among other groups.¹⁰⁸² The most notable lobbying achievement, involving the Anti-Apartheid Movement [AAM] resulted in the passage of the CAAA in 1986.

The *Newsletter of the Southern Africa Support Project*, a publication with the upper-case title, *STRUGGLE*, perhaps did the most to sustain and broadcast SASP’s conscientizing efforts. It particularly spoke to D.C.’s black residents, encouraged them to learn about African liberation movements, join SASP ranks, and chant phrases such as “A Luta Continua!” (meaning, the struggle continues!). Above all, *STRUGGLE* solicited all to take action. Mindful of the need for funds, *STRUGGLE* urged readers to contribute tax-deductible donations.¹⁰⁸³ It also asked readers to “pass this newsletter on to your family, friends, co-workers – let SASP know if more copies are needed or if you’d like more info.” The SASP especially appealed to large assemblies in the “church[es], organization[s] and/or social club[s] to include slides or a film on Southern Africa in a regularly scheduled meeting. Or, sponsor a program on Southern Africa.”¹⁰⁸⁴ Printed words were not the only way of communicating the SASP message. *STRUGGLE* photographs portrayed community people in D.C.-area South Africa boycotts,

¹⁰⁸¹ Dunn-Mouton, interview.

¹⁰⁸² Ibid.

¹⁰⁸³ Southern Africa Support Project, “What You Can Do?,” *Struggle: Newsletter of the Southern Africa Support Project*, November 1983, Box 4 Folder 3, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Ibid. SASP further suggested its readers: Call the offices of newspapers, TV, and radio stations when you notice that only the viewpoint of South Africa is being presented. And when listening to your elected representatives speak, ask them about their position on South Africa and the role of the United States in the Southern Africa region.

disseminating information and signing protest petitions.¹⁰⁸⁵ During the infamous South African State of Emergency in 1985, *STRUGGLE* featured powerful images of police brutality in black townships with the caption: “What you can do.” The recommendation was to “Let us know when you spot South African – manufactured products in stores in your areas...Encourage your friends and relatives not to buy South African products, and also encourage stores where you buy not to carry such.”¹⁰⁸⁶ Finally, without fail *STRUGGLE* mustered readers to join the FSAM “picket line at the South African Embassy, Monday thru Friday, 3 p.m. – 5 p.m. at 3051 Massachusetts Ave., N.W.”¹⁰⁸⁷

GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM: CHALLENGES AND REWARDS

Coalitions and Collaborations

SASP, along with other groups, endorsed and co-sponsored activities and events aimed at educating the community and protesting pro-South African initiatives. SASP joined TransAfrica, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and other organizations in endorsing a September 22, 1981 demonstration at the White House in protest of the Reagan Administration’s support of South Africa. Titled, “From Washington, D.C. to Johannesburg: Stop the Reagan/South Africa Alliance!!” the event was one of many grassroots demonstrations co-sponsored by SASP.¹⁰⁸⁸

¹⁰⁸⁵ Ibid. See also: Keita, interview.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Southern Africa Support Project, “What You Can Do?,” *Struggle: Newsletter of the Southern Africa Support Project*, March 1985, Box 4 Folder 3, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸⁸ “From Washington, D.C. to Johannesburg: Stop the Reagan/South Africa Alliance!!,” September 22, 1981, Box 4 Folder 14, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

Two years later, several Washington based organizations joined SASP to protest “the South African Business Seminar” scheduled to take place at the Madison Hotel in Washington, D.C. on October 11, 1983. The diverse groups included the “Committee for a Free South Africa, Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, Sojourners, Southern Africa Support Project, TransAfrica, TransAfrica D.C. Support Group, [and the] Washington Office on Africa.”¹⁰⁸⁹ The flyer outlined these organizations’ specific concerns about the intent of the seminar, asserting “The South Africa[n] Embassy is sponsoring a seminar in Washington, D.C. to promote increased investment by U.S. companies in racist South Africa. Join us in protesting continuing U.S. collaboration with apartheid.”¹⁰⁹⁰

Though not a standard operating practice, SASP did occasionally work in coalition with like-minded organizations, which broadened the influence of SASP and partners, allowing them to reach a larger audience. In a September 1, 1983 letter to David Clark, Chairman of the D.C. City Council, from “The D.C. Divest Coalition – Leslie Lewis, Southern Africa Support Project – Chris Root, Committee for a Free South Africa – Cherie Waters, TransAfrica” wrote, “on behalf of the D.C. Divest Coalition, we are writing you to urge your support to Bill 518 on divestiture that will be coming before the

¹⁰⁸⁹ “Stop U.S. Investment in Apartheid,” October 11, 1983, Box 4 Folder 43, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Ibid.

Council on Tuesday, September 16, 1983.” They mention that the coalition has talked to “thousands of D.C. residents who have expressed strong support for this Bill.”¹⁰⁹¹

At the same time, working in coalitions could be challenging when communications or follow-through broke down. Occasionally, SASP leadership found it necessary to address miscommunications and to remind organizations of their capabilities. In response to a letter from “Karen [Jefferson] and Sylvia [Hill]” Randall Robinson replied, “Thank you for your letter of March 5 [1984] in which you clarified SASP’s capabilities, in terms of time and manpower, to become involved in our D.C.-based efforts in support of the cultural boycott.”¹⁰⁹² Apparently there was some misunderstanding about why SASP “was not present at the UN conference,” with the D.C. Chapter of the Cultural Boycott Coordinating Committee.¹⁰⁹³ Robinson acknowledged, “It is unfortunate that there was a misunderstanding;” adding, “but we appreciate your having taken the time out to re-affirm your interest in working with us.”¹⁰⁹⁴

These communications proved helpful, as SASP continued its work with TransAfrica and later, FSAM initiative, one of the few formal coalitions they would form. Hill recalls their motivation:

TransAfrica’s political analysis as well as SASP’s was that we needed to have the black community and its diversity organized around these issues in order to put pressure around U.S. Foreign Policy and that this was a historical legacy that we had inherited and we had a right to it and we had to do it. So, in the course of organizing...organizations develop their own organizational feelings of their

¹⁰⁹¹ D.C. Divestment Coalition, “Letter to David Clark.”

¹⁰⁹² Randall Robinson, “Letter to Sylvia [Hill] and Kathy [Jefferson},” March 27, 1984, Box 3 Folder 3, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

¹⁰⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Ibid.

rights of space and their sense of whether they are the primary actor. And I think some of that operated.¹⁰⁹⁵

Hill explains the challenges of working in coalitions and acknowledges “that while we got a lot of criticisms for not working more in coalitions, . . . people never quite understood . . . SASP [members] worked full time jobs . . . So we weren’t just sitting in a place where we could have that kind of coalition. And that was just a reality.”¹⁰⁹⁶ By this time (i.e. 1983) Counts worked fulltime for TransAfrica. Hill and Counts remind us that SASP “met on Saturdays and Sundays around people’s kitchen tables, we never really had an office.”¹⁰⁹⁷ Since they did not have offices, they would occasionally rent space when working on major campaigns. TransAfrica had a very small staff and also faced issues regarding working in coalitions.

Nevertheless, SASP co-sponsored, received endorsements, endorsed, and collaborated with many individuals and organizations throughout its existence. In fact, most of SASP’s key leaders joined other anti-apartheid activists and scholars in a two-day symposium sponsored by the Washington Office on Africa Education Fund.¹⁰⁹⁸ During their tenth anniversary celebration, held at the Shiloh Baptist Church Family Life Center on December 9, 1988, they acknowledged and paid tribute to over 150 churches, individuals, community leaders, and organizations that supported SASP initiatives. Among them were key organizations heavily engaged in anti-apartheid work such as the

¹⁰⁹⁵ Hill, interview.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Ibid.; Counts, interview.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Washington Office on Africa Education Fund, “‘Total Strategy’ Apartheid’s Regional War - WOAEP Symposium,” January 1987, African Policy Information Center, African Activist Archive, http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-261. Sylvia Hill, Adwoa Dunn, Sandra Hill, and Kathy Flewellen were among the conference presenters.

Washington Office on Africa, Committee for a Free South Africa, African National Congress of South Africa, and the Dennis Brutus Defense Committee.¹⁰⁹⁹

Acknowledgments came from small business owners, churches, labor unions, and anti-apartheid organizations like ACOA whose program book ad stated “The American Committee on Africa Salutes SASP.”¹¹⁰⁰ Indeed, SASP acknowledged “these achievements were reached by a coalition of people and organizations agreeing on and working to reach a common objective.”¹¹⁰¹

Building Awareness: Education and Conscientization

Insuring SASP members and the community understood the history, ongoing challenges, and U.S. foreign policy impact on the region, education was paramount. Being well informed was a core tenet of SASP’s conscientization and solidarity work. Every interaction, every event was seen as an opportunity to bring awareness to the struggle in southern Africa and how black Americans’ experiences in the U.S. were related. Sylvia Hill explained, “because of the devastating impact of U.S. policy in southern Africa, we have extremely important work to do in exposing its true nature.”¹¹⁰² Always mindful of their mission, “political objectives” were developed for all major educational outreach activities. “SASP[‘s] Working Guidelines for Southern Africa Week” April 8 -14, 1984 included five primary objectives: “1...expose [the] South Africa

¹⁰⁹⁹ Southern Africa Support Project, “Unity in Action: A Tribute to the Life of Nelson Mandela,” July 16, 1983, Box 3 Folder 57, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

¹¹⁰⁰ Southern Africa Support Project, “Ten Years of Solidarity and Commitment.”

¹¹⁰¹ Ibid., 1. In the event’s program booklet SASP fittingly recognized “the martyrs and patriots of southern Africa who have given their lives to free their homelands and to those early Afro-Americans who, with their untiring efforts, let us know that none of us can be free until all of us are free.”

¹¹⁰² Hill, “Petition to the Political Committee of the United Nations,” 10.

regime as a regional terrorist...2...make the plight of Namibian refugees visible; 3. expose U.S. role in support of the S.A. regime; 4. depict some of the development problems of progressive countries in the region and some of the significant progress they have made since independence; 5. depict the impact of the military aggression and destabilization as it affects women, children and the elderly in particular.”¹¹⁰³ Moreover, SASP sought to educate people on how their personal daily decisions could support black liberation efforts in southern Africa. To educate the public “SASP use[d] its newsletter; its annual solidarity week highlighted by a fund-raising radiothon focusing on one of the southern African countries fighting to free itself; talks, films and slide shows in churches, schools, and union halls; and factual briefings for local and national elected officials to bring realities in southern Africa home to the public.”¹¹⁰⁴ In addition to planned events,

¹¹⁰³ Southern Africa Support Project, “Southern Africa Week - 1984 Planning,” April 8, 1984, Box 3 Folder 35, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

¹¹⁰⁴ Hill, “Petition to the Political Committee of the United Nations,” 10; The 1989 Southern Africa Support Week (SAW), for example, included broadcasts on Howard University’s Public Broadcast Station, WHMM TV 32 where viewers watched a wide-range of programs highlighting issues in southern Africa. During their tenth anniversary celebration, in December of 1988, SASP acknowledged that “the ‘Southern Africa Week’ campaigns [had] depended on the D.C. metropolitan area community along with radio stations WHUR and WPFW, and WHMM-TV, who contributed air time to allow SASP to bring vital information about southern Africa to the community.” Southern Africa Support Project, “Ten Years of Solidarity and Commitment”. Much of the 1989 SAW film series focused on apartheid South Africa, featuring reactions to U.S. policies and stories from South African activists. Film titles and descriptions reveal the focus of SASP’s community education including: “Nelson Mandela: The Struggle is My Life Traces the history of an awakening people and profiles the activist; Sanctions Against Apartheid: A Firing Line Special From South Africa-South Africans from various backgrounds address America about what they think is right and wrong with U.S. sanctions.” Destructive Engagement Criss-crosses the “Front Line States” to investigate South Africa’s regional war.; Witness to Apartheid Filmed in secret during the 1985 “State of Emergency.” and Spear of the Nation: History of the African National Congress Features candid interviews, archival footage, and more to tell the story of the ANC.” Always concerned with highlighting the plight of women, SAW objectives and events included a special focus on South African women. In 1989, two films featured “the women of South Africa.” [SAW 1989] Collectively, these timely and provocative film, fit well with African American sentiments of the time. Namibia and other southern African countries, were highlighted during the 1984 SAW activities. SAW was not SASP’s first week-long program series in support of southern Africa; beginning in 1981, SASP focused its work on Namibia and held “three annual ‘Namibia Week’; campaigns” with the goal of “educating the community about the illegal occupation of Namibia by South Africa.” Southern Africa Support Project, “Ten Years of Solidarity and Commitment; During

SASP leadership actively seized upon opportunities to “piggy back” on community-based events and activities by setting up information tables at local festivals and celebrations. Ongoing, internal and external education and training enhanced the knowledge of core members and supporters. Moreover, through these activities SASP gained trust and respect from the black community.

Skilled educators, researchers, legal experts, analysts, and grassroots activists, members of SASP were uniquely qualified to develop articles, programs, and materials in ways assessable to the public. The information and marketing materials for SASP’s June 24, 1984 benefit gospel concert, contained a two page “Fact Sheet on Southern Africa;” which, highlighted core issues such as “Whites control 87% of South Africa’s land mass and 70% of the country’s national income” and “South Africa is trying to prevent the independence of Namibia, a uranium rich country which South Africa illegally occupies.”¹¹⁰⁵ Adwoa Dunn-Mouton, described as a “movement veteran who focused on public education” had also directed an education outreach program for the African Studies Program at Howard University.¹¹⁰⁶ In this role, she interacted frequently with teachers and students teaching about Africa, which provided opportunities to build relationships and contacts in connection with SASP.¹¹⁰⁷ Generally, she found that

SASP’s “Zimbabwe Week,” organized in 1979, “the D.C. community contributed 3,000 pounds of clothings [sic] and almost \$10,000 in financial support for education and medical supplies to help Zimbabwean refugees in Mozambique and Angola.” Summers, “Southern Africa Support Project Marks a Decade of Struggle,” 10.

¹¹⁰⁵ Southern Africa Support Project, “‘Fact Sheet on Southern Africa’ for Benefit Gospel Concert Packet,” June 1984, Box 3 Folder 39, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

¹¹⁰⁶ Minter, Hovey, and Cobb Jr., *No Easy Victories*, 195. See also various correspondence in SASP collection, MSRRC Box 3, Folder 3

¹¹⁰⁷ Dunn-Mouton, interview. Dunn-Mouton worked closely with resource teachers, along with other SASP members, to develop educational slide shows and materials for use in schools and churches.

students in D.C. had “no sense of Africa;” thus these opportunities to teach were invaluable.¹¹⁰⁸ Other SASP members were educators and students, making connections with colleges and universities. Sylvia Hill, a professor, and Karen Jefferson, a librarian, brought strong research and writing capabilities to SASP.

Education reached beyond local adults. SASP developed opportunities for children to learn about and actively engage in southern African liberation activities. Indeed, conscientizing youth represented a key strategy of the Black Power and Black Consciousness movements. “School, university, and youth mobilization,” was among the topics included in a January 16th monthly meeting agenda for SASP.¹¹⁰⁹ Children participated in SASP protests and other anti-apartheid activities, some of which were designed specifically for them. On Saturday, April 21, 1985 SASP organized “Children for Justice in South Africa, *A Children’s Day Anti-Apartheid Demonstration*” at the South African Embassy.¹¹¹⁰ The publicity flier included photos of South African children in distress, including the iconic photo of Hector Pieterse, the thirteen-year-old student killed by South African police during the 1976 Soweto demonstration uprising. These images served as reminders of government repression and the urgency of the situation in South Africa. Further, the courageousness of young people shone through.¹¹¹¹ SASP

¹¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁰⁹ Southern Africa Support Project, “Monthly Meeting Agenda.”

¹¹¹⁰ Southern Africa Support Project, “Children for Justice,” April 27, 1985, Box 4 Folder 3, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

¹¹¹¹ Magaziner points to BCM ideology as influencing Soweto students to protest “the Department of Bantu Education’s mandate that instruction be half in Afrikaans and half in English.” Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets*, 155; Considered the language of the oppressors, students grew “agitated” over what to them was the last straw in an already demeaning education. Contrary to the ANC taking responsibility for the uprising, Magaziner and other scholars show a convincing connection between the student actions and the influences of the black consciousness movement. Magaziner asserts, “There is disagreement about whether it [the BCM] was responsible for planning the Soweto uprising in 1976 – but it is inarguable that the ideas,

invited “children in public schools, private schools, and independent black schools...to participate in this demonstration at the South African Embassy to show their support for the people of South Africa in their just struggle for liberation and self-determination.”¹¹¹² Specialized materials were developed for teachers, such as “A Suggested Guide for Teaching About the Struggle for Self-Determination and the Refuge Problem in Southern Africa.” These documents suggested films, learning activities, resources for speakers, and useful publications. Speaker resources included the Metropolitan AME Church and the Commission on Racial Justice – United Church of Christ.¹¹¹³ SASP effectively met their goal of teaching and engaging youth in solidarity work through conscientization.

SASP intervened when mis-education loomed. Exposing local youth to South African officials who represented the apartheid government, was not acceptable to SASP. When the Reverend Charles Briody, a Banneker High School teacher, protested the visit of a South African regional inspector to Banneker Academic High School, SASP co-chairperson Dunn-Mouton responded. In a letter to Principal Mazie Wilson, Dunn-Mouton asserted, “We would like to express our deepest concern over the invitation of a South African official to Banneker Academic High School. The invitation to a representative of a government that practices racial segregation and violence as a matter of policy is clearly not consistent with the beliefs and aspirations of residents and

discourses, and imaginaries that inspired students to protest on 16 June belonged to the years that came before.” *Ibid.*, 5.

¹¹¹² Southern Africa Support Project, “Children for Justice.”

¹¹¹³ Southern Africa Support Project, “A Suggested Guide for Teaching About the Struggle for Self-Determination and the Refuge Problem in Southern Africa,” n.d., Box 4 Folder 42, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

taxpayers of this city.”¹¹¹⁴ After congratulating Briody for promptly responding, Dunn-Mouton added, “We hope the reprimand to Rev. Briody will be lifted as it was clearly undeserved and that Banneker will continue to represent the best in enlightened and progressive education for our children.”¹¹¹⁵ Undoubtedly, Dunn-Mouton’s letter caused the principal to reconsider hosting the government official.

BLACK AMERICAN CHURCH INVOLVEMENT

Churches were perhaps SASP’s most important partners.¹¹¹⁶ Though most of SASP leadership did not consider themselves religious, per se, they worked closely with black American churches and church people at both historically black churches and those under white denominational umbrellas. These churches served as venues for many SASP and FSAM meetings and events. Indeed, Hill admits, “None of us...particularly wanted to spend our Sunday in church.”¹¹¹⁷ SASP recognized the importance of reaching the black community through the church and understood that they “were going to have to get involved with the church sector.”¹¹¹⁸ Leaving nothing to happenstance, SASP prepared a work plan titled, “Strategy for Achieving Objectives,” a working document outlining strategies for communicating with churches including writing “Letter[s] to churches and

¹¹¹⁴ Adwoa Dunn-Mouton, “Letter to Mazie Wilson, Principal Banneker Academic High School,” August 5, 1983, Box 4 Folder 44, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University. Please note: The letter was copied to the Reverend David Eaton minister of All Souls Unitarian Universalist church and Mrs. Floretta McKenzie, then superintendent of Washington DC Public Schools.

¹¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹¹⁶ Southern Africa Support Project, “Monthly Meeting Agenda,” 2.

¹¹¹⁷ Hill, Interview I for No Easy Victories, 29; Counts, interview. Although she was not a member of a church in D.C., Dunn-Mouton grew up very active in church in California, thus, very comfortable and knowledgeable about the black church community.

¹¹¹⁸ Hill, Interview I for No Easy Victories, 29.

other organizations,” as well as “call[ing] churches.”¹¹¹⁹ In line with its goal of engaging the local community, SASP reached out to local churches and not as much to large denominational organizations.

As SASP’s general membership grew more diverse, Hill recalls, “one of the real interesting debates that did come to [a] head was the discussion of whites going to talk to white churches. And they really did not want to do that.”¹¹²⁰ Questioning SASP’s intentions, some of the white members felt they were asked to go to white churches because SASP leadership did not “like white people.”¹¹²¹ SASP leadership understood that if they wanted to engage church people then SASP members would have to move past their discomforts and trust leadership decisions. As in this example, occasionally, feelings took precedence “as opposed to really what is the analysis behind this.”¹¹²² Nonetheless, SASP members reached out to diverse churches in the local community, gaining their trust and support.

SASP effectively engaged with church people and encouraged them to participate in supporting liberation in Southern Africa. Mark Harrison asserts the “Southern Africa Support Project did an excellent job mobilizing churches here in Washington around the Free South Africa [Movement].”¹¹²³ Taifa concurs, SASP was “very effective with the

¹¹¹⁹ Southern Africa Support Project, “Strategy for Achieving Objectives,” n.d., Box 2 Black Binder, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University. During this pre-email and pre-internet era, SASP relied heavily on distributing information through letters, fliers, and direct contact. SASP’s work plan included assignments for team members, pre- and post-event tasks, as well as strategies to encourage continued relationships and interest in its events.

¹¹²⁰ Hill, Interview I for No Easy Victories.

¹¹²¹ Ibid., 29–30.

¹¹²² Ibid., 30.

¹¹²³ Harrison, interview, March 28, 2013.

progressive community, the church communities, and via the radio.”¹¹²⁴ Further, well-before FSAM, “SASP was able to involve diverse organizations and churches” in solidarity work.¹¹²⁵ Indeed, in 1978 their first year, “twenty (20) churches from every denomination,” were involved in their activities.¹¹²⁶ Some of the earliest churches opening their doors to SASP already “had some basis of understanding” about what was happening in Africa and provided opportunities for SASP to meet with parishioners. Dunn-Mouton recalls presenting to congregations toward the end of Sunday services, after which members posed “lots of questions” demonstrating their deep interest in knowing more about the liberation struggle in South Africa.¹¹²⁷

SASP understood the importance of direct people to people connections, therefore, they hosted leaders and speakers from Southern Africa to dialogue with supporters in the U.S.¹¹²⁸ Counts remembers, “churches played a large role in [outreach] effort[s]. We had gospel shows, we had Sweet Honey in the Rock concerts, and we had [Sam] Nujoma from SWAPO, and Jonny Makhathini who represented the ANC in New York.”¹¹²⁹ Speakers from southern Africa, were not all well-known leaders; students and those in exile participated as well. ANC regional representative, Dumi Matabane spoke at a tribute to Nelson Mandela, held at People’s Congregational Church in June 1983.¹¹³⁰

¹¹²⁴ Taifa, interview.

¹¹²⁵ Southern Africa Support Project, “SASP Annual Report 1978 - 1979,” 2.

¹¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹¹²⁷ Dunn-Mouton, interview.

¹¹²⁸ Counts, interview.

¹¹²⁹ Ibid. Nujoma was a freedom fighter and the first president of Namibia; Johnstone “Jonny” Mfanafuthi Makhathini was the head of the department of international affairs for the ANC.

www.southafricaonline.com

¹¹³⁰ Southern Africa Support Project, “Tribute to the Life of Nelson Mandela.”

Parishioners could then “visualize” what was happening, by hearing first-hand stories. An effective strategy, these interactions led to more support for the cause.¹¹³¹

Co-chairs Sylvia Hill and Karen Jefferson, in a mass mailing to local pastors, extended “an invitation to ... church membership to join with SASP and the metropolitan community in expressing solidarity with the people of Southern Africa during the week of June 10th – 16th [1984].”¹¹³² Achieving its goals of providing material support, necessitated fundraising. Hill and Jefferson announced this “rare U.S. public appearance of Namibian freedom fighter Sam Nujoma” would kick-off SASP’s “campaign to raise funds for the purchase of medicines for Namibian refugees.”¹¹³³

Black church involvement went beyond providing space for events and raising funds. Administrative and fiscal assistance, such as managing the SASP account for their annual Namibia Week, were among the many ways churches supported the work of SASP.¹¹³⁴ Proceeds from the Radiothon and other fundraisers, were deposited into the “Metropolitan AME SASP account,” and managed by, Major Wilburn, a parishioner. In a letter to the Reverend Robert Pruitt, Hill acknowledged, he “has been a special help in working with our account, and we appreciate his willingness to maintain our refugee

¹¹³¹ Counts, interview.

¹¹³² Sylvia Hill and Karen Jefferson, “Letter to Pastors,” May 29, 1984, Box 3 Folder 42, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

¹¹³³ Ibid.

¹¹³⁴ SASP’s signature fundraising programs were held annually and were called Namibia Week and later Southern Africa Week. These events included educational, recreational, and cultural activities aimed at raising funds and material goods to support southern African people.

account books.”¹¹³⁵ SASP had built a close, trusting working relationship with the historic Metropolitan AME Church leadership and its members.

SASP held a gospel show at Lincoln Temple United Church of Christ, on June 24, 1984 to benefit refugees in Southern Africa.¹¹³⁶ Explicit in their messaging, the program flyer made clear the purpose of the fundraiser, stating “the independent nations of Southern Africa are under attack and the effects of natural disasters.”¹¹³⁷ To attract local audiences, drummer Baba Ngoma performed, special guests included mistress of ceremonies Dr. Lucille Banks Robinson Miller, the Reverend Thomas L. Walker, and guest choirs the “Spiritual Volunteers” and the “Tabernacle Echoes”.¹¹³⁸ As with their other major programs, SASP prepared a work plan detailing program format and logistics. The program’s purpose (i.e. “political objective”) was “to raise the question of the churches traditional role in Black liberation, and the relationship of the Black church here to that of churches in southern Africa.”¹¹³⁹ The program included gospel performances, a sermon, and “news from [the] southern Africa[n] religious community.”¹¹⁴⁰ The public service announcement provided a few facts about Southern

¹¹³⁵ Sylvia Hill, “Letter to Rev. Robert Pruitt (Namibia Week II),” February 25, 1982, Box 4 Folder 10, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

¹¹³⁶ Southern Africa Support Project, “We Say No to Apartheid, Benefit Gospel Show,” June 24, 1984, Box 3, Folder 39, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University. see also, Lincoln Temple United Church of Christ, founded in the Shaw Community of Washington, DC historically black congregation; has hosted many notable guest ministers and speakers such as Jeremiah Wright Jr., Channing Philips., and Julian Bond.

¹¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹¹³⁸ Ibid.; Summers, “Southern Africa Support Project Marks a Decade of Struggle.” Note: Baba Ngoma was the drummer at the daily Embassy protests sponsored by the FSAM; he was also recognized at the 10th anniversary dinner as a special honoree.

¹¹³⁹ Cecelie Counts, Sandra Rattley, and Bernice Reagan, “Workplan: Gospel Benefit Show,” June 10, 1984, 1, Box 3 Folder 39, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

¹¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

African refugees and how participants can help by coming to the event. At the bottom of their letterhead, SASP had a long list of individuals and organizations that endorsed their work, including faith-based groups, student organizations, black community leaders in Washington, D.C., and national politicians. SASP acknowledged the assistance of the Reverend Benjamin E. Lewis and the staff of Lincoln Temple United Church of Christ in the event program.¹¹⁴¹ Carefully constructing these programs, attention to logistical details, and properly acknowledging the pastor and host church were elements that built community support and respect for SASP. Seemingly mundane, well-orchestrated logistical details opened doors for SASP.

Signature programs like Southern Africa Sunday, held at churches throughout Washington, D.C., allowed SASP to “maintain...contact within the religious community.”¹¹⁴² Additional program objectives included, raising funds, discussing the “role of [the] U.S. government and corporations in [the] system of apartheid [and the] Church [sic] role in resisting apartheid.”¹¹⁴³ SASP understood the connection between building and maintaining relationships with churches and opening up opportunities to engage the masses. Indeed, during the period in which their work focused largely on Namibia, they sponsored “Namibia Sunday” events comparable to what they later did during “South African Sunday” events.¹¹⁴⁴ Churches receptive to and engaged in peace and justice work such as St. Timothy’s Episcopal, People’s Congregational United

¹¹⁴¹ Southern Africa Support Project, “Benefit Gospel Show.”

¹¹⁴² Southern Africa Support Project, “Workplan: Southern Africa Sunday,” April 1984, 1, Box 3 Folder 40, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

¹¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴⁴ Sylvia Hill, “Letter to Reverend Willie Wilson, Union Temple Baptist Church,” February 20, 1982, Box 4 Folder 10, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

Church of Christ, Union Temple Baptist, Metropolitan AME, Church of the Nativity, All Souls Unitarian Church, Calvary Methodist, Plymouth Congregational, and Church of the Redeemer, were among those identified for these events. Representing diverse denominations and mainline protestant congregations, these and other churches received letters from Southern Africa Sunday and those choosing to participate could support the event in several ways: “a) insert SASP flier in Sunday Bulletin; b) host SASP speaker and slide show; c) take collection for refugees; 4) prepare special service/sermon on liberation and southern Africa.”¹¹⁴⁵ These choices provided opportunities for passive as well as active engagement of parishioners. Prominent historic churches like Saints Paul and Augustine Catholic Church and People’s Congregational United Church of Christ, with middle class black congregations, supported SASP initiatives and applauded their work. The Reverend Rubin L. Tendai, then Associate Minister of People’s Congregational, wrote to the members of the World Council of Churches’ Commission on the Program to Combat Racism, stating:

Because of our genuine concern in regard to the atrocities inflicted upon millions of Black people in Southern Africa, Peoples Congregational United Church of Christ is one of the many churches in the Washington, D.C. area that supports the work and philosophy of the Southern Africa Support Project (SASP). To this extent we have advocated the cause of SASP from our pulpit, as well as opening the doors of the church to their various fund-raising activities. We have, in the past, hosted their “Zimbabwe Day” activities, a benefit gospel show, the offer to house material goods and the participation of our ministers and members in SASP sponsored seminars.¹¹⁴⁶

¹¹⁴⁵ Southern Africa Support Project, “Workplan: Southern Africa Sunday,” 1.

¹¹⁴⁶ Tendai, “Letter to the Commission to Combat Racism.” Note: The People’s Congregational Church of Christ, “in the District’s solidly middle-class Black neighborhood of Petworth, was founded in 1891 by the children and grandchildren of slaves as a spinoff from Asbury United Methodist Church.” See also ” September 25, 2013 AFRO newspaper – Washington, D.C. <http://afro.com/sections/news/washington/story.htm> “Reverend A. Knighton Stanley Dies at 76: Pastor of

Not only did People's Congregational host events, enlist their ministers and members to volunteer their time, and assist with fund-raising activities, they also encouraged other churches to join in supporting the work of SASP. When SASP hosted a Nelson Mandela celebration at People's Congregational Church, the program was endorsed by at least eight churches representing six denominations, as well as unions, individuals, and organizations like the National Black Independent Political Party, DC.¹¹⁴⁷ The Mayor's office issued a proclamation declaring "July 16, 1983, as 'Nelson Mandela Day'" and called on "residents to join with the international community in requesting the immediate release of Nelson Mandela from prison in South Africa."¹¹⁴⁸ Building rapport with and support from church leadership, all but insured participation of black parishioners in anti-apartheid activism.

Still, SASP did not take church support for granted. Considering the demands of daily life, SASP made events, activities, and resources easily accessible and convenient for everyday people. SASP regularly evaluated and refined materials, events, goals, and approaches in doing solidarity work. In response to community needs, SASP provided services such as babysitting and transportation during special events (e.g. "Day of Resistance" event).

SASP attentively followed up with thank you letters to pastors of churches for supporting African liberation initiatives. In a June 21, 1982 letter, SASP thanked the

the District's People's Congregational Church; Reverend A. Knighton Stanley was pastor of PCC during the height of anti-apartheid demonstrations in the U.S.

¹¹⁴⁷ Southern Africa Support Project, "Tribute to the Life of Nelson Mandela."

¹¹⁴⁸ Marion Barry Jr., "Nelson Mandela Day Proclamation," July 16, 1983, Box 2 Folder 57, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

Reverend Frank Robertson of All Souls Unitarian Church, in Washington, D.C. for his assistance in sharing information on Namibia with his congregants.¹¹⁴⁹ Similarly, in a letter to the Reverend Robert Pruitt of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, Hill wrote, “SASP continues to appreciate your support and respects the spiritual and political leadership you provide for our community.”¹¹⁵⁰ Showing appreciation to pastors for their church’s assistance was imperative in maintaining strong relationships.

SASP members also recognized their limitations and appealed to ministers to request the help of parishioners, for example, specifically requesting “Brother Money” to “assist us in planning and implementing a leafleting campaign” in areas that SASP did not know well.¹¹⁵¹ Striving to be clear and well-organized, they made sure their correspondence included forms and packets with background information helpful to clergy in appealing to their congregants, and other follow up instructions to make the process convenient and easy to implement.¹¹⁵² They also brought these skills and well-tested strategies to FSAM. SASP had successfully, built relationships within local communities.

Reaching out to local churches was central to SASP’s strategic plan to connect with the black community. SASP understood black pastors had great influence on their parishioners. They explained to clergy, “your own active concern in southern Africa issues means that your congregation has considerable access to southern Africa

¹¹⁴⁹ Sylvia Hill, “Letter to Rev. Frank Robertson, All Souls Unitarian Church,” Thank You, (June 21, 1982), Box 4 Folder 10, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

¹¹⁵⁰ Hill, “Letter to Rev. Robert Pruitt.”

¹¹⁵¹ Hill, “Letter to Rev. Willie Wilson.” Note: Reverend Wilson’s church located in the Anacostia working class community of Southeast Washington, DC.

¹¹⁵² Hill, “Letter to Rev. Robert Pruitt.”

news.”¹¹⁵³ Indeed, the engagement of black clergy meant the participation of parishioners.¹¹⁵⁴ Recognizing the importance of parishioners’ involvement, Hill mentioned “there are other ways you may want to indicate that church workers may want to facilitate the spreading of the information among the church congregation, so I am enclosing a form for you to respond without it being time consuming.”¹¹⁵⁵ Clergy participated by facilitating discussions, speaking on panels, and presenting keynote addresses. The Reverend Willie Wilson was invited “to speak on our panel on the role of the church in strengthening [sic] black people to liberate themselves.”¹¹⁵⁶ The Afrocentric pastor of Union Temple Baptist Church located in the heart of D.C.’s working class predominantly black community, Wilson and his congregation actively engaged in southern African liberation activities for many years.

SASP distributed worksheets and forms to ascertain specific ways volunteers were willing to assist in fundraising, quantify monthly meeting attendance, monitor administrative work, host educational activities, distribute information (leafleting), and volunteer participation during special events.¹¹⁵⁷ The organization also asked clergy to specify ways they were willing to show support.¹¹⁵⁸ Darrell Chatmon of Seat Pleasant, Maryland answered SASP’s call; he “attend[ed] a monthly meeting as a Volunteer for Namibia Week,” helped with fundraising, and distributed leaflets

¹¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹¹⁵⁴ Author, Mark W. Harrison (United Methodist Church).

¹¹⁵⁵ Hill, “Letter to Rev. Robert Pruitt.”

¹¹⁵⁶ Hill, “Letter to Rev. Willie Wilson.”

¹¹⁵⁷ Southern Africa Support Project, “Solidarity Work Sheet,” n.d., Box 4 Folder 5, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

¹¹⁵⁸ Hill, “Letter to Rev. Willie Wilson.”

SASP leaders were very successful in their outreach efforts; as SASP engaged more and more church groups, the demand on volunteer leaders' time resulted in a need to add staff. Sylvia Hill explained, "The more intensely we try to work in the churches creating support committees within the churches, the greater the need is for one person to be accessible during the day/evenings with an office."¹¹⁵⁹ She added that this was taking a toll on SASP members who worked long hours outside of their regular jobs.¹¹⁶⁰

SASP provided specific suggestions on ways clergy could assist in supporting southern African liberation work, such as "devoting your sermon or sometime during the service to the issue of Namibian refugees, or the struggle against apartheid," encourage "church workers to spread "the information among the church congregation."¹¹⁶¹ SASP hosted monthly meetings to educate individuals who in turn could "plan activities in their churches and groups" to share more detailed information.¹¹⁶² They also sought suggestions from clergy on "ways we can be more effective in mobilizing the church community to support the people of southern Africa."¹¹⁶³ Financial assistance through special collections during services, allowed SASP to raise funds to support its work.

Not all clergy responded positively to SASP's outreach efforts. Indeed, some church leaders did not provide opportunities for SASP leadership to speak before their parishioners. Hill explains, "there was one church that we went to and it's led by ... a white family and the church has all black members, working class people and I went

¹¹⁵⁹ Hill, "Letter to Prexy Nesbitt."

¹¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹¹⁶¹ Hill, "Letter to Rev. Robert Pruitt."

¹¹⁶² Hill, "Letter to Rev. Willie Wilson."

¹¹⁶³ Ibid.; See also Southern Africa Support Project, "Outreach Letters to Churches," n.d., Box 3 Folder 42, Southern Africa Support Project Papers, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University.

there to ask to speak on this issue [apartheid in South Africa] and they would not permit me to.”¹¹⁶⁴ Hill suggests some of the rationale had to do with power and some with philosophical differences. She explains some of the churches “did not want anybody on their turf from outside; if they allowed us to speak that was affirming us.”¹¹⁶⁵ Some clergy also did not want people intruding on their congregants’ time, and did not “want to hear bad things...so when you are coming to talk about injustices, you are bringing in what should be a sanctuary of peacefulness, this negative information they’re trying to forget.”¹¹⁶⁶

SASP also acknowledged problems in doing solidarity work. SASP leaders pointed to the problem of “reciprocity among people suffering from imperialism,” as a major concern in solidarity work.¹¹⁶⁷ Concerns with the impact of “disinformation and misinformation” about liberation movements and solidarity work through media disproportionately influencing African Americans who may have relied more heavily on media than on print materials. The reality is grassroots organizations could not afford to use media to get their message out; they relied more heavily on print materials. SASP leaders had concerns that “as the technology of society grows more complex, public access and opportunities for the public to participate in the political arena become even more remote.”¹¹⁶⁸

¹¹⁶⁴ Hill, interview.

¹¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁶⁷ Counts, Hill, and Hill, “Notes on Building International Solidarity in the United States,” 52.

¹¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 51. Their observations, concern expressed in this 1984 article, have manifested in very pronounced ways as concerns over the digital divide have escalated with issues of access to technology in the 21st century.

Some black clergy espoused more conservative political views, which was not new. Indeed, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was ousted from his leadership position in the National Baptist Convention, in which his family had a long history of involvement. He went on to participate in the newly formed Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC).¹¹⁶⁹ In a follow-up meeting with a local minister who had espoused conservative views on foreign policy issues during his Sunday sermon, Hill discovered that much of his information came from a foreign policy newsletter. The newsletter analyzed “the scripture in terms of U.S. Foreign policy that ministers are supposed to incorporate in their sermons, so that the public, the parishioners can understand foreign policy.”¹¹⁷⁰ In this case, these black American parishioners were exposed to conservative foreign policy positions, which SASP viewed as misinformation and indeed mis-education.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

SASP leadership is credited with organizing the daily embassy demonstrations and opening “a whole new front in [the anti-apartheid] campaign.”¹¹⁷¹ Actor and activist, Harry Belafonte contends, “to lawmakers in Washington. Those demonstrations were a constant reminder of their collusion with apartheid South Africa.”¹¹⁷² SASP developed an effective methodology for organizing. Their “ability to create a real working base of

¹¹⁶⁹ Harrison, interview, March 28, 2013. See also http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_national_baptist_convention_nbc/ “Founded in 1895, the National Baptist Convention (NBC) is the major organization of African American Baptists and the nation’s largest black religious organization in the United States. Martin Luther King’s family was active in the NBC from its founding.” And see the history of the PNBC at <http://www.pnbc.org/#/about-us/history> accessed 4/2014

¹¹⁷⁰ Hill, interview.

¹¹⁷¹ Harry Belafonte, *My Song: A Memoir*, First Edition edition (New York: Knopf, 2011), 375. Belafonte was specifically referring to Sylvia Hill’s work. He described Hill as a “plucky professor of criminal justice from the University of the District of Columbia.”

¹¹⁷² Ibid. Belafonte an artist and activist, served as co-chair of TransAfrica’s Board of Directors from its founding through the mid-1980s.

understanding of the southern African region through the many different kinds of programs and projects” offered in the community, resulted in a knowledgeable support base for things to come.¹¹⁷³ These connections with individuals and organizations in the Washington metropolitan area created a readily available support base for the embassy demonstrations. More importantly, these actions supported the “view that African Americans needed to be involved in the shaping of U.S. [foreign] policy.”¹¹⁷⁴ Indeed, SASP had built trust and credibility with local individuals and groups including the faith community, diverse churches, unions, educational institutions, as well as, national and local agencies and organizations. Their operating model of self-critiquing, staying small and focused, with internal and external education contributed to their success. Indeed, their conscientization efforts resulted in individual and collective action.

After ten years of grassroots activism, SASP remained fully committed to solidarity work. They reminded supporters that although “we should gather great pride and inspiration from our accomplishments, the retrenchment of the South African government during the last two years should encourage and inspire us all to mark this tenth anniversary with renewed commitment to solidarity, freedom and justice.”¹¹⁷⁵

As a natural progression, Hill and Counts, core SASP and FSAM leaders, would play a major role in Nelson Mandela’s first U.S. tour after being released from prison in South Africa.¹¹⁷⁶ Hill summarizes the overall achievements of SASP:

¹¹⁷³ Dunn-Mouton, interview.

¹¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁷⁵ Southern Africa Support Project, “Ten Years of Solidarity and Commitment,” 1.

¹¹⁷⁶ Belafonte, *My Song*, 395 Counts and Hill would coordinate the major logistics of the tour. Harry Belafonte’s primary role “was to use [his] celebrity” to advance and support TransAfrica’s initiatives. Belafonte was called upon to organize Mandela’s U.S. tour, he quickly contacted Roger Wilkins, who also

One of the major achievements was to build, not by ourselves, in collaboration a grassroots movement that would successfully influence U.S. foreign policy. Ronald Reagan suffered his first foreign policy defeat and only one, based on the work of the Free South Africa Movement and the various political pressures. And that was significant, that work propelled us to be in a position to host, not by ourselves...the first U.S. visit of Nelson Mandela and that was successful by anybody's standards... We had no money, but we knew how to organize. Having Roger Wilkins was key and Harry Belafonte, because they had access to the people who had money; both white and black. And we had, we meaning SASP members Cecelie, Sandra, all of us...we had the capacity to organize. And we had the national connections through the anti-apartheid movement, the [Free] South Africa Movement and various other links.¹¹⁷⁷

CONCLUSION

By the time FSAM launched, SASP already was well connected to the local Washington, D.C. community. The grassroots base of SASP, alongside the leadership structure of the architects of TransAfrica's FSAM (i.e. strong experience in the Civil Rights Movement and connections with Congress) resulted in a winning coalition. This coalition, in concert with the lobbying work, divestment campaigns, and international relationships of groups like ACOA, WOA, AFSC, WCC, and the Congressional Black Caucus, broke through barriers in the decades-long battle against apartheid in South Africa. The collective work of these groups resulted in groundbreaking legislative sanctions against South Africa, rendering Reagan's policy of "constructive engagement" null and void.

Although SASP accomplished many extraordinary achievements, it is the ordinary "people to people" connections they cultivated that best define their success. Because SASP was based in the nation's capital the impact of their local organizing

had close ties to Sylvia Hill and Cecelie Counts. Undoubtedly, they were recognized for their strong organizational skills, knowledge, and experience mobilizing the masses.

¹¹⁷⁷ Hill, interview.

played a significant role in this international movement. Although they had national connections, SASP was always clear on their goal to focus locally. Further, their willingness to self-critique, insisting upon internal conscientization, coupled with their experience and commitment to solidarity work, make SASP extraordinary. Through focused efforts and clear priorities, a relatively small core team of dedicated activists helped facilitate the most successful anti-apartheid effort in the United States. Their willingness to structure processes, policies, and protocols, which some may consider mundane, proved beneficial in anchoring their work and their relationships with black American church people and other groups.

Black church people opened their minds and their doors in solidarity with the African liberation struggle. Influenced by the Civil Rights Movement, and Black Power and Black Consciousness ideologies of the 1960s and 1970s, they fully and willingly engaged in anti-apartheid activism. Though they would not describe themselves as “church people,” SASP leaders understood the centrality of the church to reaching the black American community. Through self-assessment, evaluation, and internal training SASP members gained trust and respect from the local church community. Many of the churches SASP engaged with on a regular basis were black churches under white denominational umbrellas. This was not intentional, “that’s who they turned out to be.”¹¹⁷⁸ At the same time, many historically black churches supported the work of SASP. Together these churches and their leaders literally opened their doors for major events, advocated from the pulpit, participated on panels and gave keynote addresses, joined

¹¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

demonstrations and protests, provided administrative support and facilities, facilitated and attended educational workshops, raised funds, and assisted with a wide-range of logistics. Having recently fought a long hard battle during the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S., black American church people identified with the plight of their brothers and sisters in South Africa. Motivated by a belief that Christians have a responsibility to help those who are, in black liberation theologian James H. Cone's words, "struggling to be human in an oppressive world," black American church people answered the call in ordinary and extraordinary ways.¹¹⁷⁹ Cone added, "Christians believe that their faith has something to say about this world and about the human beings in it...something that can make a decisive difference in the quality of life."¹¹⁸⁰ Tendai best expressed this belief in a letter to the World Council of Churches. He wrote, "It is our prayerful hope that with our help and the help of other churches that support the work of SASP, Blacks in Southern Africa will one day in the near future live in an atmosphere of freedom and human dignity – as was God's intention for his children."¹¹⁸¹ Through SASP's strategic networks and conscientization efforts, the work of these local, radical black women activists, ultimately secured the achievements of FSAM.

¹¹⁷⁹ Cone, *For My People*, 2.

¹¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹¹⁸¹ Tendai, "Letter to the Commission to Combat Racism."

CONCLUSION

*“Do your little bit of good where you are; it’s those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.”*¹¹⁸² Archbishop Desmond Tutu

The sustained opposition of black South Africans—along with international sanctions and the protests led by, among others, black church people in America—finally brought down apartheid. These forces of resistance “combined with [wide spread worker] strikes” to create the conditions of “economic crisis which forced many . . . [South African] elites to advocate change.”¹¹⁸³ Yet the instrumental roles of black American church people in the U.S. anti-apartheid movement have not been closely examined.¹¹⁸⁴ Thus, “A Moral Imperative” seeks to fill a major gap in historical scholarship by revealing what remains largely ignored: black American churches led conferences, fundraising, rallies, and outreach campaigns that opposed white rule in South Africa. Indeed, the oral history testimonies of the Reverends Wyatt Tee Walker and George Houser as well as church activists Mark Harrison and Mankekola Mhlangu-Ngcobo reveal the crucial contributions of black church people to the anti-apartheid

¹¹⁸² Foundation, *The Desmond Tutu Peace Foundation*, accessed April 11, 2015, <http://www.tutufoundation-usa.org/exhibitions.html>.

¹¹⁸³ Stephen Zunes, “The Role of Non-Violent Action in the Downfall of Apartheid,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 37, no. 1 (March 1, 1999): 160–161.

¹¹⁸⁴ Pitts, interview As the Reverend Tyrone Pitts, general secretary of the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC), so passionately argues, some black clergy have felt underrepresented in the scholarly literature on the anti-apartheid movement.

struggle.¹¹⁸⁵ By fully documenting and critically analyzing their initiatives, we gain a deeper understanding of black American engagement in transnational African liberation movements, particularly from World War II to the end of the Cold War.

The four anti-apartheid organizations in this dissertation, namely the Council on African Affairs (CAA), the American Committee on Africa (ACOA), TransAfrica's Free South Africa Movement (FSAM), and the Southern Africa Support Project (SASP), shaped fifty years of anti-apartheid activism that spanned epochal shifts in politics from the Red Scare and Civil Rights to Black Power and Soviet collapse. The combined legacy of these organizations would become particularly apparent in the middle 1980s. At the end of the Cold War and apartheid rule, FSAM and SASP mobilized high-profile popular demonstrations against white rule in South Africa, just as President Reagan was seen to roll back civil rights and roll out constructive engagement. Walker, Houser, and Harrison, among others, turned the tide on Reagan's initiatives by championing Congressional legislation that led to crippling sanctions against apartheid. Such transnational activism was not a solitary event but a culminating moment drawing on decades of unsung black church support for the southern African liberation struggle. The religious radicalism of Houser, Walker, and Harrison—a subject neglected in Cold War historiography—certainly had its antecedents. For example, in the 1950s the Reverend Charles Hill, pastor of a Detroit Baptist church, risked HUAC scrutiny by using his pulpit to condemn the harsh treatment of Paul Robeson by his own government. Hill asked his

¹¹⁸⁵ Similarly, the oral history testimonies of activists Mary Gresham of Baltimore, Sylvia Hill and Cecelie Counts reveal roles black church people played in the movement.

congregation to pray for Robeson and then take up the anti-apartheid cause advocated by CAA.

MAIN FINDINGS

The four anti-apartheid organizations in this study worked in solidarity with other movements especially the ANC and their anti-colonial allies in southern Africa. Together, they lobbied the U.S. State Department and United Nations while mobilizing mass boycotts and demonstrations. At the heart of this activism were black American faith communities with ties to labor unions as well as educational and professional organizations. They protested U.S. corporations with investments in South Africa, as a first step toward imposing economic sanctions on the apartheid regime. Black American faith communities sought to share the same dream with people oppressed by white supremacy everywhere: equality through self-determination. As Joseph Jordan of SASP emphasized, “the single most important factor in the changes that came to South Africa was the resolve of the South African people to be free and their willingness to struggle towards that end.”¹¹⁸⁶

This dissertation shows that it was the ordinary contributions of black church congregants demonstrating against apartheid in the U.S. who helped make the freedom struggle a reality in South Africa. In 1949, for example, CAA sponsored an outdoor welcome home rally for Paul Robeson, who was at this time perhaps America’s most prominent and vocal critic of racism in South Africa. This Harlem event gathered, among others, a group of congregants and the Reverend Charles Y. Trigg, “[p]astor of Salem

¹¹⁸⁶ Jordan, “That Covenant Was Kept,” 10.

Methodist Church [who provided the] invocation.”¹¹⁸⁷ This form of black church involvement in the anti-apartheid struggle would echo across subsequent decades. Indeed, more than thirty years later the New Bethel Baptist Church (NBBC) would provide space on a daily basis for South African Embassy protesters, who were trained by FSAM activists.¹¹⁸⁸ For their part, black church people helped run conferences sponsored by ACOA’s RAN. In 1989, for example, the Reverend Leonard Chapman enrolled his Grace Congregational Church of Harlem in RAN workshops and disseminated information about southern Africa liberation struggles through Bible study classes. Parishioners and clergy from Union Temple Baptist Church, Metropolitan AME, and People’s Congregational United Church of Christ also partnered with SASP. These local churches offered meeting rooms for special events, managed fundraising accounts, and launched leafleting campaigns. In other words, ordinary black church people contributed their vital resources and energy to a wider movement, led by well-known activists, which sought to combat apartheid in South Africa.

Black Church People and Anti-Apartheid Activism

Black church people were perhaps the most powerful force in the four organizations studied in this dissertation. Each organization actively pursued the

¹¹⁸⁷ CAA, “Welcome Home Rally.”

¹¹⁸⁸ There are many more examples of black church support of anti-apartheid protest. From 1984 to 1986 the Reverend Ernest Gibson, pastor of First Rising Mount Zion Baptist Church in NW Washington, consistently donated the use of a church bus to transport protesters from NBBC to the Embassy. Moreover, members of the Bibleway Church in Washington, D.C., directed traffic and provided security for a FSAM-sponsored anti-apartheid vigil led by the Reverend Walter Fauntroy in front of the Capitol building hours before Reagan’s 1985 State of the Union Address.

participation of black clergy and their parishioners.¹¹⁸⁹ When and how these groups connected with black church communities varied over time. Black church people were not always engaged in high-profile actions. Their anti-apartheid activism ranged from completing administrative and logistical tasks to directing major campaigns. In this dissertation, the religious activist Mark Harrison and theologian James H. Cone insightfully describe how politically engaged black clergy motivated their parishioners and how parishioners in turn inspired their ministers. As much as there was a symbiotic relationship between pulpit and pew, clergy were far more instrumental in directing anti-apartheid protests. They also served on the boards of three national organizations: CAA, ACOA, and TransAfrica's FSAM.¹¹⁹⁰

Above all, black clergy conceptualized key anti-apartheid strategies and projects.¹¹⁹¹ For example, in 1989 Wyatt Tee Walker helped establish ACOA's Religious Action Network (RAN).¹¹⁹² Eleven years earlier he had organized black clergy in America to back the ANC in 1978. Other ministers led special campaigns. In 1946, when CAA launched its famine relief campaign, it did so at the renowned Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, where its senior minister the Reverend Adam Clayton Powell Jr. was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. During the 1950s and 1960s, George Houser actively recruited the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. to endorse the work of

¹¹⁸⁹ With the exception of SASP, involvement of national and internationally known black clergy was especially important.

¹¹⁹⁰ Although SASP did not have clergy in its core leadership group, it more fully integrated the church in its operations and outreach efforts.

¹¹⁹¹ To be sure, some black churches had long been committed to protesting white rule in South Africa.

¹¹⁹² For his part, the Reverend J. Alfred Smith, a proponent of black liberation theology and the pastor of Allen Temple Baptist Church in Oakland, California, and his congregants consistently supported the efforts of ACOA and PNBC. Smith was a featured speaker at the 1990 RAN conference.

ACOA. Houser understood that with King's involvement ACOA would bring in the many members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and establish wider activist networks in black communities.¹¹⁹³ By the early 1980s, Fauntroy was ardently promoting the mission of TransAfrica and FSAM. A native Washingtonian, local pastor, veteran of the Civil Rights Movement, and the Congressional Representative for Washington, D.C., Fauntroy's influence was broad and deep.¹¹⁹⁴ Black clergy were also vital to the anti-apartheid struggle because they inspired wider activism through example—and their skills in organizing, communicating, and fundraising. In effect, they became the catalyst for the participation of their congregations in the four anticolonial organizations. This catalytic role might prompt scholars to ask further questions about why black clergy, affiliated with predominantly white denominations, felt compelled to champion anti-apartheid activism.

While CAA, ACOA, and TransAfrica relied on the contributions of religious elites, these organizations could not have functioned without the embrace of ordinary congregants. The leaders of CAA, ACOA, and TransAfrica were raised in homes that made attending a Christian church a weekly routine. The patriarchs of Robeson, Houser, and Yergan were churchmen who preached the importance of worshipping in black churches. In fact, Robeson and Yergan would depend on their formative experience as young Christians to keep the CAA together. By 1948, many liberal black and white

¹¹⁹³ King delivered the keynote address at the 1965 Human Rights Day rally, co-chaired the Appeal for Action Against Apartheid and served on ACOA's national committee.

¹¹⁹⁴ Similarly, in the late 1980s ACOA executive director Jennifer Davis supported longtime member Wyatt Tee Walker in his leadership of RAN, which recruited hundreds of black church leaders. Walker had been affiliated with the organization since the 1950s and had among other roles, chaired the board. Well-known in the civil rights and religious community, he served as King's chief of staff, was co-founder of the (SCLC), and pastored Canaan Baptist Church in Harlem.

supporters had left CAA, mostly due to ideological differences. Some left after the organization was weakened by internal and external conflicts. The remaining members were largely black church people such the Reverend William H. Gray Jr. who defended Robeson in 1950 during the most intense period in which CAA fell victim to the witch hunts of McCarthyism. For its part, ACOA actively pursued notable clergy like King. By the 1980s, the organization had turned to a grassroots divestment effort that drew on the support of black churches. And TransAfrica's earliest strategy with Randall Robinson as executive director was to reach out to black churches to gain their support. Walter Fauntroy and SASP facilitated critical connections between TransAfrica and the local community. Indeed, they insured the participation of black clergy and parishioners in major campaigns like FSAM; they had built strong networks and rapport with black church communities prior to launching FSAM. Local activities that successfully connected domestic issues with the southern African liberation struggle yielded the greatest success in galvanizing people to demand action from their local and national representatives. Over time each organization came to rely on grassroots activism to achieve its goals. SASP was most successful in this regard because it was founded as a grassroots organization. The achievements of FSAM are owed largely to its work and to the work of Walter Fauntroy.

Four themes emerged at the core of church people's desire to become involved in the anti-apartheid movement: 1) The moral obligation and responsibility to help those who are oppressed and in need. 2) Identification with racism and suffering experienced by black South Africans at the hands of white oppressors (e.g. Jim Crow and apartheid)

particularly in similarities (perceived or real) in race relations in the U.S. and South Africa. 3) Long held interest in international issues. 4) Disagreement with the policies and practices of several U.S. presidential administrations.

Not coined until 1969, tenets of “black liberation theology” had long motivated black church people. Whether accepting or rejecting “black liberation theology” as an ideology, black church people felt a connection to South Africans based upon similarities in their experiences as oppressed black people in race-conscious societies. This theme surfaces in comments made by respondents in the oral history interviews as well as in primary and secondary sources. Indeed, the evidence affirms elements of black pride, self-determination, a commitment and responsibility to help the oppressed, and frustration with U.S. policies, did influence black church people. Just as was the case during the Civil Rights Movement some black clergy did not want to take a stand against apartheid, sometimes out of fear, sometimes because they had different priorities. Mankekola Mahlangu-Ngcobo explained, “Dr. James Cone’s work helped some of the radical pastors, though many [others] were afraid to take a stand.”¹¹⁹⁵

The organizations examined in this study provided a framework to better understand how black American church people supported black South Africans. The Council on African Affairs charted the course for anti-apartheid activism in the U.S. By navigating rough waters of the pre- and post-World War II and the Cold War era, CAA established a template for future organizations in terms of what to do and what not to do. Their tactics were replicated throughout the movement [i.e. lobbying the government,

¹¹⁹⁵ Mahlangu-Ngcobo, interview.

diplomacy with the UN, mass mobilization, solidarity with African liberation movements, hosting African leaders, financial and material support to black South Africans, education and outreach, and black churches and unions were among the core sectors pursued]. Its uncritical support of the Soviet Union and communism did not win friends; in fact, liberal black leaders distanced themselves from CAA and its leadership by 1948. The CAA would be quieted by the anti-communist fever of the government, which through their constant investigations and disruptions kept CAA from focusing on day-to-day operations and fulfilling its mission. Indeed the government witch hunts, as Arthur Miller depicts in *The Crucible*, sought to persecute organizations like CAA and its leaders.

The CAA enjoyed the participation of more mainstream liberal black leaders, including clergy, before and during the war years. As World War II ended and the Cold War era began, CAA lost hope in achieving movement on its anti-racist and anticolonial agenda through diplomacy with the government and after the war with the newly formed United Nations. As advocates of anticolonialism and supporters of the Soviet Union, CAA and its leaders were accused of un-American activities. Distraction from day-to-day operations, defense against constant investigations, and government harassment led to its eventual dissolution. During this same period, civil rights organizations like the NAACP reprioritized their earlier grievances with colonialism and focused more publicly on domestic civil rights issues. This response was partly due to the political atmosphere and partly due to a genuine dislike for Communism and the Soviet Union. Following a rift within the organization, some black church people disassociated with CAA. The

Reverends C. A. Johnson and Shelton Hale Bishop joined Max Yergan's unsuccessful takeover attempt in 1948. In fact, an unauthorized election resulted in them becoming CAA officers, positions determined to be null and void soon thereafter. Other black clergy, including radical left Charles A. Hill and conservative Louis Rawls, supported Robeson and CAA during the heightened period of McCarthyism.

As the longest continuously running U.S. anti-apartheid organization, ACOA had very similar approaches and priorities as CAA. Careful to distance itself from CAA, ACOA's predecessor, AFSAR rejected an invitation from CAA's education director to collaborate on the 1952 Defiance Campaign. Moreover, ACOA maintained AFSAR's anti-Communist position, which staved off persistent government harassment.

Associating with a group labeled as subversive was too risky for this newly established radical pacifist organization and went against their core beliefs. Still, the radical pacifist clergy and founders of ACOA were scrutinized during the Cold War era as they pursued an anticolonial agenda. Black clergy, including the Reverend Charles Trigg, were among the organization's founders; he also served as ACOA's first board co-chair with the Reverend Donald Harrington. An examination of how race and gender dynamics shaped ACOA's radical pacifism revealed its efforts to include women and blacks in leadership roles and staff positions. While egalitarianism was a core value, the evidence sheds light on occasional biases reflective of the broader society. The ACOA worked closely with African leaders, U.S. politicians, clergy, and well-known individuals. During the 1970s and 1980s, community outreach efforts became more commonplace. Specific church initiatives often included black American clergy. Considered interracial, by ACOA

leadership, the organization was often described as a “white” organization. White churches provided structural and financial support and white clergy were among the founders and board members. ACOA actively sought an interracial presence and representation throughout its history; it actively sought the involvement and support of black church and community leaders. Nevertheless, most black American respondents consistently described ACOA as a white organization. .¹¹⁹⁶ Washington-based community activist and WOA staffer Nkechi Taifa asserted, “ACOA was instrumental in mobilizing White people to support the anti-apartheid movement.” Over its long history, ACOA birthed other organizations such as WOA and helped sponsor the American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa (ANCLA) conceptualized by its long-time supporter and co-chair A. Philip Randolph.

Encouraged by Congressman Charles Diggs, chair of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, TransAfrica came out of proceedings from a Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) sponsored leadership conference on foreign policy issues. This black foreign policy lobby advocated black leadership and self-determination in support of black people in Africa and throughout the African diaspora. It was not an anti-apartheid organization per se; nor was TransAfrica viewed or accepted as an anti-apartheid organization within the established AAM community. After secretly launching FSAM at the South African Embassy, the media categorized TransAfrica as an anti-apartheid organization and the label became entrenched. The secret launching of FSAM frustrated

¹¹⁹⁶ Taifa, interview.

groups like ACOA, WOA, and American Friends Service Committee (AFSC).¹¹⁹⁷ The daily embassy and consulate protests around the country, which were tied to lobbying for sanctions against South Africa, led to unprecedented media coverage of the protests and of the plight of black South Africans. Despite being excluded from the initial plan, national and local anti-apartheid organizations participated in and supported the movement. They came together with the unified goal of forcing legislative sanctions against South Africa.

Black churches provided more ongoing logistical support to FSAM than seen with the earlier ACOA and CAA. Although TransAfrica was more moderate than CAA, conservative organizations like the Lincoln Institute for Research and Education, still attempted to use Cold War tactics to discredit TransAfrica's FSAM leadership and the organization. Unlike the demise of CAA, TransAfrica was not adversely affected by these tactics.

The work of the Southern Africa Support Project (SASP) was a major factor in the success of the FSAM. SASP had built trust with local communities who showed up for embassy protests and assisted with logistics. Its members brought strong organizational and logistical experience critical to helping TransAfrica achieve FSAM goals. Among the groups in this study, SASP had the strongest direct ties with local working class communities. Nkechi Taifa observed that TransAfrica "along with [the] Southern Africa Support Project was instrumental in mobilizing the Black community,

¹¹⁹⁷ Minter, Hovey, and Cobb Jr., *No Easy Victories*, 160.

the Black church, and college students.”¹¹⁹⁸ This black-female founded and led grassroots organization emphasized “people to people” connections. SASP’s primary focus was on building solidarity between black Americans and southern Africans in the liberation struggle. Outreach and education efforts focused on educating and motivating local Washingtonians to see the connections between what was happening in their daily lives with what was happening to black southern Africans.

Despite its local focus, SASP had access to national figures including politicians, activists, and clergy. Its members held positions in important strategic places and had significant experience mobilizing activists (e.g. the Sixth Pan-African Congress). This left-leaning group was strongly influenced by civil rights, black power, radical black intellectuals, and Marxism. In fact, SASP leaders and their TransAfrica colleague, Randall Robinson, were influenced by the writings of black radical intellectuals like C.L.R. James, Amilco Cabral, Franz Fanon, Robert Van Lierop, and French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre. Very conscience of the impact of class on building effective grassroots networks, SASP’s leadership paid careful attention to self-assessing to insure that class differences did not interfere in their interactions with the community. In addition, exposure to black consciousness and the Black Power and Civil Rights Movements shaped their ideology, which informed their tactics in anti-apartheid activism. Likewise black clergy and parishioners were influenced by tenets of black theology where personal faith and social justice merged. Black churches were strategically important to the success of the U.S. anti-apartheid movement.

¹¹⁹⁸ Taifa, interview.

SASP emphasized the importance of being educated and well-informed about African liberation struggles and how the plight of blacks in the U.S. resembled the plight of blacks in southern Africa. Although black consciousness in South Africa differed from black power in the U.S., there were transnational influences and adaptations between the movements. SASP's community outreach and education strategies sought to conscientize local Washingtonians about government repression and racial injustices in South Africa enabling them to make informed decisions about their support of the anti-apartheid movement. More specifically, SASP's outreach work most resembled the more politicized conscientization of the 1970s South Africa described by historian Daniel Magaziner in *The Law and the Prophets*.

SASP activists were instrumental in all aspects of this historic victory. Their local grassroots activism, combined with a philosophy promoting "people to people" conscientization strategies, provided a strong base for this international movement. The women of SASP, who labored over their kitchen tables to address the injustices of government repression in Southern Africa and who despite their differences in religious practices, encouraged church people and local black communities to add their voices to the movement to end apartheid in South Africa.

The FSAM delivered a major blow to U.S. support of the South African regime. This black-led organization, with the help of many AAM organizations, interrupted the unwavering government support of the South African regime rendering Reagan's policy of constructive engagement all but null and void. The unprecedented media coverage of the embassy protests, combined with outreach initiatives with local communities across

the country, contributed greatly to the establishment of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act (CAAA) of 1986. Decades of anti-apartheid work by diverse organizations and individuals culminated in U.S. sanctions against South Africa. The ACOA's outreach efforts to local groups around the country built important divestment networks, which supported sanctions. The CAA developed what became the template for anti-apartheid activism in the U.S. The radical activism of the black-led FSAM and SASP forced a reconsideration of tactics in movement. The local organizing and strategic alliances that SASP built in Washington, D.C. anchored FSAM.

Contestations and Rivalries

Ideological differences sometimes resulted in a lack of cooperation and cohesiveness within and between these AAM organizations. Gender and racial contestations surfaced over time, further complicating internal and external dynamics. Staff and volunteers for these organizations knew each other well, which may explain why many took offense to TransAfrica's secret strategy regarding the act of civil disobedience at the South African Embassy on the eve of Thanksgiving 1984. Those dynamics may equally explain why TransAfrica felt compelled to close ranks. Dumisani Kumalo insisted it was ACOA's work with local communities and student groups that moved U.S. legislators to support the comprehensive sanctions bills of 1986. Furthermore, ACOA, and other anti-apartheid organizations like WOA, saw FSAM as celebrity oriented and though it garnered national and international publicity, should not be solely credited for the legislative accomplishments of the 1980s. Respondents like Maghan Keita, emphasized the major activities leading to the passage of legislation

sanctioning South Africa were not limited to Washington, D.C. TransAfrica's leadership and architects of FSAM, insisted the apartheid movement was at a standstill and although well-meaning organizations pursued resolutions, little progress was happening to bring an end to apartheid. That FSAM leadership emphasized they were black-led and their efforts resulted in major legislative accomplishments, incensed some in the established anti-apartheid community. Organizations like ACOA, WOA, and AFSC emphasized multi-racial alliances, therefore, FSAM's emphasis on being black-led did not fit with the preferred narrative, and they took offense. Moreover, these older organizations did not feel the newly established FSAM paid deference to the anti-apartheid work they had done for years. Coalitions did not remain intact after FSAM; in fact, hurt feelings linger. Despite these cleavages, local, national, and international groups joined together in FSAM, which culminated in the passage of legislative sanctions against South Africa.

ACOA had enjoyed strong relationships with liberal pacifist black civil rights leaders from its founding forward. Internal racial dynamics were tested as young black staff like Prexy Nesbitt and Charles Hightower espoused black pride and black power ideology, challenging the direction and thinking by ACOA's established black and white leadership. George Houser, who referred to this period as the black revolt, considered resigning his position. Despite these tensions, the work of ACOA remained focused on African liberation.

As SASP opened its meetings and membership to a larger group, it also experienced gender and racial tensions. Well-meaning white men would sometimes

consume a disproportionate amount of meeting time making a point or discussing a topic of interest to them. Moreover, some of the white members would question SASP's approach and decisions about speaking assignments (i.e. if they were assigned to present at white churches, white members wondered why). SASP made clear its perspectives and priorities and did not consume too much time debating these points.

Women's Anti-Apartheid Activism

Women played critical roles in the movement. They held key leadership positions, made connections with local communities by building meaningful relationships, and they were masterful organizers and logisticians. Their "way" of working, collaborating, and leading anchored the organizations. In *Eslanda* Barbara Ransby asserts, "in terms of the actual leadership and day-to-day work of the [CAA], women played a significant role, and it was an eclectic group of women."¹¹⁹⁹ This dissertation uncovers many examples of women leading the work, often largely responsible for signature achievements. Though the education director, William Alpheus Hunton, brought a high level of expertise and skill to CAA, women were very important to the mission of educating the public.¹²⁰⁰ Similarly, the women of ACOA played key roles. Indeed, some were affiliated with the organization for decades.¹²⁰¹ Women were on the frontlines of TransAfrica's FSAM and SASP; because of close collaborations between these groups,

¹¹⁹⁹ Ransby, *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson*, 144.

¹²⁰⁰ Eslanda Robeson, Mary Church Terrell, Freida Neugenbauer, Mary Van Kleeck, and Mary McLeod Bethune, chaired conference committees, researched and wrote articles for newsletters and pamphlets, helped conceptualize and develop the framework for the organization, contributed and raised funds, and served on the board.

¹²⁰¹ Eleanor Roosevelt, Jennifer Davis, Mary Louise Hooper, Gayle Hovey, and Elizabeth Landis represented ACOA in many capacities including chairing special campaigns, directing and writing research, conference and UN delegates, and vice-presidents of the board.

there was overlap in leadership.¹²⁰² More scholarly attention is warranted to better understand these women's roles and influence on AAM.

Men largely became the icons of the three national organizations examined in this study (i.e. Robeson, Yergan, Robinson, and Houser), while women often served as key strategists and implemented the agendas; however, I must acknowledge Hunton, Houser, Fauntroy, and Kumalo who facilitated major initiatives for their respective organizations. My research revealed that women played a more central role in the long movement, than is typically portrayed in the scholarship. Many of these women and some of the men, were influenced by activist mothers and grandmothers.

At times during the Civil Rights and Black Power movements women were marginalized by male-dominated leadership. In contrast, women of the AAM were more visible and shared the stage with their male counterparts.¹²⁰³ Many of the radical white female members of CAA and liberal white female members of ACOA were influential well-off donors and fundraisers, some represented their affluent leftist husbands.

¹²⁰² Core members of SASP worked with Randall Robinson in conceptualizing and planning the first act of civil disobedience at the South African Embassy; Mary Frances Berry and Eleanor Holmes Norton were part of the TransAfrica Four. Sylvia Hill was an architect of FSAM and joined other steering committee members in corporate sit-ins and protests leading to arrests. Strong organizers and logisticians, Cecelie Counts and Sandra Hill, insured the success of the embassy protests. Adwoa Dunn-Mouton, a sub-committee staffer, helped craft the language for the CAAA bill.

¹²⁰³ The near absence of women at the podium during the March on Washington, is a glaring example of how women who labored in the Civil Rights Movement were excluded from the stage. Dorothy Height, one of the organizers of the march and an influential civil rights leader, stood on the platform but was not included among this historic event's speakers. Women such as Ella Baker, JoAnne Gibson Robinson, Diane Nash, Elaine Brown, and Kathleen Cleaver were key strategists in the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, however, they also experienced sexism. While the significance of their leadership and contributions to the movement were beyond question, they were not treated on equal footing with their male counterparts. Civil rights activists like Fannie Lou Hamer and Gloria Richardson of Cambridge, Maryland may have been exceptions, during the civil rights movement, men could not contain their outspokenness. Rosa Parks whose civil rights activism did not begin or end with the Montgomery Bus Boycott, was much more complex than portrayed. The movement did not fully acknowledge her long history of activism, she was put on a pedestal and left there.

Similarly, black women, like Eslanda Robeson, were influential, outspoken, and relatively well-off members of CAA. Gendered roles did surface during the ACOA's long existence, men led the staff and board for more than twenty-seven years. However, women were present and in leadership roles, albeit, not the top level positions of chairman or executive director until 1981 when Jennifer Davis became its executive director.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Several themes not fully addressed here warrant more consideration. This study reveals that black faith communities, as well as women were pivotal to the success of AAM. Accounts of black female clergy and parishioner participation and leadership during the first three decades of the movement are sparse. This dissertation provided perspectives on a few women clergy, mainly during the 1980s; a finding that may in part reflect the gender imbalance among black clergy in the U.S.¹²⁰⁴ Interviewing these black women clergy and others will reveal their motivations, roles, and challenges in AAM.

As black church people emerged as committed participants in the anti-apartheid movement, several black congregations figured prominently. I would like to build upon these findings by conducting oral history interviews with clergy and parishioners from these key churches. Hearing from more of the foot soldiers of the movement, will offer an in-depth understanding of the “view from the pews” as well as the “view from the

¹²⁰⁴ C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Duke University Press, 1990), 289 Lincoln reveals that there were less than “5 percent of the clergy in the historic black denominations.” who were women. Reverend Bernice Powell Jackson, a Florida pastor and president of the World Council of Churches from North America, coordinated Bishop Desmond Tutu's scholarship program for South African refugees of the 1976 Soweto uprising and has a network of female colleagues who engaged in anti-apartheid activism.

pulpit”.¹²⁰⁵ Moreover, better understanding the extent, if any, that black liberation theology, presidential politics, and domestic race relations had on clergy and parishioners’ decisions to participate in anti-apartheid activism will illuminate their motivations.

Further examination of the education and outreach work of SASP and similar organizations’ conscientizing strategies and efforts with local communities is needed. Moreover, the voices of core members like Sandra Hill would allow for a full understanding of SASP’s impact on the U.S. southern African liberation movement. Learning more about the Baltimore Anti-Apartheid Coalition (BAAC), which also focused on community education and outreach and worked closely with local churches would provide access to untapped resources.

The Washington Office on Africa, largely supported by diverse churches and unions, worked closely with the church sector in its southern African liberation activities. Respondent Maghan Keita describes WOA as an organization that was considered “more palatable” than the ACOA and TransAfrica to a broader audience of activists. Scholars may also be interested in examining NCC and PNBC for future research on black faith communities and the anti-apartheid movement.

STRUGGLES CONTINUE

Collectively, these organizations represent a very small number of staff people who accomplished extraordinary work with few resources. In the midst of the struggle, fundraising was a constant. Unfortunately, these groups are mostly moribund today and

¹²⁰⁵ See the Religious Action Network, “Summit Conference Program Book”, which lists a conference session similarly titled.

have not been replaced by new activist organizations focused on Africa. This presents a major vacuum in U.S. support of lingering issues in Africa and the African diaspora. People still need to be educated and mobilized on the war on terror in Somalia, Nigeria, and other countries in which human rights violations, religious oppression, corporate exploitation, and corruption are well-known in the global community. The South African people were vocal in expressing their issues and had access to and support of U.S. based organizations prepared to work in solidarity with African activists. Many of the churches and organizations represented in this study remain connected to people in South Africa and throughout the African diaspora through their outreach ministries. Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem continues its strong emphasis on social justice work through its Ministry of Christian Social Concern, which engages in “local, national, and international social-political issues.”¹²⁰⁶ Washington, D.C. based Union Temple remains African-centered in its teaching and worship with an emphasis on economic, social, and political consciousness. Many of these churches send missionaries to work on education, building projects, job training, and providing financial support.

South Africa is no longer seen as the pariah white supremacist government in the international community; the young democracy has seen four national presidential elections. The 1994 election of Nelson Mandela, the first democratically elected president of South Africa, officially ended the system of apartheid. The ANC remains in power under its current president Jacob Zuma. Many international corporations returned to South Africa in the late 1990s; however, poverty persists with the highest

¹²⁰⁶ “Ministry of Christian Social Concern,” accessed April 12, 2015, <http://abyssinian.org/ministry/social-concerns-outreach/ministry-of-christian-social-concern/>.

unemployment rate among black South Africans. With a few exceptions, wealth still rests in the hands of the white minority and international corporations.

The Apartheid Museum, located in the heart of Soweto a township south west of Johannesburg, portrays the story of the long fought struggle against apartheid in twentieth-century South Africa. Opened in 2001, South Africa's history is brought to the forefront through the lens of apartheid; the development, destructiveness, and demise of the state-sanctioned system of racial segregation fill the museum. In "Total Onslaught," a permanent exhibit, the international response to apartheid is featured. In *Understanding Apartheid Learner's Book*, a companion education guide to the museum, the museum opined "it was only when the United States imposed economic and financial sanctions in 1986 and the South African economy was seriously threatened, that the National Party began to consider negotiations with the ANC."¹²⁰⁷ Soweto figured prominently in the struggle against apartheid, many anti-apartheid leaders and events emerged from this sprawling segregated township of more than two-million residents. Many of the stalwarts of the anti-apartheid movement still live in Soweto; Nelson Mandela's Soweto home is now a tourist attraction. These museums pay tribute to the anti-apartheid movement in the U.S. and South Africa, which helped make Mandela a revered hero and master politician as opposed to a martyr at Robbin Island.

¹²⁰⁷ Apartheid Museum, *Understanding Apartheid Learner's Book*, Third (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 2008), 89, <http://www.apartheidmuseum.org/sites/default/files/files/downloads/Learners%20book%20Chapter5.pdf>.

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