

# Anti-apartheid solidarity in United States–South Africa relations: From the margins to the mainstream



By William Minter and Sylvia Hill<sup>1</sup>

I came here because of my deep interest and affection for a land settled by the Dutch in the mid-seventeenth century, then taken over by the British, and at last independent; a land in which the native inhabitants were at first subdued, but relations with whom remain a problem to this day; a land which defined itself on a hostile frontier; a land which has tamed rich natural resources through the energetic application of modern technology; a land which once imported slaves, and now must struggle to wipe out the last traces of that former bondage. I refer, of course, to the United States of America. Robert F. Kennedy, University of Cape Town, 6 June 1966.<sup>2</sup>

The opening lines of Senator Robert Kennedy's speech to the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), on a trip to South Africa which aroused the ire of pro-apartheid editorial writers, well illustrate one fundamental component of the involvement of the United States in South Africa's freedom struggle. For white as well as black Americans, the issues of white minority rule in South Africa have always been seen in parallel with the definition of their own country's identity and struggles against racism.<sup>3</sup> From the beginning of white settlement in the two countries, reciprocal influences have affected both rulers and ruled. And direct contacts between African Americans and black South Africans date back at least to the visits of American

1 William Minter is editor of *AfricaFocus Bulletin* ([www.africafocus.org](http://www.africafocus.org)) and a writer and scholar on African issues. Sylvia Hill is professor of criminal justice at the University of the District of Columbia and a member of the board of directors of TransAfrica Forum. The sections on the period from 1945 to 1980 were initially drafted by William Minter; most of the material in the sections on the period from 1981 to 1994 was initially drafted by Sylvia Hill.

2 See [www.rfksa.org](http://www.rfksa.org), a website created by Larry Shore of Hunter College, New York.

3 The historical parallels have inspired a number of works, of which the most influential has probably been George M. Frederickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

whaling ships in the early nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> In the twentieth century links between freedom movements in both countries have steadily multiplied since the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909 and the African National Congress in 1912. African-American leaders, from W.E.B. DuBois and Paul Robeson through to Martin Luther King Jnr and Malcolm X, have consistently regarded the South African freedom cause as integrally linked to the US civil rights movement and the campaign for freedom from racism worldwide.<sup>5</sup>

This chapter does not attempt to survey that wider history. But this context does require a brief overview of the parallel evolution of domestic civil rights struggles. Equally essential is the global role of the United States after World War II, both the Cold War competition with the Soviet Union and the emerging substitution of US leadership for the former colonial powers in Western political and economic hegemony in Africa. Here too the Kennedy visit in 1966 illustrates the complexity and internal contradictions in the US role. For many opponents of apartheid, Kennedy's willingness to defy South Africa's rulers in their own country, visiting Soweto as well as white universities, and meeting with banned ANC leader Albert Luthuli, provided inspiration. Many liberals in the United States saw Kennedy's political evolution in the years before his assassination in June 1968 as signalling new openings, both in support for civil rights at home and in opposition to the Vietnam War then dominating the US foreign policy debate. Yet in the 1960s, neither Senator Kennedy nor any other major US politician, Democrat or Republican, was willing to support the call for sanctions against South Africa. In practice, US foreign policy toward South Africa, as towards the rest of the world, was determined more by cold war demands and profitable economic ties than by denunciations of apartheid, even those as eloquent as those of Robert Kennedy.

Two decades later, in 1986, the US Congress passed the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, a sanctions measure that was one of the decisive blows leading the apartheid regime to the negotiating table. In 1990, Nelson Mandela addressed a joint session of the houses of Congress to overwhelming applause. US cabinet minister Donna Shalala concluded her tribute at Oliver Tambo's memorial service in 1993 with the cry of '*Amandla!*', and civil rights leader Jesse Jackson headed the official US observer mission to the 1994 election that brought Nelson Mandela to the presidency of his country.

The primary objective of this chapter is to trace the main outlines of the groups, campaigns, and events that produced these changes in US policy. It is not a comprehensive account, given the wide range of local as well as national groups that were involved over the years, and the fact that systematic research is very limited except on the period of the 1950s. Given that the context of policy was largely set by presidential administrations, the chapter is divided chronologically by administrations: Truman

4 See Keletso Atkins, 'The Black Atlantic Communication Network: African American Sailors and the Cape of Good Hope Connection', *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*, 24, 2, (1996), 23–5.

5 See Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane, *The Ties that Bind: African-American Consciousness of Africa* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1987).

and Eisenhower (1945–1960); Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon (1961–1974); Ford and Carter (1974–1980); Reagan (1981–1988); and Bush and Clinton (1989–1994).

## South African resistance and the United States in the Truman–Eisenhower years, 1945–1960<sup>6</sup>

The period from 1945 to 1960, stretching from the end of World War II and the formation of the United Nations to the year of African independence and the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa, saw significant changes in public opinion in the United States about South Africa. Despite the differences in circumstances and results, the parallels between the civil rights movement, the campaigns for African independence from colonialism, and resistance to apartheid in South Africa were as apparent to those involved as was the common racism of the oppressive systems.

World War II had provided Africans, African Americans, and other colonised peoples the opportunity to make their commonalities visible, especially in the black press. Prominent African-American leaders Paul Robeson and W.E.B. DuBois linked the fight against the domestic Jim Crow racial system with the war against fascism and the anti-colonial campaigns, and were applauded by many white as well as black people. They exposed doctrines of white supremacy that the segregated US army shared with European colonial powers and the white settler outposts in Africa even during the battle against Nazi racism.

President Roosevelt had hinted that the promise of freedom for oppressed peoples might apply not only to those conquered by the Nazis, but also to those ruled by Western powers. But the United States and its allies did not expect that day to come for generations. As the United States mobilised for the Cold War in the late 1940s and early 1950s, moreover, the clear congruence of anti-colonial and domestic anti-racist movements was shoved to the margin, even among most groups working for social justice at home. The dominant civil rights forces in the United States, in an effort to prove their American loyalty, dropped the rhetoric of identification with oppressed peoples.

In the US political context of the late 1940s, the Cold War thus rapidly eclipsed the World War II vision of a ‘double victory’ against racism at home and abroad. Consciousness of Africa among civil rights forces only began to regain momentum

6 For an overview of the context of this period, see William Minter, *King Solomon's Mines Revisited: Western Interests and the Burdened History of Southern Africa* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), chapters 3 and 4. Recent works on the period include Brenda Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and US Foreign Affairs, 1935–1960* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Penny von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anti-colonialism, 1937–1957* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Azza Sadama Layton, *International Politics and Civil Rights Policies in the United States, 1941–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Carol Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944–1955* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); James H. Merriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935–1961* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). Works such as Charles Denton Johnson, ‘African Americans and South Africans: the Anti-Apartheid Movement in the United States, 1921–1955’ (PhD, Howard University, 2004) and David Henry Anthony III, *Max Yergan: Race Man, Internationalist, Cold Warrior* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), show that there is still much archival material to be explored.

a decade later, particularly after the independence of Ghana in 1957. During the administrations of President Harry Truman (1945–1952) and President Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953–1960), organisational efforts to support South African resistance to apartheid and to oppose US collaboration with the apartheid regime only involved small groups of activists and had limited impact.

The principal groups involved in this period were the Council on African Affairs, which declined from a high point of activity in 1946 and finally succumbed to cold war repression in 1955, and the American Committee on Africa, which emerged in 1953 from a campaign to support the 1952 defiance campaign in South Africa. To some extent, the leadership of the NAACP also took an occasional interest in South Africa. None of these organisations had any visible impact during this period on the foreign policy establishment or within either political party. Nevertheless, their efforts did result in regular networks of communication with African leaders, particularly with the ANC. They also clearly defined a policy framework which would continue into the period of armed struggle in southern Africa following Sharpeville and guide the larger-scale anti-apartheid networks of subsequent decades. That framework included both direct support for African liberation movements and targeting US economic and political collaboration with the apartheid state.

This mobilisation, however, was in the context of a US political system that was still overwhelmingly based on the denial of rights to African Americans, despite limited efforts by the Democratic Party to counter discrimination and reach out to African-American voters in some parts of the country. During this period African Americans in most of the south could not vote and were harassed, intimidated and terrorised if they tried to exercise the right to vote. In the US Congress, advocates of civil rights were outweighed by the alliance of conservative Democrats and Republicans. And even the prominence of Nobel Prize winning diplomat Ralph Bunche made only a token breach in the lily-white enclave of foreign policy decision-making and debate.<sup>7</sup>

### ***US policy toward South Africa under Truman and Eisenhower***<sup>8</sup>

The fundamental context underlying US policy toward South Africa in this period was the common acceptance by the leaders of government and society in both countries of the legitimacy of white supremacy. The two countries diverged in their trajectories, however. The election of the National Party in South Africa in 1948 heralded the intensification of white racial control and repression under the new label of ‘apartheid’. In the United States, President Harry Truman began Democratic Party efforts to woo the African-American vote. The civil rights movement began its rise

7 See Michael L. Krenn, *Black Diplomacy: African Americans and the State Department, 1945–1969* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1999).

8 See Thomas Borstelmann, *Apartheid’s Reluctant Uncle: The United States and Southern Africa in the Early Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), and Thomas J. Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation: The United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948–1968* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1985). A selection of official documents is available in the series *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)* (Washington: US Government Printing Office), multiple years.

to public prominence in 1955 and cold war competition for hearts and minds gave both Democratic and Republican administrations new reasons to address problems of racism at home and, to a lesser extent, grounds for disassociation from South Africa. The incentives for criticising apartheid, however, were easily outweighed by rapidly growing US economic interests in South Africa and by the strategic interest in the country's mineral wealth, particularly uranium.

Prominent top foreign policy officials were openly sympathetic to white supremacy, including James F. Byrnes, secretary of state from 1945 to 1947, and Dean Acheson, who served as secretary of state from 1949 to 1952. Acheson was hostile to any critique of South Africa and in later years defended not only South Africa but also the white regime of Rhodesia and Portuguese colonialism. Under Eisenhower, comments Thomas Borstelmann, 'the overall thrust of US policy in Africa in the 1950s was the same as the administration's policy toward civil rights at home: to avoid it as much as possible'.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, global and domestic opinion made for divergence in US and South African views. This was reflected, for example, in the United Nations (UN). In 1946 and 1947, as India spearheaded criticism of South Africa at the United Nations, the United States worked to moderate the UN resolutions.<sup>10</sup> On the question of the treatment of Indians, the US agreed that this was an internal question for South Africa, but urged South Africa to consider negotiations with India. On South West Africa, the US worked to defeat UN resolutions that went beyond requesting South Africa to report on its administration of the territory. But it stopped short of supporting the effort by Smuts to incorporate South West Africa into South Africa.

In terms of US public opinion as well as world opinion, the view of South Africa shifted sharply after the National Party victory at the polls in the white people-only 1948 election when Smuts was replaced as prime minister by Daniel Malan. Even before the advances of the US civil rights movement, mainstream US opinion was much closer to the views of English-speaking South Africans than to those of the National Party. Apartheid as an ideology was regarded as an extreme position that was likely to have negative consequences for stability and the security of white people as well as for black people. An editorial in the *New York Times* of 22 August, for example, suggested that: 'There is pretty-well world-wide agreement that the apartheid policy as pursued by Malan's Nationalists is about the worst method that could have been devised to solve the problem. A solution that is based on pure racism, on the theory of the perennial and innate superiority of one race over another, is false, immoral, and repugnant.'

One of the most important influences solidifying critical American views of the South African racial system was the novel *Cry the Beloved Country*, written by Alan Paton and published in February 1948, several months before the National Party came to power. Paton's book was a perennial best-seller, eventually selling over 15m

9 Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 116.

10 See Anthony Lake, 'Caution and Concern: The Making of American Policy Toward South Africa, 1946–1971' (PhD, Princeton, 1974), 57–66, and Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle*, 74–79.

copies. It was adapted for a Broadway musical in 1949 and for a film in 1951, featuring African-American actors Canada Lee and Sidney Poitier. The message of the novel was liberal rather than radical; Paton became the founder of the Liberal Party in 1953. But its impact in shaping the world-wide image of South African racism was enormous.

This shift, however, did not affect the close economic and strategic relationships between the United States and South Africa. To the contrary, these were strengthened as the US gained ground from Britain as a rising economic power in the region. While Britain remained the primary economic partner of South Africa, holding 53 per cent of indirect investment and 69 per cent of direct investment in 1956 (and two-thirds of all investment in 1960), US investment as well as trade rose rapidly during this period. US direct investment, for example, rose from \$51m in 1943 to \$140m in 1950.<sup>11</sup> By 1959 it had reached \$32m, involving at least 160 companies.<sup>12</sup> The US increased its investment in mining, and played a major role in the expanding industrial sector, particularly in the automobile industry.

This expansion was encouraged by official loans from the US-dominated World Bank and the bilateral Export-Import Bank as well as from private US banks. The timing of the official loans and the US government perception of South Africa's value as an ally, however, was also decisively influenced by the strategic importance of uranium.<sup>13</sup> While South Africa was regarded as a reliable and valuable US military ally throughout this period, it was uranium that made the alliance particularly important. Neither the United States nor Britain responded favourably to repeated South African initiatives for a formal military alliance, such as through inclusion in NATO. But the beginning of the Korean war in 1950 led quickly not only to the commitment of a South African Air Force unit to the allied forces in Korea, but also to an agreement for US support of South African uranium production and guaranteed sales to the US and Britain over a ten-year period.<sup>14</sup>

From 1948 to 1960, both the Truman and Eisenhower administrations followed a similar policy when forced to confront the South African issue at the UN: try to avoid the issue without being fully identified with South Africa. In 1950, for example, it voted for a resolution opposed by South Africa calling for negotiations with Pretoria on South West Africa by a UN special committee.<sup>15</sup> In 1952, still under the Truman administration, the United States criticised apartheid in statements at the UN, but voted against including apartheid on the formal agenda and abstained on a resolution to establish a commission to study the racial situation in South Africa.<sup>16</sup> Until 1958, the United States continued to abstain from voting on UN resolutions concerning South Africa's racial policies. In that year, it voted for a resolution expressing 'regret

11 Minter, *King Solomon's Mines Revisited*, 82, 101.

12 Richard W. Hull, *American Enterprise in South Africa: Historical Dimensions of Engagement and Disengagement* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), 220. On economic ties during this period see also Minter, *King Solomon's Mines Revisited*, 73–102.

13 See Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle*.

14 *Ibid.*, 137–165.

15 Lake, 'Caution and Concern', 65.

16 *Ibid.*, 66–67.

and concern' about the situation in South Africa, but refused to allow use of the word 'condemn'.<sup>17</sup>

With new attention to African issues in the second half of the 1950s, particularly after the independence of Ghana in 1957, the need for a US reaction to apartheid was increasing, despite the fact that critical views on apartheid had little influence on the top levels in the US government. The contradictory tendencies are clearly revealed in the reaction to Sharpeville in 1960. The day after at least 69 demonstrators were killed by police, the US Department of State press officer read the following statement:

The United States deplores violence in all its forms and hopes that the African people of South Africa will be able to obtain redress for legitimate grievances by peaceful means. While the United States, as a matter of practice, does not ordinarily comment on the internal affairs of governments with which it enjoys normal relations, it cannot help but regret the tragic loss of life resulting from the measures taken against the demonstrators in South Africa.<sup>18</sup>

The statement won praise from African countries and complaints from the South African government. But President Eisenhower, Secretary of State Christian Herter, and US ambassador to South Africa Philip Crowe, none of whom had been consulted about the statement, all regarded it as an unfortunate mistake. President Eisenhower was described in an internal memorandum as 'furious' at the 'breach of courtesy among nations' and the fact that the State Department officials involved acted 'without checking at the top policy level, and without investigating the facts of the matter'.<sup>19</sup> Ambassador Crowe cabled Washington that in his opinion 'police had no choice under the circumstances'.<sup>20</sup>

The United States worked to tone down the resolution being prepared in the UN Security Council. But it parted company with Britain and France, who abstained, to vote for the resolution adopted on 1 April. Among other provisions, the resolution

(2) deplore[d] the fact that the recent disturbances in the Union should have led to the loss of life of so many Africans ... (3) deplore[d] the Union Government's policies and actions which had given rise to the present situation; [and] (4) call[ed] upon the Union Government to initiate measures aimed at bringing about racial harmony based on equality in order to ensure that the present situation did not continue or recur and to abandon its policies of apartheid and racial discrimination.<sup>21</sup>

17 Ibid., 72.

18 *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1958–1960, vol. 14: Africa* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1972), 741. See also pp 742–61 on US – South Africa policy, 1960.

19 Ibid., 742.

20 Ibid., 743.

21 United Nations, *Yearbook of the United Nations 1960* (New York: United Nations, 1961), 145.

On 19 July 1960, a National Intelligence Estimate prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) concluded that:

Growing world disapproval of its racial policies will probably push South Africa into an increasingly isolated position in international affairs ... Given the vehemence of both Afro-Asian and South African feeling, the Western powers will find it increasingly difficult to avoid offending one side or the other.<sup>22</sup>

### ***The context for solidarity: The US civil rights movement, the left, and South Africa***

The US government policy toward South Africa thus changed little over the period from 1945 to 1960. In contrast, over the same period the political and organisational context of the civil rights movement and other progressive forces in the US underwent significant changes. World War II had seen significant mobilisation among African Americans, under the popular 'double V' campaign for victory against Nazism abroad and racism at home. Returned veterans in the United States, as in Africa, were among the leaders in defying racism after having gained wider world experience and confidence. And the common front against Nazism which had defined wartime alliances persisted into the immediate post-war period, despite tensions dividing communists, socialists, liberals, pan-Africanists, and others considering themselves in the progressive camp.

In organisational terms, the leading civil rights organisation, the NAACP, increased its membership tenfold from 50 000 in 1940 to 500 000 by 1946. Although the national organisation focused on the legal challenge to segregation, NAACP branches and members were also engaged with other action. While the civil rights movement advanced, however, the Cold War quickly had profound effects on the political scene and the movement itself. In 1945, the towering figures of Paul Robeson and W.E.B. DuBois still symbolised a strong internationalism linking struggles for domestic and international justice. Yet by 1950 both Robeson and DuBois had been deprived of their passports by the US government, and were subject to relentless persecution and isolation for their ties with the Communist Party and the Soviet Union.

The break between these two figures and mainstream civil rights leadership came in 1948, when both played prominent roles in the Progressive Party presidential campaign of Henry Wallace. The leadership of the NAACP, in contrast, saw a close alliance with President Truman as the key to civil rights advance. Simultaneously they decided to make full use of the argument that the cold war competition with the Soviet Union itself required civil rights at home to improve America's world reputation, an argument that had significant influence on US government policy.<sup>23</sup> As government repression in the McCarthyite period escalated, the options for open co-

<sup>22</sup> *FRUS*, vol. 14: *Africa*, 1972, 755.

<sup>23</sup> See, in addition to Layton, Anderson, and other works cited above, Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).



operation between communist and non-communist progressive activists increasingly narrowed.<sup>24</sup>

It would be a mistake, however, to attribute the tensions between different political tendencies in the civil rights movement and the broader left entirely to government repression or ideological anti-communism. Socialists such as A. Philip Randolph and many others had drawn back from co-operation with groups linked to the Communist Party, particularly after the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939, when the Party turned abruptly to opposing US entry into the war against Hitler. Prominent pan-African revolutionary theorists such as George Padmore and C.L.R. James opposed the Soviet-tied Communist parties not out of opposition to revolution, but for other reasons.<sup>25</sup> Unlike the NAACP, these tendencies within the non-communist left maintained an internationalist focus on liberation rather than endorsing US cold war policy.

Still, the Cold War undoubtedly obscured the earlier convergence of opposition to domestic racism and colonialism in the African-American community and progressive forces more generally. In particular, it muted the response of the NAACP to the parallel struggle against apartheid. The organisation's leaders did maintain an ongoing interest in South Africa. Both Walter White, who headed the group from 1931 to 1955, and his deputy and successor Roy Wilkins were in touch with ANC leaders such as A.B. Xuma and Z.K. Matthews (see below). The NAACP supported the testimony of Michael Scott at the United Nations against South African occupation of South West Africa. In 1951–1952 Walter White worked actively to oppose World Bank loans to South Africa and the 1952 NAACP convention urged the US government to 'use to the fullest extent every facility at its command to oppose the cruel and barbaric white supremacy doctrine of Malan and his government.'<sup>26</sup> But the group never followed up with major attention to South Africa or anti-colonialism, leaving the field of activist solidarity with Africa primarily to smaller groups, namely the Council on African Affairs and the American Committee on Africa.

### The Council on African Affairs<sup>27</sup>

The Council on African Affairs (CAA) was founded in 1936–37, initially under the name International Committee on African Affairs, at the initiative of Max Yergan, an African American who was a leader in the international section of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). Yergan was based in Dar es Salaam from 1916 to 1918 and in South Africa from 1921 to 1936. He was well known and well-connected in

24 The intense period of repression against actual and suspected members of the Communist Party in the 1950s is particularly identified with Republican senator Joseph McCarthy, who led the 'Red Scare' until he was repudiated by more moderate Republicans in 1954.

25 See George Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism?: The Coming Struggle for Africa* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1956), and C.L.R. James, *A History of Pan-African Revolt*, (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1995 [1938]).

26 Cited in Merriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 116–117.

27 The classic study is Hollis R. Lynch, *Black American Radicals and Africa: The Council on African Affairs, 1937–1955* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Africana Studies and Research Center, 1978). See also von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*; Merriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*; Dorothy Hunton, *Alphaeus Hunton: The Unsung Valiant* (Richmond Hill, NY: D.K. Hunton, 1986). Recent studies based on archival research are Johnson, *African Americans and South Africans* and Anthony, *Max Yergan*.

African-American leadership circles and the philanthropic community in the United States, and a close associate of black South African leadership circles in education, the churches, the African National Congress, and related political movements. In the mid 1930s Yergan had become increasingly radicalised. On his return to the United States, he gained support from Eslanda and Paul Robeson to launch the new organisation, pulling together a small committee of African Americans and white people interested in Africa to promote the liberation of Africa, primarily through the dissemination of information.

In its early years, the activities of the CAA were modest but its activities and impact increased significantly after 1943, when Alphaeus Hunton became its educational director. Hunton, a Howard University professor and leader of the National Negro Congress, became the mainstay of the organisation, taking over as director in 1948 and continuing to lead the organisation until its demise in 1955. He edited its principal publication *New Africa*, renamed *Spotlight on Africa* in 1952.

The decline of the CAA began in 1947, when it was listed as a subversive organisation by the US government. There followed a split between Max Yergan on the one hand and Hunton and Robeson on the other, which paralysed the group with internal and legal conflict during 1948. Although Hunton and Robeson won the battle for organisational control, the CAA never regained its lost momentum. It lost most of its supporters outside the Communist Party orbit, and suffered systematic government harassment. Yergan for his part denounced his former associates to the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), toured Europe and Africa defending US foreign policy, and became an extreme right-wing crusader whose support extended to the apartheid regime itself.<sup>28</sup> Despite extensive research, most notably by biographer David Anthony, the reasons for Yergan's dramatic about-face remain unclear. There are hints, however, that it might have involved elements of blackmail by US government officials.

In 1952, despite the split, the CAA was still strong enough to mobilise for support of the defiance campaign in South Africa. It called for two minutes of silence on 6 April as a symbol of support, organised an open-air meeting in Harlem, and picketed the South African consulate. It held an emergency conference on South Africa in Harlem, and raised some \$2 000 that year to send to South Africa to support the campaign. CAA chair Paul Robeson called for support to the South African campaigners and added that African Americans could learn from the example of the campaign.<sup>29</sup> On behalf of the CAA, Hunton sought collaboration with the emerging Americans for South Africa. But the new organisation declined to work with the Communist-identified CAA, instead building its own coalition of support for the defiance campaign.<sup>30</sup> Much of the energies of the organisation's leaders in the early 1950s were taken up in

28 In addition to Lynch, *Black American Radicals and Africa*; Johnson, *African Americans and South Africans*; and Anthony, *Max Yergan*, see also Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize*.

29 For discussion of the CAA and other responses to the defiance campaign, see Merriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 102–123 and Johnson, *African Americans and South Africans*, 171–216.

30 The reasons for the refusal to cooperate are complex. As the focus of this chapter is on US support for the South African liberation struggle from the 1960s onwards, the issue will not be pursued here.

defending themselves against government repression, and in 1955 the group formally disbanded.

### The American Committee on Africa<sup>31</sup>

Americans for South African Resistance (AFSAR) was formed in 1952 and transformed into the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) in 1953. The spark came from an encounter by pacifist and pan-Africanist activist Bill Sutherland with Jacob Nhlapo, editor of the *Bantu World*, when they shared a platform at a meeting of Quakers in Birmingham, England, in 1951.<sup>32</sup> Sutherland heard from Nhlapo of the plans for the defiance campaign, and was given a list of contacts in South Africa, including Walter Sisulu of the ANC and Yusuf Cachalia of the South African Indian Congress (SAIC).

The group that was organised included Rev. Donald Harrington of the Community Church of New York and Rev. Charles Y. Trigg of the Salem Methodist Church in Harlem. The executive committee included Roger Baldwin; Norman Thomas; Bayard Rustin; A. Philip Randolph; and Conrad Lynn. AFSAR's efforts to support the defiance campaign included a rally at the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, followed by a motorcade and demonstration at the South African consulate. Over the next year, AFSAR raised approximately \$3 000 to send to South Africa to support the defiance campaign.

After the defiance campaign wound down due to government repression, AFSAR leaders decided in 1953 to transform the organisation into the American Committee on Africa, with a mandate including not only South Africa, but also the independence of other African countries. In the remaining years of the 1950s, the committee's work included assisting African petitioners at the UN, publishing the journal *Africa Today*, and organising visits and country-wide tours for leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Tom Mboya of Kenya. It also continued a focus on South Africa, maintaining regular communications with contacts made during the defiance campaign, particularly with Z.K. Matthews, Walter Sisulu, Albert Luthuli, and other leaders of the ANC, but also with white opponents of apartheid including Alan Paton, Bishop Ambrose Reeves, and Rev. Trevor Huddleston. In 1954, Houser made an extended visit to Africa, including South Africa, renewing his contact with Matthews and meeting Luthuli, then under a banning order, and other opponents

31 Documents of ACOA and AFSAR, are held at the Amistad Research Center at Tulane University, New Orleans, and <http://www.lexisnexis.com/academic/2upa/Aaas/AmericanCommitteeAfrica.asp>. There is no full-length study of the organisation's history. See, however, George M. Houser, *No One Can Stop the Rain: Glimpses of Africa's Liberation Struggle* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989); George M. Houser, 'Meeting Africa's Challenge: The Story of the American Committee on Africa', *Issue: A Quarterly Journal of Africanist Opinion*, VI, 2–3 (1976); George Houser, 'The International Impact of South Africa's Freedom Struggle', United Nations Centre against Apartheid, *Notes and Documents*, 82, no. 2 (January 1982): <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/misc/hous123.html>. The founding of ACOA is discussed in Bill Sutherland and Matt Meyer, *Guns and Gandhi in Africa: Pan African Insights on Nonviolence, Armed Struggle and Liberation in Africa* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2000), 148–150; George W. Shepherd, Jr, *They Are Us: Fifty Years of Human Rights Advocacy* (New York: Xlibris, 2002), 143–164; Lisa Brock, 'The 1950s: Africa Rising', in William Minter, Gail Hovey, and Charles Cobb, Jr (eds.), *No Easy Victories: African Liberation and American Activists over a Half Century, 1950–2000* (Trenton, NJ: Africa world press, 2008); David L. Hostetter, *Movement Matters: American Antipartheid Activism and the Rise of Multicultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

32 See Sutherland and Meyer, *Guns and Gandhi*; Houser, *No One Can Stop the Rain*; Jervis Anderson, *Bayard Rustin: Troubles I've Seen* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 140–143.

of apartheid. Later the ACOA raised funds for schools in South Africa resisting the imposition of Bantu Education, and, in an extended campaign, some \$75,000 for the defence of those charged in the Treason Trial from 1956 to 1961.

The most prominent campaign by the organisation on South Africa during this period was the 1957 Declaration of Conscience against Apartheid, which gained the signatures of 133 prominent world leaders in a consensus statement that Houser describes as 'mild in language'. It called on governments and organisations to 'persuade the South African government, before it reaches the point of no return, that only in democratic equality is there lasting peace and security'.<sup>33</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt was the international chairperson of the campaign; Dean James Pike was US chair, and Rev. Martin Luther King, Jnr the US vice-chair. Other signatories included Julius Nyerere, Albert Luthuli, Bertrand Russell, Arnold Toynbee, Alan Paton, Walter Reuther and John Gunther. Gunther, author of the popular *Inside Africa* published in 1955,<sup>34</sup> agreed to be honorary chairman of a new national committee set up to broaden the support for ACOA.

While this strategy succeeded in gaining significant publicity and arousing the denunciation of South African foreign affairs minister, Eric Louw,<sup>35</sup> it was followed by what Houser describes as 'the only major internal struggle for control of the organization'.<sup>36</sup> The high-profile campaign, together with a similarly high-profile reception for Ghana's President Kwame Nkrumah the same year, was facilitated by a contract with a public relations firm headed by Harold Oram, and increased the ACOA contributor list from about 3 000 to 8 000 in a year. But Oram and his supporters on the ACOA board went further to argue that the organisation should stress lobbying and relationships in Washington and de-emphasise continued contact with liberation movements. They also sought to remove radical pacifist A.J. Muste from the organisation's board. In March 1959, the more conservative faction on the board sought to gain control by electing their candidate as board president. But they failed and the policy of close collaboration with liberation movements was reaffirmed.

That decision included continued support for the movements when they decided to turn to armed struggle. Although Houser himself was personally a pacifist, the organisation was not. The organisational position, which Houser supported, was that the movements themselves had the right to decide what action to take to seek their freedom. The issue first arose not with respect to South Africa after Sharpeville, but with respect to the war in Algeria, from 1954 to 1962. The ACOA supported the Algerian Front for National Liberation (FLN), and assisted its representatives who came to New York in 1956. Houser, despite initial hesitations, 'accepted the justice of the FLN cause', arguing that the function of the ACOA was to interpret that cause and influence US policy.<sup>37</sup>

33 Houser, 'Meeting Africa's Challenge', 5–6.

34 John Gunther, *Inside Africa* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955).

35 Houser, *No One Can Stop the Rain*, 124.

36 George Houser, handwritten manuscript for *No One Can Stop the Rain* (1988), pages not included in published book.

37 Houser, *No One Can Stop the Rain*, 91.

After Sharpeville had led the movement in South Africa to draw the conclusion that armed struggle was necessary, and when other movements in the southern African region took the same course, the ACOA followed the same policy of supporting the justice of the struggle and the right of those involved to make the decisions about the means to use. In that context, the key role of the movement in the US was seen as interpreting the struggle and, increasingly, opposing US policies and involvements that gave *de facto* support to apartheid and minority rule in the region.

### **American connections: Xuma, Matthews, Luthuli**

The information available on the CAA and the ACOA, focused on key leaders and organisational events, sheds little light on those who received their information through publications or through networks of other organisations to which they were linked. Yet it is certain that it is these contacts that were building the base of popular understanding for the later impact of the anti-apartheid movement. It is also clear, even if also hard to document, that their efforts were complemented by direct links between Americans and South Africans. Chicago-based Claude Barnett, for example, who founded and directed the Associated Negro Press service from 1919 to 1964, had been a classmate of Alfred B. Xuma at Tuskegee Institute. He maintained a life-long interest in South Africa, and often featured South African news in his service that reached some 2 000 African American newspapers across the country. Pre-eminent African American writer Langston Hughes had first visited several African countries on a trip in 1923. Although he never visited South Africa, in the 1950s he kept up an active correspondence with South African writers. Among ANC leaders of the period, A.B. Xuma, Z.K. Matthews, and Chief Albert Luthuli stand out for their extensive range of contacts in the United States.<sup>38</sup>

Xuma, for example, who served as ANC president from 1941 to 1949, lived in the US from 1913 to 1927. His second wife, Madie Hall, was from a prominent African American family in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and she herself played an active role in the ANC, serving as president of the ANC Women's League from 1943 to 1948. Xuma was a transitional figure in ANC leadership, preceding the more activist youth league generation of Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo, and others. Although his role is generally downplayed in comparison to the later expansion of the ANC, a recent study contends that he provided significant leadership in reinvigorating and expanding the organisation in the 1940s, as compared to previous leaders. Xuma maintained and used his American connections to make the case against the South African racist system, as in his visit to New York in 1946 to petition the UN on South Africa and South West Africa.<sup>39</sup>

Chief Albert Luthuli, ANC president from 1952 to 1967, also had significant contacts in the US, particularly through his ties with the Congregationalist Church.

38 These connections are documented in a forthcoming collection of documents compiled by Robert Edgar, David Anthony, and Robert Vinson. For a description of the project, see [http://www.howard.edu/library/reference/bob\\_edgar](http://www.howard.edu/library/reference/bob_edgar).

39 See Steven D. Gish, *Alfred B. Xuma: African, American, South African* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

In 1948, he spent nine months on a speaking tour in the US as part of the church's mission education programme. Although his wider fame came when he won the 1960 Nobel Prize (received in 1961), his leadership and the successive banning orders he was subjected to by the apartheid government were known in church as well as activist circles in the US. He was prominently profiled by Nadine Gordimer in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1959.<sup>40</sup> Mary Louise Hooper, a white American civil rights activist who visited South Africa in 1955, stayed in the country and served as Luthuli's secretary, becoming actively engaged in ANC activities until she was expelled by the South African authorities in 1957, afterwards maintained close ties with Luthuli. Hooper was actually introduced to the ACOA in 1956 by Chief Luthuli;<sup>41</sup> after returning to the US, she became a volunteer full-time west coast representative for the ACOA, based in San Francisco, and was active in the organisation into the mid 1960s.

The most significant South African linking the ANC with its supporters in the US in the 1950s, however, was Z. K. Matthews, leading South African educator, the first graduate of the University of Fort Hare, and active leader in the ANC, particularly in the Cape Province, from the 1940s until the 1960s.<sup>42</sup> He already knew the US from graduate study at Yale University in 1933–34, and in the 1930s had received visiting Americans at Fort Hare, including Ralph Bunche and Eslanda Robeson. In 1952, he was a visiting professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Despite pressure from the South African authorities to keep quiet about political issues, he was actively engaged in speaking and writing about South Africa, and in mobilising support for the defiance campaign, for which his son Joe Matthews was provincial organiser in the Cape. Matthews, designated the official representative of the National Action Committee for the campaign, worked closely with AFSAR, but also had good contacts with the CAA and the NAACP, and spoke to a wide variety of groups in New York and elsewhere. He and his wife Frieda were so much in demand as speakers that they had to limit their engagements to a few each week. 'The telephone in my flat was constantly ringing with people from all over the USA', Matthews recalled.<sup>43</sup> After his return to South Africa, Matthews – along with Luthuli one of those charged in the Treason Trial – kept in contact with Houser of the ACOA and other friends in the US. In 1961 he moved to Geneva to work with the World Council of Churches; from 1966 until his death in 1968, he served as Botswana's first ambassador to the UN and the US.

If measured by their effect on US policy by the end of the 1950s, the efforts of the CAA, the ACOA, Z. K. Matthews, and others to educate Americans about apartheid can only be seen as marginal. In retrospect, nevertheless, they established networks of contacts into significant sectors of American society that would later prove decisive in changing US opinion and policy.

40 Luthuli is the spelling used in published work, including his autobiography, *Let My People Go* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962). Among other sources see Nadine Gordimer, 'Chief Luthuli', *Atlantic Monthly*, 203 (April, 1959), 34–39, and sections on two South African websites, [www.sahistory.org.za](http://www.sahistory.org.za) and [www.anc.org.za](http://www.anc.org.za).

41 A.J. Luthuli to George Hauser (sic) 29 March 1956. Copy of letter made available by Bob Edgar.

42 See Z.K. Matthews, *Freedom for My People* (London: Rex Collings, 1981). The documents being compiled by Edgar, Anthony, and Vinson include correspondence and articles by Matthews.

43 Matthews, *Freedom for My People*, 160.

## The United States and South Africa, from Kennedy to Nixon, 1961–1974

In this period of US policy under Presidents John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Richard M. Nixon, the majority of African countries were entering the world arena as independent states. In southern Africa, Zambia and Malawi gained independence in 1964, followed by Botswana and Lesotho in 1966 and Swaziland in 1968. At the same time, however, the ‘triple alliance’ of apartheid South Africa, white-minority-ruled Rhodesia, and the Portuguese colonial regime consolidated their hold over the region, controlling Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique as well as South Africa itself.

In all five countries during this period, the momentum of non-violent resistance to minority and colonial rule was blocked. The liberation movements, with diplomatic and some material support from independent African countries, adopted armed struggle as an indispensable component of their strategy to achieve majority rule. Nevertheless, the overwhelming balance of military force still favoured the white regimes during these years, with only Portugal showing signs of weakness in Mozambique in the early 1970s.

As the Cold War continued in Europe and Latin America, the context for US policy on southern Africa was also affected profoundly by the internal civil rights movement and by the mounting opposition to the war in Vietnam. Despite the political turmoil and cultural changes generally associated with the decade of the 1960s, as well as differences between Democratic and Republican administrations, however, official policy on southern Africa remained relatively stable. In contrast to the previous period, verbal condemnation of apartheid from US officials became common. But *de facto* collaboration with the white regimes remained the order of the day.

Despite continued lack of influence on government policy, US solidarity with African liberation and contacts with African movements expanded significantly during this period, with networks extending around the country, new groups being formed, and larger numbers and more social sectors becoming involved. In addition to organised groups, particularly important in this process were an increasing number of Americans who worked in and returned from independent African countries and of South African exiles who visited or came to live in the United States.

During the first half of the 1960s, the ACOA remained almost the only organisation devoting substantial efforts to building solidarity with African liberation and opposition to apartheid. From 1965, however, and particularly from 1968, there emerged a significant number of new groups and related campaigns. While some were short-lived, the proliferation expanded the reach of solidarity work in multiple directions. This included a significant number, both among white and African-American activists, who adopted more radical perspectives on US society and foreign policy. It also reflected a much greater emphasis on Africa among African-American constituencies, including both radical groups and the growing number of elected African American politicians.<sup>44</sup>

44 By 1970, when the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies published its first roster of black elected officials, there were 1 459 black officials. By 1978 there were 4 593. See [www.jointcenter.org](http://www.jointcenter.org).

## ***US policy under Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon***<sup>45</sup>

Sharpeville symbolised South Africa's moral isolation, making denunciation of apartheid unavoidable by all but the most extreme voices in Western countries. It also showed the regime's determination to retain control. For key Western policymakers, it was the second reality that was the more relevant guide to action in the period from 1961 to 1974.

In March 1965, a few days after the fifth anniversary of Sharpeville, a delegation from the national conference on South African Crisis and American Action met with the national security adviser, McGeorge Bundy. Bundy, a leading figure in the American foreign-policy establishment, urged the delegation to abandon the idea of economic pressures as ineffective. He noted that other problems, such as the Congo, 'greatly overshadowed South Africa as a possible threat to the US image in Africa'.<sup>46</sup>

Bundy's views were representative among Western policymakers. Serious efforts to disengage from ties with white South Africa were rejected out of hand. Moves in such a direction, if occasionally necessary to bolster the diplomatic standing of the US in the UN, were undertaken reluctantly, hedged with qualifications, and implemented inconsistently. This can be seen not only in the case of South Africa, but also in the occupation of South West Africa, where the legal case for international action was stronger. The concern for image in the global contest with the Soviet Union required occasional political gestures. But the extent of substantive disengagement from South Africa was minuscule.

In the immediate aftermath of Sharpeville, there was little US government action except for the UN vote itself. US ambassador to South Africa, Philip Crowe, who was not replaced until May 1961, was a strong advocate of close ties with South Africa. During the first year of the Kennedy administration, negotiations for a new military tracking facility, adding to three already agreed in 1957, were high on the agenda for officials dealing with South Africa. The agreement signed in 1962 was one manifestation of what assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Mennen Williams, described as a 'bifurcated' policy, including '(a) general association [and] (b) specific disassociation and intense pressure in area of apartheid'.<sup>47</sup> 'General association' included, for example, uranium purchases from South Africa (a revised ten-year

45 For official documentation on US policy toward South Africa during the Kennedy and Johnson administration, see *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1961–1963, vol. 21: Africa* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1995), 586–662 and *FRUS, 1964–1968, vol. 24: Africa* (Washington: US GPO, 1999), 963–1110. The 1964–1968 volume is also available on-line at the website of the US State Department. The volume for the Nixon years has not yet been published. For a summary of published studies see Minter, *King Solomon's Mines Revisited*, 179–259. See also Noer, *War and Black Liberation*; Christopher Coker, *The United States and South Africa, 1968–1985* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1986); Christian M. de Vos, 'Balancing Acts: John Kennedy, The Cold War and the African National Congress', *Politikon*, 32, 1 (May 2005), 103–122; Thomas J. Noer, *Soapy: A Biography of G. Mennen Williams* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005). For Nixon's policy, see Barry Cohen and Mohamed A. El-Khawas, *The Kissinger Study of Southern Africa* (Nottingham: Spokesman Books, 1975). Accounts that have been useful for this chapter are Lake, 'Caution and Concern'; John J. Seiler, 'The Formation of US Policy Toward Southern Africa, 1957–1976' (PhD, University of Connecticut, 1976); Kevin Danaher, 'The Political Economy of US Policy Toward South Africa' (PhD, University of California, Santa Cruz, 1982).

46 LBJ Library (hereafter LBJ): National Security Files, Box 76, Memorandum of Conversation, 23 March 1965.

47 LBJ: Williams Papers, Box 1, Memo on US Policy toward the Republic of South Africa, 23 June 1961.



agreement took effect on 1 January 1961) and aid for Pretoria's nuclear programme. A 'dual policy' for arms sales tried to distinguish between those suitable for enforcing apartheid and others that could serve as external threats.

Mennen Williams and his deputy Wayne Fredericks, who replaced him as acting secretary from 1965 to 1967, were advocates of closer ties with African liberation movements and a more substantive disengagement from apartheid South Africa. But they rarely prevailed in the internal policy debates. In August 1962, for example, Williams proposed that the State Department oppose an Export-Import Bank guarantee for American Metal Climax's Phalaborwa Mine in South Africa. 'Apartheid is so pervasive throughout the society that any assistance given to South Africa helps to support it directly or indirectly', he argued.<sup>48</sup> But his recommendation was not approved. And even Williams avoided the subject in public, while US businesses showed their confidence in South Africa. A revolving credit from ten American banks coordinated by Dillon Read & Company, expanded to \$40 m in December 1959, was renewed in December 1961. Including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, in 1960–61, at least \$150 m in loan capital was made available from the United States or US-led international financial institutions.

The high point of US government anti-apartheid action in this period was the voluntary arms embargo of August 1963. This dramatic gesture, announced just before a UN Security Council debate on the issue, reportedly cost as much as \$60m in potential sales. But it was primarily intended as a symbolic gesture, and numerous limitations restricted its actual impact on South Africa, which continued to receive spare parts and technology used for military purposes. Throughout this period, moreover, top US policy makers were adamant in rejecting economic sanctions or a mandatory arms embargo against South Africa. The strongest action contemplated was on the issue of South African occupation of Namibia, but this too stopped short of comprehensive measures to force South Africa to abide by UN rulings.<sup>49</sup>

In June 1966, Robert Kennedy, then a senator from New York, visited South Africa at the invitation of the liberal National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). His speeches and his well-publicised visit with banned ANC leader Chief Albert Luthuli had a significant impact on black South Africans and white opponents of apartheid.<sup>50</sup> However, on his return Kennedy apparently made no efforts to change US policy toward South Africa.<sup>51</sup>

On both South Africa and South West Africa, then, policy changes under the Nixon administration from 1969 to 1974 were not a fundamental shift from the Kennedy-

48 LBJ: Williams Papers, Box 10.

49 In 1964 the US and Britain successfully threatened South Africa with reprisals to block the implementation of the Odendaal Report to consolidate the apartheid system in South West Africa. But when the 1966 World Court ruling proved more ambiguous than expected, the US refused to agree to stronger action despite new UN rulings revoking the South African mandate over SWA. See Minter, *King Solomon's Mines Revisited*, 193–202, 241–244.

50 See Larry Shore, 'Ripple of Hope in the Land of Apartheid: Robert F. Kennedy in South Africa, 4 June–9 June 1966', in *Safundi*, May 2002 (on-line journal at [www.safundi.com](http://www.safundi.com)). A more extensive treatment was presented in Shore's website, [www.rfksa.org](http://www.rfksa.org) (accessed 13 April 2006).

51 South Africa is not even mentioned, for example, in Jack Newfield's account of Kennedy's last years before his assassination in 1968. Jack Newfield, *RFK: A Memoir* (New York: Dutton, 1969).

Johnson years, despite the more conservative tone exemplified in the policy option '[t]he whites are here to stay' that was later revealed.<sup>52</sup> In fact, from a power-political point of view, it seemed there was little urgency for a US response to crisis in southern Africa. In 1969 and 1970 guerrilla warfare in Namibia and Zimbabwe was little more than a token threat; in Angola and Mozambique the fighting was largely confined to remote non-strategic areas. The respected president of the Mozambique Liberation Front, Eduardo Mondlane, had been assassinated by Portuguese agents in February 1969, and the future of the movement was unclear. In South Africa black resistance appeared quiescent and business was booming.

The moral imperative to condemn colonialism and racism might in theory have been just as strong as in the Kennedy era, but the practical incentive was weak. With a new Republican administration in Washington in 1969, and the Conservatives returning to office in London the following year, official sympathy for African rights was less in vogue. Until April 1974, when the complacent assumption of stability was abruptly shattered by war-weary Portuguese army officers, the costs of tilting to the white regimes seemed marginal.

This theme of 'communication', as the Nixon policy was labelled, did not involve an explicit defence of white minority rule. The stance 'we too are for constructive change' was one that was later to be repeated at higher volume in the Reagan years: 'we just think we should work with those who run the present system, not against them'. 'The ambition of the administration's southern Africa policy was to cover itself so thickly with grease that nobody could get hold of it', reported John Chettle of the South Africa Foundation in January 1971.<sup>53</sup> Obfuscation and secrecy, not an open embrace of Pretoria, was obligatory even in a conservative Republican administration. Still, the Nixon years showed an unmistakable US option for closer ties with the white regime in South Africa.

Without a crisis to elevate Africa on the policy agenda, the easiest course was to continue old patterns and delay any new departures. Changes were slow, therefore, as decisions waited on policy reviews. The NSSM39 study, begun in April 1969, pitted the traditional State Department view of 'straddle' (Option 3: symbolic disassociation from the white regimes while preserving substantive ties) against a new policy of 'communication' (Option 2), in which closer ties with the white regimes would be rationalised by claiming they might produce moderate change.

President Nixon gave his approval in February 1970 to Option 2, favoured by the National Security Council (NSC), which had the advantage of presenting a liberal cover over a conservative content. The February decision mandated 'a general posture [toward the white governments] of partial relaxation along the lines of Option 2'. Of six specific measures, two defined actions vis-à-vis South Africa: (1) the embargo on arms sales should be relaxed generally to favour any US firm applying for a licence,

52 Option 2 in the study in response to National Security Council Memorandum 39 (NSSM 39) of 1969. It stated:

'The whites are here to stay and the only way that constructive changes can come about is through them. There is no hope for the blacks to gain the political rights they seek through violence, which will only lead to chaos and increased opportunities for the communists.' Cited in Cohen and El-Khawass, *The Kissinger Study of Southern Africa*, 66.

53 *South Africa International*, January 1971.

and (2) existing policy on US investment should be relaxed to permit full Export-Import Bank facilities, while avoiding conspicuous trade promotion.<sup>54</sup>

The effect was to nibble away at the marginal steps of disengagement that had been taken under Kennedy and Johnson. ‘Grey area’ arms-embargo items were re-examined. In September 1970 the assistant secretary of state for Africa, David Newsom, announced in a low-key Chicago speech that the South African government could purchase limited numbers of small unarmed civilian-type aircraft. It is still difficult to determine how substantially Nixon administration decisions on ‘grey area’ items differed from the practice in earlier years. The Africa Bureau continued to argue for tighter restrictions, while the Commerce Department wanted no restriction at all on ‘dual-use items’ that could be civilian in character. The multiple economic links enabling South Africa’s military build-up remained in place. The difference was primarily one of symbolism: just as the arms embargo had been a signal designed to win African approval and express disapproval of apartheid, so loosening the embargo was a signal of the new stance.

In justifying the new policy, David Newsom argued against ‘penaliz[ing] those who are seeking to change [the South African system] by throwing a curtain around them and their country’.<sup>55</sup> Decoding this reference, it is clear that the seekers of change he refers to were not the vocal opponents of the system, many of whom had called precisely for such pressure. Rather, the reference was to those – from the South Africa Foundation to the so-called *verligte* (enlightened) Afrikaners – who combined advocacy of ‘change’ with an equally firm commitment to preserve the essentials of the status quo.

### ***The civil rights movement, anti-war movement and South Africa***

The context for progressive political action in this period was fundamentally shaped by the civil rights movement and, in terms of foreign policy, by the movement to oppose the war in Vietnam. The civil rights movement moulded a generation of activists and successfully abolished the legal order of racial discrimination. The anti-war movement contributed to the resignation of two presidents and to the withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam. By the end of the period both movements, with their overlapping constituencies of activists, had fragmented as a result of multiple internal divisions and government repression. Yet they had also decisively changed the shape of public opinion and the political consciousness of the millions who were active participants.<sup>56</sup>

54 The options are spelt out in Cohen and El-Khawas, *The Kissinger Study on Southern Africa*, 62–86.

55 Cited in J. Seiler, *The Formation of US Policy Toward Southern Africa*, 468.

56 The volume of literature on this period is enormous. See, for example, Adam Fairclough, *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality, 1890–2000* (New York: Viking, 2001); Harvard Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality, 1954–1992* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1993); David L. Lewis, *King: A Critical Biography* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1970); James Farmer, *Lay Bare the Heart: An Autobiography of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: New American Library, 1985); Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981); Jeffrey Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); Fred Halstead, *Out Now: A Participant’s Account of the American Movement against the Vietnam War* (New York: Monad Press, 1978); Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals turn to Lenin, Mao and Che* (London: Verso, 2002); Simon Hall, *Peace and Freedom: The Civil Rights Movement and Antiwar Movements in the 1960s* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

The effects of these movements on political organising in solidarity with African liberation were contradictory. On the one hand, radicalisation and mobilisation of large numbers of activists created a milieu in which anti-racist and anti-imperialist messages, and identification with African revolution, found ready acceptance. On the other hand, the organisations engaged in domestic civil rights struggles and in opposing the Vietnam War were overwhelmingly focused on these immediate goals, leaving little energy for sustained attention to other issues, including Africa.

The commonly repeated civil rights narrative centres on moments such as Martin Luther King Jnr's 'I have a dream' speech at the 1963 March on Washington. Historians also often cite President Lyndon Johnson's appropriation of the anthem 'We shall Overcome' in pressing for a new civil rights act after the nationally televised white violence at Selma, Alabama, in 1965. The summary lesson is that Washington and the mainstream white majority joined protesters in rejecting the explicit racism of Southern white people. In this celebratory version, the victory over segregation was won in the 1960s. The meaning of Martin Luther King's opposition to the Vietnam War, his assassination, and demands for economic justice as well as political inclusion have no place in this story. It was no secret that liberal white politicians, from the White House on down, were more interested in urging protesters to be patient than they were in addressing racial and economic inequality. In August 1965 violence in the Watts section of Los Angeles marked the beginning of years of urban unrest that exposed the fact that racial inequality was entrenched nationwide rather than confined to the Southern states.

As the war in Vietnam escalated, student and civil rights activists joined traditional peace groups in mobilising against the war. In April 1965 over 20 000 demonstrators showed up in Washington for an anti-war demonstration; by 1967 Martin Luther King Jnr had overcome resistance from his more cautious advisers to denounce the US government as 'the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today'.<sup>57</sup> The speech brought down on King a barrage of condemnation from 'mainstream' liberals and civil rights leaders. But it also signalled a turn towards more radical views that became more and more dominant within both the civil rights and anti-war movements.

After 1965, the clear arc of the freedom struggle was replaced by a much more confusing and disheartening reality. The assassinations of Malcolm X in 1965 and Martin Luther King Jnr in 1968 removed the most charismatic and prominent national leaders, who were also the most serious thinkers about the nature of oppression that were able to popularise their analysis for ordinary people and inspire young people. By the end of the 1960s, of the three major activist civil rights organisations, King's SCLC was decisively weakened, SNCC had virtually collapsed, and CORE had begun a shift to a right-wing version of black nationalism. The most prominent new organisation was the Black Panthers, founded in 1966, that was already succumbing to police attacks, covert infiltration, and internal dissension by the early 1970s. Meanwhile, the NAACP had decisively opted for a close alliance with the Democratic Party establishment.

57 The speech is available from many sources. See, for example, <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45a/058.html>

Despite the fragmentation of the ‘movement’, seeing this period as only a period of decline would be profoundly misleading. Both radicals and pragmatists were taking advantage of the opportunities to move into community, state, and national politics. The number of African-American students in both predominately white and historically black colleges and universities was increasing dramatically, accompanied by demands for black studies curriculum programmes and black student unions. In culture and in politics, this phase of black nationalism cultivated an interest in studying African political theory by Franz Fanon, Amílcar Cabral, and later Samora Machel. In addition, there was a growing women’s movement among both black and white women that raised the issues of race, class and gender equity within society. All of these strains of resistance and struggles for identity and empowerment laid the basis for a level of consciousness for international solidarity in black and non-black communities nationally.

The impact of the anti-war movement among white as well as black activists was also profound, despite ideological infighting and the rapid disintegration of major organisations such as the Students for a Democratic Society. In 1967 SNCC sent a delegation to Hanoi and in their public statement identified the causes of US involvement in the war as the same reasons for US collusion with South Africa and Rhodesia.<sup>58</sup> In 1967 Muhammad Ali was arrested for resisting the draft and 50 000 demonstrators marched on the Pentagon. The continued escalation of the war in 1968–1974, along with the assassinations of King and Robert Kennedy, spurred disillusionment and radicalisation not only among students, but in all sectors of society, including the troops.

Throughout this period, the ACOA continued as the principal contact point in the US for African liberation movement leaders, joined after 1965 by a gradually increasing number of other groups. Shortly after Sharpeville, Oliver Tambo of South Africa’s ANC toured the country at ACOA’s invitation, as did other liberation movement leaders in later years. The ACOA’s closer contact and ally in the civil rights movement was Martin Luther King Jr, who joined Chief Albert Luthuli in co-chairing an ACOA-initiated Appeal for Action against Apartheid. King also delivered the keynote address at ACOA’s Human Rights Day conference in New York in 1965.<sup>59</sup> Organisationally, however, the involvement of civil rights groups in African solidarity during this period was very limited.

In the second half of the 1960s, other groups focused on African liberation began to emerge. The Southern Africa Committee of the National Student Christian Federation (NSCF) was founded in New York in 1964, going on to publish *Southern Africa* magazine from 1965 through 1983.<sup>60</sup> The Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights under Law created its Southern Africa Project in 1967, providing a way for progressive

58 James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (New York: MacMillan, 1972), 487.

59 See George W. Houser, ‘Freedom’s Struggle Crosses Oceans and Mountains: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Liberation Struggles in Africa and America’, 169–196, in Peter J. Albert and Ronald Hoffman (eds.), *We Shall Overcome* (New York: Pantheon, 1990).

60 The NSCF became the University Christian Movement (UCM) in 1966 and dissolved as a national organisation two years later. The Southern Africa Committee continued as an independent group.

US lawyers to support political prisoners in South Africa and Namibia. Liberation Support Movement (LSM) was founded by US exiles in Vancouver, Canada, in 1968, and the Africa Research Group (ARG) in Boston the same year. Local groups and coalitions also emerged, such as the New Jersey Committee on Southern Africa (1965), the Madison Area Committee on Southern Africa (1968), the Africa Activists Association at the University of California in Los Angeles (1970), and the Chicago Committee for the Liberation of Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau (1971).

Most of the groups mentioned in the previous paragraph were largely made up of white activists, some of whom had worked in Africa, as well as African exiles and a few African Americans. African-American activists were also giving greater priority to African liberation on the continent, with inspiration not only from the thinking of Malcolm X but also from veteran pan-Africanists such as C.L.R. James as well as the writings of Franz Fanon, W.E.B. DuBois, Karl Marx, and Mao tse Tung. In 1968, SNCC veterans founded the Center for Black Education and the Drum and Spear Bookstore in Washington DC, that focused on developing self-reliance projects to empower communities, rejecting what was viewed as an education for the colonised mind at traditional universities. Similarly, the Malcolm X Liberation University was formed in Durham, North Carolina, as an expression of black self-determination. It was part of a growing countrywide network of black education, cultural, and activist groups that were anti-imperialist and pan-Africanist. In 1972–1973, these groups would link up in the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC) and in multiple networks of ties to liberation movements and progressive governments on the African continent.<sup>61</sup>

Despite the many divisions among progressive forces, on African liberation there was a broad consensus ranging from the ACOA as an organisation focused on international solidarity to the growing number of politically conscious radical groups, both black and white. This included broad agreement on the twin objectives of action against US companies linked to South Africa and direct support for African liberation movements. The period saw significant action on both fronts, involving ad-hoc coalitions and campaigns and short-lived groups as well as a small set of continuing organisations.

### ***Divestment and sanctions: the early stages***<sup>62</sup>

At an emergency action conference in May 1960, following the Sharpeville massacre that March, the American Committee on Africa called for a consumer boycott of

61 Among those involved in the Center for Black Education were SNCC veterans Charlie Cobb and Courtland Cox, as well as Jimmy Garrett and Geri Stark (Geri Augusto Bogues).

62 For the history of this debate, see David Hauck, Meg Voorhees, and Glenn Goldberg, *Two Decades of Debate: The Controversy over US Companies in South Africa* (Washington, DC: Investor Responsibility Research Center, 1983). The first extensive documentation of US companies in South Africa and options for protest include House Subcommittee on Africa, *Hearings on US Business Involvement in South Africa*, Parts 1 and 2, 92<sup>nd</sup> Congress, 1971; and Corporate Information Center, National Council of Churches, *Church Investments, Corporations & Southern Africa* (New York: Friendship Press, 1973). See also the American Committee on Africa and the Africa Fund's special issue of *Africa Today*, 'Apartheid and Imperialism: A Study of US Corporate Involvement in South Africa', 17, 5, (1970); and Robert Kinloch Massie, *Loosing the Bonds: The United States and South Africa in the Apartheid Years* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 212–221.

South African goods and US government economic sanctions against South Africa, citing Albert Luthuli's statement that 'Economic boycott is one way in which the world at large can bring home to the South African authorities that they must either mend their ways or suffer for them'.<sup>63</sup> It also recommended that labour unions mount an industrial boycott, refusing to handle South African goods; that the government discourage new investment; and that companies already in South Africa adopt non-discriminatory policies.

In the first half of the 1960s, however, the campaign for economic disengagement from South Africa gained little momentum, despite its endorsement by the UN General Assembly in 1962. Unlike in the United Kingdom, there were few significant consumer imports from South Africa to attract attention. Nor was there any strong advocate in the US Congress for economic sanctions against South Africa. Despite the significant involvement of US companies in the South African economy, these links were not prominently visible to either activists or the public.

From 1965, that began to change. Detailed research, first by the American Committee on Africa, followed by the House Africa Subcommittee, church-related researchers, and the United Nations,<sup>64</sup> resulted in lengthening lists of ties, including direct investment and bank loans. Taking advantage of this research, activist student groups began to target investments by educational institutions in these companies, while activist caucuses within Protestant denominations and the ecumenical National Council of Churches began to target investments by church agencies. While the specific demands varied, from calls to ensure that the companies implement fair employment practices in South Africa to demands that they withdraw entirely, each such action provided the opportunity for debate about the apartheid system and the complicity of US business.

At first actions against apartheid tended to be small-scale and isolated. In January, 1963, for example, Mary Louise Hooper, the ACOA's West Coast representative, along with 20 others from the NAACP and CORE, picketed a ship arriving with South African goods in San Francisco, leading to longshoremen refusing to cross the picket lines to unload the vessel.<sup>65</sup> In December 1964 the South African Freedom Action Committee, a group organised by South African exiles Ben Magubane, Anthony Ngubo, and Martin Legassick, demonstrated at the South African tourist office in Los Angeles, with Legassick holding a hunger strike in a simulated South African prison cell mounted on a pickup truck.<sup>66</sup> The first large anti-apartheid demonstration was called by the Students for Democratic Society (SDS) on 19 March 1965 to protest Chase Manhattan Bank loans to South Africa. Organised together with the NSCF, SNCC, CORE, and the Pan-African Student Organisation in America, the

63 American Committee on Africa, *Action against Apartheid* (New York: American Committee on Africa, 1960).

64 See Charles C. Diggs, Jr and Lester Wolff, *Report of Special Study Mission to Southern Africa, 10 to 30 August 1969* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1969), giving a list of American companies in South Africa. Timothy H. Smith, *The American Corporations in South Africa: An Analysis* (New York: Southern Africa Committee of the University Christian Movement and Council on Social Action, United Church of Christ, 1970) was produced after Smith's 1970 research in South Africa for this organisation. On the UN see chapter 2 in this volume.

65 *Spark*, 10 January 1963.

66 *Los Angeles Times*, 16 December 1964.

event brought out some 400 demonstrators who marched for five hours outside the bank headquarters in Manhattan; 49 demonstrators were arrested after staging a sit-down.<sup>67</sup>

Between 1966 and 1969, the ACOA, joined by other groups, continued the student-initiated campaign against bank loans to South Africa, targeting ten prominent US banks involved in a consortium loan.<sup>68</sup> Students in New York closed accounts at First National City Bank, and by December 1966 A. Philip Randolph, chairing the Committee of Conscience against South Africa, announced that some \$23m had been withdrawn from the consortium. After prolonged discussions with the banks, several major national denominations threatened to withdraw church funds from the banks; the revolving loan was not renewed in 1969, although the banks said their action was not affected by the pressures. Meanwhile, in 1968 student demonstrations against economic ties with South Africa took place in a number of universities, including the University of Wisconsin, Madison; Princeton; University of California, Santa Barbara; Cornell; Spelman; and Amherst, Smith, and the University of Massachusetts in western Massachusetts.

Particularly important in establishing the information base for campaigns against US companies was the work of Tami Hultman and Reed Kramer, who worked in Durban, South Africa, from late 1969 to early 1971 on an ecumenical project with the Methodist Student Movement, a time and place that put them in close contact with Steve Biko and others in the then nascent Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). Hultman and Kramer, who later would found Africa News Service and its successor AllAfrica.com, had the non-public assignment of researching US companies, providing photographs and information from interviews with executives and informal contacts with workers to Tim Smith at the United Church of Christ and other US activists. Their research, distributed through student and church circles in Africa and Europe as well as in the United States, contributed to the first major church action on investments in South Africa, when the Episcopal Church targeted General Motors with a resolution in 1971 calling from the company to withdraw from South Africa.<sup>69</sup>

Before the expansion of protest following the Soweto uprising in 1976, the most widely publicised campaign against a US company in South Africa was that launched by a small number of African American workers at Polaroid Corporation in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in October 1970. Ken Williams and Caroline Hunter launched the Polaroid Revolutionary Workers Union, particularly targeting Polaroid's involvement in making photographs for the pass system.<sup>70</sup> The two testified before the first extensive hearings held in the US Congress on US business in Southern Africa,

67 *New York Times*, 20 March 1965; William Minter, 'Action against Apartheid', in Bruce Douglass (ed.), *Reflections on Protest: Student Presence in Political Conflict* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1968). The figure of 400 is from the *New York Times* account. My reference to 3 000 demonstrators in the 1968 article above is probably a typographical error for 300.

68 See Hauck et al., *Two Decades of Debate*, 128–130; Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 214–221.

69 Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 263–306; see also Edgar Lockwood, 'One of God's Irregulars: William Overton Johnston and the Challenge to the Church to Divest from Apartheid South Africa, 1954–1971', in *Anglican and Episcopal History*, 71, 3 (September 2002), 411–437.

70 Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 271–4; Hauck et al., *Two Decades of Debate*, 95–6.



as did Polaroid vice president Thomas Wyman.<sup>71</sup> Polaroid refused to withdraw, but announced a reform ‘experiment’ including improved wages for black employees and a pledge not to supply equipment or film to the South African government. The experiment attracted much publicity, but in 1977, after renewed charges that its products were being used by the government, Polaroid decided to end its relationship with its distributor in South Africa.

The testimony of the Polaroid workers before the House Africa Subcommittee, moreover, had a direct impact on congressional action. Newly elected Rep. Ron Dellums of California and veteran African American Rep. John Conyers of Detroit had met with the Polaroid workers at the request of Rep. Charles Diggs in 1971. They pledged ‘to use our good offices to bring their case for sanctions against South Africa inside the system in any other way we could’, and in 1972 they introduced the first divestment legislation proposed to the US Congress. Dellums noted, ‘It would be more than a decade before the Congress was prepared to come to grips with ending US complicity in the perpetuation of the apartheid regime ... But our resolution provided a vehicle for those on the outside to use to begin to build pressure on the Congress for legislative action.’<sup>72</sup>

### ***The growth of liberation support***

The shift by the liberation movement in South Africa to a strategy of armed struggle after Sharpeville, as traced in volume 1 of *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*,<sup>73</sup> was paralleled by similar movement in Portugal’s colonies, in South West Africa (Namibia), and in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). Armed struggle began in Angola in 1961, in Guinea-Bissau in 1963, in Mozambique in 1964, and in Namibia and Zimbabwe in 1966. In the US, as in the UK, the liberation movements retained and expanded their support from earlier solidarity connections of the period of non-violent resistance.

This transition was possible largely because the repression by the colonial and apartheid regimes in southern Africa demonstrably ruled out most options of peaceful protest and because this new situation was communicated by liberation movement leaders with demonstrated integrity and close personal ties to key support networks. During this period from 1960 to 1974, on a global scale and in the United States, support for the liberation struggle in South Africa and the region extended far beyond those circles with an expected ideological affinity for armed revolution. In effect, despite the dominant cold war climate, the struggles in southern Africa successfully inspired a partial counterpart, at the level of civil society, to the World War II popular front against Nazism.

71 House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Africa, *Hearings, US Business Involvement in Southern Africa*, 92<sup>nd</sup> Congress, First Session, 1971. Testimony on Polaroid is in Part I, 2–49.

72 Ronald V. Dellums, *Lying Down with the Lions: A Public Life from the Streets of Oakland to the Halls of Power* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 121–140.

73 Bernard Magubane et al., ‘The Turn to Armed Struggle’, in South African Democracy Education Trust (hereafter SADET), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, vol. 1 (1960–1970), 53–146 (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004).

In the cases of South Africa and South West Africa, the closing off of the option of non-violence was demonstrated not only by massacres of peaceful demonstrators, but by public trials that evoked international solidarity from the ACOA, the Episcopal Churchmen for South Africa, the southern Africa project of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights under Law (formed 1967), and from related networks. Although on a scale smaller than the similar operations of the International Defence and Aid Fund based in London, the ACOA's Africa Defence and Aid Fund (after 1968, The Africa Fund) raised support for political prisoners in both countries. It was particularly active in the defence of the Namibian prisoners tried in South Africa for treason in 1967, hosting their lawyer Joel Carlson in raising support at the UN and in the US to lobby against the death penalty. In the US, as in Europe, the eloquent statements from the dock by Nelson Mandela in 1964 and by Toivo Ya-Toivo of SWAPO in 1968, which placed the turn to armed struggle within the broader context of repression of other forms of struggle, were widely publicised at least within the circles of groups connected with Africa. In Rhodesia, the imprisonment of nationalist leaders in 1964 was followed in 1965 by the illegal declaration of independence by the white minority government.

Thus supporters of liberation could cite repression by the regimes and point to prisoners personally known in Western countries through both political and religious networks. Neither the ANC nor the PAC established offices in New York until 1972 and 1975 respectively. But Oliver Tambo of the ANC regularly visited New York during these years. Hage Geingob of SWAPO was based in New York from 1964 to 1975, while Theo-Ben Gurirab represented SWAPO at the UN from 1972 to 1986.

Probably the most significant influences in building support for southern African liberation struggles in the US during the period before the Soweto uprising in 1976, however, came from the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) and the African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC), both directly in the United States and indirectly through contacts in Europe and international church circles. Not only were FRELIMO and PAIGC the two movements with the most success in fighting against colonial rule; both also stressed their commitment to pursuing development goals in exile and in areas liberated by the guerrillas, to humanitarian principles, and to seeking international solidarity from multiple sources including Western countries as well as African countries and Communist-ruled countries.

Eduardo Mondlane, the first president of FRELIMO, was well known and respected in the US as well as in international church circles. FRELIMO representative Sharfudine Khan, based in New York from 1968 to 1975, reached out effectively to both black and white constituencies. And Robert van Lierop's film *A Luta Continua*, based on a 1971 trip to FRELIMO's liberated areas, provided dramatic visual imagery that made identification with African liberation struggles come alive in the 1970s. It was widely shown around the US and Europe, as well as being smuggled into South Africa. Although Amilcar Cabral of PAIGC only visited the United States twice before his assassination by Portuguese agents in 1973, his impact was also profound, not only

on the Cape Verdean immigrant community in the US, but on the wide spectrum of white and black supporters of African liberation.<sup>74</sup>

In the second half of the 1960s and the first few years of the 1970s, the public base for support for southern African liberation movements grew through two parallel and intersecting channels: first through ecumenical church links, particularly through the World Council of Churches (WCC), and secondly through radicalisation of US activists, both white and black. At the same time, there was a growing emphasis among some urban black churches on the link between one's African heritage and liberation that nurtured a racial identity with Africa in the black communities. This in turn served to legitimatise African consciousness and activism among working class churchgoers.

The WCC focus on issues of race has a long history, rooted both in the contacts with 'mission churches' and in church involvement with resistance to Nazism in World War II.<sup>75</sup> WCC secretary-general, Willem Visser 't Hooft, who had led the organisation since its founding in 1938, had been a key supporter of resistance during World War II from his base in Geneva, maintaining clandestine contact with the resistance in his home country of the Netherlands and with figures such as the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer. His successors in leading the WCC, Eugene Carson Blake from the United States, from 1966 to 1972, and Philip Potter from Dominica in the West Indies, from 1972 to 1984, shared the vision of opposition to racism.

Between 1964 and 1969, the WCC became more and more involved in southern Africa, culminating in the formation of the Programme to Combat Racism and its grants to liberation movements, including the ANC and Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). In taking this action, the churches were deeply influenced by leaders from southern Africa as well as by the civil rights struggle in the US. Z. K. Matthews and Eduardo Mondlane were leading participants at a consultation held by the WCC in Mindolo, Zambia, in 1964. The focus on racism was adopted in 1968 at the WCC assembly in Uppsala, addressed by James Baldwin after the assassination of the expected keynote speaker, Martin Luther King Jnr. The WCC workshop in 1969 outlining the plans for the programme was addressed by Oliver Tambo and by Bishop Trevor Huddleston, while the keynote address was to have been given by Eduardo Mondlane, who was assassinated three days after receiving the invitation. The grants to liberation movements stirred up a storm of controversy in churches in South Africa and in some Western churches, but were strongly reaffirmed by African churches and by leading US and European denominations.

Independently of the contacts through the WCC, another significant channel linking US activists with liberation movement leaders in southern Africa was the Quaker organisation, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). Despite the continued pacifist commitment of AFSC and its key activists, strong personal ties

74 See the special issue of *Ufahamu*, 3, 3 (1973) which includes tributes, a bibliography, and an article by US Cape Verdean activist Salahudin Matteos of the PAIGC Support Committee.

75 Pauline Webb (ed.), *The Involvement of the World Council of Churches in South Africa* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1994), and Elisabeth Adler, *A Small Beginning: An Assessment of the First Five Years of the Programme to Combat Racism* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1974).

facilitated an understanding of why the movements felt compelled to turn to armed struggle. George and Eleanor Loft and Lyle Tatum worked in Southern Rhodesia from 1957 to 1960 and 1960 to 1964 respectively, while Jim and Dee Bristol were in Zambia from 1965 to 1967. They, as well as George Houser of the ACOA, maintained close contact with Bill Sutherland, the African-American pacifist and pan-Africanist who settled in Dar es Salaam shortly after Tanganyika's independence in 1961. Sutherland was instrumental in founding a short-lived organisation called Africa Freedom Action, whose sponsors included Julius Nyerere and Kenneth Kaunda, as well as US pacifist leaders Bayard Rustin and A.J. Muste, and UK-based anti-apartheid campaigner Michael Scott.

While many traditional Quakers balked at association with African liberation struggles, these networks fostered an alternate perspective. As Bill Sutherland put it in an interview in 2003, 'I'm a person who believes in nonviolence on principle ... But I respect the revolutionist who adopts a violent method, because I think that the most important thing is the revolution.'<sup>76</sup> In 1972, in an influential pamphlet, James Bristol argued that activists in Western countries should understand the options open to movements in Africa, and focus their own work on changing the policies of Western countries that supported the colonial and apartheid systems. 'I believe in nonviolent revolution', he concluded, 'but I also believe that it is neither humane nor practical to urge nonviolent revolution upon others whose situation is so totally different from our own.'<sup>77</sup>

During the period from 1969 to 1974, coinciding with the years of the Nixon presidency, support for African liberation movements among progressive activists grew, through the information efforts of the groups mentioned earlier and many other ad hoc local coalitions. Some also raised funds or goods to send to the movements. Although these efforts were small-scale compared with the more prominent protests against the Vietnam War and local civil rights and black power campaigns, they promoted a general awareness of the region and at least rhetorical support among wider groups. The most prominent, if short-lived, coalition was formed to celebrate African Liberation Day, leading to the formation of national and local African liberation support committees.<sup>78</sup> Sparked by Howard Fuller (Owusu Sadaukai), who visited FRELIMO's liberated areas in 1971, at the same time as the filming of Robert van Lierop's film, the first ALD march in May 1972 was decided at a gathering of pan-Africanist leaders in Greensboro, North Carolina. It was organised by a national coalition that drew 60 000 demonstrators in cities across the US, in Canada and the Caribbean, with over 30 000 taking part in Washington DC, alone.

76 Interview with Bill Sutherland, by Mimi Edmunds and Prexy Nesbitt, 19 July 2003. See also Sutherland and Meyer, *Guns and Gandhi*.

77 James E. Bristol, *Nonviolence Not First for Export* (Philadelphia, PA: American Friend Service Committee, 1972), 12. See also David L. Hostetter, 'Movement Matters: American Antiapartheid Activism and the Rise of Multicultural Politics' (PhD, University of Maryland, 2004), 77–116.

78 On the national African Liberation Support Committee see Komozi Woodard, *A Nation Within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Black Power Politics* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 173–80; Ronald W. Walters, *Pan Africanism in the African Diaspora: An Analysis of Modern Afrocentric Political Movements* (Detroit; Wayne State University Press, 1993).

The second ALSC national conference, in Greensboro, North Carolina in 1973, was attended by representatives of 51 local committees from 27 states and six countries, and that year's marches reportedly drew some 100 000 participants. A 1974 conference at Howard University attracted over 700 attendees, and was followed by a Washington march with some 10 000 participants.<sup>79</sup> In its short-lived existence the strength of the organisation lay in the local rallies, educational forums and cultural activities taking place outside Washington, DC. For example, African Liberation Day activities were held in St. Paul, Minnesota linking domestic and international problems. These mid-west demonstrations and forums were in addition to east coast and west coast cities as well as southern cities like New Orleans. Although the coalition was soon to fall victim to internal ideological dissension, the nationwide mobilisation left its impact in black communities in terms of a general climate of identification with African liberation. The All-African People's Revolutionary Party (AAPRP), based in Guinea, continued to mobilise African Liberation Day activities, although with fewer numbers and diversity of sectors of the African American community, up to the early 1980s, including some marches past the South African and Israeli embassies.

### ***American activists, South African exiles, and southern Africa: An expanding web***

Despite the expansion of activist involvement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, these efforts fell far short of reaching a critical mass that could impact national opinion and official policy, as was to be the case in the 1980s. Another key component of that later impact, however, began in the 1960s, with the increasing presence of African students, refugees, and other immigrants around the US. The total number of African students grew from a few hundred in the early 1950s to several thousand a decade later. Although South African exiles arriving after Sharpeville were only a small fraction of that total – in 1968, there were 100 South African students under the African American Institute, and probably as many others under other programmes – their cumulative impact was profound. Even when they were not politically active, they were witnesses to the realities of the apartheid system. And the number who did play important roles in grassroots anti-apartheid organising is undoubtedly greater than those who can be named here. Although the ANC sent official missions to the US in 1964 (Mazisi Kunene) and 1966 (Robert Resha), the presence of South Africans living in the US was critical for providing first-hand anti-apartheid witnesses and sparks for organising around the country.

To cite only a few examples, in addition to the South African Freedom Action Committee in Los Angeles, Chris Nteta and Ken Carstens were early and persistent stalwarts of anti-apartheid action in the Boston area. Phyllis Jordan, Wandile Kuse, and Dan and Selina Kunene were at the heart of organising in Madison, Wisconsin.

79 Joseph Jordan, *No Easy Victories: African Liberation and American Activists over a Half Century, 1950–2000*, edited by Minter et al., (Trenton NJ: Africa World Press, 2008), chapter 4.

Congress Mbata at Cornell, Martin Legassick at the University of California, Santa Barbara, Ezekiel Mphahlele in Denver, and Ben Magubane in his later tenure at the University of Connecticut were among many who combined teaching and research with political action. In 1970 poet and sports activist Dennis Brutus first moved to the US, continuing with a US base for the succeeding decades of his long career as a key anti-apartheid and global justice activist, as well as being one of the founders of the African Literature Association. Illustrative of those involved was a January 1969 gathering in Raleigh, North Carolina – the Kennedy-King Memorial Forum of the Albert Luthuli Memorial Fund – organised by ANC supporter Rev. Gladstone Ntlabati, then working out of Atlanta. Included, among others, were Martin Legassick and Anthony Ngubo; Rev. Chris Nteta and Rev. Ken Carstens from Boston: Congress Mbata, then at Northwestern University, as well as musician Jonas Gwangwa and PAC supporter Peter Molotsi.

In this period, undoubtedly the South African voices most widely heard in the United States beyond the ranks of activists were musicians, pre-eminently Miriam Makeba, but also others including Hugh Masekela, Jonas Gwangwa, and Abdullah Ibrahim. Like Harry Belafonte, who took the initiative to open doors for them in the US, they were deeply engaged with the fight for freedom. Makeba, who married SNCC leader Stokely Carmichael in 1968, probably became the South African best known to Americans in the 1960s and 70s. She and others lent their talents to freedom concerts hosted by the ACOA, and sent a powerful message through their music in concerts around the country.<sup>80</sup>

Although the turbulent period of the 1960s, extending into the early 1970s, ended with little change in US foreign policy toward South Africa, both the political template of that period and the personal ties established then set the framework for the anti-apartheid movement that was to grow in succeeding decades.

## **The United States and southern Africa from Ford to Carter, 1974–1980**

In the six-year period from 1974 to 1980, the freedom struggle in South Africa saw the most fundamental changes since the shock of Sharpeville in 1960, with radical shifts in both the regional context and the political situation inside South Africa. The April 1974 coup in Portugal, itself a result of the strain of the wars in Africa, precipitated the collapse of Portuguese rule in its African colonies. The independence of Mozambique in 1975 and the defeat of South African and US intervention in Angola in 1975–1976, with the involvement of Cuban troops and Soviet arms, changed the military balance of power in the subcontinent and inserted the region more directly than ever into the Cold War. After the escalation of guerrilla war in Zimbabwe and a series of complex peace negotiations, Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980. At the beginning of the 1980s white-minority-ruled

80 Miriam Makeba with James Hall, *Mabeka: My Story* (New York: New American Library, 1987); Hugh Masekela and D. Michael Cheers, *Still Grazing: The Musical Journey of Hugh Masekela* (New York: Crown, 2004).

Africa was reduced to South Africa itself and to illegally occupied Namibia, also directly controlled by South Africa.

Inside South Africa, the black trade union movement began a new wave of expansion with the 1973 strikes in Durban. And the Soweto uprising of 1976 not only provoked sustained national resistance and the most massive government repression since Sharpeville, but also unprecedented international reaction. In 1977 the death in police detention of Steve Biko further accelerated international opposition to apartheid. Biko's death was widely publicised by his friend, journalist Donald Woods; Biko's writings were published in two books in 1978, as well as Woods's book *Biko*.<sup>81</sup> Also in 1978, the former defence minister, P.W. Botha took over from John Vorster as South Africa's prime minister, signalling a dual shift to reform apartheid internally and to gear up the security apparatus for 'total war' against all who aimed to abolish rather than reform the system.

On a global level, this period coincided with the defeat of the United States in Vietnam (1975), the victory of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua (1979), and the overthrow of the Shah in Iran (1979), the SALT-2 nuclear disarmament agreement between the US and the Soviet Union (1979), and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979). In the United States, President Nixon's resignation in August 1974 was followed by the brief presidency of Gerald Ford and by the one-term presidency of Jimmy Carter (1977–1980).

For African solidarity organisations in the US, this was a period of transition and building organisational infrastructure, as well as the challenges of the new phase of social reconstruction after armed struggle. Robert van Lierop completed his film, *O Povo Organizado*, on the social reconstruction process of Mozambique. While this film reached activists rather than the wider public, it did raise some \$50 000 to support medical clinics in Mozambique. After the independence of the Portuguese colonies, the intensity of the liberation support momentum faltered, weakened particularly by divisions among political forces in the African-American community over whether UNITA was a legitimate liberation force or a puppet organisation for South Africa's regional strategy to defend apartheid. In the wake of the Soweto uprising, however, the high profile of resistance in South Africa easily assimilated to the images of the attacks on the American civil rights movement in the US South and inspired a wave of empathy along with protests, beginning with students and extending to a much wider public by 1984.

During this period, the organisational network of Africa solidarity was strengthened not only by a host of local groups, but also by new organisations playing a national role. The Washington Office on Africa (WOA), established as a separate organisation by ACOA and allied churches and trade unions in 1972, took on a more active role. In 1972 the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists was the first United States labour organisation to pass resolutions calling for an economic boycott of South Africa.

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81 Millard Arnold (ed.), *Steve Biko: Black Consciousness in South Africa* (New York: Random House, 1978); Aelred Stubbs (ed.), *I Write What I Like: Steve Biko; A Selection of His Writings* (London: Bowerdean Press, 1978; New York: Harper & Row, 1979); Donald Woods, *Biko* (New York: Paddington Press, 1978).

African Information Service was short lived, but made an important contribution to the struggle by hosting a meeting of solidarity activists with Amílcar Cabral in New York during his visit in October 1972 to discuss the nature of the African liberation struggle and the role of international solidarity. The organisation later published a number of Cabral's speeches as well as an account of the meeting between Cabral and African-American activists in the book, *Return to the Source*.<sup>82</sup> The AFSC established an expanded southern African programme, beginning in 1975–1976, with Bill Sutherland travelling regularly from Dar es Salaam for speaking tours in the US. And TransAfrica was founded in 1977, the result of strategic thinking within the Congressional Black Caucus and related networks, to serve as a vehicle for mobilisation of African-American influence on foreign policy towards Africa, the Caribbean and people of African descent around the world. The Southern Africa News Collective (SANC) was formed by a group of African-American women activists to share critical progressive analyses of the US role in southern Africa with other African-American activists. They went on to form the Southern Africa Support Project (SASP) in 1978 to organise concrete expressions of solidarity between the people of the DC metropolitan area and the people of southern Africa.<sup>83</sup>

### ***US policy under Ford and Carter***<sup>84</sup>

US policy towards southern Africa during this period saw significant shifts, related both to changes in southern Africa and to political changes in the United States. In broad outline, the emphasis first shifted from intervention in Angola in 1975–1976 to attempts to promote a negotiated settlement in Zimbabwe, both at the initiative of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. Congress began to take a much more active role, barring US covert military intervention in Angola at the end of 1975. The Carter administration, taking office in January 1977, openly declared its support for the objectives of transition to majority rule in Zimbabwe and Namibia and the replacement of apartheid by 'full participation,' based on one-man-one-vote principles. Nevertheless, the Cold War continued to be the dominant framework for determining US priorities. In April 1978, a State Department analyst told *Africa News* that as a result of the conflict in the Horn of Africa, 'Soviet-Cuban involvement became our total preoccupation. Now we've moved back almost to where Nixon was.'<sup>85</sup>

82 Amílcar Cabral, *Return to the Source* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973).

83 African-American women in this group included Rose Brown, Cecelie Counts, Adwoa Dunn, Kathy Flewelling, Cheryl Gardner, Sandra Hill, and Sylvia Hill.

84 For an overview of US involvement during this period, see Minter, *King Solomon's Mines Revisited*, 260–304. See also W. Minter, *Apartheid's Contras: An Inquiry into the Roots of War in Angola and Mozambique* (London and Johannesburg: Zed Press and Witwatersrand University Press, 1994), 21–39; Colin Legum, *The Battlefronts of Southern Africa* (New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1988), 1–175; Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977–1981* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1983) and Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983); Steven Kent Metz, 'The Anti-Apartheid Movement and the Formulation of American Policy toward South Africa, 1969–1981' (PhD, Johns Hopkins University, 1985).

85 *Africa News*, Durham, NC, 10 April 1978.



That preoccupation, along with a continuing opposition to economic sanctions against Pretoria, meant that anti-apartheid rhetoric by some Carter administration officials was sufficient to rile the apartheid regime and its more unconditional sympathisers in the US. But it fell far short of showing the US government's will to hasten the fall of white-minority rule by altering the balance of power in favour of the liberation movements. Instead, the policy outcomes of the period showed primarily an increased willingness to adjust to changes in South Africa and the region. Thus US policy evolved in different ways for example, on Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa itself.

The failure of the joint US and South African military intervention in Angola in 1975–1976, in alliance with opponents of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), soured US–South African relations. It also left a legacy in Washington politics of hostility to independent Angola, and placed subsequent developments in Angola and Namibia squarely within the context of US cold war rivalries, not only with Moscow, but also with Havana.<sup>86</sup> Despite token moves for rapprochement with Angola under the Carter administration, this context ensured that global considerations would take priority over the objectives of freedom for Namibia and South Africa until after the withdrawal of Cuban troops and the independence of Namibia in 1990. US covert support for Jonas Savimbi's UNITA in Angola, evading congressional prohibitions and in alliance with South Africa, which escalated dramatically in the 1980s under President Ronald Reagan, was previously spurred by Carter's security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski. In the context of support for Zaire's Mobutu, Brzezinski encouraged Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and China to support Savimbi.<sup>87</sup>

On the issue of Zimbabwe, as compared with Angola, the views of those within the Carter administration regarded as 'Africanist' rather than 'globalist' had more influence. With the support of the president himself and of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, officials such as UN ambassador Andrew Young, his deputy Donald McHenry, who were both African Americans, as well as State Department policy planning director Tony Lake, and Africa Bureau chief Richard Moose succeeded in focusing high-level attention on pursuing multilateral negotiations and ultimately in resisting significant Congressional pressure to support Ian Smith's internal settlement.<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, as in the case of Kissinger's 1976 shuttle diplomacy in 1976, US diplomatic efforts were premised on co-operation rather than confrontation with Pretoria. Washington turned a blind eye to violations of the international oil and arms embargoes against the Rhodesian regime, including the presence in Rhodesia of as many as one thousand US mercenaries.<sup>89</sup>

86 For a recent account see Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959–1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

87 Minter, *Apartheid's Contras*, 146, 151–152.

88 See Andrew DeRoche, *Black, White, and Chrome: The United States and Zimbabwe, 1953–1998* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2001), for a somewhat uncritical review of the Carter policies.

89 See Minter, *King Solomon's Mines Revisited*, 271–277, 298–304 and Gerald Horne, *From the Barrel of a Gun: The United States and the War against Zimbabwe, 1965–1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

Unlike Kissinger, the Carter administration also gave priority to promoting negotiations aimed at promoting majority rule in Namibia. But this involvement was constrained by prioritising collaboration with the ‘contact group’ of Western countries over UN initiatives, and by an unwillingness to confront South Africa with sufficient pressure to force a settlement. In 1977, the Carter team twice threatened more comprehensive action: in April to induce Pretoria to engage in ‘serious negotiations’ on Namibia; and in August to force the regime to cancel a nuclear test in the Kalahari. But Washington did not react to repeated South African invasions of Angola, or to its rejection of a UN plan in favour of setting up an ‘internal settlement’ of its own clients.<sup>90</sup>

Despite the Soweto uprising, the Ford administration under Henry Kissinger took no significant new steps to pressure South Africa to end apartheid. Nevertheless, proposed steps to move even closer to Pretoria, urged by 21 US Senators in January 1976, were blocked, and proposed US Export-Import Bank support for a South African coal-to-oil scheme was turned down. In 1977, a meeting of vice-president of the US, Walter Mondale, with South Africa’s Vorster in Vienna in May served to announce visible opposition to apartheid. And an internal US policy review outlined a range of options for increasing pressure by downgrading US relations with Pretoria.

Except for the extension of the arms embargo after the murder of Steve Biko in 1977, the Carter administration failed to take additional action against Pretoria. Economic sanctions continued to be ruled out of serious policy debate, and even the ‘liberal’ members of the administration such as UN ambassador Andrew Young, argued instead that economic ties could be used to erode the apartheid system. This thesis, argued by the South African government, by business reformers, and by Bantustan leaders such as Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, in this period became the primary argument of those opposing sanctions.<sup>91</sup> But anti-apartheid activists, mobilising after Soweto in increasing numbers and in more and more places around the US, refused to be placated by this line of argument.

### ***Taking it local: Students, churches, and the new wave of divestment***

The Soweto uprising and the continuation of protests in South Africa for more than a year, culminating with the murder of Steve Biko, banning of 18 organisations, and detention of 50 key activists, was the catalyst for new energy and sustained mobilisation and protest in the US anti-apartheid movement. Students demonstrated at more than 100 universities and colleges around the country, and won the first decisions by university administrations to divest funds from companies involved in South Africa. Church shareholder resolutions increased and turned from demanding information and reforms to demanding withdrawal from South Africa. Trade union activists in the

90 Minter, *King Solomon’s Mines Revisited*, 293–297. See also William Johnston, ‘Namibia’, in Rene Lemarchand (ed.), *American Policy in Southern Africa*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981), 193–22.

91 On US policy toward South Africa in this period, see Minter, *King Solomon’s Mines Revisited*, 277–292; ‘US/South Africa – Two Years after Vienna’, *Africa News*, 25 May 1979; Peter J. Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy toward Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis and Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 215–220.

Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and in a growing number of local and national unions became involved, with actions including a focus on investments by their own pension funds. The number of local coalitions and national organisational caucuses against apartheid multiplied dramatically. This is the period, in short, in which the movement first made the transition from a cause pursued by a relatively small number of dedicated activists to a mass anti-apartheid movement.

An adequate account of this history would have to tell the stories not only of the ACOA and the handful of other national organisations that continued to provide key information and contact links within the movement, but also of hundreds of other groups, many short-lived coalitions or informal networks that took up the cause. The material for that history is not yet available.<sup>92</sup> It is nevertheless clear that at the grassroots level the major thrust during this period was from student activists, both white and black, joined in many cases by community and church activists. In some places, these campaigns also began to have an impact on local and state political arenas, a trend that would intensify with larger-scale city and state divestment campaigns in the 1980s.

The significance of divestment and related boycott actions was not yet its economic impact on South Africa, as would come to be the case in the mid 1980s. But it was above all a highly successful means to force debate and raise awareness about apartheid in the local communities and institutions where the issue was raised. In Oakland, California, for example, Leo Robinson, of Local 10 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), first introduced a resolution calling for a boycott of South Africa in July 1976, immediately after the Soweto uprising. For the next 15 years, Robinson was active both locally and in national trade union caucuses mobilising against apartheid.<sup>93</sup> And in 1979, the neighbouring city of Berkeley became the first US city to opt for divestment, through a public ballot initiative spearheaded by Mayor Gus Newport. In the 1980s, Newport took the lead in challenging his colleagues in the US Conference of Mayors to follow Berkeley's example.

In May 1977 the state of Wisconsin became the first state to divest funds (some \$11 m) from companies involved in South Africa, the result of organising that began in Madison and Milwaukee. Later that year Hampshire College in western Massachusetts became the first institution of higher education to divest funds, part of approximately \$1.3 m in divestment by educational institutions that year. Divestment by US educational institutions was estimated at \$26 m in 1978 and \$23 m in 1979, rising to \$35 m in 1980. In 1977, the Southern Africa Liberation Committee (SALC), founded in 1972 at Michigan State University, gained passage of a resolution by the East Lansing city council mandating selective purchasing policies barring suppliers that had operations in South Africa, the first step in a series of actions that would culminate in

92 On student protest see Hauck et al., *Two Decades of Debate* and Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*. See also 'Action News and Notes' section of *Southern Africa*. Also Knight, 'Documenting the US Solidarity Movement'; and [www.africanactivist.msu.edu](http://www.africanactivist.msu.edu). Knight's Africa Activist project focuses on preserving archives related to this history. Relevant material will also be found in Minter et al., *No Easy Victories: African Liberation and American Activists over a Half Century, 1950–2000* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2008).

93 Interview with Leo Robinson by Walter Turner, San Francisco, California, 3 March 2005.

state-level divestments in the 1980s.<sup>94</sup> In Massachusetts, state representative Mel King had already introduced a bill in 1973–1974 barring import of Rhodesian chrome, after discussions with Oliver Tambo organised by MIT professor Willard Johnson. Randall Robinson, later to become the founding director of TransAfrica, had led a building takeover at Harvard University in 1972 in protest of investments in Angola through Gulf Oil.<sup>95</sup> In 1977–1978, Harvard students in their thousands mobilised to demand divestment from South Africa, and at Princeton that same school year, 250 students occupied the administration building as part of a campaign by the People's Front for the Liberation of Southern Africa.<sup>96</sup>

The ACOA played a key role during this period in providing information and facilitating contacts among student groups, including a student newsletter beginning in December 1979. From 1977, it also co-chaired the Campaign for Bank Loans against South Africa (COBLSA), together with the AFSC; the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR); the Washington Office on Africa (WOA); and Clergy and Laity Concerned (CALC), the latter a group that had its origins in the anti-war movement as Clergy and Laity Concerned about Vietnam. Among faculty and graduate students, the explicitly activist Association of Concerned Africa Scholars (ACAS, founded in 1977) and the African Heritage Studies Association (AHSAs), the result of a 1969 walkout by black scholars in protest of the racism they experienced within the African Studies Association, also served as networks for communication and spread of the protest messages. Church networks included black and progressive caucuses within individual denominations and ecumenical organisations, the corporate responsibility networks centred in the ICCR, more activist circles often linked to CALC and parallel liberation theology networks, and the Religious Action Network initiated by the American Committee on Africa that drew its core of support from black pastors and was headed by Harlem pastors Rev. Wyatt Tee Walker and Canon Frederick Williams.

Paralleling the Carter administration reform strategy as a response to the new demands was an initiative by black pastor Leon Sullivan, the first African American member of the General Motors board of directors, who had previously endorsed withdrawal from South Africa. Disappointed at failure to persuade companies to withdraw, Sullivan decided instead to concentrate on promoting a reform code for companies pledging to advance desegregation and improve conditions for their black South African workers.<sup>97</sup> The initiative was welcomed by major companies and by the South African government itself, but was vigorously rejected by US anti-apartheid activists.

94 The Michigan case and parallel case of Connecticut are explored in Janice Love, *The US Anti-Apartheid Movement: Local Activism in Global Politics* (New York: Praeger, 1985).

95 See Willard Johnson, 'Getting Over by Reaching Out: Lessons from the Divestment and Krugerrand Campaigns', *The Black Scholar*, 19, 1 (Spring 1999), 2–19.

96 See Stephanie Urdang, 'Student Movement Escalates', in *Southern Africa*, June–July 1978, 8–10.

97 On Leon Sullivan and his principles, see S. Prakash Sethi and Oliver Williams, *Economic Imperatives and Ethical Values in Global Business* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 2001). A review of the Sethi and Williams book by Marylee S. Crofts and Timothy H. Smith, *Business and Society Review*, 107, 2 (2002), gives perspective on the debate on the Sullivan Principles.

In a typical statement, Africanist scholar Immanuel Wallerstein, writing as the co-chairman of the Association of Concerned Africa Scholars in 1977, argued against continuing investment:

Astonishingly, it is argued that strengthening the economic basis of the white apartheid regime will in fact bring change. This is nonsense, and those who speak it know it ... Continued American investment in South Africa in any form is continued American support for the regime in power. Those who wish to support change in South Africa have only two ways to do it: (1) active assistance to the liberation movement; (2) a call for United States economic disinvestment and political disengagement from the present South African state. The rest is sophistry.<sup>98</sup>

In April 1979, at the International Freedom Mobilisation Summit Conference of Black Religious Leaders on Apartheid, held in New York, the leaders present overwhelmingly rejected the Sullivan Principles as ‘well-intentioned (but) no longer sufficient’, declaring their full support for disengagement and ‘support of the national liberation struggle under the leadership of the African National Congress’. By 1980, the Sullivan Principles had been repeatedly debunked and discredited, not least by evidence that US companies provided strategic support to the South African security forces.<sup>99</sup>

### ***Liberation support and widening anti-apartheid links***

In this transitional period, the configuration of liberation support groups in the United States and of ties to the struggles in southern Africa shifted significantly. The African Liberation Support Committee, which at the beginning of the period seemed to promise continued growth in militant black support for African liberation struggles, did not realise that potential. Instead, disagreements over Angola accentuated other ideological and organisational differences and the impact of government repression of local black radical groups to demobilise that sector of the movement. The fact that UNITA, which had cultivated a ‘black power’ image, ended up collaborating with apartheid South Africa, was particularly disconcerting. More generally, however, the complexities of relating to post-independence Mozambique and Angola did not easily lend themselves to wider public mobilisation.

The most active and visible armed liberation struggle during the period was in Zimbabwe, and local groups did take action in support of ZANU, ZAPU, or both organisations under the combined Patriotic Front. National solidarity organisations had some success in fostering local actions against import of Rhodesian chrome, and the Washington Office on Africa and TransAfrica both lobbied to counteract right-wing efforts to support the Smith regime’s internal settlement. None of these efforts,

98 Foreword to Lawrence Litvak, Robert DeGrasse and Kathleen McTigue, *South Africa: Foreign Investment and Apartheid* (Washington: Institute for Policy Studies/South Africa Catalyst Project, 1978).

99 Elizabeth Schmidt, *Decoding Corporate Camouflage: US Business Support for Apartheid*, (Washington: Institute for Policy Studies, 1980), 17. This is the most comprehensive analysis..

however, evoked wide public support. The media portrayal of the conflict played into stereotypes of internal African conflicts, and no Zimbabwean liberation figures gained a significant public audience in the United States.<sup>100</sup> Yet when Zimbabwe won its independence, there were thousands of US activists who celebrated with it. In Washington, for example, SASP organised a victory celebration attended by some 500 people.

The level of consciousness of South Africa was far larger in scale, in part because of the visible drama of apartheid repression evoking images of the US civil struggle, with the Soweto uprising, Biko's death, and related events receiving unprecedented coverage on US television. Another highly significant factor was that the personal networks linking American activists and civil society to exiled liberation movements and anti-apartheid forces inside South Africa continued to grow. The ANC, in 1972, and then the PAC, in 1975, established offices in New York that represented the organisations at the UN but were also active in making and renewing contacts in the US. Mfanafuthi (Johnny) Makatini, who took up the ANC post at the UN in 1977 and was based in New York until 1985, was particularly active and influential. David Sibeko, who represented the PAC in New York from 1975 until his death in an internal PAC clash in Dar es Salaam in 1979, was also an active campaigner who was well received by groups in the US.

These efforts were complemented not only by the involvement of South African exiles already living in the United States, many with well-established professional and community as well as activist links, but also by links from the US to the new activist currents among South African students, churches, and unions. Biko himself never visited the United States, but he and his colleagues had organisational and personal ties with the US, particularly through student Christian organisations and other progressive church networks. The Christian Institute led by Beyers Naudé was one of the organisations banned by the South African government in 1977. Naudé himself was also banned, but he was already well known in international church circles, including the US. Desmond Tutu, who became the head of the South African Council of Churches in 1978, also maintained close contact with church circles and made regular visits to the US.

Among the many sectors reached by expanded anti-apartheid activities, two different examples illustrate the involvement of both Americans and Africans: the sports boycott and the Namibia support network among Lutheran churches. While the US had fewer sports ties with South Africa than did the cricket and rugby-playing countries of the Commonwealth, exiled activist Dennis Brutus was joined by American activists such as Richard Lapchick<sup>101</sup> of the American Coordinating Committee for Equality in Sports and Society. Arthur Ashe, who had argued in the early 1970s for efforts to integrate rather than to boycott South African sports, endorsed the sports

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100 There is as yet no study of the solidarity groups that worked to support ZANU, ZAPU, and the Patriotic Front, or of the internal settlement of Bishop Abel Muzorewa and the Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole. For a study of right-wing support for Rhodesia, see Horne, *From the Barrel of a Gun*.

101 Richard E. Lapchick, *The Politics of Race and International Sport: the Case of South Africa* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1975).

boycott in 1977. Demonstrations against South African participation in the Davis Cup tennis match culminated with thousands of demonstrators at a 1978 match in Nashville, Tennessee. Lapchick, who led the campaign together with the NAACP and local student and church groups, was the target of assault and a media campaign reportedly tied to South African agents.<sup>102</sup> Subsequently, the boycott of South Africa in professional sports led to South African efforts to bring teams to compete in ‘intramural’ university competitions; even in this arena, however, Michigan State University tennis coach Frank Beeman, a local anti-apartheid activist, organised a national effort to block their participation.<sup>103</sup>

Another US network that had significant influence in building popular anti-apartheid consciousness was National Namibia Concerns, founded in 1978 out of contacts built at Wartburg Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa, by Namibian church leaders Abisai and Selma Shejvali. The network mobilised Lutheran clergy and congregations around the United States, particularly in the Midwestern states where Lutherans were concentrated, to support the liberation struggle in Namibia and sanctions against South Africa.<sup>104</sup> A dense network of personal connections to Namibia through Lutheran as well as Episcopal (Anglican) clergy and lay activists sustained activist efforts over the next decade.

With the expansion of diverse anti-apartheid efforts around the country, links for communication among activists also grew, despite the absence of one centralised membership organisation. The ACOA, and its affiliated Africa Fund, was the key contact point for both student and other groups involved in the divestment and anti-bank-loans campaigns. And communication was also facilitated by periodic co-ordinating meetings and regular exchanges of information among key national groups.

There were also some attempts to foster collaboration among a larger set of groups. One such effort was a conference attended by about 100 people representing 36 US and Canadian groups, initiated by the Washington Office on Africa, and hosted by the Madison Area Committee on southern Africa in Madison, Wisconsin, in October 1975. Plenary sessions were addressed by Ben Magubane of the ANC and by Jennifer Davis, research director of the ACOA. In Washington, Sylvia Hill and others returning from the Sixth Pan-African Congress in Dar es Salaam in 1974 also explored the possibility of building a national coalition. But the organisational and political complexities of building such a geographically dispersed and diverse network meant that local work, combined with networking, ad-hoc coalition building, and political unity took priority over the impossible objective of building formal coalitions.

After the Soweto uprising, increasing national media coverage of protest in the United States as well as of events in southern Africa provided one indirect, albeit limited, way for groups in different parts of the country to know of each other’s efforts. But the efforts of individual organisations and networks were also facilitated

102 See *Southern Africa*, May 1979, 11, 15. Lapchick was assaulted by two masked men in his university office in Norfolk, Virginia on 14 February 1978.

103 Interview with Frank Beeman, by David Wiley and Peter Limb, East Lansing, Michigan, 12 December 2003.

104 Interview with Solveig and Peter Kjeseth, by Christopher Saunders, Cape Town, 2 April 2005.

by media ventures from within the movement. The monthly *Southern Africa* magazine expanded its operations during this period. Tami Hultman and Reed Kramer, turning from research on US companies after their return from Africa, founded Africa News Service, based in Durham, North Carolina, which began with a service for radio stations in 1973 that expanded to include a regular print publication, beginning in 1976. The *Africa News* newsletter grew from a few hundred subscribers to more than 3 000 by the end of the decade, while Africa News radio news feeds went to over 100 subscribing radio stations.<sup>105</sup> Community and listener-sponsored radio stations such as the Pacifica network stations and university stations such as Howard University's provided opportunities for talk shows, fundraising campaigns, and news on the struggles in southern Africa.

It was also in this period following Soweto that the political debate in Washington on southern Africa first began to make serious inroads into Congress. The Africa solidarity movement as well as right-wing forces supporting white-minority regimes and paid lobbyists for South Africa and Rhodesia stepped up their efforts to influence members of Congress and to use Congressional support to legislate or otherwise influence administration policies.

### ***The Washington arena***

It was during these years, first with Angola and then with continuously increasing attention to South Africa, that southern Africa became a topic of serious debate and action by the US Congress. Before Angola and Soweto, administration foreign-policy planners only rarely had to pay attention to Congress, and could rely on the general pattern of deference to the executive branch in foreign policy. After Soweto, however, Congress, with its greater responsiveness to the impact of lobbying groups and grassroots pressure, became a key focus for anti-apartheid action as well as for right-wing pressure and the attention of Pretoria's own lobbyists.<sup>106</sup>

In 1967 ACOA had established a part-time office in Washington that was headed by a full-time representative from 1968 to 1971. In 1972, this was transformed into an office (WOA) jointly sponsored by church agencies and trade unions as well as the ACOA, with a particular focus on lobbying Congress on southern African issues. From 1972 the office was directed by Ted Lockwood, a lawyer and Episcopal priest who had been active in the divestment movement. He was succeeded as director in 1980 by Jean Sindab, an African-American activist who was completing graduate work in political science at Yale University.<sup>107</sup> WOA worked closely with Washington

105 Interview with Reed Kramer by William Minter, 29 July 2005. Chapter co-author William Minter also worked at Africa News at its establishment in 1973 and from 1976 to 1982. Others involved in the early years of Africa News Service included South African exile Victor Vockerodt, Ghanaian student Kwesi Fumey, Charlie Ebel, and Ruth Brandon (Minter).

106 On the role of Congress see Stephen R. Weissman, *A Culture of Deference: Congress's Failure of Leadership in Foreign Policy* (New York: Basic Books, 1995). On legislative proposals on South Africa (1969–1984), see Ronald W. Waters, *US–South Africa Relations: A Legislative Review* (Washington, DC: Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, February 1985).

107 On Lockwood and Sindab, see Minter et al., *No Easy Victories* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2008).



representatives of its sponsors, with the National Council of Churches, and with local activists around the country. Particularly active among national denominations were the Presbyterians, Methodists, and United Church of Christ; among national unions, the United Auto Workers was consistently active, and several other unions became more active in the 1980s. Throughout its history WOA was fortunate in having many activist junior staff and interns, beginning with Chris Root in the early period, and including a long list of others in following years.<sup>108</sup>

Despite the December 1975 Congressional action to bar US intervention in Angola, and extensive hearings by the Africa Subcommittee under representative Charles Diggs from 1969 to 1978, most members of Congress were still indifferent to Africa. Right-wing sympathisers with Rhodesia and South Africa, among Democrats from the south as well as among Republicans, were both more numerous and more influential than strong advocates for African freedom. After Soweto, however, anti-apartheid advocates won their first legislative victory on economic ties with South Africa in 1978, despite opposition by the Carter administration.<sup>109</sup> Although the bill passed was limited, barring Export-Import Bank loans to companies doing business with the South African military or police and requiring that companies receiving loans endorse the Sullivan Principles, it showed the emergence of a new cohort of anti-apartheid members of Congress. These included Senator Dick Clark of Iowa, who sponsored the first Senate report on US corporate interests in Africa in 1978.<sup>110</sup>

Clark, however, was defeated in his bid for re-election in November 1978, as was California Senator John Tunney, who had initiated the December 1975 legislation to cut off US covert intervention in Angola. Both defeats were reportedly aided by energetic South African efforts to assist their opponents, as part of the Ministry of Information public relations efforts under Connie Mulder and Eschel Rhoodie beginning in 1974, later known as Muldergate.<sup>111</sup> These South African efforts were also targeted at winning influence among African Americans and in the Democratic Party, and co-ordinated with efforts to win support for the independence of Transkei.

For anti-apartheid lobbying in Washington, it was of strategic importance that there also emerged during this period an organisation aimed at consolidating and co-ordinating African-American political influence on foreign policy. In the wake of multiple divisions within the black movement, particularly between local black nationalist activist groups and the growing number of African-American politicians moving into political office, promoting a common agenda of support for African liberation was difficult, despite unity shown at gatherings such as the Black Political Convention in 1972 in Gary, Indiana. That same year, a gathering of African-American

108 This was also true of other national groups. Those who have worked at any of these organisations will realise that the number is far too great to attempt a comprehensive listing in this chapter.

109 Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy*, 219; Metz, *The Anti-Apartheid Movement*, 262–269, 412–425.

110 Subcommittee on African Affairs, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 'US Corporate Interests in Africa' (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1978).

111 See Mervyn Reed, *Muldergate: The Story of the Info Scandal* (Johannesburg: Macmillan, 1980); Shelly Pitterman, 'A Fine Face for Apartheid', in *Southern Africa*, September 1977, 14, 19–20; 'Information Scandal Revelations Continue', in *Southern Africa*, May 1979, 10–12; 'TransAfrica Forum, the US and South Africa: the New Right Connection', *Issue Brief*, 9, 1 (October 1982). TransAfrica Forum was the research and educational affiliate of TransAfrica.

leaders in Puerto Rico called by Willard Johnson of MIT and Herschelle Challenor of Brooklyn College was followed by a conference hosted at Howard University by the Congressional Black Caucus and the Committee on Positive Action of the African Heritage Studies Association. The group also sought to collaborate with Owusu Sadaukai of the African Liberation Support Committee, but, comments Johnson, 'our dismay was great when Sadaukai refused to appeal to the thousands of persons who had assembled in the spectacularly successful African Liberation Day March in Washington on May 27, 1972, to have them join our delegation to Capitol Hill just two days later to lobby for the repeal of the Byrd Amendment. The repeal could have succeeded with a switch of only three or so votes.'<sup>112</sup>

In September 1976, shortly after Harvard activist Randall Robinson had joined the staff of representative Charles Diggs in Washington, the Congressional Black Caucus held a consultation of black leaders on southern Africa. That meeting produced the *African American Manifesto on Southern Africa*,<sup>113</sup> which called, among other demands, for support of the liberation movements through the Organisation of African Unity, for tax disincentives for US corporations in South Africa, Namibia, and Zimbabwe, and for withdrawal of those corporations if they failed to support 'concrete steps towards economic and political justice'. Follow-up from that meeting led to the founding of TransAfrica in 1977 and the opening of its office directed by Randall Robinson in 1978.

In 1978 Diggs was forced to resign as chair of the Africa Subcommittee, after being charged with fraudulent financial mismanagement of his office budget. He was convicted in 1980, and resigned from Congress. Many were convinced that the conviction was unjust, and that white colleagues guilty of similar abuses would not have suffered a similar penalty. In the 1980s, he withdrew from politics, but he never lost the respect of his colleagues or of Africa activists, who paid tribute to his work at his death in 1998.

Despite the loss of Diggs and Senator Clark, the prospects for anti-apartheid action in Congress were more promising in 1980 than in 1976 before the Soweto uprising. Diggs was succeeded as chair of the Africa Subcommittee by Stephen Solarz of Brooklyn, New York, in 1979–1980. Howard Wolpe of Michigan, a political scientist who had done his doctoral research in Nigeria, joined the committee that year, and later took an activist lead as its chair for 1981–1990. While the momentum of student and local anti-apartheid actions had somewhat diminished from its high in 1977–1978, anti-apartheid organising continued around the country. In Washington, WOA and TransAfrica jointly established regular coalition meetings of the Southern Africa Working Group, which included representatives of a growing number of progressive organisations and lobbies in Washington, each with its own network outside Washington.

The 'national' anti-apartheid lobbies in Washington were also linked into local networks and were well aware that their impact on Congress depended on their

112 Johnson, 'Getting Over by Reaching Out', 7, 18.

113 See <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/aam/afroammanifesto.html>.

capacity to demonstrate ties to the district and state constituencies of members of Congress. In the Washington, DC, area itself, the staff of the Washington Office on Africa was also deeply involved in the local campaign against Riggs Bank investments in South Africa. And TransAfrica's national efforts were complemented by the Southern Africa Support Project (SASP) that concentrated on mobilising liberation support and on anti-apartheid education in the local black community. The potential synergy of these diverse forces to influence national policy was to be demonstrated dramatically in the 1980s.

## The Reagan years, 1981–1988

The victory of Ronald Reagan in the presidential election of November 1980 was a wake-up call for the US anti-apartheid movement. The 'new right', aiming to roll back liberal policies on the home front and in foreign policy, was moving into power. The incoming administration was explicitly sympathetic to the white minority regimes in southern Africa. Its ranks included many who had had no hesitancy in working as lobbyists for South Africa, Portugal, or Rhodesia.<sup>114</sup> Under the Carter administration, while movement activists denounced the administration's failures to act against apartheid, there were still links to officials seen to be sympathetic to liberation. Under Reagan, liberal as well as radical activists knew they had little hope of access to policy-making circles.

Nevertheless, this was the period in which the anti-apartheid movement had its greatest success, winning 'people's sanctions' against South Africa in cities and states around the country, and imposing significant national sanctions on South Africa by law, overruling a presidential veto. This achievement was one of the decisive steps in convincing the apartheid regime that its time had run out, and a significant component of the pressure on the regime as it entered negotiations for a settlement with liberation forces. By the end of the Reagan administration, overt support for apartheid had been discredited, even among many conservative Republicans. And when Nelson Mandela arrived for his initial visit to the United States after his release from prison in 1990, politicians of almost all stripes competed to be seen on the platform with him.

This shift within the US resulted from multiple factors. Most important was the upsurge of resistance within South Africa itself during this period, combined with the growth in prominence of the ANC as the clear leader of the South African liberation forces. But it also grew out of the consolidation and expansion of solidarity and anti-apartheid forces within the US, including their allies within the United States Congress. That expansion was visible on several fronts, the most prominent of which were the continued growth of the divestment movement, the public demonstrations sparked by the Free South Africa Movement, and the strategic action by anti-apartheid leaders in the US Congress, particularly in the House of Representatives.

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114 TransAfrica Forum, 'The US and South Africa: the New Right Connection', *Issue Brief*, 1, 9 (October 1982). TransAfrica Forum was the research and educational affiliate of TransAfrica.

### **Reagan administration policies: Putting faith in Pretoria**<sup>115</sup>

'In less than six months, the new government of the US reversed even the halting African policies of the Carter Administration and has embarked on a course of arrogant intervention into African affairs in the most hostile way, from Cape Town (sic) to Cairo, the American eagle has begun to bare his talons.'<sup>116</sup> This summary by former SNCC activist and Georgia State senator, Julian Bond, accurately portrayed the proactive tilt to Pretoria adopted by the incoming administration. The most damning evidence had been revealed a month earlier in State Department memorandums leaked to *TransAfrica* and released to the press.<sup>117</sup> Summarising a meeting of assistant-secretary-designate Chester Crocker and African-American State Department staff member, Alan Keyes, with Pik Botha and the defence minister, Magnus Malan, of South Africa, Crocker stressed that the 'top US priority' was 'to stop Soviet encroachment in Africa'.<sup>118</sup>

In a 'scope paper' prepared for the secretary of state, Alexander Haig, Crocker noted US recognition that 'the government of P.W. Botha represents a unique opportunity for domestic change', and that the US hoped for 'more positive and reciprocal relationships between the two countries based upon shared strategic concerns'.<sup>119</sup> The most serious obstacle, Crocker argued, was the unresolved situation in Namibia. Through 'constructive engagement', as he had termed it in a 1980 article, the US could help South Africa make a smooth transition to independence in Namibia, get Cuban troops out of Angola, and help create an atmosphere in which the South African regime could pursue reforms of apartheid at its own pace.<sup>120</sup>

Crocker stuck to his policy through the eight years of Reagan's two terms, and took credit for achieving his goals of withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola and an agreement on the independence of Namibia in the last months of 1988. Most analysts of this period credit his persistence in negotiations as one central factor leading to this settlement. But they also note that the US tilt to Pretoria encouraged eight years of destructive South African warfare against its neighbours, with casualties estimated in the hundreds of thousands. Moreover, Pretoria's willingness to compromise at the end of this period came from factors opposed by Crocker or entirely independent issues. The sanctions that weakened Pretoria came despite consistent opposition from

115 On Reagan administration policies see Minter, *King Solomon's Mines Revisited*, 305–34; Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy*, 230–236. On the view that sanctions worked, see Les de Villiers, *The US Sanctions Campaign against South Africa, 1946–1993* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995). See also Chester Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa: Making Peace in a Rough Neighborhood* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992); Christopher Coker, *The United States and South Africa, 1968–1987: Constructive Engagement and Its Critics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1986); Alex Thomson, *Incomplete Engagement: US Foreign Policy Towards the Republic of South Africa, 1981–1988* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1996); Pauline H. Baker, *The United States and South Africa: The Reagan Years* (New York: Ford Foundation and the Foreign Policy Association, 1989). On US policies toward Angola and Mozambique, see Minter, *Apartheid's Contras*, 142–171.

116 Julian Bond, keynote address; first national conference on public investment and South Africa, 12 June 1981.

117 Published in *TransAfrica News Report*, Special Edition, August, 1981. Reprinted in Baker, *The United States and South Africa*, 105–124.

118 Published in *TransAfrica News Report*, Special Edition, August, 1981. Reprinted in Baker, *The United States and South Africa*, 105–124.

119 *Ibid.*

120 Chester Crocker, 'South Africa: Strategy for Change', *Foreign Affairs*, 59, 2 (1980–81), 323–351.

the Reagan administration, and it was Cuban troops in 1988 that decisively checked South African military power on the Angolan-Namibian battlefield. Meanwhile, internal changes in the Soviet Union were already eroding the perceived threat in Pretoria as well as in Washington.

This chapter is not the place to detail the evolution of US-southern Africa policy in these years. But it is important to note that despite the bureaucratic and policy centrality of Crocker's State Department Africa Bureau, policy was also increasingly influenced not only by Crocker's ideas, but also by other forces. The balance of influence shifted repeatedly over the eight years. Critics of the administration from the left, including the anti-apartheid movement, could rely on a nucleus of staff allies within the US Congress and sometimes as well on moderate Democrats or Republicans. The Democratic Party, moreover, was in the majority in the House of Representatives for all eight years, as indeed it was for the entire four decades from 1955 to 1994. In 1987–1988, the Democratic Party also held the majority in the Senate as well.

Even more influential, however, was the far right within the Reagan administration, among Republicans in Congress, and among private lobbies that clustered together as the 'new right'. In these settings, the ideological anti-communist message was closely intertwined with racist views and with a willingness to collaborate not only with the South African regime as such, but with the most right-wing elements within it. The power of the far-right was already shown when Senator Jesse Helms delayed Crocker's confirmation until June, bombarding the nominee with accusations of being soft on communism for his willingness to consider negotiations with Marxist regimes and liberation movements in southern Africa. In mid 1981, President Reagan himself joked that 'sometimes my right hand doesn't know what my far right hand is doing'.<sup>121</sup> And one of the president's own Africa advisers privately deplored that 'All Reagan knows about southern Africa is that he is on the side of the whites.'<sup>122</sup>

Until 1984, in the last few months of Reagan's first term, criticisms of Crocker's 'constructive engagement' policy, whether from the left or the right, had relatively limited effects. As noted in the review of anti-apartheid actions below, it was only in fall 1984 that pressures converged to a level that could no longer be ignored. In Reagan's first term as well, the far-right had limited success in its demands for overt support for UNITA in Angola and RENAMO in Mozambique. It was Pretoria, not Washington, that drove the expansion of attacks on Angola, Mozambique, and the southern African region, with the tacit encouragement of Washington. Washington's ideologues relied not on the State Department or direct intelligence agency involvement, but on aid to UNITA through surrogates such as Saudi Arabia and Morocco. RENAMO, for its part, failed to gain much support in Washington in these years, and in 1983 the State Department even officially acknowledged that the organisation was sponsored by Pretoria.

During Reagan's second term, on South Africa policy, State Department policy makers were increasingly forced to make concessions to the growing anti-apartheid

121 Laurence J. Barrett, *Gambling with History: Reagan in the White House* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), 61.

122 Danaher, 'The Political Economy of US Policy', 5.

movement and its allies in Congress. On the war in Angola, however, the far-right and UNITA gained an increasingly stronger position in Washington. After the repeal of the Clark Amendment in 1985, openly acknowledged US covert aid to UNITA was resumed, going from \$15 m a year in 1986 and 1987 to \$50 m for 1989.<sup>123</sup> Advocates of US aid to RENAMO also mobilised more intensively, and private far-right networks provided direct support for RENAMO. But the campaign failed to get official approval, as Mozambique's leaders, with the engagement of its ambassador Valeriano Ferrão in Washington and US Africa solidarity groups, waged an active counter-campaign. President Reagan received Mozambique's President Samora Machel at the White House in September 1985 and his successor Joaquim Chissano in 1987; RENAMO failed to gain support in the State Department or at the White House.

During the Reagan years, the anti-apartheid movement had significant success in shifting the terms of debate on South Africa. On South Africa's regional wars, however, it was the far-right that gained the more substantial victories, obtaining a massive escalation of official US military support for the war in Angola. When the issue was imposed in the simple and dramatic terms of explicit racist repression, visible on television screens, the movement was able to gain media visibility and political momentum. When opponents could frame the issues in classic cold war terms, however, the solidarity movement had little success in gaining wider amplification of its views in the public arena.

On apartheid, the years 1983 to 1986 in particular saw the convergence of the continuing divestment campaigns with the innovative public presence of the Free South Africa Movement, and the eventual victory of the anti-apartheid coalition in the US Congress. In 1987–1988, as both internal and international pressures on the apartheid regime continued to grow, the US administration took its first hesitant steps towards planning for a transition in South Africa that might include a leading role for the ANC.

### ***Expanding the divestment movement and other anti-apartheid action***

Despite the lessened publicity given to the South African struggle after South African suppression of the wave of resistance following the Soweto uprising, divestment efforts continued in student and church circles during the early Reagan years. The ACOA helped give continuity to student efforts, publishing a student anti-apartheid newsletter from 1979 to 1987; facilitating regional and national conferences; and continuing to publicise the cumulative record of anti-apartheid divestment. Jennifer Davis, South African exile and ACOA's key researcher on economic issues in the 1960s and 1970s, succeeded George Houser as the organisation's executive director in 1981. On the staff, others largely focused on the divestment campaign included student organiser Josh Nessen and projects director Dumisani Kumalo, who later represented South

<sup>123</sup> See, in addition to sources listed, George Wright, *The Destruction of a Nation: United States' Policy Toward Angola Since 1945* (London: Pluto Press, 1997).

Africa as its ambassador to the United Nations. Kumalo, who joined the ACOA staff in 1979, was a tireless and charismatic organiser who toured the country speaking to student, church, community groups and local legislative bodies in the 1980s.

Meanwhile, the national coalition including the AFSC, CALC, ICCR, WOA, and TransAfrica, also continued their support for local divestment efforts. And local coalitions at university, city, and state level continued to mobilise. As Jennifer Davis noted in a 2004 interview,

what the ACOA and other groups did was to provide a template. ‘The immediate spark able to generate interest usually came from South Africa. Something happened in South Africa and people here responded. But they could respond in a directed and effective way because we had developed patterns of action, had established tools for impacting policy, and had done the analysis necessary to reveal what needed doing and why it might be effective. So if you got angry and you wanted to do something, well, go and make sure that your pension fund doesn’t invest in South Africa, pull your union’s money out of banks that lend to apartheid and redline Harlem.’<sup>124</sup>

Even before the resurgence of resistance in South Africa following the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF), the student divestment movement continued to grow. In October 1983, for example, the ACOA hosted a National Student Anti-Apartheid Conference at New York University (NYU), co-hosted by NYU student organisers, the UN Special Committee against Apartheid and the UN Council for Namibia.<sup>125</sup> The conference was also attended by representatives of the youth wings of the ANC, the PAC, and SWAPO, and was co-ordinated with a national speaking tour by ANC youth representative Klaus Maphepha and SWAPO youth representative Selma Ashipala. Over half of the 300 participants from round the US were black and Third World students, reflecting the diversity of student organising on the campuses. The total number was twice the attendance of a similar conference in 1981. The students laid plans for a two-week national action campaign in spring 1984.

As anti-apartheid mobilisation grew in the period 1984–1986 (see next section), the student divestment movement and divestment efforts in the churches grew apace.<sup>126</sup> Class boycotts, sit-ins and building takeovers, construction of shantytowns, and demonstrations proliferated around the country. Church assemblies addressed by UDF leader Allan Boesak, Nobel Prize winner Desmond Tutu, and others moved to more unequivocal support of divestment. Of particularly strategic importance, however, was the impact of divestment by state and local governments, which had been particularly targeted by the movement at the beginning of the decade. As Jennifer Davis put it:

124 Interview with Jennifer Davis by William Minter, 12 December 2004.

125 James Cason, ‘Students in US To Launch Drive against S. Africa’, in *Africa News*, 17 October 1983.

126 See, for example, Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 567–576; *Africa News*, special issue, ‘Apartheid under Siege: The US and South Africa – 1985’. See also ACOA’s *Student Anti-Apartheid Newsletter* for this period.

We recognized that although both universities and churches controlled many millions of dollars of investments, the billion-dollar funds we could influence were held by states and cities, often in public employee pension funds. We needed to strengthen ties with union members and leaders, with state and city public officials and legislators and with investment advisers.

After 1980 we focused increasingly on achieving what we began to call people's sanctions, because there was almost no support in Washington for imposing either economic or other sanctions on apartheid. ... Ultimately those people's sanctions made it possible to win action in Congress.<sup>127</sup>

At the first national conference on state and local divestment in June 1981, some 200 state and local legislators, trade unionists, investment experts, church leaders, academics and grassroots organisers met with UN officials and national anti-apartheid organisers. At that point, divestment legislation had not yet been passed in any state, but there were already active campaigns in a number of states, including Connecticut, Massachusetts, Michigan, Wisconsin, California, and even Nebraska and Nevada.<sup>128</sup>

By 1991, according to Richard Knight of ACOA, 'people's sanctions had been adopted by 28 states, 24 counties and 92 cities. Conservative estimates put the amount divested from companies that do business in South Africa at over 20 bn, including 3.8 bn and 4.2 bn respectively from the retirement funds of the states of California and New Jersey'.<sup>129</sup>

These victories were possible, first of all, because of the significant growth during the late 1960s and 1970s of African-American political representation. Willard Johnson, leader of Boston's TransAfrica chapter and a leader in the MASS DIVEST campaign, noted that 'after the 1965 Voting Rights Act and the emergence of substantial legislative and executive power among African Americans, not only in Washington, but throughout the country at state and local levels, there emerged a capacity to enact change in a limited domain'.<sup>130</sup> And Dumisani Kumalo recalled in an interview conducted in 2005:

At one point we had bills on South Africa in the state legislatures, more than 40 legislatures. And if you look back today, the states that were successful in passing these bills, there is not one among them where the bill was just introduced either by a black legislator only or a white legislator only. It was always two legislators, one white, one black. And if you had that combination, the bills passed. In Michigan [for example] there was State Representative Perry Bullard and State Senator Virgil Smith. And in

127 Interview with Jennifer Davis, 12 December 2004.

128 This conference was convened in New York, on 12–13 June 1981 and was organised by the America Committee on Africa. Sponsors included the American Friends Service Committee; Connecticut Anti-Apartheid Committee; Clergy and Laity Concerned; Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility; TransAfrica; United Methodist Office for the UN, and the Washington Office on Africa.

129 Richard Knight, *Briefing Paper: State and Municipal Governments Take Aim at Apartheid* (New York: Africa Fund, May 1991).

130 Johnson, 'Getting Over by Reaching Out', 4.



Massachusetts, of course, you had State Senator Mel King and State Senator Jack Backman.<sup>131</sup>

The reach of the anti-apartheid movement across the country was also extended by the networks of other key organisations working at the national level, such as the AFSC and the WOA. The AFSC had the unique advantage of having offices around the country, almost all of which served as gathering points for progressive activists involved in many different issues in their communities and regions. The AFSC's work on Africa built on the energy of the group's Third World Coalition that had been founded in 1971. Visits by Bill Sutherland from Tanzania continued from the 1970s into the 1980s, and the AFSC was also one of the first groups to host Bishop Desmond Tutu on a US tour. Sutherland recalls that the AFSC, itself a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, regularly nominated Tutu for the award, years before he received it. Based in Atlanta, Thandi Luthuli-Gcabashe, daughter of the 1960 Nobel laureate Chief Albert Luthuli, ran the AFSC's peace education program for the US South from 1981 to 1996. AFSC offices in Seattle, Portland, Baltimore, Ohio, western Massachusetts, and North Carolina, to name only a few, were centres of local anti-apartheid activism. And, from 1981, the AFSC national southern Africa programme office, headed by Jerry Herman, organised speaking tours to specific areas of the country. The annual Africa Peace Tours, sponsored by a coalition of groups with the AFSC and often including representatives of the ANC and SWAPO, met with local activists, spoke in schools and churches, and contacted local media. In the election years 1984 and 1988, the tours targeted key presidential states such as Iowa and New Hampshire.<sup>132</sup>

The Washington Office on Africa, under Jean Sindab from 1980 to 1986 and under Damu Smith for the rest of the Reagan term (after Sindab left to head the World Council of Churches Programme to Combat Racism in 1986), combined grassroots mobilisation with coalition building as the prerequisites for influence on Congress. It worked not only with the national offices of its sponsoring churches and labour unions, but also with the people in the pews and on the picket lines. Its leaders were a regular presence not only in the halls of Congress, but also in rallies at churches and community centres. WOA repeatedly stressed the connection of apartheid with other issues, from Namibia and the regional wars in southern Africa to domestic racism. Working with close allies such as Willis Logan, who directed the Africa office at the National Council of Churches in New York, WOA was a prophetic and effective voice speaking for stronger action from the churches

A unique contribution among groups at the national level was made by the Southern Africa Project of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights under Law, originally founded in 1967 to provide legal support for political prisoners in South Africa and Namibia. Headed by Millard Arnold in the 1970s and by Gay McDougall

131 Interview with Dumisani Kumalo by David Goodman, 31 January 2005.

132 Tour speakers in 1981 for example, included Jerry Herman of AFSC; Lindiwe Mabuza of ANC; Rebecca Matlou of SWAPO; Jean Sindab, of the Washington Office on Africa; Carole Collins of the Campaign to Oppose Bank Loans to South Africa; and Wilfrid Grenville-Gray, IDAF representative.

from 1980 to 1994, the Lawyers' Committee brought cases on behalf of the anti-apartheid movement in the US, and co-ordinated first-hand testimony on human rights abuses by the South African government, such as those against child prisoners. Its most important role, however, was inside South Africa and Namibia. Like the IDAF in London, the Lawyers' Committee developed effective means of evading South African controls and providing direct financial and legal support to political prisoners and anti-apartheid lawyers. In the mid 1980s McDougall estimates that her organisation was funnelling as much as \$2m a year into South Africa for this support.<sup>133</sup>

Also intensifying in the 1980s was the cultural boycott of South Africa, which had been adopted by American as well as other international groups of artists and performers in the 1960s.<sup>134</sup> At the beginning of the 1980s, the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid began compiling lists of performers who boycotted apartheid and those who performed in South Africa.<sup>135</sup> In New York, groups including the Coalition to End Cultural Collaboration with South Africa and the Patrice Lumumba Coalition organised protests against artists who performed in South Africa. In 1983, Arthur Ashe and Harry Belafonte joined with Ruby Dee, Ossie Davis, Tony Randall, Gregory Hines, and others to announce the formation of Artists and Athletes against Apartheid. Belafonte called for awakening world consciousness to 'the horror of apartheid in South Africa. There can be no greater courier than artists or athletes of the world.'<sup>136</sup>

The impetus for increased organising was that performers such as Millie Jackson and Frank Sinatra ostentatiously defied the ban, as South Africa paid large fees to attract performers. In 1981, for example, Frank Sinatra performed nine concerts at Sun City in the Bophuthatswana homeland, for a payment of \$1.79m. The campaign gained strong momentum, however, with contrary examples such as Roberta Flack, who turned down an offer of GB£2m to perform in South Africa. In 1985, Little Steven Van Zandt organised a recording called *Sun City*, calling for support of the boycott and denouncing apartheid, with the participation of performers including Miles Davis, Run-DMC, Joey Ramone, Jimmy Cliff, Bonnie Raitt, Afrika Bambaataa, Ruben Blades, Linton Kwesi Jackson, Bob Dylan, and Bono. Proceeds from the project went to political prisoners in South Africa and to anti-apartheid groups, through the Africa Fund in New York.<sup>137</sup>

133 Interview with Gay McDougall by Adwoa Dunn-Mouton, 20 July 2005.

134 The American Committee on Africa coordinated a We Say No to Apartheid pledge in 1965. Signatories included Leonard Bernstein, Harry Belafonte, Diahanne Carroll, Sammy Davis, Henry Fonda, Julie Harris, Langston Hughes, Arthur Miller, Sidney Poitier, and Ed Sullivan.

135 See chapter 2 in this volume

136 Bella English, 'Athletes and Actors Serve Notice on South Africa', *New York Daily News*, 15 April 1983. See also Michael C. Beaubien, 'The Cultural Boycott of South Africa', *Africa Today* (1982).

137 Danny Schechter at <http://www.littlesteven.com/career-suncity.html>. and Dave Marsh, *Sun City by Artists United against Apartheid: The Struggle for Freedom in South Africa, the Making of the Record* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985).

## **The Free South Africa Movement**<sup>138</sup>

The Free South Africa Movement, sparked by an act of civil disobedience at the South African Embassy on 21 November, 1984, grew from a convergence of several factors: the escalation of protest and repression in South Africa, frustration at the prospect of four more years of a Reagan presidency, and new energy among African-American progressive forces and their allies, stimulated by the 1984 presidential campaign of Jesse Jackson. The capacity for grassroots organising that it revealed was built on years of previous work by local groups around the country and, in Washington in particular, by the Southern Africa Support Project (SASP).

SASP emerged from a group who had helped organised US participation in the Sixth Pan-African Congress in Dar es Salaam in 1974. They settled in Washington, determined to use the experiences gained from talking with liberation movements while in Tanzania to build support for African liberation struggles and consciousness of the links between US Government and corporate support for white minority regimes in southern Africa. The primary focus of the work was in local African American community institutions, including churches, educational institutions, the media, and unions.

From 1978 to 1990, SASP worked to build people-to-people ties between the people of the Washington metropolitan area. The fact that the people of Washington, DC, did not have voting representation in Congress amplified the connection between those oppressed abroad and the capital city. The goal of SASP was to highlight local problems and connect them to national and international struggles. SASP organised annual campaigns of southern African solidarity which focused on a country in the region. In co-operation with Howard University's radio station, SASP held a day of information and fundraising for refugees. Churches held Free Southern Africa Sundays, and local labour unions hosted worker speak-outs on injustices in South Africa and the US labour sector. SASP raised support for Zimbabwean refugees in Mozambique and for the ANC exile school in Tanzania through annual southern Africa weeks with radiothons, public meetings, and innumerable speaking engagements in churches and schools.

The basic notion of SASP was that organising had to take place in the cultural and community institutions that people were familiar with, in the cultural forms that they valued. Thus, SASP took information about southern Africa to the places where people congregated – concerts in the park, gospel shows, church services and universities in order to build a constituency for fundraising and protests. Like other organisations, SASP organised community events that featured Oliver Tambo, Sam

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138 This section is by Sylvia Hill and is partly based on accounts (1995) for *Crossroads* and for the October 2004 conference at the University of KwaZulu-Natal on the Role of the International Anti-Apartheid Movement in South Africa's Freedom Struggle. See also Joseph Jordan (ed.), 'The Covenant that was Kept: Lessons of the US Anti-Apartheid Movement', *Crossroads*, 50 (April 1995); and Randall Robinson, *Defending the Spirit: A Black Life in America* (New York: Plume, 1999), 146–163; and summaries by Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 558–619 and Francis Njubi Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans against Apartheid, 1946–1994* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 123–137. Neither summary mentions the local activists of the Southern Africa Support Project, who were key to organising the embassy demonstrations.

Nujoma, Johnny Makitini and many others. It recognised the complementary role of other organisations focused on Africa, and developed particularly close ties with TransAfrica, both as a national organisation and with its local chapter. TransAfrica concentrated most of its work among the national black leadership, progressive cultural workers and entertainers, African-American media personalities and businesses, as well as black organisations with membership constituencies. It had chapters in cities throughout the nation, and its executive director, a gifted orator and an outstanding debater, was a prominent media personality identified with the cause of the people of South Africa. This systematic work built a social infrastructure of ties to institutions and sectors in the city, and indeed nationwide, that laid the base for the FSAM mobilisation in 1984–1985.

When Randall Robinson, executive director of TransAfrica, US civil rights commissioner Mary Frances Berry and congressman Walter Fauntroy arranged a meeting with the ambassador at the South African Embassy and refused to leave as an act of civil disobedience on 21 November 1984, no one knew that this single act of defiance by African Americans, on the eve of the Thanksgiving holidays, would galvanise nationwide public defiance that would reverberate around the world and ultimately make something of a contribution to the dismantling of apartheid. In his memoirs Randall Robinson recounted his statement to South African ambassador, Bernardus Fourie:

Mr. Ambassador, please convey for us to your government our basic demand, which is twofold. All of 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. We are further demanding that your government commit itself immediately and publicly to the speedy dismantlement of the apartheid system with a timetable for this task.<sup>139</sup>

While they were arrested, demonstrators marched with placards denouncing apartheid and US support of apartheid. Fifty people had been asked by SASP to show up close to the embassy, without knowing why. It is a testament to those original protesters, most of whom were SASP members, that they arrived, took placards, and began chanting, though they did not know what was going to happen until the protesters were being handcuffed. Since Washington DC law stipulated no act of civil disobedience could occur within 500 feet of an embassy, this seemed a perfect legal context for civil disobedience.

The plans for the demonstration had been laid the week before, shortly after the US presidential election. Throughout his 1984 presidential campaign, Jesse Jackson had raised the question of US support for the white minority regime and had successfully made it an election issue. But Ronald Reagan, who had made no secret of his sympathy for the white regimes, was re-elected over the Democratic candidate Walter Mondale.

139 Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 152.

As the turmoil intensified inside South Africa, anti-apartheid activists felt compelled to find more effective ways to fight back as the regime sought to neutralise political opposition through detentions and killings. In a telephone conversation Richard Hatcher, then mayor of Gary, Indiana, and also the chairperson of TransAfrica's board of directors, suggested a protest at the White House. Robinson decided on a sit-in at the South African Embassy instead, with protesters refusing to leave until Mandela and all political prisoners were freed.

Robinson met leaders of SASP – Sylvia Hill, Sandra Hill, and Cecelie Counts, who also served as Robinson's legislative assistant – to ask whether they thought this was the right moment and whether protesters could be organised to support the sit-in. All agreed that the time had come, and that the protest had to be organised in a suitably dramatic fashion that would attract the press and public support for the cause of the people of South Africa.

First, the organisers had to persuade prominent personalities to actually sit in, because it was important to convey the reality that some prominent black people were so concerned about the plight of black people in South Africa that they were prepared to get arrested for this cause. Mary Frances Berry and Reverend Walter Fauntroy, then the DC delegate to Congress, immediately agreed. Former Equal Employment Opportunity Commission chairwoman, and later DC congressional delegate, Eleanor Holmes Norton, agreed that she would leave the meeting with the South African Ambassador to announce the action to the press. Earlier, there were co-ordinated phone calls to the media and allies to announce this first act of civil disobedience.

The original plan was to sustain a protest for a week, but the spontaneous response from individuals and organisations ultimately led to the decision that the protest should last a year in order to send a message to the Reagan administration demanding the end of US support for apartheid. The organisers also wanted to place the US government on trial for its constructive engagement foreign policy if any arrest could yield a conviction. But the attorney general refused to prosecute the cases in what was viewed by FSAM as an effort to shield the US government from further exposure on its complicity with apartheid.

The daily demonstrations that followed, organised with the implicit support of the friendly District of Columbia government headed by Mayor Marion Barry, were designed to focus the symbolic confrontation on South Africa and the Reagan administration, while at the same time making it as easy as possible for celebrities and representatives of organisations from different social sectors to participate. The point was to make a symbolic declaration, easily visible to the media, that whatever Reagan might think, apartheid was unacceptable to the American people.

As Cecelie Counts, coordinator of the daily demonstrations, noted:

The success of FSAM as a movement appealing to mainstream America can be traced to the way it was conceived. The format of the demonstrations allowed people to use their organisational identities as a way to come to the movement. The organisers actively encouraged all marchers to follow-up their participation by lobbying their Senators and Representatives for

sanctions. The involvement of media personalities not only helped sustain media attention but also reassured those who were genuinely wary of protests as a way of expressing public opinion. Some did not [even] understand that they had the constitutional right to demonstrate.<sup>140</sup>

The picket line included senators and representatives, church leaders, and a steady stream of groups of people who wanted to express opposition to apartheid. While critics sometimes scoffed at the peaceful arrests and subsequent release of demonstrators as simply a ritual, the political point was not to engage in confrontation with the police, but to carry a 'message' to the South African embassy. Within days, the protests spread around the country. As soon as the initial arrests made the news, TransAfrica began receiving phone calls from groups and individuals wanting to protest by getting arrested at the embassy. The Free South Africa Movement was launched within the week, with a steering committee composed of the group originally arrested at the embassy together with Sylvia Hill, William Lucy (secretary-treasurer of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and chairman of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists); and Roger Wilkins, fellow of the Institute of Policy Studies and a George Mason University history professor. By the second week TransAfrica was swamped with telephone calls, and groups around the country were joining in.

In Boston, the TransAfrica chapter launched protests in front of the coin dealer Deak Perrera, while in New York the chapter protested at the South African Consulate; and the ACOA organised a parallel protest at Citibank. By mid-December 1984, there were ongoing demonstrations in 26 cities, targeted either at South African consulates or at US companies doing business in South Africa. Longshoremen in San Francisco refused to unload a ship with cargo from South Africa. And on 4 December, the national trade union federation AFL-CIO brought 300 demonstrators to the South African embassy, including AFL-CIO president Lane Kirkland, co-ordinating the action with union demonstrations in seven other cities.<sup>141</sup> AFL-CIO participation in the protest at the embassy signalled that the protests had become 'mainstream' within the labour sector, since the federation leadership had earlier opposed sanctions and was staunchly anti-communist.

In the international arena, the AFL-CIO's African American Labor Center (AALC), founded in 1964, promoted an anti-communist agenda opposed to the liberation movements and advocating that trade unions focus on economic rather than political issues. It was part of the close cold war link forged between the US foreign policy and labour establishments since World War II that had included covert CIA connections as well as public support for allied foreign unions and international labour groups.<sup>142</sup> Even the AALC and the AFL-CIO leadership, however, opposed

140 Cecelie Counts-Blakey, in Jordan (ed.), 'The Covenant that was Kept', 12.

141 Leslie Maitland Werner, 'Protests Spreading in US Against South Africa Policy', *New York Times*, 5 December 1984; Peter Perl and Karlyn Barker, 'Unions Join Protests of Apartheid', *Washington Post*, 5 December 1984.

142 See Roger Southall, *Imperialism or Solidarity? International Labour and South African Trade Unions* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1995), 184–213; Barry Cohen, 'The CIA and African Trade Unions', 70–80, in Ellen Ray, William Schaap, Karl van Meter, and Louis Wolf (eds.), *Dirty Work 2: The CIA in Africa* (Secaucus, NJ: Lyle Stuart Inc., 1980).

apartheid and came to support black South African trade unions, in part out of conviction, but also because that was the only way to retain any credibility on the international scene.

Within the US, however, there was little awareness of these international developments. AFL-CIO headquarters and the national leadership in most unions were slow to provide more than token support to the anti-apartheid cause, with some prominent exceptions, including the automobile workers, the steel workers, the mineworkers, as well as AFSCME. But that was only a small part of the picture. Rank-and-file workers, as well as local and state labour coalitions dedicated to anti-apartheid action, were almost always key components in the build-up of pressure to divest at those levels. Anti-apartheid labour coalitions in the California Bay Area, New York City and state, and other areas had a significant impact on decisions of municipal and state governments and pension-fund managers; in other cases, such as in Washington, DC, the local labour council was in the lead in advancing municipal divestment legislation. The Coalition of Black Trade Unionists had impact not just as a national coalition, but through the interchange of ideas, information, and contacts for action, including fundraising for the liberation movement. Such realities, however, are hard to trace in the written records of national labour groups or in the press.<sup>143</sup>

The momentum of demonstrations and media attention to South Africa was further boosted by the December 1984 visit of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, en route from South Africa to Norway to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. Describing President Reagan's South African policy as 'immoral, evil and totally un-Christian', Tutu requested and was granted a meeting with the US president, though he later observed that 'neither he nor Reagan changed each other's mind'.<sup>144</sup> Later, speaking to a packed gathering at the Washington National Cathedral, Tutu exhorted the audience to 'make a moral climate in this land that will make it impossible for any administration to co-operate with a system so vicious as South Africa's official policy of racial separateness'.<sup>145</sup>

On 9 December 1984 the *Washington Post* summed up the impact of the demonstrations:

Do you think for one minute that President Reagan would otherwise have received Bishop Tutu, the South African Nobel Peace Prize winner? Just a few weeks ago apartheid was simply not on the presidential agenda, not something he had to devote his personal time to or prepare to talk about at a news conference. That is one measure of the change. Will it be so in two weeks, two months, two years? We offer no predictions. It is already evident, though, that the political system has a larger place available for this issue than many people had suspected. Liberal interest has been freshened, conservative interest stirred. Some signs of an altered political chemistry are there.<sup>146</sup>

143 We are unaware of any major study that has researched this involvement.

144 Sandra Evans, 'Reagan to Consider Tutu Suggestion', *Washington Post*, 8 December 1984.

145 *Washington Post*, 24 December 1984.

146 *Washington Post*, 9 December 1984.

Faced by rising anti-apartheid momentum, South Africa increasingly resorted to the use of paid US lobbyists, including African Americans. Some, such as Maurice Dawkins and Clarence McKee, worked for UNITA. But others, notably William Keyes, a former Reagan official, were directly employed by Pretoria.<sup>147</sup> Such paid lobbyists, who claimed to represent 'moderate' black opinion in South Africa, caused considerable confusion when they spoke to black communities. But their effect on national opinion was minimal, as the Free South Africa Movement successfully presented the anti-apartheid message as representative of black opinion.<sup>148</sup> Far more effective in presenting contrary views sympathetic to Pretoria's anti-sanctions, anti-Communist messages, were African leaders themselves, such as Jonas Savimbi of Angola and Gatsha Buthelezi of South Africa.

### ***The sanctions battle and shifting opinion in Congress***

The next two years were the high point of the anti-apartheid movement in the US and internationally. Through intense media coverage, events in South Africa quickly had an impact both in North America and Europe. And decisions of the US Congress and by US businesses had an immediate effect on business confidence in South Africa as well as among investors in Europe and South Africa. Movement impact on public opinion reached a critical mass and forced both the US government and the business community to take material action against apartheid.

The public record of these developments has been widely discussed, because it was covered at the time on television and in the national print media. In 1985 there was Senator Edward Kennedy's visit to South Africa in January; the week-long television coverage by Ted Koppel on *Nightline* in March; P.W. Botha's self-destructive Rubicon speech in August; international banks' refusal to roll over South African loans that same month; a meeting by a South African business delegation with the ANC in Lusaka in September; and an international church gathering in Harare in December, which issued the Harare Declaration in support of the South African liberation struggle. In 1986 the negotiations of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons' Group finally collapsed when the South African Defence Force attacked Zimbabwe and Botswana just as the delegation was visiting Lusaka in May, followed within days by a Commonwealth call for mandatory sanctions. And finally in October 1986 a congressional override of President Reagan's veto resulted in passage of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act.<sup>149</sup>

Behind the scenes in the US, the two most critical arenas in translating public opinion to effective pressure were the US Congress and the debates among large institutional investors on how to respond to the escalation of conflict in South Africa and the parallel rising demands for divestment.

147 Ronald Grover, 'Nice Work if you can Stand it: Lobbying for Pretoria', *Business Week*, 30 September 1985.

148 They were, however, well-paid. William A. Keyes, for example, was paid \$390,000 a year to improve South Africa's image in the black press.

149 See the useful summary in Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 558–619.



Leadership in the House of Representatives included William Gray, Steve Solarz and Howard Wolpe along with Ronald Dellums of California. Dellums, who served in the House of Representatives from 1971–1999, and introduced the first resolution for disinvestment in February 1972, recalls in his memoirs:

In 1985 we were prepared to press for a vote on our bill – thirteen years in the making, and by now a rigorous and demanding bill. Throughout the early 1980s, my office was in regular communication with the liberation forces in southern Africa and with activists throughout the United States. Damu Smith of the Washington Office on Africa became one of our closest political supporters, in on the ground floor and working tirelessly on behalf of our effort to achieve a complete economic embargo of South Africa ... At the same time, Representative Bill Gray sponsored an alternative approach, the focus on which was to prohibit new investment. The anti-apartheid movement was split on appropriate strategic next steps in the legislative arena. Some believed that they should strike to the center, support a more moderate bill and seek the ‘achievable’ outcome; others wanted to press for maximum sanctions. In addition to introducing a bill that reflected my own preference for the latter course, I had also co-sponsored the Gray bill, along with my CBC (Congressional Black Caucus) colleagues, in an effort to ensure that some action by the United States would be taken.<sup>150</sup>

Adwoa Dunn-Mouton, then a staff consultant for the House Sub-Committee on Africa and a long time SASP member, offers some insights on the legislative struggle from the staff perspective:

On the Senate side there were at least 15 staffers in the Senate Black legislative staff group that met regularly with Chairwoman Jackie Parker, a staffer with the Democratic Senator Levin from Michigan. The House side had a large contingent consisting of about 30 from the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) and maybe 40 other staffers who worked on various committees.

This meant we had points of contact with different committees studying different aspects of the Anti-Apartheid Act so we had some sense of what House and Senate members were thinking and how they were crafting their resistance or support for legislation. But it’s important for us to remember that action was taking place on the Capitol Hill because the national campaigns had a variety of constituencies. Once the members began to hear about South Africa in their member districts, they began to figure out how they had to alter their position on sanctions. The lesson is that elected officials and staff presence is not enough. It’s a necessary condition but not sufficient.<sup>151</sup>

150 Dellums, *Lying Down with the Lions*, 131–132.

151 Quoted in Sylvia Hill, ‘Free South Africa! Notes from my Dairy’, *Crossroads*, 16 (April 1985).

Even with the momentum after Botha's Rubicon speech, in which it was anticipated he would make concessions but disappointed even his overseas supporters in defying change, neither the Dellums nor the Gray bill became law in 1985. Instead President Reagan deflected legislative action by a last-minute executive order imposing very limited sanctions on his own authority. In 1986 the legislative struggle continued. The Gray bill moved through the House of Representatives, as it had in 1985. But at the end of the debate, the House approved an amendment by Dellums substituting the stronger version. As Dellums described this historic moment:

At that moment there were more Democrats on the floor than there were Republicans. Those colleagues who surrounded me on the Democratic side wanted to voice strong support for our effort – and the ayes rang out loudly. They clearly overwhelmed the more tepid nay votes that arose mostly from the Republican side of the aisle.<sup>152</sup>

Conservative Republican representative Mark Siljander, from Michigan, told Dellums that they calculated that the vote would fail in the Senate, being seen as too radical, so they decided not to call for a recorded vote count. But Dellums noted:

I sensed that Siljander had loosed a tidal force by failing to call for a recorded vote. I had seen that no Democrat had the heart to oppose the disinvestments bill. It was also apparent that Republicans were reluctant to be seen as favoring apartheid. ... They were all caught in a conundrum.<sup>153</sup>

The Senate passed a weaker, but still substantive, sanctions bill, called the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act (CAAA). The House anti-apartheid leadership, including the Congressional Black Caucus leadership, Bill Gray and Ron Dellums, agreed to abandon the Dellums bill in favour of the CAAA since there was no time for a House–Senate conference before the congressional session ended. In return for their co-operation, Senator Lugar agreed to lead the anticipated efforts to override the expected presidential veto.<sup>154</sup> Dellums reflected that despite his disappointment with the compromise, the action did turn out to be a victory:

In the end, Reagan's veto made a Senate bill that I and other activists felt was a weak one far more significant than would otherwise have been. When the Republican Senate and the Democratic House both overrode the veto, a clear message was sent to South Africa – the people's representatives within the government of the United States had trumped the executive branch, and had taken control of the character of the sanctions that would be imposed.

Our three-pronged strategy had worked: first, consult with grassroots activists and provide them with the grounds from which to press in congressional districts for the most principled position possible – in this case,

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<sup>152</sup> Dellums, *Lying Down with the Lions*, 133.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 133–134.

<sup>154</sup> Weissman, *A Culture of Deference*, 174–175.

complete disinvestments and embargo, second, work with willing national organizations to generate a lobbying presence on behalf of bold government action – maximum sanctions, in the case of apartheid – always creating pressure to move the middle to the left, third, engage congressional colleagues and educate them about the issues and the pathways for change.<sup>155</sup>

The override of President Reagan's veto marked the high point of US legislative action against South Africa. More broadly, however, events in South Africa and continued protests in the United States and worldwide, kept pressure on US government and businesses on multiple fronts. This process both led up to and continued after the congressional sanctions victory. National and local groups found new ways to focus media and public attention. The daily demonstrations at the South African embassy continued for a year until November 1985. They were punctuated by larger-scale events such as a 'funeral march' of more than 5 000 demonstrators to the State Department in August 1985, carrying caskets symbolising deaths in South Africa. On 8 January 1986, the Free South Africa Movement presented Archbishop Desmond Tutu, visiting the US on a three-week tour of 12 cities and major college campuses, with a million signatures of support for the South African struggle. The next day the United Mine Workers joined with the Free South Africa Movement and other groups in launching a boycott of Shell Oil, demanding that the company withdraw from its mining and oil operations in South Africa. In the fall of 1987 the American Committee on Africa mobilised churches and local groups to collect keys in a symbolic gesture to 'unlock' apartheid's jails – over 60 000 keys were dumped in demonstrations at the South African consulate in New York and the South African embassy in Washington.

The shift in US opinion on South Africa, however, was not limited to the mainstream American public that was shocked by the televised images of apartheid oppression and security force violence. It was evident even within the right wing of the Republican Party. In December 1984, 35 Republicans in the House of Representatives, known as the Conservative Opportunity Society and led by Newt Gingrich and Vin Weber, wrote to the South African ambassador, Bernardus Fourie, warning that they would be compelled to support sanctions unless Pretoria moved more quickly to end apartheid.<sup>156</sup> While President Reagan and the core of his right-wing advisers remained indifferent to charges of racism, even many conservative Republicans were aware that identification with apartheid was a moral and electoral handicap for the party. In the intense atmosphere of 1985–1986, votes on apartheid became in effect referenda on racism. At least one Republican House member from Kentucky made it clear that he could not afford to support President's Reagan's constructive engagement policy because apartheid had become an election issue, and unlike the term-limited Reagan he wanted to be re-elected. After decades of work, activists had been successful in making votes on apartheid become referenda on racism.

155 Dellums, *Lying Down with the Lions*, 137, 140.

156 Baker, *The United States and South Africa*, 36.

In 1987–88, congressional advocates for sanctions continued efforts to strengthen sanctions legislation. In general, however, these efforts failed to gain the support of swing votes among ‘moderates’ who argued that enough had been done and that it was better to wait and see what the results of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act would be. However, in December 1987, Representative Charles Rangel of New York, a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, inserted a provision that denied US firms in South Africa the right to deduct taxes paid there from their US taxes by including it as an amendment to another bill. This imposed a new substantial penalty for US corporate investors. And in August 1988, the House of Representatives passed a stronger comprehensive sanctions bill by 244 votes to 132. But that legislation failed to make it to a vote in the Senate. In general, the legislative momentum for new sanctions was weak.

Anti-apartheid forces were more successful in focusing systematic attention on the administration’s slow and inconsistent implementation of the law. This was documented in congressional hearings and non-governmental reports, and helped ensure that the legislation did result in material effects on the South African economy.<sup>157</sup> Having the legislation in place, moreover, strengthened the ongoing demand for economic disengagement from South Africa by private companies and served as a constant disincentive to business confidence in South Africa. Meanwhile, the ‘people’s sanctions’ campaigns continued targeting companies directly and through the investment policies of states, cities, and other large investors.

### ***People’s sanctions continued***

Among the most sustained campaigns, involving national organisations as well as providing a target for local demonstrators, was the campaign to boycott Shell that paralleled campaigns in Europe directed at the same multinational company.<sup>158</sup> Beginning with a sit-in by the Free South Africa Movement at the Shell offices in Washington, DC,<sup>159</sup> the campaign gained support not only from the United Mine Workers, but also other unions, including the AFL-CIO trade union federation. And it tied the action to support of the National Union of Mineworkers in South Africa. 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.

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157 See Hearing before the Subcommittees on International Economic Policy and Trade, and on Africa, of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, *Oversight of the Administration’s Implementation of the Comprehensive Antiapartheid Act of 1986 (Public Law 99–440) and an Assessment of Recent South African Political and Economic Developments*, 16 June 1987 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988); and Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights under Law, Southern Africa Project, *Implementation of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988).

158 See Donna Katzin, ‘Anatomy of a Boycott: The Royal Dutch/Shell Campaign in the US’, in R. Hengeveld and J. Rodenburg (eds.), *Embargo: Apartheid’s Oil Secrets Revealed* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995), 327–337.

159 The FSAM members involved in civil disobedience at the Shell office included Mary Frances Berry, Sylvia Hill, William Lucy, Randall Robinson, and Roger Wilkins.

The effectiveness of what Tutu termed ‘people-power’ sanctions was demonstrated in early 1987 when the ICCR received a leaked secret strategy document prepared for public relations advisers to Shell. The 254-page document from Pagan International cited the threat of the campaign and outlined a strategy, codenamed Neptune, to counter it. The executive director, Tim Smith, made the report available to the press and anti-apartheid allies.<sup>160</sup> The consultants for Shell noted that the boycott threat ‘is greatest in the US where at least 23 national trade unions, most of which are affiliated with the AFL-CIO, have organised in support of the boycott along with the National Free South Africa Movement (FSAM).’ The document went on to note:

Perhaps the greatest potential threat that the FSAM poses to Shell is its close relationship with the network of US church groups which have participated in its many protests at the South African embassy in Washington, D.C. These Groups, represented largely by the National Council of Churches (NCC) and the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR), are extremely sympathetic to the goals of the boycott as they have been challenging companies on their presence in South Africa as a top priority for over 15 years.<sup>161</sup>

While the US and international campaign against Shell did not succeed in forcing the company to withdraw from South Africa, it had a sustained impact on public opinion and imposed significant economic costs on Shell. More broadly, the wider campaign for divestment and economic disengagement intensified business demands for change in the apartheid system. In the US, unlike the congressional sanctions campaign that peaked with the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act at the end of 1986, the various people’s sanctions campaigns had a sustained momentum throughout the period from 1984 until the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990.<sup>162</sup>

At the end of July 1985, Chase Manhattan Bank decided not to roll over a \$500 m loan to South Africa, triggering what was in effect a run by other American and foreign banks. The South African rand skidded in value. In New York State, Republican financial controller Edward Regan strongly opposed divestment by the state pension funds. But in January 1986 he announced that ‘if nine months from now, it becomes apparent that the system of apartheid is still so entrenched that it is impossible for it to be dismantled by May 1987, then we will ask the corporations involved to draw up contingency disinvestment plans’.<sup>163</sup> He wrote letters to more than one hundred corporate executives and threatened to file stockholder resolutions on apartheid. ‘For many corporate board members’, noted historian Robert Massie later, ‘the threat by a Republican state comptroller of one of the country’s most populous states to

160 ‘Shell Mounts Campaign to Neutralize Criticism’, *Washington Afro-American*, 10 November 1987.

161 Pagan International, the organisation headed by Rafael Pagan, Jr drew up the report. The quotations are taken from a United Mine Workers of America staff members’ highlights of the report.

162 See summary and chronology in Institute for International Economics, *Case Studies in Sanctions and Terrorism, Case 62–2 UN v. South Africa (1962–1994) and Case 85–1 US, Commonwealth v. South Africa (1985–1991)*, at [www.iie.com/research/topics/sanctions/southafrica.cfm](http://www.iie.com/research/topics/sanctions/southafrica.cfm).

163 Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 597.

use its pension clout to press for change was the most disturbing development they had yet seen'.<sup>164</sup> Albert Wilson, an African-American who was general counsel for TIAA-CREF, the giant teachers' pension fund, travelled to South Africa in early 1986, returning to tell his board that 'American companies could no longer play a positive role in South Africa', and that they should be urged to withdraw.<sup>165</sup>

Within weeks of the passage of the CAAA, General Motors and IBM announced their intention to withdraw from South Africa. At the same time, in the UK, Barclays Bank, the target of an effective consumer boycott spearheaded by student groups, announced the sale of its South African interests.

On 3 June 1987, Rev. Leon Sullivan, author of the Sullivan Principles on Fair Employment Practices in South Africa, called for sweeping economic and political sanctions against South Africa, and acknowledged that his reform principles had failed. Chairperson Audrey Chapman Smock of the ICCR observed:

Dr Leon Sullivan's announcement on June 3, asking for US corporations to withdraw from South Africa and end all economic links there, signals the termination of corporate constructive engagement in South Africa. Dr. Sullivan has reported that all of US companies' efforts, including implementation of the Sullivan Principles, have failed to abolish apartheid. Just as constructive engagement has totally failed as a foreign policy initiative, Dr. Sullivan has acknowledged that the main pillars of apartheid still remain, and something else must be done to bring an end to that despicable system that dehumanises Black people.<sup>166</sup>

That same month giant US bank Citibank announced that it was withdrawing from South Africa.

In total, from 1 January 1986 through 30 April 1988, 114 US companies announced withdrawals from South Africa. In many cases, as anti-apartheid campaigners discovered, the companies continued investment there through indirect means. But the impact was nevertheless dramatic. It reflected a fundamental shift in perspective from the assumption that the apartheid regime might continue and successfully reform itself to the view that only a democratic transition could ensure stability in South Africa.

## **A shift in administration policy assumptions, 1987–1988**

By 1987, shifts in public opinion and in Congress, as well as the ongoing crisis in South Africa, also had substantive effects on opinion within the Reagan administration. At the end of 1985, Secretary of State George Shultz appointed an advisory committee on South Africa, co-chaired by former IBM CEO Frank T. Cary and William T. Coleman Jnr, an African-American Republican who had served as secretary of transportation

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 598.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 609–611.

<sup>166</sup> Letter to South African Issues Group, 26 June 1987, Interfaith Centre on Corporate Responsibility; Barnaby J. Feder, 'Sullivan Asks End of Business Links with South Africa', *New York Times*, 4 June 1987.

under President Gerald Ford. In July 1986, in the midst of the sanctions debate, the administration decided to replace US Ambassador to South Africa, Herman Nickel, notorious for his opposition to sanctions and his bias towards the white regime, with an African American. After North Carolina businessman Robert Brown had been discredited by charges of corruption and diplomat Terence Todman had declined saying US policy lacked credibility, Edward J. Perkins, then US Ambassador to Liberia, accepted the post and was approved by the Senate in October, shortly after passage of the CAAA.

The advisory committee report, released in January 1987, acknowledged that the administration's policy of constructive engagement 'had failed to achieve its objectives'.<sup>167</sup> Although the report by the 12-person panel featured dissents by three members who opposed stronger sanctions, and by two who felt the report's recommendations did not go far enough, the majority approved implementation not only of the CAAA, but also additional pressures on South Africa, encouragement of negotiations, and rapid expansion of ties with anti-apartheid forces, including the ANC. Although its recommendations were stronger than the policies followed by the Reagan administration and its successor under President George Bush, they are worth quoting as a notable indication of the mainstreaming of anti-apartheid ideas. Some excerpts follow:

- The 'reforms' so far enacted or considered by the South African government are limited, and fall far short of what was necessary. We believe that the 1983 constitution was actually counterproductive in that it ignored the political rights of blacks (p 13).
- The first and foremost priority of US policy should be to help to facilitate the beginning of 'good faith' negotiations between the South African government and representative leaders of the black majority aimed at shaping a non-racial democratic political system (p 14).
- The first steps the South African government must take are:
  - to release Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, and all other persons imprisoned for their political beliefs or detained unduly without trial;
  - to unban the ANC, and other political organisations, and establish the right of all South Africans to form political parties, express political opinions, and otherwise participate freely in the political process;
  - to terminate the State of Emergency and release the detainees held under the State of Emergency (pp 14–15).
- US officials in all branches and levels of government should clearly communicate to South African officials these fundamentals:
  - the restoration of national citizenship to all persons born or naturalised within the internationally recognised territory of South Africa that have been denied citizenship on the basis of race;
  - the repeal of the Group Areas Act, the Native Lands Act, and the Population Registration Act;

<sup>167</sup> *The Report of the Secretary of State's Advisory Committee to South Africa*, 29 January 1987, 1. Photocopy made available to the authors.

- the reincorporation of the ‘independent’ homelands into the Republic of South Africa (pp 15–16).

The commission also recommended ‘strong presidential leadership’ to implement the policy. While that was not forthcoming – President Reagan and key conservative advisers at no stage abandoned their fundamental bias towards the white apartheid regime – the report still indicated an irreversible shift in the political climate of official Washington.

This shift was immediately visible in January 1987, when the ANC’s president Oliver Tambo met with US Secretary of State George Shultz. The meeting, taking place despite the opposition of many right-wing Republicans in the administration and Congress, was described by *TransAfrica* as ‘a diplomatic coup’, the first of its kind between a US secretary of state and a movement defined as ‘terrorist’ by US ally South Africa.<sup>168</sup> Shultz reportedly conveyed the administration’s concerns about the number of communists in the ANC’s national executive committee and about the use of violence in the liberation struggle. Tambo responded that there were indeed members of the ANC who were also members of the South African Communist Party (SACP) because both these organisations were principally concerned with dismantling apartheid. He assured Shultz that the ANC was committed to establishing a non-racial, one-person-one-vote democracy. He also said that the ANC could not relinquish violence unless other alternatives were available. ‘If it was possible to achieve our political objectives without violence’, he was quoted as saying, ‘I would renounce it. As of now, it is not thinkable.’<sup>169</sup>

President Tambo’s visit, including visits and major speeches in five US cities, also signalled a higher level of visibility of the ANC and the South African struggle with many US constituencies, including establishment as well as movement groups. In New York, he attended a reception sponsored by the AOCA, delivered the inaugural Olof Palme memorial lecture at Riverside Church, and addressed the Foreign Policy Association and the African American Institute. In Washington, he spoke at Georgetown University at the invitation of the university president, spoke at Shiloh Baptist Church, and delivered a lecture at the historically black university, Howard University. In Los Angeles, the local branch of the FSAM hosted a dinner that raised \$40 000 for the ANC. Tambo received an honorary degree from the historically black Morehouse College in Atlanta, and was welcomed to Chicago by the first African American mayor, Harold Washington, and the Reverend Jesse Jackson.

Inside South Africa, with the support of Secretary of State Shultz and the new White House national security advisor, Frank Carlucci, Perkins was given the authority to take new initiatives to establish wide-ranging contacts with the ANC and other black political forces. Despite hesitancy from Chester Crocker and other State Department officials in Washington, Perkins had support for the new approach from the White House. Later he heard that Carlucci had bluntly told other Washington officials, ‘I

168 The meeting took place on 28 January 1987; see ‘ANC Breakthrough’, *TransAfrica News*, 6, 2 (1987).

169 *Ibid.*



intend to make sure that this president does not leave office with the reputation of being anti-black.<sup>170</sup>

The Tambo-Shultz meeting reflected a longer-term process of change in the Washington debate about South Africa and US ties to South Africa that had developed in the 1980s, and that now included not only the anti-apartheid movement and the US government, but also a wide range of other institutional actors.<sup>171</sup> Universities seeking to find an alternative to divestment had started a host of educational programmes, and the Institute for International Education had expanded its scholarship programmes with additional funds from USAID (some \$40m from 1982 to 1991). Altogether, more than 1 300 South Africans had received scholarships from the United States, some for study in the US and others for study in South Africa. Programmes such as the US-South Africa Leadership Development Program (USSALEP) and the Nieman Fellowships at Harvard sponsored South African visitors. Washington meetings were hosted by the Africa programme of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, headed by Helen Kitchen (from 1982), and by the South Africa Forum at the Carnegie Endowment for Peace, headed by Pauline Baker (from 1987). The cumulative result was that the scale of communication between US and South African civil society, including representatives of the ANC as well as other groups, increased enormously in the late 1980s.<sup>172</sup>

The wider impact of ‘anti-apartheid’ sentiment after 1986, however, did not mean greater influence for the anti-apartheid movement as such. In comparison to the high point of public attention in 1985–1986, it was difficult for movement groups to maintain momentum and further increase the pressure on politicians and decision makers. Despite the efforts of anti-apartheid groups, such as TransAfrica’s attempts to have questions about South Africa introduced during presidential debates, mobilise protests during the New Hampshire presidential primaries, and run a television advertisement during the Iowa primaries against Republican presidential candidate Robert Dole, the issue of apartheid did not feature prominently in the 1988 elections. Television coverage of South Africa declined. While Jesse Jackson raised the issue in his campaign, and the Democratic platform declared South Africa a ‘terrorist state’, neither Democratic candidate Michael Dukakis nor Republican candidate George Bush made more than passing reference to Africa.<sup>173</sup>

Thus, while the term ‘constructive engagement’ dropped from vogue, and administration officials actively worked to expand their contacts with the ANC

170 Edward J. Perkins, with Connie Cronley, *Mr Ambassador: Warrior for Peace* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 252. Perkins discusses his efforts and the opposition they provoked from the South African government and some circles in Washington. He was convinced that sanctions and pressure on South Africa were essential, and that previous US policy had been based on fallacious assumptions of the willingness of the SA apartheid regime to effect change.

171 See the summary in Princeton N. Lyman, *Partner to History: The US Role in South Africa's Transition to Democracy* (Washington: US Institute of Peace Press, 2002).

172 In the mid 1980s, prominent South African visitors to Washington, predominantly opponents of apartheid, thus found many opportunities to speak, typically to activists on Capitol Hill at the Southern Africa Working Group; the Washington Office on Africa and TransAfrica, and other government and non-governmental ‘policy communities’.

173 Baker, *The United States and South Africa*, 63.

and other anti-apartheid forces in South Africa, the State Department continued its opposition to stronger sanctions that might increase pressure on Pretoria. In February 1987, for example, the US vetoed a UN Security Council resolution calling for international economic sanctions modelled on the 1986 US legislation.

In 1987–1988, apart from the new US willingness to talk to the ANC, the most significant shifts came on the front of South Africa's military involvement in Namibia and Angola, on which the influence of the US anti-apartheid movement was of minor importance in comparison to changes on the battlefield and in the global and regional geo-strategic balances.

### ***The US and South Africa's regional wars in the Reagan era***

For the core organisations and veteran activists in the US anti-apartheid movement, previous engagement with African liberation struggles meant that the regional dimension of opposition to apartheid was well understood. National organisations such as the AOCA/Africa Fund in New York, and local groups, such as SASP in Washington, had devoted much of their energy to public education and fundraising for the movements in Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, and for support of development in the independent countries of the region. In the early eighties, SASP's annual week of educational and cultural activities with labour organisations, churches and youth organisations in the District of Columbia focused on raising consciousness about the conditions in southern Africa as a region, and the assault by South Africa on its neighbours.

More broadly, the anti-apartheid movement in the 1980s was also closely interlinked with the parallel Central American solidarity movement of opposition to US intervention in Central America and the Caribbean. Nevertheless, the lack of media visibility of South Africa's attack on its neighbours, general US ignorance of even basic African geography, and the capacity of the right-wing to put the conflict in Angola, in particular, in the context of global Cold War, meant that the movement was unable to translate the anti-apartheid momentum to significant influence in opposing US-South African military collusion in the regional arena.

The result was that US regional policy was driven primarily by events on the ground and by internal disputes within the Reagan administration between right-wing and far-right factions. Africa solidarity groups also had less influence in Congress on this front than on the popular anti-apartheid theme. For Angola in particular, the defeat of US intervention there in 1975–1976, with the linkage to Cuba, evoked parallels to the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion of 1961, strongly felt by the intelligence community and by influential Cuban-American exiles. Angola was a symbol of US humiliation and Soviet threat for many Washington politicians who would have had difficulty finding it on a world map. The conflict in Angola was de-linked from that in South Africa, even for many anti-apartheid activists. If Angola appeared on the average American's mental map at all, it was probably closer to Cuba or to Afghanistan than to South Africa. And South African involvement in Angola or Namibia rarely appeared in the media, unlike the dramatic confrontations in South African townships.

This chapter is not the place for a detailed analysis of the evolution of US policy and involvement in South Africa's regional wars, including the conflicts in Angola and Mozambique.<sup>174</sup> But it is important to note that there were substantial differences between the first Reagan term from 1981 to 1984 and the second, from 1985 to 1988, as well as between US policy towards Mozambique and Angola.

In 1981, US hostility to both Angola and Mozambique was the dominant theme. South African commandos raided Maputo shortly after President Reagan's inauguration, killing 13 ANC members and a Portuguese bystander. Only days earlier US Secretary of State Alexander Haig had spoken of the need for retaliation against 'rampant international terrorism'.<sup>175</sup> Despite the failure of the US Congress to repeal the Clark Amendment barring covert involvement in Angola, UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi made a high-profile visit to Washington that year; UNITA received adulatory coverage in the *Washington Post*,<sup>176</sup> and the supply of arms through indirect channels was an open secret.

By 1985, at the height of US media focus on South Africa, Mozambique and Angola occupied very different positions in the Washington debate. In September 1985, President Samora Machel of Mozambique was warmly received at the White House by President Reagan in what official releases termed a very positive atmosphere. Right-wing members of Congress denounced the Reagan administration for 'wooing Marxists' and introduced a bill calling for military assistance to RENAMO. But the legislation failed without administration support. RENAMO stayed off the list of officially approved anti-communist freedom fighters endorsed under the new Reagan doctrine.<sup>177</sup>

On the same day that Machel met Reagan, UNITA signed its first contract with the public relations firm of Black, Manafort, Stone & Kelly, paying \$600 000 for 'the development and implementation of a strategy to aid in getting US assistance'. The way had been paved for official US assistance by repeal, in July, of the Clark Amendment barring such aid. Christopher Lehman, a National Security Council official left his White House post to handle the UNITA account for Black Manafort. At the recommendation of CIA director William Casey, president Reagan approved an initial \$13m aid commitment to UNITA in November.

In Reagan's second term, buoyed by the president's election landslide and enraged by congressional restrictions on US aid to the Nicaraguan contras, right-wing forces launched a campaign for high-profile US support for insurgents in Nicaragua, Angola, Afghanistan, Cambodia and Mozambique. The president proclaimed what came to be known as the Reagan doctrine in January 1985. Prominent far-right activists, such as Howard Phillips of the Conservative caucus, attacked George Shultz and Chester Crocker for undermining the anti-communist cause by their willingness to compromise.

174 For a review and comparison of the policies towards Angola and Mozambique, see Minter, *Apartheid's Contras*, 142–171.

175 *New York Times*, 29 January, 1981.

176 Richard Harwood, 'Angola: A Distant War', seven-part series in *Washington Post*, 19–25 July, 1981.

177 For more detailed citations for this and the next two paragraphs, see Minter, *Apartheid's Contras*.

UNITA's position in Washington politics, practically unassailable in the 1980s, built on multiple advantages. Its assets included not only the high-powered lobbying adding up to over \$1 m a year, but also the enthusiastic support of CIA director Casey and others in the intelligence establishment. The Cuban connection brought in the powerful Cuban-American lobby, with both national influence and concentrated power in Florida, a key electoral state. Media bias in favour of UNITA was guaranteed by skilful cultivation of both reporters and editors. Representative Claude Pepper of Florida, a prominent Democrat and a liberal on domestic issues, took on leadership of the UNITA cause in Congress. Peter Kelly, a partner in UNITA's principal lobbying firm, was a leading fundraiser for Democratic senators. Other partners included Charles Black, Paul Manafort and Roger Stone, all highly placed in the Republican Party.

Such a line-up probably guaranteed the defeat of efforts to block the UNITA juggernaut. But the contest was made even more unequal by the failure of the Angolan government to make significant countervailing linkages in the US. Without a diplomatic presence in Washington or regular contact with US groups, Angolan officials had little understanding of Washington political realities. Even critics of US policy had only infrequent access to usable information from Angola. In most Washington contexts UNITA's version of events went unchallenged. The one advantage the Angolan government had was its good relationship with Gulf Oil and other US businesses. To the extent that Luanda focused on improving its relationship with Washington, it relied primarily on these contacts and on direct talks with US officials rather than building relationships with the anti-apartheid movement and civil society.

In contrast to UNITA, RENAMO in Mozambique never won prominence in Washington policy circles. RENAMO's backers within the intelligence agencies and the military joined with private far-right groups to urge official US support on the UNITA model, and seemed in 1986 and 1987 to have some chance of success. In 1987 they blocked confirmation of Melissa Wells as the US ambassador to Mozambique for six months in protest against US ties with Maputo. In the political atmosphere of Reagan's Washington, RENAMO might have gained much more support were it not for the skilful counter-efforts by the Mozambican government. Maputo adopted an open-door policy towards US journalists, non-governmental organisations and businesses, winning many friends, if only a trickle of private foreign investment. Policy guidelines stressed reaching out to diverse sectors of US society, from solidarity groups and the anti-apartheid movement on the one hand to right-wing opponents on the other. Mozambican officials realised the strategic importance of Congress as well as the administration. By 1988 RENAMO was so discredited and linked with atrocities that even many right-wingers thought it wise to seek some public distance.

In the second half of the 1980s, in sum, the parallel efforts by the Mozambican government and the ANC to broaden their contacts in Washington built increased support from the anti-apartheid movement and from wider civil society, congressional, and administration contacts. Despite differences over the US-backed 1984 Nkomati non-aggression accord between Mozambique and South Africa, which many anti-apartheid critics saw as surrender to Pretoria rather than as an unavoidable measure to ensure Mozambique's survival, US solidarity groups continued to see support for

Mozambique as a vital component of the wider anti-apartheid campaign. In 1987 and 1988, they widely publicised RENAMO's atrocities and South Africa's violations of the Nkomati Accord.

In contrast, UNITA was largely immune to criticism in Washington in this period, in contrast to the following period when revelations of its own atrocities began to be revealed in 1989 by Savimbi's biographer Fred Bridgland and the group finally discredited itself by returning to war after losing the 1992 election.<sup>178</sup>

Ironically, the opportunity for Chester Crocker to win the prizes of Cuban withdrawal and Namibian independence through negotiation, and finally claim success for his policy of 'constructive engagement' came primarily from the 1987–1988 advances by Cuban forces again providing decisive assistance to confront South Africa on the battlefronts of southern Angola.<sup>179</sup> There were, of course, multiple factors influencing the negotiations that culminated in the tripartite agreement between Angola, Cuba, and South Africa on 22 December 1988, which are still the subject of scholarly debate. But there is no doubt that the new military balance on the Angolan/Namibian front, as well as the political impossibility of gaining additional military or economic support from Western powers, presented a stark choice to South Africa's rulers. In this context, key decision makers in South Africa finally decided to withdraw from direct control of Namibia and to move towards negotiation on the political future of South Africa itself.

### ***The Bush–Clinton years and the South African transition***

In the period from 1989 until the first majority-rule election in South African history, the context for the anti-apartheid solidarity movement in the United States fundamentally changed. The negotiations beginning in South Africa leading up to Nelson Mandela's release and the complex transition of the next four years were reflected in relationships on the other side of the Atlantic as well. In 1989, incoming president George Bush met with Desmond Tutu, Allan Boesak, and Beyers Naudé in May. In June he invited Albertina Sisulu, co-president of the United Democratic Front, to the White House. In October 1989, white South Africa's new president, F.W. de Klerk released Sisulu's husband, Walter Sisulu, and six other senior political prisoners. In November, the ANC opened its first office in Washington, DC.<sup>180</sup>

With official US involvement intensifying and reaching out to the ANC as well as to the De Klerk administration, and a host of mainstream foundations and non-governmental organisations also hastening to become involved in the transition and reconstruction in South Africa, the movement organisations and constituencies found themselves simultaneously victorious and relegated to a more limited status in public

178 See Minter, *Apartheid's Contras*, 153–155 for a summary.

179 For references to the literature on diplomatic and military developments (1987–1988), see Minter, *Apartheid's Contras*, 159–165; Thomas Ohlson, *Power Politics and Peace Policies: Inter-State Conflict Resolution in Southern Africa* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1998), 88–94; William Minter, 'Glimpses of the War in Angola: Three South African Accounts, a Review Article', in *Africa Today*, 39, 1–2 (1992). For Cuban involvement see chapter 14 in this volume; and Piero Gleijeses, 'Moscow's Proxy? Cuba and Africa 1975–1988', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 8, 2 (2006), 3–51.

180 It was headed (1989 to 1994) by Lindiwe Mabuza, who had previously been ANC representative to the Nordic countries and had been active in organising support for the ANC in the US.

debate. Genuine victories led almost immediately to difficult questions of strategic readjustments.

After decades of the chant of 'Free Nelson Mandela!', on 11 February 1990, it finally happened: Nelson Mandela walked out of the Victor Verster Prison in Paarl. The drama of Nelson Mandela's release from prison attracted unprecedented attention in the United States, as it did around the world. Just weeks later, on 21 March, the 30th anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre, South Africa officially relinquished authority over Namibia, which gained independence under an elected government led by the liberation movement SWAPO. Four years later, Mandela took office as the elected president of South Africa.

In the United States, these victories closed one period of solidarity and opened a new period, one with a much less clear framework for ongoing solidarity work. Ironically, factors leading to the success of the anti-apartheid convergence also contained the seeds of future weaknesses. Core Africa activists around the country, despite their diversity, often saw the anti-apartheid cause within the context of wider advocacy for human rights and social justice in Africa and at home. But it was the narrow, and negative, anti-apartheid message that enabled activists to build organisational coherence and public awareness. Both the simplicity of that message and its reinforcement by the intransigence of the apartheid regime suited it to media amplification and policy impact. And the dual strategy of national sanctions and local divestment allowed for creative pressures to be developed at all levels of the movement.

Unlike in some European countries, the key anti-apartheid organisations in the US had neither the financial resources nor the government support that might enable them to participate on a large scale in South African reconstruction. In fact, all the groups almost immediately suffered severe financial pressure as donors concluded that the need for political mobilisation was waning and that their resources for South Africa's transition and reconstruction should go through more traditional channels. Many who had been involved in movement organisations found new individual or organisational channels to become involved directly in South Africa. Just as in the US domestic arena, however, the groups with a progressive political perspective were a minority compared to the larger number of better funded government or non-governmental groups.

This chapter does not aim to cover either the growing US government role during this period, or the private US efforts to begin direct engagement in building a new South Africa. Instead, three points of particular relevance to complete the 'anti-apartheid' phase of the movement's history are singled out, namely the organisation of the first trip of Nelson Mandela to the US in 1990; the mixed success of the effort to maintain sanctions as pressure for liberation during the transition phase; and the involvement of the US movement in exposing violence and ensuring the success of South Africa's first democratic elections.<sup>181</sup>

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181 On the role of US government see Lyman, *Partner to History*. On the issues faced by anti-apartheid organisations see Ellen J. Dorsey, 'Human Rights Strategy for a Changing International Environment: The United States Anti-Apartheid Movement in Transition' (PhD, University of Pittsburgh, 1992); and Minter et al., *No Easy Victories* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2008).

The fundamental dilemma in each instance was similar: how to celebrate victories and welcome the added support from the newly convinced to oppose apartheid while at the same time sustaining the political pressure to support the full demands for democracy and counter manoeuvres by the apartheid regime and other right-wing forces, to maintain influence. In many respects, this was the most difficult phase of the political struggle to support majority rule. The contradictions ahead were clearly visible in a front-page headline in the conservative *Washington Times*: ‘South Africa Offers Majority Rule if Whites Get Veto’.<sup>182</sup> In late 1990, the Washington Office on Africa predicted: ‘as shown in talks this year about conditions for negotiations, the Pretoria regime under de Klerk is and will be a tough bargainer, rarely making a concession without a struggle and trying to get back in the fine print what it gives up in the concessions which make the headlines’.<sup>183</sup> This prediction was fully borne out in the ensuing years.

### ***The Mandela visit***

When Nelson Mandela walked to freedom after 27 years of incarceration, his release was hailed by anti-apartheid forces worldwide as one step towards dismantling apartheid. By May of 1990, anti-apartheid organisers in the US were preparing for his historic visit, scheduled for 20–31 June 1990.<sup>184</sup> Both Free South Africa Movement leaders and Lindiwe Mabuza, US representative of the ANC, were conscious that this was an important political opportunity to shape the debate in the US. First, in a context in which the news media often gave favourable coverage to President F.W. de Klerk and to homeland leader Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi of the Inkatha Party, it was important to raise the profile of the ANC with the US public and its credibility as a judge of the legitimacy of the transition process from apartheid to democracy. At the end of the visit, FSAM wanted an overwhelming public perception that the ANC, under the leadership of Nelson Mandela, could and must lead South Africa from apartheid to democracy.

The ANC laid out the following objectives for the trip:

The purpose of the tour was to thank the American People for their support during Mr. Mandela’s years in jail and their tireless support of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. Also, the delegation sought to impress upon the American people, their President, and the US Congress the need to maintain sanctions against South Africa until irreversible and meaningful change, as determined by all the People of South Africa, has occurred. Equally important was the call for the establishment of an interim

182 *Washington Times*, 25 October 1990.

183 Washington Office on Africa, ‘South Africa: Rough Crossing to Post-Apartheid Order’, *Washington Notes on Africa* (Winter 1990).

184 The US organising committee of the Free South Africa Movement, included Roger Wilkins, who was the director; and Cecelie Counts and Sylvia Hill, who served as associate directors. Harry Belafonte, founder of Artists Against Apartheid, travelled with Roger Wilkins and Sylvia Hill on the eight-city tour. For the most part, local Arrangement Committees planned local activities.

government and Constituent Assembly, selected on democratic principles from South Africans of all walks of life, to draw a new Constitution.<sup>185</sup>

The visit began on 20 June in New York City, when Nelson Mandela, his wife, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, and an 11-member delegation, including current South African president, Thabo Mbeki, arrived from Canada to begin an eight-city US tour. Before the ticker-tape parade in the heart of downtown New York, where almost half a million people cheered his presence in the USA, the delegation's 40-car motorcade was met with citizens waving support from local neighbourhoods between the airport and the home of Mayor David Dinkins. Police estimated that some 750 000 New Yorkers greeted him that first day.<sup>186</sup>

Mandela spoke at the UN, met a business delegation at the World Trade Centre, and met with artists, some of whom had been active against apartheid. On visits to neighbourhoods in Harlem and Brooklyn, he spoke to tens of thousands of supporters.<sup>187</sup> On 23 June the delegation was in Boston, where they met with anti-apartheid activists and Boston political leaders. Although a bomb scare caused the cancellation of a women's tribute to Winnie Mandela, the public mass rally did take place. The protocol throughout major cities in the USA<sup>188</sup> included meetings with local anti-apartheid organisers; labour; the business sector; municipal leadership; leaders from the faith-based sector; and youth. In each city, at least one fundraiser was organised in order to raise funds for the ANC to fund its activities during the transition phase.<sup>189</sup> In Washington, Mandela made a historic speech to a joint meeting of Congress and met with President George Bush, as well as with anti-apartheid groups and supporters.<sup>190</sup> On both occasions he emphasised the call for democracy and the need to continue sanctions as a lever for change.

In his autobiography, President Mandela recalled '... to see the support and enthusiasm they gave to the anti-apartheid struggle was truly humbling'.<sup>191</sup> In a later letter, he observed: 'the memory of that visit remains indelible on my mind because it was the boldest expression of solidarity with our cause'.<sup>192</sup> Indeed, as in the case of Mandela's visits to other countries that year, the level of interest and even adulation for the South African leader were overwhelming.<sup>193</sup>

Yet the trip not only signalled a victory to celebrate; it also marked the opening of a period in which the anti-apartheid movement's capacity for mobilisation and influence

185 Draft notes of planning meeting with ANC Mission to the United States.

186 *New York Times*, 21 June, 1990.

187 John Kifner, 'Mandela gets an Emotional New York City Welcome', *New York Times*, 21 June 1990; Don Terry, 'The Mandela Visit: In Harlem, a Name to Add to Martin and Malcolm', *New York Times*, 22 June 1990.

188 After Boston, the delegation went to Washington, D.C.; Atlanta; a labour convention near Miami; Detroit; Los Angeles; and the Bay Area (San Francisco/Oakland/Berkeley).

189 After deducting expenses for the visit, \$4.5m was donated to the Matla Trust in South Africa.

190 The only other foreign leader (other than heads of state) who had addressed a joint meeting of Congress was the Polish leader Lech Walesa, chairman of Solidarity.

191 Nelson. Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (New York: Little Brown, 1994), 508.

192 Letter of invitation to Sylvia Hill to visit South Africa as a member of the Democracy Now delegation, 5 September 1991. In private possession of Sylvia Hill.

193 For additional references and commentary, see Rob Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood: South African Culture and the World Beyond* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 175–192.



was to decline. This was, in a sense, inevitable as victory approached; in South Africa itself, negotiation and compromise were on the agenda. But there were also signs of weakness apparent behind the scenes during the trip itself. Competition to be on Mandela's schedule was intense in every city visited, with newly attracted politicians, businessmen, and other public figures as well as veteran activists prominent in the mix. At times the political significance of the trip seemed overshadowed by the jockeying for a position close to the South African leader. To complicate matters, the ANC delegation itself included not only the commanding figures of Nelson and Winnie Mandela, but also some officials who made it very clear that their future agenda for the US would focus on business and government ties and would include little or no role for solidarity activists.

Activists were accustomed to dealing with South African exiles within the context of mutually understood political solidarity. As movement leadership in South Africa transitioned into a new period, preparing to assume power, new imperatives necessitated new ways of working. It was a time of confusing signals and misunderstandings. Lines of communication became increasingly frayed without the steady hand of Oliver Tambo, who had presided over the ANC's international relations from 1960 until he was disabled by a stroke in 1989, followed by his death in 1993. Nevertheless, on key issues of sanctions and opposition to efforts to undermine the transition by violence and deception, anti-apartheid groups continued to mobilise over the next four-year period.

### ***Maintaining the pressure of sanctions***<sup>194</sup>

In his speech to the US Congress on 26 June 1990, Nelson Mandela stressed that sanctions must continue until the South African people had determined that their country was set on 'an irreversible course leading to its transformation into a united, democratic and non-racial country'.<sup>195</sup> For the anti-apartheid movement, this provided a clear mandate for the continuation of sanctions. Within the US government, the dominant view, held largely by those who had previously opposed the imposition of sanctions, was that sanctions should be lifted to reward and encourage the South African government under F.W. de Klerk to continue with negotiations.

Both proponents and opponents of lifting sanctions, however, were constrained primarily by the specific terms of the anti-apartheid legislation, which shaped the debate. Those provisions, noted former South African anti-sanctions lobbyist Les de Villiers, also decisively shaped the strategy of the De Klerk government, despite its public denials.<sup>196</sup> The relevant provisions of the act state that it:

[t]erminates the sanctions contained in title III of this Act and certain sanctions contained in title V of this Act if South Africa: (1) releases political prisoners and Nelson Mandela from prison; (2) repeals the state of emergency and releases all detainees held under such state of emergency;

194 On the debate see Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy toward Africa*, 236–243.

195 Address to the Joint Session of the Houses of Congress of the USA, 26 June 1990: available at <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mandela>.

196 de Villiers, *The US Sanctions Campaign against South Africa*, particularly 175–208.

(3) urbans political parties and permits political freedom for all races; (4) repeals the Group Areas Act and the Population Registration Act and institutes no other measures with the same purposes; and (5) agrees to enter into good faith negotiations with truly representative members of the black majority without preconditions.

Authorizes the President, unless the Congress enacts a joint resolution of disapproval, to suspend or modify such sanctions after the President determines and reports to the Speaker of the House and the chair of the Senate Foreign Relations committee that South Africa has: (1) released Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners; (2) taken three of the four actions listed in phrases (2) through (5) in the preceding paragraph; and (3) made substantial progress toward dismantling apartheid and establishing a nonracial democracy.<sup>197</sup>

While the Bush administration and the mainstream media were inclined to give De Klerk the benefit of the doubt in determining compliance with these conditions, the anti-apartheid movement, following the lead of the ANC, stressed the need for full compliance with both the letter and the spirit of the law. In particular the movement pointed to the failure to release all political prisoners and to doubts about the good faith of the government in negotiations that were delayed and punctuated by violence, much of it covertly instigated by government agents.

The ANC did not formally declare the transition process ‘irreversible’ and call for the lifting of international sanctions until November 1993, but the Bush administration lifted sanctions, with congressional approval, in July 1991 despite the opposition of anti-apartheid and civil rights organisations. The *Washington Post* headline read, ‘Citing South Africa’s “Transformation”, Bush Ends Most Sanctions’. President Bush spoke of a ‘profound transformation’ under the leadership of De Klerk, adding that ‘much remains to be done, let’s be very clear on that point, but I’ve been impressed with the commitment by President de Klerk, by Nelson Mandela, and by Chief Buthelezi’.<sup>198</sup> Despite opposition from anti-apartheid groups and their allies in Congress, it was clear that the Bush decision reflected the dominant view in the Washington establishment. In a commentary by Randall Robinson of TransAfrica in *Newsweek*, the headline read ‘We Lost – and de Klerk Won’.<sup>199</sup>

As the Washington Office on Africa noted in a review of the Bush years, the administration had

disregarded evidence that de Klerk was not negotiating in good faith, but was stalling on a rapid transition to democratic rule. The most significant evidence of bad faith was de Klerk’s failure to control or to disassociate himself from the campaign of covert violence in which elements of his security forces were implicated.<sup>200</sup>

197 Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986, H.R. 4868, Title III.

198 A. Devroy and H. Dewar, ‘Citing S. Africa’s “Transformation” Bush Ends Most Sanctions’, *Washington Post*, 11 July 1991.

199 *Newsweek*, 29 July 1991.

200 *Washington Notes on Africa*, 19, 1 (Winter 1993).

Despite this signal from the national government, however, the boost to South African economic confidence was less than expected. ‘People’s sanctions’ remained in effect, with anti-apartheid measures in place in 30 US states, more than 100 cities and other local governments, some 100 universities, and more than 160 pension funds. Private business continued a ‘wait and see’ stance on investment in South Africa. Mayor David Dinkins of New York spoke for most local governments when he pledged not to let up on sanctions until Nelson Mandela gave the word.

In September 1993, in an address to the UN, Nelson Mandela officially called for the lifting of all sanctions except the arms embargo against South Africa. The Clinton administration and Congress responded with the repeal of remaining sanctions in US national laws, and the UN officially called off economic sanctions. The focus of Mandela’s 1993 trip to the United States was more on increased trade, investment, and other support for the new South Africa than on continued pressure on De Klerk. In December, Mandela and De Klerk jointly received the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway.

### ***Exposing violence and supporting the elections***

Understanding the complex process under way in South Africa during the transition years was not easy inside South Africa, much less from an ocean away with images most commonly filtered by the biases of the mainstream news media. From 1988 to 1991, the independent television series called *South Africa Now*, directed by long-time anti-apartheid activist and media producer Danny Schechter, worked with South African journalists to portray a more nuanced picture. Although Schechter was an experienced producer who had worked at CNN and ABC, the series ran only on public television stations, and was always short of funds. In 1990 it was attacked from the right as producing ‘ANC propaganda’, after reporting on ‘third force’ violence in South Africa; the programme closed for lack of funding in 1991.<sup>201</sup>

The fate of *South Africa Now*, which won media awards, but was unable to sustain itself financially beyond 1991 or reach audiences comparable with those of the major networks, illustrates the obstacles faced by the anti-apartheid movement in these transition years. Both US government and media, despite the new-found respect for the ANC and even adulation for Nelson Mandela, were still more comfortable with the reform agenda and perspective presented by the De Klerk administration. Inside South Africa, according to the account by then US ambassador, Princeton Lyman, US officials were acutely aware of the threat to the process from Chief Buthelezi’s Inkatha and far-right forces within the South African security establishment.<sup>202</sup> Their strategy, however, was to maintain a balance of incentives and pressures to draw these forces into the process, and to encourage ‘moderation’ on all sides, rather than to bring the roots of the covert violence to public attention. In Washington, officials were studiously noncommittal in identifying those responsible for violence, while the media most often perpetuated the myths of spontaneous ‘black-on-black’ confrontation.

201 Danny Schechter, *News Dissector* (New York: Akashic Books, 2001), 212–213.

202 See Lyman, *Partner to History*, 127–212.

Within their own networks, US anti-apartheid groups disseminated the substantial documentation uncovered by South African and international researchers on the covert involvement of the South African regime in violence and the alliance between these covert forces and Inkatha.<sup>203</sup> Compared with earlier periods, opportunities multiplied to obtain direct information from South Africa and to work with South African counterparts. But it was far more difficult to communicate the complex realities of negotiations and covert violence than it had been to win support for the clear anti-apartheid message.

Within the limitations of reduced funding and the high travel costs for visiting South Africa, however, the new period offered a long-awaited opportunity for many activists to see for themselves the country that had been the cause for years or decades. Some were able to find ways to stay and work in South Africa, such as activists from the Washington Office on Africa and the American Committee on Africa who worked with the South African Council of Churches and related groups. Particularly in the more sympathetic political context of the Clinton administration after January 1993, some found employment in USAID or foundation-funded projects in South Africa. Local activist groups, such as in the Bay Area and Boston, began to explore contacts that would later develop into sister-city programmes.

One key trip, called the Democracy Now tour, was organised at the invitation of Nelson Mandela from 19 to 23 October 1991. Consisting of 33 African-American activists led by Randall Robinson of TransAfrica, it was intended to provide first-hand knowledge of South Africa for a group that had had no such previous opportunity, despite their personal knowledge of the US counterpart institutions of Jim Crow.<sup>204</sup> Among the participants were Arthur Ashe, who had served as co-chair of Artists and Athletes against Apartheid; musician Quincy Jones; Congresswoman Maxine Waters from California; William Lucy of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and secretary treasurer of American Federation of County and Municipal Workers; Dorothy Height, president of the National Council of Negro Women; Sylvia Hill of SASP; as well as other representatives from the labour, church and business sectors. They were able to confirm, as Nelson Mandela observed in his letter of invitation, that 'the repeal of several apartheid laws has had no visible effect on the lives of the black majority. As Africans we are still denied the voting rights which would allow us to shape our own destiny as free people.'<sup>205</sup> At the press conference concluding the visit, Randall Robinson stressed the need for the United States to take a stronger stand to curb the violence and advance the transition to democracy. 'I am left with the impression that our nation has watched as a casual bystander', he commented, 'we have used little, if any, of our considerable

203 Some examples are Mzala, *Gatsha Buthelezi: Chief with a Double Agenda* (London: Zed Books, 1988); Amnesty International, *South Africa: State of Fear, Security Force Complicity in Torture and Political Killings, 1990–1992* (New York: Amnesty International, 1992); Washington Office on Africa, 'Inkatha: Threat to South African Peace Process', *Washington Notes on Africa* (Summer/Fall 1990); Africa Fund, 'Gatsha-Gate' Payoff Scandal: Apartheid Government's Covert War Against COSATU Exposed (New York: Africa Fund, 1991). See also Stephen Ellis, 'The Historical Significance of South Africa's Third Force', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 24, 2 (June 1998), 261–299.

204 Invitation letter from Nelson Mandela to Sylvia Hill. 5 September 1991.

205 Ibid.

leverage'.<sup>206</sup> The group returned armed with first-hand knowledge and insights that were used to continue to mobilise public support for the ANC to assume state power.

Among US anti-apartheid groups, the one with the greatest capacity to have a direct impact in this transition period was the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights under Law led by Gay McDougall, an African American who had close ties with ANC leaders dating back to the 1970s, when both had been close observers of the Lancaster House negotiations leading to the independence of Zimbabwe. The organisation's work in supporting political prisoners had given it a wide range of contacts and credibility inside South Africa, both in the progressive legal community and with the liberation movement. And its legal expertise and reputation in the US legal community gave it credibility with the US government as well. Between 1990 and 1994, McDougall spent as much as half of each year in South Africa. And at the request of the ANC Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee she set up a system by which they could request legal research backup for the negotiations, posing questions that the Lawyers' Committee would pass on to volunteer teams of top legal researchers for quick-turn-around reports to inform the negotiating team.<sup>207</sup> The project also organised consultations bringing specialists on constitutional issues from countries around the world. It became, in McDougall's words, 'a key resource in the negotiations process helping to facilitate the anti-apartheid alliances' examination of all of their options prior to agreeing to settlement terms'.<sup>208</sup>

In 1993, with the incoming Clinton administration, the political climate for US-ANC contacts further improved. In May 1993, the White House sent a high-level delegation to the funeral of Oliver Tambo, headed by the secretary of health and human services, Donna Shalala, and including prominent African-American and anti-apartheid leaders such as Jesse Jackson, Randall Robinson, William Lucy, Maxine Waters, and Maya Angelou. Shalala concluded her address at the service with a cry of *Amandla!*<sup>209</sup> The high-level delegation, US ambassador Princeton Lyman later commented, 'symbolised American recognition that the ANC was in fact a government-in-waiting'.<sup>210</sup>

The ANC also called for continued engagement by anti-apartheid forces. On 10 July 1993 Nelson Mandela delivered a speech to the National Association of Coloured People (NAACP) convention in Indianapolis, Indiana.<sup>211</sup> He traced the historical relationship between the NAACP and the ANC as well as the necessity for the upcoming elections in South Africa to be free and fair. Recalling the civil rights struggle waged to assure the right to vote in the US, Mandela emphasised the need for activists to share their experiences in the difficult tasks of 'voter identification, voter education, and voter mobilization'. He also cautioned the group that the task

206 David B. Ottaway, 'US Activists Press Anti-Apartheid Fight', *Washington Post*, 23 October 1991.

207 Interview with Gay McDougall by Adwoa Dunn-Mouton, 20 July 2005.

208 Cited in 'The International Link: Connecting the Struggles', *Crossroads* (April 1985), 16.

209 Lyman, *Partner to History*, 85.

210 *Ibid.*, 86.

211 Nelson Mandela, 'New Tasks on Our Common Agenda', in *Nelson Mandela Speaks* (New York: Pathfinder, 1993), 261–268.

of assuring free and fair elections would require substantial financial resources and appealed to the group to join the campaign to raise those resources.

For the historic elections of April 1994, Gay McDougall served as the only American and one of five international members of the 16-member Independent Electoral Commission. With support from USAID, the Lawyers' Committee also coordinated the participation of US non-governmental groups in election monitoring. Jesse Jackson headed the official US observer team on behalf of the Clinton administration. In all, there were over 500 Americans among the thousands of observers from all over the world, including 67 in the UN's observer mission, those in the non-governmental groups coordinated by the Lawyers' Committee, and others who came with direct invitations from the ANC and its election alliance partners, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP).

Each of the American observers had their own experiences. But the common note was celebration of the result of decades of struggles that had engaged not only South Africans but their allies from around the world. Gail Hovey, part of the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) contingent, recorded some of the reflections from her election diary:

Our team included South Africans Jennifer Davis and Dumisani Kumalo, each of whom had spent decades in exile; Betsy Landis, a member of the board since the 1950s who had become an expert on Namibia; and Prexy Nesbitt, who had played many roles in the solidarity movement over a quarter of a century. Aleah Bacquie, a member of ACOA's staff, had already been in South Africa for much of the year, seconded to the South African Council of Churches at the request of its president Frank Chikane, Davis, Hovey, and Nesbitt were assigned to areas surrounding Empangeni in rural KwaZulu-Natal. Voters queued up on sidewalks, stood in single lines that snaked like ancient rivers or squared the corners of enormous fields. 'I have waited for this day for all my life and I will wait for all the day if needs be', said one voter.

I was among those who had to fly home before the inauguration of the new government. But Jennifer Davis and Dumisani Kumalo went to the party, which was the next best thing to being there myself, especially when Jen faxed me the news. She wrote 'As we waited the mood was wonderful – lots of our old friends – who hugged and kissed us and kept saying over and over, "Thank you. We couldn't have done it without you". ... [Zambia's Kenneth] Kaunda was there and asked where George [Houser] was, sent his greetings ... [T]he ANC choir sang wonderful songs in the background'. Then it was party time, Jennifer wrote. 'We did it. We did it. Hundreds of people hugging and kissing, waving little ANC and SA flags. Dancing. It was beautiful.'<sup>212</sup>

212 An excerpt from a version prepared for the manuscript Minter et al., *No Easy Victories* (2008).