

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: MOVEMENT MATTERS: AMERICAN  
ANTIAPARTHEID ACTIVISM AND THE RISE OF  
MULTICULTURAL POLITICS.

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American organizations that opposed apartheid in South Africa extended their opposition to racial discrimination in the US into world politics. More than three decades of organizing preceded the legislative showdown of 1986 when Congress overrode President Ronald Reagan's veto to enact economic sanctions against the apartheid regime. Drawing on the tactics and moral authority of the civil rights movement, the antiapartheid movement mobilized public opinion with familiar political symbols while increasing African-American influence in the formulation of US foreign policy.

Three conflicts in particular shaped American antiapartheid activism: the debate between those holding an integrationist vision of the civil rights movement versus the advocates of a Pan-Africanist view as expressed in the Black Power movement; the tension between the antiracist credibility American leaders sought to project to the world and the anticommunist thrust of American foreign policy which led to a tacit alliance with South Africa; and the dispute over whether nonviolence or armed liberation provided the best strategy for ending apartheid.

Three antiapartheid organizations that debated and dealt with these conflicts were the American Committee on Africa (ACOA), the American Friends Service Committee

(AFSC), and TransAfrica. Each group worked against apartheid for more than a decade, combined direct action with other tactics, and included antiapartheid activism in larger efforts concerning Africa and US foreign policy. The efforts of these organizations provide a window through which to examine the conflicts that marked the antiapartheid struggle.

Cultural expressions reinforced public sentiment against apartheid. Novels, plays, movies and music provided a bridge for Americans who strove to understand the struggles of those who lived under apartheid. Via the page, stage, screen, and recording studio, apartheid's opponents found a platform to transmit their message to a broad audience of Americans.

The similarity of apartheid to American racial segregation provided activists with metaphors to mobilize constituencies that had opposed American racism. Direct action in particular helped dramatize American entanglement with apartheid. By extending the moral logic of the civil rights movement, the antiapartheid movement was able to invoke the themes of equality and freedom central to American civil religion.

MOVEMENT MATTERS:  
AMERICAN ANTIAPARTHEID ACTIVISM  
AND THE RISE OF MULTICULTURAL POLITICS

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## DEDICATION

Dedicated to my parents, and all who struggled to end apartheid.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face;  
Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*

**First Corinthians 13:9-13**

*For it is the dawn that has come,  
as it has come for a thousand centuries, never failing.  
But when that dawn will come, of our emancipation,  
from the fear of bondage and bondage of fear,  
that is a secret.*

**Alan Paton**

Many people contributed to this dissertation, helping me to keep facing the glass even when I feared it was too dark to see. My thanks to all who assisted me and facilitated my intellectual sojourn.

At the University of Maryland my advisor James Gilbert expertly guided me through each phase of this process; his suggestions deepened my analysis and strengthened my argument. Alfred Moss provided inspiration and encouragement. Bill Bravman and the late Marie Perinbam shaped my ideas about Africa and its importance in the world. Gary Gerstle, Sharon Harley, and Paul Landau provided insightful criticism. Mary Kay Vaughan and Ann Jimenez helped me navigate the bureaucratic shoals on which I often foundered. The Department of History as well as the Committee on Africa and the Americas provided crucial financial support for my research.

Prior to my years at Maryland, my ideas and commitments were shaped at George School, principally by history teacher Francis Bradley. At Juniata College members of the Peace and Conflict Studies Program, particularly Andrew Murray, William Vocke, and the late Martin Clark, prepared me to think critically while acting globally. The late Frederick Binder challenged my intellect as well as my ideals.

Much of the research for and organization of this dissertation took place while I was teaching at Goshen College. My history colleagues John Roth, Steven Nolt, and Lee Roy Berry helped me to keep my cultural analysis serviceable. Jan Bender-Shetler's editorial suggestions were especially useful. The staff of the Good Library and the Mennonite Historical Library provided priceless assistance by helping me to gather the many sources I consulted.

The staff people of the American Friends Service Committee Archives, TransAfrica, and the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University were all extremely helpful and professional. Marcia Segal gave guidance on how to track down the last pieces of the puzzle at the Library of Congress. My colleagues at the College of Southern Maryland, especially Christine Arnold-Lourie and Victoria Clements, have shown me how to balance teaching with the pursuit of scholarship. My friend Allen Smith prodded me to think like a historian who cares enough about activism to be critical of it, while Alex Winter and Bonnie Bick reminded me not to succumb to the paralysis of analysis.

My parents, Abram and Patricia Hostetter, who indulged my insistence that we spend family vacations visiting every historic site listed in the AAA Tourbook, and thus are largely responsible for my engagement with history, have been more supportive than I could have imagined. The legendary forbearance of my siblings Andrew (deceased), Rebecca and Samuel, who shared those historical field trips whether they liked it or not, as well as my sons, Benuel Hostetter and Taylor Johnson, who now suffer the same fate, allowed me to piece together my vision of history.

My wife Suni Johnson has been infinitely patient, and was often more assured of the eventual success of this project than I. Without her it would have been impossible.

Though it sometimes seemed like it was a thousand centuries in coming, the dawn of this dissertation is no longer a secret. Free at last, free at last...

## INTRODUCTION

### **Through the Glass Starkly: Americans Confront Apartheid**

*To list the extensive economic relations of the great powers with South Africa is to suggest a potent nonviolent path. The international potential of nonviolence has never been employed. Nonviolence has been practiced within national borders in India and the United States and in regions of Africa with spectacular success. The time has come fully to utilize nonviolence through massive international boycott which would involve the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Great Britain, France, the United States, Germany and Japan. Millions of people can personally give expression to their abhorrence of the world's worst racism through such a far-flung boycott...The time has come for an international alliance of people of all nations against racism."*

***Martin Luther King Jr., December 10, 1965<sup>1</sup>***

Apartheid, Afrikaans for apartness, is the term for the system of racial segregation by which the white minority in South Africa oppressed the black majority and other people of color. From 1948 through 1994, apartheid served as the operating principle of government in South Africa. Because of the global outcry against apartheid as the world's most egregious example of racism, it remains a term of political opprobrium years after its official demise. The term continues to be invoked in books, articles, and speeches to emphasize the political gravity of issues such as the continued segregation of American education and housing, the oppression of lesbians and gays, the devastation caused by AIDS, the world-wide threat of environmental destruction, the global maldistribution of wealth, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>2</sup> The resilient resonance of

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., (Address to the South Africa Benefit of the American Committee on Africa at Hunter College, New York City, 10 December, 1965) American Committee On Africa (ACOA) Records, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans, Microfilm, Part 2, Reel 17, Frame 553. Hereafter referred to as ACOA Records.

<sup>2</sup> Listed below is a sampling of titles that invoke apartheid:  
Z. Jaffrey, AIDS in South Africa: The New Apartheid. (London: Verso, 2001);

the term reflects the searing reality of apartheid while underscoring the success of the global antiapartheid movement in shaping the vocabulary of political culture.

Martin Luther King Jr. stands out among the most renowned American opponents of apartheid. King's 1965 assessment of the apartheid regime's vulnerability to international sanctions and condemnation proved, in the end, to be correct. It took, however, more than twenty years for the US to implement fully the kind of sanctions King advocated. King consistently spoke out against apartheid during his dozen years of prominence as the leading voice for African-American civil rights. Beginning in 1957, he lent his name to the cause and spoke often in support of antiapartheid campaigns.<sup>3</sup> In his 1964 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, the American civil rights leader connected his efforts to those of African National Congress President Chief Albert Lutuli of South Africa; Lutuli had been awarded the same prize in 1960.<sup>4</sup> King even tried to travel to South Africa to dramatize the connection between the struggles for racial justice there and in the United States, but the apartheid government denied him a visa.<sup>5</sup>

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Titus Alexander, Unraveling Global Apartheid: An Overview of World Politics.

(Cambridge: Polity/Blackwell Publishers, 1996);

W.N. Eskridge, Gaylaw: Challenging The Apartheid of the Closet.

(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999);

D.S. Massey and N.A. Denton, American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993);

R.D Bullard, et al., Residential Apartheid: the American Legacy.

CAAS Urban Policy Series, v. 2 (Los Angeles, CA: CAAS Publications, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> Lewis V. Baldwin, To Make The Wounded Whole: The Cultural Legacy of Martin Luther King (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1992), 207.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., (Address delivered in Acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize, Oslo Norway 10 December 1964). Nobel Emuseum, <http://www.nobel.se/peace/laureates/1964/king-acceptance.html> (1 June 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Lewis V. Baldwin., Toward the Beloved Community: Martin Luther King Jr. and South Africa. (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1995).

King's advocacy of nonviolence, his commitment to active solidarity with those fighting apartheid despite American Cold War commitments in the region, and his vision of a universal antiracist position helped define the terms of debate during the quarter century of antiapartheid activism that followed his Hunter College address. King couched his call for global human rights in the principles most Americans claim to cherish, arguing that freedom, dignity, and justice<sup>6</sup> should apply to those suffering discrimination in Selma, Alabama, and Soweto, South Africa, alike. Following his assassination in 1968, King's legacy loomed large for those striving to sway public opinion and change American policy toward South Africa.

South Africa drew the attention of American activists for a range of reasons. Initially it provided a promising model for nonviolent revolution that pacifists and integrationists hoped to apply to the racial situation in the US. The optimistic attention paid to the struggle in the 1950s changed after the massacre of 69 unarmed protesters at Sharpeville served notice to civil rights activists that the path they were forging was fraught with danger and uncertainty. The 1960 Sharpeville Massacre and subsequent state of emergency in South Africa provided a stark reminder of the racial apocalypse America might face should nonviolence fail to bring about peaceful change.

US opponents of the South African racial oppression created the most widespread and successful foreign policy dissent movement of the 1980s. Organized political pressure on federal, state, and local governments, public institutions, and private corporations to end American economic and political ties with South Africa achieved maximum force during the Reagan administration. The antiapartheid movement succeeded in constraining

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<sup>6</sup> King, Jr., Nobel Peace Prize Address.

Reagan's anticommunist rationale for supporting the South African government by emphasizing the antiracist moral imperative established by the civil rights movement. Akin to the protest against American intervention in Vietnam, the US antiapartheid movement maintained its momentum because it sustained a focus on South Africa as "an essential issue of American foreign policy and national identity."<sup>7</sup>

Over the course of three decades of organizing, American antiapartheid activists created many organizations and mobilized a coalition composed of a wide range of constituencies. While organizers, journalists, and scholars from a variety of perspectives have analyzed these efforts, the US antiapartheid movement's significance to American political culture has gone largely unexplored.<sup>8</sup> Historian Van Gosse, in his work on the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, has pointed to the need for investigation of the campaigns that activists sustained throughout the Cold War era;<sup>9</sup> apartheid became the most salient of African issues during that time. Few historical studies on the antiapartheid movement have carried their analyses past the mid 1960s, when the initial radiance of African

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<sup>7</sup> Charles DeBenedetti and Charles Chatfield, An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992), 408.

<sup>8</sup> Penny Von Eschen, Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); James H. Meriwether, Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Brenda G. Plummer, Rising Wind: Black Americans and US Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Ronald W. Walters, Pan-Africanism in the African Diaspora: An Analysis of Modern Afrocentric Political Movements (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993). Philip V. White, "The Black American Constituency for Southern Africa, 1940-1980," in Alfred O. Hero and John Barratt, The American People and South Africa: Publics, Elites and Policymaking Processes (Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1985).

<sup>9</sup> Van Gosse, Where the Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America and the Making of a New Left (New York: Verso, 1993).

independence had begun to fade and the American civil rights movement had passed its zenith.<sup>10</sup>

Cold War considerations conditioned the calculations of US policy makers who saw South Africa in strategic terms. As a provider of strategic resources like uranium, as an economic ally, and a bulwark against the encroachment of Soviet influence in southern Africa, the apartheid regime provided many attractive inducements to US policy makers. At the same time, as with segregation at home, American entanglement with apartheid provided a venue for foreign and domestic critics to censure US policy as well as corporate involvement. Antiapartheid activists eventually helped overcome the confines of the two-dimensional Cold War construction of the US relationship with South Africa by demanding that the moral mandate of the civil rights movement apply to the formulation of foreign relations as it had been applied to end segregation at home.

The objective of this dissertation is to evaluate the relationship of antiapartheid activism to American political culture. By examining and comparing the actions of several of the key, long-lived national antiapartheid organizations and analyzing their efforts in the context of the cultural expressions that shaped public awareness of apartheid, this study will address several key questions: What prompted these groups to challenge apartheid? What conditions shaped and informed the tactics and strategies each pursued? How did Cold War connections to Southern Africa figure into

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<sup>10</sup> The key studies that chronicle the antiapartheid struggle on the American side are: Baldwin, Toward the Beloved Community; Donald Culverson, Contesting Apartheid: U.S. Activism, 1960-1987 (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999); Robert Kinloch Massie, Loosing the Bonds: The United States and South Africa in the Apartheid Years (New York: Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 1997); Audie Klotz, Norms in International Relations: The Struggle Against Apartheid (New York: Cambridge, 1995); Meriwether, Proudly We Can Be Africans.

organizational decisions? What role did nonviolent direct action play? How did they convey the importance of a faraway struggle to Americans? How did activists with divergent views on the nature of American race relations work together toward the same goal? How did music, films, books and athletic competitions serve to transmit the antiapartheid message? How did antiapartheid activism influence the evolution of the symbols and vocabulary of what sociologist Robert Bellah has called the “American civil religion?”<sup>11</sup> In the end, what did apartheid mean to Americans?

Working to end South African racism while facing the legacy of American racial discrimination compelled antiapartheid activists in the US to create a style of alliance and cooperation that contributed to the rise of multicultural politics. Civil rights advocates in the US opposed apartheid in South Africa because of the parallels they saw between apartheid and Jim Crow segregation. Activists extended the moral example and methods of the civil rights movement to US foreign policy deliberations about South Africa. Nonviolent direct action connected opponents of apartheid to their peers in South Africa and the American South. As more African Americans gained leading positions in American society as a result of the civil rights movement, they and their allies sought to establish themselves in the international arena. Antiapartheid activists operated synergistically with cultural workers who wrote books, sang songs, and performed in plays and films that explicated the evils of apartheid to the public at large.

The effort to end US support for apartheid spurred institutional divestment and sanctions legislation because it constructed and communicated foreign policy dissent in

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<sup>11</sup> Robert Bellah, “Civil Religion In America,” *Daedalus*, (Winter 1967), reprinted in Robert Bellah, ed., *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 171.

the vocabulary of American civil religion. In its outward advocacy as well as in its internal debates, the American antiapartheid movement helped to promote multiculturalism as a public norm in academia, business, government, and the entertainment industry.<sup>12</sup> As a renewed form of American civil religion, a key element in the inception of multiculturalism can be traced to the praxis born from the clash of integrationist universalism and Pan-Africanism within the antiapartheid movement. Multicultural politics reflect the *modus vivendi* negotiated by black and white activists during the course of the antiapartheid activism whereby they divided leadership and labor within the American antiapartheid movement.

The history of American antiapartheid activism is not a single story. It is composed of scores of individual acts, hundreds of committees and coalitions, and dozens of campaigns. Rather than a comprehensive accounting for all antiapartheid activism, this study attempts to discern the key trends set by leading activist organizations and how they intertwined with presentations of apartheid in popular culture. Through examination of the experience of formal, long lasting activist organizations, the larger contours of the antiapartheid movement's development become evident, revealing two themes. One is the chronicle of how small organizations worked for years to bring the issue of apartheid to the attention of the national conscience and consciousness. The other is the complex manner in which those same groups worked to oppose racism abroad while contending with the legacy of prejudice and discrimination at home, even within their own organizations. In the process the issue of apartheid became not just a focus of concern

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<sup>12</sup> C.E. Sleeter, P. McLaren, and NetLibrary Inc., Multicultural Education, Critical Pedagogy, and the Politics of Difference(Albany: State University of New York Press).

but an arena where disputes in the broader civil rights coalition were projected into the realm of foreign policy dissent.

The antiapartheid movement's accomplishments in the 1980s grew from experiments begun in the 1930s by the leading African-American activists of the era. For example, Pan-African intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois, long the most prominent black activist scholar in America, initially included South Africa among his many concerns at the time of the First World War. Du Bois grew more militant in the aftermath of World War One, broadening his famous contention that "the colorline is the problem of the twentieth century"<sup>13</sup> by positing that "The Negro problem in America is but a local phase of a world problem."<sup>14</sup> Always controversial, through his Pan-Africanism Du Bois exemplified his own maxim regarding the "twoness" of blacks in America:

One ever feels his twoness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.<sup>15</sup>

He wrote numerous articles and books on African topics and provided leadership to the Pan-African Congresses of 1919, 1921, 1923, 1927 and 1945.

Allied with Du Bois in his concern about Africa and apartheid was the multitalented celebrity activist Paul Robeson. Robeson's career as a singer and actor had made him the most famous African-American in the world by the late 1930s. As a result of his personal experience of racism and the knowledge he gained during his travels in Africa, the Soviet Union, and elsewhere, Robeson had become a leading radical by the time of

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<sup>13</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk (New York: Signet, 1982, 1903), xi.

<sup>14</sup> W.E.B DuBois, The Color Line Belts the World, in D.L. Lewis, W.E.B. Du Bois: A Reader (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995), 42-43.

<sup>15</sup> Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk, 45.

World War II. His renowned 1939 radio performance of “Ballad for Americans”<sup>16</sup> marked the height of his popularity in the US; the patriotic paean helped popularize a multicultural vision of America. The multilingual Robeson combined a commitment to internationalism with a desire to reconnect with his African origins. Robeson’s desire to “be African,”<sup>17</sup> and his outspoken radicalism, combined with his celebrity status to make him both a forerunner of the black power activists of the 1960s and a target for Cold War era repression. Robeson’s political involvements illustrate the conflicts and contradictions that those who joined the fight against apartheid would face from the fifties through the nineties.<sup>18</sup>

Jack O’Dell, who served as a key advisor to Martin Luther King and Jesse Jackson, describes Robeson’s significance for black activists after World War II. O’Dell met Robeson after a concert when O’Dell was a high school student in New Orleans in the late 1940s. Robeson impressed O’Dell on a political and a personal level because “he sang songs from China, the Soviet Union, Negro spirituals; had a great presence. But I was most impressed when, after the concert, he spent an hour signing autographs for students.” Robeson became O’Dell’s political model because “I liked his militancy, I

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<sup>16</sup> John Latouche and Earl Robinson, Ballad For Americans, <http://www.cpsr.cs.uchicago.edu/robeson/links/NYlabor.ballad.lyrics.html> (18 May 2003).

<sup>17</sup> Sterling Stuckey, Going Through the Storm: The Influence of African American Art in History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>18</sup> Paul Robeson, Here I Stand, (Boston: Beacon Press: 1958) and Martin Bauml Duberman, Paul Robeson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988).

liked his stance, I liked his integrity and he was a powerful symbol.”<sup>19</sup> O’Dell cites Robeson as one key influence in his decision to join the Communist Party, an association that would create political difficulties during his post-Party political activism.

Du Bois and Robeson joined forces in the Council on African Affairs (CAA), which historian Hollis Lynch has described as “the most important American organization concerned with Africa”<sup>20</sup> during the 1940s and early 1950s. Originally founded as the International Committee on African Affairs in 1937, the organization served as an educational bureau devoted to the dissemination of information about Africa. Well-known figures from the African-American community such as Alain Locke, Ralph Bunche, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Alphaeus Hunton worked with the Council in its early years. The group’s mission shifted in a more activist direction with reorganization into the CAA in 1942. The most prominent person associated with the Council was Robeson, a founder who served as chair and public spokesperson from 1942 onward. Du Bois was also central to the work of the CAA; when he left the NAACP in 1948 he made his office at the Council's Harlem headquarters.

At the end of World War II, as demands for independence emanating from colonized Africa grew louder, the CAA led the promotion of anticolonial concerns in the US. South Africa was always primary to the Council’s work. At its peak in the late forties, the CAA hosted African independence petitioners, led delegations to the State Department,

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<sup>19</sup> “Jack O’Dell on Fighting Racism in the 1940s,” Interviewed by Sam Sills, 8 May 1993, History Matters Website, <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6927/> (accessed 1 December 2003).

<sup>20</sup> Hollis R. Lynch, Black American Radicals and the Liberation of Africa: The Council on African Affairs, 1937-1955, Africana Studies and Research Center (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1978).

organized mass rallies, picketed the South African consulate in New York, and disseminated literature designed to increase awareness about Africa. The Council's criticisms of US Cold War policy and its leftwing alliances attracted pressure from the government while fostering dissension among its leaders. International activism, and suspicion of links to Soviet-backed Communism, led to the revocation of Robeson and Du Bois' passports. This, combined with government harassment of the Council regarding its status as an agent for foreign powers, neutralized the CAA as an active force by 1952. The CAA collapsed under the McCarthyite pressure brought on key members, which, in turn, caused the deterioration of its funding and popular support. The Council's fate served as an anticommunist warning to those groups that took up the South African cause in later years.

The divisions within the Council foreshadowed the debates in the antiapartheid movement that developed after the CAA's official dissolution in 1955. The CAA presaged a race-conscious style of anti-colonial activism that became stronger in the 1960s. The CAA's brand of Pan Africanism blended concern about all of Africa with a political worldview generally in line with the politics of the Communist Party. In one sense the CAA fulfilled and surpassed the chief accomplishment of American Communists in the 1940s: it moved from being an integrated educational alliance to a black-led activist organization that espoused radical views. Thus the tension between the universalism of the integrationist dream and the transnational solidarity of the Pan-African ideal that marked the evolution of the American antiapartheid movement first appeared in the CAA. The struggle within the CAA provides a microcosmic view of the process that produced the black-led antiapartheid coalition of the 1980s. As these two

tendencies vied with each other, American antiapartheid activism developed a twoness of its own.

This study examines the evolution of this tension within the US antiapartheid movement by analyzing several long-lived activist organizations and how their efforts intertwined with the presentation of apartheid in American popular culture. The story of American antiapartheid activism is not a single story. It is composed of scores of individual acts, hundreds of committees and coalitions, and dozens of campaigns. Themes that define the broad contours of this movement can be discerned looking at national groups and popular culture. The records left by the movement organizations provide a primary record of the debates, decisions and directions that comprise the workings of the movement.

Three antiapartheid organizations that debated and dealt with these conflicts were the American Committee on Africa, the American Friends Service Committee, and TransAfrica. Each group worked against apartheid for more than a decade, combined direct action with other tactics, and included antiapartheid activism in larger efforts concerning Africa and US foreign policy. These groups served as what sociologist Aldon Morris calls “movement halfway houses,”<sup>21</sup> training activists and providing the tools necessary to launch and sustain a host of campaigns, though not necessarily building their own mass membership in the process. The efforts of these three organizations provide a

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<sup>21</sup> In his appraisal of the American civil rights movement, Morris asserts, “A movement halfway house is an established group or organization that is only partially integrated into the larger society because its participants are actively involved in efforts to bring about a desired change in society. The American Friends Service Committee, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the War Resisters League and the Highlander Folk School are examples of modern American movement halfway houses.” Aldon Morris, The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change (New York: The Free Press, 1984), 138.

vantage point from which to compare and contrast the tactics, strategies, successes, failures, conflicts and controversies that marked the American antiapartheid struggle. The accounts of each of these organizations form the first three chapters of this dissertation.

Chapter One chronicles the American Committee on Africa (ACOA). Initiated in response to the mass civil disobedience of the Defiance Campaign in South Africa, ACOA organized against apartheid from 1952 until apartheid ended in the early 1990s. As a small, New York City-based organization with a limited budget, ACOA conducted a wide range of actions against apartheid. Virtually alone in its antiapartheid efforts until the late sixties, ACOA experimented with a number of antiapartheid tactics including shareholder motions and direct action against companies doing business with South Africa. Begun by activists with connections to the civil rights movement, pacifist organizations, and organized labor, ACOA operated from the assumption that its staff and supporters would be a racially integrated group. ACOA suffered criticism for being led by whites, despite several projects directed toward mobilizing African-American activism. ACOA's strategy evolved over time in relation to events in South Africa and the US. Through trial and error, ACOA developed a niche from which it provided support and specialized knowledge to the antiapartheid network and the development of transnational advocacy.

Chapter Two covers the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). Reflecting a long held concern for South Africa among Quakers, the AFSC employed active nonviolence within the context of an internationally supported liberation movement. As the struggle against the white racist regime in South Africa intensified, the strategies of AFSC's South Africa Program staff and South African Friends (Quakers) diverged.

Because of Philadelphia-based AFSC's involvement in the movements for civil rights and against the Vietnam War, its ideological emphasis shifted from relief work to nonviolent pursuit of justice and liberation. AFSC's South Africa Program reflected this change. South African Friends and AFSC staff clashed over differing understandings of the application of nonviolence to the antiapartheid struggle. Critics in the US opposed AFSC's support for economic sanctions. The controversy around AFSC's South Africa Program encompassed debates about race relations within an anti-racist social movement, the relationship of first world pacifists to armed third world liberation movements, and the role of pacifist witness in a transnational liberation struggle. In response to the challenges faced by its South Africa program, AFSC developed a stance best described as liberation pacifism.

Chapter Three tells the story of TransAfrica. Based in the Washington, D.C., TransAfrica began in 1976 at the behest of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), as the African-American lobby group for African and Caribbean concerns. While working on a number of issues related to the African diaspora, TransAfrica gained prominence during the 1980s as the initiator of the Free South Africa Movement (FSAM) that led a yearlong protest at the South African Embassy in Washington, DC. Led by activist lawyer Randall Robinson, TransAfrica represented a coming of age for African-American involvement in foreign policy. Utilizing a network of black elected officials to mobilize opposition to US policies favorable to apartheid, TransAfrica combined high profile direct action in Washington, DC, with grassroots lobbying and support from prominent African-Americans, effectively rallying African-Americans as an ethnic

interest group opposed to apartheid.<sup>22</sup> TransAfrica's assertion of a new variant of Pan-Africanism exposed the possibilities as well as the limits of what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has termed "strategic essentialism,"<sup>23</sup> a political strategy that emphasized the special bond between black Africans under apartheid and the historic discrimination against African Americans.

Neither policy makers nor activists control the way in which ideas are understood by the broader public, but information made manifest in a variety of cultural forums provide a crucial background for debates and decision-making. Cultural critic Melani McCalister has noted that cultural representations "do not inject ideologies into their audiences, but they do figure in the process of constructing frameworks that help policy make sense in a given moment."<sup>24</sup> Americans learned about and understood the situation in South Africa in ways that jibed with their own experience. The oppression of apartheid resonated with many Americans because it looked familiar. Images of white police and soldiers beating, shooting, and gassing black protesters created a context in which the term "apartheid" came to symbolize the racial Armageddon many Americans feared at home.<sup>25</sup> The

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<sup>22</sup> For an appraisal of role of African-American interest group politics in relation to foreign policy see Linda Williams, "American Interest Group Research: Implications for Africa Constituency Building," in Imani Countess, Loretta Hobbs, Doug McAdams, William Minter, and Linda Williams, Making Connections for Africa: Report from a Constituency Builder's Dialogue (Washington, DC: Africa Policy Information Center, 1997), 23-49.

<sup>23</sup> Glossary of Key Terms in the Work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Emory University, <http://www.emory.edu/ENGLISH/Bahri/Glossary.html>, (1 June 2003).

<sup>24</sup> Melani McAlister, "A Cultural History of the War Without End," Journal of American History, vol. 89, no. 2 (September 2002): 439-455.

<sup>25</sup> Garry Wills, The Second Civil War: Arming for Armageddon (New York: New American Library, 1968).

similarity of apartheid to American racial segregation provided activists with messages and metaphors to mobilize constituencies that opposed American racism.

Chapter Four evaluates and contextualizes the significance of antiapartheid activism and the way it reverberated amidst the changes in American political culture from the fifties through the nineties. Antiapartheid activism exemplifies the larger “crucible of race” in American life delineated by historian Gary Gerstle.<sup>26</sup> It provides a concentrated case study of political activism that crossed racial boundaries and international borders, as well as long-lived foreign policy dissent that spanned the Cold War era and survived the splintering of the civil rights community in the late 1960s. The link between culture and protest began long before the concerts and congressional antiapartheid legislation of the 1980s. In its heyday the Council on Africa Affairs had combined protest and lobbying to draw attention to the situation in South Africa. Direct action, including demonstrations, marches, and nonviolent civil disobedience, added an element of political theater to the campaign for sanctions and divestment. Organized protest took place in conjunction with a variety of cultural expressions from South Africa that helped to stoke opposition to apartheid. Novels, plays, movies, and music provided a bridge for Americans who strove to understand the day-to-day struggles of those who lived where racism functioned as the central operating principle of the government. Transmitted via the page, stage, screen, and recording studio, the protest of apartheid’s opponents reached a substantial audience of Americans.

The methods, symbols, and vocabulary utilized by the civil rights movement were applied to the antiapartheid struggle. Nonviolent direct action, in particular, helped

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<sup>26</sup> Gary Gerstle, American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

dramatize American entanglement with apartheid. By extending the moral logic of the civil rights movement, the antiapartheid movement was able to invoke themes of equality and freedom central to the idealistic vocabulary of American political discourse. Participation of blacks and whites in the antiapartheid movement helped to integrate the rites and practices of civic participation and protest, at once exporting American ideals while consolidating the domestic gains of the civil rights movement in the symbolic terms of American civil religion.

The notion of civil religion has been hotly contested since sociologist Robert Bellah raised the issue in his 1967 article “American Civil Religion.” Bellah contended that there are “certain common elements of religious orientation that the great majority of Americans share...this public religious dimension is expressed in a set of beliefs, symbols, and rituals that I am calling the American civil religion.” Among the key rites that exemplify civil religion for Bellah are Presidential inaugurations, Memorial Day, and the Fourth of July. Bellah proposed a periodization in which the American Revolution and Civil War mark the first and second “time of trial” watersheds that forged the terms of American civil religion. In Bellah’s view, the third time of trial – the post World War II era – was shaped by the challenge of striving toward “responsible action in a revolutionary world” where new nations are “seeking to attain many of the things, material and spiritual, that we have already attained.”<sup>27</sup>

Bellah expected new trials to change civil religion as had happened during the Revolutionary and Civil War periods. He asserted:

Out of the first and second times of trial have come...the major symbols of the American civil religion. There seems little doubt that a successful

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<sup>27</sup> Bellah, “Civil Religion In America,” 171.

negotiation of this third time of trial—the attainment of viable and coherent world order—would precipitate a major new set of symbolic forms.”<sup>28</sup>

With apartheid ended and the cold war over, it is possible to revisit Bellah’s thesis to compare history with his concerns and predictions. Did new symbols arise in the wake of the crises of the 1960s, or have Americans lost the unifying “symbolic forms” of civil religion that make possible the human progress in America’s history that Bellah emphasizes? How did America’s ascendance to global power in the post World War II era shape the development of civil religion? In what ways did Bellah’s “third time of trial” correspond with the concerns of the antiapartheid movement?

Some critics understood Bellah’s argument as advocacy for an idolatrous secular religion substituting the symbolism of government for the signs of faith. Bellah failed to persuade his detractors in part because he did not fully connect his argument to two related changes during his third “time of trial:” the symbolism that emerged from the civil rights movement reconfigured civil religion while the source of the symbols of civil religion became increasingly rooted in the realm of popular culture. Bellah’s focus on the high religion of statecraft, such as presidential pronouncements, prevented him from facing the fact that the transmission of American civil religion took place via movies, television, and popular music. While Bellah added the speeches of Martin Luther King to his list of the liturgies of civil religion,<sup>29</sup> he did not evaluate the organization of the renewed version of civil religion, nor did he fully comprehend where its congregants

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<sup>28</sup> Bellah, “Civil Religion In America,” 185.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Bellah, et.al., Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life (New York: Harper and Row, 1985).

attended services. The antiapartheid movement, in both its organizational and popular culture facets, provides the prime example of this integrated covenant.

Chapter Five is an examination of key incidents in the 1980s where antiapartheid activism contributed to the integration of American civil religion through an analysis of several key events and trends. Measures directly related to apartheid such as the activism of Jesse Jackson and Jerry Falwell, political activity that contributed to the passage of the 1986 Comprehensive Antiapartheid Act, the initiation of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, the emergence of “African American” as the preferred term for blacks in the US, and the significance of the 1990 Nelson Mandela tour of the US are evaluated in light of how each episode contributed to the evolution of multicultural politics in the US.

The American civil rights revolution produced profound social change and left unresolved social problems. In his evaluation of the significance of the upheaval of the 1960s, historian James Gilbert has speculated that the social movements of the 1930s and the 1960s each provide important lessons. Gilbert muses about the political possibilities “if the moral energy of the 1960s were ever joined to the political shrewdness of the 1930s.”<sup>30</sup> Antiapartheid activism is one key trend where these political tendencies intersected. Though the predominant political trend of the 1970s and 1980s is the rise of a renewed conservatism, the joining of pragmatism and spirit imagined by Gilbert can be seen in the work of the American antiapartheid movement, which merged international solidarity with the application of a multi-tactical nonviolence.

The process by which American activists, black and white, responded to apartheid while confronting the legacy of segregation at home contributed to the evolution of

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<sup>30</sup> James Gilbert, “New Left: Old America,” in Sohnya Sayres, et. al., The Sixties Without Apology (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 247.

multicultural politics. The key accomplishments of the antiapartheid movement, such as divestment, and government-imposed sanctions, served to heighten awareness of the connection between American foreign policy and racial politics at home. Antiapartheid activism transformed key elements of American civil religion, integrating the specific demand for racial justice with a universal embrace of liberty. Historian George Fredrickson describes the antiapartheid movement as “Birmingham and Selma on a world scale.”<sup>31</sup>

US antiapartheid activism produced a successful foreign policy dissent movement that also reflected the struggle over the definition of race in American political, social, and cultural life. At its height in the mid-1980s the antiapartheid movement represented a coming of age for a black-led movement that could influence American foreign policy and the final unified act by the civil rights coalition that cohered around the issue of apartheid. It achieved its greatest impact when it defined South Africa’s conflict in terms familiar to Americans. The development of transnational advocacy against apartheid and the evolution of a pacifist stance that supported the political goals of armed liberation movements shaped and inspired the widespread movement of the 1980s. The lasting impact of opposition to apartheid registered in the altered terms of American civil religion, which was reinforced by representations of the antiapartheid struggle popular culture. The adoption of the term African American as the preferred term for describing Americans of African descent resulted from the assertion of a Pan-African consciousness that had been raised by the South Africa issue. The significance of American

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<sup>31</sup> George Fredrickson, Black Liberation: A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in the United States and South Africa (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 276.

antiapartheid activism lies in its contribution to the ending of apartheid as well as its impact on American race relations.

For four decades, American antiapartheid activism attempted to put Martin Luther King's vision of "an international alliance of people of all nations against racism" into practice. Americans who joined the struggle merged their solidarity with those who faced "the world's worst racism" with concern that American race relations might devolve into a similar civil cataclysm. The transnational dimension of American antiapartheid activism provided impetus for the multicultural politics that sprang from the effort to realize King's global united front against racism. It also intertwined with the debate about the role of race and reconciliation in post civil rights era America.

## CHAPTER 1

### **“For the Freedom Struggle is One:” The American Committee on Africa.**

*“For the Freedom Struggle is one – Mississippi, South Africa.”*

**Mary Louise Hooper<sup>1</sup>**

The order crackled through the plane radio, “Listen carefully and note this important message. You will not be allowed to land at Strijdom Airport or any other airport in South West Africa unless all documents of crew and passengers meet all local legal requirements.” The Afrikaans accented voice from the airport in Windhoek, Namibia’s capital city, concluded “We know the reason for your mission and should you land against these instructions, you shall have to bear the consequences.”<sup>2</sup>

The pilot of the single engine plane, American David Bobman, declared, “This is a gritty situation,” and then banked the plane back toward Zambia where it had taken off several hours earlier. The passengers, who were American antiapartheid activists, began an animated conversation with the pilot about flying on toward the Windhoek. They wanted to complete the nonviolent confrontation with South Africa’s illegal occupation of Namibia that they had traveled across the ocean to commit. The pilot, who had not been informed about the group’s plan to enter Namibia without visas or South African clearance, pointed out to his passengers that he owned the plane and did not want it confiscated by the South African authorities. Duly chastened, the five activists resigned

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<sup>1</sup> ACOA Fundraising Letter, 1965, Records of the American Committee On Africa (ACOA), Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans, Microfilm, Part 2, Reel 6, Frame 470. Hereafter referred to as ACOA Records.

<sup>2</sup> George Houser, No One Can Stop the Rain: Glimpses of Africa’s Liberation Struggle (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989), 245.

themselves to the defeat of their mission and turned their attention to finding an unpaved landing strip in the desert of Botswana in order to refuel for the return trip to Lusaka, Zambia.<sup>3</sup>

The team that had come from the US in December of 1967 to challenge South Africa's continued administration of South West Africa (Namibia) reflected the provisional state of antiapartheid activism at that time. The participants – Howard University nutritionist Flemmie Kittrell, Ph.D., Quaker agricultural consultant Lyle Tatum, medical expert John Holoman, MD, economic development specialist Samuel Ashelman, and executive director of the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) George Houser – together composed the ad hoc “Committee for the Development of Independent South West Africa.”<sup>4</sup> The group had formed in response to the decision by the United Nations to declare South Africa's continued occupation of South West Africa illegal. In 1966, UN Resolution 2248 had terminated the South Africa's League of Nations Mandate, which had been taken over from Great Britain. South Africa ignored the resolution and continued its occupation.<sup>5</sup> The activists intended to enter the territory without visas in

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<sup>3</sup> Statement by The Ad Hoc Committee for the Development of an Independent South West Africa, International Affairs Division Files (IAD), 1967, 15 January 1967, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Hereafter referred to as AFSC Archives.

<sup>4</sup> The group had originally included Detroit Congressman John Conyers (D-MI) and Jim Bristol of the American Friends Service Committee; Conyers had a personal emergency that prevented him from participating and Bristol, an experienced nonviolent actionist (see Chapter Two) who had been integral to the conception and planning of the action, had suffered a heart attack during the weeks leading up to the project. IAD 1967, AFSC Archives.

<sup>5</sup> South West Africa/Namibia was granted to South Africa as a mandate by the League of Nations following WWI. South Africa maintained its occupation of Namibia until 1990. See Nigel Wordon, The Making of Modern South Africa, Third Edition (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), ix-x, 28.

order to confront South Africa's willful violation of the UN. Participants in the action had been recruited because they had medical and development expertise applicable to Namibia's needs.<sup>6</sup> The action received coverage in the Washington Post, the New York Times, The Times of Zambia, and the South African media.<sup>7</sup> The Committee wanted to ensure the validity of their project and therein delegitimize South Africa's continued occupation.<sup>8</sup>

George Houser, the coordinator of the group, linked the mile high confrontation to his involvement twenty years earlier in the original "Journey of Reconciliation." In 1947 Houser, along with fellow pacifist civil rights activist Bayard Rustin, had organized an integrated group of nonviolent activists to travel through the American South on public busses to test the willingness of the federal government to desegregate interstate travel. That action, arranged by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), drew media attention during its two week duration and provided a training ground for activists who became well known leaders in the civil rights and peace movements in later years.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Kittrell and Holoman were prominent in the black community; MLK and Andrew Young had been consulted in the early planning. IAD 1967, AFSC Archives.

<sup>7</sup> "Protest 'Fly-in' to S-W Africa Blocked," Washington Post, 7 December 1967, E1; "South Africans Foil Trip by Five," New York Times, 7 December 1967, A22; "Facing Reality Over S.W.A.," Times of Zambia, 7 December 1967; "US Group is Refused S.W.A. Rights," Cape Times, (South Africa), 7 December 1967.

<sup>8</sup> Statement by The Ad Hoc Committee for the Development of an Independent South West Africa, IAD, 15 January 1967, AFSC Archives.

<sup>9</sup> August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement 1942-1968 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 33-39.

The once-and-done action of the Committee for Development illustrates the manner and method that Houser and the ACOA pursued to spread the antiapartheid message to the American public. The delegation was deliberately interracial like the 1947 Journey of Reconciliation and subsequent 1961 Freedom Ride organized by CORE. The effort also took inspiration from antiwar activists who, in early 1967, had sailed to North Vietnam to deliver medical supplies.<sup>10</sup> Like many antiapartheid projects involving Houser and the ACOA, the confrontation in the sky showed a commitment to inter-racialism and experimental nonviolence. Houser's involvement was central, as it would be to the majority of projects in ACOA's first two and a half decades.

ACOA organized against apartheid in South Africa from its founding in 1953 until apartheid ended in 1994. Virtually alone in its antiapartheid efforts from the mid-fifties until the mid-sixties, ACOA experimented with a number of tactics and strategies. Begun by activists with connections to pacifist organizations, the civil rights movement, religious groups, and organized labor, ACOA operated from the assumption that its staff and supporters would be a racially integrated group, still an uncommon arrangement at that time. Through trial and error ACOA developed a niche from which it provided support and specialized knowledge to the antiapartheid network. By cultivating contacts in Africa, nurturing a network of activists in churches and colleges, and steadfastly representing the key aims of the South African antiapartheid movement to the US government and the media, ACOA grew into an institution crucial to the success of the US antiapartheid movement.

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<sup>10</sup> The ketch Phoenix had successfully entered Haiphong Harbor in March of 1967. See Mary Hershberger, Traveling to Vietnam: American Peace Activists and the War (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998), 116.

The formation of ACOA amid the politics of the McCarthy era influenced its trajectory, and the response of other activists to it. Because ACOA served as the longest-lived of the specialized organizations opposed to apartheid it underwent the longest evolution and endured the most criticism. Despite efforts to mobilize African-American activism, ACOA suffered criticism for being directed by whites. ACOA's progress from its time alone in the fifties and early sixties to its position as the venerable veteran of the movement in the seventies and eighties provides an important reflection of the political evolution of those who joined concern for African-American civil rights with outrage about South African apartheid. Three key questions shaped ACOA's development. How could advocates of nonviolence adapt their strategy to solidarity with the South African liberation movement? By what arrangement could ACOA involve and mobilize the African-American community to oppose apartheid? Given the strictures imposed by Cold War policies and considerations, how could ACOA foment dissent and influence American foreign policy?

The early coalition of ACOA's supporters who gravitated towards the emergence of independent Africa matured after the Sharpeville Massacre March 21, 1960. Though not always successful, ACOA experimented with different arrangements for recognizing the demands of Pan-Africanist activists and cooperating with a variety of black-led organizations. ACOA refined liberal internationalist opposition to apartheid through innovative tactics such as pressure for institutional divestment, boycotts, and stockholder resolutions. In so doing, ACOA served as a movement halfway house<sup>11</sup> on an international scale and a movement leader, cultivating specialized allies to further

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<sup>11</sup> See introduction footnotes. Aldon Morris, The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change (New York: The Free Press, 1984), 138.

antiapartheid efforts while providing information and guidance to a national network of localized activism. ACOA grew beyond the expedience of its early anti-communism to a position that emphasized the moral commitment of the civil rights movement to the corresponding struggle against apartheid, thus creating a new blend of transnational advocacy.

The history of the early years of activism in the US against apartheid in South Africa reflects the significant debate over the nature and direction of liberal internationalism during the Cold War. Opposition to apartheid in the 1950s, like civil rights activism of that decade, grew within the context of Cold War politics. Those who chose to speak out against apartheid in the 1950s and early 1960s presaged the mobilization of intellectuals, cultural celebrities, religious people, workers and students that actively rejected US intervention in Vietnam. Rather than just a dark age of consensus and quiescence, the period between the end of World War II and the rise of the Vietnam era anti-war movement can be understood as a period of creative experimentation and fluid activist identity that helps to explain the blossoming of the antiapartheid movement in the seventies and eighties. ACOA managed to cultivate action and advocacy in a time of constricted public dissent.

George Houser played an essential role in leading and developing ACOA. Born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1916, Houser, the son of Methodist missionaries, grew up in the Philippines and the US. While in college he spent a year as an exchange student in China. During the late thirties Houser worked with a group of Methodist youth activists and joined the Young Peoples Socialist League affiliated with the Socialist Party of Norman Thomas. He gained notoriety in 1940 as a member of the Union 8, a group of

Union Seminary students who refused to register for the draft.<sup>12</sup> Houser served a sentence of a year and day at Danbury Federal Prison, in Connecticut, where he helped initiate a prisoner strike in opposition to racial segregation in the penitentiary. Upon release, Houser worked for FOR and became one of the founders of CORE. Houser applied his commitment to and experience with Gandhian nonviolence to CORE's efforts to end segregation. CORE's experiments with nonviolence in the late 1940s and early 1950s established important precedents for the civil rights direct action groups that followed.<sup>13</sup>

As ACOA's executive director from 1955 through 1981, Houser's ideas and abilities shaped the organization more than any other individual. Houser's journey from draft resistance through the founding of ACOA and into transnational advocacy illuminates the developmental trajectory of American antiapartheid activism. His experience with CORE in the 1940s shaped his style of leadership and influenced the direction of ACOA. Not only did Houser play a key role in the organization from its inception until his retirement, he has also written extensively about the experience.<sup>14</sup>

CORE began in 1942 in Chicago as the Committee on Racial Equality. The Committee changed its name to Congress in 1943. As a FOR staff person, Houser worked with his FOR colleague James Farmer to initiate CORE's multifaceted approach for using Gandhian nonviolence as a way to mobilize an interracial movement to confront

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<sup>12</sup> James Tracy, Direct Action: Radical Pacifism from the Union Eight to the Chicago Seven (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Houser, Rain, 7-9.

<sup>14</sup> George M. Houser, "Human Rights and the Liberation Struggle: The Importance of Creative Tension" Africa Today, vol 39, no.4, 1992 4-18, and "Freedom's Struggle Crosses Oceans and Mountains: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Liberation Struggles in Africa and America" in Peter J. Albert and Ronald Hoffman, eds., We Shall Overcome: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Black Freedom Struggle (New York: Pantheon, 1990).

racial segregation.<sup>15</sup> The organization that took shape among seminarians and activists in Chicago evolved into a national network of CORE locals in Northern and Border States. CORE conducted the initial experiments with nonviolent direct action for civil rights that would be emulated by others in the civil rights movement beginning with the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott. Houser joined with FOR co-workers Farmer, Bayard Rustin, and others to cultivate CORE into a disciplined cadre of Gandhian nonviolent activists committed to applying the idea of satyagraha, or truth force, to defeating segregation.<sup>16</sup> Detailed to CORE by FOR leader A.J. Muste, Houser juggled his role as CORE's executive secretary from 1945 through 1955 with other duties as co-secretary with Bayard Rustin, of FOR's Racial and Industrial Department.

In 1945 Houser authored Erasing the Colorline, a pamphlet that explicated CORE's opposition to segregation and commitment to inter-racialism in all its activities. With an introduction by A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Houser's Colorline enumerated CORE's experiments with nonviolent direct action in the early 1940s. Colorline bracketed documentation of CORE's brief but lively history with an introduction and conclusion that emphasized faith in the power and practicality of nonviolence. In his forward, Randolph characterized the nonviolent direct action of CORE as "applied Christianity" and "applied democracy."<sup>17</sup> Randolph's

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<sup>15</sup> Robin Washington, "James Farmer On the Beginnings and the End of the Congress of Racial Equality 50 Years Later," Fellowship, April/May 1992, 6-18.

<sup>16</sup> The term satyagraha was coined in South Africa. Mohandas Gandhi ran a contest in the newspaper Indian Opinion to solicit a term most descriptive of his ideal for nonviolent action. See Eric Itzkin, Gandhi's Johannesburg: Birthplace of Satyagraha (Johannesburg, SA: Witwatersrand University Press, 2000), 3.

<sup>17</sup> George Houser, Erasing the Colorline (New York: Fellowship Publications, 1945), 7.

introduction presaged Houser's long relationship with the black labor leader and the importance of Randolph's participation in early antiapartheid organizing.

Houser's formulation for wiping away the "colorline" that W.E.B. Dubois had defined as "the problem of the twentieth century"<sup>18</sup> implicitly, if unintentionally, counterposed CORE's strategy to Du Bois' evolving Pan-Africanism. In its public actions and internal culture CORE emphasized inter-racialism, wherein members tried to live out the colorblind society they hoped to implement in the future. Illustrative of the dedication of CORE's members and supporters to their inter-racial ideal is James Farmer's description of his May 1949 wedding. Farmer, CORE cofounder and one of the leading African-American pacifists of the time, married Lula Peterson, a white member of CORE he had met in the course of his work as an organizer. The ceremony took place at a Manhattan ballet studio among a congregation of "more than a hundred friends of all colors, mostly socialists and pacifists, or members of New York CORE, in attire ranging from blue jeans and shorts to business suits and cocktail dress." The officiant at the humanist service, for which Peterson and Farmer had written their own vows, was an ordained Methodist minister, the Reverend George Houser.<sup>19</sup>

In the early fifties Houser began to connect his concern about segregation in the US to the struggle against apartheid. Fellow war resister Bill Sutherland, who, like Houser, had served time in prison during World War II for his refusal to cooperate with the draft, made the first connections between Houser and Bayard Rustin at FOR and the African

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<sup>18</sup> Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk, xi.

<sup>19</sup> James Farmer, Lay Bare the Heart: An Autobiography of the Civil Rights Movement (New York: New American Library, 1985), 174-175.

National Congress (ANC).<sup>20</sup> Through correspondence with ANC spokesperson Walter Sisulu and consultation with Z.K. Matthews, Houser and his FOR colleagues became supporters of the Defiance of Unjust Laws Campaign by organizing Americans for South African Resistance (AFSAR).<sup>21</sup> Matthews, President of the Eastern Cape ANC, served as Luce Visiting Professor of Theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York for the 1952-53 academic year.<sup>22</sup> During the eight months of the Campaign over 8000 South Africans were arrested in a national campaign of civil disobedience in opposition to the increasingly harsh rule of the apartheid regime.

AFSAR brought attention to the Defiance Campaign by organizing picket lines at the South African consulate in New York and raising funds in the US to support those arrested and harassed in South Africa. On April 6, 1952, when thousands in South Africa assembled to express their commitment to the launching of the Campaign, AFSAR held a rally at the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem. Addressing the assembly were Adam Clayton Powell Jr., Reverend Donald Harrington of Community Church, and Reverend Charles Trigg of Salem Methodist Church of Harlem. Also speaking, in one of his last public appearances, was the actor Canada Lee, who had recently returned from South Africa where he had acted in the film version of Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country. Lee had been the victim of anti-communist blacklisting; as a result he had publicly

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<sup>20</sup> Bill Sutherland and Matt Meyer, Guns and Gandhi in Africa: Pan African Insights on Nonviolence, Armed Struggle and Liberation in Africa (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2000), 149.

<sup>21</sup> Houser, Rain, 12, 17.

<sup>22</sup> Z.K. Matthews, Freedom for My People - The Autobiography of Z.K. Matthews: Southern Africa 1901 to 1968 (London: Rex Collings, 1981), 158.

renounced Paul Robeson as part of his strategy to obtain more work.<sup>23</sup> According to Bill Sutherland, Bayard Rustin handled organizing with the black community in Harlem.<sup>24</sup> The afternoon rally was followed by a motorcade to the South African consulate for a picket line. About 800 people attended the rally where AFSAR raised \$300 for the campaigners in South Africa.<sup>25</sup>

The Council on African Affairs (CAA) also organized support for the Defiance Campaign with a street rally in Harlem that attracted hundreds.<sup>26</sup> CAA Education Director Alphaeus Hunton, recently released from the six-month prison term he served for his contempt of court conviction, contributed a pamphlet on the Campaign titled Resistance.<sup>27</sup> CAA had contacted AFSAR's organizers about possible cooperation in support of the South African resisters but had been rebuffed. Replying for AFSAR, George Houser cited concern about CAA's identification with the Communist Party as the reason for AFSAR's refusal to join forces.<sup>28</sup> Distrust between certain members of the Council and the founders of AFSAR stretched back to the World War II years, when

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<sup>23</sup> Lee was one of the most tragic victims of the blacklist, unable to find work despite his public denunciation of Paul Robeson. He died May 10, 1952. See Victor Navasky, Naming Names (New York: Penguin, 1980), 189.

<sup>24</sup> Sutherland and Meyer, Guns and Gandhi, 149.

<sup>25</sup> Houser Rain, 14, and James H. Meriwether, Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 112.

<sup>26</sup> Meriwether, Proudly, 113.

<sup>27</sup> Dorothy Hunton, Alphaeus Hunton, The Unsung Valiant (New York: Self-published, 1986), 82.

<sup>28</sup> See Penny Von Eschen, Race Against Empire (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 143.

CAA founder Max Yergan had worked with the Communist party to wrest control of the National Negro Congress from A. Philip Randolph, prompting Randolph to resign as president of the group.<sup>29</sup> The legacy of turmoil fomented by Yergan within the CAA in 1947-48 led to resignations by many of the CAA's most prestigious members. Further, CAA's troubles with the government's 1953 decision to require CAA to register as an agent of a foreign power under the McCarran Act, also fostered mistrust among ACOA's founders, of whom many were long-time allies of Randolph.

To support and publicize the Defiance Campaign, George Houser authored Nonviolent Revolution in South Africa, published under the joint auspices of FOR, CORE, and AFSAR. The 29-page booklet, replete with an introduction by Z.K. Matthews and photos of Campaign direct actions, analyzed the effort from a pacifist perspective. Houser emphasized the connection between the ANC-led Campaign and the path-breaking nonviolent actions of Mohandas Gandhi in South Africa nearly a half century earlier. The endorsement of Gandhi's son Manilal, who lived in South Africa, imbued the Campaign with special significance for the American Gandhians.<sup>30</sup>

Recounting the successful use of nonviolent civil disobedience throughout South Africa that increased the ANC's visibility and membership, Nonviolent Revolution gave special emphasis to the efficacy of nonviolence and the involvement of Communists in the campaign. Writing in January 1953, in the midst of McCarthyism, Houser emphasized that American solidarity could help ward off Communist manipulation of the

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<sup>29</sup> David H. Anthony, "Max Yergan and South Africa: A Transatlantic Interaction," in Sidney J. Lemelle and Robin D.G. Kelley, eds., Imagining Home: Class, Culture and Nationalism in the African Diaspora (New York: Verso, 1994), 194-195.

<sup>30</sup> George Houser, Nonviolent Revolution in South Africa (New York: Fellowship Publications, 1953).

Campaign, though he did not specify how American support would do this. Houser propounded a pacifist analysis of colonialism, asserting that the Europeans in Africa clung to their imperial ways out of fear that letting down their guard would facilitate a violent end to white rule. While violent rebellions like the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya seemed to prompt an even harsher colonial backlash, in Houser's view the use of mass civil disobedience in South Africa provided a viable model for confronting colonialism in the rest of Africa. Nonviolent Revolution anticipated that the Defiance Campaign would provide inspiration for the continent, asserting, "It can only be hoped that this will be a nonviolent revolution such as the one that has begun in South Africa."<sup>31</sup>

Following the 1953 government crackdown that brought an end to the Defiance Campaign, the founders of AFSAR decided to establish their work on a more permanent basis. In May 1953 AFSAR became the American Committee on Africa (ACOA). The initial executive committee of ACOA included George Carpenter, the Africa Secretary of the National Council of Churches, James Farmer of the League For Industrial Democracy, Unitarian ministers Donald Harrington and Homer Jack, A.J. Muste of FOR, Walter Offut of the NAACP, labor leader A. Philip Randolph, Norman Thomas of the Socialist Party, Peter Weiss of the International Development Placement Association, and civil rights lawyer Conrad Lynn, who had been a participant in the Journey of Reconciliation, and George Houser.<sup>32</sup> Absent at this point was longtime Houser ally

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<sup>31</sup> Houser, Nonviolent Revolution, 7.

<sup>32</sup> Houser, Rain, 63, and Pat Farren, ed., A Way of Life: Celebrating Sustained Activism – 1991 Peace Calendar (New York: War Resisters League/New Society Publishers, 1990), August.

Bayard Rustin, who had traveled to Africa in 1952 and had proposed a program shift that would have committed FOR to an African program with himself as the key organizer.<sup>33</sup>

ACOA's founders sought to create a new political position from which to pursue their agenda regarding Africa. Historian Brenda Gayle Plummer has distinguished ACOA from the CAA, emphasizing that ACOA pursued the same pro-independence agenda as the CAA minus the "Marxist critique of imperialism." Instead of the fiery anti-colonialism of Du Bois and Robeson, the ACOA relied on "a subtle fusion of religious and humanist theory and practice" rooted in "Gandhianism and Christianity."<sup>34</sup> Joining a broad range of liberals, humanitarians and civil rights leaders united by their concern for Africa and their anti-Communism, ACOA maintained a pragmatic approach to African issues amid political changes at home and abroad. The "subtle fusion" of noncommunist liberals and religious pacifists arose in the vacuum left by the demise of the Popular Front arrangement of the CAA. Despite its explicitly anti-Communist stance regarding cooperation with the CAA, the ACOA also suffered Cold war constraints. ACOA's first director George Shepherd, who had been outspoken in support of African independence while he worked in Uganda in the early fifties, had his passport revoked without explanation for two years.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Rustin's January 1953 arrest on the charge of "lewd vagrancy," which resulted in a jail term and termination from FOR ended the possibility for this program. See John D'Emilio, Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin (New York: Free Press, 2003), 191-192.

<sup>34</sup> Brenda Gayle Plummer, A Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 233.

<sup>35</sup> George W. Shepherd, Jr., They Are Us: Fifty Years of Human Rights Advocacy (Philadelphia: Xlibris, 2003), 138-140.

The goal established at the time of ACOA's initiation was to address the absence of "Tomorrow's Continent" from "America's conscience." They reaffirmed their concern about apartheid, stating, "apartheid is not a problem of tomorrow to South Africa's ten million non-whites" while expanding their concern "from Morocco through Mau Mau to Malan." While documents for the public emphasized the positive role of the ACOA as a means to "bridge this gap between Africans and Americans...to broaden the channels of communication between Africa and America,"<sup>36</sup> internal communications show that the AFSAR veterans developed a distinct political vision. They intended for ACOA to be a link to Africa and provide education on Africa among Americans. In the evaluation of ACOA's founders these issues had not been addressed in the US except for the efforts of "the Communist-oriented Council on African Affairs."<sup>37</sup>

One obstacle to developing a credible presence in the US of advocacy for Africa was the inexperience of ACOA's founders with the continent. In his memoir Houser acknowledges that, prior to the appeals of Bill Sutherland, his only connection with South Africa had been reading Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country.<sup>38</sup> To address this limitation George Houser, in 1954, under the auspices of FOR, embarked on a six-month journey to eight colonized areas and South Africa. Houser went first to London where he met with various representatives of the independence movements as well as prominent Pan-Africanist George Padmore, who provided him with letters of introduction to Kwame

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<sup>36</sup> Draft of a Call for the Formation of the American Committee on Africa, 14 May 1953, ACOA Records, Reel 1, Frame 590.

<sup>37</sup> Initial Prospectus of the American Committee on Africa, 1954, ACOA Records, Reel 1, Frame 605.

<sup>38</sup> Houser, Rain, 10.

Nkrumah of Ghana and other leaders. Houser's excursions were circumscribed by concerns of the colonial authorities and thus he could not visit British controlled Kenya, then in the throes of the Mau-Mau rebellion. His travels in Portuguese-controlled Angola were also limited. Houser gained a wide range of impressions and contacts but his time in South Africa made the deepest impact.<sup>39</sup>

Spending about three weeks in South Africa, Houser traveled from Pretoria to Cape Town. During his sojourn he met with a number of antiapartheid activists including Arthur Blaxall, Walter Sisulu, Trevor Huddleston, Manilal Gandhi, Albert Lutuli, Oliver Tambo, Z.K. Matthews, as well as Matthews' son Joe. Traveling in areas proscribed to whites and meeting with ANC leaders like Tambo and Sisulu gave Houser a taste of the "police state atmosphere"<sup>40</sup> wrought by apartheid. During the latter part of his trip Houser suffered surveillance by undercover police who at one point detained and interrogated him. Whereas Houser's 1954 trip to the continent would be the first of many for him, the apartheid regime refused to allow Houser to visit again; he did not return to South Africa until 1990.<sup>41</sup> Houser's encounter with the wrath of the South African government started an unfriendly relationship between Pretoria and ACOA that would last until the end of apartheid.

The emergence of ACOA at the time of CAA's decline provoked short-term rivalry and long-term distrust on the part of W.E.B. Du Bois as well as those who emulated his Pan-Africanism. Du Bois, whose passport was suspended from 1952 through 1958,

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<sup>39</sup> Houser, Rain, 29-51.

<sup>40</sup> Houser, Rain, 55.

<sup>41</sup> Vincent J. Romano, "The Struggle Continues: An Interview with George Houser," Fellowship, May/June 1998, [www.fouruse.org/fellowship/fel0598-3.htm](http://www.fouruse.org/fellowship/fel0598-3.htm), (19 April 2001).

decried the demise of black predominance in academic dealings with Africa right at the moment when colonialism had begun to crumble. Politically isolated and cut-off from the civil rights organizations that had been his base for almost five decades, in 1956 Du Bois expressed anger at those he supposed might colonize the field he once commanded:

The American Committee on Africa is a right-wing organization with Christianity and some big money behind it. Naturally, it is doing some good work and publishing some facts about the present situation, but fundamentally it is reactionary ...You cannot depend on it to tell the whole African story...We have nothing in America that is at all worthwhile.”<sup>42</sup>

ACOA was not the only target of Du Bois’ frustration; he also criticized his fellow African-Americans and the emerging scholarship on Africa. Historian Philip White has cited Du Bois’s dissatisfaction with the new generation of trendsetters in the black community that came to the fore in the fifties: “This new leadership [of black businessmen, bureaucrats, and white-collar employees] had no interest in Africa. It was aggressively American. The Pan-African movement lost almost all support.” Du Bois bemoaned the lack of black involvement with African Studies, stating, “Today the American interest in Africa is almost confined to whites. African history is pursued in white institutions...while Negro authors and scholars have shied away from the subject [which earlier had been their special preserve].”<sup>43</sup>

Many among the integrated group of ACOA’s founders, such as A. Philip Randolph, had struggled with Communists and their allies in vying for leadership of the civil rights

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<sup>42</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois to Florence H. Luscomb, 22 October 1956, Du Bois Papers, as cited in Von Eschen, *Empire*, 143-144.

<sup>43</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois as cited by Philip V White “The Black American Constituency for Southern Africa 1940-1980” in Alfred O. Hero, Jr. and John Barratt, eds., The American People and South Africa: Publics, Elites, and Policymaking Processes (Lexington Mass: Lexington Books, 1981), 84-85.

movement.<sup>44</sup> Because the ACOA emerged as the key organization dealing with independent Africa and voicing opposition to apartheid at the time of CAA's dissolution there may have been a sense that ACOA, representing anticommunism, and by extension anti-Pan-Africanism, had usurped the field at the precise moment it gained importance to the US and the world. In this circumstance Du Bois and his more radical partners perceived ACOA as having colonized the concern about Africa for untrustworthy liberal purposes.

One of Du Bois' associates was also among ACOA's founders: historian Rayford Logan. Logan earned his Ph.D. in history from Harvard in 1936 and taught at Virginia Union College, Atlanta University, and Howard University. He had been associated with Pan-Africanist activities since the 1920s when he had worked as Du Bois' interpreter during the Pan African Congresses of 1921, 1923, and 1927. He had also been Du Bois' assistant on the unrealized Encyclopedia of the Negro. Logan's intellectual output included works on the League of Nations, Africa, African-Americans, and Haiti. He joined CAA in 1944 so as to be involved with other anti-colonialists and to show that "as a Liberal I would not be frightened by red-baiting."<sup>45</sup>

In the wake of the 1948 expulsion of Max Yergan from CAA by Paul Robeson and his allies, Logan withdrew from the organization along with other prominent members such as Channing Tobias, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Later that

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<sup>44</sup> Paula Pfeffer, A. Philip Randolph: Pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 39-40 and Jervis Anderson, A. Philip Randolph: A Biographical Portrait (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 239-240.

<sup>45</sup> Kenneth R. Janken, Rayford W. Logan and the Dilemma of the African-American Intellectual (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983), 189.

same year, on the request of NAACP executive secretary Walter White, Logan took over Du Bois' UN portfolio at the NAACP barely a month after White had dismissed Du Bois. While articulating an eclectic independent position for himself regarding the Cold War and Africa, Logan chose to join with the majority of civil rights activists who supported the Truman Administration's Cold War policies in order to protect gains in the domestic civil rights arena. Logan was the only major black figure to work actively with both CAA and ACOA, though Adam Clayton Powell and Channing Tobias endorsed both groups. In 1954 Logan served as ACOA's first public speaker, acted as an early liaison with the State Department, and remained identified with ACOA into the 1960s.<sup>46</sup>

The initial mandate of the Committee encompassed educational activities, particularly the production of the monthly Africa Today,<sup>47</sup> and political action, such as communicating with the State Department and registering as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) at the United Nations. Work at the UN proved to be particularly significant in the late fifties as representatives of colonized countries of Africa arrived in New York to put petitions before the international organization. ACOA provided political and practical support for the petitioners; a number of frugal future presidents and prime ministers spent the night on George and Shirley Shepherd's couch.<sup>48</sup> During the late fifties and early sixties George Houser developed contacts and relationships with the leaders of independent Africa such as Julius Nyerere of Tanganyika (which became Tanzania) and Kenneth Kaunda of Northern Rhodesia (which became Zambia). The

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<sup>46</sup> Janken, Rayford W. Logan, 189.

<sup>47</sup> Africa Today became an independent scholarly journal initially edited by George Shepherd. See Shepherd, They Are Us, 200.

<sup>48</sup> Shepherd, They Are Us, 158.

newness of the UN and its significance as a forum for the nations emerging from colonial status provided an opportunity for ACOA to be the “bridge” between Africa and the US that had been imagined at its founding.

In the wake of the Defiance Campaign, interest in South Africa from the small and insular American democratic left of the 1950s began to grow. The journal Dissent, founded in 1954,<sup>49</sup> devoted its summer 1956 issue to Africa. Among the articles included was an interview with ANC President Chief Albert Lutuli by George Houser, and an analytical article by Houser titled “Is South Africa Near Revolt?” Houser evaluated the Defiance Campaign from a Gandhian perspective, pointing out that the surge of membership that resulted from the Campaign had made the ANC “a genuine movement of mass revolt.”<sup>50</sup> Drawing on his 1954 trip to South Africa and contacts with South Africans, Houser asserted that while revolution in the near term seemed unlikely, he had sensed a foreboding on the part of all those with whom he had spoken. Houser downplayed the issue of Communist involvement with the resistance to apartheid while emphasizing the reluctance of Chief Lutuli and others in the ANC leadership to allow white membership for fear that it would be an avenue for Communist penetration of the movement.<sup>51</sup>

Dissent also published the Call issued for the 1955 Congress of the People that adopted the Freedom Charter. Z.K. Matthews, upon returning to South Africa in 1953,

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<sup>49</sup> Maurice Isserman, If I Had a Hammer: The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 89.

<sup>50</sup> George Houser, “Is South Africa Near Revolt?,” Dissent, vol. III, no. 3 (Summer 1956): 290.

<sup>51</sup> Houser, “Revolt,” 291.

proposed the process that produced the Charter in order to capitalize on the membership surge that the Defiance Campaign had produced. The eloquent appeal called upon “The People of South Africa – Black and White” to “speak together of freedom.”<sup>52</sup> Some 2,844 delegates gathered for an outdoor meeting at Kliptown, near Soweto, June 25 and 26 of 1955 to debate and ratify the Charter. Also attending the racially diverse meeting were scores of security police who interrupted the singing of the ANC anthem Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrica (God Bless Africa) in order to stop the meeting, confiscate papers and film, and check the papers of all participants.<sup>53</sup> In keeping with its anticommunist posture, Dissent published the Call a year after the adoption of the more radical and specific Freedom Charter the Call had announced. The Charter, which Dissent did not publish, demanded not only equal rights for all but also declared that “The People Shall Share in the Country’s Wealth” and “the country’s resources shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole.”<sup>54</sup> Both the government and leftists within the antiapartheid movement interpreted this broad demand as a call for socialization of the country’s mineral wealth. Dissent’s choice of the less specific Call made clear that even a little magazine of the left hesitated to imply an endorsement for the full platform of the ANC and its allies even though the antiapartheid mobilization in South Africa had produced the largest nonviolent anti-racist movement on the planet.

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<sup>52</sup> “Congress of the People,” Dissent, vol. III, no. 3 (Summer 1956): 286-287.

<sup>53</sup> Robert Kinloch Massie, Loosing the Bonds: The United States and South Africa in the Apartheid Years, (New York: Nan A. Talese/Double Day, 1998), 41-44.

<sup>54</sup> African National Congress Online Archives, The Freedom Charter, <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/charter.html>, (1 September 2003).

The Freedom Charter enshrined the principal of “black and white together equals”<sup>55</sup> as a central tenet of the ANC and its Congress Movement allies. It proved to be an ideological affront to the architects of apartheid because the leaders of the movement elevated the integrationist ideal at the very moment that the Nationalist government made separation of the races, through relocation and destruction of black townships like Sophiatown, its governing principle. Thus the Freedom Charter and its continuation of the spirit of the Defiance Campaign prompted the government to arrest 156 leaders of the congress and charge them with treason. The ensuing adjudication became known as the Treason Trial, which lasted from 1956 through 1961. During those years the trial became the primary focus of the antiapartheid movement in South Africa as well as for its supporters abroad.

The lengthy proceedings of the Treason Trial received scant attention in the US, though The New Republic published an article by Alan Paton written within the limitations imposed by the South African government.<sup>56</sup> The ACOA made an effort to bring world scrutiny to the trial by arranging for the Dean of Harvard Law School, Erwin Griswold, to be an observer. Griswold spent part of July and August observing the initial proceeding of the trial.<sup>57</sup> Upon his return he spoke to an ACOA-organized press conference at the Carnegie Endowment Center in New York. ACOA created the South Africa Defense Fund to raise money for the Treason Trial defendants in response to an appeal from South African opponents of apartheid such as Paton, as well as Anglican

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<sup>55</sup> The Freedom Charter.

<sup>56</sup> Alan Paton, “On Trial For Treason,” The New Republic, 11 November 1957, 5.

<sup>57</sup> Press Release, The South African Treason Trial, Erwin N. Griswold, ACOA Records, Part 2, Reel 9, Frame 958-960.

clerics Ambrose Reeves and Trevor Huddleston. ACOA arranged fundraising tours for Reeves and Paton.<sup>58</sup> Another important contact in South Africa was American activist Mary Louise Hooper, who mailed information to ACOA not easily available given the censorship of fear created by the South African government. After being detained by the Interior Ministry in March of 1957, Hooper fled to Rhodesia. Upon her return to the US she became ACOA's West Coast representative.<sup>59</sup>

American interest in Africa grew in the late 1950s as African states started to gain independence. In 1957 scholars initiated the African Studies Association (ASA). The State Department established a separate Bureau of African Affairs in 1958. Organizations dedicated to exposing Americans to African life and culture sprang up, such as the American Society of African Culture (AMSAC), the African American Institute (AAI), and Operation Crossroads Africa.<sup>60</sup> Within this new milieu ACOA struggled to stay afloat financially and strove to define itself ideologically. The ACOA board had chosen not to be a grass-roots organization where the entire membership voted on the policy direction of the group. Rather, it depended on a voluntary and at times fragile coalition consisting of a board whose members came from a variety of political and religious organizations and perspectives, and prestigious supporters who lent their name and reputation to the organization for purposes of publicity and legitimacy such as Eleanor Roosevelt, ACLU founder Roger Baldwin, Michigan Congressman Charles C.

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<sup>58</sup> Houser, Rain, 120-121.

<sup>59</sup> "About Mary Louise Hooper," Short biography, ACOA Records Part 2 Reel 6, Frame 992.

<sup>60</sup> White, "The Black American Constituency for Southern Africa, 1940-1980," in Hero Jr. and Barratt, eds., The American People and South Africa, 85-86.

Diggs, theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, and Martin Luther King Jr. A small professional staff performed the day-to-day work. A network of financial contributors kept the organization solvent, but just barely.<sup>61</sup>

For its first Human Rights Day action in 1957 ACOA initiated a "Declaration of Conscience Campaign" to draw American and international attention to the situation in South Africa. Martin Luther King Jr., Eleanor Roosevelt, Jackie Robinson, labor leader Walter Reuther, and Episcopal Bishop James Pike joined with an international group of prominent liberals and activists to make clear their opposition to apartheid. The Campaign, along with ACOA's support for the defendants in the Treason Trial, reinforced the enmity of the South African government toward the Committee. As a result of its activities the South African Minister for external Affairs denounced ACOA for its "decidedly pinkish tinge." The Campaign, which generated hundreds of events across the US, demanded that South Africa "honor its moral and legal obligations as a signatory to the United Nations Charter by honoring the Declaration of Human Rights."<sup>62</sup> The Human Rights Day gathering became an annual forum and fundraising event used by ACOA to bring attention to Africa, particularly South Africa.

American pacifists and liberal internationalists turned their attention to Africa in the 1950s in hopes of working with the nascent independence movements and governments. Pacifist concern for Africa grew in large part from anticipation that anti-colonial struggles would follow India's nonviolent example. Nonviolent action by Kwame

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<sup>61</sup> 1961 ACOA General Pamphlet, ACOA Records, Reel 1, Frame 376.

<sup>62</sup> "American Committee on Africa Replies to South African Government Attack on Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt," Press Release 14 December 1957, ACOA Records, Part 2, Reel 5, Frame 800-802 and Houser, Rain, 123-124.

Nkrumah's Positive Action Campaign in Gold Coast (Ghana), along with the Defiance Campaign in South Africa, raised the hopes of those in the international pacifist network that there would be an opportunity to share skills and work nonviolently to build postcolonial Africa. A.J. Muste, Bayard Rustin, Houser and other members of the ACOA board attended the 1958 Positive Action Conference in Ghana.<sup>63</sup> Houser reported in the FOR publication Fellowship that the conference call, authored by George Padmore "put emphasis on nonviolence." The conference agenda declared, "The main purpose of the conference will be to formulate concrete plans and to work out the Gandhian tactics and strategy of the African Non-Violent Revolution."<sup>64</sup> With Nkrumah's support and encouragement Rustin, Muste and other pacifists participated in a 1959 protest against French nuclear weapons testing in the Sahara that garnered international attention.<sup>65</sup> Plans for nonviolence training centers in Ghana, Zambia, and Tanzania, supported by the newly independent governments, meant to provide a venue for experienced international activists to convey their wisdom to African recruits, fell short. Despite problems of the new governments and incipient nationalism that prevented the realization of a pacifist internationalé rooted in Africa, many of the key players in the effort kept their attention focused on the continent.

The news of the March 21, 1960, Sharpeville Massacre in South Africa caused a surge of concern in the US about the increasingly violent and repressive apartheid regime.

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<sup>63</sup> Joann Ooiman Robinson, Abraham Went Out: A Biography of A.J. Muste (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 173.

<sup>64</sup> George Houser, "Pan-Africanism Enters a New Era," Fellowship, vol. 25, no. 5, 1 March 1959, 15-16, 34.

<sup>65</sup> Robinson, Muste, 171-174.

ACOA's antiapartheid efforts put it in the forefront of organizing popular response in the US to the shooting of 69 unarmed, nonviolent protesters of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) by the South African security forces. The Committee organized a public meeting at New York's Town Hall auditorium that brought together an integrated audience to express their outrage with the brutality at Sharpeville. Speakers included civil rights attorney Thurgood Marshall, Hastings Banda, who became President of Malawi, and Kenneth Kaunda, the leader of the Zambian independence movement.<sup>66</sup>

ACOA also convened an emergency conference at the end of May 1960. The gathering had initially been planned around an appearance by ANC spokesperson Oliver Tambo, but he could not attend because the State Department delayed his visa.<sup>67</sup> Instead Jackie Robinson, the first African American to play major league baseball, served as the keynote speaker, addressing an assemblage of over 300. Robinson emphasized the need for international action, comparing it to the pressure of northern supporters of the southern civil rights movement. Robinson stated:

...it is not the Negroes of the South who protest against influences in the North. Rather it is those segregationists who wish to maintain their special privileges. And so it is in South Africa too. The Africans and the other non-whites and the liberal white people who know that change must come about do not protest against the pressures from the outside, which play upon the South African situation. They welcome it and ask for it.<sup>68</sup>

The conference produced twenty-four recommendations for individuals, organizations and governments to penalize South Africa including boycott, divestment, restricted

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<sup>66</sup> Report on Sharpeville Event, 1961, ACOA Records, Part 2, Reel 2, Frame 445.

<sup>67</sup> Report on Sharpeville Event.

<sup>68</sup> Jackie Robinson, Speech to South Africa Emergency Conference, 1 June 1960, ACOA Records, Part 2, Reel 1, Frame 72-73.

contacts and exchanges, and economic sanctions.<sup>69</sup> The South Africa Emergency Conference marked the first time that American activists proposed advocacy of economic sanctions as a policy option for bringing an end to apartheid.<sup>70</sup>

In response to the uprising that followed the massacre at Sharpeville, the South African government declared the first State of Emergency, further restricting the rights of Africans and banning the PAC and ANC. Both organizations decided that nonviolence had proved insufficient in the face of state repression and organized guerilla military wings for the purpose of confronting the apartheid regime through armed struggle. Thus the ACOA and antiapartheid advocates in the US found themselves in a new and potentially difficult position. Initially attracted to the South African struggle because of the commitment to nonviolence and “non-racialism,” American advocates of the Gandhian approach had to contend with the reality that their old allies had now taken up the gun.

The ACOA, though never an explicitly pacifist organization, did not promote or endorse the use of violence. Faced with the new reality of armed struggle in South Africa after Sharpeville, a transformation that would soon consume many liberation movements across the continent, the ACOA began to advocate economic boycott and sanctions as the method by which “outsiders”<sup>71</sup> could maintain pressure on South Africa while adhering to nonviolence. ACOA’s early contact with African leaders such as Lutuli, Kaunda,

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<sup>69</sup> “24 Recommendations To Help End Apartheid in South Africa,” June 1960, ACOA Records, Part 2, Reel 1, Frame 76.

<sup>70</sup> “American Conference Urges Comprehensive Boycott of South Africa,” ACOA Press Release, 1 June 1961, ACOA Records, Part 2, Reel 11, Frame 372-73.

<sup>71</sup> Speech by Jackie Robinson.

Nyerere, and Nkrumah, all of whom had utilized nonviolence in their struggles with colonialism, dissuaded ACOA from either discounting or romanticizing armed struggle. The pacifist expectation during the fifties that Africa would provide the base for launching a practicable pacifist internationalé shifted to a focus on the application of international nonviolent pressure against apartheid.

ACOA entered the 1960s as the most experienced and credible US organization dedicated to opposing apartheid and supporting liberation throughout Africa. The turbulent years to come challenged ACOA to respond to the many changes in Africa as well as in the domestic political landscape. The choices made by the Committee followed from the precedents that the staff and board set in the early years of the group. The success of the US civil rights movement in the years following Sharpeville produced new opportunities for ACOA's antiapartheid activism. At the same time, events in the US, which gained global attention, often overshadowed the clandestine struggle in South Africa. The attraction to Africa as a new realm of political involvement that briefly united Cold War liberals with a variety of intellectuals and activists gradually dissipated as the first flush of independence began to fade.

The early interest in African independence, as represented in the board and endorsers of ACOA, had encompassed a fairly broad spectrum of liberal and leftist political figures. Elected officials such as Senator Hubert Humphrey,<sup>72</sup> Senator Edmund Muskie, Congressman Charles Diggs, and Pennsylvania Governor George Leader were publicly

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<sup>72</sup> Allard Lowenstein who served as a speechwriter and staff person in the late fifties and early sixties facilitated much of Humphrey's involvement. See William Chafe, Never Stop Running: Allard Lowenstein and the Struggle to Save American Liberalism (New York: Basis Books, 1993), 133 and Richard Cummings, The Pied Piper: Allard K. Lowenstein and the Liberal Dream (New York: Grove Press, 1986), 71-74.

associated with the Committee. Intellectuals soon to gain a radical reputation such as Immanuel Wallerstein also worked with ACOA.<sup>73</sup> By 1960 two figures central to the success of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the southern civil rights movement, Stanley Levison and Bayard Rustin, also appeared on the list of endorsers included on ACOA letterhead and literature.<sup>74</sup> The Kennedy Administration had pressured Martin Luther King to remove Levison and Rustin from any advisory positions because of past association with the Communist Party.<sup>75</sup> Their appearance among ACOA's endorsers indicates that the reflexive anti-communism of the Committee's early years had begun to ease in the wake of the first wave of African independence and the successes of the domestic civil rights movement.

A consistent internal objective for ACOA was retention of a black staff person at the executive level. For three months in 1960 C. Sumner Stone served as associate director for a short stint that ended when he was hired by the Washington Afro-American newspaper as editor.<sup>76</sup> The integrated board of ACOA conducted a persistent search to engage black staff people. The low pay and ACOA's peripheral profile proved to be an obstacle to meeting this goal. George Houser lamented this problem in his memoir, recognizing the desirability of having a black leader for the organization.<sup>77</sup> The potential

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<sup>73</sup> Shepherd, They Are Us, 157.

<sup>74</sup> ACOA Letterhead, 1960, ACOA Records, Part 2, Reel 1, Frame 90.

<sup>75</sup> David J. Garrow, The FBI and Martin Luther King: From "Solo" to Memphis (New York: Norton, 1982), Chapter 1 and D'Emilio, Lost Prophet, 346.

<sup>76</sup> Nominations for National Committee of The American Committee on Africa, May 1961, ACOA Records, Part 2, Reel 14, Frame 882.

<sup>77</sup> Houser, Rain, 267.

that mobilization of the black community could provide to antiapartheid activism prompted ACOA to pursue a number of strategies to achieve that goal.

In mid 1962 ACOA proposed to the leaders of established civil rights organizations that they form an organization through which the black community could voice its concerns regarding Africa. The American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa (ANLCA) included in its “call committee” prestigious and recognizable figures such as James Farmer of CORE, Dorothy Height of the National Council of Negro Women, Martin Luther King, Jr., of the SCLC, A. Philip Randolph of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, AFL-CIO, Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, and Whitney Young of the National Urban League. Theodore Brown, who had long served on Randolph’s staff, became the executive director of the new organization. According to Brown, approximately 100 people attended the first conference in December 1962, which passed resolutions, including a call for US sanctions on South Africa.<sup>78</sup> That same month the Call Committee of ANLCA garnered a meeting with President Kennedy in December of 1962 where they urged the President to consider imposing economic sanctions on South Africa.<sup>79</sup>

ANLCA’s style paralleled that of the SCLC by providing elite black leadership to a broader movement. The close involvement of ACOA with ANLCA’s launching drew criticism from a new generation of Pan-Africanists. The Liberation Committee for Africa (LCA), a Pan-Africanist group that had formed in 1961, expressed skepticism about the ability of ANLCA to inspire the black community to act for Africa. Reacting to the

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<sup>78</sup> Theodore Brown, interview by Robert E. Martin, transcript, 20August 1968, Moorland Spingarn Collection, Howard University, Washington, DC.

<sup>79</sup> Lewis V. Baldwin, Towards the Beloved Community: Martin Luther King, Jr., and South Africa (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press), 41.

initial call for the 1962 conference, which the LCA learned of from an announcement in Jet magazine, the September 1962 issue of the LCA magazine Liberator raised questions about the initiation of the Conference by ACOA. The LCA pointed out the difficulty that ACOA had encountered in retaining a black staff person at the executive level. The Liberator article also pointed out that of the names listed on the official ANLCA stationery only George Houser had any special expertise regarding Africa. Concerns about the lack of inclusion of Africans and blacks in the initial planning and hosting of the conference at the Arden House conference facility of Columbia University prefaced six suggestions to make ANLCA more pertinent to the concerns of “Afro-Americans.” Included in the six points was the Black Nationalist demand for discussion of “Concrete steps toward establishing direct cultural and economic ties between the people and governments of Africa and the Afro-American community, including plans for voluntary repatriation to Africa.”<sup>80</sup>

While ANLCA did not live up to the radical demands articulated in Liberator, the group did have several key accomplishments. ANLCA held conferences in 1964 and 1967, serving as the most visible expression of concern about Africa by black leaders. ANLCA also took a step toward recognizing the contribution of women to civil rights and solidarity work by including Dorothy Height among the group of leaders, thus distinguishing it from domestic civil rights coalitions of the time that focused on male leadership. In January 1965 James Farmer, representing ANLCA, toured sub-Saharan Africa, speaking in Ethiopia, Tanzania, Zambia, and Nigeria.<sup>81</sup> As an expression of

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<sup>80</sup> “The American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa,” Liberator, vol. II, no. 9, September 1962, 6-7,11.

<sup>81</sup> Farmer, Lay Bare the Heart, 230.

opposition to apartheid, as well as trepidation about the possible mistreatment of African-American sailors, ANLCA opposed provisioning US aircraft carriers at South African ports. As a result of Congressional pressure fostered by ANLCA, carriers bound for Vietnam and elsewhere were refueled at sea rather than docking at Cape Town. Also as a result of ANLCA's intervention the State Department appointed a number of African-Americans to ambassadorial posts in Africa. Despite ANLCA's modest victories, its use of "Negro" rather than black or Afro-American moored it in a particular historical moment. Although ANLCA had been conceived as a black-led organization intended to unify and mobilize concern for Africa in the black community, it never developed grass-roots support or funding.<sup>82</sup> It quickly became a relic of the civil rights movement model of the early sixties.

As the leading antiapartheid organization in the mid-sixties ACOA was in a key position to work with the emerging student movement. In 1965, attention to South Africa grew in the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). In the 1962 Port Huron Statement, its foundational document, SDS had criticized US ties to apartheid and US relations with South Africa, charging that the US "permitted economic investment to decisively affect our foreign policy: fruit in Cuba, oil in the Middle East, diamonds and gold in South Africa (with whom we trade more than with any African nation)."<sup>83</sup> In 1965 SDS, along

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<sup>82</sup> George M. Houser, "Freedom's Struggle Crosses Oceans and Mountains: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Liberation Struggles in Africa and America," in Peter J. Albert and Ronald Hoffman, We Shall Overcome: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Black Freedom Struggle (New York: Pantheon, 1990), 186-187.

<sup>83</sup> Port Huron Statement - <http://coursesa.matrix.msu.edu/~hst306/documents/huron.html> (6 August 2003).

with ACOA and the National Student Christian Federation (NESCAF),<sup>84</sup> expressed opposition to apartheid through a demonstration at Chase Manhattan Bank in New York City.

Timing their action to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre,<sup>85</sup> the demonstrators demanded that Chase end its loans to South Africa and encouraged individuals and organizations to terminate Chase accounts. Adapting the nonviolent tactics of the southern civil rights movement to an issue of international scope, the demonstrators had first pursued meetings with the bank leadership in order to make clear their demands. Under the slogan “Chase Manhattan, Partner in Apartheid”<sup>86</sup> 300-600 participated in the picket line at Chase’s Wall Street Headquarters.<sup>87</sup> Demonstrations also took place in Boston, Washington, Detroit, and San Francisco.<sup>88</sup> In Manhattan forty-four people were arrested for sitting-in at the entrance of the bank.<sup>89</sup> Chase was targeted not only for its involvement with South Africa, but because under its president David Rockefeller, Chase had projected an image of enlightened liberalism that the students

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<sup>84</sup> The NSCF became the University Christian Movement (UCM) in September 1966. See William Minter, “Action Against Apartheid,” in Bruce Douglass, Reflections on Protest (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1967), 188.

<sup>85</sup> Draft Policy for an Action Against the Chase Manhattan Bank, 1965, ACOA Records, Part 2, Reel 36, Frame 521.

<sup>86</sup> Todd Gitlin, The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage (New York: Bantam Doubleday, 1987), 179.

<sup>87</sup> Kirkpatrick Sale, SDS (New York: Random House, 1973), 182.

<sup>88</sup> Donald Culverson, Contesting Apartheid: U.S. Activism, 1960-1987 (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 45.

<sup>89</sup> Sue Reinert, “44 Arrested Protesting Chase Loans to South Africa,” Herald Tribune, (New York) 20 June 1961, 66.

believed was sorely limited.<sup>90</sup> Chase substantiated the accusations of SDS by going to court to prevent the demonstrators from even making buttons with the “Partner in Apartheid” slogan. The arrestees experienced jailhouse solidarity similar to what their counterparts in the south had undergone, singing and supporting one another. Of those arrested, seventeen pleaded not guilty and took the case to trial. All were eventually acquitted.<sup>91</sup>

SDS and other student groups invested significant energy into antiapartheid organizing. The Chase Manhattan project preceded the April 1965 March on Washington to End the War in Vietnam that brought national attention to SDS. In preparation for the action at Chase SDS had produced leaflets and a ten-page pamphlet that elucidated the connections between American business and the South African economy. Other student groups shared SDS’s concern. SNCC had sent a delegation to Africa in the fall of 1964 that included Don Harris and John Lewis, both of whom received financial support from ACOA.<sup>92</sup> In April 1965 SNCC organized a sit-in at the South African embassy in Washington, DC.<sup>93</sup> During the summer of 1965 ACOA co-sponsored a project with NSCF where several students continued research into the US investments in South Africa. The resulting documentation provided the foundation for later divestment (the sale, and thus subtraction, from a institutional portfolio of stocks of companies dong

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<sup>90</sup> Draft Policy for an Action Against the Chase Manhattan Bank.

<sup>91</sup> Arthur Waskow, “Notes on a Trial Near Wall Street,” Liberation, February 1966, 38-40.

<sup>92</sup> John Lewis with Michael D’Orso, Walking With the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1998), 294.

<sup>93</sup> Culverson, Contesting Apartheid, 45.

business in South Africa) and divestiture (withdrawal of a company from South Africa) efforts. NSCF initiated discussions with the National Council of Churches (NCC) regarding banking and investment policies of its affiliated denominations.<sup>94</sup>

ACOA closed 1965 with a large gathering at Hunter College in New York City to observe Human Rights Day. Over 3500 attendees listened to folk musician Pete Seeger and South African singer Miriam Makeba. The featured speaker was Martin Luther King, Jr. Organizer Mary Louise Hooper had been concerned that King might overstate the case for nonviolence and alienate African attendees.<sup>95</sup> But King's speech focused on the evils of apartheid as well as the obligations of black Americans in the world. King compared apartheid to Nazism, charging that South Africa's racial policies were "a recrudescence of that barbarism." Linking the struggle for civil rights in the US to the struggle for independence and freedom in Africa, King said:

In this period when the American Negro is giving moral leadership and inspiration to his own nation, he must find the resources to aid his suffering brothers in his ancestral homeland. Nor is this aid a one-way street. The civil rights movement in the United States had derived immense inspiration from the successful struggles of those Africans who have attained freedom in their own nations.

Criticizing US complicity with apartheid King lamented that "The shame of our nation is that it is objectively an ally of this monstrous government in its grim war with its own black people." Calling for sanctions and boycott as the only remaining nonviolent means for Americans and the world to gain leverage with the apartheid regime, King proclaimed

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<sup>94</sup> Minter, "Action Against Apartheid," 182-183.

<sup>95</sup> Mary Louise Hooper to George Houser, Memo, 5 November 1965, ACOA Records, Part 2, Reel 2, Frame 108.

that “No real national interest impels us to be cautious, gentle, or a good customer of a nation that offends the world’s conscience.”<sup>96</sup>

Interaction with the students of the New Left and the new generation of civil rights activists helped ACOA move beyond the parameters it had developed during the constricted political environment of the early cold war. In the latter half of the sixties ACOA increased its antiapartheid advocacy by mobilizing pressure against American banks that made loans to South Africa, initiating direct action protests against representatives of South Africa, and developing new alliances. This expansion of activity took place in the context of a new militancy among African Americans determined to apply the idea of black power at home and abroad.

During the zenith years of the civil rights movement the ideal of inter-racialism had been put to the test by direct action protests and made law by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Frustration with the limited nature of those achievements contributed to the demand for “black power,” creating conflict and confrontation between whites and blacks in many of the organizations and institutions connected to the civil rights movement. This frustration exploded after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., on April 4, 1968. While ACOA never had a black power crisis<sup>97</sup> such as those that split SNCC and roiled other groups, the new militancy did affect the choices and style of ACOA in short and long term ways. The involvement of black activists who had liberal, integrationist connections and commitments insulated ACOA

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<sup>96</sup> Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., (Address to the South Africa Benefit of the American Committee on Africa at Hunter College, New York City, 10 December, 1965) ACOA Records, Part 2, Reel 17, Frame 553.

<sup>97</sup> Houser, Rain, 267.

from much of the anger and animus that divided other organizations. At the same time, ACOA achieved only limited success in its efforts to mobilize the black community.

In the latter half of the sixties ACOA amplified its antiapartheid advocacy by mobilizing pressure against American banks making loans to South Africa. In the fall of 1966, ACOA joined with the University Christian Movement to launch the Committee of Conscience Campaign to protest the “financial and psychological support of apartheid”<sup>98</sup> by Chase Manhattan, First National City and eight other banks. Chaired by A. Philip Randolph, the Campaign demanded an end to bank loans to South Africa. The Committee garnered sponsorship from prominent public figures while mobilizing church and student groups to terminate their accounts with the banks. By the time more than 300 demonstrators gathered at the Chase and City Bank headquarters on December 9, 1966, individuals and organizations that supported the Coalition had withdrawn over \$22 million dollars.<sup>99</sup> In the course of the Campaign the United Methodist Board of Missions, the Episcopal Church, and the United Presbyterian Church all withdrew their accounts from the implicated banks. In 1967 and 1968 the Committee protested at the shareholder meetings of Chase, City Bank, and Morgan Trust, avowing that continued extension of credit to South Africa gave the apartheid regime “the confidence and wherewithal to pursue policies which are contrary to everything for which democracy stands.”<sup>100</sup> The Campaign realized an unexpected victory in 1969 when South Africa chose not to renew

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<sup>98</sup> “Committee of Conscience Against Apartheid Launches Campaign,” Press Release, 1966, ACOA Records, Part 2, Reel 4, Frame 82.

<sup>99</sup> “300 Here Protest South Africa Loans,” New York Times, 10 December 1966, A29.

<sup>100</sup> “Stockholder’s Statement urging Chase Manhattan Bank to End its Support of South African Apartheid,” 28 March 1967, ACOA Records, Part 2, Reel 4, Frame 151.

the loan. The awareness fostered among religious groups by the Campaign led to the founding of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) in 1974. A coalition of Christian and Jewish orders and organizations, ICCR replicated the tactics of the Campaign of Conscience on a broad range of social issues.<sup>101</sup>

ACOA also extended its antiapartheid activism into the realm of sports. South Africa's participation in the Olympics had been controversial because of the thoroughgoing application of apartheid to South African athletics. In apartheid-era South Africa blacks and whites did not compete against each other and blacks could not represent the country in international competition. As a result of worldwide protest the International Olympic Committee (IOC) banned South Africa from the Olympics in 1964. The South African government petitioned for re-admittance to the 1968 Mexico City games; in February of 1968 the IOC accepted South Africa's claim that sporting regulations had been modified to meet the demands that had led to the banning. But sports within the country had not been integrated. Instead, segregated competitions were arranged to produce an integrated team to be fielded in the Olympic competitions. In response most African nations as well as the Soviet Union threatened to boycott the games and the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC), led by the exiled author Dennis Brutus, worked to increase international pressure on the IOC. Eventually forty-one nations expressed their intention to boycott the Olympics in protest of South Africa's inclusion.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Susan Deford, "Challenging The Corporate Conscience: Religious Investors Gaining Clout," Washington Post, 6 June 1996, B-7.

<sup>102</sup> Amy Bass, Not the Triumph but the Struggle: The 1968 Olympics and the Making of the Black Athlete (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 161.

ACOA organized opposition to South Africa's re-instatement among American athletes. Jackie Robinson and basketball star K.C. Jones, speaking on behalf of ACOA, demanded that South Africa continue to be banned from the Olympics, stating:

If the IOC accepts South African tokenism, it will appear that international sportsmen condone South Africa's apartheid policy. To the nonwhite majority in South Africa it will be just another indication that the world is willing to compromise with the indignity of white supremacy.<sup>103</sup>

65 prominent American athletes, including Robinson, Jones, Arthur Ashe, Wilt Chamberlin, Muhammad Ali, Bill Bradley, and Jim Bouton joined with the ACOA-initiated boycott call. The IOC reversed its decision in April 1968, officially uninviting South Africa. Bouton accompanied South African soccer star Steve Mokone to the IOC meeting in Mexico City in order to lobby for the permanent exclusion of the apartheid state from international competition. Working with Dennis Brutus and South African weightlifter Chris DeBroglia, Bouton and Mokone contacted international delegates to urge them to increase the pressure on South Africa to end discrimination in all sports. Even though the lobbyists played an indirect role in the proceedings, they ran into opposition from many delegates who seemed unconcerned with apartheid. According to Bouton the members of the American delegation showed the most hostility of the officials they met. US delegate Douglas Roby accused Bouton of "being paid by the Russians" and charged that he and his compatriots were "mixed up with the commies."<sup>104</sup> Despite the unsympathetic reception from the Americans in Mexico City, ACOA

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<sup>103</sup> Statement by Jackie Robinson and K.C. Jones On Behalf of American Athletes Protesting South Africa's Readmission to the 1968 Olympic Games, ACOA Records, Part 2, Reel 2, Frame 111.

<sup>104</sup> Jim Bouton, Untitled Report on trip to Mexico City Olympics, October 1968, ACOA Records, Part 2, Reel 2, Frame 190.

continued to contest South African sports exhibitions in the United States, such as South African participation in the Davis Cup Tennis Tournament in 1978 and the tour of the Springboks rugby team in 1981. ACOA also worked to dissuade US athletes such as Muhammad Ali and Arthur Ashe from competing in South Africa.<sup>105</sup>

In another instance of transnational advocacy ACOA challenged the establishment of regular flights to the US by South Africa Airlines (SAA). In 1968 South Africa exercised its option, established by treaty in 1947, to begin flights to New York. By February 1969 SAA established regular flights to Kennedy Airport. SAA advertisements had invited “139 distinguished Americans to be among the first to fly the last ocean.”<sup>106</sup> ACOA countered the SAA campaign with newspaper ads signed by more than 160 prominent black Americans who protested the conditions facing black tourists traveling in South Africa. ACOA mobilized several hundred protesters to greet the first incoming flight at JFK on February 23, 1969. Subsequent protests were held at the Manhattan offices of SAA and in front of the Harry W. Graff advertising agency, which had signed the SAA account.

In April 1969 the House Subcommittee on African Affairs, chaired by Congressman Diggs, held a hearing on the SAA issue at which George Houser testified. Diggs initiated legislation to block SAA flights while ACOA generated petitions that were sent to the Civil Aeronautics Board. As a result the efforts of ACOA and its allies, the Graff advertising agency dropped the SAA account, The Saturday Review and The New

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<sup>105</sup> For an in depth analysis of resistance to cooperation in sports with apartheid-era South Africa see Richard Lapchick, Broken Promises: Racism in American Sports (New York: St. Martin’s/Marek), Chap. 1-8.

<sup>106</sup> Copy of South African Airlines advertisement in the New York Times, [circa January 1969] ACOA Records, Part Two Reel Nine, Frame 432.

Yorker stopped running SAA ads, and the ads that SAA did manage to place dropped mention of tourist attractions segregated by apartheid.<sup>107</sup> While the flights to South Africa continued, the campaign did succeed in countering the effort of South Africa to “propagandize thousands of innocent tourists with the pleasures of life in the parts of South Africa they are allowed to see.”<sup>108</sup> The airline issue became a point of consensus for antiapartheid sentiment around which the civil rights movement could unite during a time when unity on domestic issues had deteriorated.

In the 1970s the intensity and visibility of antiapartheid activism gradually increased as African-Americans and their allies ascended to unprecedented positions of power in business, entertainment, education and politics. Reflecting this new power, in 1969 Congressman Diggs initiated the Democratic Select Committee, composed of the nine black members of Congress. In 1971 the group became the Congressional Black Caucus with Diggs as the first chair. During this period ACOA developed a role as the organization activists relied upon to provide information and leadership in the still small realm of antiapartheid organizing. During his time at Harvard Law School Randall Robinson, who later became the leader of TransAfrica, contacted ACOA in search of information to bolster his nascent activism. In response to Robinson’s requests for information on Africa’s anti-colonial struggles ACOA “sent reams.”<sup>109</sup> By 1972 the

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<sup>107</sup>“Apparent Results of the campaign initiated by the American Committee on Africa against South African Airways and her collaborators,” Memo, 1969, ACOA Records Part 2, Reel 9, Frames 129-130.

<sup>108</sup> “South African Airways: Tell It Like It Is!” Newspaper Advertisement, ACOA Records, Part 2, Reel 9, Frame 524.

<sup>109</sup> Randall Robinson, Defending the Spirit: A Black Life in America (New York: Dutton, 1998), 64.

Washington Office on Africa (WOA), which had begun in 1967 as ACOA's Washington, DC, bureau, became an independent entity with funding from mainline Protestant churches.<sup>110</sup> New ACOA staff, including SNCC veteran Blyden Jackson, Chicago-based activist Prexy Nesbitt, and South African expatriot Jennifer Davis, who became director of research, broadened connections to local organizing while deepening ACOA's data and information regarding American economic connections to South Africa.<sup>111</sup> In 1972 William Booth, an African-American judge active in the Episcopal Church who had traveled to South Africa with a church study tour in 1971, succeeded Peter Weiss as president of ACOA.<sup>112</sup> Working with the Congressional Black Caucus and the NAACP, ACOA organized opposition to the importation of sugar from South Africa, a campaign that refined the lobbying skills of the growing network of antiapartheid activists.<sup>113</sup>

During the mid-seventies a series of political shifts in southern Africa produced new challenges and opportunities for resisting apartheid. In 1975 Angola and Mozambique gained independence from Portugal. The struggle for majority rule in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) moved from guerilla warfare toward negotiated settlement and the election of a black-led government. In South Africa in June of 1976 the student uprising that began in the black township of Soweto near Johannesburg spread across the country. Student resistance to instruction in Afrikaans inspired a new generation of South African activists who had come of age after the Sharpeville massacre and subsequent crackdown.

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<sup>110</sup> Houser, Rain, 235.

<sup>111</sup> Culverson, Contesting Apartheid, 47-48.

<sup>112</sup> Houser, Rain, 267.

<sup>113</sup> Culverson, Contesting Apartheid, 61.

The re-enlivened awareness of the crisis in South Africa spurred by the repression of the Soweto uprising and the 1977 murder by the police of Black Consciousness leader Steven Biko led to a new wave of activism in the US.

Demands for colleges and universities to divest holdings in companies doing business in South Africa were driven home by student civil disobedience resulting in over 700 arrests nation-wide during the spring of 1977.<sup>114</sup> The first divestment took place at Hampshire College that same year. Student activists had a key ally among the Hampshire trustees, long-time ACOA supporter and international activist Cora Weiss.<sup>115</sup> ACOA served the movement by providing data and analysis about corporate involvement in South Africa, as well as a staffer who served as student coordinator. Condemnation by the international community of South Africa's increasingly repressive actions gave impetus to the 1977 UN mandatory arms embargo; unlike mandatory sanctions, the arms embargo did not suffer a veto by the US, Britain, or France.<sup>116</sup> ACOA helped to focus increased concern and mobilization about apartheid by initiating the Campaign to Oppose Bank Loans to South Africa (COBLASA) under the direction of Prexy Nesbitt.<sup>117</sup>

The Carter Administration, with its emphasis on human rights as a primary goal of foreign policy, provided a greater range of opportunities for interaction with the US government regarding South Africa. Carter appointed Andrew Young to be his UN

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<sup>114</sup> David Hauck, Two Decades of Debate: The Controversy Over US Companies in South Africa (Washington, DC: Investor Responsibility Research Center), 11.

<sup>115</sup> Cora Weiss biography, Hague Appeal for Peace Website, [www.peace.ca/coraweisbio.htm](http://www.peace.ca/coraweisbio.htm), (30 August 2003).

<sup>116</sup> Hauck, Two Decades, 11.

<sup>117</sup> Houser, Rain, 350.

Ambassador. Young, a minister who had directed the SCLC and served as Congressman from Georgia, symbolized a post-Vietnam direction for foreign policy. Young's appointment presented both new possibilities and problems for ACOA and the antiapartheid movement. Young, while a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, had already shown his concern about apartheid by hosting the children of Pan-Africanist Congress leader Robert Sobukwe and providing support to them as they pursued college education in the US in the mid 70s.<sup>118</sup> He, however, held to an interpretation of nonviolence that put him at odds with those long-time antiapartheid activists who had accepted the necessity of armed struggle. Touring Southern Africa in 1977, Young made waves among blacks and whites when he met with representatives of the black community in South Africa and suggested that they mobilize nonviolent economic boycotts as he had done as a civil rights activist in the US.<sup>119</sup>

While Young urged boycotts in South Africa, he did not share ACOA's commitment to divestment and disengagement. He preferred the approach of Reverend Leon Sullivan, who encouraged American corporations to comply with a set of voluntary principles for operating in South Africa. Sullivan, a Baptist minister, had first entered the civil rights arena as a president of A. Philip Randolph's March on Washington Movement.<sup>120</sup> He then served as an assistant minister at Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem. Sullivan went on to become pastor of Zion Baptist Church in Philadelphia from 1950 through 1988. In the early 1960s Sullivan utilized an economic boycott to break down

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<sup>118</sup> Massie, Loosing the Bonds, 407.

<sup>119</sup> Massie, Loosing the Bonds, 413.

<sup>120</sup> Leon H. Sullivan, Moving Mountains: The Principles and Purposes of Leon Sullivan (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1998), 9.

discriminatory hiring practices in Philadelphia. To offset the lack of job skills of many new workers, Sullivan initiated the Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC), a jobs training program, in 1964. The OIC model eventually spread to over 140 training sites around the world. In 1971 he became the first African American to join General Motor's Board of Directors.<sup>121</sup>

Sullivan made use of his prominent position with GM to advocate a change in corporate behavior in South Africa. After traveling to South Africa in 1975, where airport police subjected him to a strip search before he departed the country, Sullivan dedicated himself to ending apartheid. In 1977 Sullivan drew up a set of principles which he urged companies doing business in South Africa to follow. The six original principles called for "non-segregation of the races" in all work facilities, "fair and equal employment practices," "equal pay" for equal work, training programs from previously excluded groups, and increased number of peoples of color in management positions. Initially there were twelve companies that adopted the principles, including IBM, Ford and GM, the American corporation with the most extensive operations in South Africa. The Carter Administration endorsed Sullivan's efforts.<sup>122</sup>

Sullivan's moderate approach to changing the apartheid regime elicited a positive response among many corporations but did not impress the established antiapartheid groups, especially ACOA. After more than a decade of advocacy for sanctions and divestment, the gradualist approach championed by Sullivan seemed too little too late to the activists at ACOA. That Sullivan, who had apprenticed with Randolph, found

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<sup>121</sup> Sullivan, Moving Mountains, Chapter 2.

<sup>122</sup> Sullivan, Moving Mountains, Chapter 8.

himself at odds with the ACOA, which had been allied with Randolph<sup>123</sup> for over twenty years, is indicative of the breadth of concern that had emerged around US relations with South Africa. With civil rights allies in key positions in government, and Carter politically indebted to the black community for their support in his narrow 1976 victory, antiapartheid activism in the late 70s grew to an unprecedented level. While suffering criticism for his moderation, Sullivan skillfully exploited the political space created by ACOA and the divestment campaign, offering a formula for reform to corporations that feared the prospect of total disengagement with South Africa.

As activism accelerated in the colleges and churches, the debate between gradualists like Young and Sullivan and those calling for total disengagement such as ACOA divided the antiapartheid community. Carter's decline in popularity, which occurred in large part because of foreign policy failures in Iran and Afghanistan, as well as the forced resignation of Andrew Young because of unauthorized contacts with the UN observer from the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), eclipsed the small successes enjoyed during Carter's first years. The emphasis on voluntary cooperation with corporate reform as the key to change in South Africa, emphasized by Young and institutionalized by the Sullivan Principles did not satisfy ACOA or the antiapartheid movement. Activists were even more outraged with the Reagan administration's South Africa policy.

"Constructive Engagement," the term coined by Undersecretary of State for Africa Chester Crocker, became the policy of the Reagan Administration as it eased constraints on trade with South Africa in order to shore up the apartheid regime as an anticommunist ally. South Africa's efforts to curry favor in the US included opening new consulates and

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<sup>123</sup> Randolph died in 1979.

initiating advertising campaigns for the Kruggerand gold coins. The new reality of a more open alliance with the apartheid regime motivated more action from ACOA and its allies. Beginning in 1981 ACOA organized a series of conferences to educate state legislators and municipal decision makers as well as students, church members, and union activists on ways to divest public monies from South Africa.<sup>124</sup> ACOA's efforts gave impetus to state and local divestment bills across the country. By 1991 at least twenty-eight states, twenty-four counties, and ninety-two cities had taken some form of action that amounted to at least \$20 billion of divestment.<sup>125</sup>

After almost thirty years of leading ACOA, George Houser retired in 1981 to be replaced by long-time research director Jennifer Davis. Davis worked with South African journalist Dumisani Kumalo to rally action for divestment.<sup>126</sup> As activism accelerated to keep pace with events in South Africa, the ACOA staff grew, making the interracial, international ideal that the organization had long upheld more of a reality among the staff and activists who did the day-to-day work. ACOA contributed support to the spring 1985 mobilization on college campuses across the country that helped foster more divestment. The achievement of the 1986 Antiapartheid Act, which levied sanctions against South Africa over Reagan's veto, marked the high watermark of public awareness and outrage over apartheid. The legislative victory proved to be Reagan's major foreign policy defeat, but did not wholly derail his administration's tilt toward the

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<sup>124</sup> Jennifer Davis, "Sanctions and Apartheid: The Economic Challenge to Discrimination," in David Cortright and George A. Lopez, Economic Sanctions: Panacea or Peacebuilding in a Post-Cold War World (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 178.

<sup>125</sup> Davis, "Sanctions," 178.

<sup>126</sup> Kumalo went on to become South Africa's first black UN Ambassador.

apartheid state. Lax enforcement of the sanctions and a veto of the UN-enforced international sanctions undermined the intent of the congressional strictures.

Despite the efforts of the Reagan administration to undermine the will of Congress, most companies were making divestiture a reality by withdrawing their operations from the country. Thus the pressure applied by the worldwide antiapartheid movement, combined with the economic dangers of investing in an unstable environment, helped to force Pretoria to respond to the demands for the dismantling of apartheid. Adding to this chorus for change was Leon Sullivan, who in June 1987 announced that his principles were no longer sufficient to the circumstances and that he now supported sanctions. Sullivan had been working behind the scenes to encourage more corporate pressure on South Africa. Sullivan essentially endorsed the agenda that the ACOA had been pressing for many years. Sullivan stated that:

Therefore, today, as the strongest possible American nonviolent protest against the continuing existence of apartheid and with the maximum nonviolent use of moral, corporate, and governmental force against that inhumane system, I call on all American companies to withdraw from the Republic of South Africa until statutory apartheid has been abolished, and Nelson Mandela has been freed, and there is a clear commitment of the vote for blacks in accordance with agreements reached with authentic and representative black south African leaders.<sup>127</sup>

The coming together of the two antiapartheid currents represented by ACOA and Reverend Sullivan marked the merger of the themes proclaimed four decades earlier by A. Philip Randolph in his endorsement of CORE. Sullivan's implementation of "applied Christianity" helped foster an entirely new realm of activism that demanded accountability for the consequences of international corporate activity. ACOA's emphasis on "applied democracy" provided activists with the tools and data to bring

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<sup>127</sup> Sullivan, Moving Mountains, 93.

about divestment through the existing avenues in government, academe, and religious organizations.

Both threads of antiapartheid activism reflected the evolution of awareness on the part of all camps that became known in South Africa as Black Consciousness. In reflecting on the death of Black Consciousness spokesperson Steven Biko, George Houser expressed the development of his own ideas about the relationship of blacks and whites in the struggle against apartheid. He said:

Biko's death was a terrible loss. I felt that what he quietly said about black consciousness was important not only for blacks but also for white people like myself to hear. So often whites who try to identify with blacks in the struggle for justice develop a kind of martyr complex or tend to think of themselves as especially anointed leaders. It is a good antidote to such a false sense of importance to be told that blacks must be in the vanguard and whites in supporting roles.<sup>128</sup>

In the four decades from the Defiance Campaign in 1953 to the election of Nelson Mandela in 1994, ACOA piloted a course that made it central to the development of the American antiapartheid movement. ACOA weathered many ups and downs while working to build concern about South Africa. Unsuccessful experiments such as the 1967 Namibia fly-in served to facilitate the take-off of more practicable and inclusive activities such as divestment and advocacy of sanctions. American antiapartheid activism in the fifties and sixties, largely inspired by ACOA, provided an important bridge between the experimental radicalism of CORE in the 1940s and the New Left and civil rights movement of the 1960s. Antiapartheid activism continued to gain momentum in the seventies and eighties, with ACOA contributing continuity and institutional memory to the effort. The success grew in sync with the mounting crisis in South Africa, and

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<sup>128</sup> Houser, Rain, 347.

resulted in good measure from the way in which ACOA had constructed the foundation on which it and others built.

When the vision of an African-led pacifist internationalé faded away after the Sharpeville Massacre, ACOA moved from support for the Gandhian struggle in South Africa to a position of solidarity with the political goals of those who advocated armed struggle against apartheid. Doing so insulated ACOA from Pan-Africanist and black power critics. ACOA's willingness to serve as a movement halfway house allowed a diverse and decentralized movement to develop. W.E.B. Du Bois's 1956 charge that ACOA was "reactionary...and not at all worthwhile"<sup>129</sup> did not prove to be accurate. As a greater diversity of organizations arose in the seventies, ACOA managed to cede some of its privilege by facilitating a division of labor in a polycentric array of national and local social movement organizations.

ACOA refined liberal internationalist opposition to apartheid by helping to launch the Washington Office on Africa and the Interfaith Coalition on Corporate Responsibility. ACOA also served as a movement leader on an international scale, cultivating specialized allies to further antiapartheid efforts while providing information and guidance to a national network of local activists. Growing beyond the expedience of its early anti-communism, ACOA took a position that extended the moral commitment of the civil rights movement to the corresponding struggle against apartheid, thus creating a new blend of transnational advocacy. A. Philip Randolph's notion of "applied democracy" grew into a wide-ranging debate on the responsibility of individuals and institutions regarding investments. ACOA's trial and error approach created a political stance that

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<sup>129</sup> Von Eschen, Empire, 143-144.

went beyond pacifist perfectionism and liberal internationalism. By merging Gandhianism and liberal Christianity, ACOA applied the ideals and the lessons of the American civil rights movement to changing American foreign policy. Because it involved as much diplomacy and education as it did direct action, adapting Gandhi's strategy to a movement on a global scale required even longer preparation and more patience than the post World War II civil rights movement.

By no means did ACOA single-handedly end apartheid. ACOA's activism did help to create the unified freedom struggle envisioned by its founders. ACOA developed a style of transnational advocacy that adapted nonviolence to the conditions of solidarity with a movement that used armed struggle. By overcoming the impulse to do for others and instead working with them, ACOA made real the definition of solidarity coined by the martyred President of Mozambique, Samora Machel: "Solidarity is not charity, but mutual aid in pursuit of shared objectives."<sup>130</sup> The experiment in solidarity that ACOA launched in 1953 achieved concrete results in the US in the 1980s. Through long experience ACOA built transnational connections between antiracist struggles, in order to make tangible the ideal that "the freedom struggle is one."<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Samora Machel as cited in Speech by President Nelson Mandela at the Commemoration of the Tenth Anniversary of the Death of President Samora Machel, 17 October 1996, ANC Online Archives, <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/Mandela/1996/sp1017.html>, (16 September 2003).

<sup>131</sup> ACOA Fundraising Letter, 1965, ACOA Records Part 2, Reel 6, Frame 470.

## CHAPTER 2

### **Liberation in One Organization: The American Friends Service Committee<sup>1</sup>**

*“Our allegiance to nonviolence does not demand from us that we shrink from taking sides.”*

**Margaret Hope Bacon<sup>2</sup>**

“We have orders to take you off this train!”<sup>3</sup> announced the policeman to three white travelers who had seated themselves in the segregated third class car of the Pretoria to Johannesburg line. Scarnell Lean, a South African Quaker, along with Lois Forrest and Ann Stever, representing the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), challenged the racial segregation of apartheid as part of a nonviolent, integrated Quaker delegation made up of four Americans and four African Friends. Forrest and Stever were Euro-American while the other members of the group, Jerry Herman and James Fletcher, were African-American. They had all boarded in Pretoria, South Africa in order to contest the racial segregation of the trains that transported the labor force of the apartheid economy. The American passengers comprised an AFSC study group that had spent three weeks investigating the status of apartheid in August of 1980 as guests of the Southern Africa Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends (SAYM). Having observed and absorbed the daily oppression of apartheid, the delegation determined that they, along with members of

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<sup>1</sup> A version of this chapter has been previously published. See David Hostetter “Liberation in One Organization: Apartheid, Nonviolence, and the Politics of the AFSC,” *Peace and Change*, vol. 27, #4, October 2002, 572-599.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Hope Bacon, “Quakers and the Struggle for Liberation,” *Friends Journal*, 1 November 1976, 550.

<sup>3</sup> Ann C. Stever, “When Quakers Encounter Apartheid,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 20 November 1980, 23.

SAYM, would commit civil disobedience by traveling in the “nonwhite” section of a Pretoria to Johannesburg train.<sup>4</sup>

First a black, then a white conductor confronted the group, telling them they were breaking the apartheid law that banned integrated travel. Meanwhile, the other passengers in the train car vocally expressed their appreciation for the small act of solidarity carried out by the Quaker representatives. At the next stop, a conductor returned with police and ordered the protesters to leave the train. Scarnell Lean replied that he and his traveling companions also had orders. When the conductor demanded that he present them, Lean confessed he could not “because they are written on our hearts.”<sup>5</sup> Jerry Herman warned the conductor that mishandling of the Friends could “create an international incident.”<sup>6</sup> After several minutes of discussion the police took Lean and Forrest by their arms and led them off the train while the rest of the group followed. The policemen presented the travelers to the South African Railway Police Commandant at the Kaalfontein station. After listening to the charges of the police and the response of the Friends, the official allowed the group to continue to travel together on the third class non-white car but implored them to inform authorities before doing it again.

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<sup>4</sup> South African Yearly Meeting Delegation Trip Report, August 1980, Peace Education Division (PED) 1980, 6, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Hereafter referred to as ASFC Archives.

<sup>5</sup> Report to Board From AFSC Delegation To Southern Africa Yearly Meeting, August 1980, PED 1980, AFSC Archives.

<sup>6</sup> Lois Forrest, “Protesting Petty Apartheid: White Riders in the Black Car,” Friends Journal, 15 April 1981, 13-15.

This small act of civil disobedience by a racially mixed affinity group did not result in arrests nor did it make many headlines.<sup>7</sup> However, it did steady the uneasy relationship of AFSC antiapartheid activists and the Quakers of the SAYM. Separated by an ocean, and by different interpretations of how the Quaker peace testimony should be applied to opposing apartheid, the two groups had labored for several years to understand each other's point of view. Debates over the direction and emphasis of AFSC's South Africa Program riled some in the organization's constituency. The ramifications of the Service Committee's involvement with civil rights and anti-Vietnam war organizing had complicated the traditional Quaker emphasis on diplomacy and reconciliation. As a result of the changes wrought by those movements, people of color became more numerous among the predominantly white AFSC staff. Most of these new employees did not hold membership in the Society of Friends and varied greatly in their personal experience of class, culture, and oppression. The changed composition of the AFSC program staff altered the links between polity and policy as the more diverse race, gender and class experiences of the staff informed the Committee's decision-making process. Accusations that the organization had strayed from its original mandate and constituency became more pronounced when non-Quaker staff did not conform to certain cultural styles and standards traditionally prized among Friends. Negative perceptions based on appearance and approach worsened when emphasis on popular education meant to mobilize mass action in support of economic sanctions and divestment appeared to eclipse traditional relief efforts and Quaker diplomacy, the methods of action favored by many long-time supporters.

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<sup>7</sup> The action elicited one sympathetic editorial in a South African newspaper. Report to Board From AFSC Delegation to Southern Africa, 6.

AFSC's South Africa Program combined a commitment to revolutionary nonviolence with the global reputation of the Committee. This mixture proved ideologically combustible when AFSC's antiapartheid work came under attack from a few Quakers in the US and South Africa as well from critical journalists. Factions within AFSC concerned about South Africa differed in their emphasis on reconciliation and liberation. Advocates of active reconciliation wanted to retain what they saw as AFSC's traditional role as a neutral broker. Those supporting nonviolent solidarity with the antiapartheid liberation movement maintained that the stark divide between oppressor and oppressed in South Africa compelled them to choose sides. Negative appraisals of AFSC's interpretation of pacifism, such as political scientist Guenter Lewy's Peace and Revolution: the Moral Crisis of American Pacifism<sup>8</sup>, fail to recognize the South Africa Program's effective blending of traditional Quaker diplomacy with popular mobilization.

AFSC's internal struggle over its South Africa Program flared around three key questions: How should first world pacifists relate to armed liberation movements? Could AFSC improve race relations within the organization while working in an anti-racist social movement? Could nonviolence be used effectively within a transnational liberation struggle? Intertwined with the evolution of AFSC's strategy regarding

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<sup>8</sup> Lewy's 1988 book, Peace and Revolution: The Moral Crisis of American Pacifism, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), accused AFSC and three other peace groups of abandoning nonviolence and siding with the Vietnamese Communists. Peace and Revolution ignited controversy among pacifists, particularly those involved with AFSC, as well as several conferences and three books. Lewy wrote before the end of apartheid, and thus his argument against AFSC is now out of sync with the turn history has taken. See Michael Cromartie, ed., Peace Betrayed? Essays on Pacifism and Politics (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1990); Chuck Fager, ed., Quaker Service at the Crossroads: American Friends, the American Friends Service Committee, and Peace and Revolution (Falls Church, Va.: Kimo Press, 1988); Kenneth M. Jensen, Kimber M Schraub, eds., Pacifism and Citizenship: Can They Coexist? (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1991).

apartheid was the Committee's critique of anti-communism, the role of its internal Third World Coalition, and the conflict that developed between AFSC and its critics. AFSC's detractors accused the Committee of departing from traditional active reconciliation and forsaking its commitment to nonviolence while AFSC's staff and supporters argued that the South Africa Program exemplified an activist application of liberation pacifism,<sup>9</sup> a hybrid position that combined nonviolent action and solidarity with liberation movements.

A new interpretation of nonviolence evolved from AFSC's internal debate over how to oppose South African apartheid. Combining the active reconciliation of Quaker diplomacy and the solidarity of liberation pacifism helped create the synergy necessary to end apartheid. The AFSC program established contacts with exiled liberation movements, provided popular education in areas of the US under-served by other national antiapartheid organizations, and successfully employed its renown to bring attention to the South African conflict. Despite the difficulties of this trans-oceanic association, AFSC contributed to antiapartheid organizing in the US, serving as a

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<sup>9</sup> Liberation Pacifism is my term for a changed understanding of nonviolence that came about as a result of experimentation pursued by Quakers and other activists in the sixties. For more background see Alice and Staughton Lynd, Liberation Theology for Quakers (Wallingford: Pendle Hill Publications, 1996) and John Richard Burkholder, "Pacifist Ethics and Pacifist Politics," in Michael Cromartie, ed., Peace Betrayed? Essays on Pacifism and Politics, (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1990). For discussion of the variety of pacifist positions and action, see Gene Sharp, "Types of Principled Nonviolence," in Gene Sharp, Gandhi as a Political Strategist (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1979), 201-234.

“movement halfway house”<sup>10</sup> that provided resources, staff, and expertise essential for a foreign policy dissent movement to function and flourish.

From its inception in 1917 as a Quaker agency committed to fostering humanitarian service and alternatives to war, AFSC had striven to apply its nonviolent vision to troubled regions of the world. AFSC had always been headquartered in downtown Philadelphia near City Hall, atop which a statue of William Penn overlooks the business district of the metropolis he founded as a Quaker utopia. The Service Committee located itself in Penn’s shadow, literally and politically, seeking to “see what love can do” in the unforgiving world of international relations. Pursuit of this non-governmental diplomacy made AFSC the source and site of conflict among Friends.<sup>11</sup> The relief work and alternative service opportunities that the Committee provided from World War I through World War II earned it the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947. Subsequent engagement with nuclear age politics brought AFSC’s political organizing efforts to the fore, though such work dates back at least as far as involvement with the Emergency Peace Campaign of the late 1930s.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> AFSC has been cited by Aldon Morris as an example of a movement halfway house. See Aldon Morris, The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change (New York: The Free Press, 1984), 138.

<sup>11</sup> See J. William Frost, “Our Deeds Carry Our Message: The Early History of the American Friends Service Committee,” Quaker History vol. 81, no. 1, (Spring 1992): 1-51.

<sup>12</sup> For background and contrasting opinions see R. Allen Smith, “The Renewal Movement: The Peace Testimony and Modern Quakerism,” Quaker History vol. 85, no. 2, (Fall 1996): 1-23, and H. Larry Ingle, “The American Friends Service Committee, 1947-1949: The Cold War’s Effect,” Peace and Change vol. 23, no.1, (1998): 27-48. Additional analysis of AFSC’s evolution is found in Peter Brock and Nigel Young, Pacifism in the Twentieth Century (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 334-345. None of these works deal with South Africa or the antiapartheid movement.

Combating racism as well as war had been a long-standing concern of AFSC. In 1963 AFSC rushed Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" into print as a pamphlet, noting that in the past many Quakers "...were imprisoned. Their actions seemed disruptive, their demands unreasonable. But today many of the freedoms for which they stood are bulwarks of our society."<sup>13</sup> The Committee's successful nomination of King for the Nobel Peace Prize had cemented its identification with the nonviolent direct action approach of the civil rights movement.<sup>14</sup> Hiring choices in the seventies, made with this identity in mind, reflected the desire to diversify the staff through aggressive affirmative action.

With the collapse of formal European colonialism in Africa, and elsewhere and the rise of American protest movements in the sixties, AFSC's international programs grew more critical of US policy. The traditional Quaker intent to minister to both sides in a conflict prompted AFSC to counter the US war in Indochina by sending medical supplies to North Vietnam and organizing a clinic in South Vietnam. Following the American defeat and withdrawal from Indochina, staff members radicalized by their experiences in the sixties sought to expand their opposition to US support for oppressive regimes around the world.

AFSC's concern about South Africa's racist apartheid system began even before the consolidation of white economic and political hegemony by the Nationalist Party in 1948. Representatives from AFSC first visited South Africa in 1932, establishing contacts

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<sup>13</sup> Martin Luther King Jr., Letter from A Birmingham Jail, with an introduction by AFSC Executive Secretary Colin W. Bell (Philadelphia: American Friend Service Committee, 1963), 2.

<sup>14</sup> Irwin Abrams, "Who Deserves the Nobel Peace Prize: How the AFSC Makes Its Nominations," Friends Journal, December 1997, 15-17.

between AFSC and South Africans, black and white.<sup>15</sup> Distinguished Quaker diplomats Douglas and Dorothy Steere visited South Africa in 1953 and 1955; they went on to serve in various volunteer capacities for the Service Committee regarding South Africa. Also in 1955 AFSC sponsored a conference at Haverford College, where Douglas Steere taught, on fostering American exchanges with South Africa. The US-South Africa Leadership Exchange Program developed from this meeting, a low-key, independent program that brought South African students to study in the US, exemplifying the kind of non-governmental diplomatic bridge-building Quakers had long practiced.<sup>16</sup> By 1957 the Service Committee had established a program with representatives in southern Africa. George and Eleanor Loft initiated and staffed this position for three years, working from Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia (now Harare, Zimbabwe). Lyle Tatum followed the Lofts as Quaker International Affairs Representative in the region, serving from 1960 through 1964.<sup>17</sup> Also working in the area from 1965 to 1967 were Jim and Dee Bristol, who

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<sup>15</sup> Margaret Jones, South Africa to AFSC, 1932, AFSC Archives.

<sup>16</sup> Informational Handout, "AFSC and Southern Africa: Some Highlights of the Past Thirty Years," 7 March 1980, PED 1980, AFSC Archives.

<sup>17</sup> Upon arrival in South Africa the Tatums met with US Ambassador to South Africa Joseph Satterthwaite, a career diplomat and life long member of the Society of Friends who, in the late 1950s, had been the First Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. In 1961, he was named U.S. ambassador to South Africa and served at the time of Nelson Mandela's August 1962 arrest. There has been an uncorroborated accusation that the CIA helped the South African security police locate Mandela, who was underground at the time. Report From Lyle Tatum on visitation with South African Friends, 27 May 1963, 4, AFSC Archives. Also see Obituary, Joseph Satterthwaite, Washington Post, 26 October 1990. Satterthwaite's analysis of the antiapartheid movement in South Africa is made clear in "Ambassador Joseph Satterthwaite, Airgram for Department of State, 'US Overseas Internal Defense Policy—South Africa,' 18 December 1962," in Kenneth Mokoena, ed., South Africa and the United States: The Declassified History (New York: The New Press, 1993), 195-197. Also see Thomas Borstelmann, "Hedging Our Bets and Buying Time: John Kennedy and Racial Revolutions in the American South and Southern Africa," Diplomatic History, vol. 24, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 461, n. 123.

labored in Zambia to foster a nonviolent component to the liberation struggles of that period.<sup>18</sup>

During this time AFSC initiated its own actions in the US regarding apartheid. In 1965 the New York Metropolitan Regional office began a dialogue with Chase Manhattan Bank, where AFSC kept its account, regarding its investment strategy in South Africa. Proceeding from the assumptions of traditional Quaker diplomacy, the New York office arranged meetings with Chase Manhattan in order to see if Friendly persuasion could bring about a change in Chase's approach to South Africa. It did not, and thus after several years of meetings, correspondence and internal deliberation on the issue, AFSC informed Chase of its displeasure with the bank's loans to South Africa and closed its account. AFSC's action prompted a response from Chase president David Rockefeller. In his letter he politely defended the bank's role in South Africa as "the most effective way to achieve mutual understanding and social progress for all." Rockefeller added a more pointed hand-written postscript: "As one who has frequently contributed to the works of the American Friends Service Committee in the past you can imagine that I particularly regret your decision."<sup>19</sup>

By questioning American economic entanglement with South Africa AFSC risked being charged with favoring Soviet dominance in the region. AFSC had been the target of such allegations since the twenties and thus had a special awareness of the domestic impact of anti-communism. In 1969 AFSC's Peace Education Division published

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<sup>18</sup> Informational Handout "AFSC and Southern Africa: Some Highlights of the Past Thirty Years," PED 1980, AFSC Archives.

<sup>19</sup> David Rockefeller to George Rubin, Chairman, AFSC New York Metropolitan Branch, 22 January 1969, General Administration 1969, AFSC Archives.

Anatomy of Anti-Communism. Authored by a committee of eight academics and activists including Jim Bristol, the report elaborated a vision of American foreign policy that looked beyond the Manichean dichotomy of the Cold War. The authors argued that reflexive anti-communism had led the US into the Vietnam debacle and allied America to repressive and undemocratic regimes around the world based solely on their opposition to communism rather than whether they supported democracy and human rights. The report asserted that “the need now is not to ‘stop Communism’ – or to go on trying in vain to do so by military means – but to see the good in it as well as the bad and to see the failures of capitalism, even of enlightened capitalism, as we now see the good.”<sup>20</sup> Calling for the US to provide credible moral leadership to match its economic and military prowess, Anatomy declared that:

If the denial of individual liberty, which we profess so disturbs us about Communist government, is really a concern of ours, then we should show a similar concern when non-Communist governments reveal a lack of sensitivity toward those who differ politically or racially from those in power.<sup>21</sup>

The report advocated bringing “economic pressure” to bear on “repressive nations to move them toward greater freedom.”<sup>22</sup> Reiterating the call of the African National Congress (ANC) and the global movement against apartheid, the AFSC authors called for economic sanctions against South Africa in order to “avert what can become the greatest African tragedy of our time.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> American Friends Service Committee, Anatomy of Anti-Communism (New York: Hill and Wang, 1969), vi.

<sup>21</sup> AFSC, Anatomy, 126.

<sup>22</sup> AFSC, Anatomy, 126.

<sup>23</sup> AFSC, Anatomy, 127.

Efforts by American Quakers to address the suffering brought on by the apartheid regime and its counterparts had begun in the late fifties. AFSC provided funds, material and expertise for several housing and agricultural development projects in southern Africa; funds for South Africa were channeled through the Friends Service Council, the British counterpart that had shared the 1947 Nobel Prize with AFSC. Out of this experience developed inquiry and planning for an expanded AFSC South Africa Program. In 1972 Lyle and Flo Tatum traveled to Africa and England to make personal contacts and explore program ideas and possibilities.

By 1974 the AFSC Board created the Southern Africa Representative Program as part of its International Division and hired Bill Sutherland to be the first person to serve in this capacity. Sutherland, an African-American, served several years in prison as a WWII conscientious objector and then worked with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). He had actively opposed apartheid since participating in the American effort to support the 1952 Defiance campaign, the nonviolent general strike led by the ANC and Nelson Mandela. He began living and working in Africa in 1953.<sup>24</sup> His AFSC responsibilities included the cultivation of contacts with South African liberation movements then in exile, transmitting news to AFSC for use in education programs, and conducting speaking tours in the US. He also participated in diplomatic efforts such as a Quaker delegation to a conference in Geneva, Switzerland, regarding the end of white rule in Rhodesia; Sutherland expressed frustration with the patronizing attitudes of some white Quakers towards himself and African delegates. While Sutherland “considered himself an

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<sup>24</sup> Bill Sutherland and Matt Meyer, Guns and Gandhi in Africa: Pan African Insights on Nonviolence, Armed Struggle and Liberation in Africa (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2000), 4-5.

advocate for genuine Zimbabwean liberation” he felt that other Quaker representatives “put reconciliation ahead of advocacy.”<sup>25</sup> Sutherland divided his time each year between the US and Southern Africa, where he maintained an office, first in Lusaka, Zambia and then in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania.

In 1976 AFSC inaugurated the South Africa Program of the Peace Education Division as the domestic component of its antiapartheid work. Staff members Lyle Tatum, former Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) activist Michael Simmons, exiled South African Peter 'Molotsi and Jim Bristol worked to support and amplify Sutherland's efforts in Africa through AFSC's offices in the US. The implementation of the program came at a time when AFSC's opposition to the US war in Vietnam had stimulated an internal reevaluation of the Committee's goals and methods. Solidarity with the Vietnamese who bore the brunt of US-sponsored aggression had rendered the traditional emphasis on the alleviation of suffering and Quaker diplomacy insufficient in the minds of many staffers and their allies. In the case of South Africa, the South African government prevented relief activities by groups that supported sanctions.

AFSC's search for the means to show support for the aspirations of liberation movements while maintaining its commitment to nonviolence proved arduous. Committee veteran Jim Bristol contributed his decades of experience and acumen to this process via several important articles. Bristol's pacifist credentials included an eighteen-month stint in prison for refusing to serve in WWII and service as a guide and advisor to

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<sup>25</sup> Memorandum from David Sogge re: Bill Sutherland in Geneva, 23 February 1977, International Division (ID) 1977, 2, AFSC Archives.

Martin Luther and Coretta Scott King during their 1959 pilgrimage to India.<sup>26</sup> He combined these experiences with the intelligence he had gathered while assigned to southern Africa to formulate a new pacifist rationale applicable to AFSC's South Africa Program and other third world commitments. Bristol's "Nonviolence, Not First for Export" provided the most succinct and significant argument for liberation pacifism. First published in 1972 as an article in the pacifist journal Gandhi Marg, AFSC reproduced and distributed it as a pamphlet throughout the seventies.<sup>27</sup>

"Not First for Export" shrewdly described and predicted the situation faced by first world pacifists in the post-Vietnam War era. Bristol began by stating "basic revolution is required in widespread areas of the world," and proposed to "overthrow such enemies of mankind as illiteracy, poverty, ill-health, economic disparity, and political injustice"<sup>28</sup> nonviolently. Citing Gandhi and King, he advocated revolution built on "nonviolent action...including such overt efforts (when strategy demands them) as obstructing access to buildings, disrupting traffic, and blocking the shipment of goods." Bristol emphasized his own principled, strategic preference for liberation by nonviolent means, contrasting the positive discipline of the nonviolent revolutionary with the likelihood that violent revolution leaves the freedom fighter "ill-equipped by his violence to carry out the

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<sup>26</sup> Obituary for James E. Bristol, New York Times, 28 October 1992, Section D, Page 21. AFSC, along with the Fellowship of Reconciliation, sponsored the King's India trip. See Taylor Branch, Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-63 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 251.

<sup>27</sup> James E. Bristol, "Nonviolence, Not First for Export," Gandhi Marg vol. 16, 1972.

<sup>28</sup> Bristol, "Not First for Export," 266.

constructive aspects of revolution.”<sup>29</sup> “Nonviolence, Not First For Export” underscored the connection between means and ends:

Cannot we envisage the tremendous advantages that would be ours if we sought, not to permit an unjust status quo to remain dominant over the lives of millions of people, but to shake that status quo to its very roots, and finally to dismantle it by methods that would respect the lives and worth even of oppressors and their cohorts?<sup>30</sup>

Drawing on his own encounters in the region, Bristol used apartheid as the example that most clearly illustrated the moral quandary of the first world nonviolent revolutionary. He stressed the need for nonviolent social change programs while acknowledging that American activists must “enter fully into the dilemma of the oppressed” if they hoped to choose valid and effective tactics. Bristol emphasized that the 1960 massacre at Sharpeville, South Africa, where police killed at least 69 peaceful demonstrators, “convinced the Africans that the forces they confront will not yield to campaigns of nonviolent resistance.”<sup>31</sup> He noted that “the dispossessed people of the world believe, as most people have always believed, that only armed violence can gain both liberation from oppression and freedom from hunger and want.”<sup>32</sup> He pointed out that many Americans glorified the Revolutionary War and the Civil War on just such grounds.

Bristol cited Nelson Mandela’s explanation of the ANC’s move to armed struggle as an example of why liberation movements had turned to “counter-violence” in their

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<sup>29</sup> Bristol, “Not First for Export,” 267.

<sup>30</sup> Bristol, “Not First for Export,” 269.

<sup>31</sup> Bristol, “Not First for Export,” 272.

<sup>32</sup> Bristol, “Not First for Export,” 272.

confrontation with violent oppressors. Following the massacre at Sharpeville, Mandela and the ANC leadership concluded that because violence seemed “inevitable” they could not “continue preaching peace and nonviolence at a time when the government met our peaceful demands with force.”<sup>33</sup> The Quaker activist made clear that he was explaining, not condoning, the choice of armed struggle by the ANC. He continued by advising pacifists that, “We cannot prescribe for people in a situation totally different from our own, no matter how sincerely we may believe that we can see a better way for waging a revolutionary struggle than the one they have chosen.”<sup>34</sup> Bristol underscored his belief that first world pacifists supporting third world liberation movements acted from a position of economic and political privilege, and therefore must not urge those facing the “grinding oppression” of apartheid to turn the other cheek, even when they themselves felt compelled to do so. Bristol argued that white pacifists could not urge nonviolence on black South Africans because they were “an integral part of the very white status quo against which the Africans are rebelling.” To drive the point home he asked, “just how arrogant and how presumptuous can white western pacifists be?”<sup>35</sup>

In answer to the query ‘what should western pacifists do?’ Bristol remained consistent with his commitment to nonviolence. He posited, “nonviolence begins at home” and urged American opponents of apartheid to focus their energies upon the corporations and the government that he labeled “the accomplices of the oppressors.” Urging his fellow pacifists to recognize that revolution “is needed first and foremost in the United States”

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<sup>33</sup> Nelson Mandela as cited by Bristol, “Not First for Export,” 272.

<sup>34</sup> Bristol, “Not First for Export,” 273.

<sup>35</sup> Bristol, “Not First for Export,” 273.

Bristol hoped they would “make the necessary sacrifices in income and...run the risks attendant upon the reordering of our society.”<sup>36</sup> The article closed by reiterating Bristol’s thesis: “It is up to the Latin Americans and the Africans to decide how they will wage their struggle for freedom. We cannot decide for them. Certainly we dare not judge the morality of their choice.”<sup>37</sup> He counseled his allies to focus on living simply and creating social change in the United States as the most effective way to show solidarity with third world liberation struggles.

Bristol’s article aroused interested opposition from others concerned with the application of nonviolence in South Africa. Gene Sharp, author of numerous works on nonviolent action, responded to Bristol’s ideas in a July 1975 letter. Sharp criticized Bristol’s argument, questioning its soundness and applicability because it stressed “moral commitment to nonviolence as a principled witness against evil” but “neglected really serious exploration of nonviolent struggle for use by ordinary people.”<sup>38</sup> Though Bristol had traveled to southern Africa to study the possibilities of encouraging nonviolent action, Sharp saw the AFSC activist’s analysis as “a retreat into personal beliefs and a withdrawal from the attempt to extend the role of nonviolent struggle in politics.”<sup>39</sup> He characterized Bristol’s advice as a recommendation for activists to merely “witness and resist, and not to replace and get rid of the violence.”<sup>40</sup> Sharp, the path-breaking

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<sup>36</sup> Bristol, “Not First for Export,” 277

<sup>37</sup> Bristol, “Not First for Export,” 277.

<sup>38</sup> Gene Sharp to Bill Rose, cc. Jim Bristol, 11 July 1975, PED 1975, AFSC Archives.

<sup>39</sup> Gene Sharp to Bill Rose, cc. Jim Bristol, 11 July 1975, PED 1975, AFSC Archives.

<sup>40</sup> Gene Sharp to Bill Rose, cc. Jim Bristol, 11 July 1975, PED 1975, AFSC Archives.

taxonomist of nonviolence, endorsed practical tactics over symbolic witness but failed to prescribe any specific action for American activists beyond providing more case studies for third world liberationists.<sup>41</sup>

“Nonviolence, Not First for Export” also stimulated discussion among Friends. Quaker author Margaret Hope Bacon, who wrote for AFSC’s Information Services Division, presented her argument regarding “Quakers and the Struggle for Liberation” in the November 1976 Friends Journal. Bacon, who had visited South Africa in 1964, wrote in the wake of the Soweto uprising that had convulsed black townships throughout South Africa during the latter half of 1976. She evaluated the failure of the international community to rebuke the apartheid regime following the 1960 Sharpeville tragedy. Bacon asserted that “the weapons of nonviolence - sanctions and shunning - were not employed”<sup>42</sup> and therefore South Africa’s racists weathered international condemnation while consolidating their power over the black majority. Citing abolitionist Quakers such as John Woolman and Lucretia Mott, Bacon urged Friends to “free themselves from complicity” and to “exert moral pressure”<sup>43</sup> by boycotting the products of corporations doing business in South Africa. She also invoked an observation of an AFSC icon, Haverford professor Henry Cadbury, who had served the Committee for many decades. Cadbury had postulated “sometimes we Quakers need to act in order to know what we

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<sup>41</sup> Gene Sharp to Bill Rose, cc. Jim Bristol, 11 July 1975, PED 1975, AFSC Archives.

<sup>42</sup> Bacon, “Liberation,” 584.

<sup>43</sup> Bacon, “Liberation,” 549.

believe.’”<sup>44</sup> Echoing Bristol’s call for intentional downward economic mobility as a personal, daily Quaker witness against apartheid, she forthrightly pronounced, “Our allegiance to nonviolence does not demand from us that we shrink from taking sides.”<sup>45</sup>

To consolidate and build upon its new agenda the South Africa Program undertook a study tour of southern Africa in August of 1977. Ten staffers, including Bill Sutherland, and six board and sub-committee members from around the US traveled to Kenya, Zambia, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Botswana to meet with representatives of the exiled South African liberation movements as well as government leaders in the host nations. Six of the participants belonged to the Society of Friends. The majority of the tour participants were people of color and members of AFSC’s Third World Coalition (TWC).

The TWC began as an informal internal network of people of color working for AFSC. Members identified themselves as part of the Third World global majority. Most of the TWC’s constituents had been hired as program staff in the late sixties and seventies. In 1971 AFSC’s Board officially recognized the TWC as a caucus and included it in AFSC’s complicated decision-making structure. The Coalition held retreats, produced a newsletter and served as a stimulus to AFSC’s efforts to bring its programs and employee relations in line with its stated commitments to civil rights and a thoroughgoing anti-racism. Many TWC staffers had come in contact with AFSC via its involvement in the civil rights movement. They sought to employ their collective experience of racism, both within AFSC and in society at large, by transforming the

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<sup>44</sup> Bacon, “Liberation,” 549. Bacon later wrote a biography of Cadbury, Let This Life Speak: The Legacy of Henry Joel Cadbury (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987).

<sup>45</sup> Bacon, “Liberation,” 550.

Committee's culture to make it congruent with the programs for racial justice they sought to implement.<sup>46</sup> According to Bronson Clark, who served as AFSC's Executive Secretary at the time of the TWC's founding, the formal inclusion of diverse voices in the Committee's policy process helped AFSC avert the divisions and schisms that plagued its peace movement counterparts during the Vietnam era.<sup>47</sup>

The presence of more people of color on the staff brought new perspectives and created new conflicts for AFSC. The TWC propounded an analysis of apartheid that connected the South African situation to US involvement in Indochina. Arguing that "South Africa will be the Vietnam of the 70's" Michael Simmons and other TWC members recommended that AFSC advocate three emphases in all of its South Africa oriented work: "beyond majority rule; worker and community perspective; and total American withdrawal."<sup>48</sup> These recommendations, after being vetted and translated into "Quakerese," became the basic demands of the South Africa Program aimed at the US government and American corporations. AFSC literature urged the US to pressure the South African government to make a rapid transition to majority rule, opposed overt or covert military involvement or sales in the region, and demanded withdrawal of economic interests in white ruled Rhodesia and South Africa.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Third World Coalition, AFSC Online Archives, [www.afsc.org/pdesc/rb009.htm](http://www.afsc.org/pdesc/rb009.htm), (16 March, 2000).

<sup>47</sup> Bronson P. Clark, Not By Might: A Viet Nam Memoir (Glastonbury, CT: Chapel Rock Publishers, 1997), 180-181.

<sup>48</sup> Third World Coalition Working Paper by Southern Africa Task Force, January 1977, PED 1977, AFSC Archives.

<sup>49</sup> AFSC Brochure, "Southern Africa Program Bridges Two Continents," (ID) 1977, AFSC Archives.

During the 1977 study tour, the AFSC delegation participated in an impassioned interchange with a gathering of Friends from Africa and Britain in Botswana. Under the auspices of the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), a body intended to enhance communication among Friends, the Quakers held a workshop on nonviolence in Botswana's capital Gaborone. Friends from South Africa dominated the small conclave. While at this conference many of the AFSC staff had their first encounter with the most aggressive spokesperson of the Southern Africa Yearly Meeting, Dr. Hendrik W. van der Merwe. The recently convinced Friend combined the zeal of a convert with academic expertise and knowledge of the Afrikaner community into his interpretation of the proper Quaker way to nonviolently oppose apartheid.<sup>50</sup>

There had been disagreements and difficulties in AFSC's relationship with South African Friends since the Committee initiated its southern Africa work in the late fifties. The Southern Africa Yearly Meeting comprised a geographically scattered and overwhelmingly white group of around one hundred members, with meetings in Botswana, Rhodesia, Zambia, and South Africa. Almost all of the South African Friends were of British ancestry (the total membership of SAYM was less than the number of people employed by AFSC). Van der Merwe, one of the few Afrikaners in the group, had first come into contact with Friends while pursuing graduate studies in the US in the early sixties. After several years of contact with Capetown Quakers, he left the Dutch Reformed Church and officially joined the Friends in 1975. Van der Merwe, trained as a sociologist at UCLA, oversaw the Centre for Intergroup Studies at the University of

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<sup>50</sup> Response of Participants in Seminar on Non-violence at Gaborone to Discussions with AFSC Study Group, 11 August 1977, PED 1977, AFSC Archives.

Capetown, an academic institute that taught conflict resolution skills. He claimed expertise as a mediator.<sup>51</sup>

His impact on the AFSC study tour proved anything but conciliatory. Retaining his academic formality, he presented papers regarding the situation in South Africa and drew up a statement critical of AFSC's support for sanctions and what he viewed as the committee's endorsement of armed struggle. The statement noted the opposition of South African Friends to "those elements" advocating "new socio-economic systems in terms of certain ideological commitments in which there will be no individual freedom." The South African Quakers also condemned "the violence of liberation wars and the institutional violence of oppressive regimes in minority and majority ruled countries. Van der Merwe's definition of nonviolence emphasized active reconciliation facilitated by neutral mediators. He saw the measures propounded by AFSC, such as divestment and boycott, as coercive forms of "institutional violence...aimed at destroying the South African economy and thereby the power off the White regime, without any accompanying efforts to provide for constructive measures for the future." The pronouncement of the South African Friends characterized AFSC's program as being "largely of a negative nature." Van der Merwe urged those outside of south Africa to be wary of "the extreme militant and military movements and exile groups who do not represent the blacks with the country of their origin" implying that the AFSC had been overly influenced by the positions of the exiled liberation groups such as the ANC<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Vinton Deming, "Preparing the Table: An Interview with Hendrik W. van der Merwe," Friends Journal, April 1997, 9-14.

<sup>52</sup> Response of Participants in Seminar of Non-violence at Gaborone to Discussions with AFSC Study Group, 11 August 1977, PED 1980, AFSC Archives. The ANC had made common cause with the predominantly white South African Communist Party (SACP) at

In addition to his stiff, scholarly criticism of the AFSC delegation, van der Merwe initiated the request for a session restricted to SAYM representatives and the Quaker members of the AFSC delegation for purposes of achieving a Friendlier sharing of views. This request resulted in the exclusion of all the TWC participants, further inflaming the AFSC staff's distrust of the white South African Friends. The study tour reported to the AFSC Board that "South African Friends never mentioned the giving up of white privilege" and that "South African Friends do not see themselves as part of the problem."<sup>53</sup>

The delegation returned from Africa angered by the patronizing attitude of South African Friends, spurring them to apply their experiences in Africa to ending US entanglement with apartheid. Conflict with van der Merwe continued because he misconstrued AFSC as a funding agency and announced to a number of South African community organizations that they should apply for grants. News of the death of black consciousness leader Steve Biko briefly overshadowed the friction with Friends in South Africa because they all respected Biko and mourned his appalling murder by torture at the hands of the South African police. Hendrik van der Merwe had initiated a dialogue with Biko, who in turn respected the Friends. In 1978 AFSC, utilizing its privilege as a past recipient, posthumously nominated Biko for the Nobel Peace Prize.<sup>54</sup>

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the time of the Defiance Campaign and relied on the alliance for obtaining ordnance and military training. For more on the ANC-SACP alliance, see Nigel Worden, The Making of Modern South Africa, 3rd ed., Historical Association Studies (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000).

<sup>53</sup> Minutes of AFSC Board of Directors Meeting, 24 September 1977, PED 1977, AFSC Archives.

<sup>54</sup> Jeanne Newman to David Sogge, 2 February 1978, ID 1978, AFSC Archives.

Building on the momentum of the visit to South Africa, Program Director Michael Simmons proposed that AFSC organize a South Africa Summer project for 1978.<sup>55</sup> The project aimed to facilitate popular education about apartheid by joining the work of staff with the contributions of college and high school age volunteers at AFSC regional offices. In ten cities around the US, approximately forty South Africa Summer volunteers, many of them African-American youth, worked to end loans from US banks to South Africa and called for a ban on the sale of South African Krugerrand gold coins. To further these demands the staff and volunteers held workshops, showed films, organized demonstrations, and mounted a theatrical production. Bill Sutherland's summer speaking tour served as an organizing focus for many gatherings and events. Overall, those involved with the project deemed it a success, though it drew criticism from a few Quakers who felt uneasy about the militancy of some of the staff and volunteers. In Chicago, the project with the highest youth involvement, the Friends Meeting barred the volunteers, mostly African-American youth, from eating lunch in the Meeting House.<sup>56</sup>

Hendrik van der Merwe exacerbated his problematic relationship with AFSC through his participation in South Africa Summer. During a visit to the US he accompanied a delegation in Chicago on a visit to Continental Bank of Illinois to explain AFSC's opposition to further loans to the apartheid regime. Rather than support the Committee's position or stand aside in quiet disagreement, van der Merwe interjected his personal

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<sup>55</sup> Michael Simmons to Southern Africa Task Force of TWC Re: Proposed Trip to Frontline States, PED 1977, AFSC Archives.

<sup>56</sup> Michael Simmons, AFSC Third World Coalition, Oral History Interview #509, 2 December 1991: 34.

opinion, denouncing South Africa Summer's demands as a "propaganda campaign against South Africa."<sup>57</sup> Chicago staff person Mary Ann Corley reported to the Philadelphia headquarters that she would not have invited van der Merwe to participate had she known that he would jeopardize the effort she had invested into arranging the meeting.<sup>58</sup>

To culminate South Africa Summer in August 1978, AFSC announced that it had sold \$1.3 million worth of Committee-owned stock in American corporations with operations in South Africa. The decision came after an AFSC-initiated dialogue with fifteen companies. Three firms met with AFSC representatives and five others corresponded with the Committee; all claimed to be moving toward equitable wages and nondiscriminatory work sites. Executive Secretary Louis Schneider disagreed with the incremental approach, stating, "We don't think anyone should be making profit from apartheid."<sup>59</sup>

The attention garnered by the South Africa Summer project and van der Merwe's criticism of AFSC fueled a sense of unease among some US Friends that had been smoldering since the end of the Vietnam War. Even prior to the Friendly fracas in Botswana, prominent Quaker economist Kenneth Boulding had sought to change the perspective of AFSC's Philadelphia staff regarding their solidarity with liberation struggles. The eclectic economist, who had helped initiate the Vietnam teach-in

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<sup>57</sup> Mary Ann Corley to South Africa Summer Project Staff regarding "South Africa Friends," 17 July 1978, PED 1978, AFSC Archives.

<sup>58</sup> Mary Ann Corley to South Africa Summer Project Staff.

<sup>59</sup> AFSC Divestment Press Release, 4 September 1978, PED 1978, AFSC Archives.

movement, was well-known among Friends.<sup>60</sup> He espoused the view that Quakers should exercise a preferential option for capitalist states. Boulding criticized AFSC's opposition to a 1976 petition that called on the new government of Vietnam to end human rights abuses. He held a one-person vigil at AFSC headquarters on January 31, 1977, to protest what he perceived as the Committee's departure "from the light of the Gospel and of science."<sup>61</sup> Joining other critics of AFSC publications and positions, Boulding accused the Committee of falling prey to "half-baked marxism (*sic*)."<sup>62</sup> Blending his version of pacifism with anti-communism, Boulding adamantly opposed the fully cooked variety of Marxism as well. Claiming to be attuned to "the beguiling flutes of freedom," he feared that AFSC heard only "the militant trumpets of justice."<sup>63</sup> Boulding felt he had failed to persuade AFSC, and that the Committee had gone the way of some Friends colleges that had become Quaker in name only.

Boulding joined with a small group of Quaker allies at the 1978 Friends General Conference (FGC) gathering in Ithaca, New York, to make suggestions to AFSC about the policies and programs of the Committee. The group, which included several Quaker critics of AFSC's staff, recommended that a special committee of Friends review the South Africa Program. The Ithaca group wanted to focus on the South Africa Program because it seemed likely that it would remain a long-term emphasis. It also happened that

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<sup>60</sup> Obituary for Kenneth Boulding by Richard Falk, The Independent (London), 13 April 1993, 20.

<sup>61</sup> Kenneth Boulding as cited by Guenter Lewy, Peace and Revolution, 127.

<sup>62</sup> Lewy, Peace and Revolution, 129.

<sup>63</sup> Memo Re: Kenneth Boulding, Louis Schneider to Wallace Collett and John Sullivan, 30 June 1977, PED 1977, AFSC Archives.

the South Africa Program had the highest concentration of staff of color of any international program. The Ithaca group's proposals brought the legitimacy of AFSC's board procedure into question because all decisions regarding South Africa policy and programs had been determined through the board's lengthy deliberations. Those at Ithaca recommended closer consultation with Quaker experts in the process of drafting AFSC educational materials and a suspension of the normal budgeting method so that a wide-open process of consultation and review could be initiated. The Ithaca proposal amounted to a call for a constitutional convention for AFSC, where all programs would be subject to re-prioritization from any motivated members of AFSC's Quaker constituency. AFSC did not act upon the Ithaca proposal.<sup>64</sup>

Other Friends objected to the specifics of AFSC's divestment policy. Earlham College economist Herbert Ward Fraser opposed the stock sale, criticizing it as a counter-productive "heroic witness" akin to the absolutist stance of Quaker abolitionists prior to the American Civil War. In a Friends Journal article Fraser argued that the antebellum Quakers who had advocated buying freedom for the enslaved had been right because compensating slave owners could have prevented war. He opposed divestment because he saw American corporations as the key liberalizing force in South Africa, and unlikely to be swayed by the token actions of AFSC and other church groups. Fraser feared that pro-divestment Friends unwittingly supported the violent polarization of South Africa and thus increased the likelihood of civil war.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Lewy, Peace and Revolution, 229.

<sup>65</sup> Herbert Ward Fraser, "Will Divestment Help?" Friends Journal, 15 October 1978, 9-11. For background on the relationship of Friends to the industrial revolution and free trade, see Douglas Gwyn, The Covenant Crucified: Quakers and the Rise of Capitalism (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 1995).

Opposition to AFSC's divestment gave rise to confrontation at the Committee's Annual Meeting in November 1978. Following a workshop by South Africa Program staff, several esteemed Friends accused the staff of pushing divestment through without proper consultation with the South African Friends and the AFSC network. Much of their vituperation was aimed at Michael Simmons, though several of the white Quakers could not remember his name. Ron Young, the Peace Education Secretary who had chaired the panel, expressed dismay with the hostility toward the staff. He informed the group that he had "been in meetings with corporate executives" who had behaved in a manner "more Quakerly than the Quakers in that room!"<sup>66</sup>

Additional criticism came from journalist Stephen Chapman. In a cover story for The New Republic magazine, Chapman claimed that the pacifist legacy of AFSC had been "Shot from Guns." He argued that AFSC's once noble, if impractical, pacifism had been sullied by its tacit alliances with political groups involved with armed struggle and terrorism. "Shot from Guns" criticized AFSC's Vietnam programs as too sympathetic to the new communist government and impugned the Committee's willingness to envision any role for the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in arranging for peace in the Middle East. Chapman included special criticism of the Committee's South Africa stance because it did not explicitly condemn the use of violence by the ANC or other liberation groups in southern Africa. Citing AFSC's Southern Africa Must Be Free brochure, he took issue with the statement that "violence has been coupled with nonviolence in the resistance and liberation struggle." Chapman objected to AFSC's

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<sup>66</sup> Ginny Hill to Bill Sutherland and David Sogge, 15 November 1978, PED 1978, AFSC Archives.

concentration on the human rights records of governments that received aid and support from the US. He concluded by accusing AFSC of losing sight of the religious foundation for pacifism, arguing that “the injunction to ‘resist not evil’ served as a reminder that suffering and injustice, however painful, were to be preferred over committing violence against one’s fellow man.” He bemoaned the loss of the Quaker pacifist purity that had made AFSC’s witness morally credible in the past.<sup>67</sup>

“Shot from Guns” spurred AFSC to respond to the claims that the Committee had abandoned its commitment to nonviolence. While acknowledging that “we cannot act without risking error” Board chair Stephen Cary responded to Chapman’s claims with the query “When the oppressed take up arms, do they forfeit our interest and concern?” Cary reiterated the arguments put forward by Bristol and Bacon regarding the role of American pacifists in relation to violence and oppression. Emphasizing AFSC’s search for peace with justice, Cary stated “from experience we can say that it is comparatively easy to preach pacifism from the pulpit or lectern when surrounded by serenity and good will. But in conditions of violence, injustice and war, it is different.” To the charge that AFSC gave preference to left-leaning governments Cary responded that AFSC “had not developed a leftist or Marxist bias or compromised our commitment to nonviolence because we now emphasize social and economic rights as strongly as political and civil.” Cary challenged Chapman’s astonishment that he did not hear more discussion of God in his interviews with the AFSC staff. The chairman stated:

We did not discuss God, Christianity or the Gospel with the New Republic writer who did not express interest in our motivation or the spiritual roots

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<sup>67</sup> Stephen Chapman, “Shot from Guns: The Lost Pacifism of American Quakers,” The New Republic, 9 June 1979, 14-17.

from which it springs...the thrust of the AFSC has always been to try to apply the Gospel, rather than discuss it.<sup>68</sup>

In the wake of the New Republic's attack, the South Africa Program received a boost in May of 1979 when Desmond and Leah Tutu visited AFSC headquarters in Philadelphia. Bishop Tutu spoke to a Third World Coalition gathering, urging them to continue their support for South Africa's freedom struggle. He reminded the group of the historical moment they occupied by saying "The United States learned that when it got involved in Vietnam, even the most powerful nation in the world ultimately could not succeed against the struggle of the people." Tutu shared stories about the resolve of South African youth since the Soweto uprising. Leah Tutu also spoke, recounting the travails of female domestic workers under the degradation of apartheid. The Bishop assured the group that though he could not advocate sanctions because to do so meant to risk arrest, he called for apartheid's opponents everywhere to apply "pressure on South Africa, political, diplomatic, but above all economic."<sup>69</sup>

Despite encouragement from the Tutus, the ripple effect from Boulding's sweeping criticism and van der Merwe's specific opposition to the South Africa Program spread to the 1979 gathering of the Friends General Conference (FGC). Meeting at Earlham College in Indiana, the liberal formation of Friends accommodated the request of Quaker journalist Chuck Fager for several ad hoc discussions to air grievances concerning AFSC. The gatherings produced a statement signed by 130 people that raised concerns about

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<sup>68</sup> Memo, "AFSC Response to the New Republic, June 9<sup>th</sup> Issue," by Stephen G. Cary, PED 1979, AFSC Archives. An abbreviated version of Stephen Cary's response to Chapman's article appeared as a letter to the editor in The New Republic, 7-14 July 1979.

<sup>69</sup> AFSC Third World Coalition Update, July 1979, PED 1979, AFSC Archives.

staff accountability, adherence to the Quaker Peace Testimony, and AFSC's role in providing service opportunities for young people.<sup>70</sup> Southern Africa and Vietnam came up as areas where some Friends thought AFSC had abandoned traditional Quaker non-partisanship, taken sides and supported violence.<sup>71</sup>

Amidst praise and criticism, for much of 1979 the South Africa Program was embroiled in disagreement over the issue of sending another study group to South Africa. The controversy had begun soon after the 1977 study group returned. Some board members felt that such a visit must be undertaken because it had been promised during the planning of the 1977 trip, while others emphasized that South African Friends had invited AFSC to visit. Many Third World Coalition staff members opposed the mission because they thought that nothing could be gained from it and that people of color would have to be granted "honorary white" status in order to enter the country.<sup>72</sup> International Division staffer Peter 'Molotsi had been wary of meeting with any South Africans, even outside of South Africa, because of his role in the Pan Africanist Congress prior to his post Sharpeville exile.<sup>73</sup> Midwest Regional Office South Africa Program staff person Marcyliena Morgan strongly opposed such a tour. She pointed out that of the possible reasons for such a trip – assisting with nonviolent aspects of the resistance movement,

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<sup>70</sup> Lewy, Peace and Revolution, 231.

<sup>71</sup> Final Summary of Concerns, FGC, 5 July 1979, drafted by Chuck Fager, PED 1979, AFSC Archives.

<sup>72</sup> AFSC Board Meeting minutes, 23-24 October 1977, PED 1977, AFSC Archives.

<sup>73</sup> 'Molotsi explained that he felt culpable for the suffering of white South Africa antiapartheid activist Arthur Blaxall, who had tried to channel funds to the families of political prisoners and thus was imprisoned for "having dealings with terrorists." AFSC Study Tour to Southern Africa Steering Committee – Notes on Update meeting, 25 April 1977, PED 1977, AFSC Archives.

providing medical supplies and services, or collecting information on the involvement of US corporations in South Africa – none could be pursued under the legal constraints of the apartheid regime. As for reciprocating the visit of South African Friends, Morgan expressed exasperation with the notion that another round of visits deserved funding “when money can never be found to implement more educational programs around South Africa.” Morgan sardonically declared, “All is not lost though. We’ll have more slide shows of someone’s vacation to South Africa, and we’ll hear how the South African Friends do what they can for the Blacks.”<sup>74</sup>

The Southern Africa Program Representative also opposed the controversial second trip. In Bill Sutherland’s analysis the only effective nonviolent option for AFSC involved advocating that Americans join in the boycott and divestment movement. In his correspondence with Philadelphia, Sutherland foresaw no opportunities for AFSC to mediate or reconcile the opposing sides with which AFSC had no history. He feared that even the minor cooperation with the apartheid regime needed to arrange a study tour could be construed as an endorsement of the government’s position. Based on his appraisal of the position paper that van der Merwe had presented at Gaborone, Sutherland warned AFSC that it could be seen as collaborating with the apartheid state, and thus undermine his delicate, behind-the-scenes efforts to develop the trust of the liberation movements.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Marcyliena Morgan to Ann Stever, 23 August 1979, PED 1979, AFSC Archives. Morgan became a linguistic anthropologist and an expert on African-American English.

<sup>75</sup> Bill Sutherland phone transcript of conversation with staff, 12 October 1977, ID 1977, AFSC Archives.

The most scathing critique of the rationale for the second trip came from South Africa Program director Michael Simmons. Simmons, who had spent over two years in prison for resisting the draft,<sup>76</sup> detected a paternalistic double standard. In his view it seemed that those in the AFSC constituency who raised concerns about the South Africa Program and the Third World Coalition staff's commitment to nonviolence looked upon the white Friends in South Africa as a besieged group doing their best to assist their black countrymen. Simmons demanded "how many Quakers in South Africa refused the privileges of their race? Can we distinguish the lifestyle and character of South African Quakers from other whites in South Africa?" He wanted to know "why does AFSC continue to focus on the messenger rather than the message? Are Friend's concerns coming from a Quaker context or a white context? Why would some view the two as synonymous?"<sup>77</sup>

Despite the TWC's vehement opposition, plans for the trip proceeded. The resignation of Michael Simmons and his replacement by Jerry Herman proved to be one change necessary to make the trip possible. Herman, an African-American, decided to participate in a small, integrated AFSC delegation to South Africa. He had been involved with AFSC in St. Louis and had worked for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in Chicago in the late sixties. Also taking the diplomatic position was James Fletcher, a prominent black Friend from New York. Fletcher, who had earned a Harvard MBA and worked on the financial staff of IBM, had been active with the New York Yearly Meeting Race Relations Committee and co-edited a book about the trail

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<sup>76</sup> Michael Simmons to Southern Africa Task Force of TWC Re: Proposed Trip to Frontline States, PED 1977, AFSC Archives.

<sup>77</sup> Michael Simmons to David Sogge, 11 August 1977, PED 1977, AFSC Archives.

blazing work of black Friend Barrington Dunbar.<sup>78</sup> Along with Lois Forrest and Ann Stever, Herman and Fletcher prepared to travel to South Africa to meet with Friends and to study the situation. When apprised of the tour's purpose and agenda, the South African government proved slow in providing the necessary authorization. Visas arrived only five days prior to the group's planned departure in August 1980.<sup>79</sup>

As guests of the South Africa Yearly Meeting, the delegation spent three weeks traveling extensively in South Africa as well as Botswana, Zimbabwe, and Namibia. In South Africa the group made a wide range of contacts, including government officials, religious leaders, black organizers, students, and conscientious objectors. Fletcher and Herman spent a night in the black township of Soweto, a choice that caused some consternation among white Friends who feared for their safety as well as what they might do without oversight. The group reported that they failed to meet with any "ordinary Afrikaners" or representatives of the Asian community. The delegation managed to meet approximately half of the members of SAYM.<sup>80</sup>

The interactions of the delegation with the Quakers of southern Africa prompted both empathy and disappointment. The AFSC representatives noted that a higher percentage of South African Friends participated in efforts for social healing and change than did

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<sup>78</sup> Biographical Information, 1980 SAYM Delegation, PED 1980, AFSC Archives. See James Fletcher, A Quaker Speaks from the Black Experience –The Life and Selected Writings of Barrington Dunbar (Race Relations Committee of New York Yearly Meeting, 1979).

<sup>79</sup> Transcript of Report to 26-28 September 1980 Board Meeting from AFSC Delegation to Southern Africa, August 1980, PED 1980, AFSC Archives.

<sup>80</sup> Report on August 1980 AFSC Delegation to SAYM, 6 November 1980, PED 1980, AFSC Archives.

American Quakers. Many supported strikes and boycotts despite the risks involved.<sup>81</sup> Yet the white privilege enjoyed by most Quakers manifested itself during some of the visits the delegation made to the homes of Friends. James Fletcher reported instances in which “they would be receiving me as a guest in their homes and yet speak or act in racially insensitive ways toward their black hired laborers or servants.” Fletcher found these situations hurtful because “as a Friend I have high regard for and high expectations of Friends everywhere.”<sup>82</sup>

An interview with Desmond Tutu culminated the trip. Tutu underscored the need for prayer and pressure to bring an end to the oppression of apartheid. He reiterated his 1979 challenge to AFSC to educate and agitate for more international pressure on South Africa, though he still felt constrained from advocating sanctions. Tutu expressed his gratitude for the work of Bill Sutherland, endorsing the quality information and insight that Sutherland provided. Tutu’s counsel helped motivate the delegation to urge AFSC to redouble its efforts in the areas of “international pressure, education and training, and reconciliation.” While thinking internationally in terms of policy related actions, the delegation focused its hope for reconciliation on the local level. They contended that “we do not imagine small efforts will significantly alter the potential of violent confrontation; yet we must have faith that they will have some positive influence which can contribute to the new, liberated society.”<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Report on August 1980 AFSC Delegation SAYM.

<sup>82</sup> James A. Fletcher, “A Pastoral Visit to the Land of Apartheid,” Friends Journal, Nov. 1981, 9-15.

<sup>83</sup> Report on August 1980 AFSC Trip SAYM.

In explaining the risk they took when they boarded the segregated train car in Pretoria they declared “Our delegation found it necessary to act in some small way, to stand with oppressed people.” The Americans invited South African Quakers from Johannesburg and Soweto to join them. Two whites and three blacks agreed to participate in the nonviolent civil disobedience their guests proposed. One of the white Friends missed a train connection and so did not take part. When detained by the railway police, the affinity group received the enthusiastic approval of the African passengers who cheered, waved and leaned out the windows of the train to show their support. As the Kaalfontain commandant released the group with assurance that “of course, you may travel with your friends; I just wish you had told someone in authority first,”<sup>84</sup> he unwittingly affirmed the delegation’s combination of nonviolent confrontation with active reconciliation.

Throughout the 1980s AFSC continued to act upon the instructions of Bishop Tutu. The Committee worked in coalition with other religious and solidarity organizations. It produced important publications including Automating Apartheid,<sup>85</sup> an analysis of how US computer companies supplied hardware and software to the South African Security forces, and Challenge and Hope,<sup>86</sup> a concise overview of the history and injustice of apartheid produced by AFSC staff in consultation with other experts. These treatises emphasized the role Americans could play in bringing down apartheid, countering the Cold War rationale then touted by the Reagan administration. To that end Jerry Herman

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<sup>84</sup> Stever, “When Quakers Encounter Apartheid,” 23.

<sup>85</sup> National Action/Research into the Military Industrial Complex (NARMIC)/American Friends Service Committee, Automating Apartheid: U.S. Computer Exports to South Africa and the Arms Embargo (Philadelphia: NARMIC/AFSC, 1982).

<sup>86</sup> Lyle Tatum, ed., South Africa: Challenge and Hope (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982, 1987).

reinvented AFSC's role as a movement halfway house, organizing "coherency workshops"<sup>87</sup> to foster a cooperative division of labor among antiapartheid organizations and prevent duplication of effort. AFSC utilized its regional offices to nurture antiapartheid activism around the country, especially in areas like the South where, compared to urban areas and cities with more liberal universities, little organized educational activity and protest had arisen.<sup>88</sup> Most importantly, AFSC nominated Bishop Tutu for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1981; Tutu won the prize in 1984.<sup>89</sup>

Hendrik van der Merwe continued his efforts to facilitate reconciliation in South Africa. In 1984 he put his white skin privilege at risk by befriending Winnie Mandela and helped to arrange some of the first contacts between the ANC and the government. The credibility he had labored to establish with most parties in the apartheid conflict enabled him to become an important mediator in the late eighties and early nineties. Van der Merwe became a significant ally of the Mandelas, assisting several of their children with college entrance requirements. He continues to defend his position regarding active reconciliation and has never relented in his criticism of AFSC's approach. In a 1997 article he repeated his objection to AFSC's support for sanctions:

In spite of growing acceptance of mediation and a negotiated settlement on the part of black South African leaders, I found antiapartheid activists more and more opposed to mediation and conciliation. I was later tempted to interpret this difference in terms of their different position and interests: the black leaders wanted a settlement so they could return home; the

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<sup>87</sup> Jerry Herman to Southern Africa Staff Re: Southern Africa Coherency Workshop, 11 June 1980, PED 1980, AFSC Archives.

<sup>88</sup> Memo from Jerry Herman, Organizing Tour to the South, 2 December 1981, PED 1981, AFSC Archives.

<sup>89</sup> Abrams, "Who Deserves the Nobel Peace Prize," 15.

antiapartheid activists feared a settlement that would deprive them of their cause and job security.<sup>90</sup>

Van der Merwe maintains that his efforts “prepared the table” for negotiations and reconciliation, but gives little credit to AFSC and the international antiapartheid movement’s contribution to the construction of the table he helped to set.<sup>91</sup>

Bill Sutherland resigned from AFSC in 1982. Subsequent appointees continued his efforts in the region. In his memoir Sutherland expresses a much different view from van der Merwe. Sutherland summarized the conflict this way:

One issue that came up during my time with AFSC was the concern by some on the AFSC Board that I was making use of the organization to support armed struggle. It seemed that if I said it looks like violence is inevitable in a particular situation in South Africa, I would be accused of advocating violence...There was an influential and affluent group within the AFSC with the conscious or unconscious feeling that they could maintain the status quo in South Africa and give it a human face, or make it less violent. It was my conviction that the people must overthrow a system based on greed and racism. Revolutionary nonviolence, as I understand it, takes into account the fact that true liberation must beware of methods that could end up replacing one tyranny with another. But I identify with any people’s struggle to get a boot off their necks and it’s up to them to decide their methods. I couldn’t tell the ANC or PAC to wait until my nonviolent experiment works.<sup>92</sup>

Bill Sutherland’s efforts represented the best tradition of Quaker diplomacy – patient listening, behind-the-scenes contacts, and availability to the powers that be as well as the aggrieved parties. But his outsider status – not a Quaker, black, and unwilling to enter South Africa as an “honorary” white - put him at odds with vocal opponents in AFSC’s

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<sup>90</sup> Hendrik W. van der Merwe in Chuck Fager, ed., Sustaining Peace Witness In The Twenty-First Century: Papers from the 1997 Quaker Peace Roundtable, First Month (*sic*), 17-19, 1997, (Wallingford Pa.: Pendle Hill Publications, 1997) 10.

<sup>91</sup> Deming, “Preparing the Table,” 13-14.

<sup>92</sup> Sutherland and Meyer, Guns and Gandhi in Africa, 153.

constituency. Many white South African Friends and doctrinaire American Quakers who criticized Sutherland disagreed with the logic propounded in Jim Bristol's, "Nonviolence: Not for Export" and the analyses of the Third World Coalition. Moreover, Sutherland's presence in Africa challenged the Southern African Friends self-image as neutral brokers; his refusal to enter South Africa reminded them of their white privilege, implicating them as beneficiaries of apartheid.

The struggle that took place among William Penn's political heirs within AFSC involved members of the international Quaker network and people who saw themselves as part of the African diaspora; only a few individuals, such as Jim Fletcher and Jerry Herman, seemed able to easily identify with both groups. The idea of liberation pacifism, articulated by Jim Bristol, Margaret Hope Bacon, and others who saw themselves as pacifists and revolutionaries, proved most challenging to those Quakers who emphasized diplomacy and active reconciliation. AFSC, by elevating Desmond Tutu's work and witness made a significant contribution to the transnational application of nonviolence that helped end apartheid. The sanctions that Tutu had urged gained international grassroots support from groups like AFSC and proved to be one important nonviolent tool for encouraging change.<sup>93</sup> The post-apartheid evaluations of former government officials and antiapartheid leaders alike confirm the important role of international sanctions and divestment in forcing the apartheid regime to negotiate.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> See Chapter 15, "The Effect of Sanctions," in Robert Kinloch Massie, Loosing the Bonds: The United States and South Africa in the Apartheid Years (New York: Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 1998).

<sup>94</sup> See Les De Villiers, In Sight of Surrender: The U.S. Sanctions Campaign against South Africa, 1946-1993 (Praeger: Westport, CT, 1995). De Villiers ran the anti-sanctions publicity campaign for the South African government.

The ANC and Nelson Mandela also affirmed Hendrik van der Merwe for his mediation efforts.<sup>95</sup> Van der Merwe's arbitration succeeded in the context of the creative tension heightened by the international economic pressure that AFSC had encouraged. The conflict between AFSC's South Africa Program and South African Quakers over sanctions exemplified the difficulty of balancing popular education and mobilization based on liberation pacifism with active reconciliation. AFSC's antiapartheid activism created a different understanding of how nonviolent activists can support the aims of armed liberation struggles without endorsing violence. It also exposed the difficulties of overcoming the historical and cultural legacies of racism when pursuing liberation, even in a single organization. AFSC's South Africa Program's melding of traditional Quaker diplomacy with popular mobilization broadened decision-making about nonviolent action beyond the old AFSC elite. The evolution of AFSC's antiapartheid activism shows the dynamic nature of nonviolence in contrast to the static nonresistance prescribed for pacifists by critics like Stephen Chapman and Guenter Lewy.

AFSC's work against apartheid extended Martin Luther King's conception of creative tension across physical and psychological borders. In his "Letter From a Birmingham Jail" King asserted that "nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue."<sup>96</sup> King sought to combine confrontational direct action with constructive negotiation. In its antiapartheid work AFSC used a similar strategy

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<sup>95</sup> Deming, "Preparing the Table," 14.

<sup>96</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter From a Birmingham Jail," in James E. Washington, ed., A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr. (New York: Harper and Row, 1986) 291.

when it confronted the issue of racism in South Africa and in its own ranks. Ultimately, active reconciliation and liberation pacifism proved to be synergistic, not contradictory. AFSC grew beyond the patronizing missionary assumptions of some of its internal critics and began to live out Jim Bristol's assertion that "nonviolence begins at home."<sup>97</sup> The new synthesis of liberation pacifism represented the achievement of all those in the Quaker network that acted upon the orders written on their hearts.

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<sup>97</sup> Bristol, "Nonviolence, Not First for Export."

## CHAPTER 3

### **Black Power on Embassy Row: TransAfrica**

*"When black people in Africa begin to storm Johannesburg, what will be the role of this nation - and of black people here?"*

#### **Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton in Black Power: The Politics of Liberation<sup>1</sup>**

"Mr. Ambassador, please convey for us to your government our basic demand" stated Randall Robinson to Bernardus G. Fourie, South Africa's Ambassador to the US. As Fourie grew increasingly uncomfortable, Robinson, the executive director of the African-American foreign policy organization TransAfrica, continued to confront the ambassador with the terms and conditions that he and his companions had come to the embassy to express. In the presence of fellow protesters Mary Frances Berry, civil rights commissioner, Walter Fauntroy, Washington, DC's Congressional Delegate, and Eleanor Holmes Norton, activist law professor, Robinson continued:

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>2</sup>

Ambassador Foury was at a loss. He pleaded with Delegate Fauntroy, "You are a member of the United States Congress." Fauntroy replied, "I am indeed a member of the

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<sup>1</sup> Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) and Charles V. Hamilton, Black Power: The Politics of Liberation (New York: Vintage Books, 1967, 1992), 179.

<sup>2</sup> Randall Robinson, Defending the Spirit: A Black Life in America (New York: Dutton, 1998), 152.

United States Congress and I am there because I have devoted my life to civil rights and the pursuit of racial justice. I am here for the same reason.”<sup>3</sup>

The day before Thanksgiving is often a slow day for political news. On Wednesday, November 21, 1984, a unique act of civil disobedience filled the pre-holiday news vacuum. Four African Americans, all of them prominent in their fields, had arranged to meet with South Africa’s ambassador to the US, Bernardus G. Fourie, in order to communicate their outrage over the recent government crackdown and consequent jailing of 14 antiapartheid labor activists in South Africa. The delegation of black American leaders arrived at the South African embassy on Massachusetts Avenue, NW, which in legal terms was South African soil, in the nation’s capital, for a 3:30 pm appointment. Eleanor Holmes Norton, formerly the head of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, described the plan simply: “What we really wanted was to get in there.”<sup>4</sup> After listening to the Ambassador for about an hour, Professor Norton excused herself from the meeting. She left the embassy to alert the media and signal supporters that the three remaining members of the party planned to sit-in at the embassy until their demands were met or they were arrested. The ambassador obliged and called the police, which landed Robinson, Berry, and Fauntroy in jail and the embassy confrontation on the front page of the Thanksgiving Day newspapers. Justifying the action of this elite group of protesters, media spokesperson Norton declared, “What can we do except draw the

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<sup>3</sup> Robinson, Defending the Spirit, 153.

<sup>4</sup> Joan Steineu Lester, as authorized by Eleanor Holmes Norton, Fire in My Soul (New York: Atria Books, 2003), 228.

attention of the world to black South Africans who cannot speak for themselves? Our own government is no recourse for us at this point.”<sup>5</sup>

Robinson and his allies used the unusual civil disobedience action to bring attention to long-standing concerns about apartheid in South Africa. The 1984 embassy action served as the initiation of the Free South Africa Movement (FSAM), in which TransAfrica played the leading role. The FSAM’s initial action launched a solid year of picketing and civil disobedience at the South African embassy. TransAfrica’s initiative galvanized the US antiapartheid movement at the outset of the second Reagan administration in a way that linked protest to legislative action to impose economic sanctions on South Africa. The prominence of an African-American foreign policy lobby at the center of the national antiapartheid coalition made clear the identification of black Americans with the struggle against South African racism and helped to illuminate a wide range of antiapartheid activities.

Based in Washington, D.C., TransAfrica grew from a mandate established by the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), as the African-American lobby group for African and Caribbean concerns. Led by activist lawyer Randall Robinson, TransAfrica represented a coming of age for African-American involvement in foreign policy. Utilizing a network of black elected officials to mobilize opposition to policies favorable to apartheid, TransAfrica combined a high profile direct action in Washington, DC, with grassroots lobbying and support from prominent African-Americans. TransAfrica conveyed Pan-Africanist concerns with a politically viable voice, situating itself to take

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<sup>5</sup> “Fauntroy Arrested in Embassy: Delegate, 2 Others Protest S. African Acts,” Washington Post, 22 November 1984, 1.

advantage of the political space created by the legacy of the civil rights movement and the 1984 presidential campaign of Jesse Jackson.<sup>6</sup>

TransAfrica's role in creating and leading the Free South Africa Movement marked the culmination of a long struggle to assert an effective African-American voice in the realm of US foreign policy debate. TransAfrica drew upon the many preceding efforts to galvanize concern about Africa in the black community, capitalizing on the new access to power achieved by African-Americans in the post-civil rights movement era. The precedents set and problems encountered by organizational predecessors such as the Council on African Affairs (CAA), The Liberation Support Committee (LSC), the American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa (ANLCA), the Organization of African American Unity (OAAU), and the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC), loomed large in the mind of TransAfrica's founders as they tried to construct an organization that connected African-American concern and identification with Africa, particularly South Africa. TransAfrica's assertion of a new variant of Pan-Africanism exposed the possibilities as well as the limits of what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has termed "strategic essentialism,"<sup>7</sup> a political strategy that emphasized the special bond between black Africans under apartheid and the historic discrimination against African Americans.

The individual most central to TransAfrica's success was Harvard-trained lawyer Randall Robinson. Robinson's personal story is interwoven with that of the organization

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<sup>6</sup> Karin L. Stanford, Beyond the Boundaries: Reverend Jesse Jackson in International Affairs (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997), 27.

<sup>7</sup> Glossary of Key Terms in the Work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Emory University, <http://www.emory.edu/ENGLISH/Bahri/Glossary.html>, (1 June 2003).

he led from its inception in the 1970s through the height of the antiapartheid movement in the 1980s and into the post-apartheid 1990s. His post-apartheid memoir, as well as a novel written prior to the launch of TransAfrica, provide historical background as well personal insight to the visceral connection to Africa that motivated Robinson and inspired many African-Americans to commit themselves to the antiapartheid struggle.

TransAfrica's organizational history illuminates several questions regarding the group's role in the broader antiapartheid movement: What distinguished TransAfrica from previous efforts to mobilize the African-American community against South African apartheid? What forces converged to make the inception of TransAfrica possible? How did TransAfrica employ the nonviolent direct action model of the civil rights movement while advocating solidarity with those waging armed struggle against the apartheid regime? How did TransAfrica achieve the combination of public prominence and political power to gain the ear of the political establishment? These questions can be addressed by examining the organizing that preceded the emergence of TransAfrica, analyzing the original goals and objectives of TransAfrica, and evaluating the degree to which these goals were achieved in the context of the broader antiapartheid movement of the 1980s and early 1990s.

At the time of TransAfrica's founding the McCarthy era polarization that contributed to the destruction of the Council on African Affairs had ebbed. No longer did identification with anti-colonial movements automatically put an organization beyond the political pale in the eyes of the US government. The wave of independence that had swept Africa in the sixties and seventies had helped to legitimize the kind of Pan-Africanism that had made W.E.B. Du Bois and Paul Robeson targets of political harassment and repression. The end of Portuguese colonialism in Africa in 1976 led to

increasing international pressure to end white rule in Rhodesia and South Africa. Meanwhile, the contribution of African-Americans to the election of Jimmy Carter in the 1976 presidential election showed that a modicum of recognition would be granted to the black constituency of the Democratic Party. Carter's selection of African-American civil rights activist Andrew Young as his United Nations ambassador marked a new phase of engagement by blacks with the formulation and execution of US foreign policy.

Along with increased political clout, African-Americans were enjoying increased economic power and academic prestige as well as prominence in the realm of the arts and media. The marginal political position that had made Robeson and Du Bois particularly vulnerable to McCarthyism and blacklisting had changed sufficiently to allow a new generation of activists, schooled in the lessons of the civil rights movement, to employ their wealth and talent in service of the antiapartheid cause. Growing political power helped resolve the tension between radical Pan-Africanists who identified with the armed liberation movements in Africa and more moderate activists who supported liberation but also sought integration into the foreign policy establishment. Thus the journey to Ambassador Fourie's office did not start at Robinson's Capitol Hill workplace. It had its origins in the legacy of the CAA and had grown until enough political capital had been accrued that Randall Robinson and his allies could insist that the check be cashed and black leadership of the antiapartheid movement be acknowledged. The organizations and alliances that preceded TransAfrica tested the tactics, developed the analyses, and trained many of the activists who contributed to TransAfrica's development. To understand the conditions that made TransAfrica possible it is necessary to review the primary Pan-African and civil rights organizing activities of the sixties and early seventies.

The formal disbanding of CAA and the public castigation of its leading figures, Alphaeus Hunton, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Paul Robeson,<sup>8</sup> had cast a pall over the prospects for Pan-Africanist organizing in the late fifties. When the formerly colonized nations of Africa began to gain their independence a new cohort of Pan-Africanist groups that strove to support independent Africa began to appear. An early watershed moment for this emerging movement came during the global surge of protest that followed the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, Prime Minister of the Republic of Congo, in January 1961. An ad hoc array of individuals, many associated with Pan-Africanist groups in New York City, entered the visitor's gallery of the United Nations Security Council intending to rise in silent protest during US Ambassador Adlai Stevenson's presentation. UN security guards intervened with the protesters and a fracas ensued during which eighteen people sustained injuries during their ejection from the gallery. Upon their removal the activists commenced a street demonstration that attracted several hundred protesters. As a result of the protest the UN was closed for two days. Although press reports and political commentators accused the protesters of being Communists, the Pan-African demonstrators had actually barred black Communist leader Benjamin Davis, a long time ally of Paul Robeson, from participating. In addition, this early clash signaled a new militancy among African-Americans advocating Pan-African solidarity. No longer would the pillorying of their CAA predecessors prevent them from protesting American complicity with apartheid.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See Introduction, 8 -12.

<sup>9</sup> For a complete account of the UN protest see James H. Meriwether, Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 235-238 and Brenda G. Plummer, Rising Wind: Black Americans

Among the protesters at the UN was Daniel Watts of the Liberation Support Committee (LSC), which produced Liberator magazine. Beginning in 1961, Liberator served as an important monthly forum for discussion of Pan-Africanism and cultural nationalism. Watts' magazine also covered protests it deemed noteworthy in the cause of the struggle for black liberation. Among the network of activist-journalists who wrote for Liberator was William Worthy. Worthy was a 1942 graduate of Bates College where he had been a classmate and ally of fellow anti-apartheid activist Bill Sutherland.<sup>10</sup> He had been a member of the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) and participated in the 1947 Journey of Reconciliation that had challenged segregation of public transportation in the upper South. Worthy gained prominence as one of the first African-American journalists in Moscow during the mid-fifties, and earned notoriety when he entered China and Cuba. Like other Americans who traveled to places deemed off-limits by the US State Department in the 1950s and early 60s Worthy had his passport revoked after making a documentary film in Cuba.<sup>11</sup> Worthy's Cuba controversy even became the subject of a song, "The Ballad of William Worthy," by folk singer Phil Ochs. The refrain of the ballad pokes fun at the State Department's policy on travel to Cuba: "But somehow it is strange to hear the State Department say 'You are living in the free world, in the free world you must stay.'" <sup>12</sup>

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and US Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 301-303.

<sup>10</sup> See Chapter 1, 26 and Chapter 2.

<sup>11</sup> Bates College Web Site, "William Worthy '42," <http://abacus.bates.edu/pubs/mag/95-Fall/worthy.html> (31 May 01).

<sup>12</sup> Phil Ochs, "The Ballad of William Worthy," 1964, <http://www.lyrics.net.ua/song/44168> (1 June 2003).

Worthy also challenged the US foreign policy establishment's position on South Africa. Two decades before the 1984 sit-in at the South African embassy, Worthy and a group of allies paid a protest visit to US Ambassador to the UN, Adlai Stevenson. On July 28, 1963, Worthy and six companions arrived at Stevenson's US Mission to the UN office. The men wore dress suits and the women donned hats and their best dresses to underscore the seriousness of their deputation. Stowed in the purse of one of the women was a banner that read "EXPEL SOUTH AFRICA FROM THE UNITED NATIONS."<sup>13</sup> Word of the action reached the Ambassador's office before the protesters. Upon arrival an assistant asked, "Is this the group that is planning a sit-in?"<sup>14</sup> Still smarting from the memory of the 1961 Lumumba demonstration, UN and US security services had arranged for an increased presence in preparation for the nonviolent confrontation, even sending James H. McShane to observe the protest. McShane had commanded the federal marshals who had accompanied James Meredith during his integration of the University of Mississippi.<sup>15</sup>

Worthy's group arrived without an appointment. After a half hour wait, Ambassador Stevenson received the delegation and then proceeded to defend the Kennedy administration's policy toward South Africa. The "heated conference" did not persuade the Ambassador; according to Worthy "We spoke with Mr. Stevenson but did not communicate." The delegation did manage to alarm Stevenson when they warned him that the sit-in represented just the first wave of black demonstrators who would come to

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<sup>13</sup> William Worthy, "Anatomy of a Sit-in," *Liberator*, vol. III, no. 9, September 1963, 6-7.

<sup>14</sup> Worthy, "Sit-in," 6.

<sup>15</sup> Worthy, "Sit-in," 6.

the UN on behalf of African independence. The direct action at the Ambassador's office garnered television and newspaper coverage. Worthy was hopeful that the next time Stevenson enunciated American policy toward Africa to the Security Council the ambassador would "have to look over his shoulder to see if dissenters from Harlem, poised to demonstrate, are sitting in the gallery."<sup>16</sup>

Actions such as those covered in Liberator magazine brought increased attention to growing concern about Africa in the black community. African-American civil rights leaders tried to represent that concern in with a more moderate profile by forming The American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa (ANLCA). Initiated in 1962, the organization included black civil rights leaders Dorothy Height, James Farmer, Martin Luther King, Jr., A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins, and Whitney Young. Opposition to apartheid was salient among ANLCA's concerns. The ANLCA leadership urged President Kennedy to consider imposing economic sanctions on South Africa when they met with him in December of 1962.<sup>17</sup> ANLCA's style paralleled that of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) by providing elite black leadership to a broader civil rights movement. In its short existence ANCLA fostered the appointment of African-Americans to ambassadorial posts in Africa and helped bring an end to the practice of refueling US Navy ships at Cape Town. ANCLA held its final meeting in 1967 and eventually dissolved for lack of funding. Historian Milfred C. Fierce traces the

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<sup>16</sup> Worthy, "Sit-in," 7.

<sup>17</sup> Lewis V. Baldwin, Towards the Beloved Community: Martin Luther King, Jr., and South Africa (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press), 41.

inception of TransAfrica to the intent of ANCLA to found “a permanent organization to carry out the objectives of the conference.”<sup>18</sup>

Similarly fated to fade from the scene while establishing an important precedent was the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) founded by Malcolm X in 1964. Presaging the formula for political efficacy proposed by Carmichael and Hamilton in Black Power, wherein they posit that “Before a group can enter the open society, it must first close ranks,”<sup>19</sup> the OAAU was Malcolm X’s post-Nation of Islam effort to link domestic efforts to end the oppression of blacks with the international vantage point he had developed in his travels to Africa and the Middle East. OAAU dissolved shortly after Malcolm’s assassination in 1965, but his plan to testify before the United Nations in order to call for an international investigation into crimes against black Americans was emulated by James Forman in his capacity as International Affairs Director of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Forman argued to the Fourth Committee of the UN General Assembly, the body responsible for decolonization issues, in November 1967 that, “any examination of the forces of apartheid, racism and colonialism had not only to observe the effect of those forces in one area or country but to consider their entire interrelations and manifestations elsewhere.”<sup>20</sup>

Forman also gained renown for his authorship of and agitation for “The Black Manifesto” in 1969. The Manifesto, first announced by Forman when he interrupted a

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<sup>18</sup> Milfred C. Fierce, “Selected Black American Leaders and Organizations and South Africa 1900-1977: Some Notes,” Journal of Black Studies, vol. 17, no. 3 (1987): 318.

<sup>19</sup> Carmichael and Hamilton, Black Power, 44.

<sup>20</sup> “James Forman of SNCC Addresses the United Nations, November 17, 1967,” Liberator, vol. 7, no. 12, December 1967, 8-9.

service at New York's Riverside Church, demanded \$500,000,000 in reparations from Christian and Jewish organizations to organizations working for the liberation of black Americans.<sup>21</sup> The Manifesto, like Forman's testimony to the UN, established a precedent for more militant action on the part of African-Americans in the name of the African diaspora. Forman's ten point platform, which followed the model of the Black Panthers' 1966 Ten Point Program<sup>22</sup>, spoke to both the whites in the pews and the blacks he hoped to mobilize, asserting, "We must boldly go out and attack the white Western world at its power centers. The white Christian churches are another form of government in this country and they are used by the government of this country to exploit the people of Latin America, Asia and Africa."<sup>23</sup> The Manifesto, with its strident tone and call for "revolution which will be an armed confrontation and long years of sustained guerilla warfare inside this country,"<sup>24</sup> presaged Black Panther leader Huey Newton's call for "Revolutionary Suicide."<sup>25</sup> While the Manifesto never reaped the reparation sum initially sought, it did stimulate internal giving, as well as much soul searching among the faithful and their religious organizations.

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<sup>21</sup> James Forman, The Making of Black Revolutionaries (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972, 1998), 547-549.

<sup>22</sup> "Black Panther Party Platform," in Deirdre Mullane, ed., Crossing the Danger Water: Three Hundred Years of African-American Writing (New York: Anchor Books, 1993), 683-85.

<sup>23</sup> Murray Kempton, "Black Manifesto," New York Review of Books, vol. 13, no. 1, 10 July 1969, Online Archive, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/11267> (1 October 2003).

<sup>24</sup> "Introduction to the Black Manifesto" as excerpted in Murray Kempton, "The Black Manifesto," New York Review of Books, vol. 13, no. 1, 10 July 1969, Online Archive, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/11266>.( Accessed 1 October 2003).

<sup>25</sup> Huey P. Newton, Revolutionary Suicide (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973).

The tumultuous period between the announcement of the Black Manifesto and the founding of TransAfrica saw many important developments that shaped the conditions in which the group would be conceived. The 1969 African Studies Association (ASA) conference in Montreal was riven with conflict between the established white scholars of Africa and a coalition of Africans and African-Americans who demanded racial parity on the organization's governing board. A parallel African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA) arose to provide a forum for scholarship from an African perspective. The participation of activist scholars such as Ronald Walters in AHSA helped to connect the organization to the realm of Pan-Africanist organizing.<sup>26</sup>

The willingness to confront the status quo arrangements regarding South Africa was not limited to academe. Beginning in 1970 one of the first and most successful efforts to pressure an American corporation to stop doing business with South Africa arose from black employees at the Polaroid Corporation. Upon discovering that Polaroid equipment was being used to produce South Africa's passbooks, the onerous internal passport that black South Africans were required to carry, Polaroid employees Ken Williams and Caroline Hunter initiated the Polaroid Revolutionary Workers Movement (PRWM) with the aim of publicizing Polaroid's complicity with the apartheid regime and organizing a boycott of Polaroid products. As a result of her activism Hunter lost her job; Williams, her husband, had already resigned.<sup>27</sup> Polaroid responded by advertising their intention to stay

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<sup>26</sup> Ronald W. Walters, Pan-Africanism in the African Diaspora (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 69-72 and Komozi Woodard, A Nation Within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (Leroi Jones) and Black Power Politics (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 178.

<sup>27</sup> Philip V White "The Black American Constituency for Southern Africa 1940-1980" in Alfred O. Hero, Jr. and John Barratt, eds., The American People and South Africa:

in South Africa in order to encourage change and embarked on an effort to improve conditions for its black employees in South Africa.<sup>28</sup> Supporters of the PRWM, including the American Committee on Africa (ACOA), criticized Polaroid's gradualist approach. In 1977 ACOA contacts in South Africa helped to prove that the government was still obtaining Polaroid film through a third party distributor. As a result of this revelation Polaroid abruptly ended all sales and involvement in South Africa, becoming the first major corporation to disinvest.<sup>29</sup>

In 1971 the Democratic Select Committee, led by Congressman Charles Diggs, became the Congressional Black Caucus. As the Caucus gained new members African concerns were high on its agenda. The high water mark of cooperation between black activists who had become politicians in the Democratic Party and more radical black nationalists and Pan-Africanists came in 1972 with the organizing of African Liberation Day. Demonstrations in Washington, DC, and San Francisco involved thousands of blacks from around the country and the world. In DC the march leading up to a rally at the Washington Monument passed by the South African Embassy. Speakers at the Liberation Day rally included Congressman Diggs and DC Delegate Walter Fauntroy.<sup>30</sup>

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Publics, Elites, and Policymaking Processes (Lexington Mass: Lexington Books, 1981), 84-85.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Kinloch Massie, Loosing the Bonds: The United Sates and South Africa in the Apartheid Years (New York: Nan A. Talese/Double Day, 1998), 271-273.

<sup>29</sup> George Houser, No One Can Stop the Rain: Glimpses of Africa's Liberation Struggle (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989), 271-272.

<sup>30</sup> For description of the ALD demonstrations see Walters, Pan-Africanism in the African Diaspora, 69-72, and Woodard, A Nation Within a Nation, 173-180. Speeches and papers from the conference at Howard University were published in Inez Smith Reid and Ronald Walters, eds., From Gammon to Howard: Proceeding of the African-American National Conference on Africa (Washington, DC: Howard University, May 25-26, 1972).

Coinciding with the Liberation Day events was the African-American National Conference on Africa held at Howard University. Sponsored by the Congressional Black Caucus, speakers from the US and Africa stressed the need for black Americans to unite with the liberation struggles in Africa in recognition of their common struggle against white colonialism.

The events in DC lived on in the form of the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC). Leading figures such as Owusu Sadaukai (Howard Fuller)<sup>31</sup> and Black Arts Movement creator Amiri Baraka (Leroi Jones), as well as a number of younger activists, participated in activism around the country that was grounded in a Pan-Africanist approach to the wars of liberation occurring in Africa. ALSC was well represented at the 1974 Sixth Pan Africanist Congress held in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania.<sup>32</sup> By 1976 ideological transition from Black Nationalism to variants of Marxism on the part of leaders such as Sadaukai and Baraka, along with FBI infiltration, led to sectarian division and the demise of the ALSC.<sup>33</sup> Despite the brief existence of ALSC, it had set an important precedent by joining radical solidarity with African liberation movements to the politics of the Black Convention Movement and the accession to power of an increasing number of black elected officials at all levels.

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<sup>31</sup> Sadaukai, who would revert to being known as Howard Fuller, went on to become a professor of education and served as superintendent of the Milwaukee public schools. As of 2003 he is a leading advocate of school vouchers. See Institute for the Transformation of Learning website at <http://www.itl.mu.edu/> (6 June 20003).

<sup>32</sup> William W. Sales, Jr., From Civil Rights to Black Liberation: Malcolm X and the Organization of Afro-American Unity (Boston: South End Press, 1994), 201.

<sup>33</sup> Sales, Black Liberation, 201.

In America's bicentennial year, the focus of the Congressional Black Caucus on apartheid and other struggles in Africa intensified. A discussion about mobilizing black-led political action for Africa that began in 1975 among the members of the CBC and its allies had come together as the Black Forum on Foreign Policy.<sup>34</sup> At its annual fall weekend conference September 25-26, 1976, Congressmen Andrew Young and Charles Diggs assembled representatives of national black organizations in order to craft a response to the policies of the Ford administration. Along with the CBC those included were the NAACP, PUSH, AFRICARE, the Black Economic Research Council, and the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW). The meeting ratified a proposal titled "The African-American Manifesto on Southern Africa"<sup>35</sup> written by Randall Robinson, Herschelle Challenor, and Charles Cobb, who had all worked with Diggs' House Subcommittee on Africa. Drawn up at a time when the Soweto Uprising in South Africa had been raging for three months, the Manifesto combined criticism of the pro-Rhodesia actions of Ford's Secretary of State Henry Kissinger with a vision for changing America's role in the region.

"There comes a moment in the affairs of humankind when honor requires unequivocal affirmation of a people's right to freedom with dignity and peace with justice" began the Manifesto. Pledging solidarity with those protesting apartheid in South Africa as well as in Namibia and Zimbabwe, the Manifesto argued "the specter of internationalized, anti-

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<sup>34</sup> Massie, Loosing the Bonds, 386-387.

<sup>35</sup> In his memoir Randall Robinson refers to the document produced by the conference as "The Afro-American Manifesto on Southern Africa." Freedomways Magazine published it as "The African-American Manifesto on Southern Africa." See Robinson, Defending the Spirit, 98, and Freedomways, vol. 17, no. 4, 1976, 216-221. Also see The "African-American Manifesto on Southern Africa, 1976," <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/aam/afroammanifesto.html> (1 June 2003).

colonial war... could have an ominous impact on race relations in America and abroad.” Building on the bicentennial theme of 1976 the document connected “the first modern war for independence” to the signers’ “unswerving commitment to immediate self-determination and majority rule in Southern Africa.” The authors bolstered their case with the assertion that “the destiny of Blacks in America and Blacks in Africa is inextricably intertwined, since racism and other forms of oppression respect no territories or boundaries.”<sup>36</sup>

The Manifesto laid claim to a mandate from a roster of “revolutionary predecessors” from Africa and the diaspora:

From Crispus Attucks to W.E.B. Du Bois, from Dinizulu to Amilcar Cabral, from Martin Luther King to Malcolm X, from Nkrumah to Lumumba, from Nat Turner to Whitney Young, from Sojourner Truth to Mary McLeod Bethune, to proclaim the truth of the Revolution of 1776, which is also the truth of the Revolution of 1976 in Southern Africa.

Like James Forman’s Black Manifesto, the African-American Manifesto articulated ten points based on an analysis of the root causes of the conflicts in the region: “Despotism and racism that serve to polarize the white government and the African majority; the continuing violence by the Europeans to sustain institutions of racism and exploitation; economic exploitation.” The document affirmed the legitimacy of “the liberation of Southern Africa from white minority rule by means of armed struggle, where necessary” and supported “the right of the liberation movements to seek necessary assistance from whatever sources available,” implicitly justifying the acceptance of military aid by groups such as the African National Congress (ANC) from the Soviet Union and Cuba, while emphasizing that they rejected the supposition that “such assistance implies external

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<sup>36</sup> Manifesto, Freedomways, 216.

domination within Cold War context.” After laying out the particulars that included condemnation for South Africa and Rhodesia, support for Angola and Mozambique, and opposition to US corporations in South Africa, the Manifesto concludes with a restatement of “Our Commitment:”

We challenge the Judeo-Christian community, the labor movement, the media and political, business, and civic leadership in this country to see that our government upholds its values and its historical commitment to self-determination, freedom and justice, and to understand that the appeasement of South Africa can only invite an escalated war that will exacerbate racial tensions in the United States.

To back up their challenge, the signers pledged themselves to “mobilizing Black America and others of good will to formulate and support a progressive US policy toward Africa.” Further, the Manifesto underscored the signers’ vision of a united front effort, promising resistance “to those Blacks who work directly or indirectly to support white minority regimes in Southern Africa.”<sup>37</sup>

The African-American Manifesto, adopted unanimously, represented a radicalization of the black establishment’s position on Southern Africa. While endorsing armed struggle and promising to enforce racial cohesion on Southern Africa related policy issues, the Manifesto couched its radical opposition to the course of US foreign policy in terms redolent of the Declaration of Independence and the rhetoric of American civil religion. Thus the radical demands of the Pan-Africanist movement were melded to the pragmatic agenda of black elected officials, an established vanguard in a unique position to lead the fight for radical reform. In its most significant action the Black Leadership Conference connected the demands of the Manifesto to the initiation of an African-American foreign policy lobby group. Randall Robison, who had worked as an assistant

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<sup>37</sup> Manifesto, Freedomways, 216, 217, 218, 221.

to Congressman Diggs, was asked to chair the planning group that laid the groundwork for the establishment of TransAfrica.<sup>38</sup>

Placing this responsibility on Robinson proved to be an inspired decision. Robinson's background served to make him a doggedly determined advocate for the cause that blended his concerns about Africa with personal experience of racism in America. Born in Richmond, Virginia, in 1941, Robinson grew up in circumstances so segregated that he never sat next to a white person in a classroom until entering Harvard Law School in 1967.<sup>39</sup> Robinson came from a prominent family in Richmond's black community. His siblings were often in the vanguard of integrating the educational institutions they attended and the professions they pursued. Robinson served in the Army before graduating from historically black Virginia Union University in Richmond. In his memoir Robinson recounts the most egregious of the slights and slanders he suffered at the hands of blatant segregationists in the south and supposedly enlightened liberals in the north. As he became more politicized he came to a position where he "could see no real substantive distinction between my American experience and the painful lot the Haitians, South Africans, Mozambicans, Angolans, Zairians, Afro-Brazilians, and other blacks in other places about whom I was reading."<sup>40</sup> Robinson's experience during his youth of an American version of apartheid made him eager to travel to Africa. A Ford Foundation research fellowship facilitated a six-month sojourn to Tanzania following his graduation from Harvard Law School in 1970.

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<sup>38</sup> Robinson, *Spirit*, 96.

<sup>39</sup> David Remnick, "Randall Robinson, From Boyhood Pain to a Crusade Against Apartheid," *Washington Post*, 5 February 1985, E1.

<sup>40</sup> Robinson, *Spirit*, 69.

Robinson's time in Tanzania deepened his commitment to the cause of Africa. Upon his return to Boston he devoted himself to organizing the Pan African Liberation Committee (PALC) while earning a living as a community organizer at the Roxbury Multi-Service Center. PALC took up the cause of solidarity with those resisting Portuguese colonialism in Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and Mozambique. The Committee facilitated the production of 50,000 posters of a picture of grinning Portuguese soldiers holding aloft the severed heads of several Africans; each poster bore the logo of Gulf Oil, the major corporation involved in Angola, and carried the message "Boycott Gulf."<sup>41</sup> Harvard became a target for PALC organizing when it refused to divest its Gulf Oil stock. Robinson and other PALC members planted over a thousand black crosses in snow covered Harvard Yard to publicize the university's complicity with the forces of oppression in Southern Africa. In 1972 PALC also executed a six-day occupation of Harvard President Derek Bok's office. The sit-in ended when the University promised to send an official to investigate conditions in the Portuguese colonies. Bok's special assistant, Stephen Farber, traveled to Africa as agreed; upon his return he had found no reason for Harvard to divest from Gulf Oil.<sup>42</sup> Robinson and PALC had gained national attention and a minor concession from Harvard, but had not brought any substantive change in the University's investment policy.

During his days as an organizer with PALC, Robinson composed a short novel that distilled his relationship to the struggle against apartheid. Drawing on his experiences as a soldier as well as the knowledge he had gained as a Pan-African activist, in The

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<sup>41</sup> Robinson, Spirit, 89.

<sup>42</sup> Robinson, Spirit, 90-93.

Emancipation of Wakefield Clay, published in 1978, he places his protagonist in a predicament where his loyalties to his country of birth and his ancestral homeland and its peoples come into conflict.<sup>43</sup> The main character is a young African-American soldier from the south, Wakefield Clay, who is mobilized to Africa as part of an Army unit deployed to protect a US owned gold mine from antiapartheid insurgents. The “African Liberation Front,” captures Clay, along with two white soldiers, a Boston liberal and a redneck southern Captain.

While captive, Clay reads antiapartheid literature provided by his jailers, much as Robinson had first developed an interest in Africa while reading at the base library when he was in the Army. Through reading and conversation with one of the guards, Clay gains a new awareness about the politics of the struggle and develops sympathy for the cause. When his fellow prisoners attempt an escape, he finds himself torn between the mandate to elude capture and his support for the Front. When the Captain stealthily pounces on a sentry who obstructs the Americans’ escape, Clay cries out to alert the guard and then interposes himself between the knife-wielding Captain and the South African. In the ensuing struggle the Captain stabs Clay several time while shouting, “Die you nigger!” before the guard manages to shoot him. While his life slips away Wakefield is condemned by the surviving captive American who says “Goddam you, Clay, goddam you.” With “his eyes open and shining, at peace” as he dies, Clay is thanked by the guard whose life he saved and cradled in the arms of one of the female Front soldiers.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Randall Robinson, The Emancipation of Wakefield Clay (London: Bogle-L’Overture Publications, 1978), 7.

<sup>44</sup> Robinson, Clay, 106.

The portrayal in Wakefield Clay of an average black soldier receiving a political education against the backdrop of the antiapartheid struggle reflects the position Robinson had developed as he began his work with TransAfrica. Like Clay, he had been a naïve southern soldier who had his eyes opened while serving in the Army during the Vietnam era. He developed a bond with Africa as a result of his reading and his time in Tanzania. Finally, he did not know whether to be more wary of the open racism of the southern whites with whom he had grown up or the veiled disdain of northern whites like those he had encountered in the classrooms at Harvard. The climax of Wakefield Clay resolves this tension by having the protagonist commit revolutionary suicide to show his solidarity with the transnational fight against colonialism and apartheid. In the book's closing scene, Clay's father and brother decide not to share the sympathy message sent by the African Liberation Front with Wakefield's mourning mother. Unsure what to believe about Clay's death, they cannot square the official US explanation with the note that states that Wakefield Clay "courageously gave his life for the cause of African freedom."<sup>45</sup>

Robinson personally experienced the indignity of apartheid in 1976 when he accompanied a Congressional delegation to South Africa. Upon arrival he realized that he had stepped into a situation much like the one he knew in the segregated Richmond of his youth. In an interview Robinson recounted his sense that the atmosphere in South Africa "...smells of tension. Everyone is watching everyone. It's a situation that feels like it might explode at any moment. It's almost surreal."<sup>46</sup> At the time of his visit,

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<sup>45</sup> Robinson, Clay, 106.

<sup>46</sup> Remnick, "Randall Robinson," Washington Post.

conditions were so tense that the American Foreign Service officials who met the plane accompanied Robinson and other black members of the delegation to the whites only men's room in order to avert an incident with the South Africans.

By the summer of 1977 Randall Robinson had emerged as the choice to become executive director of the new TransAfrica, a name coined by fellow exploratory committee member Herschelle Challenor. Incorporating the organization on July 1, 1977, Robinson raised money and helped assemble the board so that the organization could begin its work as "The Black American Lobby for Africa and The Caribbean" in June 1978. Political Scientist Ronald Walters contacted Richard Hatcher, mayor of Gary, Indiana, to head the board of directors. Hatcher had been prominent in the Black Convention movement and had strong connections with black elected officials. The inclusion of Dr. Dorothy Height of the National Council of Negro Women provided a connection to the American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa, with which Height was also involved. Start up funding came through the Africa Committee of the National Council of Churches.<sup>47</sup>

TransAfrica faced challenges on two fronts. Trying to address all of Africa's issues put the two person staff in a position comparable to that of the Israeli lobby multiplied by nearly sixty nations, clearly an impossible task. At the same time TransAfrica took on the role of speaking for black America on foreign policy issues, which made it vulnerable to charges of arrogance and over-reaching. The fledgling lobby launched activities such as monitoring key legislation pertaining to Africa, providing testimony at Congressional hearings, publishing a newsletter and building its membership. As TransAfrica got

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<sup>47</sup> Robinson, Spirit, 108.

underway, Randall Robinson and his associates searched for ways to break out of the righteous but irrelevant category to which African issues, often represented by the “amiable but fangless liberal church establishment,”<sup>48</sup> were often relegated.

An opportunity to join the struggle over the Carter administration’s policy on Rhodesia came when the leader of the white minority regime in Rhodesia, Ian Smith, accepted the invitation of twenty-seven conservative members of the Senate to visit the US. Confronting Smith provided TransAfrica with a target for protest as well as a chance to raise its own public profile. TransAfrica organized a letter, signed by more than forty black leaders, to President Carter that objected to granting Smith a visa to the US. TransAfrica lawyers Curtis White, John Garland and Victor Goode unsuccessfully attempted to obtain an injunction from the US District Court to prevent Smith’s plane from landing at JFK Airport, arguing that granting Smith’s visa violated UN sanctions against Rhodesia. As Smith traveled across the country protesters in several cities greeted him; in Washington, TransAfrica rallied hundreds outside the White House to make clear the widespread opposition to the continuation of Smith’s rule.<sup>49</sup> The Washington Post ran an opinion piece by Randall Robinson titled “A Visa for ‘Tyranny’” in which Robinson called Smith’s proposal for “internal settlement” a plan for continuing “white minority rule in blackface.”<sup>50</sup> The precedent for action set during the Smith visit, which combined direct action protest with pressure from African-Americans in positions

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<sup>48</sup> Robinson, Spirit, 110.

<sup>49</sup> “Ian Smith Visits America,” TransAfrica News Report, vol. 1, no.1, Fall 1978, 1. TransAfrica Files, TransAfrica, Washington, DC. Hereafter referred to as TAF.

<sup>50</sup> Randall Robinson, “A Visa for ‘Tyranny,’” Washington Post, 5 October 1978, A20.

of power, became a distinctive synthesis that TransAfrica applied again at key moments of political opportunity.

That same summer the founder of the CBC and chair of the House Subcommittee on Africa, Charles Diggs, Jr., faced charges of mail fraud and lying in connection with the misuse of his Congressional payroll monies. Despite being found guilty in October, in November Diggs won re-election to his House seat for a thirteenth term by better than eighty percent of the vote. By June of 1980 his appeals had been turned down and he began a seven-month prison sentence. With the end of Diggs' political career TransAfrica and the antiapartheid movement lost an important ally in Congress.<sup>51</sup>

President Carter's 1977 appointment of Congressman Andrew Young as the US Permanent Representative to the United Nations presented opportunities and frustrations for TransAfrica. Young had been among the initiators of the Black Foreign Policy Forum that helped to found TransAfrica, and shared the group's goals. Young, however, saw economic involvement in southern Africa as the best way for the US to facilitate change, a position that put him at odds with TransAfrica activists who had accepted the necessity of boycott and armed struggle. During his visit to southern Africa in 1977, Young made waves among blacks and whites when he met with representatives of the black community in South Africa and suggested that they mobilize nonviolent economic boycotts as he had done as a civil rights activist in the US.<sup>52</sup>

Despite disagreements over the Carter administration's policies toward Africa, Young's turbulent tenure at the UN marked a period when TransAfrica had the greatest

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<sup>51</sup> Massie, Loosing the Bonds, 474.

<sup>52</sup> Massie, Loosing the Bonds, 413.

degree of access to the executive branch. Young's off the cuff remarks and individualistic style, often at odds with the objectives of the Carter State Department, drew down his currency with Carter and ultimately made him a liability in the eyes of the administration. In July of 1979, without clearing the conference with the State Department, Young met with the Palestine Liberation Organization's UN representative Zehdi Terzi. Young requested that Terzi try to delay the release of a report by the UN Committee on Palestinian Rights. A reporter for Newsweek found out about the meeting, queried the State Department, and set off the process that led to Young's resignation at the request of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance.<sup>53</sup>

Young's forced departure from the administration drew protest from the black constituency that had supported Carter's election in 1976. Many black leaders saw Young's resignation as evidence that the Carter camp valued the political support of American Jews, who had protested Young's conference with Terzi, more than the loyalty of the black community. TransAfrica weighed in on the controversy with a "Message to the President on the Resignation of Ambassador Andrew Young and on United States Relations with the Middle East and Africa."<sup>54</sup>

The "Message" from TransAfrica reiterated the disappointment and regret of the black community regarding Young's resignation. Declaring that "Black Americans and Jewish Americans are peoples whose history have made them ready champions of the

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<sup>53</sup> Andrew J. DeRoche, Andrew Young: Civil Rights Ambassador, Biographies in America Foreign Policy, Number 10 (Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources Books, 2003), 111-112.

<sup>54</sup>"Message to the President on the Resignation of Ambassador Andrew Young and on United States Relations with the Middle East and Africa," TransAfrica News Report, vol. 1, no. 3, Fall 1979, 2, TAF.

oppressed,” the “Message” bemoaned the damage that the circumstances of Young’s resignation to “the socially conscious and beneficial cooperation that has existed between our two communities” as well as to “the prospects for a general, peaceful resolution of conflict in the Middle East.” Stating that TransAfrica’s goal was “foreign relations that are more mutually beneficial to this country and to the substantial populations of African descent in the countries of Africa and the Caribbean,” the missive went on to address the parallel between TransAfrica and American allies of Israel:

We are styled “the black lobby for Africa,” and sometimes compared with “the Israeli lobby” by people who wonder if we can “do for Africa what the Jews have done for Israel. We do not seek to do what they have done. We do not seek to hold American policy or action to ransom in the interest of this or that policy or ambition of any foreign country.

The message detailed TransAfrica’s disagreements with Young over the best course for fostering change in South Africa while affirming Young’s role in the Carter administration as the most effective advocate for “improving the relations between the United States and the emergent and impoverished nations of the world.”<sup>55</sup> TransAfrica made clear its distress over Young’s resignation: “The blame for Young’s removal must fall principally on you Mr. President.”<sup>56</sup> The discontent with Carter administration’s diminished commitment to the human rights agenda it had emphasized at the outset of its tenure would grow into outrage over the change in policy that transpired when Carter lost the White House to Ronald Reagan.

As the November 1980 election approached, TransAfrica strengthened and diversified its activism. An “Action-Alert System” aimed at bringing black public opinion to bear

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<sup>55</sup> “Message,” TransAfrica News Report, 2.

<sup>56</sup> “Message,” TransAfrica News Report, 2.

on Congressional and Executive branch decision-making was organized. Implementation of the call and letter-generating system involved targeting the 153 congressional districts with a black constituency of ten percent or more. Initially thirty “Action Alert Coordinators” took on the task of generating responses in their districts.<sup>57</sup> Another project was a national campaign to provide scores of permanent signs proclaiming “LET’S END U.S. SUPPORT FOR SOUTH AFRICA” and other antiapartheid messages to black churches and community institutions. The signs served as a visible link between the African-American community and the struggle of the black majority in South Africa. An expanded staff included Salih Abdul-Rahim (Salih Booker) who served as legislative assistant.<sup>58</sup>

From TransAfrica’s perspective the portents of Reagan’s policy toward southern Africa were grim. “All Reagan knows about southern Africa is that he’s on the side of the whites,”<sup>59</sup> avowed the man who became Ronald Reagan’s Assistant Secretary of State for South Africa, Chester Crocker. Reagan affirmed Crocker’s appraisal in March of 1981 when he stated to a reporter that, because of the primacy of cold war considerations, he could not foresee forsaking “a country that has stood by us in every war we have fought...” even though the Afrikaner leaders of the National Party were the political heirs of the Afrikaner architects of apartheid who had favored the Nazis in World War II. Crocker concocted the policy of “constructive engagement,” as opposed to confrontation,

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<sup>57</sup> “TransAfrica Action-Alert System,” TransAfrica News Report, vol. 1, no. 7, Fall 1980, 5, TAF.

<sup>58</sup> “TransAfrica and Black Church in Anti-Apartheid Campaign,” TransAfrica News Report, vol. 1, no. 7, Fall 1980, 5, TAF.

<sup>59</sup> Kevin Danaher, “The US Struggle over Sanctions against South Africa,” in Mark Orkin, Sanctions Against Apartheid (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990), 134.

by which he hoped to nudge South Africa toward change through continued US economic involvement rather than sanctions and divestment. His compatriots in the Reagan administration seemed more interested in engagement with the apartheid regime, constructive or not.

TransAfrica quickly moved into a confrontational position with the Reagan administration. In May of 1981 Randall Robinson received classified State Department documents that revealed the warmer relationship the Reagan foreign policy team was initiating with South Africa.<sup>60</sup> The person who passed the memoranda to Robinson did so out of disagreement with the new policy direction. Robinson turned the documents over to Washington Post journalist Joe Ritchie, who published an article based on the leaked information.<sup>61</sup> The papers revealed that Assistant Secretary-designate Chester Crocker, along with his assistant Alan Keyes, had met with South Africa's Defense Minister and Foreign Minister in Pretoria to discuss relations with the new administration. Central to the logic of the papers were administration concerns about Soviet involvement in Angola, access to South Africa's mineral wealth, and protection of sea transportation around the Cape of Good Hope. The papers also made clear that Reagan's policy regarding South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia would not continue the multilateral approach that had been crafted under Carter. Overall, the message to Pretoria was that the Reagan White House would "work to end South Africa's polecat status in the world and seek to

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<sup>60</sup> Robinson, Spirit, 128-29.

<sup>61</sup> Joe Ritchie, "US Details Terms for Closer South African Ties," Washington Post, 29 May 1981, A21.

restore its place as a legitimate and important regional actor with whom we can cooperate pragmatically.”<sup>62</sup>

TransAfrica published the purloined papers in its August 1981 News Report with the hope that wide dissemination of the moves toward the “developing alliance” with South Africa would help build opposition to apartheid in the US.<sup>63</sup> Robinson’s action caused concern among TransAfrica’s board members because release of the State Department memoranda put the organization in a position akin to that of Daniel Ellsberg, the Rand Corporation employee who leaked the “Pentagon Papers” to the New York Times. The TransAfrica Board held a special discussion to deal with whether Robinson had followed proper organizational protocol by releasing the documents without prior consultation; it was decided that the board did not want to be embroiled in such decisions in the future.<sup>64</sup> No legal action followed the incident, but the lines between the White House and TransAfrica had now been clearly drawn and the black lobby had made clear that it planned to use all tools at its disposal to challenge constructive engagement.

While the early 1980s proved to be a period of frustration for TransAfrica’s attempts to influence White House policy toward southern Africa, as an organization the black lobby was growing. New chapters were established and individual membership grew. An annual dinner served as a fundraising event as well as a venue for prominent speakers such as Sam Nujoma of the Namibian liberation movement SWAPO and Maurice Bishop, Prime Minister of Grenada. In 1982, TransAfrica launched a non-profit

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<sup>62</sup> Ritchie, “South African Ties,” Washington Post.

<sup>63</sup> “New US Policy On South Africa: State Department Documents Uncover Developing Alliance, TransAfrica News Report, Special Edition, August 1981, TAF.

<sup>64</sup> Robinson, Spirit, 133.

educational branch, TransAfrica Forum. The forum produced two publications: “Issue Brief” and a quarterly called TransAfrica Forum Journal.<sup>65</sup> The Forum aimed to amplify the work of TransAfrica by providing venues for a variety of scholars and commentators to raise the profile of issues related to Africa.<sup>66</sup>

The Reagan administration’s policies toward South Africa and the increasingly repressive actions of the South African government continued to prod TransAfrica to seek new methods by which to convey its antiapartheid message. All over the country divestment debates roiled university trustees and municipal bodies, while Presidential Candidate Jesse Jackson made opposition to apartheid a campaign theme, and South African apartheid opponent Bishop Desmond Tutu received the 1984 Nobel Peace Prize. At the same time the aggressive anticommunism of Reagan’s foreign policy left its opponents scrambling to respond to cold war confrontations with the Soviet Union and repression of revolutionary movements in Central America. The Republican landslide re-election in 1984 added to the anxiety of those seeking some way to resist Reagan’s foreign policy.

The Wednesday, November 21, 1984, sit-in at the South African Embassy right after the election acted like a flare in the night sky, illuminating the breadth of existing grassroots antiapartheid activism while igniting a new wave of antiapartheid organizing. Building on the extensive Thanksgiving Day media coverage, the day after Thanksgiving the launch of the Free South Africa Movement (FSAM) was announced in a meeting room in the Rayburn House office building. A steering committee made up of prominent

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<sup>65</sup> TransAfrica Forum Journal was published from 1982 through 1996.

<sup>66</sup> TransAfrica Forum News Release, 29 January 1982, TAF.

African Americans who had been outspoken in their opposition to apartheid – Eleanor Holmes Norton, Roger Wilkins, historian and fellow of the Institute for Policy Studies, William Lucy of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, and Dr. Sylvia Hill, professor at the University of the District of Columbia and leader in the DC based South Africa Support Project (SASP) – connected FSAM with a range of constituencies. TransAfrica played the central role in the coalition, with Legislative director Cecelie Counts coordinated the day-to-day operation of the demonstration. FSAM, which initially intended to mount a week of picketing at the embassy, grew into a year of protests in which over 4000 people were arrested during protests at the embassy.<sup>67</sup>

In the days immediately following the embassy sit-in, protests happened in twenty-six cities across the country. Demonstrators targeted South African consulates and businesses that sold gold Kruggerand coins from South Africa. The number of arrestees grew so large that on November 30, 1984, the US Attorney for Washington, DC, Joseph diGenova, began dismissing charges because of the fear that they would clog the courts.<sup>68</sup> Subsequently, a range of celebrities including Arthur Ashe, Stevie Wonder, and Amy Carter, along with twenty-three members of Congress, submitted to arrest during the daily picket line that started each day at 3:30 pm, the time of the original appointment with Ambassador Fourie. Several rallies involving the visiting Archbishop Tutu served to connect the embassy actions to the global movement against apartheid.

Organizer Cecelie Counts, like Robinson a graduate of Harvard Law School, attributed the successful mobilization by the FSAM to the way it was originally

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<sup>67</sup> History of the Free South Africa Movement Fact Sheet, Spring 1990, TAF.

<sup>68</sup> “Protest Chronology,” Washington Post, 27 November 1985), B1.

imagined. According to Counts, “the format of the demonstrations allowed people to use their organizational identities as a way to come to the movement.”<sup>69</sup> The daily ritual of volunteer “messengers” stepping forward from the picket line to risk arrest by refusing to leave until they were arrested for demonstrating within five hundred feet of an embassy provided an entry level, low risk activity through which people could show their commitment to the cause. The dignified, nonviolent nature of the protest helped garner sympathetic media attention while expanding participation beyond the cadre of activists for whom apartheid had been a long-held concern. Steering committee member Sylvia Hill emphasized the significance of the co-operation of the Washington, DC city government, which under Mayor Marion Barry, who had once been president of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, “helped to legitimize protest and arrest for many people who would otherwise have been apprehensive.”<sup>70</sup>

The FSAM coalition provided leadership to a symbolic revival of an alliance akin to the civil rights coalition of the sixties that included blacks, labor, Christian and Jewish groups, women, and students. FSAM made American opposition to apartheid visible in a way that had not previously occurred and linked that sentiment to the demand for sanctions legislation. Without fully expecting it, TransAfrica had managed to bridge divides that had previously separated segments of the antiapartheid constituency. By fulfilling the long sought strategic objective of an antiapartheid network led by African

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<sup>69</sup> “The FSAM Story: Cecelie Counts-Blakey recounts the origins, achievement and shortcomings of the Free South Africa Movement,” Crossroads, April 1995, 12.

<sup>70</sup> “Free South Africa! Notes from My Diary: Sylvia Hill offers a personal history of work in the Free South Africa Movement,” Crossroads, April 1995, 15-16.

Americans, FSAM served to publicize the struggle for federal legislation to impose economic sanctions on South Africa.

Linking grassroots demonstrations to foreign policy legislation is a difficult and delicate business. TransAfrica's links to the Congressional Black Caucus made that connection more direct than had been the case with comparable legislation in the 1980s regarding nuclear arms control and aid to Central American counter-revolutionaries. As conditions worsened in South Africa and the government there declared a state of emergency, frustration grew in the US and the possibility for garnering support for substantive sanctions legislation increased. FSAM helped give impetus to increased activity in Congress to enact economic sanctions against South Africa. In 1985, Congress, after much debate and bargaining, passed a limited sanctions bill that served notice to the White House that opinion in the legislative branch was turning against constructive engagement. Even a group of Republican legislators, led by Georgia Republican Newt Gingrich, wrote a letter to Reagan warning of the domestic political cost of maintaining constructive engagement.<sup>71</sup> In response, Reagan's allies began to probe and criticize the leadership of the antiapartheid movement for being too far to the left politically. One of TransAfrica's critics was The Lincoln Institute for Research and Education, a conservative think tank that articulated a right wing critique of civil rights issues.

In 1985 the Lincoln Institute published a booklet titled TransAfrica: A Lobby of the Left.<sup>72</sup> Concerned that some of the junior Republicans in Congress had become critical of

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<sup>71</sup> "The FSAM Story," Crossroads, 13.

<sup>72</sup> Lincoln Institute, TransAfrica: A Lobby of the Left (Washington: Lincoln Institute for Education and Research, 1985).

constructive engagement as a result of the publicity generated by the Free South Africa Movement, the authors of Lobby of the Left strove to show that TransAfrica as well as its supporters in the CBC were in league with pro-Soviet, anti-American forces in southern Africa and elsewhere. The first target of Lobby was the African Nation Congress. Asserting that the ANC could not conduct the campaign of sabotage and guerilla strikes it had been executing since the late seventies without Soviet training and support, Lobby cited statements by ANC President Oliver Tambo and other ANC representatives in which they express gratitude to the USSR for its aid to and support of the antiapartheid struggle. TransAfrica's defense of the role of Cuban combat troops in Angola along with support for statements critical of Israel provided proof to the authors of Lobby that TransAfrica's advocated a radical agenda.

In Lobby of the Left the Lincoln Institute reached back to the Rhodesia crisis of the Carter years in an effort to tar Randall Robinson as disloyal to the US. Citing a quote in the Philadelphia Bulletin in which Robinson stated:

The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne is 40 percent black. The (Carter) administration would be absolutely foolish to expect these troops to be sympathetic to an order to help racist governments in South Africa, Zimbabwe or anywhere else. It would create all kinds of turmoil. We would expect the black leadership to provide this information to black troops to help them make up their minds. I would be the first to do so.<sup>73</sup>

By intimating that Robinson had counseled treason to African-American troops, the Lincoln Institute attempted to discredit him the same way that Paul Robeson had been smeared in 1949 for speaking out against the possibility of war with the Soviet Union. Robeson too had been lambasted for purportedly treasonous speech that might have

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<sup>73</sup> Philadelphia Bulletin, 20 July 1978, as cited in Lincoln Institute, Lobby, 8.

persuaded black troops not to fight. For Robeson, this charge began the effective containment of his political activism.<sup>74</sup> For Robinson and TransAfrica, the times had changed enough so that such charges had little impact.

Lobby of the Left accused TransAfrica of abusing the moral mantle of the civil rights movement in order to support Marxist terrorism in southern Africa for the purpose of undermining the geopolitical objectives of the US. The pamphlet charged TransAfrica with selectively criticizing South Africa while failing to hold other African states to the same standard. Lobby alleged that TransAfrica focused not on “‘racism’ but the promotion of radical revolution.”<sup>75</sup> By utilizing the kind of anticommunist rhetoric reminiscent of publications such as Red Channels<sup>76</sup> that had been used against the Council on African Affairs in the 1950s, The Lincoln Institute’s broadside tried to delegitimize TransAfrica’s work by casting it as anti-American. While Lobby of the Left did not directly hinder TransAfrica’s efforts, it did contribute to an atmosphere in which the black lobby’s opponents tried to undermine its credibility with charges of anti-Americanism.

The fears of the rightwing were justified insofar as the increasing momentum of the pro-sanctions forces in Congress heralded the growing consensus against constructive engagement. In 1986 a bill authored by the Democratic Congressman from Berkeley, Ronald Dellums, one of the CBC members who had been arrested at the South African Embassy, passed the House on June 12. The bill called for comprehensive sanctions

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<sup>74</sup> Martin Bauml Duberman, Paul Robeson (New York: Pan Books, 1989), 342.

<sup>75</sup> Lincoln Institute, Lobby, 34.

<sup>76</sup> Counterattack (Organization), Red Channels: The Report of Communist Influence in Radio and Television (New York: American Business Consultants, 1950).

including a trade embargo and divestment. In August the Senate passed a slightly weaker version of sanctions. In the House-Senate Conference Committee the Senate bill was accepted as the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986. President Reagan vetoed the measure, but was overridden by both chambers of Congress.<sup>77</sup> The override of Reagan's veto marked the end of constructive engagement and the first major foreign policy defeat for the administration. Congressman Dellums evaluated the victory this way:

In the end, Reagan's veto made a Senate bill that I and other activists felt was weak far more significant than it 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.<sup>78</sup>

The politics of the civil rights movement and the Cold War were intertwined in the lead-up to the sanction. Conservative Republican Senator Jesse Helms, who had often been at odds with the civil rights movement in the US, had mounted an unsuccessful filibuster of the 1985 sanctions package. During the 1986 debate Helms helped arrange phone calls between South African Foreign Minister Roelof (Pik) Botha and farm state senators sensitive to South African grain purchases. Helms asserted that sanctions would lead to “violent, fundamental change” in southern Africa that would foster “lasting tyranny” and benefit the Soviet Union's regional aims. Fellow Republican Richard Lugar from Indiana, who supported sanctions, countered Helms charge by positing that

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<sup>77</sup> Peter J. Schraeder, United States Foreign Policy toward Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis and Change (New York: Cambridge, 1994), 230.

<sup>78</sup> Ronald V. Dellums and H. Lee Halterman, Lying Down With the Lions: A Public Life from the Streets of Oakland to the Halls of Power (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 137.

“We are against tyranny, and tyranny is in South African, and we must be vigorous in that fight. We are not destroying the [South African] government. That government is self-destructive.”<sup>79</sup>

TransAfrica celebrated the enactment of the Anti-Apartheid act as the culmination of many years of struggle and the fruit of the FSAM. Emphasizing the role that TransAfrica had played in building the momentum for sanctions, Senator Edward Kennedy referred to Randall Robinson as the “101<sup>st</sup> Senator” for the role he played in representing FSAM in the process of obtaining the sanctions bill. “We could not have overridden Ronald Reagan’s veto without Randall Robinson’s leadership.”<sup>80</sup> TransAfrica increased its prestige and profile by using increased funds to hire more staff. The Congressional imposition of sanctions would be TransAfrica’s brightest moment, one that illuminated the strengths and weaknesses of strategic essentialism that had inspired the black-led FSAM. While the Congress passed sanctions in response to public pressure in the context of escalating violence in South Africa, the Reagan administration showed its determination to continue its engagement with South Africa. In February 1987 the US vetoed a UN Security Council resolution modeled on the 1986 Anti-Apartheid Act that would have imposed stricter international sanctions on South Africa. This vote contravened the stipulation of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act that the US government should pursue broader international sanctions, thus disregarding the intent of

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<sup>79</sup> Edward Walsh, “Sanctions Imposed on South Africa as Senate Overrides Veto, 78-21,” Washington Post, 3 October 1986, A1.

<sup>80</sup> Jacob Weisberg, “Mandela’s Men: Disavowing an Impending Victory” The New Republic, 9 July 1990, 14.

the law.<sup>81</sup> Thus the expansion of the legacy of the civil rights movement, as represented by the FSAM, into Congressional decision-making on US foreign policy did not extend to an international venue such as the UN.

With overt constructive engagement undone by sanctions, the Reagan administration did its utmost to maintain its cold war-driven agenda in southern Africa, particularly its support for the antigovernment National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) guerrillas in Angola led by Jonas Savimbi, who also had the support of South Africa. In 1985, Congress had repealed the Clark Amendment, originally passed in 1976, which had prevented the US from providing covert assistance to UNITA. Antiapartheid activists saw the support for UNITA as “a strategy to lift the financial weight from South Africa by paying for Savimbi.”<sup>82</sup> Savimbi’s supporters in Congress and the Reagan administration supported his forces as a counterweight to the Cuban forces that supported the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola-Worker’s Party (MPLA) government in Luanda. In June of 1988 Savimbi was brought to the US to meet with President Reagan as well as to conduct a speaking tour of southern cities. Reagan refused to meet with Angolan President José Eduardo dos Santos during this period. Savimbi’s tour culminated with the Medgar Evers Humanitarian award being presented to him in Jackson, Mississippi. With more protesters outside the event than in attendance, Savimbi accepted the award from Jackson Mayor Charles Evers, the brother of slain NAACP leader Medgar Evers, and then joined hands with the mayor to sing “We Shall

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<sup>81</sup> Schraeder, United States Foreign Policy toward Africa, 233.

<sup>82</sup> “Free South Africa!,” Crossroads, 17.

Overcome.”<sup>83</sup> TransAfrica, along with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the NAACP, organized protests to greet Savimbi at each of his speaking engagements.<sup>84</sup>

In July of 1988 an agreement was reached that would lead to the independence of Namibia and the eventual unraveling of apartheid. Assistant Secretary of State Chester Crocker managed to mediate the July 20 accord between Angola, Cuba, and South Africa that, when formalized as the Angola Accord and the Namibia Accord on December 22, 1988, would lead to the withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola and the independence of Namibia from South Africa in March of 1990.<sup>85</sup> The success of Crocker’s diplomacy served to prevent further tightening of the loosely enforced sanctions on South Africa, and thus the possibility for mobilizing greater public pressure on Congress diminished even as the administration continued to lobby for aid to Savimbi

Randall Robinson and TransAfrica worked hard to prevent more aid going to UNITA. This effort was rewarded by further enmity from conservative supporters of Savimbi who searched for ways to diminish TransAfrica’s credibility. During the summer of 1988 it was made known via TransAfrica’s financial report to the House of Representatives, a requirement for registered lobby groups, that the Cuban interest Section had purchased tables at several of TransAfrica’s annual fundraising dinners. The total amount given to TransAfrica by the Cubans was \$4000. News of the donations elicited condemnation from spokespeople for the administration as well as the Washington Times and the Wall

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<sup>83</sup> Mary Dixon, “Angolan Guerrilla Leader Gets Medgar Evers Award,” The Clarion-Ledger Jackson Daily News, (Mississippi), 26 June 1988, 1A, TAF.

<sup>84</sup> “Confrontation,” Newsweek, 27 June 1988, 5, TAF.

<sup>85</sup> Schraeder, United States Foreign Policy toward Africa, 236.

Street Journal. TransAfrica responded to the charges that the organization was taking money from Communist Cuba by explaining that all of the African and Caribbean embassies and interest sections had been invited to the functions and thus the funds had not been considered a donation. What the Wall Street Journal dubbed a “miniflap” did not result in legal problems for TransAfrica but it once again indicated that the organization’s opponents wanted to obstruct TransAfrica’s agenda by casting it in Cold War terms.<sup>86</sup>

As the debate over aid to Savimbi continued, the charges that TransAfrica had taken a pro-Communist stance emerged again in 1989. On October 2, Republican Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah called for an investigation by the Attorney General into whether Randall Robinson had received payment from the MPLA government in Angola. Robinson, with funding from the United Church of Christ, had traveled to Luanda the previous week where he met with President dos Santos and other Angolan officials. He presented dos Santos with an invitation from thirty-six members of Congress, including eight Republicans, to visit the US. Hatch charged that, “Mr. Robinson should not be permitted to propagate Marxist propaganda under the cover of academic independence,” and that “it is known that the Marxist regime financed Mr. Robinson’s trip to Luanda.”<sup>87</sup>

Liberal columnists Anthony Lewis of the New York Times and Courtland Milloy of the Washington Post came to Robinson’s defense. Lewis suggested that allies of Savimbi such as Hatch were becoming desperate as even conservative opinion was turning against

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<sup>86</sup> Peter LaBarbera, “Cuban government aids pro-Marxist TransAfrica,” Washington Times, 21 July 1988, A1 and “Keeping Company,” Wall Street Journal, 9 August 1988, Editorial Page, TAF.

<sup>87</sup> Anthony Lewis, “The Savimbi Smear,” New York Times, 5 October 1989, A31.

the brutal anti-Communist guerilla. Milloy attributed the smear to “a regressive political atmosphere in which blacks are considered fair game for unjustified attacks.”<sup>88</sup> In response to rebukes in the press as well as letters from the CBC and Robinson, Hatch apologized for the letter. The Senator claimed the letter had been written and sent by a pro-Savimbi aide without his knowledge or approval. Hatch said, “It got out of hand. It’s a stupid letter. I’m a little offended that people would think I’m dumb enough to write that letter.”<sup>89</sup> The CBC accepted Hatch’s apology and the controversy receded. TransAfrica had enough allies and sufficient reputation to easily survive one of the last red baiting episodes of the cold war era.

In the fall of 1989 the transformation of South Africa and the end of apartheid began to accelerate. The aging president P.W. Botha was made to resign by his cabinet. Botha was replaced by F.W. deKlerk, who represented a younger faction of the National Party that realized apartheid was no longer economically tenable. In February 1990, de Klerk lifted restrictions on the political organizations that had been banned in the wake of the Sharpeville Massacre. The ANC, PAC and South African Communist Party could now come above ground to be rejoined with long imprisoned leaders whom de Klerk released. On February 11, 1990, Nelson Mandela was released from prison after more than twenty-seven years behind bars.<sup>90</sup> The tectonic shift in the South African political situation

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<sup>88</sup> Courtland Milloy, “Panning Hatch’s Latest Act,” Washington Post, 10 October 10 1989, B3.

<sup>89</sup> Don Phillips, “Hatch Apologizes for ‘Stupid’ Letter,” Washington Post, 11 October 1989, A26.

<sup>90</sup> Nigel Wordon, The Making of Modern South Africa, Third Edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 155.

reverberated in the US. Suddenly, the years of organizing and picketing and letter writing and lobbying seemed to have come to fruition.

The abrupt change in South Africa created new opportunities and complications for TransAfrica. In March a high-level delegation from TransAfrica, including Jesse Jackson, Richard Hatcher, Dorothy Height, and Randall Robinson met with Secretary of State James Baker III. They urged him to maintain sanctions on South Africa, arguing that pressure needed to be maintained to insure that the government continued to dismantle apartheid.<sup>91</sup> The transformation of South Africa was in a tentative phase, temporarily elevating TransAfrica from the position of petitioner to the role of intermediary between the liberation movement and the US government. This was the role TransAfrica played during the American phase of Mandela's 1990 world tour.

In June of 1990 Nelson Mandela and his wife Winnie made a whirlwind national tour of the US, covering eight cities in eleven days. Except for a small demonstration in Miami where anti-Castro Cubans expressed unhappiness about Mandela's friendship with Fidel Castro, the tour was welcomed by tens of thousands of people who expressed admiration for Mandela and support for the antiapartheid struggle. Mandela spoke to huge crowds, enjoyed a parade in Manhattan, and addressed a joint session of Congress, the first African to do so. Randall Robinson and board members of TransAfrica joined in the greeting of Mandela upon his arrival in New York and helped to arrange his many engagements in the black community. Black mayors governed most of the cities Mandela visited; over seven million dollars was raised for the ANC during the tour.<sup>92</sup> In

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<sup>91</sup> Donna Britt, "Robinson, A Voice for Africa: The Lobbyist and His Power of Persuasion," Washington Post, 12 March 1990, D1.

<sup>92</sup> Richard Lacayo, "A Hero's Welcome," TIME, 2 July 1990, 14-20.

his address to Congress on June 26, Mandela expressed his appreciation to the antiapartheid movement:

And here I speak not only about you, members of the United States Congress, but also of the millions of people throughout this great land who stood up and engaged the apartheid system in struggle. The masses who have given us such strength and joy by the manner in which they have received us since we arrived in this country.<sup>93</sup>

The quickly shifting political circumstances made for disparate aftereffects from the Mandela tour. While the tour created lots of media coverage and involved thousands of people who felt included in the moment, the effect on the antiapartheid movement was decidedly mixed. Longtime grassroots activists often felt shoved aside as the ANC showed “more interest in developing ties with sources of political power and money than with activist organizations.”<sup>94</sup> As the role of the ANC changed from that of an activist movement to a political party vying for power and elected office, its relationships with solidarity activists and allies changed, much to the disappointment of those at the grassroots. Local activists also voiced frustration with TransAfrica. According to Prexy Nesbitt, an African-American organizer who had been central to antiapartheid activities in Chicago and had worked with ACOA, TransAfrica did not relate well to grassroots groups because it saw itself “as being exclusively in control of all work on Africa in the

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<sup>93</sup> Nelson Mandela, Address to the Joint Session of the Houses of Congress of the U.S.A. Washington, D.C., 26 June 1990, ANC Online Archives, <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mandela/1990/sp900626.html> (1 October 2003).

<sup>94</sup> Nicholas Alexander, “Whatever Happened to the Free South Africa Movement?,” Third Force, March/April 1993, 16.

US. Just because African-Americans were the moving force behind the movement doesn't mean we should reject allies in the struggle."<sup>95</sup>

In the wake of the Mandela visit the role of TransAfrica began to change. The organization responded with outrage to the Bush administration's May 1990 invitation to South African President F.W. de Klerk to visit the US. Randall Robinson spoke out forcefully in opposition, stating:

No American president has ever invited a South African president presiding over an apartheid state to visit the United States. Not even Ronald Reagan. Then to do it in the face of objections and the week before Nelson Mandela comes to the United States is a demonstration of insensitivity of which I did not know George to be capable.

As a result of the uproar from TransAfrica and other critics of the Bush administration de Klerk postponed his trip. One group that did not oppose de Klerk's visit was the ANC. When asked by a reporter whether de Klerk's meeting with Bush concerned him, Mandela replied "Whether I go to the States before or after Mr. de Klerk makes no difference whatsoever to me."<sup>96</sup> This small rift between the ANC and TransAfrica continued to grow as the events of the early nineties unfolded.

In October of 1991 Nelson Mandela and the ANC hosted the "Democracy Now Tour" organized by TransAfrica. A delegation of twenty-three African Americans spent six days learning about and investigating conditions in South Africa. Among the delegates were producer Quincy Jones, NCNW president Dorothy Height, Representative Maxine Waters, publisher Earl Graves, tennis star Arthur Ashe, Mayor Richard Hatcher, Gay McDougall of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, along with labor

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<sup>95</sup> Alexander, "Whatever Happened," 15.

<sup>96</sup> Weisberg, "Mandela's Men," The New Republic, 14.

leaders, business people, and clergy.<sup>97</sup> Lindiwe Mabuza of the ANC welcomed the group, stating:

Here are the sons and daughters of Africa whose ancestors left the continent as slaves coming back to say to their brothers and sisters in South Africa who are under going another form of slavery, ‘We are coming back not shackled, not weak, but strong because we have learned over the centuries that in order to make it we must stand together.’<sup>98</sup>

The delegation pledged its continued support to the South African freedom struggle. Upon departure Randall Robinson spoke for the group, telling Nelson Mandela, “The blood that unites us is thicker than the water that divides us.”<sup>99</sup>

TransAfrica’s sixteen years of struggle and growth had brought it to a place where Robinson and the board believed it needed to expand from an activist lobby group to an institution akin to other Washington think tanks. With that goal in mind, a building at 1744 R Street NW in DC was purchased in 1993. TransAfrica raised over 2.4 million dollars for the purchase and renovations of its new headquarters. The building, which had once been the German Embassy, was meant to house offices, meeting space and a specialty library devoted to works on Africa and the Caribbean. The library was named in honor of Arthur Ashe, who had died in February 1993. The collection included books from the shelves of the Council on African Affairs, donated to TransAfrica by Dorothy Hunton, the widow of CAA director Alpheus Hunton.<sup>100</sup> The conference room in the new

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<sup>97</sup> “TransAfrica leads Democracy Now Tour to South Africa,” Press Release, 17 October 1991, TAF.

<sup>98</sup> “A Summit of Concern in South Africa,” Ebony, January 1992, 28.

<sup>99</sup> “Summit,” Ebony, 28.

<sup>100</sup> William Raspberry, “TransAfrica Comes Into Its Own,” Washington Post, 14 May 1993, A31.

headquarters was named in honor of W.E.B Du Bois while a large portrait of Paul Robeson adorned the front hall. The new TransAfrica headquarters was officially dedicated on June 4, 1993. The group that had held vigil outside of the South African embassy through heat and cold, rain and snow, had now taken residence among the legations of the world on Embassy Row.<sup>101</sup>

One of the first major events at the new center was a reception for Nelson Mandela. An elite group of TransAfrica supporters shared a luncheon with the South African leader and his entourage. Mandela informed the gathering of the plans being made for the first all race elections of 1994 that would make him president, as well as describing the dire need for international aid to address the poverty of the black masses. According to Robinson's memoir, toward the end of the meeting Mandela aide Barbara Masakela informed the group that the ANC had approached American corporations for support of their election efforts. Among those contacted had been J. Wayne Fredericks, who, as a spokesperson for Ford Motor Company had long resisted disinvestment and sanctions. Randall Robinson took offense at this, and told Masekela "To seek their support is prudent and desirable. But for us who have heard nothing about this initiative from the ANC is an affront." When asked, "After all of our efforts, how could you do this?" Masakela replied, "That was then, this is now and we must move on."<sup>102</sup>

Randall Robinson's disappointment with the ANC grew in 1994 when another planned fundraiser featuring Mandela was cancelled with little notice. After returning the

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<sup>101</sup> The building on R Street was sold in 2001 following Randall Robinson's retirement from TransAfrica. See Teresa Wiltz, "Legal Weapons Too: For Actor Danny Glover, his Role as an Activist is a Lifetime's Work, Washington Post, 28 May 2002, C1.

<sup>102</sup> Robinson, Spirit, 182-3.

donations solicited for the affair TransAfrica landed in financial difficulty. Frustrated with this kind of treatment from those on whose behalf he had labored so long, Robinson pessimistically contended “once there was an army of Americans eager to push our government in a helpful direction. Now, that well-meaning force has been all but dissolved--puzzlingly, by the hand of the ANC itself.”<sup>103</sup>

TransAfrica’s leadership of the Free South Africa Movement culminated a long struggle to assert an effective African-American voice in the realm of US foreign policy debate. The same strategic essentialism, built on the special bond between black Africans under apartheid and African Americans, which helped make TransAfrica effective in the fight for economic sanctions on South Africa, hindered the efficacy of the same tactics when applied to other issues regarding Africa. Like his character Wakefield Clay, Randall Robinson tried to interpose himself and his organization between those suffering from apartheid and the support of the apartheid regime by the US. Akin to A. Philip Randolph’s role in the March on Washington Movement, TransAfrica benefited from Randall Robinson’s “situational charisma,” described by Randolph’s biographer Paula Pfeffer as

A term applicable to a leader of normally nonmessianic tendency who invokes a strong response because he offers, in a time of acute adversity, leadership that is perceived as a means of salvation from distress. Situational charisma may bring a leader such as Randolph to power; it cannot keep him there.<sup>104</sup>

Like its leader, TransAfrica was delimited by situational appeal that could not be easily stretched to fit the post apartheid circumstances. Like a flare that lights up the night, the

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<sup>103</sup> Robinson, Spirit, 186.

<sup>104</sup> Paula F. Pfeffer, A. Philip Randolph, Pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 3.

TransAfrica's FSAM tactic proved to be a one-use-only political tool based on strategic essentialism.

TransAfrica represented the de facto merger of Pan-Africanist and integrationist trends among African Americans concerned about South Africa. It was most successful when it leaned toward the integrationist side and cast the antiapartheid struggle in terms of the American civil religion. It was less successful when it leaned toward the more radical Pan-Africanist side because that message did not reach the broader public. Without the mirror of the struggle to end apartheid in South Africa to reflect its light and heat on TransAfrica's rejuvenation of the American civil rights coalition, the group was limited in its appeal and could not rebuild the public base that had been crucial to the passage of the 1986 Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act.

TransAfrica successfully invoked the spirit of the movement for African-American civil rights and applied it to influencing US policy toward South Africa. Utilizing its connections in the CBC in combination with symbolic civil disobedience at the South African Embassy, TransAfrica clarified the preceding three decades of patient antiapartheid organizing while bringing pressure to bear on Congress as well as Presidents Reagan and Bush. During the decisive years of the antiapartheid struggle TransAfrica brought black power to Embassy Row.

## CHAPTER 4

### Lost in the Stars: Apartheid and American Popular Culture

*Not miles, or walls, or length of days  
Nor the cold doubt of midnight can hold us apart,  
For swifter than wings of the morning  
The pathways of the heart!  
Over tens of thousands of miles.”*

#### ***Lost in the Stars***

By Maxwell Anderson and  
Kurt Weill  
1949<sup>1</sup>

*It's time to accept our responsibility  
Freedom is a privilege nobody rides for free  
Look around the world baby it can't be denied  
Why are we always on the wrong side?*

#### ***Sun City***

By Little Steven  
1985<sup>2</sup>

When both apartheid and the cold war were new, Americans learned of South Africa's racial conflict through Alan Paton's novel Cry, The Beloved Country. First published in early 1948, just prior to the election that swept the Nationalist Party into power in South Africa, Cry was made into a Broadway musical in 1949, titled *Lost in the Stars*, and produced as a film in 1951. The international bestseller alerted the world to South Africa's crisis in a way similar to Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin<sup>3</sup> (also an

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<sup>1</sup> Maxwell Anderson and Kurt Weill, Lost in the Stars: The Dramatization of Alan Paton's Novel Cry, the Beloved Country (New York: W. Sloane Associates, 1950), 6.

<sup>2</sup> Little Steven, Sun City, EMI Records Group, 1985, Liner Notes.

<sup>3</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom's Cabin (New York: Signet, 1998 ed.).

international success adapted to the stage) informed the debate over slavery in antebellum America. Like Stowe, Paton observed apartheid from the position of a white Protestant seeking reconciliation with oppressed blacks. The career of Cry on page, stage, and screen provides a starting point for understanding the way that Americans perceived apartheid through popular culture.

Casting of the dramatizations of Cry offered opportunities for African-American performers to learn about conditions in South Africa while gaining prominence in productions that earned international renown. The transnational involvement of writers, directors, and actors in producing *Cry* and *Lost in the Stars* exemplified the power relationships at the outset of major cultural productions about apartheid: white American and European, writers, directors and lyricists framed dramatic presentations that featured African-American and black South African performers.

Over the four decades that books, movies, and music conveyed the oppression and pain of South Africa's struggle to American audiences, a simultaneous struggle for control of the means of creative production and transmission by Africans and African-Americans ensued. The way in which the stories were told and the productions were sold reflected changing racial power dynamics in South Africa and the US. The gradual assertion of black authorship and control is parallel to the process by which the emergence of the black-led Free South Africa Movement marked a shift in the power relationships within the American antiapartheid movement. By translating the issue of apartheid into the terms of American civil religion influenced by the civil rights movement, representations of apartheid in popular culture shaped the cultural context in which Americans understood the South African crisis.

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Cultural critic Melani McCalister has noted that cultural representations “do not inject ideologies into their audiences, but they do figure in the process of constructing frameworks that help policy make sense in a given moment.”<sup>4</sup> Americans learned about and understood the situation in South Africa in ways that jibed with their own experience. The oppression of apartheid resonated with many Americans because it looked familiar. Images of white police and soldiers beating, shooting, and gassing black protesters created a context in which the term “apartheid” came to symbolize the kind of racial Armageddon that Americans, after the riots and strife of the 1960s, hoped to avert at home.<sup>5</sup>

The similarity of apartheid to American racial segregation provided activists with messages and metaphors to mobilize constituencies that opposed American racism. Sociologist Robert Bellah’s definition of civil religion, which emphasizes rituals such as Presidential inaugurations, Memorial Day, and the Fourth of July<sup>6</sup> does not account for the role of popular culture in recasting the symbols and terms of the creed. In the era where television and movies came to be the dominant medium, popular culture is the realm in which civil religion is reinterpreted and understood in light of new circumstances. The representation of the antiapartheid struggle in South Africa in

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<sup>4</sup> Melani McAlister, “A Cultural History of the War Without End,” Journal of American History, September 2002, Vol. 89, No. 2, p. 439-455.

<sup>5</sup> See Garry Wills, The Second Civil War: Arming for Armageddon, (New York: New American Library, 1968).

<sup>6</sup> Robert Bellah, “Civil Religion In America,” Daedalus, (Winter 1967), reprinted in Robert Bellah, ed., Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 171.

popular culture is the venue by which many Americans became aware of the issue, and thus it is important to contextualize the key examples that conveyed the message.

This chapter explores the changes in the way apartheid was presented to Americans using an eclectic approach that concentrates on salient examples in key cultural categories. Covered here are the precedents established when Cry, the Beloved Country first introduced South Africa's problems to the world. The role of music, particularly the career of Miriam Makeba, the production of the album *Sun City*, and the controversy around Paul Simon's *Graceland* album, are explored. The realm of athletics is examined by looking at the personal activism of African-American tennis star Arthur Ashe. Finally, an analysis of the most prominent films about apartheid will show the evolution of the genre.

Alan Paton's novel grew from the epiphany of a middle-aged teacher turned juvenile prison warden who, during travels abroad, gained the necessary perspective to distill and record his personal feelings about his country's racial divide. Paton, born in 1903, was descended from British settlers; his upbringing as a devout Anglican Christian is evident in his writings. Beginning in 1935, he served as Principal of the Diepkloof Reformatory for young offenders, where he earned a reputation as a progressive reformer in his work with the young black African wards. In 1946 Paton toured prison facilities in Sweden, Norway, and the US. During his trip he wrote Cry, finishing the novel in San Francisco on Christmas Eve. American friends convinced him to submit it to several publishers.<sup>7</sup> Accepted by Scribners without modification, Cry drew praise from many quarters.

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<sup>7</sup> See Peter F. Alexander, Alan Paton: A Biography (New York: Oxford, 1994).

Theologian Reinhold Niebuhr told the New York Times Book Review he thought Cry to be “about the only recent religious novel that succeeds.”<sup>8</sup>

The full title of Paton’s first book is Cry, the Beloved Country: a Story of Comfort in Desolation. Cry tells the story of reconciliation between a black priest and a white farmer brought together by a shared crisis. The son of the priest murders the reformer son of the farmer; the priest’s son is tried and executed for the crime. The personal rapprochement that the two fathers achieve after losing their sons is symbolized by the agreement of the farmer to help repair the leaky roof of the priest’s church. In order to overcome the sadness and loss brought on by the deaths of their sons, the two men find common ground in the practical act of resurrecting a place of worship.

Paton’s stark tale makes human and personal the difficulties that the peoples of South Africa had in emulating the balance and harmony of nature found in the bountiful land where they lived. It also simplifies the complexities of South African life, avoiding the issues of ethnic division in both the white and black communities. In so doing it poses the political against the spiritual; the harmonious ideal that Paton imagines in Cry is not achieved through political redress of black demands, but through the practical resurrection found in personal confession and forgiveness. As a morality tale it succeeds wonderfully, but as an explanation of the political and racial conflict it only touches the surface of problems that soon engulfed the country. In this sense it falls short of the more systematic critique of American slavery Stowe laid out in Uncle Tom’s Cabin.

The immediate success of Cry attracted proposals for turning the story into a musical and a movie. Playwright Maxwell Anderson learned of the novel before its publication

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<sup>8</sup> Alan Paton, Towards the Mountain: An Autobiography (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1980), 300.

via a conversation with Dorothy Hammerstein, the wife of Oscar Hammerstein, who knew of its pending debut. Anderson sought out composer Kurt Weill to collaborate on creating a musical adaptation of Paton's work. Weill, who had fled Nazi Germany, collaborated with Bertolt Brecht, and composed numerous operas and musicals in German and English, provided a soaring score for the production. *Stars* was Weill's last composition; he died in 1950. Rouben Momoulian, who had directed the original version of George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*,<sup>9</sup> directed the resulting show titled *Lost in the Stars*. Momoulian recruited Todd Duncan, a professor of voice at Howard University, to play the lead role of Stephen Kumalo. Duncan had earlier played Porgy in Gershwin's folk opera of black life in the American south.<sup>10</sup>

The linkages between *Cry* and *Porgy and Bess* are significant because they show connections between the emergence of African-American performers on Broadway and the issue of apartheid. Though criticized for characterizing black life from the point of view of outsider whites, productions of *Porgy and Bess* provided an important entry point for blacks breaking into the performing arts. When the musical played in Washington DC it provoked controversy because of segregation at Washington's National Theatre. Todd Duncan joined Anne Wiggins Brown, who portrayed Bess, in leading the cast's refusal to perform until the National Theatre allowed integrated audiences. Pressure from the cast, the Theatre Guild and George Gershwin resulted in the first integrated audience at the National Theatre, an action that did not become a permanent policy for another

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<sup>9</sup> George Gershwin, DuBose Heyward, Ira Gershwin, *Porgy and Bess* (Gershwin Publishing Corporation; 1935).

<sup>10</sup> Max O. Preeo, *Lost in the Stars: Original Cast Album (reissue)* 2001, UMG Recordings, Liner Notes.

twenty years.<sup>11</sup> In part because of the prominence he gained from his role in *Porgy and Bess* the baritone Duncan had been the first African American hired by the New York City Opera in 1945.

*Lost in the Stars* began its Broadway run in October of 1949 and ran for 273 performances.<sup>12</sup> In Alan Paton's opinion, the Broadway musical format did not fit his tale of a "humble and unsophisticated black priest"<sup>13</sup> seeking reconciliation amid the conflicts that embroiled his family. In the case of the film version of *Cry*, Paton exercised more control over the adaptation because he wrote the screenplay. Working with director Zoltan Korda, Paton transferred the stark prose of his novel onto the screen. Korda, who had directed Paul Robeson in *Sanders of the River*<sup>14</sup> and had overseen a number of films in the African genre, aimed for the international market, casting African-American actors Canada Lee and Sidney Poitier in the leading roles of the black Anglican priests Stephen Kumalo and Theophilus Msimango. The filming of *Cry* took place in South Africa, where the cast and crew confronted the reality of apartheid in its earliest years.

Most of the cast and crew, black and white, were South African. Poitier, in only his second film role, traveled to South Africa unaware of how the strictures of apartheid would structure his life during his four-month stay. According to Poitier's first memoir, he and Canada Lee were housed in a country farmhouse outside Johannesburg as a way to accommodate them without subjecting them to segregated facilities in the city.

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<sup>11</sup> Hollis Alpert, The Life and Times of Porgy and Bess: The Story of an American Classic (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1990), 123.

<sup>12</sup> Preeo, *Lost in the Stars*, Liner Notes.

<sup>13</sup> Alan Paton, Journey Continued (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988), 20.

<sup>14</sup> *Sanders of the River*, Directed by Zoltan Korda (1935; London).

Initially they were denied any liquor in keeping with the apartheid proscription against selling alcohol to blacks. Lee surreptitiously pursued a relationship with a wealthy white woman, risking arrest for being in a white neighborhood after curfew. At one point in their travels the actors witnessed white mob violence against blacks after an accident between the van carrying the blacks and a white motorcyclist.<sup>15</sup>

Early in the production Poitier offended an Afrikaner member of the crew by using the bathroom reserved for whites because only the white bathroom was supplied with toilet paper. As a result of this perceived slight the crewmember held a grudge and made Poitier and Lee's departure drive to the airport weeks later a chase scene worthy of the movies. Poitier and Lee had fortuitously befriended the black driver assigned to them; he organized his friends to defend the actors. Provided with pistols and protected by a second car that ran interference, the two American actors made their get-away at 110 miles per hour with a car of Afrikaner vigilantes in hot pursuit. They made it to the airport safe but shaken. Poitier credited Dickie Niaka, the chauffer, with driving "like a man possessed as he dueled a whole system following us in a blue sedan." In Poitier's view the frightening episode provided a moment of freedom for his black African compatriots. He felt that "For the first time in his life, in those brief terrifying moments, with the smell of death in the air, Dickie Niaka was liberated—because he was tasting what it was like to have his destiny in his own hands."<sup>16</sup>

Aiming for a broad audience in the US, Paton added direct references in the film's script to the links between America and South Africa. During the scene when Reverend

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<sup>15</sup> Sidney Poitier, *This Life* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1980), 154-155.

<sup>16</sup> Poitier, *This Life*, 154-155.

Kumalo is traveling to Johannesburg to inquire after his son, the train travels by the towering piles of tailings from the gold mines. A conversation ensues in which Kumalo inquires of his fellow passengers about what becomes of the product of the mines:

What do the white men do with gold?  
They sell it to the white men in America.  
And what do they do?  
They have a big hole in the ground and they put it all back again.  
They say that is what makes the world go around.<sup>17</sup>

The black and white film version of *Cry* drew critical praise but small audiences. Upon returning to the US, Canada Lee participated in early antiapartheid activities with the American Friends of South African Resistance (AFSAR), the precursor organization to the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) before his death at age 45 in June 1952.<sup>18</sup> As for Poitier, his time in South Africa helped set in motion a personal political awakening that led to his involvement with the US civil rights movement as his successful career made him a wealthy and prominent figure.<sup>19</sup> Poitier starred in films dealing with race and civil rights, such as *The Defiant Ones*,<sup>20</sup> *In the Heat of the Night*,<sup>21</sup> and *Lilies of the Field*<sup>22</sup> for which he won the 1963 Academy Award for Best Actor. During the 1964 Freedom Summer campaign Poitier, along with Harry Belafonte, visited civil rights workers in Mississippi to deliver \$60,000 in cash for their voter registration

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<sup>17</sup> *Cry, The Beloved Country*, Directed by Zoltan Korda (1951; London Films).

<sup>18</sup> See Chapter 1, page 28.

<sup>19</sup> Poitier also played Porgy in 1959 film version of *Porgy and Bess*, Directed by Otto Preminger (1959; MGM).

<sup>20</sup> *The Defiant Ones*, Directed by Stanley Kramer (1958; United Artists).

<sup>21</sup> *In The Heat of The Night*, Directed by Norman Jewison (1967; United Artists).

<sup>22</sup> *Lilies of the Field*, Directed by Ralph Nelson (1963; United Artists).

efforts. Underscoring the seriousness of their mission, the two stars endured a car chase by the Ku Klux Klan much like the one Poitier had survived in South Africa.<sup>23</sup> Alan Paton, who became the leader of the Liberal Party in South Africa, had important connections to the early US antiapartheid movement, corresponding with George Houser of ACOA and participating in speaking tours and signing fundraising letters for the organization until the South African government prevented him from traveling in order to silence him.<sup>24</sup>

Cry, the Beloved Country, the most popular literary rendering of South Africa's racial circumstances, established a literary trope in which both black and white South Africans seek forgiveness and redemption from their mutual tragedy in which racism represents the fall from grace. This personalized saga held an appeal to the people outside South Africa much like Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*,<sup>25</sup> published in 1960 and released as a movie in 1962, satisfied the desire of many Americans for an exemplary myth of personal racial reconciliation made possible by a virtuous white person who acts above the realm of politics. In the shadow of Paton's parable and the precedent it established for subsequent mainstream portrayals of the antiapartheid struggle, there is an evolution of plotlines that moved from the white paternalism and restriction of black agency implied by Cry to the depiction of the complexities of oppression and resistance.

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<sup>23</sup> Taylor Branch, Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years, 1963-1965 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), 450.

<sup>24</sup> George Houser, No One Can Stop the Rain: Glimpses of Africa's Liberation Struggle (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989), 130.

<sup>25</sup> Harper Lee, To Kill A Mockingbird, (New York: HarperCollins, 1960), and To Kill A Mockingbird, Directed by Robert Mulligan (1962; Universal Studios).

Another transition is evident in the emergence of a group of African-American actors and directors concerned with moving beyond the constraints of the original *Cry*.

In the realm of music South African performers played an important role in informing the world of South Africa's situation. Key among these artists was singer Miriam Makeba, who first arrived in New York City in November of 1959. The then 27 year-old woman who would become known as "Mama Africa" served as an important cultural ambassador, connecting the South African antiapartheid struggle and the American civil rights movement. Makeba, who, as an infant, had been imprisoned with her mother, suffered exile from South Africa and blacklisting in America, yet she influenced music, fashion and political expression as a transnational representative of independent Africa. From the very outset of her rise to international prominence Makeba's career became intertwined with the antiapartheid struggle.<sup>26</sup>

During the 1950s Miriam Makeba became a well-known singer and performer in South Africa. Appearing with groups such as the Cuban Brothers and the Black Manhattan Brothers, Makeba's voice and presence earned her roles in the jazz opera *King Kong* as well as a South African recording contract. In 1959, she was featured in Lionel Rogosin's antiapartheid docudrama *Come Back, Africa*,<sup>27</sup> which introduced her to a global audience. Makeba traveled to Italy and Great Britain for the openings of *Come Back, Africa*. While in London she met Harry Belafonte, who took it upon himself to orchestrate her entrance into American show business. Appearances on *The Steve Allen Show* and at the Village Vanguard nightclub launched Makeba's career in the US. She

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<sup>26</sup> See Miriam Makeba with James Hall, *Makeba: My Story* (New York: New American Library, 1987).

<sup>27</sup> *Come Back, Africa*, Directed by Lionel Rogosin (1959; self-distributed).

toured with Belafonte, appeared on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, and through him became acquainted with a range of celebrities, including Duke Ellington, Miles Davis, Diahann Carrol, Langston Hughes, Cicely Tyson and Marlon Brando. Makeba dubbed her mentor Belafonte “Big Brother”<sup>28</sup> for his efforts.

When Makeba attempted to return to South Africa in 1960 to attend her mother’s funeral, the South African consulate invalidated her passport, effectively exiling her from her native land, a result of the post-Sharpeville crackdown by the South African government. Makeba also faced the realities of American Jim Crow segregation, where she faced discrimination in accommodations. When visiting Atlanta to perform at a rally with Martin Luther King Jr. in 1961, she and Belafonte were refused service at the restaurant in their hotel. Belafonte and Makeba returned to the restaurant after alerting the media in order to confront the segregation policy. Belafonte made a point of comparing apartheid with American segregation: “What can we as Americans say to a guest like Miss Makeba? She comes from a land of oppression, only to find a situation like this.”<sup>29</sup>

Makeba not only illuminated the musical world she also made a fashion statement by appearing with her hair unprocessed, becoming one of the first famous black women to wear her hair in a natural or “Afro” style, thus initiating a trend. Her bright and flowing onstage costumes inspired emulation as well. Makeba’s rendering of songs from South Africa along with music from around the world made her a progenitor of world music. Her two-year marriage to fellow South African, trumpeter Hugh Masekela helped to put

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<sup>28</sup> Makeba, *My Story*, 83.

<sup>29</sup> Makeba, *My Story*, 101.

her at the center of the network of African artists working in the US. Many African diplomats, students and travelers benefited from Makeba's hospitality. Makeba came to represent the emergence of independent Africa in the early sixties, earning the nickname "Mama Africa" and staying in high demand. In May of 1962 she performed for President John F. Kennedy's birthday celebration held at Madison Square Garden, singing her hits "Wimoweh" and "Nomeva," prior to Marilyn Monroe's rendition of "Happy Birthday."<sup>30</sup>

Makeba's position as one of the first big stars from Africa served to politicize her celebrity status, making her relationships susceptible to the fast changing political climate of the 1960s. In the wake of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, Makeba was contacted by "some of the African delegates at the UN"<sup>31</sup> who asked her to excise several Hebrew songs from her repertoire, including a duet she performed with Belafonte. Makeba refused. According to Makeba, she informed Belafonte of the request that she rebuffed, but he misunderstood her and thought it was she who wanted to drop the Hebrew numbers. Belafonte blasted Makeba in the press and dropped her from his tour. The rift between mentor and protégé lasted for a decade.<sup>32</sup> As a result of the breach Makeba took up the offer of President Sékou Touré to visit independent Guinea.

While in Guinea, Makeba renewed her acquaintance with Stokely Carmichael. Carmichael, the radical activist from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) who had gained fame by calling for "Black Power," had been traveling in Africa. The acquaintance became a relationship and the two married in March 1968. They lived

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<sup>30</sup> Makeba, *My Story*, 107.

<sup>31</sup> Makeba, *My Story*, 143.

<sup>32</sup> Makeba, *My Story*, 145.

in Washington, DC, for much of the rest of the year. As a result of her association with her radical husband, then involved with the early phase of the Black Panther Party, Makeba lost her recording contract and most of her concert dates in the US. The first major African recording star in America became one of the last victims of 1950s style blacklisting.<sup>33</sup> Makeba knew of the precedent, stating, “I think of what they did to Paul Robeson. He was not given work because of his political beliefs.”<sup>34</sup>

By 1969, in response to Makeba’s blacklisting and Carmichael’s political frustrations, the couple had relocated to Guinea. During the 1970s she performed in Africa and around the world but rarely in the US. She also represented Guinea at the UN, though she did not feel comfortable in the role of an official diplomat. In 1987 Makeba joined Paul Simon’s *Graceland* tour, which reintroduced her to US audiences. Makeba returned to South Africa in 1990 as apartheid began to be dismantled. Miriam Makeba also contributed her acting and singing skills to the movie *Sarafina!* She played a domestic working in the home of wealthy whites whose daughter joins in the Soweto uprising, enacting on screen the nickname she earned at the outset of her international career, Mama Africa.

Sports served as another template on which the image of apartheid was cast. The American South has produced many black athletes, but few who rose in the elite world of tennis until the 1990s. The African-American trailblazer in the men’s game was Arthur Ashe. Born in Richmond, Virginia, in 1943, Ashe became involved in tennis at age 10. He learned his sport from Dr. Robert Walter Johnson, who had also coached the first

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<sup>33</sup> Stokely Carmichael with Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture)* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 672.

<sup>34</sup> Makeba, *My Story*, 164.

female black tennis star, Althea Gibson. Despite the limits imposed by segregation, Ashe became prominent on the amateur youth circuit and earned an athletic scholarship to the University of California at Los Angeles. At UCLA Ashe won the US intercollegiate singles championship, which helped lead the university team to the NCAA championship. After graduating in 1966 Ashe played as an amateur while serving in the Army. He won the US Open in 1968 and, after completing his military service, turned professional in 1969. Ashe competed for 11 years, winning at Wimbledon in 1975, the year he earned the number one ranking among male tennis players. His career was cut short by a heart ailment, but he continued to captain the US Davis cup team during the early 1980s.

As a prominent player in international competition, Ashe came to know leading tennis players from South Africa such as Cliff Drysdale, Frew McMillan, and Ray Moore. In 1969 Drysdale discussed with Ashe and other top players the initial South African Open to be held in Johannesburg that fall. Drysdale explained to Ashe that “They’d never let you play,”<sup>35</sup> meaning that the government would not grant him a visa even if the Open organizers asked him to participate. Ashe had been unaware that apartheid remained so entrenched, so he took it upon himself to challenge the regime by asking for a visa to allow him to play. As Drysdale had predicted, Ashe was rebuffed. In February of 1969 Ashe testified to the House Subcommittee on Africa to recount his attempt to gain entry into South Africa; in May he explained his efforts in front of a United Nations

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<sup>35</sup> Arthur Ashe and Arnold Rampersad, Days of Grace: A Memoir (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 103.

committee.<sup>36</sup> Undeterred by the snub, and against the advice of antiapartheid activists such as George Houser who urged Ashe to boycott South Africa,<sup>37</sup> Ashe continued to apply each year until 1973 when he finally received a visa.

At his matches in 1973 and again in 1974 Ashe demanded that the viewing stands be integrated, and the South Africans complied during his appearances. Ashe sought the opinions of blacks, coloreds, and Indians who faced discrimination under apartheid as well as whites holding a range of opinions about the future of the regime. Despite the acceptance and hospitality he received from his South African hosts, Ashe saw “the sneer of superiority on the faces of many whites”<sup>38</sup> which to Ashe was akin to the disdain and discrimination he had experienced growing up in the American South. In one circumstance he encountered a teenaged Mark Mathabane, who waited for Ashe after each match. One day Ashe asked the future tennis star and author “Why are you following me around?” to which Mathabane replied, “Because you are the first one I have ever seen.” Ashe asked “The first what?” to which the precocious Mathabane answered, “You are the first truly free black man I have ever seen.”<sup>39</sup> A note from Winnie Mandela, surreptitiously delivered in a folded newspaper to Ashe as he departed from

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<sup>36</sup> Marvin Martin, Arthur Ashe: Of Tennis and the Human Spirit (Franklin Watts/Golier: New York, 1999), 115.

<sup>37</sup> George Houser, No One Can Stop the Rain: Glimpses of Africa’s Liberation Struggle (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989), 275-276.

<sup>38</sup> Ashe, Grace, 104.

<sup>39</sup> Ashe, Grace, 105. Inspired by Ashe, Mathabane went on to become an outstanding tennis player. He earned a scholarship to Oakdale College in New York; after graduation he authored the autobiographical Kaffir Boy: The True Story of a Black Youth's Coming of Age in Apartheid South Africa (New York: Macmillan, 1986), and five other books.

Johannesburg by plane, urged Ashe not to be presumptuous but to “ask the South Africans what you can do to help in their struggle.”<sup>40</sup>

As a result of his experiences in South Africa, Ashe refused to return there to play tennis after 1975 and began to support economic and cultural sanctions. He committed himself to the antiapartheid struggle and lent his assistance to TransAfrica. Ashe had been a childhood friend of TransAfrica’s leader Randall Robinson; both had played on the little league baseball team coached by Robinson’s father. Ashe, who had not been directly involved with the civil rights struggles being waged during his college years, explained his involvement with activism in the 1970s and 1980s this way:

Like many people with even a modicum of conscience and intelligence, I was too confused about what was going on among the leaders of black America, especially the younger leaders, to know precisely where to tread. South Africa was a clearer issue, and I turned to it almost with relief.<sup>41</sup>

Ashe retired as a player after suffering a heart attack in 1979. In 1980 he was chosen to captain the US Davis Cup. In that capacity he convinced American player John McEnroe not to play an exhibition match against Bjorn Borg at Sun City in the South African “homeland” of Bophuthatswana.<sup>42</sup> Ashe persuaded McEnroe’s father, his son’s chief advisor, to have McEnroe withdraw from the match. Ashe pointed out that

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<sup>40</sup> Ashe, Grace, 106.

<sup>41</sup> Ashe, Grace, 115.

<sup>42</sup> In 1950 the white government instituted the Group Areas Act, South African Beginning in 1959, relocation of black Africans to so-called tribal homelands or Bantustans, about 13% of the land, was part of a apartheid policy to systemically contain blacks by removing them from land they owned to distant, often agriculturally unusable areas and then declaring them independent nations. Families were separated in the process because many of the adults needed to work in the cities, far from their families. Bophuthatswana was on of these areas. See Nigel Wordon, The Making of Modern South Africa, Third Edition (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), 124-128.

McEnroe's fame insured that he would attract a great deal of criticism for competing in South Africa. McEnroe sacrificed the prize money being put up by NBC and a South African entertainment group; he and Ashe maintained good relations throughout the course of Ashe's captaincy.<sup>43</sup>

As the situation in South Africa worsened in the 1980s Ashe became even more outspoken. As an active supporter of TransAfrica, he agreed to co-chair, along with Harry Belafonte, Artists and Athletes Against Apartheid (AAAA) which, beginning in 1983, enrolled a diverse group of cultural figures and over thirty organizations who pledged not to play or perform in South Africa in response to the United Nation's call for a cultural boycott.<sup>44</sup> AAAA was particularly critical of those artists who had performed at the Sun City resort in Bophuthatswana. South Africa had set it up the supposedly independent country as part of its program to relocate South African blacks to areas deemed traditional homelands in order to take away their South African citizenship. Headline entertainers such as Frank Sinatra contested the claims of AAAA and refused to participate in the boycott, many others who had previously played in Sun City were dissuaded from returning.<sup>45</sup>

The launch of the Free South Africa Movement (FSAM) in November 1984 drew Ashe further into antiapartheid activism. On January 11, 1985 Ashe participated in civil disobedience and was arrested at the South African embassy in Washington, DC as part

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<sup>43</sup> Ashe, Grace, 108.

<sup>44</sup> Hazel Ross, "Cultural Boycott Campaign Under Way" TransAfrica News, Vol. 2, No. 7, 1983, page 1, 6.

<sup>45</sup> Michael Beaubien, "Whitelisting South Africa: The UN Boycott Names Names" Village Voice, November 29, 1983, 24.

of the FSAM demonstrations.<sup>46</sup> In October of that year Ashe was replaced as Davis Cup captain, a decision by the US Tennis Association that he attributed in part to his visible activism. Undeterred by the setback, Ashe continued to participate in antiapartheid activities with TransAfrica. In 1989 he appeared before the Association of Tennis Professionals, along with Mark Mathabane, to persuade the organization to maintain its boycott of South African for tennis tournaments.<sup>47</sup>

The rapid changes that took place in South Africa in 1989 and 1990, which led to the release of Nelson Mandela, brought great satisfaction to Ashe. In 1990 he met Mandela after a televised town meeting in New York. Mandela embraced him and praised his three-volume work A Hard Road to Glory: A History of the African-American Athlete,<sup>48</sup> which details the struggles of African-American athletes; Mandela had read the work while still in prison. Ashe also conferred with Mandela as a participant in the 1991 “Democracy Now” tour to South Africa organized by TransAfrica.<sup>49</sup>

Like Jackie Robinson before him, Ashe used his public profile to bring attention to the issue of apartheid, translating his personal racial sojourn in America into the rationale for activism to change South Africa.<sup>50</sup> Arthur Ashe died of AIDS in 1993. He contracted the illness from a 1983 blood transfusion performed when he underwent heart bypass surgery. TransAfrica’s Arthur R. Ashe, Jr. Foreign Policy Library provides a wealth of

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<sup>46</sup> See Chapter 3, page 117.

<sup>47</sup> Ashe, Grace, 120.

<sup>48</sup> Arthur Ashe, A Hard Road to Glory: A History of the African-American Athlete (Amistad/Penguin: New York, 1993).

<sup>49</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>50</sup> See Chapter 1 regarding Jackie Robinson’s antiapartheid activism.

materials on Africa and the Caribbean. In 1996 he was memorialized with a statue placed on Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia, where his image integrates the boulevard devoted to icons of the Confederacy such as Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee. The statue portrays him with books in one hand, a tennis racquet in the other, arms held over his head in a pose of triumphant celebration, as he gazes at a group of admiring children. The placement of the statue provoked controversy in Richmond and among Ashe's admirers. Some traditionalists objected to the placement of a new statue among the monuments that celebrate the Southern leaders of the Civil War. Some African-Americans did not want the statue in such company either, preferring that it be placed in front of a proposed Hall of Fame for African-American athletes. The Richmond City Council, deliberating in front of a gallery of onlookers that included whites clad in Confederate uniforms and blacks in traditional African garb, determined that the statue should be placed on Monument Avenue.<sup>51</sup> The Ashe statue commemorates the life of one of Richmond's greatest athletes, activists, and humanitarians. The controversy it provoked and the contrast it presents indicates that the racial divide so central to Ashe's activism remains a living concern.

*We're rockers and rappers united and strong  
We're here to talk about South Africa we don't like what's going on  
It's time for some justice, it's time for the truth  
We've realized there's only one thing we can do  
I ain't gonna play Sun City*

***Sun City***  
By Little Steven

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<sup>51</sup> Martin, Human Spirit, 156-157.

1985<sup>52</sup>

In 1985, with South Africa under a State of Emergency and Ethiopia suffering famine, artists in Europe and the US were spurred to use their prestige and visibility to raise money and promote awareness about the troubles across Africa. Bob Geldof, lead singer for the Boomtown Rats, initiated the pattern in 1984 with his British production of *Do They Know It's Christmas?*,<sup>53</sup> recorded by an ensemble dubbed Band Aid. Proceeds from the recording were used to combat hunger in Africa and elsewhere. In the US Harry Belafonte, seeking to emulate Band Aid, encouraged musicians Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie to work with producer Quincy Jones to create *We Are the World*.<sup>54</sup> The resulting single and album involved forty-five performers, including Bono, Ray Charles, Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, Tina Turner, Dionne Warwick and Paul Simon. Columbia Records distributed the single version of *We Are The World* pro bono. The song was phenomenally popular. On April 5, 1985 over 5,000 radio stations around the world played the song simultaneously. The song rose to the number one position on the pop charts where it remained for four weeks; eventually 7.5 million copies were sold in the U.S. *We Are The World* raised \$50 million dollars for famine relief and supplies for Africa.<sup>55</sup> Geldof expanded on the effort by organizing “Live Aid,” a star-studded

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<sup>52</sup> Dave Marsh, *Sun City by Artists United Against Apartheid: The Making of the Record* (New York: Cloverdale Press, 1985), 11.

<sup>53</sup> Band Aid - "Do They Know It's Christmas?" *The Story of the Official Band Aid Video* (Vestron Video: 1985).

<sup>54</sup> Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie, *We Are the World*, Mijac Music, 1985.

<sup>55</sup> See David Breskin, *We Are The World: The Photos, Music, and Inside Story of one of the Most Historic Events in American Popular Music* (New York: Perigee Books, 1985).

fundraising concert staged in London and Philadelphia simultaneously and telecast live around the world on July 13, 1985.<sup>56</sup>

The precedent set by Band Aid and replicated by USA for Africa inspired another ensemble effort. Guitarist Steven Van Zandt, colleague of Bruce Springsteen and known as Little Steven, became involved with antiapartheid efforts in 1984 as a result of travels to South Africa. Van Zandt first became aware of apartheid when he heard Peter Gabriel's 1980 song *Biko*,<sup>57</sup> a tribute to the martyred South African black consciousness leader which incorporated samples of the songs sung during the funeral processions of those killed in clashes with the South African security forces. Little Steven went to South Africa twice in 1984 where he spoke with dissenters and visited the miniature Las Vegas known as Sun City. In March of 1985, after meeting with media raconteur Danny Schechter, a New Left veteran who had first traveled to South Africa in 1967,<sup>58</sup> Van Zandt decided to pursue the creation of the single recording that became *Sun City*.<sup>59</sup> Schechter and Van Zandt assembled an international ensemble of fifty-four musicians to record Van Zandt's antiapartheid anthem. Among the performers were South African exiles, black and white, as well as a significant cross section of the top acts of the 1980s including Africa Bambaataa, Pat Benatar, Ruben Blades, Jackson Browne, Jimmy Cliff, Miles

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<sup>56</sup> Jay Cocks, "Rocking the Global Village: The Live Aid Concerts Raise Big Bucks, Tall Hopes and a Few Hackles," *Time*, July 22, 1985, 66.

<sup>57</sup> Peter Gabriel, *Biko*, 1979.

<sup>58</sup> Schechter recounts his long involvement with South Africa, including attendance at Chief Albert Lutuli's funeral and his friendship with Ruth First in his memoir *The More You Watch, the Less You Know: news wars/(sub)merged hopes/media adventures* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1997).

<sup>59</sup> Little Steven, *Sun City*, (1985; Razor & Tie).

Davis, The Fat Boys, Peter Gabriel, Run-DMC, and Gil Scott-Heron. Several participants, including Bono, Bob Dylan, Bob Geldof, and Bruce Springsteen, had also contributed to the *We Are the World* effort.

Under the title Artists United Against Apartheid, the *Sun City* single, video, and accompanying album, as well as the book and documentary about the making of the album, marked a unique collaboration across genres and generations. Production of the MTV-style video, directed by Jonathan Demme, attracted large crowds in Harlem and Greenwich Village as fans and antiapartheid activists turned out to see the stars and support the struggle. The single debuted at the United Nations on October 30, 1985, under the auspices of the UN Centre Against Apartheid. The interracial alliance that created *Sun City*, along with its political message and purposes, marked it as distinct from the apolitical, feel-good aura of *Do They Know It's Christmas?* and *We Are the World*. Danny Schechter described the effect of the album as “journalism you could jam to.”<sup>60</sup>

As a result of the explicit political edge of *Sun City*, with lyrics that urged support of the cultural boycott and criticized Ronald Reagan’s constructive engagement, calling it “nothing but a joke,”<sup>61</sup> the *Sun City* project did not receive the kind of airtime that the previous ensemble fundraising pieces enjoyed. According to Schechter “only half of American radio stations played it, many objecting to the explicit attack on President Reagan’s policy of constructive engagement. Some black stations said it was too white, while many white stations considered it too black.”<sup>62</sup> South Africa understood the intent

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<sup>60</sup> Schechter, *The More You Watch*, 281.

<sup>61</sup> Little Steven, *Sun City* Liner Notes.

<sup>62</sup> Schechter, *The More You Watch*, 286.

of the piece and banned the song. The Public Broadcasting System (PBS) refused to air Schechter's *The Making of Sun City* documentary, despite the kudos it received from the International Documentary Association, claiming that it was essentially a commercial for the album because the artists involved with making the album were also featured in the film.

*Sun City* appeared in the wake of renewed student protest on college campuses and as the year of picketing at the South African embassy by the Free South Africa Movement was coming to an end. Congressional debate over sanctions against South Africa had been a major news item while violent images of South Africa's state of emergency crackdown had been regularly featured in the media. In this context, the message of *Sun City* took the antiapartheid effort to a new front, combining cultural expression with the ethic of intentional philanthropic consumer spending that the antiapartheid movement had advocated in other economic activities. According to Little Steven, sales of the *Sun City* album generated over \$1 million for the antiapartheid effort.<sup>63</sup> The Africa Fund, the aid and assistance arm of the American Committee on Africa, administered the funds. In part because of his involvement with the production of *Sun City* Danny Schechter eventually left his fulltime position with ABC's 20/20 News magazine to oversee the production and distribution of "South Africa Now," an independent weekly news program picked up by many PBS affiliates from 1988-1991.<sup>64</sup>

One performer who participated in *We Are the World* but did not contribute to *Sun City* was singer-songwriter Paul Simon. Simon, with his partner Art Garfunkel, had

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<sup>63</sup> Little Steven, *Sun City* Liner Notes.

<sup>64</sup> Schechter, *The More You Watch*, 221.

created music that became integral to the soundtrack of the sixties. The duo moved from their teen guise as “Tom and Jerry” in the 1950s to a more somber, often melancholy, sound at the height of their popularity in the 1960s. Simon’s compositions bridged personal reflection and social commentary. In 1963, prior to achieving commercial success, he had recorded “He Was My Brother,” a paean to a “freedom writer” who is martyred because “he hated what was wrong.”<sup>65</sup> A year later, when Simon’s Queens College classmate Andrew Goodman was murdered in Mississippi during the 1964 Freedom Summer voter registration drive, Simon translated his shock and horror at Goodman’s death by changing the lyrics to specifically locate “He Was My Brother” in Mississippi.<sup>66</sup> Simon’s commitment to social relevance, expressed through songs like “A Church is Burning”<sup>67</sup> which laments racist violence against black churches, and musical experimentation, continued to drive his artistic choices in later years.

Two factors prompted Simon not to participate in the *Sun City* project. He objected to the original lyrics of the title song, which had named the names of performers who had appeared at Sun City, including Simon’s friend, singer Linda Ronstadt. In addition, Simon had also been engaged in his own exploration of South African music. A bootleg version *Gumboots: Accordion Jive Hits, Volume II*, a compilation album of South African “Mbaqanga” or township jive music, inspired Simon to travel to South Africa to record with a number of top South Africa artists, including Lady Smith Black Mambazo and

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<sup>65</sup> Paul Simon, *He Was My Brother*, 1963.

<sup>66</sup> Laura Jackson, Paul Simon: The Definitive Biography of the Legendary Singer/Songwriter (New York: Citadel Press Books, 2002), 61-62.

<sup>67</sup> Lyrics for “A Church is Burning” [http://www.paulsimon.com/index\\_main.html](http://www.paulsimon.com/index_main.html), (accessed 12/1/03).

Ray Phiri. The resulting collaboration became the album *Graceland*. Released in 1986, *Graceland* was Simon's most successful album since the seventies and his most controversial musical project.<sup>68</sup>

*Graceland*, referring to Elvis Presley's mansion in Memphis, Tennessee, as well as an elusive state of grace, received critical acclaim, popular appreciation, and political disapproval. By arranging and recording most of the tracks for *Graceland* in South Africa, Simon had abrogated the terms of the UN cultural boycott, which called upon artists not to perform or record in South Africa. Critics also accused Simon of exploiting the South African musicians for personal gain. He had crossed a line that had not been immediately visible to him: he put creativity and the business of music before politics and had not shown deference to those who considered themselves the guardians of the boycott and the struggle. Simon's misstep was compounded by the fact that the songs on *Graceland* made largely personal and not avowedly political statements about life in South Africa. The inclusion of boycott breaker Linda Ronstadt as a back up singer on the "Under African Skies" track did not help matters.

Nonetheless, the criticism that ensued from the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid, the African National Congress, and other antiapartheid activists seemed to take Simon by surprise. In the process of creating the album, Simon, aware that working in South Africa could be contentious, had consulted with Quincy Jones and Harry Belafonte, as well as several South Africans, about the advisability of the project. All had urged him to proceed. While in South Africa Simon paid the performers he worked with triple the American scale for session artists and contracted to share royalties with

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<sup>68</sup> Paul Simon, *Graceland*, Warner Brothers, 1986, Liner Notes.

those with whom he had collaborated. Despite these steps, the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid added Simon to the list of performers censured for performing in South Africa. Simon was removed after petitioning the Committee, explaining in his letter that as a musician “who has refused to perform in South Africa, I reiterate and intend to maintain this position in the context of the UN cultural boycott.”<sup>69</sup> Prior to the recording of *Graceland* Simon had twice refused to perform at Sun City, turning down substantial offers. The stance Simon took, however, was not one of complete contrition. He continued to argue that he was exercising his artistic freedom, distinguishing his actions from artists who had performed at Sun City by saying “To go over and play Sun City would be like going over to do a concert in Nazi Germany at the height of the Holocaust. But what I did was to essentially go over and play to the Jews. That distinction was never made.”<sup>70</sup>

*Graceland* won a Grammy for album of the year in February 1987 and was very popular in South Africa. Despite, or perhaps because of, its success the album remained controversial. The *Graceland* international tour, the proceeds of which went to the supporting artists from South Africa and to charitable causes such as the United Negro College Fund and Children of Apartheid, received support and condemnation from people concerned with South Africa. Reverend Allan Boesak, a leader of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in South Africa, as well as Nobel Peace Prize laureate Desmond

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<sup>69</sup> Michael Marin, “The Sins of Paul Simon” Africa Report, July-August 1987, in The Paul Simon Companion: Four Decades of Commentary (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997), 165.

<sup>70</sup> David Frick “Paul Simon’s Amazing Graceland Tour,” Rolling Stone, July 2, 1987, in The Paul Simon Companion: Four Decades of Commentary (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997), 153.

Tutu, endorsed the tour. Boesak had created the Children of Apartheid fund, which provided aid to children jailed by the apartheid regime. Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masakela joined the tour along with several of the acts that had recorded with Simon. Each concert concluded with an ensemble rendition of “Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika,” the anthem of the ANC.<sup>71</sup> The tour was greeted enthusiastically all over the world, including two large outdoor concerts in Zimbabwe, where integrated throngs danced and cheered to the rhythms of the transnational troupe while video crews recorded the event for an American cable television special. Shows in the US were commercially successful, though the audiences during the initial phase of the tour were almost exclusively white. Performances in Detroit, Philadelphia, and Atlanta were added in an effort to address this self-segregation. Simon attributed the problem to the notion that *Graceland* was “a white record.”<sup>72</sup>

Yet the UN Committee remained critical of Simon’s tour and Dali Tambo,<sup>73</sup> son of ANC president Oliver Tambo and founder of Artists Against Apartheid in Britain, denounced the album and the tour. Putting the problem plainly, Tambo asserted that, in order to make sure that Simon’s musical endeavors were not twisted into feel-good

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<sup>71</sup> Upon the inauguration of Nelson Mandela in 1994 “Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrica” (God Bless Africa) became the co-national anthem along with the Afrikaans “Die Stem” (The Call of South Africa).

<sup>72</sup> Fricke, “Amazing Graceland Tour,” 161.

<sup>73</sup> Dali Tambo, with Artists Against Apartheid, went on to become the lead organizer of the June 11, 1988, Nelson Mandela 70th Birthday Tribute Concert, which was broadcast to over 72 countries throughout the world. It was the world's largest audience for any televised music event up until that time, surpassing Live Aid. See Mike Ketchum, “The Nelson Mandela 70th Birthday Tribute Concert, Wembley Stadium, London, 11 June 1988,” <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mandela/awards/wembley88.html> (accessed 8/30/2003).

propaganda by Pretoria there should have been prior consultation. According to Tambo “If Paul Simon had come to us first and discussed this, none of this would have happened.”<sup>74</sup> Antiapartheid protesters picketed *Graceland* tour concerts in Great Britain. Tambo’s sentiments also resonated with segments of the antiapartheid movement in the US, particularly students and young people riled about Simon’s perceived poaching of South African music for his own fame and profit.

To address the criticism Simon met with a group of students at historically black Howard University in January of 1987. Simon spoke with the group, explaining, as he had in his letter to the UN, that his objective was to share the music of South Africa with the world, not to exploit. The Howard audience was not persuaded. In front of reporters and television cameras one student accused Simon of co-opting the Mbaqanga sound, charging, “You’re telling me the Gershwin story of South Africa! Its nothing but stealing!”<sup>75</sup> Other students questioned Simon’s creative sincerity and political understanding. Simon pointed out that there had been no guarantee that his efforts would be such a hit, but much of the audience remained unswayed. Following the tension-filled exchange, reporter Charlayne Hunter-Gault, who had been one of the first black students at the University of Georgia, remarked that “it’s the liberals that take all the shit.”<sup>76</sup>

The comparison of Paul Simon to George Gershwin, though intended as condemnation, can also be understood as a compliment. Like Gershwin, who endured censure for caricaturing black life in *Porgy and Bess* while providing an important

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<sup>74</sup> Marin, “The Sins of Paul Simon,” 167.

<sup>75</sup> Jennifer Allen, “The Apostle of Angst,” *Esquire*, June 1987, in *The Paul Simon Companion: Four Decades of Commentary* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997), 179.

<sup>76</sup> Jennifer Allen, “The Apostle of Angst,” 180.

opening for black performers in the era of segregation, Paul Simon saw his work succeed commercially and afford opportunities to South African musicians whose horizons had been limited by the constraints of apartheid. In particular, the vocal group Ladysmith Black Mambazo went on to achieve global renown, appearing on American television programs such as *Saturday Night Live* and *Sesame Street*. Ladysmith founder Joseph Shabalala viewed the whole phenomenon “as a gift from God.”<sup>77</sup> The crescendo of criticism that had greeted the release of *Graceland* diminished in subsequent years while the popularity of South African music grew, in large part because of the introduction it had gained from *Graceland's* success.

By 1992, with the ANC leadership out of prison, the dismantlement of apartheid underway, and the cultural boycott lifted, Simon traveled to South Africa as part of his *Born At The Right Time* tour. Although the tour had been approved by the ANC and welcomed by Nelson Mandela, and again included South African musicians, more radical antiapartheid organizations threatened violent disruption of the concerts. Simon met with one of the aggrieved groups, the Azanian Youth Organization (AZAYO), participating in a dialogue like the one he had joined with students at Howard University. An explosion at the offices of one of the contractors assisting the tour frightened the performers and potential concertgoers. As a result attendance at the five shows was less than expected.<sup>78</sup> Simon pursued the tour despite the threats and controversy, stating, “...I feel indebted. I

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<sup>77</sup> Fricke, *Amazing Graceland Tour*, 159.

<sup>78</sup> Jackson, *Paul Simon*, 202.

wanted to come and repay the debt to South African musicians whom I have been working with these past six years.”<sup>79</sup>

The *Graceland* controversy of 1987 came at a time when apartheid had become a topic in mainstream movies. The evolution of representations of the struggle against apartheid in film has parallels with and connections to contemporaneous antiapartheid activism. The assertion of black authorship and control is comparable to the process by which the emergence of the black-led Free South Africa Movement marked a shift in the leadership within the American antiapartheid movement. The success of divestment and boycott efforts, along with the passage of the 1986 Comprehensive Anti Apartheid Act, contributed to a changed climate in which apartheid became the topic of a number of commercial Hollywood releases. Initially the stories focused primarily on the white characters while later films moved toward a focus on black characters and the struggle for self-determination. This evolution occurred because of the emergence of black directors and funders who wanted to confront the inclination of the film industry to aim for the white audience in America.

Following the release of *Cry, the Beloved Country* in 1951, the issue of apartheid gained little notice in mainstream movies viewed in the United States. Lionel Rogosin’s 1959 *Come Back, Africa* helped to launch the career of Miriam Makeba and became an educational tool for the small antiapartheid network of the 1960s, but did not receive widespread distribution.<sup>80</sup> During the sixties even popular documentaries with South

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<sup>79</sup> Scott Kraft, “Simon’s Troubled Water: Tangled Web of South African Politics Ensnares Singer,” Los Angeles Times, January 10, 1992, F1.

<sup>80</sup> Peter Davis, In Darkest Hollywood: Exploring the Jungles of Cinema’s South Africa (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1996), 47-61.

African elements passed over the subject. In *The Endless Summer*, released in 1966, California surfers find the perfect wave in South Africa but encountered no black people on screen.<sup>81</sup> Hugh Masekela's performance in *Monterey Pop*,<sup>82</sup> filmed at the 1967 Monterey Pop Festival where he appeared between Moby Grape and The Byrds, stands out as one of the few appearances by a South African to achieve widespread distribution. But Masakela's set was remarkable for its musicianship, not its politics.<sup>83</sup>

Movies set in South Africa's pre-apartheid past, such as the 1964 production of *Zulu*,<sup>84</sup> (in which Zulu Chief Mangosuthu Buthezi, leader of ANC rival Inkatha Freedom Party, plays the role of the nineteenth century Zulu leader Cetewayo)<sup>85</sup> ostensibly dealt with the politics of the nineteenth, not the twentieth century. In 1975 action thriller *The Wilby Conspiracy*,<sup>86</sup> Sidney Poitier joined Michael Caine, (who had appeared in *Zulu*). Poitier and Caines' characters become black and white fugitive buddies, reminiscent of the *The Defiant Ones*, in which Poitier had played an escaped prisoner handcuffed to Tony Curtis.

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<sup>81</sup> *The Endless Summer*, Directed by Bruce Brown, (1966; Image Entertainment).

<sup>82</sup> *Monterey Pop*, Directed by D.A. Pennebaker, (1967; Pennebaker Hegedus Films). In the film version, which does not include all of the performances, Masekela appeared after Simon and Garfunkel.

<sup>83</sup> Masekela's performance of "Bajabula Bonke" or Healing Song, was described by Eric Burden and the Animals in their song *Monterey*: "Hugh Masekela's music was black as night."

<sup>84</sup> *Zulu*, Directed by Cy Endfield (1964: Diamond Films Ltd.).

<sup>85</sup> Davis, *In Darkest Hollywood*, 161.

<sup>86</sup> *The Wilby Conspiracy*, Directed by Ralph Nelson (1975; United Artists).

Critic Peter Davis points out that this “buddy film” genre, in which white characters attain a new understanding of the dilemma of the black character because the black character makes a heroic sacrifice, often costing his life, became the predominant trope in the feature films about apartheid made during the 1980s, and continued in several of the films of the 1990s.<sup>87</sup> The movies made in the late 1980s served as an important venue for portraying the oppression of apartheid in a time when Pretoria was strictly censoring news from South Africa, while those made after the release of Nelson Mandela situate the antiapartheid struggle as history that people should understand in a moral context. The precedents set prior to the eighties changed slowly as filmmakers grew bolder in their criticism of apartheid and African-Americans gained greater influence in the production of films about South Africa. Critic Rob Nixon has noted that, because of the power of the American media industry, “whenever there is a mass market endeavor to translate another culture’s experience into terms accessible to the USA, American preconceptions, frames of reference and narrative designs readily take precedence.”<sup>88</sup> Nixon’s assessment of the manner in which actors and themes familiar to American audiences dominated the antiapartheid production is substantiated by the films of the era.

British Director Richard Attenborough, who had directed the Oscar winning epic *Gandhi*<sup>89</sup> in 1982, turned his attention to South Africa with *Cry Freedom*,<sup>90</sup> released in 1987. Attenborough’s adaptation of white South African journalist Donald Woods’

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<sup>87</sup> Davis, *In Darkest Hollywood*, 61.

<sup>88</sup> Rob Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem, and Hollywood* (New York: Rutledge, 1994), 44.

<sup>89</sup> *Gandhi*, Directed by Richard Attenborough (1982; Columbia).

<sup>90</sup> *Cry Freedom*, Directed by Richard Attenborough (1987; Marble Arch Productions).

account of his friendship with black consciousness leader Stephen Biko put *Cry Freedom* squarely into the buddy genre of films contending with race relations. The film, which stars American actors Kevin Kline as Woods and Denzel Washington as Biko, portrays Biko persuading the skeptical Woods of the justice of the black struggle against apartheid. Biko's militancy is politically sanitized, and he is portrayed as just a reasonable integrationist, not a fiery militant. The Biko character is murdered about seventy minutes into the film, effectively containing his role rather than fully explicating it. The rest of the movie is dominated by Woods' perilous escape from South Africa. At the time of its release the film provoked controversy among antiapartheid activists who criticized it for diminishing black agency and from the South African Government, which, after first approving the film for release in South Africa, subsequently banned it in part because two of the theaters showing the film were bombed.<sup>91</sup>

*Cry Freedom* not only borrows the buddy formula from *The Defiant Ones*, it also establishes several conventions that were repeated and modified in the films that follow. These include recreation of clashes with the police in township battlegrounds strewn with wrecked cars, a scrolling text epilog which refers to the ongoing oppression in South Africa, and a buddy relationship between a black and a white character. At the end of *Cry Freedom* there is a listing of those who had died in detention like Steven Biko, along with the trumped up causes of death, such as "self strangulation."<sup>92</sup> *Cry Freedom*, like several of the movies that followed it, was filmed in the frontline state of Zimbabwe, where Robert Mugabe's regime cooperated with antiapartheid filmmakers.

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<sup>91</sup> Davis, *In Darkest Hollywood*, 108.

<sup>92</sup> *Cry Freedom*

Another 1987 release was the historical drama *Mandela*,<sup>93</sup> which appeared on the cable channel HBO. Filmed in Zimbabwe, *Mandela* stars Danny Glover in the role of Nelson and Alfre Woodard as Winnie Mandela. Mandela's rise to the leadership of the ANC and the antiapartheid struggle is faithfully and plausibly chronicled. The film uses the relationship between Nelson and Winnie to humanize their characters and to illustrate the pain created by the quarter century Mandela had spent behind bars at that point. True to the situation in South Africa at the time of the film's release, the movie finishes with the 1985 statement of Nelson Mandela, read by his daughter Zindzi, in which he refuses to renounce armed struggle in exchange for freedom.<sup>94</sup>

The British production of *A World Apart*,<sup>95</sup> released in 1988, is a fictionalized account of the sojourn of white antiapartheid campaigner and journalist Ruth First. First's daughter Shawn Slovo wrote the screenplay, drawing on her own experience as well as First's book about her time in detention titled *117 Days*.<sup>96</sup> The film is directed by Chris Menges, who oversaw photography for previous message films such as *The Killing Fields*<sup>97</sup> and *The Mission*.<sup>98</sup> The film's story, set in 1963, is told through the eyes of a thirteen year old in the position that Slovo found herself, watching her mother, portrayed by Barbara Hershey, suffer the absence of her exiled father and serve time in jail under

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<sup>93</sup> *Mandela*, Directed by Philip Saville (1987; HBO).

<sup>94</sup> Nelson Mandela, Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela (Boston: Little Brown, 1996), 522-523.

<sup>95</sup> *A World Apart*, Directed by Chris Menges (1987; Palace).

<sup>96</sup> Ruth First, *117 Days*, (New York: Stein and Day).

<sup>97</sup> *The Killing Fields*, Directed by Roland Joffe (1984; Warner Studios).

<sup>98</sup> *The Mission*, Directed by Roland Joffe (1986; Warner Studios).

the Ninety Day detention act. The film omits the fact that First was a member of the South African Communist Party and that her husband Joe Slovo was the leader of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the armed wing of the ANC. While First, renamed “Diana Roth” for the film, is shown working as a journalist and hosting integrated parties, the film does not provide much background on First or the struggle, focusing instead on the personal feelings of her daughter and family. The movie ends with Roth/First and her daughter joining an illegal funeral procession for a fallen comrade, replete with fluttering ANC flags and the assemblage singing “Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika” as the security forces close in. The final frames transpose a written explanation of the 1982 death of Ruth First, assassinated by a letter bomb while living in Mozambique, over the picture of man throwing a tear gas canister back at the police. While the film focuses mainly on the travails of the character Diana Roth and her family, not on black agency in the struggle, *A World Apart* does give emphasis to the role of women in South Africa and their active resistance to apartheid.

In 1989 director Euzhan Palcy chose to film her rendering of *A Dry White Season*<sup>99</sup> in Zimbabwe. Palcy, originally from Martinique, visited South Africa to gain a sense of the scene and situation. Based on the novel by Afikaner André Brink, *A Dry White Season* received plaudits for the way Palcy reworked the buddy formula to balance white and black perspectives. Palcy had as her goal the transmission of the reality of life under apartheid, by creating a movie that was “a Hollywood production, but it’s not a

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<sup>99</sup> *A Dry White Season*, Directed by Euzhan Palcy (1987; MGM).

Hollywood film.”<sup>100</sup> Determined to employ South Africa actors, rather than African-Americans, to play South Africans, Palty cast Winston Ntshona, Zakes Mokae, and Sophis Mgcina, alongside Donald Sutherland, Susan Sarandon, and Marlon Brando. Set in 1976, *Dry White Season* centers on the relationship between a white schoolteacher, played by Sutherland, and his black gardener, Winston Ntshona, as they are pulled into a tragic sojourn initiated by the disappearance of the gardener’s son.

A *Dry White Season* reworks the buddy genre so that both the black and white partners lose their lives for questioning the apartheid regime. It is left in the hands of another character, the black cab driver, Stanley, who had introduced Sutherland’s character to the hellish side of life in South Africa, to avenge the death of his liberal white ally, thus joining black sacrifice with black agency. In another departure from precedent, Palty’s film was the first of the antiapartheid movies to explicitly show torture. Palty herself became a trailblazer, as *Dry White Season* was the first film produced by a major Hollywood studio to be directed by a black woman. Included in the musical score of the film are contributions from Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Hugh Masakela, and the cast of the Broadway musical *Sarafina!*. Like its predecessors, *Dry White Season* includes a scrolling text at the end that elaborates the state of the struggle in 1989.

Following the release of Nelson Mandela and the initiation of the dismantlement of apartheid, the circumstances of production, as well as the purpose for making apartheid-themed films, also changed. No longer were movies the primary window by which mass

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<sup>100</sup> Interview with Euzhan Palty in S. Torriano Berry and Venize T. Berry, *The 50 Most Influential Black Films: A Celebration of African-America Talent, Determination, and Creativity* (New York: Citadel Press, 2001), 198.

audiences could glimpse the agony of South Africa. With legalization of black political organizations and the lifting of the cultural boycott it became possible to film in South Africa with support of the ANC. The new films served to inscribe a record in popular historical consciousness of the meaning of the struggle. Many of the same thematic dilemmas and questions remained for directors to deal with, and the subject remained controversial as directors, black and white, took on the challenge.

Apartheid, discredited by the National Party itself, became a safe subject for mainstream moviemakers to tackle. In 1992 Disney released the film version of *Sarafina!*, a musical about the Soweto uprising. *Sarafina!*<sup>101</sup> was created by the multi-talented Mbongeni Ngema, who directed it as a Broadway musical with a cast from South Africa in 1988-1989. The music for *Sarafina!* was co-written by Hugh Masakela, whose playing is featured on the sound track along with Ladysmith Black Mambazo. The drama centers on a student who is inspired by a teacher, played by Whoopie Goldberg, to act against the injustice of apartheid. The film makes great strides toward emphasizing black agency as well as showcasing the music and dance of the black townships. The students organize themselves to resist instruction in Afrikaans. The main character, Sarafina, exposes her inner dialogue by speaking to a picture of Nelson Mandela. In the course of demonstrating and fighting the police, Sarafina participates in the necklacing execution, performed by hanging a tire filled with gasoline around the neck of the victim, of a black constable who works with the white government. Miriam Makeba appears as Sarafina's mother, a domestic worker who advises her daughter to be cautious but true to herself. With the counsel of her mother and the example of her martyred teacher in mind, the

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<sup>101</sup> *Sarafina!*, Directed by Darrell Roodt (1991; Disney).

Sarafina character forswears violence and throws a gun she had been hiding into a swamp.

The interruption of the action with spirited dance numbers makes for an incongruous juxtaposition of lively music with students fighting and fleeing police. White characters are central to the action only as the oppressive administrators and vicious cops that the students are rebelling against, with the main story concentrating on Sarafina's political coming of age. Torture and imprisonment are portrayed, though not as graphically as in *A Dry White Season*. Director Darrell Roodt broke new ground by contending with the issue of black-on-black violence. It was also the first of the antiapartheid movies filmed in Soweto with the cooperation of the ANC and produced by South Africans. *Sarafina!* ends with the standard text explanation of the current situation as of 1992, which is more hopeful than its predecessors as a result of the changed situation.

Another film shot primarily in South Africa during the interregnum between Mandela's release and the 1994 election was *The Power of One*.<sup>102</sup> Released in 1992, it was directed by John G. Avildsen, who also directed *Rocky*,<sup>103</sup> *Lean on Me*,<sup>104</sup> and *The Karate Kid*.<sup>105</sup> Avildsen transposes the trope of the buddy genre onto the cliché of the David vs. Goliath fight movie to explore the rise of apartheid in the thirties and forties. Avildsen puts to film the novel by Bryce Courtenay,<sup>106</sup> which follows the travails and

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<sup>102</sup> *The Power of One*, Directed by John G. Avildsen (1992; Warner).

<sup>103</sup> *Rocky*, Directed by John G. Avildsen (1976; MGM).

<sup>104</sup> *Lean on Me*, Directed by John G. Avildsen (1989; Warner).

<sup>105</sup> *The Karate Kid*, Directed by John G. Avildsen (1984; Columbia/Tristar).

<sup>106</sup> Bryce Courtenay, *The Power of One* (New York: Random House, 1989).

triumphs of P.K, an English-speaking orphan who lands in an Afrikaner boarding school. His Zulu nanny garners P.K. the blessing of a traditional healer, who imbues the character of P.K. with courage.

Abused by his pro-Hitler classmates, P.K. becomes the charge of a gentle German émigré pianist who is detained by the British during World War II. As a result, P.K. becomes something of the prison mascot, visiting the compound to take piano lessons from Doc and boxing lessons from Geel Peet, portrayed by Morgan Freeman. The wise African boxing mentor teaches his young white protégé to use his brains to overpower his opponents. P.K. learns the languages of the African ethnic groups in the prison and becomes their arbiter and choir director. He leads them in a defiant song with Zulu lyrics that rail against the cowardly guards, who, uncomprehending, sway along to the vocal harmony.

When the truth comes out, the guards beat Geel Peet to death in retaliation for their humiliation. P.K. goes on to become a fighter and antiracist bridge builder who challenges the onset of the post-1948 apartheid regime by participating in interracial boxing matches as well as clandestine literacy classes for his fellow fighters. A romance with the daughter of an Afrikaner intellectual meant to resemble the architect of apartheid, D.F. Malan, serves to expose the faulty tribalism of the whites. In the climactic scene, P.K. and his black boxing buddy confront P.K.'s old boarding school tormentor during a police raid on a black township of Alexandra. Together they prevail over the sadistic Afrikaner and continue with their literacy efforts.

Much like *To Kill A Mockingbird*, *The Power of One* provides the viewer with a white savior with whom to relate in the battle of universal good versus racist evil. *One* goes even further, posing the white savior as a magical peacemaker who knows how to heal

the tribal divisions in black society as well as confront the injustice of apartheid. The finale of *One* joins the convention of reading a document, with a black child in the literacy project sounding out the American Declaration of Independence, with the requisite scrolling text waxing eloquent about the amazing “power of one” as the buddies literally walk off into the sunset. *The Power of One* turns the antiapartheid epic formula inside out, using not only the South African landscape but also apartheid itself as a backdrop for a universal story about the power of the individual.

In stark contrast to the rosy universalism of *The Power of One*, *Bopha!*<sup>107</sup> attempts to correct to address problems inherent in *Cry Freedom* and other films. The title is a Zulu term that means "to detain" or "to arrest," and also means "resistance." The term is defined in the beginning of *Bopha!* by scrolling text, rearranging the convention established in the predecessor films, implying motion from words to deeds rather than deeds to words. Released in 1993, *Bopha!* is based on a play by South African author Percy Mtwa. The play had been produced at Lincoln Center in 1986 and at the Los Angeles Theater Center in 1987. PBS also produced it as a docudrama narrated by Sidney Poitier that interwove footage of township violence between rival black groups with scenes from the play. Mtwa traveled with the play in South Africa where he spoke with audiences about their experiences.<sup>108</sup>

The commercial movie production debuted Morgan Freeman as director with Arsenio Hall as producer. The film re-united Glover and Woodard who had starred in HBO's *Mandela*. *Bopha!* is set in 1980, with the memory of the 1976 Soweto uprising still

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<sup>107</sup> *Bopha!*, Directed by Morgan Freeman (1993; Paramount).

<sup>108</sup> *Bopha!* Synopsis, <http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/Bopha-1046229/about.php> (accessed 30 August 2003).

smoldering. Glover portrays a black police captain in a remote homeland that wants his teenage son to follow him into the force. The son rebels and joins his peers in resisting Afrikaans instruction and the security forces, including his father. Glover's character is drawn deeper and deeper into the contradictions of his position as a black enforcer for the racist regime. As the veneer of paternalism is stripped away by the increasingly harsh actions of his white superiors, Glover is forced to face his personal failure in contrast to the more righteous choice of his son, who becomes a resistance leader. In the final scene Glover attempts to join a funeral rally where his son is speaking. During his son's rousing call to resistance, Glover's character is recognized and stabbed for being a collaborator. Unbeknownst to his son, he dies at the back of the crowd, thus symbolically making way for the post-Soweto generation to lead the necessary struggle against the system that he had tried to accommodate.

*Bopha!* is the most fully realized of the antiapartheid epics in the sense that it justifies the strategy and tactics of the post-Soweto era struggle. Instead of a sensitive white liberal having his eyes opened to the plight of blacks, in *Bopha!* it is a black accommodationist who becomes aware of the horror he has facilitated. *Bopha!* represents the emergence of a conscious and conscientious class of African-American actors and artists who used their craft and clout to create a significant political product. *Bopha!* is an important historical statement but did not enjoy the critical or commercial success of its predecessors because it came out when American anger about apartheid had given way to hope for the successful transition to democracy. In direct connection with the South African situation at the time, the September 1993 premier of *Bopha!* served as

a benefit for the Fund for Democratic Elections in South Africa, which raised money for a voter registration drive.<sup>109</sup>

In the wake of the ANC's rise to power in the 1994 election, the new government instituted the unprecedented Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) intended to provide catharsis for the victims, as well as victimizers, of the violence of the apartheid years. The TRC, chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, spent the years between 1995 and 1999 holding hearings at which the accused faced their accusers as they appealed for amnesty for their offenses. In this changed arrangement and atmosphere, director Darrell Roodt revisited the most famous and popular of the South African stories, *Cry, The Beloved Country*.<sup>110</sup> Roodt's version of *Cry* was the first mainstream motion picture to be shot in democratic South Africa.

Like the original, Roodt's version of *Cry* teamed internationally famous actors James Earl Jones and Richard Harris in the leading roles, with South African actors playing most of the other parts. The improvements in film making technology that came about during the years between the original and the remake enlarge and enliven Roodt's telling of the conflict and healing that take place in the story. While adhering to Alan Paton's plot and prose, Roodt's production conveys a sense of hope that, by overcoming the problems of the past, a new nation and a new relationship between the races is possible. After Jones, as Reverend Kumalo, reconciles with his white counterpart, played by Harris, he climbs a hill in order to be by himself to pray. Meanwhile, Kumalo's new daughter-in-law feels her first labor pains. Though her husband, executed for the murder

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<sup>109</sup> *Bopha!* Synopsis, <http://www.rottentomatoes.com>

<sup>110</sup> *Cry, the Beloved Country*, Directed by Darrell Roodt (1995; Miramax).

of the son of Harris's character, is gone, the possibility of a new generation, implying a new nation, lives on in the potential of their child. As she begins her labor, Kumalo reaches the summit of his climb and kneels to pray.

The 1995 version of *Cry*, like the original, ends with a scrolling text of the concluding words of Paton's novel. Rather than listing specific names or circumstances linked to the antiapartheid struggle as did *Cry Freedom* and *A Dry White Season*, or hopeful homilies about the power of the individual like *The Power of One*, *Cry* relies on Paton's spare prose to convey a message of universal reconciliation aimed at the human spiritual dilemma.

For it is the dawn that has come,  
as it has come for a thousand centuries, never failing.  
But when that dawn will come, of our emancipation,  
from the fear of bondage and bondage of fear,  
that is a secret.<sup>111</sup>

But the transition to majority rule was no longer a secret because it had come to pass. The process by which the change was negotiated is dramatized in the HBO/Showtime production of *Mandela and de Klerk*.<sup>112</sup> The film re-unites Sidney Poitier and Michael Caine, who had worked together on the *Wilby Conspiracy*, in the roles of Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk. The film conflates the apartheid endgame into two hours, with the two leaders hammering out the details of the transfer of power and finishing with the triumph of Mandela's inauguration in 1994. Although the story is posed as a sort of buddy movie, with Poitier revisiting a South African theme, the film also uses the historical events to undo the buddy formula. While Mandela and de Klerk are forced

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<sup>111</sup> Paton, *Cry*, 273.

<sup>112</sup> *Mandela and de Klerk*, Directed by Joseph Sargent (1997;HBO/Showtime).

together by circumstance, they resolve their conflict by democratic means, and, in the end, the black man does not have to sacrifice his life for the white. Though the film is workman-like in its presentation, with no special flourishes other than being filmed on location in Capetown, it moves beyond the buddy formula because it is based on real political events. In the final scene the point is made that South Africa has achieved democracy. Rather than a scroll over, Poitier as Mandela reflects back on the night following his inauguration to his concluding words at the 1964 Rivonia trial:

During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if need be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.<sup>113</sup>

The bold declaration runs through the Mandela character's thought, but he drops the last line. Martyrdom is no longer required, because the ideal has begun to be achieved.

In the post-apartheid era the antiapartheid epics live on as a reminder of the struggle and the way in which the medium packaged the message. Appraised separately, each of the antiapartheid films portrays the complexities and nuances of the struggle over apartheid from a different perspective. Weighed together, they provide an important record of how the outside world perceived apartheid and how that perception grew beyond some of the limits imposed by Hollywood and the tastes of the US market. The evolution of films from the original *Cry, the Beloved Country* through *Mandela and de Klerk* is the story of how the image of South Africa and apartheid grew from Paton's

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<sup>113</sup> Nelson Mandela, Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela (Boston: Little, Brown and Company), 368.

stark personal morality tale to the actual transfer of power from the National Party to the ANC.

Music, sports, and movies created a cultural landscape in which Americans could comprehend apartheid in light of their own ideas and experiences. The transformation of the venues for transmission of ideas and ideologies through popular culture accelerated the way in which Americans learned about apartheid. In the 1950s and 1960s the flow of information was slowed by the South African government's control of the media and because little demand for news and culture had been detected by those in a position to market such things. By the 1980s the ability of the news media to project the South African crisis around the globe helped create a demand for dramatized explanations of the problem and the way that people were confronting it, especially during the period when the apartheid regime severely censored the news in the late 1980s.

The effect of popular culture on the evolution of American civil religion has always been derived from multiple influences. Historian James Campbell has made the point in his study of the African Methodist Episcopal church in the US and South Africa that "African and African-American identities are and have always been mutually constituted."<sup>114</sup> This principle can be extended to encompass the cultural process by which similar though distinct racial dynamics in the US and South Africa were refracted in the cultural products and venues by which Americans came to know about South Africa, as well as how South Africans to learned about racism in the US.

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<sup>114</sup> James T. Campbell, Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), viii.

Illustrative of this dynamic is the transformation described by Afrikaner policeman Eric Taylor in *Long Day's Journey into Night*,<sup>115</sup> the 1999 documentary about South Africa's TRC. In his application for amnesty Taylor, who was involved in the assassination of antiapartheid activists Matthew Goniwe and Fort Calata, cited Nelson Mandela's autobiography and the film *Mississippi Burning*<sup>116</sup> as key factors in his change of heart. In Taylor's words *Mississippi Burning* "was also about apartheid."<sup>117</sup> The 1988 film about the 1964 murder of civil rights activists James Cheney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner drew criticism at the time of its release for many of the same reasons that *Cry Freedom* did not satisfy critics and activists. In *Mississippi Burning* black voices and agency are muffled; it is the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), rather than the black-led civil rights movement, that is portrayed as the central player in changing Mississippi and the South. The dichotomy in *Mississippi Burning* between the racist local police who participated in the murder of the civil rights activists in Mississippi and the noble FBI who investigate the murders resonated with Eric Taylor, a paladin of apartheid, moving him to seek amnesty and forgiveness before the TRC.

Eric Taylor also cited his commitment to Christianity as an inspiration for his police work in the apartheid era as well as motivation to go before the TRC. The cultural commonality of a Christian worldview, shared by many blacks and whites in South Africa, and by many South Africans and Americans, helps to explain the continuing

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<sup>115</sup> *Long Day's Journey into Night*: Directed by Frances Reid and Deborah Hoffmann, (1999: California Newsreel).

<sup>116</sup> *Mississippi Burning*, Directed by Alan Parker (1988; MGM).

<sup>117</sup> *Long Night's Journey Into Day*: online transcript <http://www.newsreel.org/transcripts/longnight.htm> (accessed 8/30/03).

appeal of Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*. *Cry* is the South African story that makes personal the problems of a country with a black majority contending with the legacy of settler colonialism. While it can be interpreted as a story written from the viewpoint of a paternalistic white liberal, it also enables readers and viewers to empathize across racial and class lines. The resurrection of hope through reconciliation in the wake of the suffering caused by the deaths of two young men, one white and one black, appeals to a broad audience because it is posed as a personal rather than a political parable.

Rather than racism leading to the social Armageddon that riots against segregation in America and apartheid in South Africa once seemed to portend, *Cry* promises that peace can come on a one-to-one basis in the context of a common faith. Hope becomes practical when Reverend Kumalo and James Jarvis make a gentleman's agreement to work together to repair Kumalo's leaky church roof. The symbolic value of a black man and a white man shaking hands, agreeing to rebuild a church after surviving a mutual tragedy, resonates with the very sentiments that the American civil rights movement drew upon. The voluntary alliance portrayed in *Cry* not only is a more appealing relationship than the coercive shackling together of black and white portrayed in *The Defiant Ones*, it fits with the renewed notion of an American civil religion based on a common humanity that can overcome racial division. Given this shared cultural context, it is not surprising that a tale of hope, as implied by Paton's full title, *Cry the Beloved Country: A Story of Comfort in Desolation*, has remained more alluring to audiences<sup>118</sup> who prefer it to the existentialist angst expressed by Weill and Anderson's musical title *Lost in the Stars*.

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<sup>118</sup> *Cry, The Beloved Country* was the December 2003 selection of Oprah Winfrey for her Book Club. See [http://www.oprah.com/books/books\\_landing.jhtml](http://www.oprah.com/books/books_landing.jhtml) (accessed 1 December 2003).



## CHAPTER 5

### **If They're Not Free, We're Not Free: Antiapartheid Activism and the Integration of American Civil Religion**

*Our foreign policy must be characterized by mutual respect,  
not by gunboat diplomacy, big stick diplomacy and threats.  
Our Nation at its best feeds the hungry.*

*Our Nation at its worst,  
at its worst, will mine the harbors of Nicaragua;  
at its worst will try to overthrow their government,  
at its worst will cut aid to American education and increase the aid to El Salvador;  
at its worst, our Nation will have partnership with South Africa.  
That is a moral disgrace. It is a moral disgrace. It is a moral disgrace.*

#### **Jesse Jackson, 1984<sup>1</sup>**

*We were 180 years as a nation before segregation was eliminated here.  
Thank God the world was more patient with us than we have been with South Africa.*

#### **Jerry Falwell, 1985<sup>2</sup>**

*It isn't a question of economics or politics, it's a moral issue.  
Are you for goodness or evil? Are you for freedom or oppression?*

#### **Desmond Tutu, 1986<sup>3</sup>**

“We oppose apartheid too...Jerry Falwell”<sup>4</sup> read the sign on the steps of Thomas Road Baptist Church. The message on the sign, placed there by Falwell, was directed to the

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<sup>1</sup> 1984 Address to the Democratic National Convention in Deidre Mullane, ed., Crossing the Danger Water: Three Hundred Years of African-American Writing (New York: Anchor Books/Random House, 1993), 739.

<sup>2</sup> Jerry Falwell as quoted in Mary McGrory, “Sinking to New Lows,” Washington Post, 27 August 1985, A2.

<sup>3</sup> Desmond Tutu as quoted in Karlyn Barker, “Bishop Tutu Joins Apartheid Protesters at South African Embassy” Washington Post, 9 January 1986, A26.

three hundred protesters, led by the Reverend Jesse Jackson, who had marched to the steps of Falwell's church to protest its pastor's position on South Africa. The marchers held signs that charged Falwell with advocating racism because of his opposition to economic sanctions against the apartheid regime. Falwell, as a guest of the South African government, had traveled to South Africa for five days in August of 1985 and met with various officials including President P.W. Botha. He returned to the US determined to mobilize his organization and constituency to support President Ronald Reagan's policy of constructive engagement and help the President prevent the implementation of economic sanctions against South Africa.<sup>5</sup>

Falwell made himself the center of a political firestorm by praising the South African government and criticizing the antiapartheid movement in South Africa and the US. Disparaging those who advocated economic sanctions legislation, Falwell claimed that the black South Africans he met urged him to advocate more, not less, US investment. Falwell advocated increased investment by US corporations as the way to encourage the reform of apartheid while maintaining the strategic Cold War alliance with South Africa. Most controversial was Reverend Falwell's lambasting of 1984 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Desmond Tutu. In Falwell's view the South African clergyman was not representative of sentiments among black South Africans. According to Falwell, "If Bishop Tutu maintains that he speaks for the black people of South Africa, he is a

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<sup>4</sup> John F. Harris, "Jackson, Falwell Preach on South Africa; Pair Differ on US Policy at Church Service in Lynchburg," Washington Post, 31 August, 1985, page A30.

<sup>5</sup> James R. Dickenson, "Tutu a 'Phony' Falwell Says; Moral Majority Leader Boosts South Africa," Washington Post, 20 August 1985, page A15.

phony.”<sup>6</sup> Reverend Falwell’s inflammatory statements provoked several weeks of media attention, amplifying public debate regarding American policy toward South Africa. Falwell’s trip to South Africa coincided with President P.W. Botha’s August 15, 1985, “Rubicon Speech” in which Botha evinced a belligerent and intransigent defense of apartheid, dashing expectations that he would announce an acceleration of reform.<sup>7</sup> Falwell’s defense of Botha in the wake of the South African leader’s defiant pronouncements against change intensified criticism of the Reagan administration’s position. Long-standing critics of apartheid were joined by moderate Republicans in the House and Senate who spoke out against South Africa and the Reagan administration by signaling their intent to support the economic sanctions bill then being considered by Congress.<sup>8</sup>

As a result of the controversy spokespersons for the administration began to distinguish Reagan’s position from Falwell’s by acknowledging Bishop Tutu’s importance in any resolution of the South African conflict.<sup>9</sup> Falwell himself apologized for his statement by qualifying his criticism of the Bishop, stating that he did not question Tutu’s religious credentials, just claims that he spoke for all South Africans. During a televised face-off with Falwell on ABC’s *Good Morning America* program August 21 Jesse Jackson framed the issue in a domestic historical context. Jackson tied Falwell’s support

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<sup>6</sup> Dickenson, “Tutu a ‘Phony’.”

<sup>7</sup> Nigel Worden, The Making of Modern South Africa, Third Edition (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), 152-153.

<sup>8</sup> Reginald Dale, “Right-wing in US Split Over Apartheid,” Financial Times of London, 24 August 1985, Section I, page 3.

<sup>9</sup> Rudy Abramson, “White House Sees ‘Crisis of Confidence’ in South Africa,” Los Angeles Times, 22 August 1985, Part 1, Page 1.

for the Botha regime to his resistance to desegregation in the US, stating, “Falwell, you supported apartheid in southern America until it was over. Now you’re supporting apartheid in southern Africa while its still alive.”<sup>10</sup>

Following the August 31 march to Thomas Road Baptist Church, Jackson convened a large public meeting at the Court Street Baptist Church, a historically black congregation in Lynchburg. Falwell also attended and addressed the assembly, reiterating his anti-sanctions message. Jackson condemned Falwell’s stance, reminding his audience, “When I went to South Africa, I could not speak with the President.” Speaking to Falwell, Jackson continued, “Since you know him and I know you, tell him [Botha] that justice delayed is justice denied. Tell Botha that the blood of the innocent is on his hands.”<sup>11</sup> Jackson preached to Falwell’s congregation the following day, and on September 4 they appeared on the ABC News television program *Nightline*.

The debate between Jackson and Falwell on *Nightline*, moderated by anchor Ted Koppel and interspersed with a video glossary of terms and events pertinent to the discussion, laid out the clashing points of view that the two most prominent political preachers of the era represented. Both of the activist ministers grounded their positions on apartheid in their own versions of American civil religion. Jackson blended the vocabulary of the civil rights movement with biblical references, placing Botha in the same lineage as “Pharaohs and Nebuchadnezzars” while calling for the application of nonviolent action via economic sanctions in order to pressure South Africa to end

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<sup>10</sup> “Falwell, Jackson Trade Charges on South Africa,” AP, Los Angeles Times, 22 August 1985, Part 1, Page 6, Column 1.

<sup>11</sup> John F. Harris, “Jackson, Falwell Preach on South Africa; Pair Differ on US Policy at Church Service in Lynchburg,” Washington Post, 31 August 1985, A30.

apartheid. Falwell attempted to change the subject by invoking the terminology of the Cold War. He bemoaned the “blood red river of communism” he saw flowing through Africa and lamented what he claimed was the antiapartheid movement’s lack of concern about the Soviet role in fomenting unrest in South Africa. Falwell tried to shift the topic of the debate but could not evade the moral problem presented by apartheid. Though neither advocate convinced the other, they shook hands, agreed that South Africa presented a moral dilemma for Christians and Americans, and parted by saying “God Bless You.”<sup>12</sup>

The clash between Jackson and Falwell symbolized the way in which the struggle over US policy towards South Africa represented a deeper conflict within the context of American civil religion. Historian Andrew Manis has argued that the contestation of the meaning and application of civil religion during the last half of the twentieth century was a clash between “a homogeneous civil religion of exclusion” that defended segregation, and “a pluralistic civil religion”<sup>13</sup> growing from the era of the civil rights movement. The debate between Falwell and Jackson, both southerners and both Baptists, extended the ongoing conflict between these two visions of America into the realm of foreign policy formulation. Further, as theologian Richard Hughes argues, one of the historic roles played by Jackson, the civil rights movement, and other African-American activists has

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<sup>12</sup> Falwell-Jackson Debate, *Nightline*, 4 September 1985 (New York: MPI Home Video, 1990).

<sup>13</sup> Andrew M. Manis, Southern Civil Religions in Conflict: Civil Rights and the Culture Wars (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2002), 183.

been to speak and act “on behalf of marginalized people around the globe — people who live today in a world defined in so many ways by American wealth and power.”<sup>14</sup>

The antiapartheid movement applied the methods, symbols, and vocabulary utilized during the American civil rights struggle to an issue of transnational significance. By extending the moral logic of the civil rights movement, antiapartheid activists were able to invoke themes of equality and freedom central to the idealistic vocabulary of American political discourse. Participation of blacks and whites in the antiapartheid movement helped to integrate the rites and practices of civic participation and protest, at once exporting American ideals while consolidating the domestic gains of the civil rights movement in the symbolic terms of American civil religion. The movement for African-American civil rights challenged the reigning civil religion of the southern US by consolidating the realignment of the sites and symbols of the entire American civil religion. The pluralistic and inclusive notion of multicultural politics demonstrated by American antiapartheid activism extended the ethos of the civil rights movement into the area of foreign policy. The application of the tactics and strategies first advanced by the civil rights movement to the effort to change US policy toward South Africa marked a political coming of age for African Americans as well as a recognition that concern for human rights does not stop at the water’s edge.

The concept of an American civil religion as posed by sociologist Robert Bellah has provoked controversy since he initiated the debate in 1967. Bellah contended that there are “certain common elements of religious orientation that the great majority of Americans share” which are “expressed in a set of beliefs, symbols, and rituals that I am

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<sup>14</sup> Richard T. Hughes, Myths America Lives By (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 15.

calling the American civil religion.” The major symbols of American civil religion arose from the American Revolution and the Civil War eras, which Bellah called the first and second “times of trial.” He viewed the 1960s, particularly the struggle over civil rights and the Vietnam War, as a third time of trial, predicting that “a successful negotiation of this third time of trial—the attainment of a viable and coherent world order—would precipitate a major new set of symbolic forms.”<sup>15</sup>

The new forms Bellah predicted arose directly from the civil rights movement. Mass marches and nonviolent civil disobedience have become standard rites of the expression of dissent. Historian Robert Ellwood contends, “The great demonstrations for civil rights or against the war and the draft took on a quality that was almost liturgical in their ultimate, climactic use of charged symbols to sum up in a moment what might take an hour to explain in a teach-in.”<sup>16</sup> These were the rituals that the antiapartheid movement revived and re-applied. Drawing from trends and traditions established by the civil rights movement, as well as the greater access to power for African-Americans developed by overcoming segregation, the antiapartheid movement was able to assert influence and make a lasting mark on American political culture. Antiapartheid activism was a key element in establishing the concept of multiculturalism as the paradigm in which American civil religion would develop in the 1990s and beyond.

The argument over the legitimacy of South African religious spokespeople such as Desmond Tutu and the role of the US in regard to apartheid reflects the struggle over the

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Bellah, “Civil Religion In America,” *Daedalus*, (Winter 1967), reprinted in Robert Bellah, ed., *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 185.

<sup>16</sup> Robert S. Ellwood, *The Sixties Spiritual Awakening: American Religion Moving from Modern to Postmodern* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 18.

meaning of American civil religion in the post-civil rights movement era. In order to understand the ways in which the contestation of American civil religion and American antiapartheid activism intersected and intertwined it is necessary to address three questions. How did the effort to influence American foreign policy regarding South Africa become entwined with the changes in American civil religion? What specific rites and rituals did antiapartheid activists create and utilize to place their activism in the context of American civil religion? Did American antiapartheid efforts change the practice of the American civil religion?

To address these questions this chapter analyzes several key events and trends in the development of the antiapartheid movement that took place during the most intensive period of activity between 1984 and 1990. Measures directly related to apartheid such as the activism of Jesse Jackson and Jerry Falwell, political activity that contributed to the passage of the 1986 Comprehensive Antiapartheid Act, the initiation of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, the emergence of “African American” as the preferred term for blacks in the US, and the significance of the 1990 Nelson Mandela tour of the US are evaluated.

The manner in which American activists responded to apartheid in South Africa while confronting the legacy of segregation at home contributed to the evolution of multicultural politics in the US. The key accomplishments of the antiapartheid movement, such as divestment, and government-imposed sanctions, served to heighten awareness of the connection between American foreign policy and racial politics in the US. Antiapartheid activism transformed key elements of American civil religion, integrating the specific demand for racial justice with a universal embrace of liberty. US antiapartheid activism produced a successful foreign policy dissent movement that also reflected the struggle over the definition of race in American political, social, and cultural

life. At its height in the mid-1980s the antiapartheid movement represented an accession to power for a black-led movement able to influence American foreign policy as well as the final unified act by the revived civil rights coalition that temporarily cohered around the issue of apartheid. It achieved its greatest impact when it defined South Africa's conflict in terms familiar to Americans.

Both Jesse Jackson and Jerry Falwell were polarizing figures with a history of controversial political statements and alliances. Jesse Jackson had drawn attention and created acrimony for claiming to have cradled the dying Dr. King in his arms when King was shot April 4, 1968.<sup>17</sup> Subsequently, Jackson made headlines, as well as enemies, with his activism in Chicago, the Democratic Party, and his international involvements. By 1985 he could claim to represent over three million voters who had voted for him in the 1984 Democratic primaries as well as much of the black constituency of the Democratic Party. His speech to the Democratic convention that summer raised the profile of multicultural politics in a manner comparable to the way William Jennings Bryan's "Cross of Gold" speech had lifted the banner of populism in 1896. Jackson described America as a patchwork quilt, a vision that embraced diversity while celebrating inclusion:

America is not like a blanket - one piece of unbroken cloth, the same color, the same texture, the same size. America is more like a quilt - many patches, many pieces, many colors, many sizes, all woven and held together by a common thread. The white, the Hispanic, the black, the Arab, the Jew, the woman, the Native American, the small farmer, the

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<sup>17</sup> Others who were there have challenged the version of the assassination scene that Jackson propounded in the hours and days immediately after King's death. See Marshall Frady, Jesse: the Life and Pilgrimage of Jesse Jackson (New York: Random House, 1996), 227-236, and Kenneth R. Timmerman, Shakedown: Exposing the Real Jesse Jackson (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2000), 5-10.

businessperson, the environmentalist, the peace activist, the young, the old, the lesbian, the gay and the disabled make up the American quilt.<sup>18</sup>

During the 1984 campaign Jackson had delivered a strong antiapartheid message that grew from his personal concern about the issue. Jackson first traveled to South Africa in July of 1979. Initially the South African government had denied him a visa, but had relented under pressure from the Carter administration. During his twelve-day sojourn Jackson spoke to large crowds of black South Africans, exhorting them to engage in nonviolent civil disobedience to end apartheid. He addressed a meeting of the South African Council of Churches, met with representatives of the government - though not President P.W. Botha - and arranged a meeting where he attempted to heal the rift between black leaders with different positions, including Anglican Church leader Desmond Tutu, Chief Gatsha Buthelezi representing the Zulu organization Inkatha, and Nthato Motlana of the Soweto Civic Association.<sup>19</sup> Jackson countered critics, South African and American, who had assailed his intervention in the situation by asserting, "I am at home here – I was taken from here 350 years ago against my will. I'm a world citizen and injustice anywhere threatens justice everywhere else."<sup>20</sup> Upon his return to the US Jackson briefed President Carter about his trip.

Jerry Falwell, who launched his Moral Majority organization in 1979 to mobilize fundamentalist Christians, became an important player in the Republican Party as a result

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<sup>18</sup> Jesse Jackson 1984 Address to the Democratic National Convention in Mullane, ed., Crossing the Danger Water, 736.

<sup>19</sup> John F. Burns, "Rev. Jesse L Jackson's Two Week Tour Of South Africa Creates Stir In Country," New York Times, 2 August 1979, Page 4, Column 1.

<sup>20</sup> Timmerman, Shakedown, 105.

of his constituency's support for Ronald Reagan in the 1980 election. Falwell's poor record on civil rights made him a less than ideal spokesperson for Reagan's policy of constructive engagement with South Africa. During the early years of his ministry Falwell had been a segregationist, going so far as to have a group of black teenage civil rights protesters who attempted to conduct a kneel-in on the steps of his Thomas Road Church, removed by police.<sup>21</sup>

Falwell, the civil rights movement, and the antiapartheid struggle, all had a memorable day March 21, 1965. Two weeks earlier on "Bloody Sunday," civil rights protesters had been beaten at the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. On March 21, civil rights protesters, including 23 year-old Jesse Jackson,<sup>22</sup> assembled to restart the interrupted Selma to Montgomery March. It was also the fifth anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre in South Africa. That Sunday evening Falwell preached a sermon titled "Ministers and Marchers" in which he acknowledged the earnestness of Christians involved with the civil rights movement but questioned the motives of their leaders.

Falwell declared "I do question the sincerity and non-violent intentions of some civil rights leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Mr. James Farmer, and others, who are known to have left-wing associations." Falwell went on to challenge the affiliations of the civil rights movement at large, charging "It is very obvious that the Communists, as they do in all parts of the world, are taking advantage of a tense situation in our land, and are exploiting every incident to bring about violence and bloodshed." Falwell, who used his jeremiad to lament the involvement of Christian ministers in social activism rather

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<sup>21</sup> Frances Fitzgerald, Cities on a Hill: A Journey Through Contemporary American Culture (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 170.

<sup>22</sup> Frady, Jesse, 189.

than a more narrowly defined evangelism, made clear his stand against the civil rights movement: "I believe these demonstrations and marches have done more to damage race relations and to engender hate than to help!"<sup>23</sup> While Falwell bemoaned the involvement of other ministers in politics, he had taken his first public step toward his own political engagement. Falwell's logic and vocabulary in 1965 was quite similar to the language he used in 1985 to defend the Reagan administration's South Africa policy. Having cast off his reluctance to participate in politics, he clung to a strident anticommunism to justify his opposition to sanctions against South Africa.

In his debate with Jackson and in his accusations against Tutu and the antiapartheid movement, Falwell mounted a holding action against the growing rebellion in South Africa and the accompanying activism in the US. He used the October 1985 issue of Moral Majority Report to reiterate the position he took in his debate with Jackson but had to reformulate his defense of the apartheid regime after the Reagan administration recast its position in a September 9 Executive Order designed to head off imposition of sanctions by Congress.<sup>24</sup> Reagan's Executive Order 12532 stopped US government loans to the South African government, prevented the sale of computers to South African security agencies, limited cooperation on nuclear power programs, and banned the sale of

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<sup>23</sup> Jerry Falwell, "Ministers and Marches," Sermon delivered at Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Virginia, 21 March 1965, reprinted in Perry Deane Young, God's Bullies: Power Politics and Religious Tyranny (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1982), 310-311.

<sup>24</sup> The October 1985 issue of Moral Majority Report was devoted almost exclusively to defending constructive engagement. The November issue carries an explanation of Executive Order 12532 with the headline "Reagan rescues South Africa from hostile U.S. Congress." See Moral Majority Report, October and November issues, 1985.

South African Kruggerrand gold coins in the US.<sup>25</sup> In order to prevent passage of much more punitive Congressional sanctions the Reagan administration seemed to abandon constructive engagement in order to take small but punitive action against the apartheid regime. Meanwhile, Falwell and his Moral Majority organization were left behind as the administration attempted to co-opt the language of the antiapartheid movement.

A Harris Poll conducted in the week following the Jackson-Falwell debate on *Nightline* found that 76% of respondents thought Falwell's criticism of Tutu was wrong.<sup>26</sup> Facing this attitude in the field of foreign policy gave impetus for the Moral Majority to change course. While concentrating his efforts on oversight of his rapidly expanding Liberty University, Falwell transformed his organization into the more broadly focused Liberty Federation in 1986. Falwell announced his retirement from politics in 1987 and disbanded the Liberty Federation in 1989.<sup>27</sup>

Jerry Falwell could not stop sanctions against antiapartheid because he ran up against public opinion regarding South Africa, which he could not dissuade with his Cold War accusations. The long simmering concern about South Africa that had burst into the headlines with the November 21, 1984 arrest of TransAfrica leader Randall Robinson and other prominent African Americans at the South African embassy in Washington, DC, had engendered an important political force. Popular protest around the country, pressure

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<sup>25</sup> Peter J. Schraeder, United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis and Change (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 229.

<sup>26</sup> Poll by Louis Harris and Associates conducted September 5-8, 1985 Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe (accessed 5 November 1999).

<sup>27</sup> Fitzgerald, Cities on a Hill, 198, and Matthew C. Moan, "The Preacher Versus the Teacher," National Education Association Higher Education Thought and Action Journal, Vol. 8, No. 1, (Fall 1993): 132.

for institutional and governmental divestment, activism among students and church people, and a movement toward passing sanctions legislation in Congress combined to make US policy toward South Africa a key lightning rod issue for foreign policy dissent in 1985 and 1986.

The 1984 civil disobedience at the South African embassy served as the initiation of the Free South Africa Movement (FSAM), in which TransAfrica played the leading role. FSAM's initial action launched a year of picketing and civil disobedience in Washington, DC, and inspired protests around the country. TransAfrica's initiative galvanized the US antiapartheid movement at the outset of the second Reagan administration in a way that linked protest to legislative action to impose economic sanctions on South Africa.<sup>28</sup>

By the spring of 1985 a new surge of student activism mobilized many campuses, bringing attention to the call for colleges and universities to divest themselves of stocks doing business in or with South Africa. Twenty years after the Students for a Democratic Society demonstrated at Chase Manhattan Bank in New York City,<sup>29</sup> students across the country brought protest and civil disobedience to their campuses. As a way to illustrate their demand for divestment the students built shanties meant to resemble the shacks built by poor blacks in South Africa. The shanty tactic began at Cornell University in April 1985 and spread to over 40 campuses by 1986.<sup>30</sup> Students built shantytowns from castoff materials and used them as sites of protest and political education. Shanties attracted student support and provoked confrontation. In April 1985 Berkeley police attacked the

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<sup>28</sup> See Chapter Three.

<sup>29</sup> See Chapter One.

<sup>30</sup> Sarah A. Soule, "The Diffusion of An Unsuccessful Innovation," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 566 (Nov 1999): 120.

shanties at 2:30 am, initiating a daylong melee that led to over one hundred arrests and many injuries. At the University of Utah and Johns Hopkins University shanties were set ablaze by counter demonstrators.<sup>31</sup>

At Dartmouth College, students affiliated with the conservative *Dartmouth Review* newspaper attacked the shanties on campus with sledgehammers in the early morning hours of January 21, the day after the first celebration of the Martin Luther King Jr. national holiday. The Dartmouth incident led to a drawn-out disciplinary proceeding for the perpetrators while sparking a new level of activism by students, faculty and the administration in response to the concerns of minority students.<sup>32</sup> The response by Dartmouth to the destruction of the antiapartheid shanties presaged the conflict over multiculturalism and “political correctness” that became the key topic of campus controversies in the 1990s.

The initiation of the King Holiday recognized the role of African Americans and the significance of the civil rights movement in the nation’s history. Originally proposed by Democratic Congressman John Conyers of Michigan in 1968, Congress had passed legislation to create the holiday in 1983 to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the March on Washington.<sup>33</sup> The bipartisan support for the holiday, with the notable exception of Republican Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina who attempted to

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<sup>31</sup> Jon Weiner, “Students, Stocks and Shanties” *The Nation*, 11 October 1986, 337-340.

<sup>32</sup> Dinesh D’Souza, “Shanty Raids at Dartmouth: How a College Prank Became an Ideological War,” *Policy Review*, 1986.

<sup>33</sup> “The King Holiday: A Chronology,” <http://thekingcenter.com/holiday/index.asp> (accessed 1 September 2003).

filibuster the Senate vote on the bill, foreshadowed the coalition that took shape in 1986 to enact sanctions on South Africa.

President Ronald Reagan had initially expressed some ambivalence about the holiday. Responding to a reporter's question at an October 19, 1983 press conference about King's alleged alliances with Communists Reagan replied, "We'll know in about 35 years, won't we?" Reagan was referring to the materials gathered via FBI surveillance of King that had been sealed until 2027.<sup>34</sup> President Reagan promised to accede to the will of Congress stating, "I believe the symbolism of that day is important enough that I'll sign that legislation when it reaches my desk."<sup>35</sup> Upon signing the King Holiday into law on November 2, 1983, Reagan laid claim to the significance of King's legacy, stating, "As a democratic people, we can take pride in the knowledge that we Americans recognized a grave injustice and took action to correct it. And we should remember that in far too many countries people like Dr. King never have the opportunity to speak out at all."<sup>36</sup> Reagan's opaque reference to dissenters like King in other countries was broad enough to possibly include the Soviet Union as well as South Africa. The new holiday was celebrated for the first time on January 20, 1986.

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<sup>34</sup> See David J. Garrow, The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.: From "Solo" to Memphis (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981).

<sup>35</sup> Transcript of October 19, 1983 Presidential Press Conference, Public Papers of Ronald Reagan, <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/resource/speeches/1983/101983e.htm>, (accessed September 1, 2003).

<sup>36</sup> Ronald Reagan, Remarks on Signing the Bill making the Birthday of Martin Luther King Jr., a National Holiday, November 2, 1983, <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/resource/speeches/1983/101983e.htm>, (accessed 8 September 2000).

By the spring of 1986 the situation in South Africa had deteriorated even further, creating pressure for the imposition of stiffer congressional sanctions. On May 19 Pretoria had lashed out with air attacks at ANC bases and offices in the southern Africa states, while continuing a state of emergency at home that relied on increasingly repressive tactics that led to many deaths and detentions. Major American banks called in their loans and voluntary corporate withdrawal from South Africa accelerated. Meanwhile, by 1986, 131 colleges and universities, along with 19 state governments, 68 cities and counties, and numerous churches and unions had implemented restrictions on institutional investment that affected nearly \$220 billion of pension and endowment funds.<sup>37</sup> In this atmosphere congressional support for sanctions swelled. On June 12 the House of Representatives, by a voice vote, passed a comprehensive sanctions bill sponsored by Democratic Representative Ronald Dellums that called for a complete embargo of and disinvestment from South Africa. The Republican minority had hoped to let the bill pass without recording their opposition on the assumption that it would not be matched by the Senate. In the opinion of Representative Dellums the House vote “placed a marker on the wall below which the House of Representatives will never be able to go.”<sup>38</sup> Two days later, in another indication of the movement’s strength, an antiapartheid rally in New York City held to mark the tenth anniversary of the Soweto Uprising

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<sup>37</sup> Schraeder, *Crisis and Change*, 231. The University of Maryland divested \$7.2 million from South Africa in 1989. See “A Seat at the Campaign Table,” <http://www.inform.umd.edu/CPMAG/winter99/profiles.html> (accessed 1 October 2003).

<sup>38</sup> Ronald V. Dellums and H. Lee Halterman, *Lying Down With the Lions: A Public Life from the Streets of Oakland to the Halls of Power* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 134.

attracted over 40,000 demonstrators.<sup>39</sup> In August the Senate, by an 84 -14 margin, passed a milder version of sanctions that banned private bank loans and prohibited new investment. The House-Senate conference committee accepted the Senate's version. On September 26 President Reagan vetoed the final bill, known as the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986.<sup>40</sup>

The Reagan administration had worked throughout the summer of 1986 to stave off Congressional action. On July 22, 1986, the President addressed the nation via television to make his case for maintaining his policies toward South Africa. But the political and economic pressures had converged to sway the votes of many Republicans who no longer wanted to be identified with what many of them had come to see as tyrannical racism. By a 317 to 83 vote the House overturned the President's veto on September 29. On October 2, with Randall Robinson, Jesse Jackson and Coretta Scott King looking on from the gallery and members of the Congressional Black Caucus working the floor of the chamber, the Republican-controlled Senate overrode the President's veto by a vote of 78-21.<sup>41</sup> Democratic Senator Paul Sarbanes of Maryland described the enactment of the Comprehensive Antiapartheid Act of 1986 (CAAA) as "the last nonviolent option for change in South Africa."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Lyle V. Harris, "New York Rally Protests Apartheid; Thousands Join Call for New US Sanctions," Washington Post, 15 June 1986, A21.

<sup>40</sup> Robert K. Massie, Loosing the Bonds: The United States and South Africa in the Apartheid Years (New York: Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 1997), 619.

<sup>41</sup> Schraeder, Crisis and Change, 230.

<sup>42</sup> Edward Walsh, "Sanctions Imposed on South Africa As Senate Overrides Veto, 78-21," Washington Post, 3 October 1986, A1.

Enactment of the CAAA was the key foreign policy defeat for the Reagan Administration and the high watermark for Congressional Black Caucus influence on foreign policy. The years following the passage of sanctions posed new difficulties for the antiapartheid movement. In light of the decline of unity that occurred after 1986 it is necessary to temper George Fredrickson's assertion that the antiapartheid movement was "Birmingham and Selma on a world scale."<sup>43</sup> In a sense, passage of sanctions served, as had the Selma to Montgomery march, as a final major unified act before the movement declined. Activism continued, more universities and municipalities divested, and the terms of debate shifted from whether to pressure or constructively engage South Africa as to how best to coerce the apartheid regime. But the clarity of focus and accord created by the focus on sanctions legislation in 1985 and 1986 was never regained. The achievement of Congressional sanctions and institutional divestment made it difficult to maintain momentum and unity further action.

The movement's focus and public profile diminished gradually. The shift by the Reagan administration from a policy of constructive engagement to a regional strategy aimed at supporting South Africa by providing arms and assistance to anti-government forces in Angola and Mozambique, facilitated by the 1985 repeal of the Clark Amendment that had banned such aid, caught movement lobbyists off guard.<sup>44</sup> While the enactment of sanctions by the British Commonwealth countries and the European Economic Community helped to drive home global disapproval of apartheid to the

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<sup>43</sup> George Fredrickson, Black Liberation: A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in the United States and South Africa (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 276.

<sup>44</sup> Sylvia Hill, "Free South Africa! Notes from My Diary: Sylvia Hill offers a personal history of work in the Free South Africa Movement," Crossroads April 1995, 17.

government in Pretoria,<sup>45</sup> in February of 1987 the Reagan administration vetoed imposition of sanctions by the United Nations.<sup>46</sup>

In 1987 a spring mobilization in Washington, DC, attempted to merge several currents of the US dissent from the Reagan Administration's foreign policy. The April 25-27 Mobilization for Justice and Peace in Central America and Southern Africa culminated a six month process aimed at increasing the visibility of the opposition of segments of the labor movement and many religious communities to Reagan's policies toward the Third World. Framed as a call from individual labor and religious leaders, the mobilization combined a Saturday mass march on the Capitol with a Monday civil disobedience blockade at the CIA. Over 75,000 demonstrators, many of them students who had built shanties and worked for divestment, marched down Pennsylvania Avenue that rainy Saturday.

Despite the appearance of unity during preparation for the mobilization a number of strains and controversies surfaced, particularly in relation to the support of the labor movement and the involvement of antiapartheid organizations.<sup>47</sup> Because the AFL-CIO generally supported anticommunist Cold War policies those labor groups that chose to support the April 25 mobilization suffered condemnation by the labor federation's president Lane Kirkland and the union leaders most closely allied with him. In March Kirkland sent a letter to state and local labor councils urging them not to support or

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<sup>45</sup> Donald Culverson, Contesting Apartheid: U.S. Activism, 1960-1987 (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 134.

<sup>46</sup> Schraeder, Crisis and Change, 233.

<sup>47</sup> See Beverly Bickel, Philip Brenner, and William LeoGrande, Challenging the Reagan Doctrine: A Summation of the April 25 Mobilization (Washington, DC: The Foreign Policy Education Fund, 1987).

participate in the mobilization. Six days prior to the march Kirkland, along with Albert Shanker of the American Federation of Teachers and John Joyce of the International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftsmen, took out an ad in the New York Times titled “Avoiding the Wrong Crowd.” The ad portrayed the march, which featured speakers from liberation movements in Central America and southern Africa, as procommunist because of its call for a cutoff of military aid to the governments of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala and its support for the government of Nicaragua.<sup>48</sup> Despite the attempt to smear the march, none of the twenty-four union presidents nor any of the fifty religious leaders retracted their endorsements of the mobilization.<sup>49</sup>

The relationships of the antiapartheid groups, including TransAfrica and the American Committee on Africa, with the rest of the coalition, also proved to be difficult. Most of the organizations represented on the steering committee were primarily concerned with the Reagan administration’s policy in Central America. An unrealistic expectation that the antiapartheid groups would be able to mobilize the black community led to frustration with the small black turnout for the demonstration. According to the post-mobilization evaluation, the antiapartheid groups “complained that without national materials listing steering committee organizations or endorsers, they had no way to project any anti-apartheid presence in the organizing nationally or locally.”<sup>50</sup> Representatives of the ANC as well as the Southwest African People’s Organization (SWAPO) spoke at the April 25 rally. The attempt to draw together the two most significant foreign policy dissent

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<sup>48</sup> Challenging the Reagan Doctrine, 10.

<sup>49</sup> Challenging the Reagan Doctrine, 53-54.

<sup>50</sup> Challenging the Reagan Doctrine, 34.

movements of the mid-1980s met with limited success and did not transform into a lasting alliance. It presaged both the promise and problems of building multicultural political coalitions.

One of the keynote speakers at the April 25 rally was Jesse Jackson, whose presence helped to strengthen the mobilization's connection to concern about southern Africa. Jackson was then preparing for his 1988 presidential campaign, during which he again raised the issue of South Africa on the campaign trail. During the 1988 primary election season Jackson won over 7 million votes, coming to the convention with 1,218 delegates. At the 1988 Democratic Party convention in Atlanta, Jackson included southern Africa in his speech:

We have basic challenges - freedom in South Africa. We have already agreed as Democrats to declare South Africa to be a terrorist state. But don't just stop there. Get South Africa out of Angola; free Namibia; support the front line states. We must have a new humane human rights consistent policy in Africa.<sup>51</sup>

Jackson had again raised the issue of apartheid in a nationally televised prime time speech.

As in 1984, the Democrats suffered a defeat in the 1988 presidential election. The Dukakis campaign had gone poorly and Vice President George H. W. Bush was elected the forty-first President of the United States. As had been the case four years earlier, the prospects for Democrats and their allies were gloomy. Once again, the initiative to stake out the political terms and territory for the new cycle came from black activists. At a December 19, 1988 press conference to promote the March 1989 National Black Agenda

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<sup>51</sup> Address by Jesse Jackson to the Democratic Convention 19 July 1988, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/jesse/speeches/jesse88speech.html>, (accessed 1December 2003).

conference, Jackson announced his intention to try to make “African-American”<sup>52</sup> the term of choice, superceding black. Jackson asserted, “This is deeper than just name recognition. Black tells you about skin color and what side of town you live on. African-American evokes discussion of the world.”<sup>53</sup> For Jackson and his allies the term African American connected African heritage with the antiapartheid activism of the 1980s.

Jackson gave his name and fame to a project that had already begun in piecemeal fashion. Many black-oriented radio stations and newspapers as well as elementary school textbooks had already adopted the term. Arthur Ashe had chosen to use it in his 1988 book A Hard Road to Glory: a History of the African-American Athlete.<sup>54</sup> Another proponent of the change, Historian Mary Frances Berry, argued, “This doesn’t mean that everything will be wonderful and all the poor people will get taken care of. But with the devastating problems in the community now, building self-esteem can’t be all bad, it’s not going to make things worse.”<sup>55</sup> While some in the black community were not receptive to the change, and others voiced concerns about the unintended exclusion of people from the Caribbean and South America, the initiative of Jackson and his allies marked a watershed moment in the evolution of ethnic identity for all Americans. Psychologist Roderick Watts pointed out “ ‘African-American’ reflects a post-modern

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<sup>52</sup> Clarence Page, “African American or Black? Pride come with label” Chicago Tribune, 25 December 1988, 1.

<sup>53</sup> Isabel Wilkerson, “ ‘African-American’ Favored by Many of America’s Blacks,” New York Times, 31 January 1989, A1.

<sup>54</sup> Arthur Ashe, A Hard Road to Glory: A History of the African-American Athlete (Amistad/Penguin: New York, 1993).

<sup>55</sup> Wilkerson, “ ‘African-American.’ ”

black consciousness, it has a self-affirming quality that seems to fit right now.”<sup>56</sup> New York Times writer Isabel Wilkerson asserted that a key factor driving the effort to make African-American the generally accepted term was “involvement in the fight to end racial separation in South Africa that led to the search for a clear group identity.”<sup>57</sup>

Group identity and movement relationships came to the fore the following year when the new leadership of the National Party in South Africa, facing world-wide condemnation, continued unrest, and a deteriorating economic position, changed course and initiated what turned out to be the dismantlement of apartheid. The February 11, 1990 release of Nelson Mandela, televised live to much of the world, was greeted as the political resurrection of a man who had spent 27 years hidden from world view. Jesse Jackson was the first American to greet Mandela upon his release.<sup>58</sup> Journalist Richard Lacayo explained the special significance of Mandela’s visit to the black community: “For many blacks who have begun to call themselves African Americans, he is a flesh and blood example of what an African can be.”<sup>59</sup> Mandela’s world tour in the summer of 1990 served as celebration for those who had long opposed apartheid and provided the ANC with an opportunity to raise money while advocating that the US and other countries maintain pressure on the South African government, including sanctions. It also marked the culmination of the broad unity that had fueled the successes of the antiapartheid movement but did not outlast it.

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<sup>56</sup> Wilkerson, “ ‘African-American.’”

<sup>57</sup> Wilkerson, “ ‘African-American.’”

<sup>58</sup> Ronald W. Walters, Pan-Africanism in the African Diaspora (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 265.

<sup>59</sup> Richard Lacayo, “A Hero’s Welcome,” Time, 2 July 1990, 16.

Mandela's triumphant first visit to America covered eight cities in twelve days. The festivities in New York included a parade in Manhattan and rallies at Yankee Stadium, Riverside Church, and Harlem's Africa Square. In his autobiography Mandela recounts that his wife Winnie reminded him "Harlem is the Soweto of America."<sup>60</sup> Included in Mandela's itinerary in New York was a June 21 nationally televised town meeting from the Aaron Davis Hall of the City College of New York's Harlem Campus. In front of a predominantly African-American audience of over one thousand people, including many of the most prominent activists and supporters of the American antiapartheid movement, Mandela squared off with ABC's Ted Koppel, the moderator of the event.

While fielding questions from the audience, exhibiting his fluency in Afrikaans, as well as fencing with Koppel, Mandela established himself as a uniquely appealing television personality, diplomatic yet forceful and unwavering in his defense of the ANC's position. At one point, after dealing with sustained questioning about the ANC's relationship to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Mandela managed to wrest control of the exchange from Koppel, stating bluntly "Mr. Koppel, You are entirely mistaken – I expect you to be consistent." After an uncomfortable silence, Mandela queried the usually voluble anchor, asking, "I don't know if I have paralyzed you,"<sup>61</sup> which brought cheers and sustained applause from the majority of the crowd.

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<sup>60</sup> Nelson Mandela, Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela (Boston: Little Brown, 1994), 583.

<sup>61</sup> The Koppel Report: A Town Meeting with Nelson Mandela, 21 June 1990, (New York: MPI Home Video, 1990) videocassette.

Koppel had introduced the town meeting, by way of explanation to Mandela, as “a very old and honorable American tradition.”<sup>62</sup> The forum did resemble a town meeting, but one adapted to the television age and reflective of the multicultural reality antiapartheid activism had helped to shape. Koppel, the son of German-Jewish immigrants who had fled the Holocaust,<sup>63</sup> held forth with the man who would become South Africa’s first black president, in front of an integrated audience that represented the diversity, as well as the political divisions, of New York City in 1990. Arrayed behind Koppel and Mandela were, along with Winnie Mandela, David Dinkins, the first African-American mayor of New York, Harry and Julie Belafonte, Jesse Jackson, Randall Robinson, Arthur Ashe, Ossie Davis, Spike Lee, and Steven Van Zandt. Many of the members of the audience were attired in a rainbow of African robes and headwear, emphasizing in a visual way their identification with the cultures of Africa.

The questions regarding the ANC’s relationship with the PLO and Libya’s Muammar Qaddafi were asked in the context of the several incidents where blacks and Jews in New York had clashed violently in the months preceding Mandela’s visit. In response, Mandela’s expressed gratitude to all those who had supported the ANC, including Yasser Arafat and Muammar Qaddafi. He also testified about his gratitude to Jewish allies of the ANC in South Africa and around the world. The response of the audience was overwhelmingly positive. Despite his twenty-seven years of imprisonment in another

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<sup>62</sup> The Koppel Report: A Town Meeting with Nelson Mandela.

<sup>63</sup> Peter Ross Range, “Late-night Rider: Turning The Tables on TV’s Grand Inquisitor,” Modern Maturity Online, [http://www.aarp.org/mmaturity/jan\\_feb01/cameo.html](http://www.aarp.org/mmaturity/jan_feb01/cameo.html), (accessed 15 September 2003).

country, Mandela seemed to understand “the old and honorable tradition” of the town meeting, and the new dynamics of multiculturalism in America, as well as anyone.

The town meeting, practiced since the colonization of New England and idealized by the painter Norman Rockwell to illustrate “Freedom of Speech,”<sup>64</sup> is a rite of American civil religion. The use of such symbolism in the age of television, with reporters and anchor people serving in the role of secular officiants, is indicative of the way old forms have been adapted to new forums. Nelson Mandela’s exchanges with Ted Koppel were among the most stage-managed, as well as the most widely accessible, moments of the Mandela tour. Mandela’s ability to inject spontaneity into the assembly and connect with the congregation on a political and emotional level speaks not only to his gifts as a speaker and politician, but also to the long preparation for just such an event established by the antiapartheid movement. Mandela’s advocacy of self-determination for the black majority in South Africa resonated with those demanding self-determination within the American polity as well.

The effort to influence American foreign policy regarding South Africa inevitably became entwined with the changes in American civil religion because antiapartheid activists invoked themes of equality and freedom central to the idealistic vocabulary of American political discourse. The pluralistic and inclusive strategy of multicultural politics demonstrated by American antiapartheid activism extended the ethos of the civil rights movement into the area of foreign policy. The application of the tactics and

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<sup>64</sup> Rockwell created paintings to illustrate all of the “Four Freedoms” evoked by President Franklin Roosevelt as justification for US involvement in World War II. See Franklin D. Roosevelt, Message to Congress, 6 January 1941, [http://www.archives.gov/exhibit\\_hall/powers\\_of\\_persuasion/four\\_freedoms/four\\_freedoms.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibit_hall/powers_of_persuasion/four_freedoms/four_freedoms.html) (accessed 1 December 2003). Also see Maureen Hart Hennessey and Anne Knutson, eds., *Norman Rockwell: Pictures for the American People*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1999), 100.

strategies first advanced by the civil rights movement to the effort to change US policy toward South Africa marked a political coming of age for African Americans, who were able to assert influence on foreign policy because the nadir of the crisis in South Africa coincided with the new zenith of African-American influence in America. As affirmation of this special relationship, President Clinton appointed Jesse Jackson to head the American delegation charged with monitoring the 1994 all-race elections that elected Nelson Mandela president of South Africa.<sup>65</sup> In addition, antiapartheid activist Gay McDougall was the only American and one of only five international members to serve on South Africa's 16-member Independent Electoral Commission, which organized and administered the 1994 elections. McDougall, an African-American human rights lawyer who had led the South Africa Project of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, served to further tie the American struggle for civil rights to the institution of free elections in South Africa.<sup>66</sup>

The specific rites and rituals created by antiapartheid activists placed their activism in the context of American civil religion. The circumstance of the newly established Martin Luther King Jr. National Holiday cast the destruction of the Dartmouth shanties as a racially motivated attack and thus helped to shape the terms of discussion about race and racism in America and the world. Shantytowns on college campuses and demonstrations at the South African embassy placed tactics born of the civil rights movement into a transnational perspective. The prominence achieved by the 1984 and 1988 Jesse Jackson

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<sup>65</sup> Karen Stanford, Beyond The Boundaries: Reverend Jesse Jackson in International Affairs (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 174.

<sup>66</sup> Brief biography, Gay McDougall, MacArthur Fellows Program, <http://www.macfound.org/programs/fel/announce.htm> (accessed 5 December 1999).

presidential campaigns, combined with the passage of the 1986 Comprehensive Antiapartheid Act, to establish a firm connection between the concerns of the African-American community and foreign policy toward South Africa. Republican Senator Robert Dole's comment that "this has now become a civil rights issue"<sup>67</sup> in the wake of the passage of sanctions by the Senate in 1986 underscored the reason that many Republicans objected to the continuation of Reagan's constructive engagement policy. Jackson's 1988 assertion that "African-American" should supercede black as the preferred name for those of African descent consolidated the sentiment that had gathered around the antiapartheid movement and focused it on an issue of identity politics. This was an achievable change that has become generally accepted.<sup>68</sup>

American antiapartheid efforts changed the practice of the American civil religion by integrating an African-American perspective into the formulation of foreign policy, the last realm of governmental power to accept and acknowledge African-American influence. Antiapartheid activism was a key element in establishing the concept of multiculturalism as the paradigm in which American civil religion would develop in the 1990s and beyond. The conflict between Jerry Falwell and Jesse Jackson represented a broader trend that Falwell's Cold War fundamentalism could no longer contain. While both men might have been viewed as political hucksters by their opponents, and as the

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<sup>67</sup> Quoted in Pauline H. Baker, "The Sanctions Vote: A G.O.P. Milestone," New York Times, 26 August 1986, as cited in Schraeder, Crisis and Change, 232.

<sup>68</sup> One measure of the widespread acceptance of "African American" as the term of choice is its adoption for the title of the seventh (1994) and subsequent editions of From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans. Previous editions of the landmark survey of Africans in America, which was first published in 1947, used the phrase "A History of Negro Americans" in the title. See John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss Jr., From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans, Eighth Edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000).

leading acolytes of their professed views by their supporters, their debate was indicative of the greater shift in the civil religion they were contesting. Jesse Jackson had helped set the tone that the antiapartheid movement had built upon in his 1984 Democratic Convention address when he adapted a Sunday school song to his political agenda: “Our flag is red, white and blue, but our nation is a rainbow — red, yellow, brown, black and white - and we're all precious in God's sight.”<sup>69</sup>

The inclusiveness emphasized by Jesse Jackson’s rhetoric about the Rainbow Coalition dovetailed well with Desmond Tutu’s appeal to cast the antiapartheid struggle as a moral one. “Are you for goodness or evil? Are you for freedom or oppression?”<sup>70</sup> asked the Nobel Peace Prize laureate in his appeal to the conscience of Americans. A positive rhetoric of inclusion, combined with a practical program of sanctions understood as the transnational application of nonviolence, drew greater support than the negative and defensive Cold War geopolitical position articulated by Falwell and Reagan. Participation of blacks and whites in the antiapartheid movement helped to integrate the rites and practices of civic participation and protest, rewriting the script of American civil religion, adding new rituals while forcing reappraisal and reflection on how the national story is told, at home and abroad.

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<sup>69</sup> 1984 Address to the Democratic National Convention in Deidre Mullane, ed., Crossing the Danger Water, 734.

<sup>70</sup> Desmond Tutu as quoted in Karlyn Barker, “Bishop Tutu Joins Apartheid Protesters at South African Embassy,” Washington Post, 9 January 1986, A26.



## CONCLUSION

### **Now Face to Face? Opposing Apartheid, Proposing Multiculturalism**

*We could not have made an acquaintance through literature with human giants such as George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson and not been moved to act as they were moved to act. We could not have heard of and admired John Brown, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King Jr., and others, and not be moved to act as they were moved to act. We could not have known of your Declaration of Independence and not elected to join in the struggle to guarantee the people life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.*

### **Address to the Joint Session of the Houses of Congress of the USA**

**Nelson Mandela**, Washington, D.C., June 26, 1990.<sup>1</sup>

*A man in white skin can never be free while his black brother is in slavery,  
'And we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain.  
And this government of the people, by the people and for the people  
Shall not perish from the Earth.'*  
*Abraham Lincoln said that on November 19, 1863 at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.  
And he was right. I believe that too."*

### **Ballad for Americans**

Music: Earl Robinson

Words: John LaTouche

Performed by Paul Robeson

First Broadcast November 5, 1939<sup>2</sup>

Nelson Mandela's 1990 speech to a joint session of the US Congress marked the first time an African leader addressed the American legislature. Mandela's appearance before Congress, a highlight of his American tour, followed speeches in the preceding months

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<sup>1</sup> Address to the Joint Session of the Houses of Congress of the USA by Nelson Mandela, 26 June 1990, <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mandela/1990/sp900626.html> (accessed 3 November 2001).

<sup>2</sup> Martin Bauml Duberman, Paul Robeson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), 237.

by Polish Solidarity leader Lech Walesa and Czech President Vaclav Havel.<sup>3</sup> The collapse of Communism that had coincided with the demise of apartheid marked a watershed in world politics and US foreign relations. The veneration of Mandela on the same level with anticommunist heroes Walesa and Havel placed the South African struggle within the context of the fight against despotism that had been used to justify American Cold War policies, even though it had been Cold War calculations that hindered the imposition of economic sanctions by the US against South Africa.

Mandela's invocation of Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln along with African-American heroes bolstered the legitimacy of the African National Congress as well as communicated the ideals of that struggle to Americans. In an emblematic sense Mandela's speech served as the capstone of the long effort of antiapartheid forces in America to integrate US society by transforming the symbols of civil religion. Expressing admiration for John Brown associated the ANC's adoption of armed struggle with Brown's Harper's Ferry raid; both were tactical failures in the short-term that contributed to long-term strategic changes in race relations. By equating the significance of the three presidents memorialized on Mount Rushmore with post Civil War African-American radicals like Du Bois, Garvey, and King, Mandela melded himself with the heritage of agitation for change from both an integrationist and Pan-Africanist perspective.

Among the "others" to whom Mandela expressed gratitude, Paul Robeson surely stands out as a forerunner and model for American antiapartheid activists. The opinion

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<sup>3</sup> See Foreign Leaders Addressing Congress at [http://clerk.house.gov/histHigh/Special\\_Exhibits/foreignJointMeeting.php](http://clerk.house.gov/histHigh/Special_Exhibits/foreignJointMeeting.php) (accessed 1 December 2003).

of Jack O'Dell, who admired Robeson's political courage and became an associate of Martin Luther King as well as Jesse Jackson, is indicative of the continuity that connected the internationalist efforts of Jesse Jackson in the 1980s with those of Robeson. O'Dell, who served as foreign affairs advisor for Jackson's Rainbow Coalition, viewed Jackson's internationalism as descended from Robeson and his contemporaries, stating "The Rainbow Coalition is placing America in touch with the world...in the way that the Henry Wallace Campaign, Paul Robeson, and Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois made the supreme effort to do in 1948. We are their children. We are keeping the faith."<sup>4</sup>

The current of internationalism that linked the antiapartheid movement of the 1980s with the precedent set by Robeson and Du Bois represents an important thread of continuity during the Cold War. Historian Michael Lind argues that the domestic factions of the Cold War were delineated in the 1948 election to which O'Dell refers.<sup>5</sup> While the faction that descended from the Henry Wallace campaign was effectively contained in the 1950s when the Council on African Affairs collapsed, the spirit of Wallace's Progressives and the CAA found new life during the upsurge of the civil rights movement of the sixties and the antiapartheid activism that followed. The ideals as well as the divisions that came in the wake of the Wallace campaign presaged the tension between the universalism of the integrationist dream and the transnational black solidarity of the Pan-African ideal that marked the evolution of the American antiapartheid movement.

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<sup>4</sup> Jack O'Dell as cited in Morton Kondracke in "Jesse's World: President Jackson's Foreign Policy," New Republic, 25 April 1988, 11.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Lind, Up From Conservatism: Why the Right is Wrong For America (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 24.

Antiapartheid activism in the US produced a successful foreign policy dissent movement that also reflected the struggle over the definition of race in American political, social, and cultural life. It achieved its greatest impact when it defined South Africa's conflict in terms familiar to Americans. The development of transnational advocacy against apartheid and the evolution of a nonviolent stance that supported liberation movements during the first three decades of antiapartheid activism shaped and inspired the widespread movement of the 1980s. The tension between advocates of universalist integrationism and proponents of a particularist Pan-Africanism produced a unique style of advocacy that blended highly visible direct action with a decentralized, grassroots activism that targeted financial connections to apartheid where ever they occurred. The three antiapartheid organizations analyzed in this study all influenced, and were influenced by, this dynamic.

The American Committee on Africa provided continuity and consistency to antiapartheid efforts from the 1950s through the 1990s. ACOA experimented with different arrangements for recognizing the demands of Pan-Africanist activists and cooperating with a variety of black-led organizations. ACOA refined liberal internationalist opposition to apartheid through innovative tactics such as pressure for institutional divestment, boycotts, and stockholder resolutions. Growing beyond the expedience of its early anti-communism to a position that emphasized applying the moral commitment of the civil rights movement to the corresponding struggle against apartheid, ACOA created a new type of transnational advocacy. The experiment in solidarity that ACOA launched in 1953 achieved concrete results in the US in the 1980s. Through long experience ACOA built transnational connections between antiracist struggles, and in the

process exemplified the *modus vivendi* that would become crucial to multicultural politics.

The South Africa Program of the American Friends Service Committee blended commitment to revolutionary nonviolence with the global reputation of the Committee. The evolution of AFSC's nonviolent solidarity with the antiapartheid liberation movement was based on the principle that the stark divide between oppressor and oppressed in South Africa compelled the organization to choose sides. Liberation pacifism, a significant new interpretation of nonviolence, evolved from AFSC's internal debate over how to oppose South African apartheid. Combining the active reconciliation of Quaker diplomacy with the solidarity of liberation pacifism contributed an important element to the effort to end apartheid. AFSC's contacts with exiled liberation movements, its popular education efforts in areas of the US underserved by other national antiapartheid organizations, and its nomination of Desmond Tutu for the Nobel Peace Prize made it significant to the antiapartheid coalition.

TransAfrica utilized a network of black elected officials to mobilize opposition to policies favorable to apartheid, combining high profile direct action in Washington, DC, with grassroots lobbying and support from prominent African-Americans. TransAfrica conveyed Pan-Africanist concerns with a politically viable voice, situating itself to take advantage of the political space created by the legacy of the civil rights movement and the 1984 presidential campaign of Jesse Jackson.<sup>6</sup> TransAfrica's role in creating and leading the Free South Africa Movement marked the culmination of a long struggle to assert an effective African-American voice in the realm of US foreign policy debate. The

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<sup>6</sup> Karin L. Stanford, Beyond the Boundaries: Reverend Jesse Jackson in International Affairs (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997), 27.

imposition of sanctions on South Africa by Congress marked the zenith of TransAfrica's efforts, a victory that illuminated the strengths and weaknesses of the strategic essentialism that had inspired the black-led FSAM. The racial solidarity that had focused the energy of the FSAM did not last beyond the ending of apartheid, and thus the essentialism of the black lobby for Africa and the Caribbean proved to be a successful tactic but not sustainable as a long-term strategy.

The passage of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 marked the end of constructive engagement and the first major foreign policy defeat for the Reagan administration, culminating many years of struggle. Political scientist Peter Schraeder argues that the passage of sanctions arose from four factors: the increased political power of African Americans, Republican anxiety about the issue of race in foreign policy, the strength of grass roots antiapartheid groups such as those chronicled in this dissertation, and the change in public opinion regarding the ongoing crisis in South Africa.<sup>7</sup> When Republicans in the Conservative Opportunity Society began to criticize the Reagan Administration's policy of constructive engagement the makings of a significant though temporary coalition took shape.<sup>8</sup> They joined with Democrats and moderate Republicans like Senator Lowell Weicker of Connecticut who described the overriding of Reagan's veto as "today's generation saying 'no' to the incipient holocaust of our time."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Peter J. Schraeder, United States Foreign Policy toward Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis and Change (New York: Cambridge, 1994), 230.

<sup>8</sup> Donald Culverson, Contesting Apartheid: U.S. Activism, 1960-1987 (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 130.

<sup>9</sup> Edward Walsh, "Sanctions Imposed on South Africa as Senate Overrides Veto, 78-21," Washington Post, 3 October 1986, A1.

The development of transnational advocacy against apartheid and the evolution of a pacifist stance that nonetheless supported the political goals of armed liberation movements shaped and inspired the widespread movement of the 1980s. The lasting impact of opposition to apartheid registered in the altered terms of American civil religion, which was reinforced by representations of the antiapartheid struggle in popular culture. The adoption of the term African American itself as the preferred term for describing Americans of African descent resulted in large part from the assertion of a Pan-African consciousness that had been raised by the South Africa issue. Thus the significance of American antiapartheid activism lies in its contribution to the ending of apartheid as well as its impact on American race relations.

Antiapartheid organizations in the US played multiple roles. They acted as nongovernmental organizations on the world scene, attempting to influence global opinion and specific policies aimed at South Africa. They worked as lobbying organizations in the US and organized mass mobilizations while contributing to the redefining of racial politics in this country. It is from among the antiapartheid activist sects and movement halfway houses that the integration of American civil religion arose; the registering of their concerns and demands in the American political vocabulary is their lasting success. That the symbolic victories of activist movements can be easily co-opted and undermined does not detract from the significance of the struggle to transform the terms of debate. Historian Doug Rossinow, in his study of the relationship of the New Left and Christianity, asserts, “the new left’s greatest historical significance lies not

in its impact but in its meaning, including its meaning for the larger political world from which it emerged.”<sup>10</sup>

The representation of South Africa’s antiapartheid struggle in American popular culture is the venue by which many Americans became aware of the issue. Music, sports, and movies constituted a cultural landscape in which Americans could comprehend apartheid in light of their own ideas and experiences. The transformation of the venues for transmission of ideas and ideologies through popular culture accelerated the way in which Americans learned about apartheid. In the 1950s and 1960s the flow of information was slowed by the South African government’s control of the media. By the 1980s the ability of the American news media to project the South African crisis around the globe helped create a demand for dramatized explanations of the problem and the way people were confronting it, especially during the period when the apartheid regime severely censored the news in the late 1980s.

The lasting effect of opposition to apartheid registered in the altered terms of American civil religion. Clashes between Jesse Jackson and Jerry Falwell symbolized the way in which the struggle over US policy towards South Africa represented a deeper conflict. The antiapartheid movement applied the methods, symbols, and vocabulary utilized during the American civil rights struggle to an issue of transnational significance. By extending the moral logic of the civil rights movement, antiapartheid activists were able to invoke themes of equality and freedom central to the idealistic vocabulary of American political discourse. Participation of blacks and whites in the antiapartheid movement helped to integrate the rites and practices of civic participation and protest, at

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<sup>10</sup> Doug Rossinow, The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America (New York, Columbia University Press, 1998), viii.

once exporting American ideals while consolidating the domestic gains of the civil rights movement by transforming the symbols of American civil religion.

The new forms of civil religion predicted by Robert Bellah arose directly from the civil rights movement. Creative direct actions, such as those pursued by the major antiapartheid organizations and activists around the country, served as a tool for building support for antiapartheid policies as well as influencing the course of American civil religion. Drawing from trends and traditions established by the civil rights movement, as well as the greater access to power for African-Americans developed by overcoming segregation, the antiapartheid movement was able to assert influence and make a lasting mark on American political culture. The adoption of the term African American as the preferred term for describing Americans of African descent resulted from the assertion of a Pan-African consciousness that arose in large part from antiapartheid activism. Antiapartheid activism was a key element in establishing the concept of multiculturalism as the paradigm in which American civil religion would develop in the 1990s.

The 1990 Mandela tour marked a watershed in American political culture. The event was a success in terms of producing a sense of solidarity with the changes underway in South Africa. In another sense it marked the last incident of the unity that had peaked domestically with the signing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Nelson Mandela, imprisoned for twenty-seven years and thus kept from the public's view, emerged from prison as a representative of an earlier historical moment. The applause that greeted him can be seen as adulation commensurate to his courage and fortitude. It can also be understood as the last burst of modernist political energy and unity before a new set of issues and concerns established the postmodern dynamic of multiculturalism. Thus the multicultural arrangement as a political *modus vivendi* was the product of political

moment that now is past. Like the term African American, the meaning of multiculturalism is subject to changing interpretations and is thus unstable.

A new permanent exhibit titled “African Voices,” which opened in December of 1999 at the National Natural History Museum of the Smithsonian Institution, exemplifies this situation. Corporate underwriters of the exhibit include Shell Oil and Coca Cola, two companies that were targeted for boycott during anti-apartheid years. According to the introduction to the exhibit, “African Voices” demonstrates “the diversity, dynamism, and global influence of Africa’s peoples and cultures over time in the realms of family, work, community, and the natural environment.”<sup>11</sup> The updated display is a vast improvement on past portrayals of Africans and non-Europeans because it depicts real people and current issues, rather than using mottled brown mannequins wearing dusty examples of native garb displayed in a style similar to the dioramas of stuffed animals and dinosaur bones. Among the displays are explanations of the transatlantic slave trade and the role of Americans of African descent in the history of Washington, DC.

The final alcove, titled ‘Global Africa,’ focuses on the 1994 election of Nelson Mandela as the first black president of South Africa. A quote from Mandela’s inauguration address is placed at the end of the display: “Never and never again shall the laws of our land rend our people apart or legalize their oppression and repression.”<sup>12</sup> Mandela’s words are placed alongside with a phrase from the poetry of Maya Angelou that is given the final place of honor at the exhibit’s exit: “I rise, Bringing the gift that my

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<sup>11</sup> “About African Voices” website <http://www.mnh.si.edu/africanvoices/> (accessed 15 December 2003).

<sup>12</sup> Nelson Mandela, South African President, April 27, 1994, as quoted in “About African Voices” website <http://www.mnh.si.edu/africanvoices/>, (accessed 15 December 2003).

ancestors gave. I am the dream and hope of the slave.” Angelou, who spent time as an expatriate in Ghana<sup>13</sup> and who once performed as “Bess” in a traveling production of Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess*,<sup>14</sup> and Mandela are held up as exemplars of Africa and its descendents. By blending African and African-American voices the exhibit illustrates the concept that the two identities are “mutually constituted,”<sup>15</sup> as historian James Campbell has argued. The commemoration of the election of Mandela uses the culmination of the antiapartheid struggle as the greatest accomplishment of the diaspora while lending positive reinforcement to the Du Boisian notion of “twoness.” Given the setting, however, its inscription in a museum suggests the possibility of ossification as well as a model worthy of emulation.

The American antiapartheid movement mattered. It mattered because it contributed to the demise of de jure racism in South Africa and because it furthered the unraveling of racism in the US. The worldwide antiapartheid movement contributed to a major victory for human rights. Over the course of four decades American antiapartheid activism put Martin Luther King’s vision of “an international alliance of people of all nations against racism”<sup>16</sup> into action. The transnational dimension of American antiapartheid activism provided impetus for the multicultural politics that sprang from the effort to realize

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<sup>13</sup> See Angelou’s account of her time in Africa in Maya Angelou, *All God’s Children Need Travelin’ Shoes* (Franklin Center, PA; Franklin Press, 1986).

<sup>14</sup> Hollis Alpert, *The Life and Times of Porgy and Bess: The Story of an American Classic* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1990), 189.

<sup>15</sup> James T. Campbell, *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), viii.

<sup>16</sup> Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., (Address to the South Africa Benefit of the American Committee on Africa at Hunter College, New York City, 10 December, 1965) Records, Microfilm, Part 2, Reel 17, Frame 553. ACOA Records.

King's global united front against racism. The American contribution to defeat of South African apartheid accentuated the ability of antiapartheid forces in South African to capitalize on the end of the Cold War. The rationale for supporting anticommunist authoritarian regimes collapsed along with communism, and thus the regime in South Africa could no longer resist the outcry against its racism.

Yet the global colorline described by W.E.B Du Bois persists in South Africa, the United States, and the world. While apartheid has ended, its political legacy lingers on. Du Bois' interpretation of the division of the world based on color remains a central problem. The integration of American civil religion via multiculturalism assures that, in the future, the debate will be more complicated than a question of black and white.

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