

# *W* *Leaving the Ties That Bind*

REPORT FROM AN ASSESSMENT PROJECT

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Imani Countess

Africa Action  
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# Table of Contents

- Acknowledgments** ..... Page 1
- Foreword** ..... Page 2
- Executive Summary** ..... Page 4
- Project Background and Description** ..... Page 7
- Findings** ..... Page 10
  - Activity Highlights ..... Page 10
  - Engagement with Africa and Policy Engagement ..... Page 14
  - Policy Engagement Potential ..... Page 16
- Recommendations for National Organizations** ..... Page 20
  - National Groups Must Take the Initiative ..... Page 20
  - Key Action Recommendations ..... Page 21
  - Challenge and Opportunity for Progressives ..... Page 23
  - Key Constituencies for Progressives ..... Page 24
- Appendices**
  - Appendix 1: Methodology ..... Page 26
  - Appendix 2: Interviewees ..... Page 28
  - Appendix 3: Focus Groups ..... Page 33
  - Appendix 4: Additional Group Profile ..... Page 36

# Acknowledgments

In April 1990, I was privileged to attend Nelson Mandela's first major address to the international community in Wembley Stadium, London. During that speech, as at no other time since, I was overwhelmed by the full weight of the moment. The 70,000 gathered in Wembley, and millions more around the globe, had joined with South Africa's peoples to challenge both our respective governments and the apartheid state, and we had won! That moment, and the years leading up to it, defined my life as an activist and fundamentally shaped my world view.

Contemporary activists working on Africa's behalf will have their own defining moments as they work on the issues of the day. My hope is that this research project will, in some small way, contribute to understanding what is needed to build the next wave of social movements supporting Africa.

The staff of the Africa Policy Information Center and I owe the Carnegie Corporation of New York our deepest gratitude. We extend a special word of thanks to our former program officer, Yolonda Richardson, and program assistant, Andrea Johnson. Carnegie provided financial support for this Needs Assessment Project, as well as a related project in 1996-1997. We also thank the United Methodist Church Board of Global Ministry and the late Mrs. Carol B. Ferry for their financial support. We wish to thank Loretta Hobbs of O'Neal/Hobbs Associates for her in-kind service contribution.

This project would not have happened without the scores of activists, scholars, business people, and others who shared their time, thoughts, and hopes with me. I am particularly grateful to the staff of the Africa Policy Information Center (now a part of Africa Action): Salih Booker, Bill Minter, Adwoa Dunn Mouton, Vicki Ferguson, Sarah Godfrey, Billie Day, and Jeff Manchester. Research staff Ann-Louise Colgan, Meg Naizghi, and Luke Davenport provided direct support, and their efficiency and professionalism enhanced the project. The staff of The Africa Fund in New York (now also a part of Africa Action), Ph.D. candidate Jill Humphries, and activists Bill Martin, Clarence Lusane, Leslie Cagan, and Jim Cason also provided critical insights and information. The project's Advisory Committee (Jennifer Davis, James Early, Loretta Hobbs, Diana Baird N'Diaye, Makani Themba-Nixon, and Karin Santi) brought their combined decades of experience to shaping the project's direction. I am also deeply grateful to Kamili Anderson, who assisted in editing parts of this report even while assuming the helm of Howard University Press.

*Imani Countess*

Executive Director, 1992-1997  
Africa Policy Information Center

## Foreword

In September 1977, when South African liberation leader Steve Biko was beaten to death in prison, South Africa's Minister of "Justice" aroused world-wide indignation when he told reporters Biko's death "leaves me cold." For millions around the world, this callous indifference to human life which epitomized the essence of the apartheid system, sparked the opposite response. A student activist at Wesleyan University in Connecticut at the time, I was one of many throughout the U.S. who were moved to intensify their commitment to help eliminate that racist system. We included African Americans, African exiles, other Americans with personal experience of Africa, and others whose values and experience also impelled them to join in the struggle.

As Imani notes in this report, the story of the work of hundreds of groups and thousands of people, which eventually forced U.S. policymakers to end their unholy alliance with the apartheid regime, has not yet been told. National groups, such as the American Committee on Africa which had already been fighting against apartheid for 25 years when I first worked there as an intern in the summer of 1978, are part of the panorama of those who joined the good fight. But it was synergy with local groups that provided the essential missing links and enabled the message of struggle against apartheid to reach so deeply in U.S. society that policymakers could no longer remain indifferent. Even in the nation's capital, as Imani and I can testify from personal experience, it was often the behind-the-scenes work of local groups such as the Southern Africa Support Project that made the critical connections.

Today's "global" issues, from HIV/ AIDS to global warming, and from trade policies to the failure of international peacekeeping, have their most immediate and devastating consequences in Africa. Whether judged by the number killed each day or by the potential collapse of entire nations, the AIDS pandemic is a greater threat to global human security than are organized terrorist groups. More than 8,000 people worldwide die of AIDS each day—the equivalent of more than two World Trade Center tragedies each and every day. It is the most glaring indicator of a system of global apartheid with an entrenched double standard which values some lives and devalues others.

Both the AIDS pandemic and the World Trade Center terrorist attacks highlight the shared vulnerability of human life. Yet for the most part, our policymakers are still left cold by threats to the human security of Africans.

But compared with 25 years ago, there are now tens of thousands more within this country who are deeply concerned about what happens to those who live and die on the African continent. Many more—recent African immigrants—have direct family ties. Many more have lived and worked on the continent. And, yes, many more—

young and old—have a wider consciousness of the world combined with a burning commitment to social justice. The potential for change is enormous.

Yet, as Imani clearly points out, that potential will not be translated into policy changes unless we bring it together into a force that policymakers cannot ignore. We do not have the luxury of choosing to act locally, act nationally, or act globally. We can and must do all three.

*Salih Booker*

December, 2001

# Executive Summary

## Project Background and Description

**D**uring the summer of 1998, Africa's visibility in the U.S. political arena seemed to reach its highest levels since the anti-apartheid focus of the mid 1980s. President Bill Clinton had recently completed travel to six African nations, the first such trip for a sitting U.S. president. The U.S. National Summit on Africa launched its first regional meeting in Atlanta with three thousand people attending, many of whom vigorously debated a range of issues in four thematic workshops.

What was the response of the U.S. Congress to this surge of interest in Africa? It slashed every Africa account in the preliminary appropriations budgets. Working at that time for the African Development Foundation, a small US-government-funded agency providing development support to grassroots groups in Africa countries, I was particularly struck by this contradictory picture. How could these dramatic examples of multi-level interest in Africa and grassroots support for a more dynamic US/Africa relationship coexist with congressional disinterest and, in many cases, open hostility toward Africa?

With financial support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, I carried out a project consisting of a series of informal conversations with activists and groups concerned with Africa in five areas across the United States: Research Triangle, North Carolina; Bay Area, California; New Orleans, Louisiana; Houston, Texas, and the Baltimore/Washington Corridor. I also organized two focus groups at the National Summit on Africa gathering in Washington, DC in February 2000.

The conversations focused on what the activists and groups were actually doing, to what extent they sought to intervene in policy toward Africa, and on the reasons for engagement, or lack of engagement, with policymakers.

The interviews uncovered significant, diverse, and frequently inspiring activity. However, when measured against the need and potential for transforming this interest into engaged constituency action, the picture I found was sobering, if not grim. Very little of the work carried out by the groups interviewed focuses on influencing policy. Few groups were confident of their ability to influence local and national policy. Few groups were taking advantage of local advocacy resources. Few maintained substantive linkages with national groups, who traditionally have served the important role of providing information on campaigns and opportunities to influence policy. Many, moreover, were unaware of each other, even within the same geographical area.

Nevertheless, almost all interviewees were passionate about the need to change the overall policy environment on African issues, and expressed willingness to be engaged in campaigns to change policy. This provides a profound challenge for national Africa advocacy organizations, to find ways to assist in providing the missing links between local activity and policy engagement.

## Recommendations for National Organizations

In terms of the number of individuals and groups engaged with Africa throughout the country, the potential for policy impact is probably greater than at any time in the past, even at the height of the anti-apartheid movement. But that potential is likely to remain largely unrealized, unless national groups take strong action to foster greater policy engagement from those diverse constituencies.

National groups must take the initiative. They must reach out in new ways. Despite limited resources, they must make greater investments in dialogue and mobilization of local constituencies. In short, if they want a dynamic, mobilized constituency, they have to organize it.

In particular, national Africa-focused groups should:

- Invest in building local networks, local activity, and local leadership.  
National groups and funders should invest in building local networks, local activity, and local leadership, both with their own resources and by bringing their local Africa-focused contacts together with advocacy resources already available in local communities. This may involve regional meetings, such as the regional summits held during the National Summit on Africa process. But it can also be done with smaller-scale meetings and workshops to encourage dialogue, cross-fertilization, and spotlighting local leaders. Local Africa-focused activists and groups could also benefit from training in advocacy methods as well as more accessible information from national organizations on policy issues.
- Increase coordination at local as well as national levels.  
Increasing communication and coordination among groups working on Africa can pay off in greater impact. Despite the range of political viewpoints among national Africa-focused groups, there are many issues on which there is consensus across a very wide ideological spectrum. Networks such as the Advocacy Network for Africa (ADNA) should be supplemented by greater efforts to define common messages to use in outreach. Without seeking to obscure differences, it should be possible to convene an annual meeting of key groups to discuss one or two themes, issues, or campaigns on which their priorities might converge.

Also critical is communication and coordination among groups working at local levels. The precise form this can take will vary significantly with local conditions. However, national groups can and should play a key role by encouraging the further growth of such links where they exist, and by bringing individuals and groups into contact where such coordination is absent.

- Increase Targeted Outreach Activity.  
National groups reach thousands of supporters around the country through their existing efforts. These efforts can be expanded. However, they will be most successful if they are also targeted in



a sustained way in particular local settings, and combined with sustained building of relationships with local networks.

The scale of the U.S. is so large, and the resources of most Africa-focused groups so small in comparison, that the activists reached rarely cluster in large numbers in particular areas. Even less frequently are such clusters organized to serve as key links between national campaigns and their local communities.

Given limited resources, it will take time to strengthen such outreach activities. Initially, a national group may have to choose only a few high priority local areas for intensive work. But making sustained outreach a higher priority now is the only way to turn policy engagement potential into policy impact.

- Give Particular Emphasis to Youth Development.

One of the most striking findings revealed in our community visits was that the age profile indicated that few, if any, opportunities exist for young people entering this field. When I compared this picture with my own experience, it was clear that few groups have any natural entry point for a 21-year-old Imani Countess. Youth are being mobilized for many causes which have profound implications for Africa, such as the global justice movement and activism on AIDS. Yet few vehicles exist for young people to become involved on a sustained basis in Africa-focused organizations. It is urgent for Africa-focused groups to address this challenge, by developing mechanisms that provide more welcoming entry points for young people.

## Opportunity and Challenges for Progressives

National groups that share a progressive political perspective focused on social justice have an extraordinary opportunity and face particular challenges. On the one hand, the structural position of Africa in the world means that protest against marginalization and injustice resonates widely with almost all those concerned with Africa, whatever their ideological stance. On the other hand, the willingness to “speak truth to power” by criticizing establishment positions often means less access to financial and other resources.

In addition to implementing the recommendations in the previous sections, progressive groups must take additional steps, including better articulating their political perspectives within the larger Africa-focused community and developing organizing approaches that build solid local networks with links to grassroots activists involved in a range of community issues.

Within the broad range of local groups working on Africa or on global issues that impact Africa, some have particularly high potential for becoming the key links between national progressive groups and local communities. While continuing to reach out to activists in many different sectors, my interviews indicated that progressives will find particularly fruitful opportunities among individual progressive activists, religious communities, the global justice movement, specialized global issues groups, and the African Neo-Diaspora (recent African immigrants).

# Project Background and Description

During the summer of 1998, Africa's visibility in the U.S. political arena seemed to reach its highest levels since the anti-apartheid focus of the mid 1980s. President Bill Clinton had recently completed travel to six Africa nations, the first such trip for a sitting U.S. president. The U.S. National Summit on Africa launched its first regional meeting in Atlanta with three thousand people attending, many of whom vigorously debated a range of issues in four thematic workshops.

What was the response of the U.S. Congress to this surge of interest in Africa? *It slashed every Africa account in the preliminary appropriations budgets.* Working at that time for the African Development Foundation, a small U.S.-government-funded agency providing development support to grassroots groups in Africa, I was particularly struck by this contradictory picture. How could these dramatic examples of multi-level interest in Africa and grassroots support for a more dynamic US/Africa relationship coexist with congressional disinterest and, in many cases, open hostility toward Africa and all things related to Africa?

For 50 years, the Cold War was the dominant influence on U.S.-Africa relations. Within this framework, the U.S. government supported colonialism and minority settler regimes in Southern Africa. Consequently, most U.S. citizen engagement, which achieved maximum impact during the anti-apartheid movement of the 1970s and 1980s, developed opposing that framework.

In the 1990s, the Cold War ended. In South Africa, a democratically elected government replaced the apartheid state. Yet neither foreign policy officials nor engaged citizens have established a new framework to guide U.S. policy. In the new global environment, new forms of citizen engagement with Africa are flourishing. U.S. government action or inaction can do serious harm, most tragically illustrated by the U.S. decision to block international intervention during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. What the government does directly affects the many specific Africa-related issues citizens care about. And yet there is little public engagement with policymakers.

This disconnect between flourishing citizen engagement and lack of impact on policy, combined with the ongoing marginalization of the African continent, prompted a series of consultations within the Africa Policy Information Center (APIC) and with others, resulting in the concept for this Assessment Project. The aim was to seek out a selection of Africa's most active constituents around the country, and to ask them about their current attempts to influence U.S. policy and under what conditions they would increase their advocacy.

## “Mobilizing Structures”

This attempt to address a specific set of questions was shaped by ideas developed in a 1997 consultation, also initiated by APIC. We convened a gathering of 45 activists from across the United States to discuss Africa-related constituency building. That meeting, called a “Constituency Builders’ Dialogue,” was a unique opportunity for grassroots activists to step back from day-to-day campaign- and issue-based activities and reflect on the larger, social change aspects of their activities. Several widely respected scholars and social scientists were invited to this discussion to share their expertise in the area of social movement theory as it pertains to building a U.S.-based constituency for Africa.<sup>1</sup>

In one of the essays presented at the dialogue, sociologist Doug McAdams identified three components as essential to the development of social movements:

- political opportunities, referring to “changes in the broad political system which leave it vulnerable or receptive to the demands of particular groups,”
- mobilizing structures, referring to “collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action,” and
- framing processes, which form the shared meanings and definitions that people bring to collective action.

This project concentrates on one of these components: mobilizing structures. Africa’s advocates—and national organizations in particular—have paid insufficient attention to the concept. With rare exception, there is little awareness and scarce appreciation for the work of the thousands of people in communities around the country—oftentimes with little or no resources—working to expand public understanding of Africa. Even accounts recording the successes of the anti-apartheid movement, for example, frequently equate that movement with one or more national groups. The story of sustained work over more than twenty years, involving hundreds of groups and thousands of people, which forced U.S. policymakers to end their unholy alliance with the apartheid regime, has not yet been told.

With the exception of a few organizations, for example IFESH, which is based in Arizona and convenes a bi-annual Summit in an African country, and Constituency for Africa, whose signature activity is the city-based Town Hall Meeting, “national” Africa-focused groups tend to be based in either New York or Washington, D.C. There are no systematic procedures for tracking grassroots concerns and interests. It is rare for a group to solicit input on program development from local activists that are engaged in Africa-related activity.

By explicitly focusing this project on collecting ideas from outside the circle of “usual suspects” on the east coast, I aimed to spark awareness within the advocacy community of what development groups have come to know so well: the importance of participatory processes.

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<sup>1</sup> Imani Countess, Loretta Hobbs, Doug McAdam, William Minter, and Linda Williams, *Making Connections for Africa: Report from a Constituency Builders’ Dialogue*. Washington: Africa Policy Information Center, 1997.

## Targeting the Consultations

For the 1997 constituency dialogue, APIC Senior Research Fellow William Minter offered a conceptual map of Africa-interested constituencies with explanatory notes. As a starting point for identifying a “hardcore” Africa-interested individuals, he proposed including 1) persons having jobs with Africa-focused organizations (including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, multilateral agencies, embassies, and African Studies departments); 2) those spending 50 percent of their time on African issues, and 3) those who would like to spend more than half their working time dealing with such issues, if they could find a job that would allow them to do so.

I used this definition as a starting point, but also gave greater emphasis than this definition seemed to imply to those individuals and groups engaged in purely voluntary activities. Thus, I focused on people connected to both informal and formal groups that are most engaged with Africa and African affairs. As shown in Appendix 2, this included people connected with 12 groups with no paid staff, 21 groups with less than 10 paid staff, and 13 with more than 10 paid staff.

However, I did not include the loosely defined “Africa advocacy community” of mainly national groups located in Washington, D.C. Nor did I include groups that were either registered or informal agents of African governments.

This still left an enormous range of possibilities. In selecting geographic areas to visit, I used a variety of criteria indicating potential for engagement with Africa. These included: large African-American populations; access to university African Studies Centers; large numbers of new African immigrants; businesses interested in trading with Africa; ongoing public education activities, such as an Africa Regional Summit, or Constituency for Africa Town Hall Meeting; strong history of activism; and strong history of Africa-related activism. I also considered the practical question of time available for travel and expected ease in making contacts.

The areas selected were: 1) Research Triangle area, North Carolina, 2) San Francisco Bay Area, California, 3) New Orleans, Louisiana, 4) Houston, Texas, and 5) the Baltimore/Washington corridor (excluding “national” groups). While each area fit most or all of the above criteria, they are very different: the San Francisco Bay is an international hub, or a global city. Baltimore, New Orleans, and Houston are major ports with large African American populations. Each of the port cities has initiated political programs or initiatives to focus attention on Africa, and Maryland offers the example of a strong state infrastructure that has offered direct support and encouragement to Africa-linked business interests. The Triangle area of North Carolina includes three medium-sized cities (Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill), with a significant concentration of educational, business, and other professional resources.

The national networks or organizations of which some interviewees were part meant that some activities were similar in each city; for example, Sister City organizations function similarly, with similar missions and mandates. However, most groups were engaged in diverse work that has little to no direct impact on the national or international policy arena. The interviews provided a rich base for eliciting a range of views and perspectives.

To supplement the community visits, I also organized two focus groups at the National Summit on Africa in February, 2000 (see Appendix 3). This enabled me to get perspectives from people representing 12 additional U.S. states.

# Findings

## Activity Highlights

**M**ost of the groups represented in the interviews (51 organizations, businesses, or small groups) were informal volunteer organizations or had only a small number of paid staff (see table in Appendix 1). In general, the volunteer groups, locally created avenues for expressing and galvanizing community interest and engagement, had relatively little policy involvement. Those with staff were more likely to have a policy component in their work.

The activities reported by those interviewed covered a wide range, as illustrated by selected highlights below.

### NGO Sector

The interviewees were from groups ranging from development groups and research organizations to small voluntary groups and informal networks.

Some development NGOs are primarily government contractors, dependent on the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) as their main revenue stream, and therefore constrained by its policy goals and objectives. I spoke with staff of two such groups in North Carolina. One was the Research Triangle Institute, which has an extensive work program of research and other consultancy services. Its activities include projects which have direct impact on health policies in Africa through work with African governments.

North Carolina is the home of Jesse Helms and other conservatives who have worked to eliminate U.S. funding for organizations that advocate, provide information on, or perform abortions. But it is also the home for International Projects Assistance Service (IPAS), a global non-governmental organization which focuses on reproductive health and is the primary producer of a safe, inexpensive abortion device, the manual vacuum aspirator. IPAS estimates that 13% of all maternal deaths in Africa are due to unsafe abortion. The group provides training to midwives and health care professionals in the use of the device, which is manufactured in North Carolina, as well as other post-abortion family planning practices.

According to those interviewed, neither IPAS nor RTI lobbies the U.S. national government or engages in advocacy. Their work does, however, influence the policies and practices of African governments.

Most of the grassroots groups with few or no staff were organized around specific events, nationalities, ethnic groups, countries or issues. Sister Cities of Durham, for example, has a sister city relationship with Arusha, in

Tanzania. And San Francisco has a sister city relationship with Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Examples in North Carolina also include the North Carolina Rwandese Community Organization and the Ngwa Association of North Carolina. In the San Francisco Bay area, examples include the African Heritage Museum and Education Center, the African Immigrant and Refugee Resource Center, and the Liberian Community Foundation.

### Education Sector

Africa-related activity within the education sector is broad and extends to every area of the U.S. In addition to the outreach activities of the 12 federally funded African Studies Programs (<http://www.afrst.uiuc.edu/outreachlist.html>), and a host of study-abroad programs from American universities ([http://www.isp.msu.edu/ncsa/NCSA\\_mn.htm](http://www.isp.msu.edu/ncsa/NCSA_mn.htm)), there are over 22,000 African students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities. Afrocentric education, and the incorporation of Africa into world history and social studies curriculum, continues to grow in the elementary and secondary schools, both in response to national trends and at the initiative of particularly concerned teachers.

I spoke with scholars involved in the strong academic Africanist programs in the Bay Area and in the Triangle Area. These scholars play important roles both in local outreach and in national policy issues related to their areas of concern. However, as leading Great Lakes scholar Dr. Catharine Newbury remarked, it is difficult for younger scholars. "At evaluation time, activism is viewed as service, not scholarship....For young activist scholars this presents a particular problem because they could lose the base from which they operate, undermining their ability to work in their areas."

Engagement with Africa extends far beyond leading academic institutions. The North Carolina Department of Public Education, for example, reports that public school enrollment in the state includes almost 2,000 students speaking 42 different African languages. In New Orleans, interviewees noted that, following public pressure, the Board of Education did create an office responsible for preparing Africa-related curricula for use by public schools. They also noted the challenge to get teachers to actually use the curriculum. In several of the classrooms I visited, there were marvelous examples of dynamic teachers presenting and challenging students, covering issues as diverse as Egyptian hieroglyphics, African governments, and the African presence in the Americas.

Africa is also central to the efforts of institutions such as the Mickey Leland Center on World Hunger (<http://www.lelandcenter.org>) at Texas Southern University in Houston. The Center, which was established in the

### Saving Lives Through Alternate Options *Houston, Texas*

The non-profit community group Saving Lives through Alternate Options (SLAO) was started in 1995 on the initiative of an immigrant couple from Sierra Leone, initially to organize support for the victims of war in Sierra Leone. Since then, the group has broadened its mandate. It now works with the African and Caribbean immigrant population on a wide range of issues and services, including immigration and refugee services, HIV/STD services, and substance abuse education. The group has challenged public health and city officials to recognize the African and Caribbean subgroup within the Black community as communities with similar health issues as the larger Black community, but communities that require specialized outreach. SLAO has developed outreach to more than 70 African immigrant groups in the Houston area. Matthew Momoh, one of the founders of the group, is also host to a popular weekly radio call-in show, The Matthew Momoh Show (KPFT/90.1 FM).

early 1990s following the death of Representative Mickey Leland in a plane crash in Ethiopia, has an active legislative intern program and is commissioned by the Peace Corps to recruit volunteers from Southwest Texas for overseas positions. The Center's long-term vision includes its development and transition to an international think tank on hunger issues, with a lively academic exchange between the university and African institutions.

#### Business sector

In New Orleans and Baltimore, I met with government agencies involved in the promotion of international trade. In the same areas, I also met with individuals and groups interested in developing trading relationships with Africa, as well as representatives of small enterprises that are already engaged in trade with Africa. Businesses of this type represent less than 25 percent of the current export trade with Africa, but include types of organizations most likely to proliferate: technology and information services, pharmaceutical companies, and financial investors.

The interviewees were either exporters or seeking to export goods to Africa. Those already engaged included an electronic technology firm, a family-owned pharmaceutical company, a dealer in used and refurbished goods, and a financial broker. Those organizations hoping to develop African trade links were involved in cleaning products, cottage industries and handicrafts, and a health equipment supplier.

Those individuals or groups seeking new opportunities, mainly in New Orleans, expressed a great deal of frustration because of the barriers to developing trade with the continent. They noted major issues including a lack of access to credit, particularly short term letters of credit, as well as the problems associated with weak African currencies and the difficulties of acquiring foreign exchange in Africa. Additionally, these emerging micro-entrepreneurs complained about what they perceive as a short-sightedness and narrow focus by policy makers on maintenance of current major

#### Vukani Mawethu, Cultural Warriors *San Francisco, California*

Vukani Mawethu is a choir made up of San Francisco Bay Area residents, united in their love of South African music. Formed in 1986 by Bay Area activist Fannia Davis and James Madihope Phillips, a South African union and ANC (African National Congress) cultural activist residing in San Francisco, Vukani's purpose is to raise U.S. awareness of the South African freedom struggle by performing the songs of this struggle. As a continuing success, the group performs several times each month throughout the Bay Area for unions, rallies, and political and educational events. As a "cultural warrior" group, Vukani Mawethu is donor, fundraiser, political collective, and a diverse family. A staunch advocate of racial justice worldwide, Vukani Mawethu is internally vigilant regarding its members' own practices regarding issues of race and gender. The group's philosophy is reflected in all aspects of its activities. Performance fees are channeled into a fund, from which small grants are given to organizations, projects, and campaigns in South Africa and the U.S.

Using funds raised from its own performances, Vukani Mawethu journeyed to South Africa in 1994. There, the group met and sang with South Africans in support of their continued struggle to build a stronger, more equitable nation. Their self-produced video, "Sizongena: Coming Home," documents the trip, a highpoint for an organization whose members have made unique contributions in building connections between people of all races from South Africa to the U.S. through activism, philanthropy, and music. Vukani Mawethu's spirit was best captured by South Africa's Winnie Mandela, who, in addressing the choir for the first time on South African soil, stated, "This [South Africa] is your home. You are a part of us, and we are a part of you."

commodities (mainly oil imports and oil related goods and service exports) as opposed to increasing local and national support for the expansion of trade relations.

The motivation for some is to share resources with their extended families and communities at home in Africa. Others, such as two I interviewed, identified their interests in Africa as largely opportunistic and profit motivated, “pure and simple, we want to make money.” Several said they were seeking to create opportunities for family

members to become self-sustaining, to alleviate/minimize extended family pressures for remittances, and to create jobs and develop businesses that contribute to Africa’s development.

Anjelo Mida  
*Baltimore, MD*

One successful micro-enterprise that seems to have overcome some of the barriers experienced by others, is the Baltimore-based Anjelo Mida, a pharmaceutical, chemical products, and medical supply export company. Started in 1997, this Ghanaian family business, with current revenues of \$500,000, has succeeded despite obstacles to transferring funds out of Ghana. Accepting this as a limitation for now, they only seek enough returns to cover the costs that are incurred here in the U.S.. According to a spokesperson: “We know that we will be able to build several houses and send relatives to school, but we are not going to be able to get money out.”

For Ghanaians, a core corporate value is that “to whom much is given, much is expected.” The three brothers and a sister who run Anjelo Mida, all of whom have advanced degrees in allied health fields, believe that part of their duty is to share what they have learned as well as the material gains they have achieved.

Anjelo Mida, started with volunteer labor, now supports one family member full-time, while others continue to provide volunteer support while holding other full-time jobs. Currently, the company exports only to Ghana. Plans to begin exporting to Senegal and Nigeria are in the pipeline. While at the present time a wholesale buyer of drugs and goods, the group hopes to build a manufacturing plant in a Baltimore empowerment zone, thereby creating much needed jobs in that city while providing critical medicines for rural Africans.

None of the businesspeople interviewed were engaged in formal policy-related activity. All were aware of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act trade legislation, but none had become involved in advocacy for the bill. The reasons for this lack of engagement range from feeling that organizations of their scale could have little impact to their desire to focus on the concrete activity of generating wealth for themselves and African communities.

#### Religious Sector

In the course of the project visits, I met with several representatives of the mainline protestant churches, one practicing Muslim who actively advocates attention to Africa within her faith group but who holds no formal position within her religious organization, a refugee resettlement group sponsored by a large urban church, and two regional directors of Church World Service, a national ecumenical, relief and development organization.

Like other interviewees, religious sector groups focus on a range of international issues, of which Africa and its specific concerns are one set. Interviewees ranged from activists or heavily involved churches with Africa projects to potential activists or churches with social action ministries that are open to Africa-related activity. For example, Third Baptist Church in the Bay Area, which created the African Immigrant and Refugee Center out of its concern for Horn of Africa refugees in the 1980s, is an activist church. The Presbyterian Church of Calistoga, CA, where the pastor has worked with the



congregation to gather their support for a national resolution that condemns slavery in Mauritania, is an example of one with additional activist potential.

Church World Service (CWS), “an international relief, development and refugee assistance agency of 35 protestant and orthodox denominations,” provides relief to more than 80 countries around the globe, including the U.S.. The organization’s central fund-raising activity is the Cropwalk. In 1999, Cropwalks were held in 1,900 communities that organized, recruited, conducted public education events and raised over \$15 million. The community work on which the fund-raising is based is accomplished through more than 20 regional offices, each with a small staff that is responsible for global education, public policy, and fund-raising. In North Carolina, the work involves partnerships with church hunger ministries as well as the Cropwalks. In Texas, two percent of the total amount raised is contributed to education and advocacy related activities, including the work of Bread for the World, Center for Public Policy Priority, and RESULTS.

All CWS regional offices rely on community-based committees to assist in public education. The CWS national offices develop educational outreach materials, which are, in turn, distributed through the regional offices. In 1999, Africa was the mission theme, and in 2000, HIV/AIDS and Jubilee 2000, the international campaign to cancel developing world debt, were the focal point. Both the HIV/AIDS and debt campaigns have a significant focus on Africa.

#### Media sector

While mainstream media are notorious for marginalizing Africa, alternative media provide many examples of accurate and fair treatment. The Black press, independent media, and local cable access stations can and do make available a variety of actors who present different and frequently more balanced pictures of the continent. At the national and international level, the internet has provided opportunity for highly successful ventures such as Africa News Service in North Carolina, which gave birth to the commercial internet news gateway allAfrica.com, now based in Washington, D.C. AllAfrica.com, now a complex news organization with very broad impact, is one of the most successful on the internet, and provides Africa material to a wide range of other news outlets. California Newsreel, in San Francisco, has also established itself at the national level as the leading supplier of Africa films/videos to libraries, educational systems and schools.

In the Bay Area and in Houston, I met with the hosts of Africa-focused radio programs. Similar ventures can be found in many other cities around the country. In North Carolina, I interviewed the host/producer of Carochen and Entertainment Unlimited, an African cultural program that airs on local cable, and includes interviews with people who have traveled to Africa, as well music and cultural content. E-mail lists are used in local as well as world-wide contexts, such as an “African Issues” listserv based at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, with subscribers on campus and in the community.

#### Engagement with Africa and Policy Engagement

In sum, my interviews showed groups from a wide range of sectors heavily involved with Africa issues. While this includes that portion of the “hardcore” who hold Africa-related jobs, it also includes many other individuals who are very actively engaged on a volunteer basis. Most significantly, many groups not now focusing on policy matters have the potential to become significantly engaged with policy.

Of particular note is the degree of involvement of U.S. students (including neo-Diasporan Africans), business people (those engaged in trade as well as those interested in developing trade relationships), and volunteer activists in formal and informal groups who work on diverse issues, from health policy to refugee services.

It is clear that there is an indirect impact even without implicit engagement. The importance of key individuals—“quiet leaders”—should not be understated. For example, one activist is a Presbyterian pastor who ministers to a small congregation, is part of a regional Neo-Diaspora group, brings Africa’s issues to the regional presbytery, and facilitates a linkage between his congregation and a South Africa ecumenical organization. The work of this single individual facilitates people-to-people networks and increases public understanding of Africa’s issues.

When asked about the extent to which they engaged in direct efforts to influence policy, however, the lack of engagement was striking. I asked interviewees the following specific questions:

- Do your legislators call you about policy matters?
- Have you ever testified before or lobbied Congress, or written a letter to a member of Congress? If not, why not?
- Do you participate in campaigns or activist networks?
- What would encourage your group to do more in this area?

The answers fell roughly into several categories:

- Some interviewees said their organizations’ mandates prohibited them from policy-related activity. These include not only government contractors, but also groups that have very specific mission statements, such as sister-city community organizations that focus on promoting people-to-people relationships.
- Some said their organization did not work on policy matters because of a perceived prohibition. Some erroneously think that their 501(c)(3) tax status prohibits advocacy.
- Others said they were so overwhelmed by the number of requests for advocacy that they are unable to prioritize the opportunities.
- Others said they worked on policy issues, but had no direct engagement with national policymakers, for a variety of reasons. These include those whose work excludes national policies; those who work to influence local policy actors such as mayors and county boards; and those who see a national organization, such as the National Summit on Africa, Church World Service, or Bread for the World, as taking action on their behalf.

For the vast majority, their lack of engagement in policy advocacy did not come from the view that it was not important, but rather the assumption that it was up to someone else to do it.

Yet leaving it to national groups to communicate advocacy messages to policymakers leaves those trying to communicate alternative messages highly vulnerable to being ignored, particularly by busy members of Congress

who are most attuned to their own local constituencies. The result is a missing link, clearly summed up in a paper by Susan Bales of the Frameworks Institute, written for the Aspen Institute's Global Interdependence Initiative<sup>2</sup>.

In Bales's words,

*... policymakers complain that they never hear any citizen voices, except activist ones, whom they discount. Policymakers need to hear from 'trusted intermediaries,' often defined as ordinary constituents, or at least those most likely to matter to their re-election, business and civic leaders, the heads of major endorsing organizations like teachers' unions, leaders of important swing constituencies like soccer moms and Hispanics, and the core voting groups like seniors.*

Bales continues by adding that "sustained forums for powerful citizen voices to find expression to policymakers" are required over time to "create a policy environment that allows officials to break with the status quo, to find new language and policy options to overcome their timidity on global issues."

If Africa-focused national groups want to change the perception and the reality that African issues are unimportant to policy makers, there is no alternative but to work with local partners to enable such sustained engagement at the local level.

## Policy Engagement Potential

Despite the limited engagement in policy advocacy among the diverse groups interviewed, interviewees were surprisingly open to exploring options for greater engagement. They were acutely aware that the broader context of government action or inaction on Africa affected their particular concerns.

### Brainstorming

To address the question of needs, priorities, and interests, respondents were asked a series of questions, including the following: "If you woke up tomorrow and found yourself the head of any national Africa advocacy organization (TransAfrica, APIC, etc.), what would be your top program priority? Respondents found this opportunity to imagine quite exciting. Indeed this question frequently sparked the most animated conversation; one respondent spent 30 minutes answering it.

Among the responses were the following:

- develop a program that supports Africa's economic development;
- focus on movement building;
- work on developing trade policies (*"there has been too much talk about policy, we need to develop concrete trade relationships with Africa."*);

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<sup>2</sup> Susan Nall Bales, "Communicating Global Interdependence," Frameworks Institute (<http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/products/messagememo.pdf>), p. 35.

- develop a massive public education campaign;
- develop programs that focus on the Diaspora (*“I would want to include the African world in the discourse. It helps us make sense to us... We could also stand to know how African the Americas are.”*)

### Issues

Interviewees were presented with a series of campaign options. Each was asked to indicate whether his or her group would be “eager to participate,” “likely to participate,” or “unlikely to participate” in a campaign addressing one or more of the following issues:

- cancellation of Africa’s debt;
- HIV/AIDS in Africa;
- maintaining/increasing international investment in Africa’s development;
- maintaining/increasing U.S. support of UN peacekeeping efforts; and/or
- ending contemporary slavery in Africa.

The majority of those who responded to those questions indicated that their organizations were either eager or likely to participate in campaigns that focused on debt cancellation and HIV/AIDS. The other three options met with a more uneven response, largely stemming from a lack of familiarity with the organizational structures responsible for foreign assistance delivery, United Nations peacekeeping, and the status of slavery in Africa.

### Barriers to Engagement

The final area of inquiry explored the question of the barrier to engagement. In particular, I asked interviewees:

- What are the barriers to increasing citizen engagement with Africa policy issues?
- What are the barriers to your work?

Generally, responses pointed to several broad social areas: race, education, human and financial resources, and perceived public disinterest in and/or ignorance of Africa.

For example:

- *“[People] don’t see how issues directly impact the lives of people”*
- *“The biggest obstacle is that people don’t see the relationships. Africa is too remote.”*
- *“Racism and the legacy of slavery and racism makes it much more complicated...and there is not a willingness to confront that, despite what Bill Clinton says.”*
- *“For many, Africa remains the Dark Continent with all the racial and ethnic connotations...”*
- *“Most Americans are myopic and self-absorbed.”*

- *“Difficulty in linking global issues and the lack of community-based movements in the regions.”*
- *“Financial resources...I’m looking for ways to build financial resources.”*

These comments, all related to society-wide problems, describe the environment or context that frames the activity of every U.S. constituency group working on Africa. By their existence, these groups are contributors to the multi-cultural mix that is slowly changing the complexion of the nation and the power relations within it. But, to paraphrase James Baldwin, to “change the American reality” regarding race and Africa remains an overwhelming obstacle.

Other barriers mentioned included the following:

- Many interviewees, mainly those working as volunteers, also indicated that a lack of time and a lack of information were barriers to the work of their organizations.
- Others cited the complex character of political change in Africa as a most significant challenge for activists. For example, one interviewee active during the anti-apartheid era noted, “people don’t know how to contribute at this phase of the struggle. That is a barrier.”
- Several interviews also cited hostility between some Africans and African Americans. According to one West Coast interviewee, “it is weird. I don’t know much about and don’t understand it, but it is a problem.” Given that most African Americans receive the same distorted images of Africa that other Americans receive, misunderstandings are natural. Conversely, Africans may be influenced by stereotypical and negative images of African Americans. Also mentioned as a source of tension was the fact that many African immigrants find themselves in competition with African Americans in terms of housing, minority community benefits, etc.

## Missing Links

The groups interviewed showed a diversity of interest that was on the one hand surprising, while on the other hand not so, given both the Continent’s diversity and the relative freedom that people in the U.S. have to organize into formal and informal groups.

In the long term, the cumulative impact of this work brings U.S. society closer to developing a realistic understanding of Africa and its complexity. The work that these and other groups do can be viewed as important fronts in the ongoing battle to overcome the negative impressions of Africa that are perpetuated by the gatekeepers of information in U.S. society. The positive experience of one returned Peace Corps volunteer now living in North Carolina, for example, has shaped the impressions of many others within her family and community. Her family’s negative impressions of the continent were dispelled by her advocacy, to the extent that they visited the continent for themselves. As a student and professional in the natural resource management field, she shares her experience in Africa with co-workers and others. While the current impact of such work is dwarfed by the power of mainstream media and the inadequacies of the education system, she and individuals like her, and the associations that they form, are making important contributions that will add up over time.

However, when measured against the key focus of this project, namely the possibility of transforming this broad diverse interest into engaged constituencies, the current situation is sobering, if not grim. Very little of the work carried out by the groups interviewed includes a focus on influencing policy. Few had confidence in their knowledge of policy arenas or their ability to influence local and national policy. Too few groups were involved with local networks that could have supplied information, training, and encouragement around key issues or advocacy techniques.

In one striking example of lack of communication, in one city a statewide faith organization coordinated a year-long educational campaign on debt. The campaign did have an impact within a selected constituency. Thousands of dollars were raised, hundreds of people were educated about debt, and many became advocates for debt reduction. *Yet not one of the other groups in the city was aware of the campaign, including key individuals in the academic community and leaders in the African neo-diaspora community.*

Additionally, too few groups maintain substantive linkages with national groups, who traditionally have served the important role of providing information, particularly information on campaigns and opportunities to influence policy. Interviewees were asked to describe their relationships to national Africa-interest groups, ranking groups from across the political spectrum, from the Global Coalition for Africa and the Corporate Council to APIC and The Africa Fund, from “not familiar with” to “essential partner.”

I expected that interviewees would be particularly aware of national groups with high visibility, such as TransAfrica and the National Summit on Africa. However, most interviewees in the community visits showed little allegiance to any particular national group. Few indicated that any national group was instrumental to their work. Notably, very few of these “hardcore” activists viewed national groups as essential partners. Most had either never heard of or never worked with any of the national groups.

A significant number, however, said that they had received and used materials from national organizations. Several gave APIC and Africa News particularly good marks in the “rely on for news and analysis” query. But this did not extend to seeing these groups as “essential partners”.

Strikingly, the same pattern of distance from national groups was apparent in focus groups I convened at the National Summit on Africa (see Appendix 3), despite the fact that the focus group participants were attending a high-profile national conference.

# Recommendations for National Organizations

*You can't milk a cow by placing a pail in the middle of the paddock*

— Ugandan Proverb

**G**iven the number of individuals and groups engaged with Africa throughout the country, the potential for policy impact is probably greater than at any time in the past, even at the height of the anti-apartheid movement. But that potential is likely to remain largely unrealized, unless national groups take strong action to foster greater policy engagement from that diverse constituency.

Most of the local groups interviewed for this report have narrowly defined missions and foci. Only a few have adopted broad missions, such as the promotion of people-to-people linkages and the promotion of social and cultural ties to Africa. Despite widely shared awareness of the barriers posed by the wider policy environment, and widely shared support for change, greater policy engagement is unlikely to emerge spontaneously.

The responsibility for overcoming this challenge rests primarily with the national groups who have identified themselves as 'voices for Africa and the Diaspora', 'constituency builders for Africa', or 'advocates for changing U.S. policy toward Africa'. To do so, it is essential that they reach out in new ways that go beyond sending out information resources to be used by those already prepared to do so.

## National Groups Must Take the Initiative

National Africa-focused groups can, in fact, point to significant successes, both large and small. The fight to end U.S. support for apartheid culminated with success in the 1980s as the result of synergy between diverse efforts around the country and national groups who helped focus these energies on the national scene. Even in recent years, advocacy efforts have had successes, such as inserting worker and human rights protections in Africa-related trade legislation, fighting reductions in U.S. development assistance for Africa, and protecting important institutions (for example, the Development Fund for Africa and the African Development Foundation). Africa-focused groups have been significant components of the movements to promote the treaty banning landmines and to cancel debts of developing countries.

However, these groups have not yet been able to build stable networks of constituents that are able to apply consistent pressure on policymakers. This inability of national groups to develop stable and identifiable networks

makes it difficult to translate that widespread diverse interest in Africa into political impact. This is, in large part, the result of a failure to develop and implement outreach activity that is intentional and consistent.

One reason, of course, is the lack of human and financial resources. Another is the still unanswered question of how best to frame issues of social justice in the current era. Even with limited resources, however, there is enormous potential if national groups focus clearly on fostering greater impact for local activists and groups.

This does not imply that national groups can or should bring a pre-packaged formula for policy engagement to local activists and groups. Implementing the following recommendations on the ground implies above all listening to local constituencies and adapting programs to local realities. But national groups must bring something to the table. If they do, they will find many who are willing to join in changing U.S. relations with Africa.

National groups must take the initiative. They must reach out in new ways. Despite limited resources, they must make greater investments in dialogue and mobilization of local constituencies. In short, if they want a dynamic, mobilized constituency, they have to organize it.

## Key Action Recommendations

1. Invest in building local networks, local activity, and local leadership.

National groups and funders should invest in building local networks, local activity, and local leadership, both with their own resources and by bringing their local Africa-focused contacts into contact with advocacy resources already available in local communities. This may involve regional meetings, such as the regional summits held during the National Summit on Africa process. But it can also be done with smaller-scale meetings and workshops to encourage dialogue, cross-fertilization, and spotlighting local leaders.

Local Africa-focused activists and groups could benefit from training in advocacy methods as well as more accessible information from national organizations on policy issues.

Several specific measures might include:

- Exposure to materials and programs designed to increase members' understanding of the rules governing (501)(c)(3) advocacy and lobby activity;
- Training programs that demystify the policy process by covering topics such as how to meet with staff and how to meet members of Congress and state legislators;
- Assistance from national bodies in organizing local events related to national campaigns; and
- Access to information resources that are clear, timely, and adapted to local citizen engagement, in that they are designed to provide clear targets while showing how local efforts can make a difference. (Such information resources can only be developed and disseminated with the engagement of key local informants as well as staff of national organizations.)



2. Increase coordination at local as well as national levels.

Increasing communication and coordination among groups working on Africa is not beyond the realm of the possible, even with very limited resources. And it can pay off in greater impact.

Despite the range of political viewpoints among national Africa-focused groups, there are many issues on which there is consensus across a very wide ideological spectrum. Examples include the need for greater debt cancellation, the need for greater U.S. and multilateral investment in responding to the HIV/AIDS pandemic and Africa's wider health emergency, and the need for greater and more effective commitments to long-term development assistance. Informal networks and coordination among many Africa-focused groups does exist at the national level. For example, there is the Advocacy Network for Africa (ADNA), which consists of more than 200 organizations—many now outside of Washington—that exchange updates, announcements, action alerts, and other Africa-advocacy information. This is an important and growing effort.

Many national groups also have some history of working together on short-term projects, but there is no regular mechanism for periodic consultation on key issues. Networks such as the Advocacy Network for Africa (ADNA) should be supplemented by greater efforts to define common messages to use in outreach. Without seeking to obscure differences, it still should be possible to convene an annual meeting of key groups to discuss one or two themes, issues, or campaigns on which their priorities might converge.

Also critical is communication and coordination among groups working at local levels. The precise form this can take will vary significantly with local conditions. However, national groups can, and should, play a key role by encouraging the further growth of such links where they exist, and by bringing individuals and groups into contact where such coordination is absent.

3. Increase Targeted Outreach Activity

National groups reach thousands of supporters around the country through their existing efforts. These efforts can be expanded, with greater efforts to increase organizational recognition through targeted media interventions increasing coverage in the mainstream media, and continued growth in the use of relatively low-cost electronic media such as e-mail and the web. Clearer identification of priority issues and better adapted information resources can help.

These efforts will be most successful, however, if they are also targeted in a sustained way in particular local settings, and combined with sustained building of relationships with local networks. The scale of the U.S. is so large, and the resources of most Africa-focused groups so small in comparison, that the activists reached rarely cluster in large numbers in particular areas. Even less frequently are such clusters organized to serve as key links between national campaigns and their local communities.

Given limited resources, it will take time to strengthen such outreach activities. Initially a national group may have to choose only a few high priority local areas for intensive work. But making sustained outreach a higher priority now is the only way to turn policy engagement potential into policy impact.

4. Give Particular Emphasis to Youth Development

One of the most striking findings revealed in my community visits was that the age profile indicated that few, if any, opportunities exist for young people entering this field. When I looked at the demographic profile of those I met with, reflected on the organizations they described, and compared it with my own experience, it was clear that few have any natural entry point for a 21-year-old Imani Countess. Youth are being mobilized for many causes which have profound implications for Africa, such as the global justice movement and activism on AIDS. Yet few vehicles exist for young people to become involved on a sustained basis in Africa-focused organizations. It is urgent for Africa-focused groups to address this challenge, by developing mechanisms that provide more welcoming entry points for young people.

### Challenge and Opportunity for Progressives

National Africa-focused groups that share a progressive political perspective focused on social justice have an extraordinary opportunity and face particular challenges. On the one hand, the structural position of Africa in the world means that protest against marginalization and injustice resonates widely with almost all those concerned with Africa, whatever their ideological stance. On the other hand, the willingness to “speak truth to power” by criticizing establishment positions often means less access to financial and other resources.

In addition to implementing the recommendations in the previous sections, progressive groups must take additional steps to:

- better articulate their political perspectives within the larger Africa-focused community,
- actively work together to strengthen their collective and individual organizational bases,
- consolidate their efforts with those of other progressive organizations working on a range of social justice issues,
- move from advocacy-based approaches to organizing approaches that build solid local networks, and
- begin to work with grassroots actors in ways that target the social and political underpinnings of oppression, thus developing closing links in local activist communities.

One example of that shift now underway is the World Bank Bonds Boycott Campaign. National advocacy groups have challenged the World Bank’s structural adjustment policies for almost 15 years. With dialogue, reports, and statements they have sparked broad internal debate and changes in policy that require consultation with many actors. Yet this has not succeeded in changing fundamental World Bank policies which damage Africa. More recently, the global campaign calling for the cancellation of the huge national debt of many developing nations again has met some success, but has hit the barrier of World Bank intransigence at the demand that debt to international financial institutions themselves should be cancelled.

Currently, critics of the World Bank have organized a movement advocating against the purchase of World Bank bonds, modeled in part on the South African divestment campaigns of the 1970s and 1980s. It is too soon to

tell the effects of these efforts to put pressure on the World Bank by attacking its sources of funding. But, like the divestment campaign, this effort offers abundant opportunities to educate the public and empower local communities by determining what local funds will support.

## Key Constituencies for Progressives

Within the broad range of local groups working on Africa, or on global issues that impact Africa, the following groups have particularly high potential for becoming the key links between national progressive groups involved in campaigns on issues and the local communities within which they can reach out to others as well. While continuing to reach out to activists in many different sectors, my interviews indicated that progressives will find particularly fruitful opportunities in these constituencies.

### Progressive Activists

In every area visited by the project, I found individual activists who, at their core, are committed to changing the way Americans understand Africa, individuals who feel that their primary purpose on this planet is to work against corporate domination, racism, and other forms of inequality. These individuals are politically diverse, with identifications ranging from Black Nationalist, Pan-Africanist, and Progressive to Socialist or Liberal. Organizationally, they may have found homes in the labor movement, in community or social service organizations, or elsewhere. The bottom line, however, is that, with little explanation, they “get it.” They see the connection, for example, between the startling decline in the health of poor communities in Detroit and the collapse of the public health system in Zimbabwe. Almost always engaged in other issues as well, they can still provide crucial support and community contacts for an Africa advocacy agenda.

### Religious Communities

Africa-focused groups have long worked closely with faith-based organizations at the national and local levels, including Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim groups. Activists within religious communities have been key in such recent campaigns as that for the treaty to ban landmines and for cancellation of debts of developing countries. Mainline Protestant denominations, historically Black denominations, and many Catholic orders have clear national mandates to engage in social justice issues, including health, poverty and other areas of inequality and injustice. Locating the key local and regional contacts and engaging with them gives access to key mechanisms needed to educate and mobilize the U.S. public.

### The Global Justice Movement

Beginning with the protests in Seattle in 1999, the existence of a significant new movement in the U.S. against corporate globalization and for global justice has been widely recognized. Despite the drop in attention following the terrorist attacks in September 11, this movement will continue and will likely regain momentum. To date, those most actively engaged have been disaffected White youth. West-coast-based groups have played key roles in the movement. The issues raised by these activists are issues that profoundly affect Africa, and some African NGOs have participated in the process. However, Africa in general and people of color are largely absent from the ranks of these organizations. Making this connection visible through greater engagement of Africa-focused groups at local levels is both imperative and potentially extremely fruitful.

### Global Issues Groups

Within the NGO sector there exist many specialized groups addressing global issues such as global warming, the world water supply, the impact of extractive industries and agricultural practices on the environment, and more. These groups are important alternative sources of information and analysis as well as key resources for constituency-based activism. Almost all of these groups have some component of African programming. Moreover, each of these issues which require global answers have particularly serious consequences for vulnerable African societies.

### The Neo-Diaspora

These “new” African Americans, recent immigrants to the U.S. from Africa, already represent a significant part of the hard-core constituency focusing on Africa-interest activities. The majority have similar priorities to other African Americans, that is, they focus on personal issues of economic survival, as well as maintenance of cultural, familial, and other links. Their organizational involvement may be very focused on a particular geographical area, or on development of specific economic linkages. Nevertheless, large numbers in this community are U.S. citizens and actively engaged in a wide variety of issues related both to local communities here and to national and international concerns. This community has enormous potential for greater impact on U.S. policy, both through its own organizations and through bringing its knowledge and commitment to wider coalitions.

# Appendix 1: Methodology

The project was designed as a non-academic qualitative research study to:

- collect data that will increase the public understanding of the breadth of activities conducted by Africa-interested groups in the U.S., and
- begin the process of developing more dynamic and organic relationships with grassroots actors in this area of interest.

Project staff used a semi-structured or focus interview format to engage with individuals affiliated with a broad cross-section of Africa-interested groups. Additionally, staff conducted abbreviated interviews with key informants in each region of the U.S. as well as with activists based in New York and Washington, D.C. with knowledge of specific sectors.

Our data collection efforts focused on the following areas:

- Demographics of the “hardcore” Africa constituency;
- Organizational activities of the “hardcore” constituents;
- Relationship of the “hardcore” constituent to policy and policymakers;
- Needs, priorities, and interests of the “hardcore” constituency groups; and
- Organizational potential for increasing activity aimed at influencing Africa-related U.S. policy.

Interviews were conducted in five distinct areas of the U.S.:

- North Carolina’s Research Triangle area, an area including Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill;
- California’s Bay Area, consisting of San Francisco, Oakland, and Berkeley, along with Vallejo and Calistoga counties in the Napa Valley region;
- New Orleans, Louisiana;
- Houston and Austin, Texas; and
- the Baltimore/Washington, D.C. Corridor.

Potential interviewees in each area were contacted through letters and e-mail. APIC staff sent out materials describing the project to persons whose contact information was drawn from various mailing lists, and asked recipients to help identify interviewees. Approximately 1,000 persons were contacted via letters in the five areas. Hundreds more were contacted via e-mail.

On the basis of these contacts, a trip was planned to each of the areas (see Appendix 2). Appointments were made for both individual and group interviews, with care taken to seek representatives from different sectors. A standard set of questions was combined with ample opportunity for more free-flow discussion of the issues.

Those interviewed were, of course, not selected as a random sample, and cannot be considered a “representative” set. However, they cover a significant range of the diversity among those engaged actively with Africa in their communities.

## Appendix 2: Interviewees

### Interviewee List

#### National Key Informants

*Harry Amana*, Director, Sonya H. Stone Black Cultural Center

*Sean Barlow*, World Music Productions

*Leslie Cagan*, Z Magazine, Board, Pacifica Foundation

*Horace Campbell*, Black Radical Congress

*Jim Cason*, The Africa Fund Board of Directors

*Jennifer Davis and Suzie Johnson*, The Africa Fund

*Paula Brown Edma*, Regional Director, NAAC Northeast Region

*Jerry Herman*, American Friends Service Committee

*Priscilla Lewis and Nancy Muirhead*, Global Interdependence Initiative, Rockefeller Brothers Foundation

*Willis Logan*, National Council of Churches, Africa Office

*Clarence Lusane*, American University

*Leonard Robinson*, The Africa Society of the National Summit on Africa

Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, May 16 -20, 2000

*Margaret Davide, Julie Robison, Alan Johnston, Eileen Reynolds, and the Africa Geographical Team*, Center for International Development, Research Triangle Institute\*

*Marjorie Freeman*, Sister Cities of Durham

*Rev. Joe Harvard*, First Presbyterian Church, Durham, NC

*Bertie Howard*, Africa News Service

*Ted Lord*, African Issues—Listserve, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

*Greg Meyer*, North Carolina Rwandese Community Organization, Raleigh, NC

*Joseph Moran*, Church World Service

*Clifford Mpare*, New Africa Advisers, Durham, NC

*Catharine Newbury*, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC

*Chima Nwozi*, Ngwa Association of North Carolina

*Obie Shaw and team members, Africa-Dot-Com\**

*Karen Zack, Yael Rice, Uche Ekenna, and the Africa Team, International Pr, Chapel Hill\**

*Michi C. Vojta, NCPVA Member*

San Francisco Bay Area, August 15 - 22, 2000

*Rev. Cornell Barnett, Community Presbyterian Church, Calistoga, CA*

*Genevieve Bayan, National Summit on Africa Delegate, San Francisco, CA*

*Frankie Gillette, San Francisco-Abidjan Sister City Committee*

*Patricia Jemison, Bay Area Anti-Apartheid Network, Vukani Mawethu Choir*

*Van Jones, Ella Baker Human Rights Center\*\**

*Danny Kennedy, Project Underground*

*Nunu Kidane, IDEX, San Francisco, CA*

*Cornelius Moore, California Newsreel*

*Lori Pottinger, International Rivers Network, Berkeley, CA*

*Mark Rand, JustAct*

*I. Lee Murphy Reed, African Heritage Museum and Education Center*

*Rev. Ashir Ryikanti, African Immigrant and Refugee Resource Center*

*Martha Saavedra, Center for African Studies, University of California, Berkeley, CA*

*Rev. Taarlson, Liberian Community Foundation, Vallejo, CA*

*Marcia Thomas, Changemakers Foundation\*\**

*Walter Turner, Board Chairman, Global Exchange\*\**

New Orleans, September 25-29, 2000

*Mora Beauchamp-Byrd, Nikki Alia Wilson, and staff, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University\**

*Tony Crawford, African Renaissance Education Fund, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, New Orleans\*\**

*Carl Galmon, Deputy Director of African Affairs, City of New Orleans*

*Dr. L. Jack, Chair, History Department, Race, Gender and Class Project, Southern University at New Orleans*

*Dr. Nchor Okorn, Political Science Department, Dillard University*

*Dr. Nchor Okorn, Lawrence Fulley, and the members of the African World Network*

*Dr. David Organ, African World Studies Institute*

*Walter C. Powell, III Nu Look Products Corporation*

Houston, October 10 - 12, 2000

*Dottie Atkins, Mickey Leland Center, Texas State University*

*Kassahun Bisrate, Alliance for Multicultural Community Services*

*Sylvia Brooks, Urban League, Houston*



*Howard Hartman*, Church World Service

*Fenda Koroma*, Consultant\*\*

*Judit Momoh*, Saving Lives Through Alternate Options

*National Black United Front—Houston Chapter\**

*Dr. Sheila Walker*, Center for African and African American Studies

*Dr. Julani Williams and Class*, Texas Southern University\*

Baltimore/Washington Corridor, November 2000

*Courtney Funn*, Special Assistant, Division of Tourism, Film and the Arts, Baltimore, MD\*\*

*Fred Kelly*, Paragea Corporation, Gaithersburg, MD

*Loreen Wutoh Odoom*, Anjelo Mida, Inc., Catonsville, MD

*Peter O'Neill*, Manager, Office of International Business, Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development, Baltimore, MD\*\*

*Dr. Olawale Oyegbola*, American Protech Corporation, Riverdale, MD

*Tami Hultman and Executive Staff*, allAfrica.com

*\*Group Meeting \*\* Regional Key Informant*

## Interviewee Profile

Those interviewed for the project included more than 60 group representatives and key informants in five different areas of the country. About 50% of those interviewed completed background forms from which the following information was collected.

The individuals were:

- Racially and ethnically diverse  
Whites make up the largest racial group, followed by African Blacks and African Americans.
- Highly educated  
More than 75 percent hold advanced degrees.
- Have incomes well above the average U.S. household  
More than half have household incomes of \$50,000 to \$90,000, as compared with the average household income for White Americans of \$44,000 and \$30,000 for African Americans.
- Identify themselves as "activists" with regard to human rights and related concerns
- Were at or approaching middle age  
More than 54 percent are between 36 and 50 years old.

The pattern, then, is of a group that is far more educated than the average American, has a higher income, and is not young.

The following interview matrix shows the groups represented by those interviewed, arranged by sector and by activity type.

# INTERVIEW MATRIX

| Category                     | Group Policy Orientation   | Sector   |                                |  |   |                                       |   |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--|---|---------------------------------------|---|
|                              |                            | Education  | Media                          | Organizations  | Religious Groups                              | Business                              | Government                                  |
| <b>Key Informant</b>         | <i>Policy-oriented</i>     |  |                                | Global Exchange  |   |                                       |   |
|                              | <i>Non-policy-oriented</i> | Black Cultural Center<br>California Newsreel   | Africa News /<br>allAfrica.com | Changemakers   |   |                                       |   |
| <b>Africa-specific Group</b> | <i>Policy-oriented</i>     |  |                                | Free Nigeria Movement<br>Liberian Community Foundation<br>National Summit on Africa<br>Saving Lives Through Alternate Options              |   |                                       | City of New Orleans,<br>International Trade |
|                              | <i>Non-policy-oriented</i> | Department of African and Afro-American Studies<br>UNC<br>AfricanIssues<br><br>African Heritage Museum and Education Center<br>Center for African Studies—Berkeley<br>African World Studies Institute, New Orleans<br>Center for African and African American Studies<br>University of Texas<br>Texas Southern University<br>Dr. Julani Williams | Carochen International Group   | Rwanda Refugee Association<br><br>Durham—Arusha Sister City Association<br>Ngwa Association of North Carolina<br><br>African World Network | African Immigrant and Refugee Resource Center | New Africa Advisors<br><br>Africa.Com |   |

# INTERVIEW MATRIX

| Category                                | Group Policy Orientation   | Sector   |       |  |   |   |   |
|---|----------------------------|--|-------|--|---|---|---|
|   |                            | Education  | Media | Organizations  | Religious Groups  | Business  | Government  |
| Groups with Significant Africa Programs | <i>Policy-oriented</i>     |  |       | International Rivers Network<br><br>IDEX<br><br>JustAct<br>National Peace Corps Association<br>Project Underground   |   |   | Maryland State: Division of Tourism, Film and the Arts;<br><br>Office of International Business |
|   | <i>Non-policy-oriented</i> | Amistad Research Center<br>African Renaissance Education Fund<br>Southern University at New Orleans, Race, Gender, and Class Project<br>Mickey Leland Center, Texas State University |       | IPAS<br><br>Research Triangle Institute<br><br>San Francisco — Abidjan Sister City Committee<br>Alliance for Multicultural Community Services<br>Urban League, Houston<br>National Black United Front<br>Houston Chapter | First Presbyterian Church Durham<br>Church World Service North Carolina<br>Church World Service — Texas<br><br>Community Presbyterian Church — Calistoga<br>Allen Temple Baptist Church — Oakland | Nu Look Products Corporation<br>Parage Corporation<br>Anjelo Mida<br><br>American Protech Corporation |   |

# Appendix 3: Focus Groups

National Summit on Africa

Washington Convention Center, February 16, 2000

Report prepared March 28, 2000

Facilitator: Loretta Hobbs, O'Neal/Hobbs Associates

Staff: Imani Countess and Ann-Louise Colgan

Focus Group Members:

*DeWayne Boyd*, Office of Congressman John Conyers, Jr., Detroit, MI

*Rev. Robert Cann*, Ark Foundation of Africa, Brooklyn NY

*Eric Cox*, Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Alaska, Anchorage, AK

*Dr. Emma Samuel Etuk*, Emida International Publishers, Forestville, MD

*Carl Galmon*, Deputy Director of African Affairs, New Orleans, LA

*Belay Asmelash Gessese*, Tigray Development Association, Washington, DC

*Eno Isong*, Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation

*Linda Linton, Esq.*, World Affairs Council, Reno, NV

*David Mozer*, Bicycle Africa, International Bicycle Fund and the Washington State Africa Network, Seattle, WA

*James Nicholas*, Director, Africa Marketing, Department of Economic and Community Development, State of Connecticut

*Esther Omotunde*, Hope International, Park River, ND

*Ambassador Edward Perkins*, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK

*Philip Rutledge*, Indiana University, Indianapolis, IN

*Mildred T. Sparks*, Director, State Office of Black Affairs, Department of Community and Economic Development, Salt Lake City, UT

*Theo Smith*, Minnesota Trade Association, Minneapolis, MN

*Nicholas Walker*, ACT! NOW 2000, Aurora, CO

*Elvira Williams*, AHEAD, Inc., Rockville, MD

On February 16, 2000, the Africa Policy Information Center (APIC) convened two focus group discussions to coincide with the National Summit on Africa's "Dialogue and Celebration of Africa" in Washington, DC. The focus group discussions were part of a qualitative research project organized by APIC which is designed to collect data in order to sharpen and define the growth opportunities available to U.S. constituency builders, by addressing the questions:

1. Who makes up Africa's constituencies in the U.S.?
2. What factors influence their interest in Africa?
3. What factors influence engagement with national groups or campaigns?
4. What information and training needs exist for local groups interested in strengthening their involvement with national constituency building groups?

Two focus groups were scheduled during the Summit. Using information supplied by the Summit Secretariat, invitations were extended to 146 Summit participants: 88 chairs and co-chairs, and 58 other registrants. Confirmed participants were asked to complete a background form providing demographic information, as well as a questionnaire, before the discussion.

The total number of participants, 11 in the first session and 7 in the second, was 18: 13 men and 5 women. Ten were African American, 5 African, and 3 White. Ten of the 18 reported holding advanced professional degrees; six reported incomes of \$90,000 and above. The sectors most highly represented were education, government, business, and NGO. Occupations ranged from grassroots development activist, grantmaker with a large international foundation, former U.S. Ambassador to an African country, congressional staff, college professors, and political appointees within state and city municipal structures.

Members of the group came from 15 different states and the District of Columbia, including Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New York, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Utah, and Washington.

Sixteen of the 18 participants had worked and/or lived in Africa. Most indicated business interest, academic, or other professional interest in Africa. Most also identified themselves as activists with particular concerns regarding human rights in Africa.

Strikingly, very small proportions of the group indicated strong identification with national groups. This was true even for the National Summit on Africa, despite the fact that focus group participants included many National Summit state chairs and co-chairs. Six of the 18 participants identified the National Summit as a key partner, while two more said they relied on it for "news and analysis." Other groups either identified as key partners or provider of news and analysis include Africare (6), Africa News(5), Constituency for Africa (5) Global Coalition for Africa (5), International Foundation for Education and Self-Help (5), TransAfrica (5), APIC (4) and Washington Office on Africa (4).

Responses to key questions posed to the group included the following. Participants often expressed agreement with responses by other participants.

1. What are the resources lacking at the community level?
  - Access to education about Africa.
  - Africa groups need to prioritize communication. Communication should be proactive and consistent. It “is incumbent upon policy groups to disseminate information.” “A lot of folks sit in Washington, D.C. and think that by osmosis or whatever,” information will circulate.
  - Training.
  - Personnel infrastructure—there are few, if any, permanent structures within state and local government that are designated to work on Africa-related issues. “Unlike other areas,” there are no staff responsible for building trade and other relationships. “Africa is peripheral to a lot of other things”
  - African governments have been unable to provide the level of representation that other nations routinely establish, i.e. honorary consulates.
  - A system of money or exchange that is equitable.
  
2. What are the barriers to work on Africa?
  - Media emerged as a consistent problem. “Media has certainly projected [Africa] as a boy, irresponsible, incapable, unable to govern....You are the most corrupt in the world...”
  - The absence of an entrepreneurial middle class in Africa is a major impediment to the challenge of increasing economic development.
  
3. What activities would improve work on Africa?
  - Listening to Africans. (Most of the participants had worked in or visited Africa and many had were aware of or had experiences with U.S. development projects. Many complained about insensitive USAID staff with little or no interest in Africa, poorly designed projects that were unable to benefit the target population.)
  - More support for Africa’s most needy. For example South African monopolies are buying up large quantities of the continent and poor and others need support indigenous efforts to benefit from privatization.
  - Resources for organizations working on Africa.
  - More informed decision-makers within the donor community.
  - Frank dialogue between Africans in America and the African-American community.

## Appendix 4: Additional Group Profile

First Peoples Worldwide:

Building Solidarity Among Indigenous Peoples  
Fredericksburg, Virginia

*Note: I have added this additional profile, of a group I first met while working at the African Development Foundation, to provide another illustration of the variety of U.S. groups engaged with Africa.*

“Stopping globalization is not an option, and when you map where indigenous people are and where biodiversity is, they overlap...indigenous people will be on the front line over the next century” notes Kristyna Bishop, Associate Director of First Peoples Worldwide (FPW), a project of the First Nations Development Institute (FNDI). Working in partnership with WIMSA (the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples of Southern Africa), the umbrella group representing the San peoples of Southern Africa, and the Ogiek people of southwestern Kenya, FPW is facilitating global linkages between indigenous peoples and laying the groundwork for the empowerment of the world’s most dispossessed and disenfranchised communities.

FNDI is a Native American nonprofit group founded to “help tribes build sound, sustainable reservation economies.” FPW is an “indigenous-controlled international organization that advocates for indigenous self-governance and assists in the delivery of culturally appropriate economic development.”

In 1997, FPW organized a tour of the US for members of WIMSA. This tour, which included a visit to the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, allowed both Native Americans and Africans to understand the commonality of the social and economic problems created by physical isolation, unemployment, and a history of oppression within their respective societies. As one of the African tour participants noted, the San people “felt a solidarity when they realized that the same dynamic exists: Native American elders realized they suffered from stereotypes of Africans, and the Africans [realized that they] had assumed that Native Americans don’t live in the ways they had been taught.” The tour allowed members of both organizations to share information and understand the ways in which they could create home-grown solutions to the development challenges facing their respective communities.

FPW also works with WIMSA to build a shared understanding between both groups of their respective legal and land rights. This effort involves the development of materials, curricula, workshops, and training as well as

the identification of funding sources to ensure that the collaboration can continue for at least three years on its own. In addition to grassroots efforts of this type, FPW works with African governments, sharing information it has gathered on land claim models from other parts of the world. An important aspect of this group's holistic approach is the importance its members place on addressing the total environment in which grassroots groups live, including the government entities with which these groups must interact.