NO EASY VICTORIES

African Liberation and American Activists over a Half Century, 1950–2000

Edited by
William Minter, Gail Hovey, and Charles Cobb Jr.

with a Foreword by
Nelson Mandela

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Africa today is experiencing a second wind of change, with Africans demanding good governance, respect for human rights, and empowerment of women. Those who are in the forefront are standing on the shoulders of those whose voices and stories we hear in *No Easy Victories*." —Charlayne Hunter-Gault, author of *New News out of Africa: Uncovering the African Renaissance*

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

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

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"This is a remarkable and often insightful collection of essays and reflections ... in its very strength it exposes an entire realm of research that has yet to be completed." - Gerald Horne, H-Net review January 2008

Chapter 5

The 1980s: The Anti-Apartheid Convergence

David Goodman

It was the fall of 1978, and South Africa was about the farthest thing from my mind. I was just entering college and knew little of this distant, tortured land. A chance encounter with an anti-apartheid activist changed all that. On a sunny September afternoon during freshman week at Harvard, I was walking up the steps of the Fogg Art Museum to participate, along with a thousand or so of my new classmates, in the quaint ritual of having tea with the college president, Derek Bok. As I approached the front door, a graduate student named Joe Schwartz pressed a leaflet into my hand.

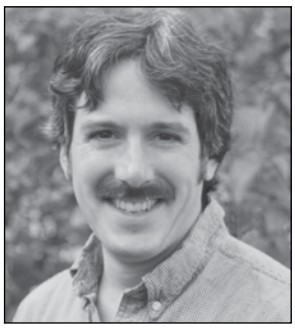
"Why don't you ask President Bok why Harvard supports apartheid?" he challenged me. He explained that Harvard had millions of dollars invested in companies doing business in South Africa. I figured there must be some explanation for this, but I was sufficiently cheeky to venture inside and go directly over to the university president. He was cradling a teacup, surrounded by a clutch of awestruck freshman. Was it true, I asked Bok, that Harvard was profiting from apartheid? The students fell silent. Bok pursed into a tight smile. He replied coolly, speaking of the importance of remaining "engaged," maintaining "dialogue," and bringing pressure on South Africa from the inside.

I was unimpressed, and frankly disgusted by his explanation. Two years after the police attack on protesting students in Soweto, the white regime that I read about appeared to be utterly unmoved by polite pressure and the occasional diplomatic scolding. The simple reality was that the college president could not bring himself to part with such profitable investments. My anti-apartheid activism began that day.

Although I didn't know it at the time, my chance encounter was being repeated on sidewalks, in living rooms, and in workplaces all across the United States. Schoolteachers, longshoremen, investment managers, legislators, and retirees were learning of the ways that they were unwittingly supporting a racist state on the southern tip of Africa. And they were figuring out that they had the power, right in their own communities, to make a difference.

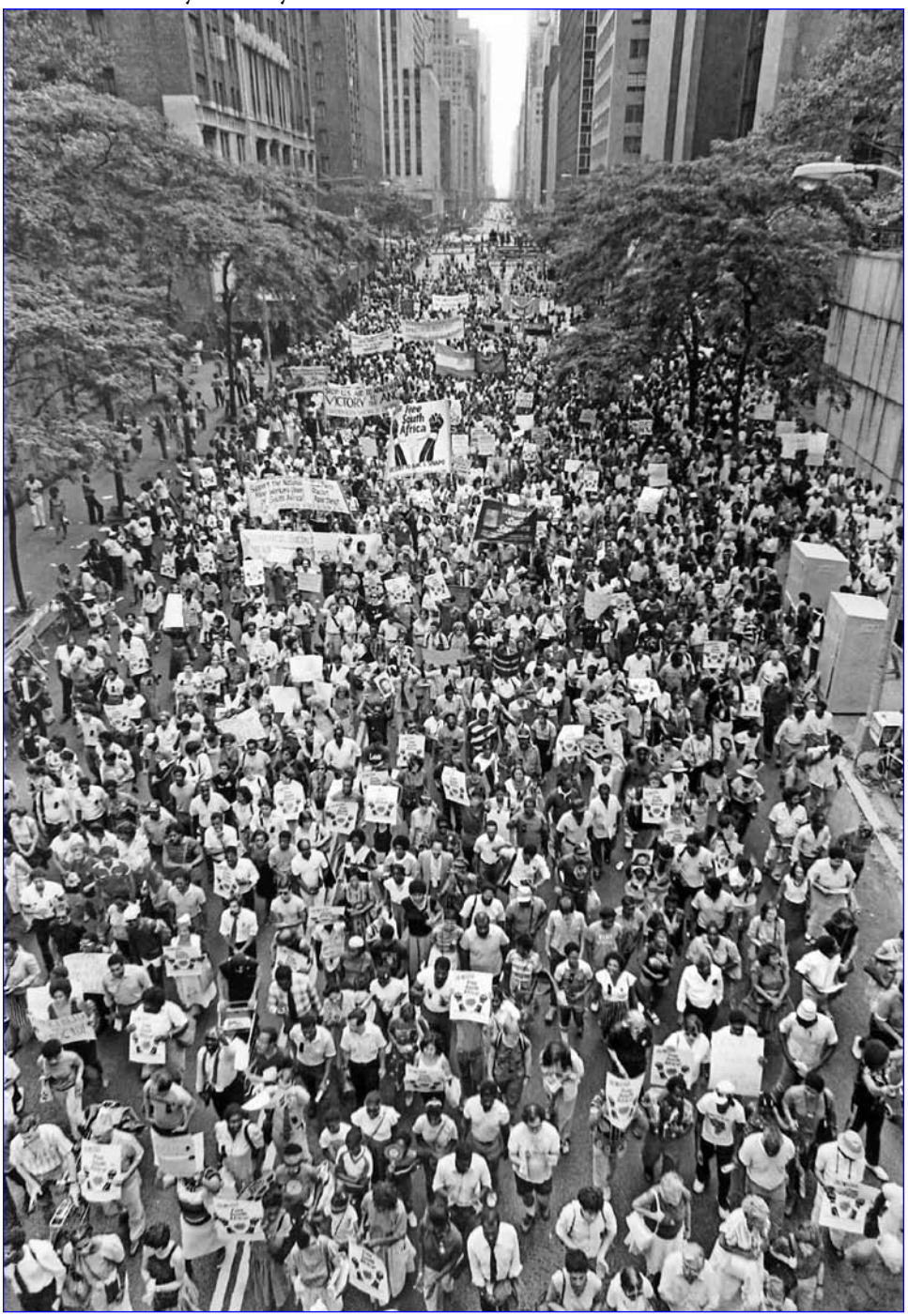
These realizations did not come about by chance. The explosion of activism in the 1980s in support of Southern African liberation was the culmination of decades of efforts, reflecting lessons learned from countless past successes and failures. The singular achievement of U.S. activism in the 1980s was the transformation of disparate African solidarity movements into a focused, multiheaded, and surprisingly successful anti-apartheid movement.

My own engagement reflected how the movement had spun off numerous local—even neighborhood—initiatives.



David Goodman
Photo courtesy of David Goodman.

As a college activist, I joined efforts to force Harvard to divest itself of the approximately $1 billion that it held in companies doing business with South Africa. I worked with Harvard's Southern Africa Solidarity Committee, helping organize demonstrations, teach-ins, debates, and fasts, and constructing a South African–style shantytown in Harvard Yard.



Anti-apartheid demonstrators fill the streets of New York City, August 13, 1985. ACOA joined with a coalition of labor, religious, and community groups led by Cleveland Robinson, secretary-treasurer of United Auto Workers District 65, to organize the event. *Photo by David Vita.*

In 1983 I was involved in launching the Endowment for Divestiture, an alternative donation channel for Harvard alumni who wanted to pressure the university by contributing to an escrow fund that would only be turned over to Harvard after it divested from South Africa. Following college, I was active in several Boston-based anti-apartheid groups, and I participated in demonstrations aimed at stopping the sale of Krugerrands. I was mostly just a foot soldier in these efforts, one of thousands around the country engaged in the seemingly quixotic challenge of smashing the pillars that supported apartheid.

My involvement in the divestment movement led me to want to see for myself what the apartheid of my protest chants was about. Themba Vilakazi, a friend who was a longtime member of the African National Congress, told me, "You should go to South Africa if you can get in. But," he added, "when you come back, you will have a responsibility to tell people about it." In 1984, as a budding freelance journalist, I journeyed to Zimbabwe and South Africa. I chronicled what I found there for a variety of U.S. and British publications and ultimately wrote a book about that and subsequent visits, *Fault Lines: Journeys into the New South Africa* (Goodman 2002).

In this chapter, I tell the story of U.S. activism in the 1980s by focusing on representative examples of anti-apartheid activism in three key arenas: local, national, and international. At the

local level, I take as a case study the organizing that happened in Massachusetts, which led to passage of the nation's first statewide divestment initiative in 1983. Former Massachusetts state representative Mel King and Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor Willard Johnson were at the center of these struggles. The national picture is represented here by Jennifer Davis and Dumisani Kumalo, both of the American Committee on Africa, and by the work of the Free South Africa Movement launched in Washington, DC by Randall Robinson. Finally, Ted Lockwood, who spent the 1970s as director of the Washington Office on Africa and the early 1980s as the international affairs representative for the American Friends Service Committee, fills in the international dimension of the solidarity effort.

Global Outrage, Local Actions

South Africa may be an ocean away, but when I arrived to start college in Cambridge in 1978 it was a hotly debated local issue. Massachusetts, I quickly learned, was a key outpost of the U.S. anti-apartheid movement. The first university divestment and the first full divestment of a state pension plan took place there in the late 1970s and 1980s. Chapter 4 on the 1970s recounts the story of the Polaroid Corporation in Cambridge and how workers there made South Africa a local issue. It also relates the early organizing done by Randall Robinson while he was a Harvard Law School student and before he became executive director of the African American lobby TransAfrica.

In the late 1970s, students in Massachusetts took up the cause of South African divestment. The first school in the country to divest was Hampshire College in western Massachusetts in 1977. The Southern Africa Solidarity Committee at Harvard, of which I was a member, formed during this period. It brought members of African liberation groups to campus, held material aid drives for Zimbabwe, and sponsored concerts by Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand) and Bob Marley. Around the city, the Boston Coalition for the Liberation of Southern Africa (BCLSA) played a key role in building a larger divestment initiative. A key member of BCLSA was Themba Vilakazi, Boston representative of the ANC. In 1985 Vilakazi formed the Fund for a Free South Africa (FREESA), which became the de facto leader of anti-apartheid work in the Boston area.

Two African American leaders played central roles in anti-apartheid efforts in Massachusetts. Mel King is a lifelong community activist in Boston. He headed up the Boston chapter of the Urban League in the late 1960s—described by a fellow activist as "the first Black Power Urban League chapter in the country"—until his election as a Massachusetts state representative in 1972.

Willard Johnson was a professor of political science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for over 30 years, until his retirement in 1996. The founder and head of the Boston chapter of TransAfrica and a member of the group's national board, he was a guiding force in numerous African solidarity efforts around Boston from the late 1960s onward, and he spearheaded Boston's Free South Africa Movement in the 1980s.

Massachusetts was among the first states to put issues of African liberation before state and local political bodies. In 1973–74, for example, state representative Mel King introduced a bill in the Massachusetts legislature aimed at preventing the port of Boston from handling Rhodesian chrome. This strategy was conceived during a visit to Boston by ANC president Oliver Tambo in late 1969 or early 1970. Tambo met activists at the home of Willard Johnson in suburban Newton. Among those in attendance was Mel King. Johnson recalls, "What Tambo was essentially pointing out was that there are ways to use legislative and governmental machinery at the local level on these foreign policy issues."

Mel King's focus on South Africa was a natural outgrowth of his racial justice work in Boston. He explains, "One's involvement in [anti-apartheid work] is based on one's understanding of the racial nature of this society. And so a situation like South Africa is just an extension of here. So if you're working on it here, you see the relevance of working on it anywhere it exists."

In the aftermath of the Soweto uprising, King held hearings to expose how Massachusetts investments were supporting South Africa. After a 1979 commission study revealed that the state had more money invested in companies doing business in South Africa than in companies doing business in

Massachusetts, King and a liberal white state senator, Jack Backman, filed a divestment bill. The legislation failed to pass, but King and Backman succeeded in winning a provision that barred the state from new purchases of stock in companies doing business in South Africa (Massie 1997, 539).

In 1980, King and Backman again pushed divestment legislation. Dumisani Kumalo from ACOA testified before the Massachusetts State Legislature, and the *Boston Globe* supported the bill. It failed again.

In February 1981, King and Backman sponsored a meeting of area groups, including the Catholic Archdiocese of Boston, the Massachusetts Council of Churches, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, BCLSA, and TransAfrica. The groups formed a coalition, MassDivest, to support legislation seeking total divestment from every bank and company doing business in South Africa. MassDivest members traveled around the state, speaking to people about the need to invest locally, not in apartheid South Africa. They created a popular bumper sticker that said "Make it in Massachusetts, not in South Africa." In late 1981 the bill passed the State Senate, but it failed a third time in the House.

In late 1982, the Massachusetts House and Senate both passed the divestment bill. It was then vetoed by conservative Democratic governor Edward King, who had just been defeated by Michael Dukakis. Mel King and Jack Backman fought off efforts to weaken the bill, and in a last-minute move before the legislature adjourned, they pulled off a dramatic veto override in both houses. "We whipped him soundly. It was the only veto of [Gov. King's] that was overturned," recalls King proudly.

Massachusetts thus became the first state to fully divest from South Africa. Within nine months, the state sold off $68 million of investments in companies doing business in South Africa (Massie 1997, 540). The action energized the national divestment movement, and other states followed suit.

Demonstrators at Boston's City Hall Plaza demand that Massachusetts pension fund monies be divested from companies doing business in South Africa, September 16, 1981. *Photo © Ellen Shub.*

King reflects on the strategy that finally resulted in victory:

> There had been some good organizing. There had been the union people who could tell their legislators, "That's our money." So I think it was a great coalition of forces that came together. . . . It's one of the things that you learn as a legislator, and that is that you get a good base of people who are constituents of a couple of the legislators who can go and tell them what they want. And you get enough of them, then you can make things happen.

Jennifer Davis, ACOA's executive director, noted that the experience in Massachusetts became a model for the country. For divestment legislation to succeed, she said, it was crucial to have both a black and a white legislator pushing the bill, as was the case with King and Backman.

Mel King continued his work with a historic run to be mayor of Boston in 1983. As one of scores of volunteers in his "Rainbow Coalition"—the forerunner to Jesse Jackson's same-named political operation—I was among many who drew inspiration from King's eloquence and the power of his message, linking the fights for social and racial justice abroad and at home. Many of the progressive unions and organizations that backed divestment supported Mel King's candidacy. But Boston was not then—and is still not—ready to elect an African American mayor. King finished a distant second to Ray Flynn. In 1986 King ran for U.S. Congress, finishing third in a race won by Representative Joseph Kennedy.

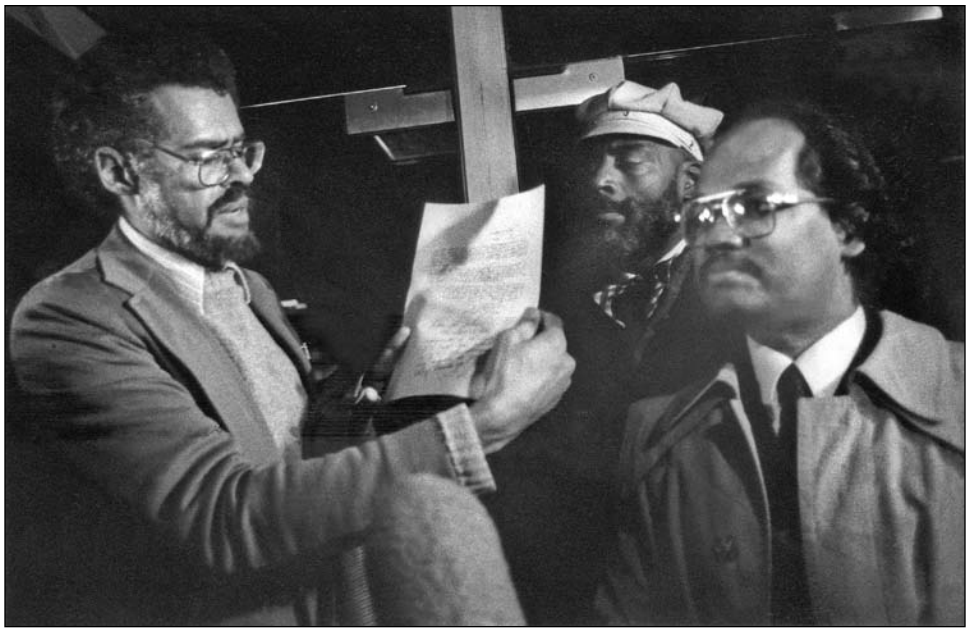
One of Mel King's greatest legacies was the progressive coalitions that he helped build. King was a patient, forceful, and visionary organizer. His moral authority derived from his experience fighting racism in Boston's schools and neighborhoods. When I asked him when his awareness of social justice issues began, King replied, "When I was born as a black child." When King took on apartheid, he made it clear that he was fighting the American version as well. It was a message that resonated strongly among everyone from whites in the solidarity movement to black community activists.

But the racial tensions that divided Boston were never far below the surface of the coalitions working to fight apartheid. A citywide coordinating group that I was a part of, the Southern Africa Support Coalition of Massachusetts, foundered over racial divisions between our own members. At one point, our work against racism in South Africa ground to a halt as we turned our energy to confronting racism in our own relationships. We sought help from Joyce King, Mel's wife, who facilitated a painful, important dialogue about racism, both personal and political. The emotional conversation between the black and white members of our group in Boston reflected strains within the South African liberation movements, where there were long-standing tensions between proponents of Africanism and those advocating a nonracial approach.

Willard Johnson was determined to keep blacks and whites talking and working together when he established the Boston chapter of the Free South Africa Movement (FSAM). The FSAM had been launched on the day before Thanksgiving 1984 when Randall Robinson was arrested at the South African embassy in Washington, DC. Johnson recounts:

> I have to admit that I personally differed with Randall with regard to how the Free South Africa Movement ought to have been structured nationally. He wanted it to be very clear that this was black leadership, and the [Congressional] Black Caucus and the black elected officials were the heart of the power base. There was a certain sense that all of these other folks had been marching around the mulberry bush for a long time with no results. We could avoid that at the local level in a way, and we didn't have the same level of challenge that you would have had nationally. But we set up our steering committee for the movement here, for Free South Africa, in Boston deliberately to incorporate a variety of other groups.
>
> Now, they were all on the left. We didn't really go back and tap into the Catholic Church leadership, but we made sure that we had a number of very credible white folks involved in our steering committee. And it was a real steering committee and it made real decisions.

To activate the FSAM in Boston, Willard Johnson, Mel King, and others used the occasion of a visit by South African Anglican bishop Desmond



After a campaign to close the South African consulate in Boston, Willard Johnson displays a signed letter of resignation from the acting consul, December 4, 1984. With Johnson are Massachusetts state representative Mel King and Boston city councilor Bruce Bolling. *Photo © Ellen Shub.*

Tutu to announce that they would hold a demonstration outside the office of South Africa's honorary consul in Boston. When King, Johnson, and other demonstrators arrived for the protest, the consul agreed to meet with them. To their surprise, he met their demands and resigned on the spot.

Buoyed by this early victory, activists identified their next target: stopping the sale of Krugerrands at Deak-Perera, a national gold coin dealership. In late 1984, a delegation of four local leaders, including Johnson, met with Deak-Perera officials in Boston and demanded that they stop selling Krugerrands until apartheid was ended. A frantic conference call with company executives ensued, during which the company declined to comply. Johnson and his colleagues then refused to leave Deak-Perera's offices and were arrested. This kicked off the Krugerrand campaign in Boston, which Johnson wrongly assumed they would win quickly. The protests outside Deak-Perera, which spread to the company's offices in cities around the country, endured through a long winter.

In August 1985, with the threat of a national ban on sales, Deak-Perera finally announced that it was suspending the sale of Krugerrands. This local campaign had a direct impact on the apartheid government. Willard Johnson (1999) estimates that the Boston campaign resulted in cutting Deak-Perera's Krugerrand sales in half; the national campaign is estimated to have cost South Africa $400 million in sales.

The combined effects of these attacks on the economic pillars of apartheid eventually became impossible for South Africa to ignore. According to Richard Knight, ACOA's longtime keeper of the numbers, "By the end of 1987 more than 200 U.S. companies had withdrawn from South Africa. Net capital movement out of South Africa was R9.2 billion in 1985, R6.1 billion in 1986, R3.1 billion in 1987 and R5.5 billion in 1988" (Knight 2004).

The FSAM in Boston disbanded in 1986 following the formation of the Boston-based Fund for a Free South Africa the year before. Divestment efforts continued with the passage of groundbreaking selective purchase legislation in Massachusetts and Boston. These laws prevented local government officials from purchasing products from companies that did business in South Africa.

In 1985, after nearly a decade of protests, and following the election of anti-apartheid candidates to its board of overseers (including, eventually, Bishop Tutu), Harvard University began a process of selective divestment. Over the next five years, Harvard sold off hundreds of millions of dollars of investments in companies that were doing business in South Africa.

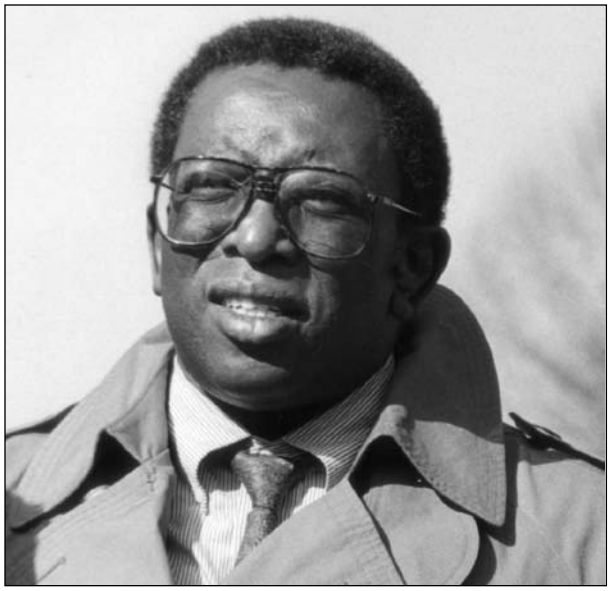
Mel King and Willard Johnson insist that the local actions to bring pressure on the apartheid regime were part of a larger struggle. Johnson reflects, "The framework for us was African liberation in all of its dimensions, even liberation theology aspects of it within that framework. This is all a part of trying to organize for a free, powerful African world that was anchored on the continent itself, able to project dignity and power, but extending to all of

the places where there were substantial communities of peoples of African descent."

The Movement at Home: U.S. Anti-Apartheid Activism

In the 1980s, activists brought the issue of apartheid to the U.S. heartland. The American Committee on Africa and its tax-exempt educational affiliate, The Africa Fund, were now headed by two South African–born activists: the analytical and intense executive director, Jennifer Davis, and the ebullient and persuasive projects director, Dumisani Kumalo. They led the charge from the East Coast power centers into the 50 states. Their efforts were bolstered by the high-profile protests and arrests and lobbying efforts being organized by Randall Robinson and the Free South Africa Movement.

While Kumalo focused his work exclusively on South Africa, Davis, as George Houser's successor, provided what Kumalo calls the "intellectual glue" for the organization, locating the divestment campaign in the larger context of solidarity work in Southern Africa. Kumalo, who became South Africa's ambassador to the United Nations in 1999, recounted the origins of the divestment strategy as we sat in his office in the South African Mission to the U.N. in New York.



Dumisani Kumalo
Photo © Rick Reinhard

Kumalo's own story is a classic South African reversal of fortune. A founder of the Union of Black Journalists in South Africa who later worked for an oil company, he arrived in this country in 1977, just as South African police were closing in on him and his colleagues. His transformation from an activist who organized protests outside South Africa's New York mission to the country's ambassador is jarring, dramatic, and even humorous, a point made often by the quick-to-laugh diplomat.

Kumalo recounts the arc of activism that began in church basements and sidewalks of middle America and was eventually felt in the power centers of Washington and Pretoria. In the 1980s, he recalls, anti-apartheid activism "went local" with the state and local divestment and selective purchase campaign.

> The other campaign that even localized it more was the Campaign to Stop Banking Loans to South Africa. And Prexy Nesbitt and Gail [Hovey] and myself were involved in that. It made people ask themselves a simple question: The money I put in this bank, does it go for loans in South Africa? And of course we had these guys who could research, people like Beate Klein, and all those people who could do research into where these loans were invested. As a result there were demonstrations in places like Wyoming.
>
> In Wyoming, people would go picket the local bank about South Africa. First of all, picketing in Wyoming is like, what is this? What? South Africa? Where is that? But the people who are picketing are local neighbors. So it became local, the local radio station, local people. . . . It wasn't run by South Africans in the U.S. or the people outside doing it. It became a local campaign, a homegrown campaign. And all Africa Fund did was provide information.

Kumalo's organizing strategy was inspired by organizing successes in the labor movement, especially the J. P. Stevens campaign. This was an organizing drive launched in 1976 by the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) against textile giant J. P. Stevens. ACTWU organizer Ray Rogers devised a "corporate campaign," successfully targeting high-profile J. P. Stevens board members and isolating the company from its

Children protest in New York City, June 16, 1980. Rev. Herbert Daughtry of Brooklyn organized children to march across the Brooklyn Bridge to the Wall Street financial district, where they protested corporate investment in South Africa. Some 300 people took part in the demonstration commemorating the 1976 Soweto uprising. *Photo by Stan Sierakowski.*

financial backers. In 1980, J.P. Stevens settled with ACTWU, enabling 3,000 workers in 10 plants in the South to win collective bargaining rights (Corporate Campaign 2004).

In carrying out the bank campaigns, Kumalo notes, they drew on what they had learned from Ray Rogers and the other activists in the J. P. Stevens movement. He adds that the churches, along with Tim Smith and the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, also played key roles. In the 1980s, "all these things were coming together."

Drawing on the strength of other movements was critical to the success of the anti-apartheid movement. "I was responsible for putting together coalitions around the country," observes Kumalo. "Everywhere I went, the coalitions were made up of people who either had been trade union people who had done J. P. Stevens, people who were doing antiracism work in their own neighborhood, some people who were veterans of the antiwar movement. So we had a very fertile ground, which made it very easy for us."

While Kumalo was able to tap into existing coalitions, his work remained delicate and complicated. In his travels around the country—he visited as many as 1,000 campuses and every single state—Kumalo encountered the entrenched racism of U.S. society. Trying to build a movement that was politically and racially diverse "was very, very difficult," he recalls. Again and again, Kumalo would visit cities where progressive whites and progressive blacks lived on opposite sides of town and did not work together. "I would insist, we are going to have a joint meeting. Because the issue of apartheid was the rich issue on the table. Then they eventually began to work. We really helped them forge coalitions."

The college campuses were especially divided. Most often, the white student groups would invite Kumalo because they had the money, and the black students would not be involved in the visit.

So I always insisted when I got to a college, I must go talk to the black college group. "Oh, they are not interested," I was told. I said, well, fine. They have a radio station—the colleges pacify black kids by giving them their radio station. I'd go there and they'd say, "Oh no, we don't do interviews." I'd say, "No, you have to do interviews." And then suddenly these kids come out in large numbers . . . But the American campuses are very segregated.

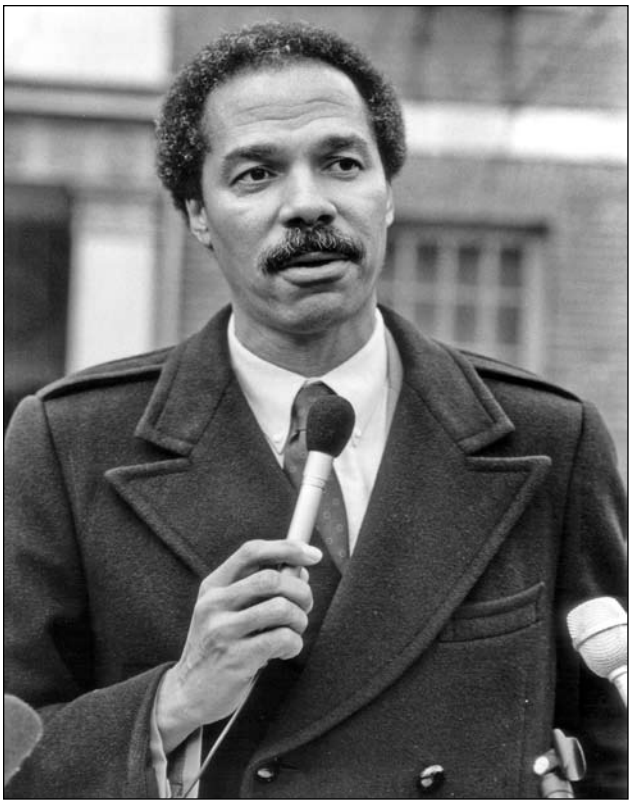
The anti-apartheid movement's finest hour was the passage by the U.S. Congress of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 over the veto of President Ronald Reagan. The legislation imposed limited sanctions against South Africa. Kumalo explains the groundwork that led to this event:

> The reason why we have the biggest success of this movement, reversing the Reagan veto on sanctions, was precisely because we had this grassroots. The South African government focused their lobbying efforts in Washington—I'm told this by current colleagues who were working against me then. But we lobbied on the ground. These senators and these congressmen were getting 10, 12 calls at the district office.
>
> I remember Senator [Harry] Reid, who is now leader of the Democratic Party. He owes his election to us. He was at that time, I think, in Congress [running for] Senate. I know he's from Nevada, because there was a movement there led by an African American senator called Joe Neal. Senator Joe Neal was a very, very good politician in Nevada. And these guys generated calls from these rural Nevada towns to Senator Reid. And Senator Reid became the one to join in the vote overriding President Reagan.
>
> So we knew in The Africa Fund by lunchtime that we would reverse the veto, even though the vote was in the afternoon. We knew, because we were counting on all these people. And these people are calling us from wherever they are. State representative Joseph Mitchell up in Alabama, and we had those Alabama senators that nobody said we could get. Because they were getting calls from their local voters and their local people saying "sanctions matter." And those people, we cultivated them easily because our movement was seen as an integral part of these movements of the time that were about justice, anticapitalism, antiwar.
>
> [Reagan's effort to undermine sanctions came] at the wrong time for him because by that time we had done the work. We had had five, six years of really preparing the ground. So we had people in every corner in every neighborhood who were willing to rise and say this is not the way it should be done.

"Shantytown" erected on the Michigan State University campus by the Southern Africa Liberation Committee. Similar displays were built on campuses throughout the country. *Photo courtesy of Frank Beeman and David Wiley.*

As ACOA/Africa Fund pursued its organizing efforts, TransAfrica, under Randall Robinson, was also looking for ways to bring the issue of apartheid to the heartland. Cecelie Counts-Blakey, legislative liaison and an assistant to Robinson in the 1980s, was an active member of the local Southern Africa Support Project in Washington. In a retrospective published in the Oakland, California–based journal *CrossRoads* a decade later, she reflected that the anti-apartheid movement

> needed to do something to take it beyond the traditional solidarity networks that were its main constituency; we had to find a way to galvanize "mainstream America" and shift the parameters of the policy debate. If this could not be accomplished, anti-apartheid activists were in danger of losing the gains we had made in the economic battle against South Africa at the



Randall Robinson
Photo © Rick Reinhard.

> local and state levels in the early 1980s. (Counts-Blakey 1995, 11)

The Free South Africa Movement was launched in 1984 on the day before Thanksgiving with the arrest at the South African embassy of Randall Robinson, DC Congressman Walter Fauntroy, and civil rights activist Mary Frances Berry. Within a week, protests sprang up at corporations and consulates in over 20 cities. Over the course of the following year, more than 4,500 people were arrested nationwide. Getting arrested at FSAM demonstrations became a rite of passage for public figures and celebrities who wanted street credibility with progressives; scheduling these high-profile actions became a logistical headache—albeit a welcome one—for FSAM activists.

The FSAM was spectacularly successful at launching the issue of apartheid onto the front pages and energizing a grassroots base. But the meteoric rise and headline-grabbing nature of FSAM accentuated rifts within the anti-apartheid movement. Counts-Blakey reflected on this in her *CrossRoads* article:

There were many layers of tension between TransAfrica, the Free South Africa Movement, and other members of the anti-apartheid movement. FSAM, though successful in some respects, exacerbated existing tensions between TransAfrica, a relatively new Black foreign policy lobby, and the older, hardworking, solidarity organizations (American Committee on Africa, Washington Office on Africa, American Friends Service Committee). Randall Robinson, executive director of TransAfrica, led what ostensibly was an African American foreign policy lobby. But the organization was treated by the media as an anti-apartheid organization, while Robinson was depicted as the representative of the anti-apartheid movement. TransAfrica's Board of Directors expected him to devote more time to development of the organization's overall capacity, while anti-apartheid activists felt that TransAfrica should devote more of its resources to nurturing and sustaining the Free South Africa Movement.

Some activists were upset because FSAM was led by African Americans, not a multiracial coalition of traditional anti-apartheid organizational leaders. Other activists felt dispossessed as FSAM attracted new grassroots support and celebrity involvement far beyond the traditional network of long-term activists. So, even though FSAM's policy of moderation resulted in a major movement victory, many anti-apartheid activists were ambivalent, if not hostile towards it.

It may well be that FSAM, as time passes, will become a model for mobilizing public opinion and [not for how] to build lasting coalitions. It is also quite possible that FSAM was a victim of its own success and meteoric rise. FSAM represented the greatest triumph for the U.S. anti-apartheid movement but also revealed its deepest problems. In one sense it was the realization of all of the work done in the previous 30 years and could not have been successful without that groundwork. But its promise as the vehicle for bringing disparate elements of the [anti-apartheid movement] into a more coherent and con-

tinuous effective force was never realized. (Counts-Blakey 1995, 14)

Jennifer Davis says that "keeping some sort of coalition together" became a challenge as the anti-apartheid movement achieved success. "It was really tough keeping TransAfrica within the organizing group so that everybody would push more or less together. [Robinson] didn't do a lot of organizing, but he was a great speaker. I do think that one of the things that ACOA did was to enable that coalition to sort of keep together."

Kumalo adds,

> The drama was the Free South Africa Movement and the people getting arrested, the big names . . . The weakness of it is that it was very celebrity-oriented. But the fact that it was celebrity-oriented, it gave even more momentum to the people at grassroots level. When TransAfrica, for instance, and Randall Robinson and these guys would do things in Washington, for some African American leaders it was very important. But don't forget people like Rev. Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker of the Canaan Baptist Church who were organizing the African American churches around the country.

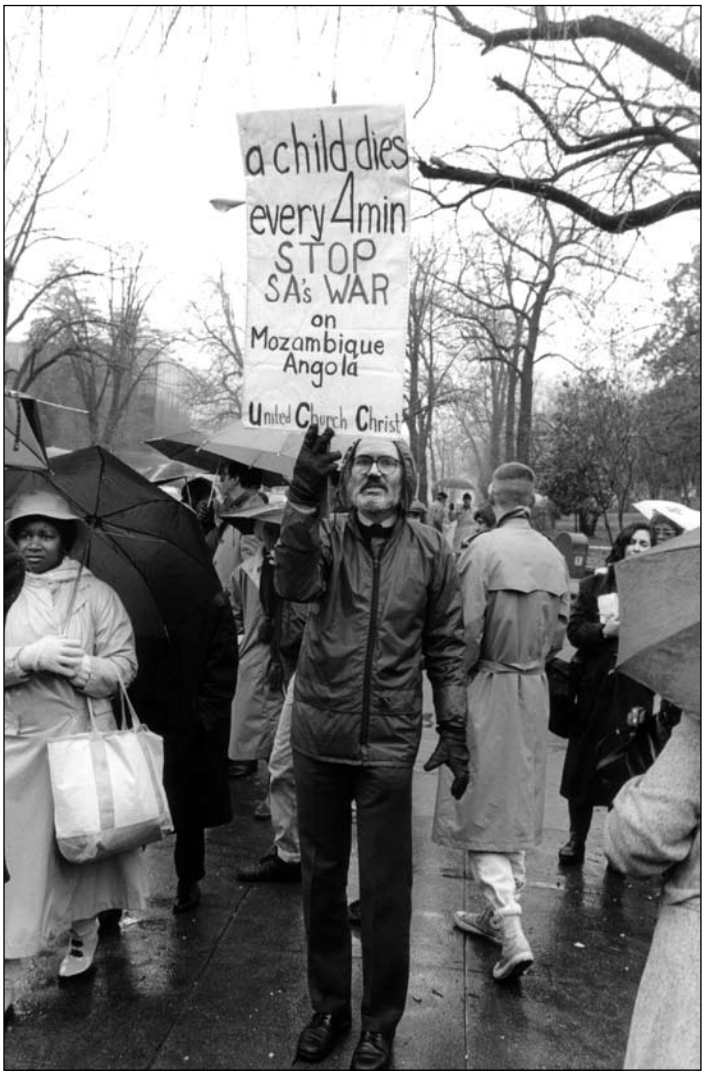
As the anti-apartheid movement scored victories, the South African government parried. It cultivated several African American leaders to defend South Africa's actions within America's black communities. South Africa's supporters in Congress succeeded in repealing the Clark Amendment in 1985; the repeal allowed millions of dollars in aid to flow to Jonas Savimbi, the South African–backed rebel leader waging a bloody insurgency against the government of Angola. As a TransAfrica staff person noted, "We were negotiating down to the last semi-colon on the sanctions bill [of 1986] while the policy context had shifted to a regional strategy" (Hill 1995).

Davis reflects,

> The things that were important were the ability to connect people here to what was happening in South Africa. Something happened in South Africa and people here responded. But they could respond in a directed and effective way because patterns had been established and analysis had been done. So if you got angry and you wanted to do something, well, go and make sure that your pension fund doesn't invest in South Africa.

Kumalo offers this advice to today's activists:

> You need an action message. You need to say to people, "If you do this, it has an impact on this."
>
> You need to pick one issue. You can't be a movement that addresses everything under the sun. And through that issue, articulate concerns that are universal. The human rights of the people who are dying of HIV/AIDS, the poor—these are all common things. But you need one issue



Rev. Larry Gilley, who worked for the United Church of Christ in South Africa and in Mozambique, joins a 1985 demonstration in Washington against South Africa's war on Angola and Mozambique. *Photo © Rick Reinhard.*

that you can zero in on and say this is one thing that we should do.

For Americans, who have a very poor attention span, you need a very simplified message. And if you have information, give it in slow doses.

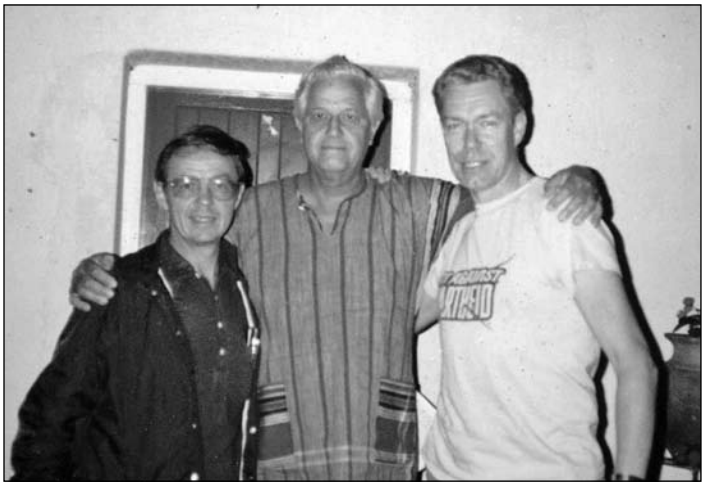
American Activist in the Frontline States

When I first began my travels to Southern Africa in 1984, I headed to recently liberated Zimbabwe. With my partner (now wife) Sue M. Minter, I arrived in the quiet high-country capital of Harare with just three contact names. These were the people to whom American activists entrusted our political education, and our safety. One of those contacts was Edgar (Ted) Lockwood, who headed the Southern Africa International Affairs office of the American Friends Service Committee.

Lockwood, then 64 years old, was a bear of a man. He had a gentle but firm manner, a mix of minister and streetwise activist. In a country and region riven by political and racial tensions, where South African spies and assassins were at work, Lockwood accomplished the considerable feat of earning the respect and trust of a diverse range of political antagonists. In this suspicion-filled environment I found him a generous guide, opening doors for us to opponents of the white regime both outside and inside South Africa's borders.

Lockwood came to Southern Africa by a circuitous route and with an impressive résumé. The offspring of a Republican family and a former lieutenant commander in the U.S. Navy, Lockwood became a lawyer in the 1950s, only to quit after making partner in a law firm. He then went to seminary to become an Episcopal minister. In 1962 he took the helm of a church in Woods Hole, Massachusetts.

Lockwood traces his real awakening to issues of racism and social justice to a trip he took to Alabama in 1965. He and 90 others were responding to a call from Martin Luther King to join civil rights activists on a march from Selma to Montgomery. During the march, he recounts, "I asked somebody on the street where could I get a drink of water, and he pointed to the sewer, and said, 'You can get it down there.' I really saw face to face the raw nature of racism, and that spurred me on."



From left: Father Michael Schultheis, S. J., Edgar (Ted) Lockwood, and Warren (Bud) Day in Harare, Zimbabwe, 1985. Schultheis was a solidarity activist based in Tanzania. Day was Oxfam America's regional director for Southern Africa, based in Harare from 1985 to 1986. Lockwood, based in Harare as the Southern Africa international affairs representative of the AFSC, was responsible for relating to the member countries of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC). SADCC was set up by the nine majority-ruled countries of Southern Africa (Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe) with the aim of reducing economic dependence on apartheid South Africa. *Photo courtesy of Carol Thompson.*

Lockwood's involvement in fair housing issues and his interest in progressive economic change—he describes himself as a "democratic socialist"—led him to move to Washington, DC in 1967. It was there that someone at the Institute for Policy Studies, a progressive think tank, asked him how his church made decisions about its investments. Lockwood had no idea. He decided to look into the matter.

Lockwood's inquiry quickly led to action. "What we did was to challenge the Episcopal Church on the issue of lending money to South Africa through banks with which they did business." Among the banks that the church invested in were Guaranty Trust Company, Chemical Bank, Chase Manhattan Bank, and Citibank, which were all part of a consortium that was making loans to South Africa. Lockwood's research revealed that the church had unwittingly "taken part in a consortium loan to the South African government of something like $40 million."

In May 1969, Lockwood, along with Bill Johnston of Episcopal Churchmen for South Africa, helped organize a protest and teach-in about South

Africa in the lobby of the Episcopal Church Center in New York City. The following year, the church established a Committee on Social Criteria for Investment and appointed Lockwood to serve on it. In May 1971 the committee persuaded the Episcopal Church to challenge General Motors to divest from South Africa, a widely publicized move that helped catalyze a national church divestment movement.

At the urging of the ACOA, Lockwood traveled to South Africa in 1971 to attend the trial of Dean Gonville ffrench-Beytagh, the Anglican dean of Johannesburg who was charged and later jailed for funneling money from the ANC and the International Defense and Aid Fund to use for social welfare. The trip was a watershed for Lockwood. Among other things, it included his first meeting with members of the African liberation movements in Zambia. He recalls how the meeting in Lusaka unfolded and what transpired on his return to the United States:

> I got in a taxi [in Lusaka] and I said I want to go to the liberation movements. They took me down to the liberation movements' headquarters which they had in a kind of compound. . . . I went in and said hello to SWAPO and ANC and they said, "You shouldn't be here. Where are you staying? We'll come up." So the ANC people sent a delegation to meet me in my hotel room. I think there were three or four people. One of them was a very sedate and dignified older person. I don't remember what his name was. One of the people was Duma Nokwe, who was the secretary of ANC at that time.
>
> And so they pumped me for what was going on in South Africa. And I told them what I knew about the trials, and what I had done, and what I had seen. And we all had a beer in my room. And then this very dignified man said, "Comrade Lockwood, you may think that what you have said is of no importance, and that you have only told us some little bits and pieces of things. But it is like a person being in the middle of a desert, and seeing a place where there is water. And you have given us water, and we have drunk it with great pleasure."
>
> It was my first chance to hear some kind of eloquence that was also quite touching in a way. So I felt renewed. I really didn't know very much about the liberation movements at all, but I was favorably impressed with them. And then I came home. And in 1971, in November, Bill Johnston arranged for me to make a presentation to the [U.N.] Committee on Decolonization. I think they called it the Fourth Committee. I thought it was going to be a little something in a small room with a few people. It was not at all. It was a committee of the whole of the General Assembly. . . . So that's how I got launched on South Africa, apartheid, and all that.

In 1972 Lockwood was appointed director of the Washington Office on Africa, a post that he held until 1980. His early focus at WOA was on strengthening sanctions against Rhodesia, specifically to repeal the so-called Byrd Amendment sponsored by Senator Harry Byrd. "This Byrd Amendment, in effect, said you couldn't ban critical and strategic materials from a noncommunist country, unless it was also banned from communist countries. So that meant that the United States could import the Rhodesian chrome ore and the nickel ore," explains Lockwood. WOA lost its campaign to overturn the amendment in Congress but succeeded in persuading President Jimmy Carter, who took office in 1977, to reimpose these sanctions against Rhodesia. In the end, international pressure helped force the white Rhodesian government to accept a settlement and allow free elections for a majority-ruled Zimbabwe.

Three years after leaving the Washington Office on Africa, where he was replaced by Jean Sindab, Lockwood accepted an offer to serve as the international affairs representative for AFSC in Southern Africa. Bill Sutherland, his predecessor in that post, had been based in Dar es Salaam. But with the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980, the frontline had moved closer to South Africa, and Lockwood worked out of Harare from 1983 to 1985.

In those early years, Zimbabwe was one of the most hopeful and stable of South Africa's neighbors, and it served as a strong anchor for the regional political and economic alliances confronting South Africa. The new government was breaking down segregated education, bringing more Africans into schools than the white-minority government had in the previous 90 years. Its economy grew and the

government was cited internationally as a model in expanding rural health services. Harare was the regional hub for nongovernmental assistance to the region, and food surpluses were available for famine response in neighboring countries. Zimbabwean troops were sent to Mozambique to help that country against the South African–backed insurgency and to protect the trade corridor to the sea that served not only Zimbabwe but Botswana and Zambia.

It was easy to travel in the region then, Lockwood recalls, and his mandate from AFSC was broad. One of his priorities was to support the efforts of worker-owned agricultural cooperatives in the region. He felt that it was important "to try to see what it was like for people who said they wanted to live out socialism in terms of how they organized their life."

Lockwood's planning for a conference and his effort to link up members of worker-owned co-ops in Tanzania, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe brought him into direct conflict with the new Zimbabwean government. "The Minister of Agriculture headed the co-ops, and he didn't want our society of co-ops to do this conference. He tried his best to ruin it." The conference, which Lockwood says was the first nongovernmental conference in Zimbabwe since independence in 1980, eventually happened in June 1985. But it highlighted for Lockwood some of the fundamental problems with the new Zimbabwean regime. "The idea of a nonprofit, nongovernmental civic society was something that [the Zimbabwean authorities] didn't tolerate," he says. "That's part of the Mugabe problem, I think."

Lockwood was not a pacifist, and he understood the need for Zimbabwe to defend itself against South African attacks. But he also saw the dangers in the approach taken by top leaders of the Zimbabwe African National Union, the party led by Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe. Lockwood first met Mugabe in Maputo, Mozambique during the Rhodesian liberation war. He was introduced by Eddison Zvogbo, who later became Zimbabwe's justice minister.

> [Zvogbo] explained that I had been working to restore sanctions against Rhodesia. And Mugabe looked up and said, "Eh, sanctions. What are sanctions? It means nothing. Nothing means anything except the gun."
>
> He struck me as being a very violent man, and having a preference for violence. Very bright guy. But also a streak of extreme emotional bias in favor of military action. . . . And it just got more and more so. And he was not in any way a humble man. He was always fearful of his grip on power, and the grip of ZANU on power, and he did everything possible to make it a solid one-party state. In effect, he tried to do a security situation the way the Soviet Union did under Stalin. Only it didn't appear so at the time, and we didn't see it coming at the time.

Lockwood left Zimbabwe in 1985 to return to the United States, where he worked on projects for the National Council of Churches and AFSC. His experience in Zimbabwe had given him a more nuanced appreciation for the challenge of transforming a racist, authoritarian society into a nonracial, democratic one.

> It was very easy to sort of say, well, the liberation struggle, they're the heroes. They are the good people, and I don't want to hear anything bad about them. The more I stayed with it, the more I felt sympathy for everybody. How difficult it is, really, to have a peaceful society as well as a just society come out of this. . . . ZANU's adoption of a program of holy violence is just wrong. You can't do that, and carry it all on as part of your understanding of what the state is supposed to be. What is the underlying constitutional structure? If in fact what you're going to continue to do is a civil war on your political enemies, then you can't go on like that. It's horrible.

Looking back on his involvement with the campaigns for freedom in both Zimbabwe and South Africa, however, Lockwood thinks that a key lesson for activists is that one has to focus.

> My feeling is that you have to accept that you are a small part of a big movement. Accepting that means that you don't take on all of the issues that you see as possible to deal with. Concentrate your focus on one issue or two issues, and don't spend

your small degree of capital by taking on all the issues.

It's like a laser beam. A laser beam is a collection of light that will cut something. If you dissipate the light and you don't have it concentrated, you can't cut anything.

At Decade's End

By the end of the 1980s, South Africa's prime minister F. W. de Klerk wanted the international community to believe that his country, by then reeling from military setbacks in Angola and Namibia, the effect of international sanctions, and a domestic insurrection, was on "the threshold of a new era." In an effort to prove this, he visited European capitals and also met with the presidents of Mozambique, Zaire, and Zambia. At home, he sought to consolidate power and implement a Nationalist Party five-year plan, which he spoke of as the vehicle to end apartheid and white minority rule.

But the plan that de Klerk proposed in 1989 was not one-person, one-vote in a unitary state—the arrangement that ultimately resulted from the 1994 South African elections. Instead, de Klerk proposed replacing white minority rule with a federation of many minorities: whites, Indians, people of mixed race, and some 10 African ethnicities. He was still dedicated to a system imposed by the white minority government that had race or ethnic division at its core. De Klerk's "new era" was really a desperate effort to convince the international community to lift sanctions to avert South Africa's financial collapse.

Gail Hovey, then managing editor of *Christianity and Crisis*, reported that "foreign investment in South Africa is at a standstill and the government can raise no substantial loans abroad. On June 30, 1990, some $11 billion in loans are scheduled to come due. . . . South Africa is under extraordinary pressure to convince the international financial community, and the new administration in Washington, that sanctions should be lifted because a new day has dawned" (Hovey 1991).

The anti-apartheid movement in the United States and around the world helped ratchet up pressure on the minority government of South Africa. From shantytowns on American college campuses to the numerous universities, cities, and states that divested, to protests against businesses that were profiting from apartheid, to vigils and sit-ins at South African embassies and consulates, to winning

SWAPO president Sam Nujoma, left, with ACOA executive director Jennifer Davis, Manhattan borough president David N. Dinkins, and ACOA executive board president M. William Howard at the Municipal Building in New York City, May 1988. ACOA organized many of the events on Nujoma's schedule in New York, including a labor rally, a press conference with Dinkins, and meetings with other political, religious, and civic leaders. *Photo courtesy of Richard Knight.*

passage of national anti-apartheid sanctions legislation, the movement was crucial in helping to amplify the chorus of South African voices who were demanding simple justice in the land of their birth.

During my travels in South Africa and Namibia during the 1980s and 1990s, ordinary citizens would often tell me how important it was to them to know that the international community was on their side. "Don't forget us here in the 'Wild South,'" implored my friend Anton Lubowksi, a Namibian attorney and the first official white member of SWAPO, in a letter to me shortly before his assassination by South African agents in 1989. Coming just a year before Namibia's hard-fought independence, it was a plea for continued solidarity, one that international activists can say proudly that they heeded.

With a little more time, South Africans would finally accomplish what they had been fighting for over many generations. In a free and fair democratic election, voters at last would choose a new government that for the first time represented all of South Africa's people.

Oral sources for chapter 5 include interviews with Jennifer Davis (2004, 2005), Willard Johnson (2005), Mel King (2004), Dumisani Kumalo (2005a, 2005b), and Ted Lockwood (2004, 2005).

Meeting of the Bay Area Anti-Apartheid Network in the 1980s. Similar meetings were held in living rooms, church basements, college classrooms, and union halls throughout the country to organize against South Africa.
Photo courtesy of Vukani Mawethu.

Sylvia Hill
From the Sixth Pan-African Congress to the Free South Africa Movement

William Minter

At the Sixth Pan-African Congress in Dar es Salaam in June 1974, Sylvia Hill didn't have much time to follow the speeches and debates about race and class, the African diaspora, and the current status of the liberation movements. As one of the key U.S. organizers of the event, she had to focus instead on a host of logistical questions, from finding typewriters to transcribe the sessions to negotiating with translators demanding to be paid in U.S. dollars.

"Six PAC," the sixth in the series of Pan-African congresses initiated by W. E. B. Du Bois, came more than two decades after the historic Fifth Congress in Manchester, England in 1945. It was the first to be held in Africa. Hill is aware that many observers discount the congress because of the heated disagreements that were aired, particularly among delegates from the United States and the Caribbean. But there were positive outcomes, she insists. "I've read and I've heard people say that the conference didn't produce anything, and I'm like, wait, wait, wait," she said in a 2003 interview. "It was really Six PAC that led me to return and work on Southern Africa. There were a group of us who committed ourselves that we were going to work against colonialism, and it was based on the investment in this congress and the agenda of the national liberation struggle."

Hill and many of the other organizers wanted to establish direct connections between African liberation movements and African Americans. Tanzania, which hosted the event and had fostered wide participation from the United States through its embassy in Washington, was the key venue for bringing people together.

Tanzania's President Nyerere was keenly aware of the importance of people-to-people contact and of the critical contribution made by those who work behind the scenes. When national delegations to the congress were scheduled to meet with Nyerere, the all-male group of leaders of the U.S. delegation chose themselves as the five to go, despite a suggestion from veteran activist Mary Jane Patterson that Hill should be included. That night, Hill recalls,

> Ambassador Bomani [the Tanzanian ambassador to the United States] came and said to me, "There will be a car to pick you up to take you to the president. You will meet with the president alone, and when the gentlemen get there, you will already be there." I was there half an hour before they got there. I was already on my second cup of tea when they walked in and they were so stunned to see me sitting there.

On returning to Washington, Hill and a small group of fellow activists—almost all women—founded a small group called the Southern Africa News Collective, which grew into the Southern Africa Support Project in 1978.

Sylvia Hill and her fellow local activists in the Southern Africa Support Project were at the heart of the Free South Africa Movement that brought demonstrators to be arrested at the South African embassy. Hill was also one of the key organizers for the Sixth Pan-African Congress in Dar es Salaam in 1974, and for Nelson Mandela's tour of the United States following his release from prison in 1990.

Today Hill is professor of criminal justice at the University of the District of Columbia. She serves on the board of TransAfrica Forum. This profile draws on interviews with Sylvia Hill by William Minter in 2003 and 2004.

They were clear in defining their top priority as the local community. While they recognized the complementary role of national organizations focused on Africa and developed particularly close ties with TransAfrica, they argued that developing a local base of support for African liberation was essential. They raised assistance for Zimbabwean refugees in Mozambique and for the ANC exile school in Tanzania through annual "Southern Africa" weeks with radiothons, public meetings, and speaking engagements in churches and schools. It was this systematic work, Hill says, that built "a kind of social infrastructure of ties to institutions and sectors in the city" and that would later pay off in the Free South Africa Movement demonstrations.

The relationship between local groups and other groups working on different aspects of solidarity was dialectical, Hill stresses. If it had all been one large bureaucracy, "we could have never done what was ultimately accomplished." It was local organizing in combination with national media attention to South Africa—and particularly TransAfrica's presence in the national media—that enabled the Free South Africa Movement coalition to sustain daily demonstrations at the South African embassy for a year, in 1984–85. Around the country, coalitions of local activists came together and took their own initiatives, inspired by the growing publicity and informed by resources from national groups.

"People have a range of ways they express support. It's everything from sitting in front of the TV and saying, 'right on,' to physically being there. Now if you want them there, you've got to work to get them there," Hill reflects.

> What is significant, from the organizer's point of view, is that the person expresses public opposition instead of private disdain for policies. The challenge for the organizer is to find that creative space that will permit ordinary citizens to express collective opposition. It is the task of the organizer to create venues for internal feelings to be expressed publicly. This the Free South Africa Movement accomplished. And therefore, one of our profound lessons of this movement is that one should never underestimate the power of symbolic protests to create a climate for political change.

Sylvia Hill, center, and Gay McDougall were among African American activists invited by Nelson Mandela to visit South Africa in October 1991 on what was called a "Democracy Now" tour. *Photo courtesy of Sylvia Hill.*

Jennifer Davis
Clarity, Determination, and Coalition Building

Gail Hovey

Jennifer Davis never planned to go into exile from South Africa. But by 1966, organizing inside the country had become very difficult. Most major organizations were banned, and an increasing number of the individuals she worked with, at both the grassroots and leadership levels, were in detention or under house arrest. Exile was never simple, she says. Activists had to grapple both with their conscience about "leaving the struggle" and with the authorities, who used the issuing of passports as a means of control.

> Leaving South Africa happened quite suddenly, in a traumatic few weeks. It started by my husband [lawyer Mike Davis] leaving to visit my brother, traveling on a valid passport. That was followed by several calls from the police indicating that they believed he had left illegally and that I would soon be subjected to some form of house arrest order, as would he if he returned. Mike had done many political cases in South Africa, including several where he was instructed by the Tambo-Mandela law firm.

In New York, Mike Davis made contact with people connected to the American Committee on Africa, and over time they helped him reestablish his legal career. Jennifer Davis arrived with their two small children and began her adjustment to life in the United States. An early experience stands out in her mind as particularly instructive. She was invited to dinner by friends of her parents who lived on Manhattan's East Side.

> They had an absolutely beautiful house with lots of original artwork, an El Greco in their dining room. One of the guests said to me—I think we were already sitting down after dinner—you must see great differences between South Africa and here. And I said, well, there are some differences, but there's not such a lot of difference. I see a tremendous number of very poor black people, and a lot of very rich white people. And she pulled herself up to her rather portly height and said, there are no poor people in America.

Davis had been speaking her mind since high school, when she dared to argue with her Afrikaans teacher about the 1948 elections. The daughter of a South African father and a German mother who left Germany in the early 1930s, she came to understand the meaning of the Holocaust from her parents and maternal grandmother. For Davis, "never again" meant that every Jew should be an activist, resisting religious and racial oppression wherever it occurred.

A member of the Unity Movement in South Africa, Davis describes herself as a very serious young woman.

Jennifer Davis and George Houser had been colleagues for more than a decade when he retired from the American Committee on Africa in 1981 and she became the organization's second executive director. A South African exile, she knew the organization well from her years as its research director and led it through the critical decades of the 1980s and 1990s.

This profile is based in part on interviews with Davis by William Minter in 2004 and 2005. It also draws on interviews with Robert S. Browne by William Minter in 2003, and with Dumisani Kumalo by Gail Hovey in 2005.

> By the time I got to the University of the Witwatersrand in the early fifties, the Communist Party had already been banned. On the Wits campus much of the left debate was carried out in the Student Liberal Association, which provided the public home for many who had formerly been open party members. Unity Movement members who were functioning in something called the Progressive Forum were in hot opposition to the Communist Party, and drew their ideological framework from the Trotskyist tradition. Thus there was a lot of debate, mainly about the nature, structure, and possible transformation of South African society, but also about international issues and about broader ideas, the role of art and science, the nature of capitalism and imperialism.

In the United States Davis found a place at ACOA, where she became the research director. She established extensive files that were a resource for activists and journalists and provided the information for ACOA's and The Africa Fund's numerous presentations before U.N. and U.S. government committees. During the burgeoning divestment campaign, items like "Fact Sheet on South Africa" and "Questions and Answers on Divestment" were used in virtually every state and local campaign.

Davis's home became a temporary landing place for countless people—Africans, Europeans, and North Americans—who had been recently expelled from their countries of origin or were in New York temporarily to carry out a U.N. assignment or use ACOA's resources. One such guest was activist poet Dennis Brutus. In 1966 Brutus had just been released from the Robben Island prison in South Africa and went on tour in the United States for ACOA. Davis remembers that he used to wander around her apartment in the middle of the night, muttering poetry; her kids were fascinated by him. He later settled in the United States and spearheaded work on the international sports boycott.

Over more than three decades, Davis continued to host delegations and individuals from liberation, protest, human rights, and trade union movements throughout Southern Africa, providing the opportunity for them to inform and update activist Americans on the progress of their work.

In 1981, on the retirement of George Houser, Jennifer Davis took over the leadership of the American Committee on Africa and The Africa Fund, a position she would hold until her retirement in 2000. At the time, ACOA's board was chaired by William Booth, a black lawyer and district court judge who was a former New York City commissioner. Announcing Davis's appointment in *ACOA Action News* (spring 1981), Booth said, "She has gained a reputation as an authority with few peers in analyzing political and economic developments in Southern Africa. . . . She brings the same commitment and integrity that are characteristic of George Houser. What was so well begun will be well continued under her leadership."

It was not quite that simple. This was, after all, the *American* Committee on Africa, and according to board member Bob Browne, some people thought it was crazy to appoint a South African to head it. And not only a South African, but a white Jew. Browne went on to say that it did not remain a problem because Davis quickly won over any skeptics. But that is also

an oversimplification. While serving as director, Davis traveled around the country speaking in a wide variety of venues. She had to deal with sensitive questions regarding her credibility. Although he says they didn't talk about it at the time, Dumisani Kumalo, ACOA's project director and a fellow South African, was well aware of the challenges she faced. "We were involved in a political struggle and she was a white Jewish woman in this struggle against racism. So she was up against it in the U.S., with its racism."

Davis recalls her debates on U.S. television with South African homeland leader Gatsha Buthelezi, who worked with the South African government to lobby against sanctions.

"He attacked me as the 'white lady.' He's black; I'm white. What do I know? He was arguing that we should have more investment." Davis learned the value of speaking, whenever she could, in joint appearances with a black colleague. "I developed, I think, a fair amount of credibility, but to have David Ndaba from the ANC or Dumisani Kumalo meant that me being a 'white lady' didn't matter."

Davis remained a strong advocate for strengthening sanctions and keeping them in place until there was a genuine transfer of power in South Africa. In 1989 Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Herman Cohen admitted, "Sanctions have had a substantial impact on persuading white South Africans of the need for a negotiated settlement" (*Wall Street Journal*, June 30, 1989). Then he argued that now was the time to lift sanctions, to reward the changes that had been made.

Davis was quick to reply. "What has changed," she said, "is the white power structure's sense of permanence and invulnerability . . . The economy is badly shaken—no growth, unemployment for whites, inflation" (1989). She called for the imposition of comprehensive sanctions.

From the beginning of her involvement with ACOA, one of Jennifer Davis's key contributions was to insist on an anti-imperialist focus for the American anti-apartheid work and for the work in support of liberation movements in the rest of Southern Africa. While affirming the importance of human rights and political prisoner campaigns, Davis insisted that ACOA concentrate on exposing and weakening the support that American institutions were giving to the white minority regimes.

Beginning in the 1970s, Davis began making trips to Africa. In August 1974 she traveled to Tanzania to spend time with Frelimo, visiting, among other places, the Mozambican movement's hospital in Mtwara.

> We were supporting, through the Rubin Foundation, the hospital in Mtwara. It wasn't a hospital, it was a small house, and they'd bring people across the border from Cabo Delgado. The staff greeted me as I came up to the building, and then they held me in the door, and they said to the respective people in the beds, this visitor is coming from the United States and she would like to come and talk with you, and is it all right? And everybody said yes, and then I went inside. I went to a hospital in Zambia where the doctors took me around and nobody ever told the patients what was happening.

Davis was enormously impressed by Frelimo. She understood them to be seriously attempting to engage the people not as victims but as participants. When Mozambique's president Samora Machel and 33 others died in a plane crash on October 19, 1986, Davis flew to Maputo to attend the funerals. ACOA's relationships with Frelimo were too enduring not to express solidarity in person. She recalls:

> Perhaps the most memorable minutes of my stay in Mozambique were 15 minutes spent with Graça Machel an hour before leaving. She had borne herself with great dignity throughout the public ceremonies. Now, face to face, she embraced me, listened to my messages of sympathy and solidarity and said, "We have always known that we had many friends, but it is good that you are here, so we can touch." Then she went on to talk about tasks ahead. (Davis 1986)

In January 1990, just before the elections that would bring SWAPO to power in Namibia, Davis traveled to Windhoek. She wanted, she says, to reconnect with individuals and groups throughout the country, to understand what might happen in the next few weeks and the ways that solidarity could continue after the elections. She went north to Oshikati, where SWAPO had strong support. She talked to a wide range of people, from Toivo ya Toivo and other SWAPO leaders to women's groups and Lutheran church activists.

Finally, in 1994, Davis returned to South Africa to serve as an official observer for the South African election. She had traveled a long distance in the three decades she had been away. A Jewish secular intellectual, she had come to lead organizations whose constituencies were most often Christian, or black, or both. That the churches were major players in the anti-apartheid movement in the U.S. was something that she had to get used to.

She came to win the respect of those with whom she worked. At a party held in her honor in 2003, one of the speakers was Harlem minister Canon Fred Williams, a board member of ACOA and co-founder with Wyatt Tee Walker of ACOA's Religious Action Network. The network was open to all religious traditions but was made up predominantly of black churches. They had answered a call from religious leaders in South Africa to protest detentions, work for sanctions and send prayers and messages of solidarity.

Jennifer Davis, left, testifies at the United Nations on South Africa's apartheid policies, November 1980. Karen Talbot of the World Peace Council was also among the witnesses from nongovernmental organizations. *UN Photo.*

"Here was this Jewish woman," Williams said, "and she is the one who made it possible for the Religious Action Network to do its work, this coalition of primarily black, male clergy and their churches. The public Jennifer, cold to some, aloof, hard to connect to, yes, but so reliable as the one to look more deeply, to insist on principle, to keep focused even in the face of terrible opposition" (2003).

Jean Sindab
Connecting People, Connecting Issues

Gay McDougall, *International Human Rights Law Group*

I remember being with Jean in Zimbabwe in 1988 for an international conference convened to highlight the tragedy of thousands of children that were being detained in South African jails. Many of them were tortured. It was the first major anti-apartheid conference that was attended by large numbers of South Africans, many of whom surreptitiously crossed the border to attend. There were nearly 2,000 people there. Jean was asked to speak at the closing plenary—a great honor to her and to the role of African Americans in the worldwide movement. Many of the great orators of the movement preceded her at the podium—a tough act to follow. But it was Jean that brought the house down. She spoke simply and eloquently and so passionately that every person in the audience was touched and moved to give her a standing ovation.

It is hard to imagine what the international anti-apartheid movement would have been without Jean Sindab. She was such a vital part of it, whether lobbying Congress, organizing grassroots campaigns, or strategizing with activists from other countries.

One of the things that I greatly admired about Jean was that she was an internationalist. There could be no question that she was firmly rooted in the experiences of the oppression suffered by African Americans [and especially by] African American women. But she was also someone that was able to rise above a parochial view of "our" problems and see the horizon where people of many different experiences of oppression could join forces into a majority. She was a part of the lives and struggles of many different peoples around the world.

Above all else, Jean was genuine and sincere. Jean was the type of person that gave a lot of herself to what she cared about. She was blessed to have both purpose and passion in her life.

At the goodbye party we held for Jean when she moved from Washington to Geneva, I said that when I think of Jean Sindab it calls to mind other great black women of our generation: Ms. Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Shirley Chisholm. Jean has earned her place among them.

Ted Lockwood, *Washington Office on Africa*

Jean succeeded me as the director of the Washington Office on Africa in the summer of 1980. She brought strengths to the office that I did not have and never would have. The fact that she was African American and bright was just the beginning of what she brought.

Her bubbling energy and enthusiasm led her to reach out to others who had not been reached in the struggle against apartheid. Organizations which we had never been able or tried to reach were glad to share in her zeal for

Raised by her mother and grandmother in Bedford-Stuyvesant, New York City's largest black neighborhood, Jean Sindab won a scholarship to attend Hunter College in 1970, at the age of 26. She went on to earn a PhD in political science at Yale University. Beginning in 1980, she directed the Washington Office on Africa and led the organization during the critical period leading up to the adoption of congressional sanctions against South Africa. Sindab directed the Programme to Combat Racism of the World Council of Churches, based in Geneva, from 1986 to 1991. After returning to New York, she coordinated work on environmental and economic justice for the National Council of Churches until her final illness. Her death from cancer in 1996 cut short a rich career of activism.

During her time in Washington, Sindab focused her work on South Africa and Namibia. In Geneva the scope expanded to include combating racism worldwide. Later, from her post at the National Council of Churches, she was one of the pioneers in raising the issue of environmental racism around the country. Many in the movement stressed the intersection of domestic and international struggles. But few matched Sindab in her capacity to make live connections that went beyond rhetoric or theoretical analysis. She was confidently rooted in her own community and values, yet insistent and skillful in bringing people together for common goals.

A celebration of the life of Dr. Nellie Jean Pitts Sindab was held on February 24, 1996 at People's Congregational Church in Washington, DC. These testimonies, from among many read at the service, focus on the distinctive contributions she made to African justice.

African interests. Even though she was fresh from academic studies, her passion for liberation was infectious and intense. It galvanized and mobilized the anti-apartheid movement. No one was a better stump speaker.

She was generous in recognizing the contributions of those of us who had preceded her at the Washington Office on Africa. She organized a spectacular tenth anniversary party for WOA that honored those contributions. Her staff were devoted to her.

Her nationalism was not narrow or racialist or doctrinaire. It stemmed from her own heritage of Christian faith and love: a love that tries to embrace not only the victims of racism but those who are the victimizers, whether they are insensitive elitists, misguided bigots, or outright enemies. She was a disciple of Christ, a beautiful child of the black church.

At the same time, she could be confrontational with those friends and allies who she felt were undercutting the cause of freedom by lukewarm support, bureaucratic indifference, racial or sexist condescension, cynicism, or snide remarks. She was confrontational with me more than once but I think we never ceased to be friends.

She never got the support that she needed. Those of us who shared the niggardly financing that marked our times appreciated her downright rage. She would storm out of meetings in ways we never dared to.

She never forgot her roots in "Bed-Stuy." The traumas she and her family had endured there fueled her passion for justice. She never suffered fools gladly. Why should she?

As my artist friend, Freddy Reynolds, would say, she was "something else." Her death is a terrible loss, but nothing so good is ever lost forever.

May she rest in peace, and may light perpetually shine upon her.

Past and present members of the Southern Africa Support Project

The Southern Africa Support Project mourns the loss of our sister in the struggle for human rights. Her belief in the impossible, her sense of humor, and her energetic spirit will be sorely missed as we meet the challenges of tomorrow.

Despite Jean's tremendous workload as director of the Washington Office on Africa, she was always willing to help us in organizing material aid for refugees in Southern Africa and participate in our campaigns to raise public consciousness against U.S. foreign policy. Whether we asked her to join us in a picket line, attend a gospel show, chaperone a youth dance-a-thon, or co-host a radio program, she enthusiastically joined our programs. Jean did not limit her role in the struggle to only her organization's work. She valued the work of many organizations as a collective strike against injustice!

Her ability to work in coalitions was just one of her treasured strengths. We will miss her.

Current and former directors of the Washington Office on Africa gather at the National Anti-Apartheid Conference in June 1990. From left: Damu Smith (director 1986–89), Jean Sindab (director 1980–86), and Aubrey McCutcheon (director 1989–90). Ted Lockwood (director 1972–80), not shown in this photograph, was also at the conference. *Photo by Basil Clunie.*

Public Investment and South Africa

Julian Bond

Thank you a great deal for the kind and warm welcome. I think most of us who work on African issues, who are scattered throughout the United States, begin to develop a feeling of isolation and estrangement. So it is extremely gratifying to discover that we are many and diverse, that those of us represented here in fact are representatives of a larger group of people scattered throughout the 50 states of the U.S. and that our cause is just and our success virtually assured.

Among all of us who are gathered here, there is a particular group: legislators and council members, who are here as part of the responsibility of our offices because we are all sworn to uphold the public good. There certainly could be no greater good than the cause for which we gather, the advancement of the struggle for the independence of Southern Africa.

We are here to complete the process of halting American complicity in the most hideous government on the face of the planet, the one system where racial superiority is constitutionally enshrined. We gather here at a time when even the most moderate advances away from complicity are being compromised, abandoned and withdrawn.

In less than six months, the new government of the U.S. reversed even the halting Africa policies of the Carter administration and has embarked on a course of arrogant intervention into African affairs in the most hostile way. From Cape Town to Cairo, the American eagle has begun to bare his talons. Our secretary of state is a man who pounded his palms on the table like tom-toms when African affairs were discussed in the Nixon White House. Our new ambassador to the U.N. sees callers [a high-ranking South African military intelligence team that came March 15, 1981]. [First] she says she does not know [them] and then denies seeing them at all. When her visitors are discovered to have entered the U.S. illegally and their hospitality revealed to be a violation of policy, she dismisses all complaints as if the policy had been already revised.

Unfortunately, she was right. America's policies towards Africa have changed. They have changed from benign neglect to a kind of malignant aggression. In Mozambique, starvation is added to the American arsenal. On the high seas, the American oil companies, Mobil, Exxon, and Texaco have joined European interests in breaking the OPEC embargo to South Africa. On Capitol Hill there is the intensity of Soviet competition in Africa, not humanitarian concerns, which conditions American aid to the continent. Mineral rights are exchanged for human rights.

In South Africa itself there is no mistaking the increased militancy, each group adding momentum to the irresistible motion of liberation. But our concerns are here. Our cause is to take whatever action we can

At the first national Conference on Public Investment and South Africa in 1981, some 200 state and municipal legislators from across the United States attended workshops on drafting socially responsible legislation, among other topics. Held in New York City on June 12–13, the conference also drew trade unionists, investment experts, church leaders, academics, and grassroots organizers. The conference sponsors included ACOA, AFSC, the Connecticut Anti-Apartheid Committee, Clergy and Laity Concerned, the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, TransAfrica, the United Methodist Office for the U.N., and the Washington Office on Africa.

For the opening session at the United Nations, Ambassador B. Akporode Clark of Nigeria, then chair of the U.N. Special Committee Against Apartheid, welcomed the participants. The keynote address, excerpted here, was given by SNCC veteran and Georgia state senator Julian Bond.

to end American complicity with this international problem [apartheid]. Our contribution is to pull together those forces—legislators, investment experts, trade unionists, student activists, that growing constituency for freedom in South Africa—to facilitate the expansion of public prohibitions against the expenditure of public funds for inhuman purposes. In short, we intend to end American investment in evil. The evil, of course, is the system of apartheid in which four and a half million whites absolutely dominate 20 million nonwhites, denying them every vestige of humanity. As the second-largest foreign investor, the U.S. plays a key role in keeping apartheid afloat. The net effect of American investments, according to former senator Dick Clark of Iowa, has been to strengthen the economic and military self-sufficiency of South Africa's apartheid regime.

Our cause, then, is to end American complicity with this evil. But we must know the course of the rapidly shifting climate around us. The loudest voice on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee today belongs to Senator Jesse Helms, Republican of North Carolina and apologist for South Africa's fascists. The new president of the U.S. had already announced even before his nomination and election his intentions to subsidize subversion in Angola; he has sent repeated assurances to South Africa's white population that the U.S. will tolerate their genocide. He has further delayed the liberation of Namibia, rewarding South Africa's intransigence. He has made the American colossus he professes to adore bow down before a small tribe of racist tyrants.

We are here, then, to force the disengagement of our commonly held wealth from this evil. I think we all realize that this will be a difficult and time-consuming process, for we are in effect opposing the whole of American history. The current condition of American black people, political and economic, is more than well known. We gather here to ask the U.S. to honor the principle that no person's worth is superior to another, to do in foreign affairs what is yet to be done at home.

State legislator Julian Bond in 1981.
Photo courtesy of Richard Knight.

If it is difficult, our task is not impossible. Events in South Africa daily demonstrate that we are a part of a quickening struggle whose outcome has never been in serious doubt. We can make a great contribution to that struggle if all who truly believe in freedom will join us. Ours, then, is a subtle request; to ask our neighbors, the people with whom we share the country, to refuse to finance the domination of one set of human beings by another.

Surely that is a reasonable appeal. South Africa today constitutes a direct personal threat to us all. Forty years ago, Adolf Hitler demonstrated that genocide is yet possible even in democracy, even among people who look alike. It is evil supreme and we cannot allow it to continue; to be neutral on this issue is to join the other side.

"South Africa Is Next to Namibia" *The Lutheran Connection*

Solveig and Peter Kjeseth

Solveig: In 1971, Wartburg Seminary—which is where Peter taught for 36 years—in Dubuque, Iowa began to receive Namibian pastors who were coming to do graduate work. The first Namibian, Abisai Shejavali, and his family stayed for about seven years. It was the Shejavalis who taught us where Namibia was and how to say the word "Namibia." Little by little, they—especially Dr. Shejavali's wife Selma—taught us about what was happening in their country. And little by little we learned and little by little their struggle became our struggle. So it was very personal—it wasn't that we set out looking for a cause. One moved in with us.

Abisai Shejavali's father was a retired Lutheran pastor living near the border of Angola. South African soldiers came and brutally beat him and raped and blinded his wife. And at that time Abisai wrote a letter of protest to Prime Minister Vorster. Selma is a Ndonga royal and her uncle, who had cooperated with South Africa, was assassinated while they were at Wartburg. The uncle, King Filemon Elifas, had allowed open, public flogging of SWAPO supporters, so he was really hated. Selma says her uncle was not a bad man, but he was not strong and therefore he was used by South Africa.

Peter: During the years Abisai was with us he became more and more politicized. When we first knew him, he [had] what I would now call a rather naïve belief that things were going to turn out quite well.

Solveig: They had full confidence that the United States was going to come down on their side. But in the 1970s, as he saw the U.S. repeatedly vetoing economic sanctions against South Africa at the U.N., he could see how the U.S. clearly sided with South Africa.

There was a little Namibia Concerns Committee at Wartburg—probably seven, eight people—and we began to study the issues and then we would accept invitations to speak at any little groups. Mainly it was women's church groups that Selma and I would speak to. And then Wartburg for the next 30 years always had Namibian pastors there, so with each succeeding year there was greater impact. Emma Mujoro was a Namibian pastor and she and I traveled hundreds and hundreds of miles on the back roads of Wisconsin and Iowa, talking about the situation in Namibia.

By 1990, the mailing list had grown to 11,000 and represented virtually every state, including Hawai'i and Alaska.

Peter: Dubuque is right at the corner of Wisconsin, Illinois, and Iowa, and not too far away from Minneapolis and that's the Midwest where Scandinavian Lutheran background is very influential.

Solveig: The other thing was that every year Wartburg would graduate probably 50 young pastors who went all over the U.S., and every single one of them knew Namibians. Not all of them were involved politically, but

Dubuque, Iowa, might seem an unlikely hotbed of Southern African organizing, but National Namibia Concerns based at Wartburg Theological Seminary mobilized more than 10,000 American Lutherans to support Namibian independence and impose sanctions on South Africa. Among the founders were two couples, Abisai and Selma Shejavali and Peter and Solveig Kjeseth. The Shejavalis, originally from Namibia, returned to their country at the end of the 1970s. They played prominent roles not only in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia, but also in the Namibian Council of Churches and in the struggle for liberation.

Peter and Solveig Kjeseth are both of Norwegian Lutheran immigrant stock, with family histories of commitment to social justice. Peter's great grandfather had left Norway as a poor farmer after being involved in peasant organizing. The couple met at the University of Chicago and spent the early 1960s in Geneva, where Peter worked with the Lutheran World Federation. When they met the Shejavalis at Wartburg, they already had been involved in organizing against the Vietnam War and had helped found the Dubuque County Democratic Club, a progressive alternative to the local established Democratic Party. It was Namibia, however, that became their life work.

Solveig and Peter Kjeseth spoke with Christopher Saunders, a historian at the University of Cape Town, on April 2, 2005 at the bed-and-breakfast that the Kjeseths now run near Cape Town.

they were aware of the story. They knew the issues and they would respond, you know, so over a period of a few years, the word spread. And they would have a captive audience where they were going: congregations.

In 1977 apartheid was declared to be an issue of *status confessionis* by the Lutheran World Federation, which meant that we were called by our faith to oppose it. So apartheid and Namibia's occupation was seen as a religious issue, and appropriate to be addressed from the pulpit, in sermons or in publications.

One of the things we did politically in those days—and I was so proud of how it worked—was that we asked people to put the question of Namibia on their local political [Democratic] "resolutions list." We have this tradition in Iowa that the candidates, the political candidates for U.S. president, come first to Iowa because Iowa's party caucuses are the earliest in the country. And I just loved it when *Time* magazine's reporter—it must have been in 1984—wrote that "the candidates were asked about such esoteric questions as U.N. resolution 435." When I read that, I knew "that's our network!"

It was very much a really grassroots movement. Just about everybody in the network had a passion for Namibia because it had become real for them; it was real people that they had gotten to know. It was the Shejavalis and the !Noabebs and the Mujoros and the Nambalas and the Uahengos and the Shivutes. It became much more than an abstract political issue.

One last story, which I have to tell to a South African. I was at a church conference in Wisconsin during the struggle, with probably 1,500 women. We went for lunch at the college cafeteria, and I noticed there were a couple of black African women students, and two older white women, and I sat down near them. And these women, the whites, were asking the African students, "Oh! Are you from Africa?" "Yes, we're from South Africa." The two women looked puzzled for a moment. Then one brightened and asked, "Oh, South Africa . . . is that next to Namibia?"

Solveig Kjeseth and Selma Shejavali. *Photo courtesy of Solveig Kjeseth.*

Race and Anti-Apartheid Work in Chicago

Rachel Rubin

Many whites, including myself, embraced anti-apartheid work, partly because we were outraged at the horror of South Africa but also because it gave us a way to fight racism here in the United States. I had always seen and disapproved of racism and from a very young age felt a need to fight against it. The anti-apartheid struggle gave me a solid way to do that.

In the mid-1970s, when I was in college, the campus I was on was so segregated and the institutional policies so paternalistic and racist that there were very few forums for blacks and whites to work together. The first full-fledged anti-apartheid group at my university, which I joined on its inception, was established by an African American who was a visiting artist on campus. However, as the organization developed, it became and remained an almost exclusively white organization. It worked in coalition with black groups and other more multiracial formations, but it never was able to make significant inroads into the African American community of the town or of the campus. Although this upset me and I was never totally sure why it was, it did not surprise me. Given the white power structure on campus and in society at large and some bitter experiences on both sides, there seemed to be little ground for working together. African American students feared white paternalism and insensitivity, while white students feared black anger, saying the wrong thing and then being rebuked. Unfortunately, I think most groups doing anti-apartheid work during that time were as segregated and separated as the communities their members came from.

Nonetheless, when I graduated and moved back to Chicago in the 1980s, I continued my determination to do anti-apartheid work. By this time there were more anti-apartheid organizations functioning in the country, and I joined, soon after its founding, the Coalition for Illinois Divestment in South Africa (CIDSA). It later became the Chicago Committee in Solidarity with Southern Africa (CCISSA). I served on the board and steering committees of this organization for nearly 12 years.

My experience with CCISSA was very different than my previous experience on the campus of the University of Illinois. CIDSA/CCISSA was conceived of and founded by a small group of African Americans and whites, and we maintained an equal number of African Americans and whites on our board. The group always had as many blacks as whites in its active leadership, and we were always careful to have black members or both white and black members together go to give talks or go to meetings as representatives of the group. CIDSA/CCISSA was a biracial collective. Our public as well as private faces were racially mixed.

In its first phase CIDSA successfully waged statewide divestment campaigns, working with primarily labor and church groups toward that end. As

Rachel Rubin has been an anti-apartheid and Southern Africa solidarity activist for two decades. She lived and worked in Manica province in Mozambique from 1990 to 1992. She is currently an attending physician at Cook County Hospital in Chicago and a specialist in occupational and environmental medicine.

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we reorganized ourselves into CCISSA we worked hard to place ourselves within both the white and African American communities, speaking at churches, synagogues, community centers, schools, etc. We also developed strong ties with resident South Africans. Our annual Soweto Day Walkathon was always a cooperative venture with black churches, community organizations, local politicians, and residents of the neighborhood we were to march through. Many of these links were forged by CCISSA members who had connections to those neighborhoods or communities. Slowly over the years this outreach garnered the organization a certain level of respect within segments of the black as well as certain white communities.

Problematically, though, to certain segments of the African American community in Chicago, we continued to be seen as a white group, albeit as the years went by, a well-meaning white group. This was because we were integrated and had an organization where blacks were willing to work with whites on an issue that some thought should remain in the African American community. In fact, it was felt by some, local black cultural nationalists in particular, that if anti-apartheid work was (merely) supporting black South Africans in their liberation struggle against the white apartheid regime then the solidarity movement was best seated within exclusively black organizations. It was believed that if whites wanted to help, then let them start their own organizations in their own communities. In other words, our very multiracial existence was seen as a problem.

This labeling as a white group was more fundamentally a consequence of the white power structure of this country. No matter what, when you have a group that is made up of whites and blacks that may on an internal basis function in a very equal way, the perception often is going to be that it is impossible to have equality on any level in a society where white racism has been so prevalent. This of course is not unique to the anti-apartheid movement. There were many feminist organizations in the 1970s who felt that no men should be allowed in women's organizations, given their natural inclination to dominate. Similarly, whites and blacks often have different understandings of integration. Recent housing surveys have shown that whites often think 10 percent black/90 percent white is the optimal formula of neighborhood integration, while blacks interviewed in these studies see 50 percent black/50 percent white as the only meaningful way to integrate. Our organization had always been about fifty-fifty. Nonetheless, some continued to think that we whites were the ones dominating the leadership and that we were trespassers on black turf. In other words, if a political organization had both black and white leadership and membership, then the blacks must be tokens or sellouts, or at the very least would be wasting their time trying to work with whites.

The development of CCISSA with all of its issues did, in fact, advance the struggle against racism in the United States in two small ways. First, the dismissals of the organization as white forced many of us to deal with black perceptions of the limitations of whites doing antiracist work. It made us have to check ourselves and make sure that we did not fit that category. This probably would not have happened if we had not maintained our mul-

tiracial membership. I think our determination to deal with the criticism made us better progressive organizers with African Americans as a whole.

Second, I think racial barriers were broken down in CCISSA and broken down through CCISSA. We did succeed in a small way as an anti-racist collective and not only as an anti-apartheid organization. We created an environment, a network of friends that was multiracial and multicultural—hopefully a network that will remain intact for the rest of our lives. What bound us together was our sense of being political comrades. We developed an analysis together. We learned, studied, and strategized together. We made connections between racism and colonialism here and in Southern Africa and reflected on these connections in the activities we planned. We also illustrated over time to a great number of members in the black community that there were whites willing to struggle against international racism and blacks willing to work with us. However, we still need to overcome the continued racial segregation within progressive, left political work and we need to continue to confront the difficulties of overcoming internalized white racism if we are really going to tackle racism in this country.

From Local to National ⇜ *Bay Area Connections*

Leo Robinson

In the San Francisco Bay Area, as elsewhere in the country, the anti-apartheid campaign of the 1980s and 1990s was closely tied to the local contours of progressive politics (see Walter Turner's chapter on the 1990s). At the same time, its impact was projected into the national arena through multiple organizational links and networks. As early as 1979, Berkeley, California, became the first U.S. city to opt for divestment through a public ballot initiative spearheaded by Mayor Gus Newport. In the 1980s Newport challenged the membership of the U.S. Conference of Mayors to follow Berkeley's example.

Another influential Bay Area figure with national connections was labor activist Leo Robinson, of Local 10 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union. Robinson recalled the growth of the local's activism in an interview with Walter Turner in 2005.

Around 1974 or 1975 I happened to meet the girlfriend of my working partner. He was going to San Francisco State, and he brought her by the house one day. And right away I could tell she had an African accent. And she said that she was from South Africa and I said oh. And I said when you get back home, you're going to be in pretty good shape, huh? And she said I can't go back. And I said what do you mean, you can't go back? She said if I go back after I've finished my schooling, I'll be arrested the minute I step off the plane. And that was my first introduction to apartheid.

I had not yet made a genuine connection. I started to know about it because when you picked up a copy of *Jet* from time to time you would see something in there about what was going on in Africa. And it's in the back of your head, right? And then in 1976 when the student uprising occurred in Soweto, the massacre of innocent, unarmed people—it's a gut reaction that you act from then. But as you get to be knowledgeable about what it is that you're looking at, then it's a whole different focus. Because the gut reaction does not last long. [A massacre is] in the news one day and then it slowly dies out and it's forgotten about by people.

Until you actually start delving into things, you never know what's occurred prior to when you came along. William Bill Chester, who was a member of Local 10, who then moved to the International as a regional director for Northern California and beyond, who happened to be African American, had raised the question of apartheid back in the late fifties or early sixties.

Bill had raised the question, but it didn't go anywhere. In 1976 it was a different matter. It was a different matter entirely, because I guess you could say that by 1976 the African American population of this country had sort of arrived. We had started to be elected to various offices around the country and had gotten jobs, such as we could be a post person and get a job at the fire department if you really pressed—those kinds of things.

But the question of apartheid—once I looked into it, I found out that, number one, the government of the United States had been complicit. And so that upset me. I said as a result of that one of the aims of the anti-apartheid movement should be to expose the complicity of the United States government and to neutralize it insofar as the liberation movements are concerned.

In July of '76 the first of the anti-apartheid resolutions was introduced in Local 10 by myself and others. A little short resolution that simply said that due to the situation in South Africa, we were calling for a boycott of all goods to and from South Africa and Zimbabwe. Plus, the original resolution, when it left Local 10, it went to the International executive board. The International executive board changed the words from "demand" a boycott

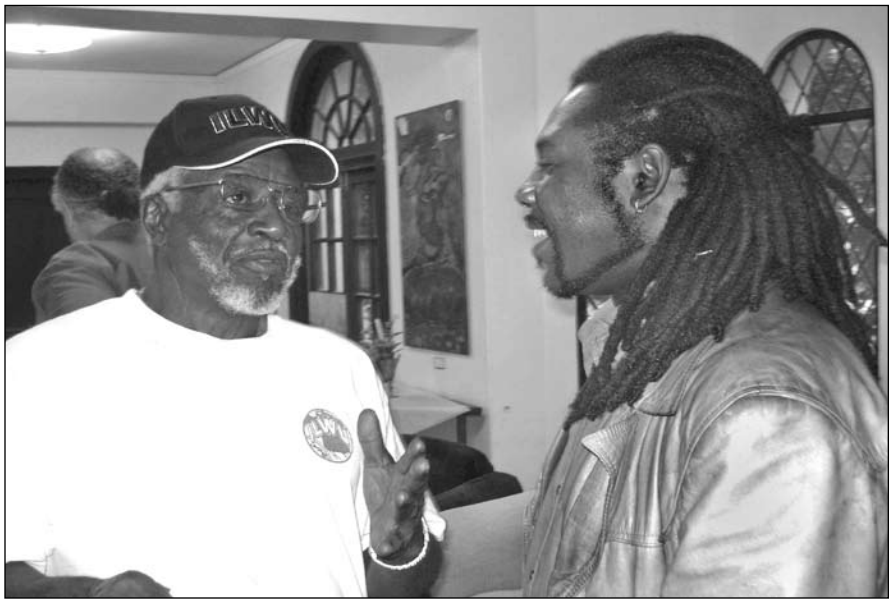
of South African cargo to "urge," okay? Which means that we knew then that we had our work cut out for us in terms of educating the membership not only of Local 10 but of the entire international union.

We had become part of the labor-based anti-apartheid movement. At the time, we were the first anti-apartheid labor committee in the country. We raised the question of apartheid to the level of visibility within the trade union movement, because the AFL-CIO played its usual role when it came to foreign workers, particularly black workers in Africa. They gave it a one-line, half a paragraph blurb in their annual report.

And then committees started popping up all across the country. Starting here in the Bay Area, we started sending out resolutions to the state federation, to the national convention of CBTU [Coalition of Black Trade Unionists], even to the executive council of the AFL-CIO. This is over a period of years that this occurred. Then in 1977 or '78, we held the first anti-apartheid labor conference in the United States at Local 34 in San Francisco.

In April of 1977 we had a two-day shutdown. Myself and the committee had made arrangements with the chief dispatcher that the community people were going to come down to Pier 27 to protest that ship, the South African cargo. So we made sure that Local 10 members who were sympathetic took those jobs, knowing that they were not going to work. And so for two days we tied them up. We tied that ship up.

That was the first of many demonstrations at the docks. The one that got the most attention was in November 1984. By then we were better organized and the whole question of South Africa had become an issue nationally. They were calling for the release of Nelson Mandela. They were calling for entertainers, black entertainers, to boycott South Africa. Because by then Sun City was up and running in South Africa and they were inviting black entertainers from the U.S., offering them huge sums of money to come to Sun City to entertain. And we were saying to them, don't go. If you do go, demand to speak to Nelson Mandela. Otherwise, don't go.



U.S. trade unionist Leo Robinson and South African student Steve Nakana greet each other at an African Diaspora Dialogue meeting in Berkeley, California, 2006. Nakana told the gathering that when he was a student at the ANC school in exile in Tanzania, he had received packages from people in America, with clothing, books, and other items. Robinson told of packages that he and other union officials had put together to send, adding with a laugh that they had often slipped chewing gum, candy, or dollar bills into the pockets of clothes just before sealing them. Nakana, smiling broadly, stood up and said he was one of those who opened such packages. "It felt like Christmas," he added. *Photo courtesy of Nunu Kidane.*

Ronald Dellums

Ronald W. Dellums of California served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1971 through 1999, representing the district that includes Berkeley and Oakland. He grew up in Oakland, the son of a longshoreman who was a member of the same union as Leo Robinson. His uncle was a protégé of national labor and civil rights leader A. Philip Randolph. Working as a social worker after a short stint in the Marine Corps, Dellums was urged by community activists to go into politics, and he gave up plans to pursue a PhD.

Elected to the Berkeley City Council in 1967 and then to the House in 1970, Dellums regarded himself as "a voice for the movements" in Congress (Dellums 2000, 2). He was one of a group of urban progressive legislators who, in his words, worked inside the system and learned its rules while relying on the "street heat" of activists to command the attention of those in power (5).

In his memoir, published in 2000, Dellums dedicated a chapter to the years of campaigning on apartheid. "The liberation of South Africa from the yoke of apartheid is one of the most important political and human rights events of my lifetime," he wrote, "and I consider having played some role in it to be my greatest legislative and personal achievement" (6).

The following excerpt is reprinted by permission from *Lying Down with the Lions: A Public Life from the Streets of Oakland to the Halls of Power* (Boston: Beacon, 2000), 121–40.

A group of workers from a Polaroid plant had come down from New England [in 1971] with the express purpose of meeting with members of Congress to discuss their concerns regarding their company's commercial engagement with South Africa. The [Congressional Black Caucus] chairman, Charles C. Diggs, Jr. (D-Michigan), asked me to meet with the Polaroid workers and report back on their concerns.

[John Conyers (D-Michigan) joined me, and] we agreed to receive their petition and to take up their cause within the Congress; we also promised to use our good offices to bring their case for sanctions against South Africa inside the system in any other way we could. . . . By February of 1972 we had introduced a disinvestment resolution for consideration by the House. . . . In fact, it would be more than a decade before the Congress was prepared to come to grips with ending U.S. complicity in the perpetuation of the apartheid regime. . . . But our resolution provided a vehicle for those on the outside to use to begin to build pressure on the Congress for legislative action.

In 1985 we were prepared to press for a vote on our bill—thirteen years in the making, and by now a rigorous and demanding bill. . . . Throughout the early 1980s, my office was in regular communication with the liberation forces in Southern Africa and with activists throughout the United States. Damu Smith of the Washington Office on Africa became one of our closest political supporters, in on the ground floor and working tirelessly on behalf of our effort to achieve a complete economic embargo of South Africa. . . .

At the same time, Representative Bill Gray sponsored an alternative approach, the focus of which was to prohibit new investment. The anti-apartheid movement was split on appropriate strategic next steps in the legislative arena. Some believed that they should strike to the center, support a more moderate bill and seek the "achievable" outcome; others wanted to press for maximum sanctions.

In addition to introducing a bill that reflected my own preference for the latter course, I had also co-sponsored the Gray bill, along with my CBC colleagues, in an effort to ensure that some action by the United States would be taken.

In 1985 neither bill became law, as President Reagan threatened a veto while issuing an executive order imposing very limited sanctions. The next year the Gray bill moved through the House of Representatives, as it had in 1985. At the end of the debate, the House voted on an amendment . . . substituting the stronger version.

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

The Republicans made a tactical error in failing to call for a recorded vote that would probably have defeated the amendment. Representative Mark Siljander (R-Michigan) [said] that they calculated that the vote would fail in the Senate, and would be seen as too radical.

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

The bill thus passed the House, but the Senate passed a weaker version, and the House Democratic Party leadership accepted a compromise to put forward the weaker Senate version to President Reagan for signature.

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

Our three-pronged strategy had worked: first, consult with grassroots activists and provide them with the grounds from which to press in congressional districts for the most principled position possible—in this case, complete disinvestment and embargo; second, work with willing national organizations to generate a lobbying presence on behalf of bold government action—maximum sanctions, in the case of apartheid—always creating pressure to move the middle to the left; third, engage congressional colleagues and educate them about the issues and the pathways for change.

Congressman Ron Dellums of California protests in front of the South African embassy, December 1984. *Photo © Rick Reinhard.*