



# 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 3

# The 1960s: Making Connections

*Mimi Edmunds*

I had to go to Africa to understand America.

Sitting in Sproul Hall Plaza on the University of California's Berkeley campus, arm in arm with someone I don't know, I'm just a little nervous. It's October 1, 1964, and I'm in my first year at Berkeley, having just transferred from a small women's college on the East Coast. Suddenly we hear a hundred or so motorcycles roaring down Bancroft Avenue.

I had never been in a demonstration. I hadn't gone on the Freedom Rides in the South, and in fact I hadn't yet voted. I didn't really understand why the United States was in Vietnam. But I had learned something about segregation and discrimination growing up in rural Maryland.

Other Berkeley students had just returned from working with SNCC and CORE during the Freedom Summer of 1964. They included Jack Weinberg and Mario Savio, graduate students who had been registering black voters in Mississippi. They were fired up to right the injustices they had seen, and they began recruiting students for a variety of causes on and off campus. Their activities included picketing the *Oakland Tribune* for discrimination. University president Clark Kerr and the University of California Board of Regents capitulated to pressure from

the newspaper's owner and publisher, William Knowland, and outlawed all political activity on campus. Savio and Weinberg wasted no time in challenging the new prohibition.

Jack Weinberg sat down at his now-unauthorized recruitment table. He was arrested and put in a police car. Mario Savio climbed up on top of the police car and called for us all to sit down in the name of the right to practice free speech. As we blocked the police car from moving, we could see the phalanx of shiny police motorcycles at the university gates, waiting and watching. We continued to sit as night came on.

We didn't know it then, but we were participants in the birth of the free speech movement, one of the many expressions of *the movement* that would define a decade and, to an extent, a generation. The movement of the 1960s embraced not only civil



Mimi Edmunds with Kenyan members of parliament Charles Murgor and Joseph Chemjor, about 1967. The MPs were among the elders who termed Mimi and her sister Dorsett "daughters of the Rift." Photo by Dorsett Edmunds.

rights activism but also anti-Vietnam War protest, along with efforts to counter cultural complacency with “free love, drugs, and rock ’n’ roll.” Some of us were radically secular; others had strong religious connections.

The sit-ins that began in the South in 1960 helped make the civil rights movement a moral center of political action in the United States for much of the decade. In the South, in particular, the term “movement” had a spiritual dimension. The church was a meeting place and a safe haven; prayer, preaching, and song lent courage and inspiration. “Movement” also meant moving ahead and together, the opposite of retreat, fragmentation, and passive acceptance of the status quo. “One isolated battle had given way to many scattered ones,” writes the historian Taylor Branch. “Now in the Mississippi jails [the Freedom Riders] were moving from similar experiences to a common experience. Students began to think of the movement as a vocation in itself” (1988, 485).

I am going to explore the significance of the 1960s by telling the stories of four people—Mary Jane Patterson, Bernard (Ben) Makhosezwe Magubane, Prexy Nesbitt, Mia Adjali—and a bit of my own story. As a group we are black and white, women and men, born in the United States and

in Africa. We represent more than one generation of activists, both through our own experience and through the work and influence of our families. We are not so much typical as illustrative of the wide diversity of people who were fortunate enough to be engaged during this tumultuous decade. What we have in common, and what sets us apart from most activists involved in the movement, is our connection to the new Africa that was emerging in the 1960s. The bond that was created then continues today.

We also shared, by the end of the decade, understandings about the world we lived in: that the United States was an imperialist power, and that, for U.S. policy makers, Cold War imperatives trumped verbal commitments to freedom in Africa.

Africa was a beacon of hope in the decade: 28 countries gained political independence, 17 in 1960 alone. In the United States, historic civil rights legislation was passed, and entrenched systems of racial discrimination were actively challenged as never before. There was a sense of freedom rising. At the same time, Washington’s preoccupation with the Cold War led to policies that contributed to conflict and instability in Africa—in the Congo, in the Portuguese colonies, and in the white settler states of Rhodesia, South Africa, and South West Africa.

By decade’s end it was clear that the U.S. government was trying to limit the scope of independence in Africa as well as the pace and extent of change in the United States itself. Those of us active in the decade wrestled with these realities. We made decisions to be engaged in struggles for justice, many of us leaving home to do so.

## From California to Kenya

A year after the demonstration in Sproul Hall Plaza, the alienation I felt about the war in Vietnam and the injustices in my society made



Mimi and Dorsett Edmunds served as Peace Corps volunteers in Kenya’s Great Rift Valley in the mid-1960s. Here Dorsett reads to children. *Photo courtesy of Mimi Edmunds.*

me want to live and work in a non-Western culture. I was one of many young idealists who went away to better understand my home country and to do something that I thought might contribute to a better world.

I received an invitation from the Peace Corps to teach secondary school in Kenya. What I didn't know was that my twin sister Dorsett had applied the very same day, and the Peace Corps, thinking we were the same person, sent her an invitation to Kenya as well. In the end, we both went. I was posted to a young secondary school, Chepterit, on the western slope of the Great Rift Valley near the Ugandan border, 200 miles from Nairobi. Dorsett went to a Harambee school 60 miles north, also high up on the western escarpment of the Rift.

For two years I taught high school girls at Chepterit and boys in the neighboring boys' school six miles south on a dirt road, preparing them for higher studies or the workforce. None of them wanted to go back to the farm. It was a poor province, but the students were driven to get an education, and while many of them may have lacked a pair of shoes, their writing and reading skills were better than my kid brother's back in the States. It was difficult to keep books in our small library. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* regularly went missing.

I was struck by how little of their own country's history these students knew, and by how well they could recite British monarchical and constitutional history. Even three or four years after independence, the students were not learning Kenyan history. I decided to create a branch of the East African History Society in my local district.

During school breaks I worked in health programs, inoculating hundreds of people against infectious diseases, especially in the Maasai Mara region. Because Dorsett and I were posted to neighboring districts, we probably got to know twice as many people in the province as we might have otherwise. Many of my students were cousins of her students. The local elders decided that since our parents had allowed their twin daughters both to come, they needed to adopt us as "daughters of the Rift," and so they did. And so we were, and are.

## Mary Jane Patterson: Missionary on Two Continents

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*Our involvement in the civil rights movement is what sent us into our involvement about apartheid. I am convinced of that.*

—Mary Jane Patterson

Not everyone active in the 1960s was new to these issues. Mary Jane Patterson was in Kenya at the same time as I was, but she came with decades of experience as a leader in her church and in the civil rights movement. "What sent me to Africa," she says, "was the Presbyterian Church. . . . The church in Kenya wanted a missionary who had worked in the American civil rights struggle. They did not care what the race of the missionary was, whether white or black."

Mary Jane Patterson was born in Marietta, Ohio in 1924. Her mother was a librarian and her father worked in the post office. From her parents, she recalls, she received a sense of history and a "can do" attitude. Ohio lacked the patterns of segregation that existed in the Deep South, but Patterson does remember the Ku Klux Klan coming to town in 1936 or 1937, when she was 12 or 13. Only a few blacks lived in Marietta, but they all went downtown, including Mary Jane and her father, and successfully broke up the Klan gathering.

Patterson entered college in 1940, but once the war began she left her studies to take up work in the Curtis Wright airplane factory in Columbus. "I was Rosie the Riveter until the end of the war," she says. Only in 1954, 14 years after she started, did she complete a BA in philosophy and a BS in accounting at Ohio State University. She returned to school later to earn a degree in social work, having discovered that this field, not accounting, was her real interest.

Patterson became an activist in the Presbyterian Church and took a leading role in the church's growing involvement in the civil rights movement. Through the NAACP she learned about apartheid. But Patterson's first priority was not Africa; it was her church and civil rights. The Bethany Presbyterian Church in Columbus was fighting discrimination in housing. "One suburb would not sell houses to Negroes or Jews, and our church along with Christian, Methodist, and Unitarian churches got

involved in desegregation in housing—that was around 1948. The civil rights movement really began in the church in the late forties.”

In 1960, at just 36, Mary Jane Patterson became an elder in Bethany Presbyterian Church. “They asked me to be an elder, because they wanted me to say the same thing on the floor of the presbytery that I’d say in the street about civil rights.” It didn’t take long for Patterson to earn a reputation at the national level. In 1963, Margaret Shannon of the church’s Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations contacted her because they needed a social worker for Nairobi. But Mary Jane Patterson had another priority.

I said no, even though I was interested in Africa. I cannot, I am going to help organize the March on Washington in Ohio. What we did was interfaith—Protestant, Catholic, Jewish. . . . I can’t tell you how many busloads of people we got to go to Washington from Ohio, and when we came back, we were heroes!

The church asked her to go to Kenya again in 1964. Again she turned down the request because of her commitment to the civil rights struggle at home. Patterson spent six weeks in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, registering voters. “Ohio is a state where African Americans, or Negroes, or colored, whichever they were, had been voting since the 1850s, since before the Civil War. My grandmother and my great-grandmother voted. That was normal for Ohio.” So there was no hesitation in her mind; she had to go to Mississippi in the summer of 1964.

Finally, in 1965, Margaret Shannon pressed her one more time to accept the invitation to work in Kenya. And she did, she says with a laugh, “after a two-martini lunch.” Patterson arrived in Nairobi in September 1966.

Patterson served as a social worker with the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, doing work similar to her earlier YWCA activities in Columbus. With her Kenyan co-worker Mary Kirobi, she set up a hostel where girls could begin their education, and then helped them go on to high school or vocational school or find a job. The pair worked at the Eastleigh Community Center in Nairobi and Patterson lived in the city’s Delamere flats.



Mary Jane Patterson  
Photo by Mimi Edmunds.

Living and working in Africa had special meaning for Patterson and laid the foundation for her future work lobbying for a better U.S. foreign policy toward Africa. Still, she always knew she would be an outsider.

I wasn’t one of those crazy African Americans who went over and kissed the soil and said, “God, I’m home.” You can’t be home if you’ve been in the diaspora for 14 generations! You’re not home. Home is where you are for 14 generations!

Even so, there was a deep connection. Patterson could relate to the idea of African roots. Slaves came from East Africa as well as West Africa. A museum in the Tanzanian port of Bagamoyo (often translated as “lay down your heart”) highlights the town’s role in the slave trade. Patterson remembers the Swahili phrase “moyo ya Afrika”—heart of Africa.

Kenyans would say, “You look like us,” and I did, I do. Well, I was young and pretty. [Laughs.] When you go out to an African village, they have you sit—all guests—with the elders, but the women would always say “You’re our daughter!”

Reflecting on those years, 1966–68, she says, “I loved it. They only had had their independence for three years. And oh, the hope. *Harambee!* Swahili for ‘let’s all pull together.’ The joy of it all. . . . It was such a great time.”

In 1968, Patterson’s sojourn in East Africa was interrupted by the crisis in the United States that followed the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy. When Rev. King was killed, President Jomo Kenyatta held a memorial ceremony at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Nairobi in which Patterson participated. “You couldn’t get in the church, it was so crowded,” she recalls. Awareness of Martin Luther King reached deep into the Kenyan countryside. On a trip upcountry Patterson was stopped by villagers who told her of the violence in Chicago following King’s assassination. They said to her, “We heard on the radio. The mayor of Chicago said ‘shoot to kill.’”

Patterson was called home, along with 100 other Presbyterian missionaries. She arrived to find the country “going crazy” in the summer of 1968. She put her things in storage, certain she would be returning to Africa in six months. The church sent her first to Chicago and then to California. Ronald Reagan had been governor since 1966, and according to Patterson, he had “wrecked education, wrecked mental health, and was on the way to wrecking the environment.” She came to understand that she would not be returning to Kenya, at least not right away. She resigned from her mission board assignment, saying, “California needs missionaries worse than Kenya does.”

One of the challenges for Patterson in the late 1960s was the rise of the black nationalist movement, the Black Panthers, with their ideology of violent struggle.

It made sense in terms of an old Frederick Douglass saying that nothing happens without struggle. It can be peaceful; it can be violent. Power conceded nothing . . . I had known that saying since I was a child. My Dad used to say it. Although I couldn’t go along with [the stress on violence], because it had not been a part of my background, it did make sense.

In 1971 Mary Jane Patterson became associate director of the Washington Office of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA. She quickly assumed

principal responsibility for international issues, including Africa, and continued to place Africa high on the agenda when she became director of the office in 1975, a post she held until her retirement in 1989.

Working with contacts in the church, in Congress, and in progressive political circles, Patterson was a stalwart supporter of the campaigns to cut off U.S. support for apartheid and minority rule in Southern Africa. She represented the United Presbyterians on the board of the Washington Office on Africa, which had been founded in 1972 by the American Committee on Africa with church and trade union involvement. WOA’s mission was to support African liberation by lobbying in Washington, and Patterson chaired its board of directors during the critical years of 1978–84. Patterson was a consistent counselor and mentor for three of WOA’s directors: Ted Lockwood, Jean Sindab, and Damu Smith.

To this day, Mary Jane Patterson, now in her eighties and living in a retirement community, takes every invitation to speak on Africa and civil rights. She never fails to make the connection between the struggle for basic human rights in the United States and in Africa. Today, she says, the most devastating threat the continent faces is HIV/AIDS.

## **From Kenya to New York**

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Returning to New York after the Peace Corps, I found my way to the basement of Washington Square Church, where the Committee of Returned Volunteers had formed as an anti-imperialist branch of the antiwar movement. It was 1969. We broke into geographic regions and in time formed the Committee for a Free Mozambique. Sharfudine Khan, representative at the United Nations for the Mozambique Liberation Front, met with us regularly as we organized to build support for Frelimo. With the Southern Africa Committee, we met representatives from the Southern African liberation movements—MPLA from Angola, PAIGC from Guinea-Bissau, SWAPO from Namibia, and the ANC from South Africa. Our goals were to build solidarity and support for the liberation movements and raise consciousness about colonialism and apartheid and about U.S. political and economic support for both.

For the next 10 years I continued my involvement with Africa in a number of ways. I returned to



Sharfudine Khan, Frelimo's representative at the United Nations, built support for the struggle against Portuguese colonialism. *UN Photo.*

the continent twice, meeting with leaders and other members of Frelimo. In the United States I worked on *Southern Africa* magazine and *Africa Report*. But I wanted to know more, to understand more, to do more. I decided to return to graduate school in anthropology at the University of Connecticut. Bernard (Ben) Magubane became my professor and my political mentor. I was one of innumerable students who benefited from the fact that contacts with Africa in the 1960s were not one-way: Americans were going to Africa, but Africans were also coming to the United States.

## **Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane: Educator in Exile**

*History has a way of throwing long shadows. The experiences of Afro-Americans and of the black people of South Africa share a great deal in common.*

—Ben Magubane, *The Ties that Bind*

Ben Magubane barely made it out of South Africa in December 1961. The year before, South African police had fired on a group of peaceful protesters, killing 69 and wounding hundreds in what came to be known as the Sharpeville massacre. The March 21 police attack and the government crackdown that followed changed the struggle for freedom and majority rule in South Africa, making clear that non-violent protest alone would be futile. Both the ANC and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) were banned, their leadership forced underground or into exile. The preparation for armed struggle accelerated.

A secondary school teacher in Durban since 1951, Magubane had also been an ANC activist and had attended Defiance Campaign rallies. When the government introduced Bantu education in 1953, enforcing full racial segregation in schools, he joined with ANC members Johnny Makatini, Fred Dube, and Mazizi Kunene to discuss what to do. He had to decide if he would work for this new system. Concluding that he could not, he went to night school, taking all his subjects at once to speed up the process while still teaching a full load during the day. Because of this effort he was able to enroll in the non-European section of the University of Natal, and he completed a master's degree in sociology in the late 1950s.

Married with three children, Magubane felt it was too dangerous for him to stay in South Africa in the repressive climate after Sharpeville. He had received a scholarship from the Institute of International Education in the United States. Magubane was able to secure the necessary papers and passport with the help of two leaders of South Africa's Liberal Party: anthropologist Leo Kuper, for whom he had worked as a research assistant before Kuper moved from Durban to Los Angeles, and the writer Alan Paton.

In December he told his mother his plans and left for Johannesburg. The next day the Special Branch of the South African police came looking for his house. Warned by children in the neighborhood, his mother got there first; she gathered all his political pamphlets and literature and made a huge bonfire.

When Magubane arrived at the Johannesburg airport on December 21, 1961, the Special Branch was waiting for him. They delayed the plane for three hours, trying to decide whether he should be detained. Finally they allowed him to leave, but his passport,



good for only a year, was never renewed. He was exiled from his country and was not able to return until the end of the apartheid regime, 30 years later.

Emotionally, it was extremely hard for Magubane to leave South Africa. It was, he recalls, “one of the most exciting periods in South Africa’s history as the bomb [of resistance] had exploded.” Just before leaving, he had heard Mandela speak from the underground. Still, because of his family, he felt he had no choice. After he arrived in the United States, a visit to Harlem reminded him of home. “I saw how black folks lived, and the housing was just as bad” as in South Africa.

Magubane headed to the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), where he earned a second master’s in sociology and advanced to candidacy for the PhD within three years. At about the same time, Martin Legassick, a white South African associated with the ANC who had studied history at Oxford, also arrived at UCLA.

In 1964, Legassick and Magubane had similar reactions to the news that ANC leaders Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu had been sentenced to life in prison. “It was a terrible moment, especially for those South Africans so far away and overseas,” says Magubane. The devastating event solidified their friendship, and they organized a demonstration at an office of the South African tourist bureau that was located on an affluent stretch of Beverly Drive. The demonstration made the Los Angeles papers the next day, including a photograph of Magubane carrying a placard denouncing South Africa.

It was the beginning of his political activism in the United States. With Legassick, Magubane founded a grassroots anti-apartheid group in Los Angeles, perhaps the first such local group in the United States. Among their activities was the collection of clothing for the ANC in Tanzania, which they shipped through ACOA.

Long before coming to the United States, Magubane had been interested in African Americans. During World War II he had seen black and white American sailors walking around Durban, a regular port of call. Through his reading—*Ebony* magazine was readily available in South Africa—he became aware of racism, segregation, and the murder of Emmett Till. Young Ben and his friends would go to

see American movies, especially if there were black actors in them, even if blacks played the “buffoon” as they usually did, he says. Magubane also became familiar with American culture through his fondness for American jazz. He claims to have one of the best collections of records, including Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Nat King Cole, and many others.

Once in the United States, Magubane took advantage of opportunities to deepen his understanding. He met Ethel Nance, W. E. B. Du Bois’s West Coast secretary, who gave him an autographed copy of the writer’s thesis on the Atlantic slave trade, which he cherishes. At the time, he was not familiar with Du Bois’s work, but once introduced to it he



**PROTEST** — While Beverly Hills went about Christmas shopping, pickets appeared yesterday at Wilshire and Beverly Drive to object to conditions in South Africa. Tourist office was confronted with offenses, tourists were urged to go elsewhere and abstain from buying South Africa goods. Staff Photo

Ben Magubane, then a student at UCLA, leads a protest march in Los Angeles after Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu were sentenced to life in prison in 1964. Photo courtesy of Ben Magubane.

read Du Bois “ferociously” and still does to this day. He met Bill Sutherland and drove to the Bay Area to hear the speeches of Mario Savio. He followed developments in the civil rights movement and went to speeches by Martin Luther King Jr. In 1963 he was introduced to Malcolm X after hearing him speak in a mosque in Watts. The experience had a powerful impact on him, Magubane says.

In 1966 Magubane completed the doctoral thesis that would later become a book, *The Ties That Bind* (1987), an exploration of the connections between African Americans and Africans. With PhD in hand, Magubane was ready to leave Los Angeles. He had kept in touch with fellow students Siteke Mwale and Arthur Wina, who had returned to Zambia after that country’s independence in 1964, Mwale to become foreign minister and Wina minister of finance. At their suggestion, Magubane accepted a position in the sociology department at the new University of Zambia, beginning in March 1967.

Magubane says he needed to return to the African continent. He missed home and wanted to be closer to South Africa, even if he could not go there. His family had joined him in Los Angeles in 1965. But now his four daughters were growing up, and he wanted them to be closer to South Africa as well.

It was a dynamic time in Southern Africa, the best of times, says Magubane. A large community of South Africans lived in Lusaka. Jack Simons, author of *Class and Colour in South Africa* (1969), was teaching sociology at the university. Every Sunday Magubane and Simons would meet at Simons’s house to discuss Southern Africa and other issues. These conversations had a great influence on his thinking. He says he “unlearned” much of what he had been taught in political science and sociology at UCLA and reconsidered what he understood about the political economy of race.

These new ideas would become the basis for *The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa* (1979). Magubane dedicated the book to his parents, who “sacrificed every penny to put me through school,” and to his grandparents, “whose fireside stories about the Zulu War of 1879 and the Bambatha Rebellion of 1906 made an indelible mark on my mind.” With this scholarly work he broke with authorities in his field in South Africa, taking up a Marxist perspective that would alienate a number of

liberal scholars, including some of his early mentors. In the 1960s and 1970s, Magubane recalled, many liberal scholars bashed the liberation movements, criticizing them as ineffective. He charged them with ignoring the complex, historically determined realities that the movements confronted and underestimating their long-term potential.

He also published papers, including “The Crisis in African Sociology” in *East African Journal* and a criticism of the theory of social pluralism in *African Review*. Out of this work came an invitation from James Farris to apply for a position at the University of Connecticut at Storrs. He joined the Department of Anthropology at the end of the decade and was finally granted a green card, allowing permanent residency in the United States. For the first time he could travel easily, speaking about apartheid and South Africa all over the country.

Magubane was one of many political exiles whose presence in the United States in this era helped educate Americans about the liberation struggles in Southern Africa. In January 1969 many of those exiles gathered in Raleigh, North Carolina for the newly established Kennedy-King Memorial Forum of the Chief Albert Luthuli Memorial Fund. The week-long conference was held at Shaw University, where the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee had started in 1960. It was organized by ANC supporter Rev. Gladstone Ntlati and gave a forum to exiles supporting both the ANC and the PAC. Speakers included James Forman of SNCC, who later that year would issue the Black Manifesto, demanding reparations from churches to address the economic injustice still facing the black community. Magubane was invited to the conference but was unable to attend because he was then in Zambia.

Today Magubane is one of the distinguished elders among South African social scientists. He directs the South Africa Democracy Education Trust, an ambitious research project documenting the history of South African liberation from 1960 to 1994. By 2007, the project had published two volumes on the 1960s and the 1970s, based on extensive new primary research, and was completing a third volume on international solidarity with South Africa.

In the fall of 1971, before I studied with Magubane at the University of Connecticut, I had enrolled

in a graduate program in anthropology at Northwestern University. While in Chicago, I worked with activists and returned volunteers to found the Chicago Committee for the Liberation of Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau. This committee held demonstrations, carried out grassroots education, and produced posters and other materials to support this work. A leading member of the group was Prexy Nesbitt, who brought to our committee a personal knowledge not only of the city of Chicago but of the movements in Africa we were organizing to support.

## **Prexy Nesbitt: Activist Networker Extraordinaire**

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*I was not only studying history; I felt like I was living it. . . .*

—Prexy Nesbitt, reflecting on the first International Conference on African History in Dar es Salaam, 1965

In 1965, Chicago-born Prexy Nesbitt, a junior at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, was enrolled at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania for a year abroad. Nesbitt's arrival in East Africa continued his extended family's long history of activism and interest in international affairs, especially in Africa.

Nesbitt's parents, Rozell William Nesbitt and Sadie Alberta Crain, had met at the University of Illinois in the late 1930s. His father, the third of five brothers, was finishing a BS in engineering, and his mother was getting a degree in education. Both parents became teachers. Before Prexy was four years old, the five Nesbitt brothers bought a large house on Chicago's west side, on Albany Street in the North Lawndale neighborhood, for all the Nesbitt brothers and their families.

Today Lawndale is almost entirely black, but back then its residents were mainly working-class and lower-middle-class Jewish families. The Nesbitts broke the color bar in the neighborhood elementary school. After Prexy completed the fifth grade, his parents transferred him to the private Francis Parker school after his father discovered that the teacher in the neighborhood school was absent from the classroom and Prexy was—as he remembers it—doing the teaching.

Sadie Nesbitt, his mother, worked for years as a counselor and social worker at the YWCA and Hull House, as well as in the public school system; she later served on the board of directors at Francis Parker. She helped start the Urban Gateways program to bring artists and writers into the public schools for lectures and performances. An educator with broad multicultural and international sensibility, she was a role model and inspiration for her son.

Nesbitt's extended family provided additional models of engagement with African and civil rights issues. His father's uncle, Rufus Barker, was a follower of the Jamaican-born Pan-Africanist leader Marcus Garvey. Prexy's uncle, George, was an attorney in Champaign County and either a member of or very close to the Communist Party. George Nesbitt was one of the African American soldiers who attempted to integrate the U.S. army at the officer level during World War II. For his efforts he was sent to an isolated post in Australia. When he returned from the war, he helped draft the legal case for the integration of public housing in Chicago. Another uncle, Lendor, was a physician who later cared for patients in the Black Panthers' free medical clinic on Chicago's West Side.

As a young boy in the 1940s and 1950s, Nesbitt was taken to meetings to hear W. E. B. Du Bois, Alphaeus Hunton, Paul Robeson, Cisco Houston, the Weavers, and Pete Seeger. In 1958 Rozell Nesbitt took his son to hear Kwame Nkrumah speak. But Prexy Nesbitt's first personal encounter with Africa actually came earlier, in the mid-1950s, when Eduardo Mondlane, who would later become the leader of Frelimo, visited the Nesbitt home on Albany Street. The Nesbitts belonged to the Warren Avenue Congregational Church, where the pastor was Edward A. Hawley, a good friend of the Nesbitt family. Hawley had been a pastor in Oberlin, Ohio, when Eduardo Mondlane was a student there, and they were close friends.

Mondlane began graduate work in anthropology at Northwestern University in 1953. He and Janet Rae Johnson were already engaged. Not only was she white, she was considerably younger than he was, and her parents did not approve of the match. Nevertheless, the couple was married by Ed Hawley in 1956. With few places to socialize, they enjoyed the interracial community of the Warren Avenue

church, and they came to the Nesbitt building. “Eduardo and Janet were very accepted in the living room of Aunt Peggy and Uncle Lendor,” says Nesbitt. While he only vaguely remembers meeting them, he certainly remembers the lively discussions.

In high school, Nesbitt was active in the baggage porters’ union through his father and his uncle George, who had helped form a black redcaps’ union. In his first year at Antioch College, he was arrested for sitting in the barber chair of a segregated barbershop. In 1964 he was set to go to Mississippi for Freedom Summer, but his mother stopped him. Prexy was a large man, six foot one, with a commanding presence, and his mother had a real fear that he would be killed. The murder of Emmett Till was still fresh in her mind; moreover, a young black man recently had been sledge-hammered to death by a gang of whites on the corner of 55th Street and Kedzie right there in Chicago. She told her son he would have to find another family to send him through college if he went south that summer.

Nesbitt could go to Africa with her blessing but not to Mississippi. He had chosen Antioch because of the opportunity it offered to take the junior year overseas. Tanganyika had achieved independence in 1961 under the leadership of Julius Nyerere, known as Mwalimu, or Teacher. In the 1960s the country seemed to offer a model for postcolonial Africa, with its philosophy of African socialism and self-reliance and its support for the liberation struggles to the south. It became a mecca for young Americans, especially African Americans. Even so, few foreign students were enrolled at the University of Dar es Salaam in 1965, and Prexy Nesbitt was the first African American to study there.

Nesbitt’s family connections preceded him to Tanzania. Ed Hawley had left Chicago and become pastor to Southern African refugees in Dar es Salaam. Nesbitt’s instructors in African history at the university, Terence Ranger and Irene Brown, were also involved in support work with the liberation movements. Through them and through Ed Hawley and Bill Sutherland, Nesbitt quickly became engaged. He spoke at a school in Dar es Salaam for refugees from Southern Africa, choosing as his topic Malcolm X, who had been assassinated earlier that year.

When the white minority government in Salisbury, Rhodesia, made its Unilateral Declaration

of Independence from Britain in November 1965, Nesbitt joined a student protest made up largely of Tanzanians, with a sprinkling of Kenyans and Ugandans. The students mounted a symbolic attack on the British embassy, burning a Rolls Royce and the British flag. They were hauled off to jail, then released. When they returned to the university, President Nyerere came to formally reprimand them for their actions and call for an apology. But as he was leaving the room, the president turned around and winked at the student protesters.

That same year, Nesbitt was asked to be the sole student representative at the first International Conference on African History, organized by Terence



Prexy Nesbitt in Geneva in 1981 or 1982, while on the staff of the World Council of Churches Programme to Combat Racism. *Photo courtesy of Prexy Nesbitt.*

Ranger at the University of Dar es Salaam. “It was an emerging field at that very time, and I felt like I was living history,” Nesbitt recalls.

Returning to the United States at the end of the academic year, Nesbitt led the Antioch Committee on Southern Africa along with Martie Houser,

George Houser's daughter. The committee raised the issue of Antioch's connections to companies involved with South Africa. It would take a decade, but Antioch College became one of the earliest colleges to divest.

That fall, pursuing a doctoral degree on a fellowship at Columbia University, Nesbitt studied with Marcia Wright and Thomas Karis. He co-edited a citywide black student newspaper, and during the demonstrations of 1968, he urged black students to link up with white students as they took over buildings. Locally, they were protesting the expansion of Columbia into the Harlem neighborhood; some also wanted to expose the war-related research the university was engaged in. Nesbitt was arrested and lost his fellowship. Throughout his political activism, Nesbitt says, he was buoyed by his family's support. When he was sitting in protest in Hamilton Hall, his father, Rozell Nesbitt, came to visit. A bystander remarked, "They should throw them all in jail." Rozell Nesbitt turned to the man and said, "Well, they better start with me, because that's my son up there!"

The lawyer for the arrested students was Robert Van Lierop, an African American attorney who was also becoming interested in Africa's liberation movements. Two years later Van Lierop would travel to Mozambique to make the film *A Luta Continua*, which became an organizing tool for Southern Africa support groups.

With Sharfudine Khan, Frelimo's representative at the United Nations, Nesbitt had been exploring the possibility of returning to Tanzania to work for Frelimo at its secondary school in Dar es Salaam. Eduardo Mondlane, the Frelimo leader, was instrumental in making this happen. It wasn't until they sat down for a meal together that Nesbitt realized he had met Mondlane years before, as a youngster back in Chicago.

Due to internal struggles within Frelimo, Nesbitt was not able to teach as expected at the school. Instead, he worked with Southern African refugees through Ed Hawley at the Tanzanian Christian Council. He also worked with Jorge Rebelo, Frelimo's information secretary, helping edit *Mozambique Revolution*. But in 1969 Prexy's mother, Sadie Nesbitt, died suddenly, and he returned to Chicago.

Prexy Nesbitt's personal and political lives would be linked twice by tragedy. In 1969, the year his mother died, Eduardo Mondlane was assassinated. In 1973, his sister Roanne called to tell him that Amilcar Cabral had been killed. Four months later, Roanne was killed. For Nesbitt, these deaths are forever linked.

Back in Chicago in 1970, Nesbitt became the first field staff for ACOA, organizing anti-apartheid groups in the Midwest. In 1972 Robert Van Lierop and Nesbitt founded the Africa Information Service in New York and published a book of Amilcar Cabral's writings and speeches, *Return to the Source* (1973b). Nesbitt worked for ACOA a second time in 1977–79, coordinating the national Committee to Oppose Bank Loans to South Africa.

When he joined the staff of the World Council of Churches in Geneva in 1979, Nesbitt became part of its highly controversial Programme to Combat Racism. Among other things, the program provided humanitarian aid to liberation movements fighting racial oppression. He brought to the position a network of contacts with the Southern African movements, and he had credibility within many member churches of the World Council because of the numerous church audiences he had addressed over the years.

Some years later, in 1986–87, Nesbitt made similar linkages at the local level when he worked as a special aide to Harold Washington, the first African American mayor of Chicago. Above all, Nesbitt was skilled at bringing people together. He maintained a vast network of organizations and individuals around the United States and in Africa and Europe. He was a bridge builder, able to work with blacks and whites alike and with a wide array of sectors ranging from church people and trade unionists to elected officials and members of liberation movements. Reflecting in 2003, he said:

I'm very interested in trying to pass on to this next generation how you cannot let these kinds of tensions—racial, ethnic, religious—divide people from fundamental goals that can only be reached by people banding together and overcoming the social barriers and the polarization. That's the only possible future that we have, to bring in real change in the United States.

## Mia Adjali: United Methodist Women and African Liberation

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*To go from Algeria to Connecticut to Mississippi in the fifties was the most extraordinary experience.*

—Mia Adjali

Like Mary Jane Patterson's work with the United Presbyterians, Mia Adjali's life work with the United Methodist Church illustrates the contributions made to African liberation by people of faith and the institutional church. The daughter of Norwegian missionaries, Mia Aurbakken spent her childhood in Algeria, where her parents worked for the Methodist Church. She attended college in the United States and in 1960 began working with the Methodists at the United Nations in New York. In 1967 she married Boubaker Adjali, an Algerian journalist and filmmaker who had participated in his country's war of independence from French colonialism. Each of them has been involved in African issues for over half a century.

Mia Adjali grew up on three continents. The family spent the turbulent years of World War II in Algeria. "There was no way we could return to Norway, as the North Sea was mined," she recalls. When the war ended her family was able to travel to Norway and on to the United States, where her parents studied at the Kennedy School of Missions in Hartford. Her mother died in 1947 and the family returned to Norway, but by 1948 they were back in Algeria, where Adjali's father remarried and she finished elementary school. She continued her studies in France and then entered Millsaps College, a Methodist school in Jackson, Mississippi.

"To go from Algeria to Connecticut to Mississippi in the fifties was the most extraordinary experience," she says. "I had the chance to be living in societies that were going through severe changes and confrontations." When Algeria became independent in 1962, Adjali recalls, her father commented that "in the United States only people living in Mississippi in the fifties could really understand what was happening in Algeria."

Millsaps was a progressive, albeit all-white college where professors raised the consciousness of the students and the community around the issues

of racism, civil rights, and integration. In 1959, her senior year, Adjali chaired a committee that organized a series of lectures on integration. The first guest was Dr. Ernst Borinski, a professor of sociology at Tougaloo College, a black college near Jackson. The audience that night was small, just a few students and a reporter from the new daily newspaper in Jackson. The reporter turned out to be the son of the president of the White Citizens Council, and the next day Borinski's talk hit the headlines. The newspaper blasted the lecture series for giving him a platform, noting angrily that Dr. Borinski had said that segregation was "unchristian."

The repercussions were statewide and jeopardized the college. Millsaps officials reluctantly gave in and cancelled the following speakers in the series, replacing them with a person who championed segregation. Adjali had to introduce the well-known Mississippi lawyer John Satterfield, who later would oppose the admission of James Meredith to the University of Mississippi. This time the classroom was packed, mostly with people from Jackson. Satterfield began by saying, "All that will be said tonight will be in the name of Jesus Christ." He went on to justify segregation, citing the Bible as his authority.

With her experience in Algeria and Mississippi, Adjali compares the relationship of the colonialist and the colonized to that of plantation owner and slave. "It is a strange relationship," she says, best described by Lorraine Hansberry in *The Drinking Gourd* (1960) and by Martinique-born psychiatrist Frantz Fanon. Fanon worked in an Algerian hospital and joined the National Liberation Front (FLN) after the 1954 outbreak of the French-Algerian war, serving as ambassador to Ghana for the provisional Algerian government. The experience led him to write his best-known book, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), which became a primer for those trying to understand the quest for liberation. The book was at the heart of the argument in the 1960s over the movement from nonviolence to armed struggle as the only means to end intransigent colonial oppression.

In 1960 the Methodist Church established the Methodist Office for the United Nations, three rooms and a walk-in closet on East 46th Street and First Avenue in Manhattan. A college graduate that year, Adjali was invited to New York to work

at the new office as a staff member of the Women's Division of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Church, arguably the most progressive force within the denomination.

It was an exciting period for Africa. Of the nations that became new members of the U.N. in 1960 and 1961, 19 were African states. Adjali began meeting African delegates to the U.N., developing close relations that continued in the following decades. She also met with representatives of the movements still struggling for liberation. One of her first contacts was with the Algerian FLN, whose office was located down the street from her own office.

In December 1960, tension and excitement filled the air as Resolution 1514 (XV), "Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples," was introduced in the U.N. General Assembly. The most critical—and controversial—elements were the concept of the right to self-determination and the call for "a speedy and unconditional end [to] colonialism in all its forms."

The night before the vote on the resolution, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan of Britain called President Dwight Eisenhower. Concerned about Southern Rhodesia and the consequences of independence for its minority white population, Macmillan urged Eisenhower to abstain on the vote. The U.S. abstention came as a surprise, as the entire U.S. delegation had favored the resolution. Dr. Zelma Watson George, a social worker from Chicago and a member of the U.S. delegation to the U.N. General Assembly that year, had been authorized to assure African delegates of United States support for the decolonization resolution. When the resolution passed with a few abstentions, mostly countries that still had colonies, delegates stood to applaud. Dr. George joined them, standing up in the middle of the seated U.S. delegation.

It wasn't long before the American vote was neutralized. The new president, John F. Kennedy, agreed to have the United States participate on the Committee of 24 for Decolonization, a body set up to carry out the resolution. Adjali says that while many people remember 1960 as the year Khrushchev took off his shoe in the U.N. General Assembly and banged it on his desk, she remembers it as the year of the decolonization resolution—and Zelma Watson George standing to applaud.

By 1963, Adjali and the Women's Division had moved into the Church Center for the United Nations on First Avenue, directly across from the United Nations. For the rest of the decade and into the 1970s and 1980s, the new Methodist Office for the U.N. served as a hospitality center for the liberation movements. They had desks available with phones, typewriters, and access to duplicating equipment. One person had special privileges: Dr. Eduardo Mondlane, a Crusade Scholar of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Church and the first president of Frelimo. During his trips to New York and the United Nations Mondlane would "nationalize" Adjali's office, and she became his temporary secretary. While Oliver Tambo, president of the ANC, never used a desk, he sometimes needed other



Dr. Zelma Watson George, center, was a member of the U.S. delegation to the United Nations when the decolonization resolution was introduced in the General Assembly in December 1960. *UN Photo.*

services. One evening he had a number of telegrams to send, and Adjali's office was ready to help.

Representatives of the liberation movements also came to the Methodist Office for the United Nations when the Methodist U.N. Seminar Program invited them to address youth or adult seminars. They would describe colonialism or apartheid in their countries and the process for freeing their people. The Methodists (and later the United Methodists, after the 1968 merger of the Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren Churches) involved the liberation movement figures in consultations about decolonization and apartheid in the United States and in countries with United Methodist Churches, many of them under colonialism. Missionaries who spoke out in those countries and had been expelled by the colonial powers also shared important information about the situations they had witnessed.



Mia Adjali in her office at the Church Center for the United Nations. *Photo courtesy of Mia Adjali.*

Adjali's office helped the liberation movement representatives prepare their speeches for presentation to the United Nations' various committees dealing with decolonization or ending apartheid. "We often ended up typing their U.N. speeches and duplicating them," Adjali recalls. "It was in my office that the ZAPU and ZANU representatives wrote their first joint speech, shortly before independence

in Zimbabwe. Paragraph by paragraph, the speech was negotiated, and page by page it was typed by Jennifer Dougan, my assistant, to be ready for the 3:00 p.m. session of the Security Council."

Adjali and the Women's Division worked with the ACOA, led by George Houser, a United Methodist pastor, to bring pressure for a change in U.S. policy. The churches realized they had a critical role to play in influencing Washington, and Adjali believes they provided important support for the liberation struggles during these years. Of central importance to this work was the church presence at the United Nations.

United Methodists from all over the country came to New York to attend seminars on decolonization and many other issues related to racism and social justice. A good number of them took back to their communities and churches a deeper understanding of world issues and a renewed commitment to engage

locally in liberation support and anti-apartheid campaigns. Adjali came to direct this work, becoming the executive secretary for global concerns of the Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church and the main representative for the board at the U.N. She held these positions until her retirement in 2006.

For many Protestant and Catholic churches with a missionary presence in Africa, the anticolonial period required a rethinking of roles, a redistribution of resources, and a shifting of control to African leadership. In relation to Southern

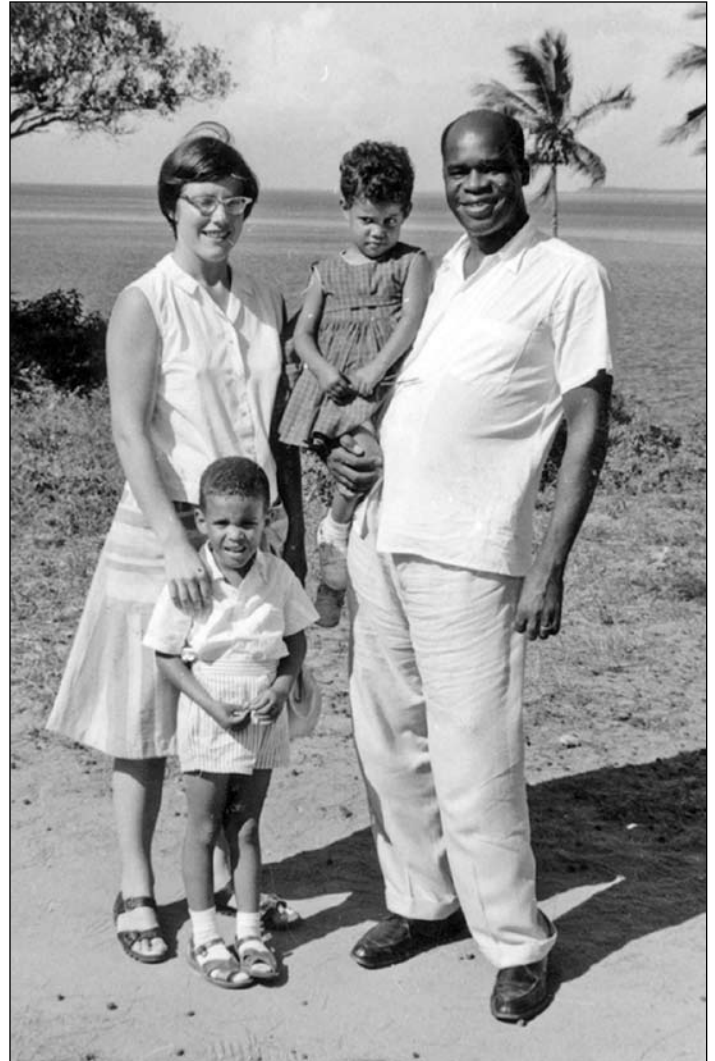
Africa, where the struggle for majority rule was protracted and difficult, church denominations had to decide whether or not to be in solidarity with the struggle for freedom and whether or not to support armed struggle. Mia Adjali spoke with unflinching clarity on these matters, her personal experience providing her with understanding that came only later to many others in the United States.



By the end of the 1960s, the emergence of independent African nations gave all of us a sense of achievement and of hope. At the same time, the continuing struggle in Southern Africa deepened our understanding of what remained to be accomplished on the continent and of the role U.S. political and economic interests would play in the process. Whether we entered the 1960s as newcomers or as experienced activists, we ended the decade knowing that the work in which we had been engaged was unfinished. Eduardo Mondlane signed his letters *A luta continua*, the struggle continues. It became our byword and our challenge.

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*Oral sources for chapter 3 include interviews with Mia Adjali (2004), Ben Magubane (2004), Prexy Nesbitt (1998, 2003), and Mary Jane Patterson (2004).*



Janet and Eduardo Mondlane with two of their children in Mozambique in 1961.  
*Photo courtesy of Oberlin College Archives.*

# Harry Belafonte

## A Committed Life

### Charles Cobb Jr.

For Harry Belafonte, artistic achievement does not and should not mean political disengagement. “My social and cultural interests are part of my career. I can’t separate them,” says Belafonte. Paul Robeson was a major influence on Belafonte and other African American artists in the late 1940s and 1950s. Many of these artists, like Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, and Sidney Poitier, were involved with the American Negro Theater in New York. So was Belafonte. “When I first met [Robeson], I was quite young. And he embraced those of us in our little group of cultural activists in New York. And he came to see a play that we were in, and at the end of the play, he stayed behind to talk to these young people, of which I was one. And he said to us, ‘You know, the purpose of art is not just to show life as it is, but to show life as it should be’” (2004a).

Belafonte’s political commitment started even earlier, during his years growing up in Harlem and Jamaica. His Jamaican-born mother, says Belafonte, “embraced Marcus Garvey and the struggles against oppression of Africans” (2002). Belafonte was also a veteran of World War II, a war that shaped many young African Americans who would emerge as civil rights leaders in the 1940s and 1950s. “In the victories that came out of that war, those of us who participated came back to our homes with the expectation that there would be generosity, that we would be rewarded for our commitment not only to our nation, but to its principles of democracy. However, we found that such generosity was not available” (2000).

Belafonte’s first record album, *Calypso*, sold more than a million copies in 1956, the first album ever to do so. It stayed at the top of the charts for an unprecedented 31 weeks. That was the year of the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott against racial segregation. Belafonte quickly lent his growing prestige to the boycott and to the young leader it had thrust forward—Martin Luther King Jr.

His interest in Africa, meanwhile, was growing, inspired partly by culture and partly by the emergence of the newly independent African nations. When the Peace Corps was founded in 1961, the Kennedy administration sought credibility for the fledgling organization. Belafonte became one of its advisers, but with a clear-eyed view of the corps’ real value. “Most people thought the Peace Corps was a chance for America to show how beautiful we were as a people, our great generosity. I viewed the Peace Corps another way: Get enough Americans to go to these countries and live for two years with indigenous peoples in environments where [these volunteers] learned something else altogether and bring them back to America to educate their own communities. To point out that their own humanity was inextricably bound to the humanity of the peoples of the developing world” (2004b).

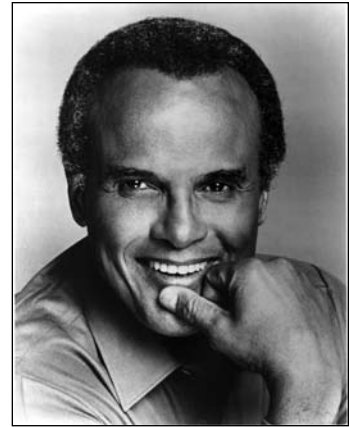
For many in the African American community, support for African liberation has been closely linked to the civil rights struggle in the United States. One of the clearest examples of this connection is the life of singer-activist Harry Belafonte, whose advocacy for Africa spans decades. This profile draws on published and broadcast interviews with Belafonte in 2002 and 2004 and on speeches he delivered in 2000 and 2004.

Involvement with the Peace Corps helped deepen his Africa experience. “And then I began to go to Kenya. [I learned] what Jomo Kenyatta went through in the Mau Mau uprising and I became very friendly with Tom Mboya.” Throughout his career, Belafonte maintained contacts with African leaders, intellectuals, and artists, both those in independent Africa and those from countries still under white minority rule.

During the intense years of civil rights struggle in the South, Belafonte not only lent time and resources to the movement but encouraged movement interest in Africa. In 1964, Belafonte sponsored a visit to West Africa by SNCC leaders Fannie Lou Hamer, John Lewis, Julian Bond and others.

Belafonte became increasingly visible as an opponent of apartheid. He introduced South African musicians Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela to U.S. audiences and supported their on-stage denunciations of the racist regime. In 1983 he was co-chair with tennis great Arthur Ashe of Artists and Athletes Against Apartheid. His 1988 film and record album, *Paradise in Gazankulu*, focused on children victimized by apartheid and had a significant impact. After Nelson Mandela was released from prison, Belafonte played a key role in organizing his visit to the United States and was his official host.

At age 78, he continues to speak out. “Whether it is Kosovo, whether it is Somalia, whether it is Rwanda, whether it is Kampuchea, wherever we have been in the world, we still see man’s inhumanity and our work is far from over” (2000).



Harry Belafonte.

# Charles Cobb Jr.

## *From Atlanta to East Africa*

### **Charles Cobb Jr.**

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**A**s I came of age, the things that are dramatic in my memory are the 1954 Supreme Court decision, the events in Little Rock, and the events in Montgomery, Alabama, and tangled in there are the independence of Ghana and the Mau Mau struggle in Kenya. I remember the *Pittsburgh Courier* used to run a little box on the front page that talked about the conflict in Kenya, the conflict in Congo, the Sharpeville demonstrations, Lumumba, Tshombe, Kasavubu, all of which were happening when I was in high school. These things were part of my consciousness, growing up.

A lot of us in 1960 and '61 who were in college were caught up in the student sit-in movement, which was more or less a spontaneous movement, though not quite as spontaneous as some historians would suggest. I was living in Massachusetts and had been picketing the Woolworth's in support of Southern students in 1960. The students who were protesting in Greensboro and Nashville had the greatest dramatic impact; they were shown on television and so forth. People my age were strongly affected by that because it was, for our generation anyway, the first time in the South that we saw blacks taking the initiative.

By the time the Freedom Rides happened, I was at Howard University, literally sitting on the grass on campus and reading in the student newspaper about the Howard students who had been involved in the Freedom Rides. Somebody gave me a leaflet about a sit-in demonstration in Maryland, which I went to, and I became involved in that way.

The name that kept coming up was SNCC, simply because that was an organization that the students had formed. There was a discussion going on among a lot of students about whether sit-ins would really change anything, whether you should commit a real chunk of time to working in the South. What made up my mind was a very small blurb in the *New York Times* which talked about a voter registration project in Mississippi, run by Bob Moses in fact. The story was about the fact that Moses had brought some people down to register to vote and had gotten beaten up. And it struck me that more than sitting at lunch counters, this was probably something important, and I began to cast about for a way to get into that. . . .

What we were organizing people to do was to register to vote, mainly because that was the most legitimate thing. The law was pretty clear, at least the federal law: all people have the right to vote . . . But we were also organizing in a deeper sense. Mississippi at that time, Alabama, the Arkansas Delta, the north of Louisiana, the northern Florida panhandle, the whole Black Belt South, southwest Georgia: If you were black and living in those areas, you were really living almost in a state of paralysis. . . . As an orga-

Charles Cobb Jr., one of the editors of this book, was a field secretary for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in Mississippi from 1962 to 1967. He moved to Tanzania in 1970. This excerpt from an interview with Cobb traces the beginnings of his involvement in the civil rights movement and his introduction to Africa.

Excerpted from an interview with Charlie Cobb by Julius Scott, a graduate student at Duke University, in the spring 1981 issue of *Southern Exposure* (Institute for Southern Studies, Durham, NC).

nizer the idea, the *real* idea behind organizing, was to begin to get people in motion around something, just to break that paralysis.

It was in '63 that we really started to become aware of Africa, as I remember. Oginga Odinga, who was at that time the vice president of Kenya, was touring the United States, and one of the places he visited was Atlanta, Georgia. A whole bunch of us went to see him, just because he was an African leader. There was no political assessment of Kenya, or any of that. He was a black guy who was a vice president of a country, and we had just never seen that. He was staying at some posh hotel in downtown Atlanta, and he saw us. We had this talk, and shook his hand; it was a big thing. Afterwards we decided to go have coffee at a restaurant next door to the hotel, and we were all refused service. We were kind of high on meeting this black leader, and so naturally we refused to leave the restaurant, and we all got arrested. Oginga Odinga became a known name in the organization. There were songs written about him. Because of this incident, discussion started.

Then in '64 Harry Belafonte, who was a supporter of SNCC and other organizations, arranged a trip to Africa for some SNCC people. It was a big thing, and built the discussion more and more in the organization. In the media by this time you're starting to get the whole business with Rhodesia and the Unilateral Declaration of Independence, and all this was filtering into the organization.

Our expanding consciousness of Africa and the discussions within the organization revolved around two key words: power and alternatives. All along we were asking ourselves whether what we were doing was really going to provide the answers for blacks. You work in a county, or you work in some rural town, and because you're working some blacks get killed or shot, something like that. And you inevitably ask yourself, "Is it really worth it? If they actually get this vote, what will it really mean for them? Is what we are about, making blacks Democrats or Republicans, is that really freedom, is that liberation?" And that question really became very intense in 1964, in the aftermath of the Democratic Party convention in Atlantic City, where clearly, legally and morally, the black delegation that we had organized as the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party should have been seated. By any standard, it should have been seated and wasn't. It didn't have anything to do with the merits of our case; it had to do with politics that were at play at that particular convention. As a consequence, coming out of that convention a few people were looking around for alternatives.

What we had learned essentially was that the things that affected blacks in Ruleville, Greenwood, or Sharkey County, Mississippi, didn't just stop at the county line or the state line. What we really had was a national structure. The sheriff and the Ku Klux Klan and White Citizens Council were all tied into the Congress and the president, and even if we got everybody registered to vote in Sunflower County it wasn't going to provide the complete answer for black people. We were beginning to see the relationship between economics and politics.

### Oginga Odinga

I went down to the Peach Tree Manor  
To see Oginga Odinga  
The police said "Well, what's the matter?"  
To see Oginga Odinga.  
Oginga Odinga, Oginga Odinga  
Oginga Odinga of Kenya  
Oginga Odinga, Oginga Odinga  
Oginga Odinga of Kenya.  
Uhuru, uhuru  
Freedom now, freedom now  
The folks in Mississippi  
Will knock you on your rump  
And if you holler FREEDOM  
They'll throw you in the swamp.

Then the question became—and this began to lead us into Africa and more broadly into the Third World—where do we find alternative designs for organizing ourselves as a people? So Africa then begins to loom very large, partly because we were meeting poor people from ZANU and ZAPU and ANC, and African students. They would talk to us about their situation, and they knew what we were talking about and we knew what they were talking about, and there was something to share there. We began to talk to people more and more about independent institutions. The question of power—Black Power—became a discussion. The question of race intensified.

The work in the counties went on pretty much the same way it always had, but in addition our own broadening consciousness entered into those discussions. For Fannie Lou Hamer to go to Guinea the way she did didn't lead to some African institution developing in Ruleville, Mississippi, but perhaps it made Africa a little less alien to our friends and neighbors. Julius Lester and I went to Vietnam, people went to different parts of Africa, people went to Cuba, to Puerto Rico. We had taken a position on the Vietnam War, and we were becoming interested in the African liberation movement.

As a field secretary for SNCC, I came into contact with journalists and saw what they wrote. Inevitably one says, "I can do a hell of a lot better than that." I traveled widely; I was in south Asia and Africa. It seemed to be important to begin to figure out ways to communicate what I'd seen.

In 1969 I was teaching school in the United States and decided to go to an African country long enough to really learn something about it. I chose Tanzania simply because it seemed to be the place where the liberation movements were concentrated and because I just happened to know more Tanzanians than anybody else. And one of the things I started to do was write.

The thing that I learned in the South, which I didn't know before going into it, was that what looks simple turns out to be complex. The same thing is true about rural Africa. And if you want to write about it, as I did when I got to Africa, or if you want to organize it, which is what I did in Mississippi, then you have to learn to deal with these complexities.



From left: SNCC workers Stokely Carmichael, Charlie Cobb, and George Greene at a demonstration in Atlanta, Georgia, December 1963. *Photo by Danny Lyon/Magnum.*

# Walter Bgoya

## *From Tanzania to Kansas and Back Again*

### Walter Bgoya

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**A**t the end of July 1961, I and several hundred other African students left our different countries on scholarships offered by the African American Institute. I was placed at the University of Kansas. Before going to the university I stayed for a month with a generous and deeply religious white family in a little town called El Dorado. The stay with this family offered me the first experience of living in the United States.

I was taken to church every Sunday and stood in line with the priest after service to shake hands with the whole congregation, as the African student who was staying with the Cloyes. Not having seen any black person in the church, I was intrigued and asked my hosts if there were any black people in the town. Yes, I was told, there were Negroes (the term in use then), but they had their own churches. I thought it strange that there were separate churches for black and white people, but I did not want to embarrass my family any further so I did not pursue it. I did, however, ask if I could meet a family of black people and arrangements were made.

The visit did not go well, unfortunately, perhaps because neither they nor I were prepared for it. Only one member of the family greeted and sat with me—quite uncomfortably, it was obvious. The others went on with their business, oblivious to my presence, not even greeting me, which as an African I found insulting. Perhaps the fact that I had been brought there by a white family made me part of the white world with which they had problems. I was deeply disappointed. I learned later that relations between Africans and African Americans were complicated and that it would take special efforts to make friends with people of my own race.

Going to the university in September was the beginning of four years of intense involvement in the struggle against different forms of racial discrimination at the university and in the town surrounding it, leading to the 1964 takeover of the administration building. Protesters were arrested, tried, and acquitted. The story has been told in *This Is America? The Sixties in Lawrence, Kansas*, by Rusty Monhollon (2002). The struggle at the university exposed me to unpleasant experiences with rightist groups, including the John Birch Society and the Ku Klux Klan, who burned a cross outside my apartment. I was called all sorts of names in threatening letters and phone calls—I was a “communist” and a “foreign agitator”—and I was advised to take these threats seriously. But while my involvement in a leadership position in the campus civil rights movement was deeply resented by right-wing white people, we had great support from liberal and progressive white students and faculty members.

Walter Bgoya is the managing director of Mkuki na Nyota, an independent scholarly publishing company in Dar es Salaam, and chairman of the international African Books Collective. From 1972 to 1990 he directed the Tanzania Publishing House, which played a major role in making Dar es Salaam a center for progressive intellectuals from around the world. Its publications included Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Agostinho Neto's *Sacred Hope*, Samora Machel's *Establishing People's Power to Serve the Masses*, and Issa Shivji's *Class Struggle in Tanzania*. In this essay, written for *No Easy Victories*, Bgoya reflects on his experiences and work in the 1960s.

I returned to Tanzania in 1965, having learned many lessons from my years in the United States. I had immersed myself in the struggle for rights and human dignity regardless of my status as a foreign student. I rejected the notion that as a foreigner I had no business getting involved in black people's struggles; after all, I was not spared the indignities of racial discrimination in housing or refusal of service in restaurants and other places. I learned to speak up and to challenge authority when I believed it was wrong. Back home, my outspokenness did not endear me to my superiors at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where I was assigned to work, or to politicians who did not accept that their ideas could be challenged. A one-party state under the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), Tanzania was hierarchical and authoritarian, and one was expected to conform and to do as one was told.

It was clear after a short time in the foreign ministry that I needed to make some alliances at the workplace and outside if I was to survive. A group of youth leaders had been invited by Mwalimu Nyerere soon after the 1967 Arusha Declaration (TANU's policy on socialism and self-reliance) to form the TANU Study Group, a kind of think tank for the ruling party. I was asked to join and we met once a week on Sundays to discuss current political and economic issues, both national and international, and to forward recommendations to the party leadership.

Major issues during that period were the struggles for liberation from Portuguese colonialism in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau; settler colonialism in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and South West Africa (Namibia); apartheid in South Africa; and issues in other places such as French Somaliland (Djibouti), Comoros, Sahara, and, outside Africa, East Timor. The Vietnam War, the struggle for admission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations, the Soviet Union's invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and support for Cuba were among the other issues that exercised us. In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs I was assigned to the Africa desk and it was there that I had the opportunity to meet and work with liberation movements and their leaders. I also worked with the OAU's Liberation Committee, which had its headquarters in Dar es Salaam.

Not all Tanzanians supported the government's policy of supporting the liberation movements. There were some high officials and politicians who thought Tanzania was unduly exposing itself to dangers and was expending financial and other resources it could ill afford in support of the wars of national liberation in Africa. They did not say this openly—who would dare question Mwalimu Nyerere? Nevertheless they slowed things down, frustrated the more radical supporters of the liberation movements, and even occasionally resorted to calling them CIA agents as a way to discredit them.

Relations between the Tanzanian government and the liberation movements were generally good but difficult situations did sometimes arise, especially where there were two or more liberation organizations from the same country. Cold War politics influenced debates and decisions in international forums inside and outside Africa. There were also contradictions. On one hand, the liberation movements were grateful for the support they



enjoyed from Tanzania and from Mwalimu Nyerere; on the other hand, they feared that Tanzania might exert undue influence on their “internal affairs.” A good example of this was the response of the liberation movements to the 1969 Lusaka Manifesto.

The document, which had been written by Nyerere and adopted by the leaders of the Frontline States, put forward the position that the heads of state would dissuade the liberation movements from continuing the armed struggle if the Portuguese and South African regimes accepted the principles of independence and majority rule and agreed to start the process of negotiations to that end. The liberation movements were incensed by this position. In the first place, they argued, it had been taken without consulting them. Second, the decision on the means by which to pursue the struggle was a sovereign decision that only they and no one else could take. Third, each struggle had its own character and there could not be one position that would fit all.

The Lusaka Manifesto was adopted by the OAU. We argued with the liberation movements that armed struggle was not an end but a means toward an end, and if that end could be secured peacefully, there would be no reason for war. But the liberation movements never quite accepted the position. In 1971 I had the honor to be assigned to draft the Mogadishu Declaration, which nullified the Lusaka Manifesto. The declaration argued that since the Portuguese colonialists and the apartheid regime had not responded positively, frustrating the hopes of the OAU, there was no alternative but to continue to support the armed struggle.

The 1960s and 1970s were exciting times in Tanzania’s history. Because of Mwalimu Nyerere’s leadership and his desire to build an African socialist society based on the African concept of *ujamaa*, he attracted many Western intellectuals. For African Americans, Tanzania came to embody many of their historical aspirations, including the possibility of returning to Africa to stay, which a few of them did.

African Americans coming to Tanzania often arrived with names of individuals and institutions to contact, including in some cases the foreign ministry, and I was privileged to be one of the individuals who was contacted. It was a period of mutual discovery between those African Americans and Tanzanians, with unresolved questions and frustrations but also fulfillment, especially in 1974 around the time of the Sixth Pan-African Congress. Some members of the Drum and Spear group—Charlie Cobb, Anne Forrester, Courtland Cox, Geri Stark (Augusto), Jennifer Lawson, Kathy Flewellen, and Sandra Hill—stayed for short periods of time. Others, such as Bob Moses and Professor Neville Parker, stayed longer and made invaluable contributions to Tanzania in the field of education. Bill Sutherland stayed the longest, followed by others such as Monroe Sharp and Edie Wilson. Walter Rodney, who was at the University of Dar es Salaam, had great influence on discussion and debates around the period of the Pan-African Congress.

I left the foreign ministry in 1972 to join and manage the Tanzania Publishing House. There, my involvement in liberation support activities

actually increased, as I was now less constrained by diplomatic and civil service orders. Publishing became another front in the struggle. Looking back after the end of apartheid and the liberation of the continent, we salute those who bore the brunt of the enemies' blows, and we remember with respect and pride those who paid the supreme price. Among those who worked together, friendships and comradeship endure, along with a feeling of connection to a larger network. On all continents there are still many who remain committed to freedom and to inevitable victory of the next stage of the African revolution. As before, victory will not be not easy, but it is essential.



From left: Kathy Flewellen, Geri Augusto, and Walter Bgoya, in Dar es Salaam, 1974. Flewellen and Augusto were among the organizers of the Sixth Pan-African Congress. Bgoya was then director of the Tanzania Publishing House. *Photo courtesy of Loretta Hobbs.*

# Miriam Makeba

## “Mama Africa”

**Gail Hovey**

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*My life, my career, every song I sing and every appearance I make, are bound up with the plight of my people.*

—Miriam Makeba, *Makeba: My Story*

**A**s a teenager in South Africa, Makeba listened to Ella Fitzgerald and Billie Holiday on a wind-up record player. Her older brother Joseph, a saxophone and piano player himself, introduced her to the American jazz greats and taught her American songs. When she would sing with Joseph, she recalls, “sometimes I don’t even know what I’m saying, but I put my all into it” (Makeba and Hall 1987, 21).

Makeba learned how to sing from the musicians she performed with, having had no formal musical training. Among the first were her nephew Zweli’s band, the Cuban Brothers. They were not from Cuba, had never been there, had never met a Cuban, and none of them were brothers; the name was a fantasy from the movies.

Her first paying job was with the Manhattan Brothers, a popular group in South Africa in the 1940s and 1950s. The contacts she made landed her a small role in Lionel Rogosin’s film *Come Back, Africa* (1959). Rogosin, an American filmmaker, took Makeba and the film to Europe. While in London she met Harry Belafonte, who came to a screening of *Come Back, Africa*. Makeba told him that all his songs had been translated into South Africa’s African languages. He told her to get in touch with him if she came to the United States. Rogosin wanted Makeba to do just that, but her visa only allowed her to travel in Europe. In no time, Belafonte arranged for her visa and she entered the United States in November 1959, at the age of 27.

It was overwhelming. Within a week she appeared on the *Steve Allen Show* in Los Angeles and opened a four-week run at the Village Vanguard in New York’s Greenwich Village. Belafonte became her guardian; she called him Big Brother. He brought guests to hear her sing—Sidney Poitier, Duke Ellington, Diahann Carroll, Nina Simone, and Miles Davis. After she sang, Makeba says, their applause was like thunder, and it electrified her.

Press reviews compared her to Ella Fitzgerald, Ethel Merman, and Frank Sinatra. Belafonte praised her as “easily the most revolutionary new talent to appear in any medium in the last decade.” *Time* magazine wrote, “She is probably too shy to realize it, but her return to Africa would leave a noticeable gap in the U.S. entertainment world, which she entered a mere six weeks ago” (Makeba and Hall 1987, 89).

Catapulted to international fame, Makeba remained first of all a South African. She was in New York when she heard about the Sharpeville massacre. Two of her uncles were among the 69 dead. In the same year Makeba’s

Perhaps more than any other public figure, Miriam Makeba embodies the connections between the African and North American continents and the gifts each has to give the other. Her life also illustrates the harassment and alienation suffered by many of those who spoke out publicly against apartheid. This profile of Makeba draws on her autobiography and on published memoirs by her two husbands, Hugh Masekela and Stokely Carmichael.

mother, who was ill, phoned that it was time for Makeba's nine-year-old daughter Bongki, who lived in South Africa with her grandmother, to join her mother in the United States; she did soon after. Not long after that Makeba's mother died.

Makeba applied to the South African consulate for permission to return for the funeral. She watched as an official stamped her passport "Invalid," placing her permanently in exile.

For an instant my breath catches in my throat as I realize what has happened . . . I am not permitted to go home, not now, and maybe not ever. . . . Everything that has gone into the making of myself, gone. . . . I have gone too far. I have become too big. . . . I have not said a word about politics in all the newspaper stories about me. But I am still dangerous. . . . I am in exile. I and my daughter alone in a West that is bright and rich but is foreign to us. I hold Bongki tight and try to protect her from the terrible things I feel. (Makeba and Hall 1987, 98)

Makeba's troubles with the authorities, South African and American, were just beginning. She accepted an invitation to address the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid on July 16, 1963. "My country has been turned by the Verwoerd Government into a huge prison," she told the committee. "Therefore, I must urge the United Nations to impose a complete boycott of South Africa. The first priority must be to stop the shipment of arms. I have not the slightest doubt that these arms will be used against African women and children" (Makeba and Hall 1987, 112).

With this speech, Makeba was no longer just a brilliant entertainer. She became the voice of Africa's oppressed people. Immediately the apartheid government banned the sale of her records in South Africa. But African leaders reached out to her and she became friends with the heads of newly independent states like Kwame Nkrumah, Sekou Toure, and Julius Nyerere, as well as leaders of liberation movements like Eduardo Mondlane and Amilcar Cabral. It was an exciting time, as one after another African nation became independent. "There is so much hope and promise," she rejoiced. "It is the dawn of a new age" (Makeba and Hall 1987, 92).

In May 1964 Makeba married South African musician Hugh Masekela, and they welcomed many into their home in New York. Masekela recalls:

The African community, especially the diplomatic and exile population, was growing in leaps and bounds, and our place had become a home away from home for many people from these groups. Students, ambassadors, musicians, actors, writers, dancers, and activists. . . . The civil rights and African-American communities held a special place in their hearts for her. More than that, people of all nationalities . . . recognized and loved her with a sincerity I have seen reserved only for a few very special people in the world. Miriam was extraordinarily special then, and always will be. (Masekela and Cheers 2004, 169-70)

But life with Makeba was not easy, Masekela says, and the couple divorced. Although her increased outspokenness did not go unnoticed

by the U.S. and other Western governments, it was not until 1968, when she married the radical SNCC leader Stokely Carmichael, that Makeba's career was seriously threatened. The bad news came in a phone call from her manager Bob Schwaid. Her bookings were being canceled right and left (Makeba and Hall 1987, 159).

Carmichael was surprised. "I hadn't expected this. I'd figured, at most, some people would criticize her. Racists might boycott her shows, maybe stop buying her records. But this? All at once? It had to be an organized campaign. . . . It had to be organized across the industry" (Carmichael and Thelwell 2003, 653–54). Indeed, according to Ekwueme Thelwell, who completed Carmichael's autobiography after the SNCC leader's death, actions of the Internal Revenue Service later made clear that the federal government played a role in the continuing harassment of Makeba (654).

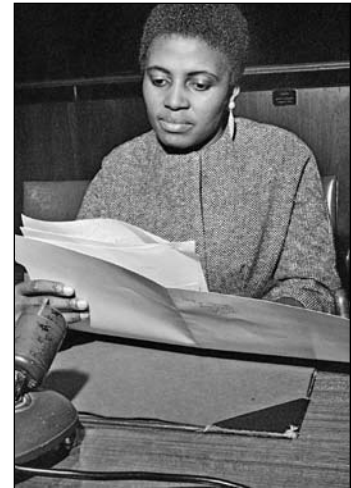
At almost the same time, Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in Memphis. Makeba had been performing in Los Angeles, but she immediately got on a plane to return home to Washington, DC, where she and Carmichael lived. Washington was in flames, black neighborhoods under military curfew. With the sirens and occasional gunfire, it "seemed to her like South Africa all over again" (Carmichael and Thelwell 2003, 656).

Makeba and Carmichael decided to act on a long-held dream and move to Africa. They had begun their relationship in Guinea, and President Toure had long encouraged them to live in his country. Makeba lived the next two decades in Africa, performing there and in Europe. She served as a member of the Guinean delegation to the U.N. General Assembly, an opportunity that again allowed her to speak out about South Africa.

By the time Miriam Makeba returned to South Africa in 1990, after 30 years of exile, she was known as the Empress of African Song and, more simply, as Mama Africa. She was welcomed home personally by Nelson Mandela. Her first concert in South Africa was held in 1991 and was a huge success. It was followed by a world tour that included the United States and Europe.

It was her friend Philemon Hou, a fellow South African musician, who taught Makeba a poem she repeated with her grandchildren while still in exile (Makeba and Hall 1987, 198):

We are an African People  
An African People!  
An African People!  
We are an African People  
And don't you forget it!



Miriam Makeba addresses the United Nations Special Committee on the Policies of Apartheid, March 9, 1964. *UN Photo.*

# Media for the Movement

## *Southern Africa Magazine*

### Gail Hovey

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*If you care about civil rights in the United States, you need to care about the freedom struggles in Southern Africa.*

—Hank Crane, Africa Secretary, World Student Christian Federation

When the National Student Christian Federation, the student movement of the mainline Protestant churches, met for its annual summer meeting in Chicago in 1964, the students in attendance were well aware that this was Freedom Summer. Many of us had already been involved in one aspect or another of the civil rights movement. At that meeting we heard a new challenge from Hank Crane, who had grown up in Congo, the son of Presbyterian missionaries who had arrived there in 1912. Crane's father-in-law and mother-in-law, Roy and LeNoir Cleveland, were also missionaries; although they were white Southerners, they had been recruited to go to the Congo by African American missionary William Sheppard. Sheppard and others in the Presbyterian mission in Congo's Kasai area had been active in exposing the grisly horrors of King Leopold's rubber trade in the Congo at the beginning of the twentieth century (Hochschild 1998, 164–65; Kennedy 2002; Phipps 2002). Before Crane spoke to us in 1964, he had spent several years traveling around Africa for the World Student Christian Federation, based in Northern Rhodesia, which would become independent Zambia that October.

Crane found a receptive audience in the students that day. In the fall we took up his challenge to focus on liberation in Southern Africa. David Wiley, then a graduate student at Princeton University and Seminary, who had worked with the Student Christian Movement in white-ruled Southern Rhodesia in the early 1960s, and Ken Carstens, a white South African Methodist minister in exile since 1961, began the process of educating us, explaining the workings of the apartheid state and setting the larger Southern African context. We continued to meet on a weekly basis, first to educate ourselves and then to determine what action to take. Although this new Southern Africa Committee (SAC) was initially intended to be national, limitations of time and money quickly narrowed our membership to students at East Coast schools, especially Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University in New York City.

When Students for a Democratic Society called for a demonstration at Chase Manhattan Bank in the spring of 1965 to protest Chase loans to South Africa, we were ready to participate, as were SNCC and CORE. Chase was chosen as a target not only because it was a leading member of a consortium of banks that provided a revolving loan fund to the South African government, but because it had been instrumental in resolving the crisis in the South African economy after the Sharpeville killings in 1960.

Gail Hovey, one of the editors of this book, was a founder of *Southern Africa* magazine and an original member of the Southern Africa Committee. She remained involved with the magazine from 1964 to 1975. During the two years she spent in Africa, living in the Northern Transvaal from 1966 to 1967, she regularly sent information to the magazine in New York without the knowledge of the South African authorities.

Revealing our preference for reconciliation, and also our naiveté, Southern Africa Committee members insisted that an effort be made to negotiate with the bank before taking action against it. At a lunch appointment in Chase's swanky dining room, we were hosted by a vice president for public relations. I was amazed to discover that we knew more about Chase's involvement in South Africa than he did. Instead of addressing the support provided by the bank to the apartheid regime, he wanted to talk about the possibility of scholarships for South African students.

For some of us it was a revelatory moment, the beginning of an education in the nature and power of international capital. Our argument that supporting a more just society in South Africa would be in Chase's long-term interest cut no ice. What mattered was profit in the short term and co-opting Africans through scholarships and capitalist economic development. SAC joined the demonstration in front of the bank and some of our members were among the 49 arrested.

Our next target was First National City Bank, now Citibank, which was a part of the same revolving loan fund. SAC members talked with bank officials, seminary and university administrators, faculty, and students. We asked people to withdraw their accounts if the bank had not met our demands by a specified date. We also approached the denominations and church agencies that had their offices at the Interchurch Center in New York, asking them to withdraw accounts. This campaign continued in collaboration with the American Committee on Africa, the initial public withdrawal involving some 70 accounts by individuals and a \$20,000 withdrawal of Barnard College's student council fund. We saw this strategy as an effective way to confront the public with the issue of American involvement with apartheid. We gave up our illusions about convincing the banks to change their ways of doing business. It would take more years and radically increased pressure that ultimately affected their bottom line before the banks would finally end their loans to South Africa.

In 1965, most Americans knew very little about apartheid or about the countries of Southern Africa. As a new convert to concern about the region, I found it instructive that the November 11, 1965 Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Rhodesia received such minimal coverage in the U.S. press. SAC understood that the declaration was a daring and desperate effort on the part of whites, under the leadership of Ian Smith, to perpetuate minority rule in the British colony.

Convinced of the seriousness of the crisis in Rhodesia and of the need for information, we started what quickly became a biweekly news summary on Southern Africa. At first our sources were mostly British. Before long we established contact with the Zimbabwean nationalist movements and in time subscribed to publications printed in Southern Africa by the liberation movements and by the regular press. What began as the "Rhodesian News Summary" evolved over the next three years into *Southern Africa* magazine.

When the NSCF became the University Christian Movement and then went out of existence as a national movement in 1969, SAC became independent and continued as a cooperative. The quality of *Southern Africa*

magazine improved significantly over time with the involvement of ACOA staff member Janet Hooper and graduate student Susan Geiger, both of whom had spent time in Africa, and South Africans Stephanie Urdang and Jennifer Davis, among others. The committee operated on a shoestring and was subject to FBI infiltration and IRS investigation, and it finally ceased publication in 1983. But for 15 years the magazine provided its readership, some 4,000 subscribers, with information on the progress of the liberation struggles and analysis of U.S. governmental and economic involvement with the region.

Unlike *Africa News*, which emerged from a North Carolina branch of the Southern Africa Committee, *Southern Africa* magazine was primarily a vehicle for communication within the movement rather than something intended for a broad public audience. In the period before Africa rated even minimal media attention, it was a vital resource, joining Liberation News Service and the *Guardian*, both also based in New York, in keeping African freedom on the movement agenda.

The women in the *Southern Africa* magazine collective were also involved in the emerging women's movement in New York and made connections between that movement and the anticolonial and anti-apartheid movements in Africa. We learned from and reported on the roles African women were playing in national liberation struggles. The connections we established resulted in, among other things, Stephanie Urdang's *Fighting Two Colonialisms: Women in Guinea-Bissau* (1979) and her later book on women in Mozambique, *And Still They Dance* (1989). Another committee member, Susan Geiger, went on to teach women's studies at the University of Minnesota and wrote *TANU Women: Gender and Culture in the Making of Tanganyikan Nationalism, 1955-1965* (1997). These books, among others, preserved and made available to future generations the essential contribution of women in the history of African resistance, knowledge of which was in danger of being lost.



Stephanie Urdang of the Southern Africa Committee was invited to travel to liberated areas of Guinea-Bissau with PAIGC in 1974. Here she speaks with her translator, Mario Ribeira. Photo courtesy of Stephanie Urdang.