



March 26, 2001

Merger News Flash: We have a new name! See enclosed announcement.

Dear Chris & Dave,

On March 5, South Africa's High Court began hearings in a closely watched case that could mean life or death for millions of people in Africa, and will affect the very future of the continent itself.

As you no doubt know, the world's leading pharmaceutical companies filed suit in 1998 against then-president Nelson Mandela and nine other respondents. The companies want to block implementation of a 1997 South African law that would make it easier to provide life-saving medicines to more than 4 million South Africans living with HIV/AIDS.

Why is this case so important for Africa, and for Africa's friends?

- ◆ The United Nations estimates that 3 million people died of AIDS last year—2.4 million of them in Sub-Saharan Africa. Drugs that have revolutionized AIDS treatment in the rich countries are priced far too high for African countries to afford.
- ◆ Drug industry profits are soaring. GlaxoSmithKline, lead plaintiff in the South African case, just announced profits of \$7.6 billion for the year 2000, up 13 percent from 1999. In fact, drug companies around the world boasted an estimated \$315 billion in sales in 2000. That's more than the gross domestic product of all 12 countries in the Southern African Development Community!
- ◆ This case is not only about fighting a disease—it's about fairness and the value the world places on African lives. Insisting on Africa's equal right to health is central to our struggle against systems that value profit over human lives, and against the racist double standard that refuses to value black lives.

APIC, The Africa Fund, and the American Committee on Africa have joined South Africa's Treatment Access Campaign and other groups in demanding that the drug companies withdraw their suit. We endorsed and participated in several of the demonstrations held in cities around the world to protest the court case. We also issued an open letter to the Bush administration and the drug companies that was endorsed by the leadership of our religious action network, our state and local elected officials network, and representatives of a youth action network that we are forming. Altogether more than 200 organizations and individuals signed on.

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In the first months of the Bush administration we are already fighting back against his assault on global health. Last month, in response to mounting pressure, the administration dropped its plan to reverse a Clinton executive order mandating that the U.S. government stop attacking African efforts to bring cheaper life-saving drugs to their people. There are dramatic shifts in public opinion on treatment access in recent months, showing that further change is possible.

At the same time, however, Bush is continuing a case at the World Trade Organization against Brazil, attacking its successful use of generic drugs against AIDS. And, as I noted in the enclosed *Los Angeles Times* commentary, the negative impact of the administration's global "gag rule" on abortion—as so many other "global" policies—falls most heavily on Africans.

Recently, we've spoken to a national gathering of young environmental and human rights activists convened by Amnesty International and the Sierra Club. We also spoke to a standing-room-only audience at Columbia University, to a packed symposium on AIDS in Los Angeles, and to the National Conference of Black Mayors in Savannah, Georgia. It's clear that there is new energy and outrage at global and domestic inequalities that amount to a "global apartheid."

But, as you well know, it takes more than outrage to build a movement. It also takes an enormous amount of nitty-gritty hard work. None of us can go it alone; we gain strength, and energy, and new ideas from each other. That's why **APIC, the Africa Fund, and the American Committee on Africa ARE NOW ONE ORGANIZATION! And we have a new name: AFRICA ACTION.**

We held our first all-staff planning meeting in New York at the end of January, and we're working together daily to implement our new agenda and to plan for the launch of a major campaign in June. The first meeting of our interlocking boards of directors took place in Washington, DC last week and elected Wyatt Tee Walker as our president; Adwoa Dunn-Mouton, vice president; Carolyn Long, secretary; and Marvin Rich, treasurer. You will hear more about our board and staff in the weeks ahead as we complete the legal and financial procedures to implement our merger.

The challenge for all of us concerned with the full spectrum of human rights and social justice is to focus our energies enough to make a real difference—without losing sight of the diverse and complementary struggles in which we and our allies are engaged. The AIDS pandemic, for example, both feeds on and deepens economic inequality, civil conflict, and other societal divisions. These must be addressed. We must support African efforts to rebuild public health systems, mount strong prevention campaigns, and counter the stigmatization of people with HIV/AIDS.

Those engaged in these and related struggles in African countries often work under incredibly difficult conditions. Just how difficult depends in large part on external forces that we must confront together.

For the moment we are focusing our energies on strengthening the twin functions of **AFRICA ACTION**, namely:

1. Distributing critical information about Africa and about U.S. and international policies toward Africa, in order to change the context of public debate on African affairs
2. Mobilizing people and organizations to force U.S. foreign policy makers to respond to public pressure and to demand that international institutions serve the people in whose name they claim to work.

The word "Action" in our new name is there for a reason. While we will continue to provide excellent analysis and broad coverage of African affairs, we intend to do much more in terms of working directly with you and others to build public pressure for real changes in policy. We must continue to expose the global inequities that keep Africa disadvantaged, but we must also take action to fight the structural causes of those inequities—beginning right here in the USA.

We hope you will continue to work with us, think with us, march with us, and join us in the fight against the anti-African policies of Washington and the undemocratic multilateral institutions that weigh most heavily in shaping global policies. We should not tolerate the continuation of global apartheid at the start of a new millennium.

With your support we know that AFRICA ACTION is going to make a major difference this year and in the years ahead. We much appreciate your generous contributions in recent months, and we will be relying on your support again this year.

We're going to fight for Africa's right to health; we're going to expose the obscene profits drug companies are making while letting Africans die; and we're going to win the battle for the cancellation of illegitimate debts. We remember how we fought and helped win the anti-apartheid struggle. Now, we're learning how to take it global!

I look forward to being in touch with you again soon.

Sincerely,


Salih Booker
Executive Director
Africa Action

Thank you so much for your contributions and for inspiring others to give as well!
We're going to keep this institution and this Movement growing!



Los Angeles Times

Pandering to Abortion Foes Cripples Global AIDS Effort

By SALIH BOOKER

In light of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa, what President Bush did as soon as he got to the White House was criminal: He imposed the contentious abortion politics of one narrow domestic constituency upon millions of people in the world's poor countries. Bush's decision to restrict money for international family planning will only increase unsafe procedures and the spread of AIDS in poor countries. It is tantamount to imposing a death sentence.

Adding irony here is the fact that restricting money for international family planning will not reduce abortions because no federal funding supports them anyway. The true purpose of the act is to advance the agenda of the anti-choice fundamentalists who are among Bush's strongest supporters. The consequences of this measure for Africa, Latin America and Asia, however, are dire.

The "global gag rule," as this measure is known, was first imposed by Ronald Reagan in 1984, but reversed by Bill Clinton in 1993. It denies federal funding to international organizations that provide family planning services if they also provide reproductive health education and abortion services using money from other sources.

Groups providing important health care assistance in developing countries will lose funding. Projects providing contraceptives will be cut, contributing to a greater demand for abortions. More unsafe abortions will occur as happened the last time this policy was enforced. And, with the decrease in the full range of family planning services, there will be an increase in HIV/AIDS infections.

In light of the unprecedented suffering and social destruction caused by the AIDS pandemic, especially in Africa, Bush's action is anti-African in the extreme. Rep. Nita M. Lowey (D-N.Y.) said Bush was declaring war on the reproductive health of the world's poorest women. She, Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) and others have pledged to reverse Bush's decision.

This callous policy approach to international public health care threatens the very cooperation between rich and poor nations and organizations that desperately needs strengthening if we are to address the major health challenges of the 21st century, especially AIDS. The International Planned Parenthood Federation, which is not directly involved in abortion services, currently receives \$5 million a year from Washington and is likely to be among those hardest hit by this measure. The federation lost a quarter of its funding

last time the gag rule was imposed, forcing it to cancel campaigns promoting safe sex and contraception. Its programs in Asia and Africa likely will be hit worse this time.

It is obvious that the president was emboldened to make this decision because the people who will become its casualties are poor people of color. That is the price to pay for rewarding a small band of zealots. Within days, Bush expanded the assault on global public health by initiating a review of a Clinton executive order that supports African countries' rights to import or produce cheaper generic versions of HIV/AIDS medications still under U.S. patent. A reversal of this order would be the equivalent of imposing the death penalty on 32.5 million people living with HIV in the developing world.

If they are to have any hope of survival it will depend on an increase in the reach and quality of public health care delivery systems in their countries and the availability of affordable and safe anti-retroviral drugs. It seems Bush would deny them that hope. Taken together these first steps of the Bush administration lay bare what promise to be major determinants of U.S. policy on global issues under Republican rule: appeasement of the party's hard-line ideologues and the promotion of corporate America's enormous profits over human progress. This is quite different from what the former Texas governor promised during the campaign. In the second televised presidential debate, Bush answered a question on whether the people of the world should fear the U.S. by saying, "It really depends upon how our nation conducts itself in foreign policy. If we're an arrogant nation, they'll resent us. . . . If we're a humble nation, but strong, they'll respect us."

There is no humility in this ideologically driven attempt to deny millions of people a right for which American women have a constitutional protection, the right to choose. And there is no national strength expressed in the administration's attack on a tiny portion of our nation's wealth being used for global public health. There is only cowardice and arrogance in this first act by our new president.

It makes one want to ask, "Who elected him president anyway?"

Salih Booker is executive director of the Africa Fund, the American Committee on Africa in New York and the Africa Policy Information Center in Washington. The three nonprofit organizations are entering a merger. Web site: www.africapolicy.org.

Africa Action is Born!

[Incorporating the **American Committee on Africa (ACOA)** est.1953, **The Africa Fund** est.1966, and the **Africa Policy Information Center (APIC)** est.1978]

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March 21, 2001

International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination

The United States' oldest organizations devoted to analysis and advocacy on African Affairs have successfully negotiated a consolidation of three institutions into one: **Africa Action**.

The three organizations forming this new union date back to 1953, the year South African liberation movement leader Walter Sisulu requested the creation of an organization to educate Americans about the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. We are the oldest progressive American organizations devoted to educating and mobilizing Americans to fight for positive US and international policies toward Africa and to supporting African struggles for political and economic justice, as well as combating global racism.

The American Committee on Africa was established in 1953 in New York to support the liberation struggle in South Africa. Its mandate grew rapidly to encompass solidarity work with independence movements throughout the continent. It founded The Africa Fund in 1966 to provide research, publications and public education for campaigns in support of African freedom. The Washington-based APIC was created in 1978 as the education wing of the Washington Office on Africa, itself originally an initiative of ACOA. Throughout the past decade APIC has pioneered the use of information and communication technology to support advocacy work on Africa. It became an independent organization in 1998.

Over the years, The Africa Fund and ACOA helped develop strong networks of Africa advocates among the African American faith community and black State and Municipal elected officials. Both networks were important participants in the anti-apartheid struggle. They have been active this year in pressing for the cancellation of Africa's illegitimate foreign debt and for equal access to life-saving anti-AIDS medicines. The New York organizations have also renewed a program to engage younger people in activism for Africa. To these mobilizing strengths, APIC brings a proven capacity to reach diverse public constituencies with timely information and analysis of African affairs by e-mail and through our excellent website. APIC has also helped develop and co-chairs the Advocacy Network for Africa (ADNA), a 200 plus strong coalition of organizations that monitor Congress and U.S. policy and advocate for positive changes in U.S. policies. APIC has also organized and moderated global electronic discussions on key social and economic policy issues that are helping to identify and facilitate communication among grassroots social movements in Africa concerned with the same issues the new organization will be working to address.

As **Africa Action** we will address Africa's priority issues by providing information and mobilizing for action to help shape new US and multilateral policies to support Africa's efforts to achieve economic, political and social justice in the 21st century. Shortly we will launch a campaign to support Africa's Right to Health as one of our major efforts. We will continue to share information and analysis on a wide range of African affairs to shape public policy debates. We will expand and strengthen our networks, empowering them to participate in influencing US and international policies toward Africa, democratizing US foreign policy and holding international institutions accountable for their actions.

The following are lists of the staff and Board of Directors of Africa Action.

Africa Action Staff

Salih Booker, **Executive Director** (analyst and activist; media commentator; former staff member in US Congress, TransAfrica, The Ford Foundation and Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations)

William Minter, **Senior Research Fellow** (researcher, analyst, activist, author, information technology consultant; books include: King Solomon's Mines Revisited, 1986, and Apartheid's Contras, 1994)

Aleah Bacquie, **Program Director/Religious Action Network** (religious and civil rights activist; former Social Justice Ministry Director at The Riverside Church in New York and Media Officer at the South African Council of Churches)

Vicki Ferguson, **Program Director/Public Education and Outreach** (activist combating racism, sexism, & homophobia; trainer in gender analysis, and electronic and grassroots advocacy; former conference and demonstrations coordinator)

Muntu Matsimela, **Program Director/State and Municipal Network** (lawyer, activist and organizer on domestic and African human rights issues; former managing attorney for The Osborne Association providing legal services for HIV-positive prisoners and their families)

Aisha Satterwhite, **Program Director/Youth Action Network** (editor, researcher and writer; former Associate Editor of American Legacy magazine)

Ann-Louise Colgan, **Research Associate** (MA Graduate of University of Limerick, Ireland; former student leader on human rights issues; with APIC since 1999)

Annie King, **Financial Officer/Office Manager** (Church Administrator, One Way Church, NY; Financial Advisor, Project People Foundation, NY; with ACOA/The Africa Fund since the 1960's)

Sarah Ciapponi-Godfrey, **Administrative Associate** (BA Graduate of Trinity College, Washington, DC; with APIC since 1998)

Nechesa Morgan, **Administrative Associate** (BA Graduate of American University, Washington, DC; with The Africa Fund since 2000)

Laura Bryant, **Research Assistant** (BA Graduate of Syracuse University, NY; researcher in conflict resolution and faith-based advocacy; former development worker with African and Latino refugee communities in South Africa and the US)

Jeff Manchester, **Bookkeeper** (with APIC since 1995; former Accountant for Kraft General Foods)

Africa Action Board of Directors

Rev. Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker, **President** (Senior Pastor, Canaan Baptist Church, Harlem, NY; former Executive Director for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference)

Adwoa Dunn-Mouton, **Vice President** (Consultant; former Staff Director, Senate Subcommittee on Africa, US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations)

Marvin Rich, **Treasurer** (Program Director, National Coalition Against Censorship)

Carolyn Long, **Secretary** (Consultant; former Vice President, InterAction, Washington, DC)

Elizabeth Calvin (Executive Secretary, Women and Children's Office, Mission Contexts and Relationships,

General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Church)

Jim Cason (Journalist, La Jornada; Political Action Co-chair, Association of Concerned Africa Scholars)

Fantu Cheru (Professor of African and Development Studies, American University, Washington, DC; Independent Expert on Effects of Structural Adjustment and Debt for the UN High Commission for Human Rights)

Cecelie Counts (Assistant Director, Department of Education, AFL-CIO)

James Early (Director, Cultural Heritage Policy, Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, the Smithsonian Institute; Chair of the Board of Directors, Institute for Policy Studies, Washington, DC)

Bob Edgar (Professor, African Studies Department, Howard University, Washington, DC)

Prexy Nesbitt (Program Officer, Center for International Solidarity, AFL-CIO, Johannesburg, South Africa)

Andrew Norman (Former President, Scholarship, Education and Defense Fund for Racial Equality)

Rev. Dr. Franklyn Richardson (Senior Pastor, Grace Baptist Church, Mount Vernon, NY)

Venita Vinson (former Vice Chair, Colorado State Democratic Party)

Canon Frederick B. Williams (Rector, Church of the Intercession, NY)