

THE  
WASHINGTON OFFICE ON AFRICA

110 MARYLAND AVENUE, N.E. • SUITE 509 • WASHINGTON, D.C. 20002  
PHONE (202) 546-7961 • FAX (202) 546-1545 • E-MAIL WOA@IGC.APC.ORG

1972-1997 ~ *Twenty-Five Years of Mobilizing Africa's Constituency*

April 4, 1997

Dear WOA/APIC supporter:

**This is a tough, tough letter to write. After seven years with the Washington Office on Africa and the Africa Policy Information Center (WOA/APIC), with five of those years as Executive Director, I am leaving.** I have been offered a position as Congressional Liaison Officer with the African Development Foundation (ADF) and I have accepted. My new position allows me to continue working for US policies that are aimed at supporting grassroots African initiatives and enhancing African self-reliance, but does so without the pressure, stress, and long hours that characterize the progressive, non-profit environment. And with two children—ages 5 and 2—a more predictable work setting has become extremely important to me.

I leave WOA/APIC satisfied with the level and quality of work we have been able to produce during these seven challenging years, yet still humbled by the privilege of being allowed to lead these two extremely important organizations. The enclosed Washington Office on Africa 1996 Annual Report provides a snapshot of our most recent activities. A 1996 APIC report will be produced and distributed shortly.

I also leave, however, extremely excited by what the future holds for *both* organizations. After the initial difficulty and disarray of the post-Cold-War/post-apartheid era, a number of interesting possibilities are emerging. Anyone familiar with the current state of the Africa advocacy community knows that it is premature to claim clear directions or even the existence of fully developed alternative political visions. There are, however, fresh voices from grassroots communities in Africa and the US which are moving toward developing new partnerships and information-sharing techniques.

For example, just a few days ago I received a fax from the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund, which historically has worked to help African-American farmers in the South retain their land, but is now also working in partnership with an agricultural cooperative in The Gambia. From the Berkeley-based US/South Africa Sister Community Project to the New York-based Religious Action Network of the American Committee on Africa creative linkages and substantive networks are developing.

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**BOARD OF DIRECTORS:** Dan C. Hoffman, *Africa Office, United Church of Christ, United Church Board for World Ministries*; Barbara Green, *Presbyterian Church (USA)*; Anna Rhee, *United Methodist Church, Board of Global Ministries, Women's Division*; Mark Brown, *Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*; Jon Chapman, *Presbyterian Church (USA), Africa Office*; Jennifer Davis, *American Committee on Africa*; Bill Dyer, *Missionaries of Africa*; Nicolas Gourdet, *Africa Office, Disciples of Christ, Division of Overseas Ministries*; Mervin Keeney, *Church of the Brethren*; Archie LeMone, *Progressive National Baptist Convention, Home Mission Board*; Jay Lintner, *United Church of Christ, Office of Church in Society*; Terence Miller, *Maryknoll Justice and Peace Office*; Adwoa Dunn Mouton, *Africa Policy Information Center*; Daniel Olson, *Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Africa Office*; Stephen Price, *Society for African Missions, SMA Fathers*; Peggy Hutchinson, *United Methodist Church, Board of Global Ministries*.



On the political side here in Washington, we continue to face uphill battles on many fronts. Budget-cutting, indifference and uncritical free-market assumptions threaten new creative options that a post-Cold-War era should promise for sustainable and equitable development and trade. Africa's pro-democracy struggles often receive lip service in Washington, but rarely the substantive support they need. Reaction to crisis is most often ad hoc, crippled by US failure to participate responsibly in the UN and other multilateral institutions, and insufficiently attentive to the range and diversity of African opinion. These are *not* new battles, but the context is new. Many aspects of the new political environment are hostile to the human values for which we stand. But there are hopeful signs as well, in a growing number of voices and arguments asserting that the US is required to develop human-centered policies for an interdependent world. As WOA and APIC sort out their place in this new terrain, I'm sure that both will continue to affect US policy toward the African continent positively.

There are many other things that I'd like to say: Thank you for your support to both organizations. Thank you for your patience when we have been late in fulfilling our subscription requirements. Thank you for the work that you have done to change US policy toward the African continent. But I think the most important message I'd like to convey is that your support for the Washington Office on Africa and the Africa Policy Information Center remains critical. I'm leaving my salaried position here, but my first act as outgoing director is to join both organizations. My checks are enclosed and I hope that you will also take this opportunity to renew or increase your support! Thank you again.

*A luta continua.*



Imani Countess  
Executive Director

Enclosures: WOA 1996 Annual Report  
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