



CELEBRATING  
50 YEARS OF  
ACTIVISM FOR AFRICA!



AFRICA ACTION  
GALA PROGRAM  
OCTOBER 3, 2003

# AFRICA ACTION

Tonight, we come together to celebrate 50 years of collective "Activism for Africa." Our theme this evening is "Sankofa," an Adinkra symbol from the Akan of West Africa, which means "wisdom, knowledge, and the people's heritage," learning from the past to move towards the future.

In order to most effectively move forward in the fight for human development, debt cancellation, AIDS funding, reparations, and peace, we must reflect on the wisdom and knowledge we have gained in the past 50 years. The successful struggles of African people to gain independence from colonization and liberation from tyranny supported by activists in the U.S. offer us many important lessons. By fully understanding the trials and celebrating the achievements of the past, we can find strength, direction, and inspiration for the future.

In 2001, three of the oldest Africa advocacy groups in the United States merged to become a new organization-**AFRICA ACTION**-working for economic, political, and social justice throughout the African continent.

In 1953, the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) was founded in New York by a group of black and white civil rights activists who organized support for the historic Defiance Campaign in South Africa the previous year. ACOA together with the Africa Fund, which was founded in 1966, provided key support for independence movements throughout Africa. Both

## TONIGHT'S PROGRAM

### WELCOME

#### THE STORY OF AFRICA ACTION

George Houser, *founding Executive Director  
American Committee on Africa and The Africa Fund (1955-1981)*

Imani Countess, *former Executive Director  
Africa Policy Information Center (1992-1997)*

#### AFRICAN REFLECTIONS ON THE ROLE OF AFRICA ACTION

Bishop Mvume Dandala, *General Secretary  
All Africa Conference of Churches*

Emira Woods, *Executive Director  
Foreign Policy and Focus*

#### 50 YEARS OF LEADERSHIP IN ACTIVISM FOR AFRICA

George Houser, *founding Executive Director of American Committee on Africa and  
The Africa Fund (1955-1981)*

Jennifer Davis, *former Executive Director of American Committee on Africa and  
The Africa Fund (1981-2000)*

Ted Lockwood, *former Executive Director of Washington Office on Africa (1972-1980)  
and Washington Office on Africa Educational Fund (1978-1980)*

Jean Sindab, *former Executive Director of Washington Office on Africa (1980-1985)  
and Washington Office on Africa Educational Fund (1980-1985)*

Damu Smith, *former Executive Director of Washington Office on Africa (1985-1989),  
and Washington Office on Africa Educational Fund (1985-1989)*

Aubrey McCutcheon, III, *former Executive Director of Washington Office on Africa  
(1989-1991), and Washington Office on Africa Educational Fund (1989-1991)*

Imani Countess, *former Executive Director of Africa Policy Information Center  
(1992-1997), and Washington Office on Africa (1992-1997)*

Pearl Alice Marsh, *former Executive Director, Africa Policy Information Center  
(1997-1999)*

#### THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

*Africa Action Staff*

#### CLOSING REMARKS

James Early, *President, Africa Action Board  
Director of Cultural Heritage Policy  
Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Smithsonian Institution*

#### AFRICA ACTION, continued

organizations built strong networks of US-based advocates that became crucial participants in the anti-apartheid struggle.

The Africa Policy Information Center (APIC), founded in Washington, DC in 1978, (initially as the Washington Office on Africa Education Fund, WOA-EF) pioneered the use of new information and communication technology to support advocacy work on Africa. When these three organizations merged, their complementary strengths became a solid framework to organize activism for Africa in the decades ahead.

This year marks a half-century since the founding of AFRICA ACTION's oldest parent organization. The struggle today is no longer against colonialism and South African apartheid, but against global apartheid-the worldwide system of entrenched inequalities and racism that keeps Africa poor. Global issues, from the AIDS pandemic to the failure of peacekeeping to the unjust and unpayable foreign debt, have their most devastating consequences in Africa.

In partnership with activists throughout the United States and with civil society organizations in Africa, AFRICA ACTION is working to change American foreign policy and the policies of international institutions in order to support African struggles for peace and development.





*Africa Action*

*1634 Eye Street, NW, Suite 810*

*Washington, DC 20006*

*202-546-7961*

*[www.africaaction.org](http://www.africaaction.org)*