

TRANSAFRICA IN BOSTON

The premier TransAfrica chapter grew out of the local arm of the TransAfrica Action Alert system in 1979, set up by National Board member Willard Johnson and directed by now Boston City Councilman Charles Yancey. Formal incorporation of Boston's chapter occurred in 1981 as the TransAfrica Boston Support Group.

The chapter quickly gained local and national attention with its spectacularly successful Black Ambassadors program in Feb. 1983, directed by Chapter Treasurer Marilyn Carrington. An over-capacity turnout of seven hundred people came to an afternoon colloquium to hear 18 of the 22 living African Americans who had served the U.S. at the Ambassadorial level discuss outstanding foreign policy issues of the day, and tell of their career experiences. That evening over eleven hundred people attended our banquet to honor these Ambassadors in one of Boston's largest ever programs devoted to international relations. As a result of this program the National Association of Black Former U.S. Ambassadors was created.

The Chapter also played an important role in securing passage of the country's first comprehensive divestment of state pension funds from South Africa related holdings, followed by some of the earliest complete City divestment and selective purchase bills. The Chapter's tax exemptable affiliate, the Boston TransAfrica Forum, played a key role in planning the Mandela visit to Boston. We established and supervised the merchandizing operations in connection with the visit, which generated nearly \$80,000 for the tour as well as substantial sums for seven community based anti-apartheid organizations.

Our Chapter is now an established part of the Boston scene. It has a substantial membership, with over thirtyfive community leaders having been elected to serve one or more three year terms on our Board, under Presidencies of Willard Johnson, James Woodard and Pearl Robinson. Recent Chapter public education programs have concerned Elections in Haiti, Transition in Liberia, The Implacations of the Gulf War for the black world, and Civil Rights in Kenya. We have monthly open Board/membership meetings, publishes periodic "Legislative Watch" bulletins and edits a monthly column of articles called TransAfrica Report that is published by a number of black community newspapers across the country. We are called upon frequently for comment and analysis by the local print and broadcast media.