

Interview with Sylvia Hill

"People have a range of ways they express support. It's everything from sitting in front of the TV and saying, 'right on,' to physically being there. Now if you want them there, you've got to work to get them there." — Sylvia Hill

"What is significant, from the organizer's point of view, is that the person expresses public opposition instead of private disdain for policies. The challenge for the organizer is to find that creative space that will permit ordinary citizens to express collective opposition. Instead of expressing isolated opposition at home or in the classroom, it is the task of the organizer to create venues for internal feelings of disdain to be expressed publicly. This, the Free South Africa Movement accomplished; and therefore, one of our profound lessons of this movement is that one should never underestimate the power of symbolic protests to create a political climate for political change." — Sylvia Hill[1]

Introduction

Sylvia Hill is professor of criminal justice at the University of the District of Colombia and part-time faculty member of The Union Institute in Cincinnati, Ohio. She received her doctorate in education from the University of Oregon in 1971 after having majored in psychology at Howard University. She is one of the long-term activists whose key role in Africa solidarity work has been recognized by colleagues, although little noted in the public record. She serves on the board of TransAfrica Forum.[2]

Hill and her fellow local activists in the Southern Africa Support Project (SASP) were at the heart of the Free South Africa Movement that brought demonstrators to be arrested at the South African Embassy every day for a year beginning on November 21, 1984. Hill was also one of the key organizers for the Sixth Pan African Congress[3] in Dar es Salaam in 1974, and for Nelson Mandela's tour of the United States following his release from prison in 1990.

Local organizing in Washington, DC is particularly complex, since the focus on local action is often blurred by the presence of so many organizations and offices focusing on the national government. After an initial abortive effort to help bring together a national coalition on Southern Africa, Hill and the SASP core group were insistent in defining their top priority as the local community. While they recognized the complementary role of other organizations focused on Africa, and developed particularly close ties with TransAfrica during the period of the Free South Africa Movement, they argued that developing a local base of understanding and support for African liberation was essential. They were also explicit in acknowledging the complex roles of race, class, and gender in defining the environment for organizing.

The interview below focuses on the organizing in the late 1970s and early 1980s that led up to the Free South Africa Movement demonstrations, and then on the first visit of Nelson Mandela to the United States, a tour for which Hill acted as the associate director.

In both cases Hill reflects on the behind-the-scenes work necessary to create public events that give an opportunity for ordinary people to have a political impact. The work of SASP on political education and fundraising for liberation movements was, in effect, "building a kind of social infrastructure of ties to institutions and sectors in the city" that later made the demonstrations at the South African Embassy possible. And in the Mandela trip, which came after the anti-apartheid cause had reached the height of its popularity, there was the complex task of reconciling multiple agendas for participation, in addition to the primary goal of the organizers to move U.S. policymakers toward policies opposing apartheid.

Hill sees the diversity of organizations and agendas involved in the anti-apartheid campaign as a necessary consequence of the difficulty of the tasks and the complexity of U.S. society. She is also reflective rather than resentful in referring to the tensions involved in the high-profile Mandela trip.

The involvement of the Free South Africa Movement activists, Hill commented in a later conference paper, came out of "a tradition of activism and a commitment to internationalism. Some of us were activists in the civil rights movement. Others were key activists in organizing the Sixth Pan African Congress while others had served in the Venceremos Brigade in solidarity with Cuba. Many of our political views and work methodologies were nurtured by the national liberation movements of Africa, the Caribbean and South America. [And] we have a long tradition of Pan-African thought and activism that guides our international solidarity. Thus, international solidarity, as the late Samora Machel said, is about mutual aid between people fighting for the same objectives." [4]

The Free South Africa Movement, Hill reflected in that paper, necessarily concentrated on the political and strategic organizational demands of the time, that is, ending U.S. foreign policy support of apartheid. But it did not build sustained organizational strength that could carry over into the post-apartheid era. Redefining international solidarity in the age of globalization and the era of one superpower, and finding ways that diverse forces committed to social justice can converge to make an impact, remains an open challenge.

Additional primary sources on the Free South Africa Movement and SASP include articles by Sylvia Hill and two other SASP members, Cecelie Counts and Joseph Jordan, in a 1995 special issue of the Oakland, California-based *CrossRoads* magazine.[5] A set of papers from SASP, which went out of existence as an organization in the early 1990s, is housed in the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University, but has not yet been processed. Other papers are with Hill or other SASP members.

Another earlier interview with Hill focuses on her background, her involvement with the Sixth Pan African Congress, and the early years of organizing in Washington, DC.

William Minter
February 2005

Transcript

Interviewee: Sylvia Hill

Interviewer: William Minter

Location: Washington, DC, USA

Date: August 12, 2004

Q: In this interview we're going to concentrate primarily on the period of the late 1970s and early 1980s. In the earlier interview we talked about antecedents to that. Please tell us more about the Southern Africa Support Project (SASP), which was described also in the earlier interview. I believe you said SASP as SASP eventually emerged in 1978.

HILL: SANC [Southern Africa News Collective]—

Q: Had been in existence earlier.

HILL: Right.

Q: During that time period, what were the major activities of the organization? In the earlier period there was the news collective and getting out information. This later period, just to set the context, was the period after the independence of Angola and Mozambique. One had had the Soweto uprising in South Africa and the beginning of response to that. But Zimbabwe was not yet independent. Namibia was not yet independent. South Africa was still under the apartheid regime, and at the national level, one had, during this period, first a Democratic administration and then the Reagan administration. So over that six-year period, what were the major activities of your group?

HILL: The major activities were really trying to frame our organizing in terms of building people-to-people ties. Particularly we wanted to emphasize that there were large numbers of refugees in the region, not because of natural disasters but because of the political regime of Rhodesia and the apartheid regime. We also were trying to grapple with how to explain apartheid. At that time that word was not a household word as it is now. And we felt strongly that we wanted the public to know the word, but we had difficulty trying to think about the best way of describing the word. Do we talk about it in terms of Jim Crow experiences here in the United States? Do we talk about it as slavery? Exactly what images were we trying to grapple with?

So as one part of our work, we did a lot of meeting around trying to craft the content of what we were actually saying and trying to give some priority to the content of what we were saying. Because politically, while there were enormous quantities of information to know about any geographical region, you just have to decide what's going to be your priority and what you're trying to have the public understand, and then you don't try to learn or teach the rest, in some sense. So we spent a lot of time doing that in the early phases of our organizing.

For the most part we had analyzed the community of Washington, DC into sectors, and labor was an important sector. We had identified about 10 churches that we thought were key churches to build relationships with. And youth was always a difficult sector.

Q: Did you include university students?

HILL: It was really much less university students and much more youth in various—either church or schooling situations. But certainly we worked with universities as well. So after that analysis, then we did presentations at churches, at Sunday schools. We had slide shows that we used for visuals.

Q: These were ones you put together yourselves?

HILL: Yes.

Q: Are those still available somewhere? Are they in the Moorland-Spingarn archive?

HILL: No, they're not. And they're not fully complete because we started using pieces of them for different visual presentations, so they are dismantled themselves now. But I think I have some slides of what we used. We had joined with the Howard University radio station, WHUR, to host what we called a radiothon. And the radiothon was used to raise funds for refugees, really Zimbabwean refugees that were in Mozambique. Later, Howard University's television station featured films and interviews on the struggles in Southern Africa as part of our organizing efforts.

Q: What was the first year that was done? Do you remember?

HILL: 1978.

Q: But you didn't do it constantly, you did it at a specific time of year, right?

HILL: Yes, at a specific time. We had what was called Southern Africa Week.

Q: When was that?

HILL: It varied. It varied, as we learned what the weather would do and not do for the success of your event. But basically what one week would consist of would be a church activity at some particular churches at different times. We tried to do it at several churches. The radiothon, which was a fundraiser, and the different DJs of each show would host a member from our group or some guest that we would have, and the person would briefly speak about the situation and characterize why it was necessary to make contributions. So we would raise funds that way, through the radiothon. We also joined with the Black Film Institute at the University of the District of Columbia to sponsor film showings with discussions. We had youth dance-a-thons where they danced for hours in order for contributions to be made towards a particular campaign. The National Black Police Association, along with many others, helped us chaperone the dance-a-thons.

Many of the popular Go Go bands such as Rare Essence and the Junk Yard Band would perform without pay at these youth dance-a-thons in solidarity with the struggle. We had annual races called Run for Justice since many of us ran and found that was a sector willing to participate in events in support of the struggle. In 1988 we published a pamphlet, "Bringing the Struggle Home: Organizing for Action on Southern Africa" in order to capture our different forms of linking the struggle. Sometimes we had outdoor events where people, during the time of the radiothon, people could drive by and donate funds. So we often had that at the Freedom Plaza.

Q: Can you explain where that is?

HILL: Oh, the Freedom Plaza would be on Pennsylvania Avenue between 13th and 14th Streets, Northwest, across from the City Council and mayor's office. Council members would come to the venue and make a solidarity statement during the radiothon. And we had drives for donation of clothing and donation of medicines. We worked with doctors and the National Medical Association[6] to collect medicines that we sent to the region, and educational supplies. We had gospel concerts where we showed slide shows and a pastor spoke on the struggle in the region. In essence our strategy was to center the struggle in the mainstream of black political life.

Q: Before 1980 this was basically for Zimbabweans in Mozambique? And what were your channels for getting supplies there?

HILL: Well, in 1978 I had visited Mozambique with a delegation that Bob van Lierop hosted. The liberation movement actually had an organized office for receiving those supplies.

Q: And you shipped them yourselves?

HILL: Yes, we did. It was quite a challenge of trying to—

Q: I would imagine.

HILL: We got containers. The union helped a lot with this.

Q: Which union?

HILL: The Longshoremen's Union in Baltimore basically explained to us what we had to do, which was to purchase these containers—well, you rent them. And then you packed all your materials in the containers. Now, I don't have that kind of detail because somebody else in the group probably coordinated that activity.

Q: But that was how it was done. Did that kind of program continue after Zimbabwean independence?

HILL: Yes. Because then Angola, the Angolan struggle between UNITA [7] and the Angolan government created another set of humanitarian needs, so we also raised supplies and sent them there as well. By 1987 we hosted the May 18–25 ninth annual week focusing on "A Region Under Siege." This was during the aftermath of the South Africa state of emergency where an estimated 25,000 people were detained and approximately 10,000 of them were children. We were also conscious that since 1980 the apartheid regime was invading neighboring countries, so we viewed the political conditions as a regional problem.

Q: You sent supplies to Luanda?

HILL: Yes. Also, in 1986 we collected \$6,000 to purchase medical supplies for women and children in the SWAPO[8] refugee camps in Angola.

Q: And that was after 1980?

HILL: Yes.

Q: Were those the basic activities that you focused on during those years?

HILL: Yes.

Q: For ANC [the African National Congress]?[9]

HILL: Yes, we did work with the ANC as well.

Q: Shipped some to Tanzania?

HILL: No, we did not do any shipping to Tanzania for the ANC. Most of our work for the ANC actually got harder, as the struggle escalated. We got into the country by individual courier, so we didn't send products so much as money for educational and material aid.

Q: So essentially fundraising and public education. To what extent were you involved—you as an organization—in the various divestment and bank boycott activities during that time? Because there were those going on in DC as well. You spoke in the earlier interview briefly about the DC City Council. Were you also focused on that or was that other people who were doing that?

HILL: Other people were leading the campaigns and we participated. We could not carry on a big divestment campaign. We just didn't have that kind of infrastructure, because actually we had no staff. We were all working other places and most of us had family responsibilities. During the time of the week-long campaign, we usually hired a student, somebody. At different times we would then even rent an office for a short period of time. But most of the time we met around kitchen tables. For large meetings, we also met at Howard University in the School of Engineering and in the offices of the African Studies Program at Howard University.

Q: Do you remember who were the people primarily focused on that? Was it specific organizations or coalitions or particular people on the city council who took the leadership on divestment?

HILL: Within our group Sandra Hill was the person most involved with the city council divestment. So I'm not the best person to ask on that. As a group we focused more on grassroots organizing. We did do some collaboration. For example, the AFSCME union,[10] particularly the secretary-treasurer Bill Lucy, was very helpful. For example, we were able to get Congressman Conyers[11] to host a reception dealing with the Zimbabwean issue. At that time a representative from ZANU[12] spoke. The Black Caucus, as such, was not grappling with the international issues in that region at that time, not in a way of a congressman publicly hosting a reception on the issue. I think it was certainly Mr. Lucy's reputation and institutional presence that gave an opportunity or an avenue for this to happen.

Q: Do you remember what year that was? '78, '79?

HILL: No, but I could check.

Q: How would you characterize the political climate you faced, particularly as one compares the period under Carter and the period under Reagan? Was that relevant to what you were doing at your level? Did that make a difference?

HILL: It was our feeling that in order to influence the direction of the United States within a context of imperialism, it was important for the Third World, and in this context particularly Africa was our concern, to be strengthened. Just from a social change point of view, you needed not just internal voices of opposition, but you needed external—nation-state forces of opposition outside the United States.

Q: In the U.S.?

HILL: Internal U.S., voices of opposition. You needed external voices of opposition as well. We, at least within the Southern Africa News Collective, viewed ourselves as strengthening those voices of opposition with our solidarity with the national liberation movements. We also did not believe that Sub-Saharan Africa could begin to reverse the legacies of slavery and colonialism until it eliminated colonialism and eliminated apartheid. So at one level of our analysis the difference between the Carter administration and Reagan administration was very little.

But I must say that the hostility that the Reagan administration [showed] and its dismantling of unions—I mean it was such a clear-cut agenda that we felt a sense of urgency to challenge U.S. foreign policy. It was a political period where—I think what's most interesting upon reflection was that in all of that period when we were doing our organizing, we were really building a kind of social infrastructure of ties to institutions and sectors in the city, which later enabled us to, I think, carry on those demonstrations at the [South African] Embassy. And later the demonstrations at Deak Perera [because of

their sale of South African] Krugerrands and at the corporate offices of Shell Oil [because of its investments in South Africa].

Another trend that was happening was that there were increased numbers of young black activist types who became congressional staffers. And Adwoa [Dunn-Mouton] could talk more about that in some level of detail. But our presence—"our" meaning a set of young people who had come out of certain kinds of political experiences and who [were] internationalists in some sense, whether they defined it as Pan Africanism or anti-imperialist—they had concern about U.S. foreign policy in Africa. But more than anything, they were not necessarily careerist in the traditional sense of the word. They wanted to influence U.S. foreign policy, and so they used their time, I think, while working on [Capitol] Hill to understand how Congress worked and how you could influence change by knowing how it works.

And so there were lots of battles within the legislative context that are significant in and of themselves in terms of influencing U.S. foreign policy. They were not a radical shift in any kind of way from the main imperialist agenda of the USA. But they were small movements. So, for example, the push for having women considered as a primary group in the allocation of U.S. aid was a significant kind of effort by a variety of people on Capitol Hill.

Q: So you've basically said that as far as substantive policy, you didn't see that much difference between the Carter and Reagan periods. But on the other hand, Reagan coming in—can I get you to elaborate on that? My perception is that it came as a shock that in some sense helped mobilize people. Is that your perception?

HILL: I think that's the way I recall it as well. Particularly that second election, which was just before the Embassy campaign. Remember, we had Kirkpatrick—

Q: Jeanne Kirkpatrick.[13]

HILL: Jeanne Kirkpatrick, who was speaking at, I think it was the Urban League Annual Conference, told an African American audience that they should not be worried about foreign policy. They had too many other problems to worry about. In effect, that was her political sentiment. But I recall that the Reagan administration had an assertive and aggressive agenda on behalf of the white minority regime. And if it was not Reagan's idea, it certainly was the political agenda of the political operatives in his administration. And this was true in Nicaragua and Cuba, so that the sheer force of their agenda, the political agenda with the devastating humanitarian consequences, was overwhelming. And as I recall we felt that if we didn't challenge it—not that we thought we were going to win, but we just felt that we had to challenge it as a show of opposition. This was also the time of Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition. There were lots of different trends happening. For example, the Central America struggle was quite visible. And the Rainbow Coalition.[14]

Q: Let me move to another question. In terms of your public education, you talked about how do you explain the struggles, how do you explain apartheid. But the name of the coalition, the Southern Africa Support Project, also reflects the regional context. Can you reflect on how you succeeded or failed in explaining to people that apartheid affected not only South Africa, but also the region?

HILL: Well, every aspect of the region was difficult to explain for the general public because there was, in the beginning, such little knowledge. In fact if you did a news search, even on National Public Radio, you would have found few if any mentions of the word "Africa" or news-oriented stories [on Africa]. We thought we really had a victory when NPR had a story about Africa, because it just was invisible. Sub-Saharan Africa was invisible in the media. So we had to struggle with the first and foremost issue—how do you characterize the problem and not have people end up thinking that the people themselves are a charity case? So it was very much Samora Machel's maxim that we are struggling for common objectives, not for charitable allocations of goods and materials, that guided our work.

We spent a lot of time on that issue. And it really is an important political issue, because it's very important that people understand politically why people are in the inhumane and unjust conditions that they find themselves in. That it is not because some fault of their own that they ended up there. And that's very key in this society because this society has a very "fault-based" psychology approach to explaining poverty and failure in the educational system and so forth. So we were conscious about that. I have no idea whether we were successful or not successful in that sense, but we tried very hard to not simply characterize people as needing help because something was at fault with them.

The second challenge was trying to show the relationship between social conditions here and social conditions there. Now, in South Africa we probably had our strongest base because we could collaborate, we could talk about what unions were experiencing there, what union workers were experiencing here. And we even had a large, well-attended speak-out on workers' issues where union workers here talked about their issues. We didn't have a union representative from South Africa. We had somebody to characterize what the struggle was with the area in South Africa.

The third concern we had was trying to capture the realities of racism without demonizing white people. And trying to characterize racism in a way that the systemic nature of racism was clear in terms of its institutional policies and practices, as distinct from having people end up thinking just an evil white person did this or that or the other. It was easy to [be simplistic about] colonialism or South Africa, if one is not careful in how we are characterizing images to people about the nature of power and power relationships.

Fourthly, we had a very strong emphasis on women leadership. For example, it was the policy of SASP that we always had co-leaders and it would be male and female. This was part of our collective work strategy.

Now, the successes. It's a political climate that you're trying to create. And you're competing against very powerful communication forces that really capture people's time and imagination. It's a very consuming society, that for an international solidarity group to try to capture a little space to build sentiment, get political understanding, and a willingness to act, is a difficult objective.

But you did begin to hear in music references to South Africa or to Zimbabwe. This music was popular music, as such.

Q: Can you cite particular artists or particular songs?

HILL: At the time when we were doing radiothons and the Southern Africa Week, radio stations would give you air time to advertise your event. Sandra Rattley, who was a communications person, would do these public affairs announcements using artists who might have a reference to any one of the countries that you might be organizing around. Because each year we did a different country—sometimes it would be Zimbabwe Week, it might be Namibia Day, or South Africa Day. So sometimes we used a regional name, and within that region we might focus on a country per day. So I'd have to check. I can remember this song by Terri Collier on "My heart is in Zimbabwe." Sandra Rattley did most of those public service announcements in the early years using Sweet Honey in the Rock and Gil Scott Heron, for example.

Q: Back to the question of South Africa and Southern Africa. My impression as one looks back is that through the '80s, the height of consciousness was reached about South Africa and about apartheid, but that the number of people who would recognize even the country names Zimbabwe or Mozambique was much less. But in, say, the churches you concentrated on or the unions you concentrated on there was a core who would recognize the names of countries and leaders other than South Africa.

HILL: They wouldn't recognize leaders necessarily. We really didn't focus on leaders a lot. Unless, for example, Samora Machel, because of his writings on international solidarity, quotes were very useful in our organizing. So if you looked at documents that we had, you would see his name. But we were also against the "great man" theory of making historical change and did not try to convey that the struggle would be won because of the greatness of one person, but rather we tried to celebrate the people's involvement in the struggle. I think one of the reasons why South Africa had such an appeal is the image of Mandela and of Winnie Mandela as people representing a resistance movement of people. The campaign of civil disobedience lasted a long time and captured their spirit of resistance in the midst of widespread people resistance.

Q: You're talking about primarily in the '80s?

HILL: In the '80s.

Q: With the internal struggle and its visibility?

HILL: Its visibility. Remember when Ted Koppel went to South Africa to air *Nightline* for a week? That was incredible. In the international context it may seem like nothing, but again I think that we have to recall that when you really look at the representation of Africa in the news, whether print or visual or electronic, it was very little. Very little. There were articles in some of the black press, like the *Amsterdam News* regularly carried articles. Certainly the *Nation of Islam* newspaper regularly had something. But it was not in the mainstream media.

Q: And that affected local organizing, of course.

HILL: Yes. Very often media affirms that political issues are important because they're represented in the media. It also educates or miseducates.

Q: So in a sense, the effects of local organizing could be amplified when the mainstream media kicked in.

HILL: Absolutely.

Q: And when the mainstream media didn't reinforce that, one was fighting upstream.

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HILL: Yes. It was quite dialectical. Even when we did the demonstrations that day, the beginning day to that year of the campaign of civil disobedience, we had two or three people who called a newspaper or called the television and said, I just passed by and saw these people demonstrating, and I am trying to figure out what is happening on 30th [Street] and Massachusetts Avenue [location 500 yards from the South African Embassy in compliance with the city's law on demonstrations]. And that was to put political pressure on the media that this was a story that they should cover. And most of them did respond.

Q: In terms of the local media to start with, and then it grew from there.

HILL: Right. It expanded quickly to national and international media.

Q: You mentioned earlier that the ties you made during this period of trying to reach out and educate people were the ones that you then drew on to bring people out for the demonstrations. Could you elaborate on this? Were there other allied groups you were in touch with who were working on Africa-specific things? How would you sketch that out for people?

HILL: Okay. Well, I think that the organizational infrastructure of groups who worked on Africa was significant. While I have this in my mind, I want to point out that had any of us been one organization, we could have never done what was ultimately accomplished, right? Because it would have been too large a bureaucracy and it would have just gotten

mired down in trying to nurture the bureaucracy as opposed to being free enough to focus on one's organizational skills and political objectives.

And then as well I think we honed our skills in different ways. For example, the Washington Office on Africa, the American Committee on Africa.

Q: Up in New York.

HILL: Yes, up in New York. So you had TransAfrica and SASP. You had Gay McDougall's group. At that time it was two different groups.

Q: The Lawyers' Committee?

HILL: The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights under Law. Am I missing anybody? But those were the primary groups—and the divestment, but that's ACOA as well. But just put divestment campaign because it interfaced with interfaith groups.

Q: There were a variety of groups that were involved in divestment—

HILL: —that did divestment. Which was a pretty complicated intellectual exercise that required a lot of research and organizing and presenting material in ways that would be useful to different types of organizers. For example, shareholders versus demonstrators at a protest rally. So in many ways each of these anti-apartheid groups had different strengths. SASP mainly focused on the local organizing and mobilization. But the demands of, say, the larger anti-apartheid campaigns required that organizers or workers be pretty proficient at lobbying and advocacy and figuring out what the issues were, that folks would be fairly linked to national organizations who may not have this as their primary agenda of work, but [who could provide] a phone number and a body sitting there [that] somebody could reach.

Q: Can you give an example? You mean national organizations such as civil rights groups?

HILL: Right. Those, the NAACP, the Southern Christian Leadership Association, the Delta Sorority, the AKA Sorority. All of those groups, once the campaign became more visible, came on board.

Q: But in a sense you already had networks or ties where you sort of knew who to call, even if they weren't coming to your meetings and you didn't see them every day.

HILL: Right. Absolutely. That network was there. And different communities across the nation had different levels of organizing that had been taking place. So, for example, in Pittsburgh there was a group, a peace organization actually, that had been demonstrating at the South African Consulate for about five years before we thought up the campaign at the Embassy.

Q: And you were in touch with those people?

HILL: Yes.

Q: Was Dennis Brutus already there at that time? Was he involved in that group?

HILL: He was not there yet, I don't think. They worked on a variety of issues, but that was one of their issues as part of their group. So there were those kinds of groups. A group in Houston, there was a group in Virginia. What part of Virginia? They were in Portsmouth, Virginia. And they regularly raised supplies to go to Angola and did an enormous amount of educational activities, and they did that within the context of Pan Africanism. They were a Pan Africanist-oriented organization.

Q: Was that Portsmouth or Norfolk? Or were there different groups?

HILL: I'm trying to think of—now that my grandchild is in that area I should really remember this. But I can get the definite place. But they would have activities in different places in that tidewater area, though they actually lived I think maybe somewhere like Chesapeake, but I'm a little uncertain of that.

Q: Within DC and the local arena, in addition to the national organizations that focused on the national arena, what were the groups that you can recall as the people you could always count on to show up? Or is that too hard a question to answer because it was different every time?

HILL: It was different every time. And we had different moments as SASP of participation. We could have a meeting that would have 100 people, and then we could have a meeting that would have 10. At our strongest moment in terms of internal organizational structure we had about 20 core members from 1981 to 1990.

Q: Did you set up meetings for visiting people from the liberation movements and so on?

HILL: Oh, yes.

Q: So it wasn't just you speaking. Do you remember—

HILL: Well, [Oliver] Tambo came.[15] He was in Washington for a meeting with Secretary of State George Shultz in January 1987. He had visited SASP before 1984 when we urged that the ANC place more resources in their USA ANC office. Theo-Ben Gurirab[16] of Namibia also visited many local events.

Q: From Zimbabwe or Zimbabwean movements?

HILL: Basically folks from the Patriotic Front. [Joshua] Nkomo as well as ZANU. I don't remember specific names. But representatives from the Patriotic Front. We had a number of forums for them. In fact we even had—I think about 500 people came to that—when

the Rhodesian flag dropped, we had a big celebration of their national liberation at the Calvary [Methodist] Church in Adams Morgan [neighborhood in Washington, DC].

Q: Were there a lot of people at that?

HILL: Yes. And we also had one at People's Congregational Church. We had meetings at All Souls [Unitarian Church], of course. And St. Augustine [Catholic] Church, as well as Union Temple [Baptist Church], and all of the United Church of Christ (UCC) churches because they had a fairly extensive sanctions movement within their church. But one of the observations that we found in working with churches is that some of the churches—all of them are quite feudal in their organizational structure. Some of them have social action committees; their structure made it a bit easier to work with them because they had a committee already. It was just a matter of attaching yourself to that committee and encouraging the committee that this was an agenda that they should have.

Q: So in some cases it was the committees you related to and other cases basically relating to the pastor?

HILL: Pastor, yeah. And so the pastor would permit you to speak during the church service, or a guest you would bring in, or perhaps permit you to host an event, show a film.

Q: So basically you had to negotiate that in each case. You had to investigate and find out?

HILL: Yes, we had to investigate and find out. You'd have to go to church and visit and talk to people and see what it was like. You couldn't just assume by the fact that it was a Baptist church or UCC church that you would have access and support. And it did take time. Actually the national liberation movement, particularly as articulated by Amilcar Cabral [17] and Samora Machel, have useful lessons for organizing. And by studying what they were doing in the context of their countries, we extrapolated some of those lessons for how to organize here. So when Samora Machel or Cabral talk about getting to know the culture of the different groups within your society, then that's why you spend time trying to grapple with this question of what churches would be more likely to be supportive of U.S. foreign policy change. And it took time.

It was very interesting, actually. It's worthy of study because one church I went to was the Church of God in Christ. It's a Pentecostal church across from Howard University. So in order to endure these churches I would study the rhetorical style of the minister, and sometimes I would just daydream. But at this particular sermon, suddenly the minister talks about, "and that is what Castro doesn't want you to do." So of course I was so startled. How did he get to Castro in this sermon? So I listened.

And on Mondays, that's the day that ministers have off. But ministers also, they have a special church service that they go to as well, at least the Baptists do, around their own denomination. But I called and asked to visit this minister. So I was talking to him about

the concerns of U.S. foreign policy in Africa. And so I said, by the way, where did you get your information on Castro and so forth? So he said, oh, from this newsletter. And that's when I found that this Republican right-wing organization does a newsletter of how to interpret news within the context of the Bible for your church service.

That was quite a revelation, because what it meant was that there is more systematic effort to influence church leadership than I had thought or had given proper attention to. It's not basically that these [ministers] are reactionary or conservative necessarily. But they're also being fed this political perspective systematically. And if you wanted to have different thoughts, you would have to compete with trying to have their ear with a different point of view. So there were many lessons that we learned about organizing in this kind of complex political situation, many of which we could do nothing about necessarily. But it did increasingly demonstrate to us that reactionary political views do not just emerge. That there are very systematic efforts to encourage them and reward them and reinforce them.

Q: Let me go beyond the period that I initially said I would talk about to ask if there are particular reflections that you have on the period of the Free South Africa movement itself and so on, which you've written about and other people have written about. On that period, from 1984, the various aspects of the struggle, and eventually Mandela being released from prison and visiting the United States in 1990. Were you involved in helping to organize that visit in DC?

HILL: Well, the national visit.

Q: You were on the national committee?

HILL: Yes. I was the associate director of the national office. Actually that was the year of my sabbatical.

Q: So you were really spending full time on it? Can you describe that to me?

HILL: Sure. I was out of town actually at the first meeting that Randall [Robinson][18] and others had called to talk about was this even feasible.

Q: And who did he call?

HILL: Well, I remember Roger Wilkins[19] was there. Actually Cecile [Counts][20] would know all of the names. I was out of town, but she attended. And I remember Harry Belafonte was there. Those were just a couple. And the reason I remember that is that I believe Harry Belafonte asked Roger if he had time to actually lead something like this, that it could not just happen, that if he [Nelson Mandela] came, that we would really have to have a show of public sentiment that would influence U.S. foreign policy. It could not appear that his visit was unimportant and unconnected to the public.

It's a constant struggle to influence U.S. foreign policy. So we thought this was a pretty important moment, and Harry suggested that Roger work on it. And Roger said, oh, if I have Sylvia and Cecelie to work with me—so that's how we became the hub of crafting that visit. And then an aide who worked for Senator Ted Kennedy, his name is Michael, gave us some very important advice. He said, look, your best bet is to really think of this like a campaign and try to organize an infrastructure much like you would if you were running a political campaign.

Well, of course, none of us had ever run a campaign. The closest I had come to it was working for electing a governor in Oregon. But we had not had that kind of experience. He suggested a young woman named Reta Lewis, who had worked on the Carter campaign, pretty high up in the logistical operations so she really knew the campaign organizational infrastructure and staff needs. But most importantly she had an infrastructure of friends that she had encountered who knew the science of campaign organizing and we brought them together to hear how it's done and then to hire. So we had advance people go out to each city. We had number crunchers who do nothing but work telephones and get people to come. Because it wasn't enough for people to watch it on TV. We had to have bodies there welcoming the arrival of the delegation in every city.

The one thing I understand now that I didn't understand before. Sometimes as organizers we are kind of naïve but people have a range of ways they express support. It's everything from sitting in front of the TV and saying, "right on," to physically being there. Now if you want them there, you've got to work to get them there. They are not going to sit in their living room and think, oh, you know it's really important for me to be standing at the end of 16th Street when Mandela comes by. Not if I can sit and look at it on TV.

So there are a few sets of people among the general public who like to be at a historical moment and they will come. But the vast majority of people will often be quite content to see it on TV or read about it in the newspaper or hear about it on the radio. So if you want people there, you have to really organize to get them there. And how you organize to get them there requires quite a bit of logistical knowledge and work. And that's what the ones that usually call themselves the number crunchers do. So they can pull into a geographical area and immediately have all the phone numbers, set up the phone tree. The one message is it's important for your body to be there. We know you are in support of Mr. Mandela. We know that you admire him because of his long resistance to apartheid. But we want you to go one step further and be physically there so that he and the world or most importantly U.S. foreign policy makers know that you support the different foreign policy agenda by your presence being there.

So that logistical nightmare was one. The foremost logistical nightmare was money. Where are we going to get the money from to actually implement this—[that] was a central question. And here I must say Roger Wilkins is a fundraiser par excellence and he was formidable in raising the funds to support the infrastructure. The airplane was another struggle. First of all we had to have a private airplane and we had to have a private airplane of the highest order in safety. We did not want to ask the [George H. W.] Bush administration to use a U.S. Army plane. Although Roger did talk to—what was the

highest-ranking black in the—the doctor, the physician in the Bush administration and in Reagan's [administration]? He's now at Emory University. His name may come back to me. But he did talk to him about it. He wasn't interested—it was just a contradiction in terms.

We had explored with Bert Lee the possibility of the use of a plane from Reebok, a corporate plane. But it actually was too small for the delegation they were bringing and the infrastructure we needed to move around the cities. But finally USAir under the leadership of Mr. Trump made a plane available. We paid for it but he still had to—somebody had to make the decision that the plane was going to be used only for that, during that period. And so that was [difficult], because we were getting kind of close before we solidified that particular deal as such.

But the real political difficulty was that in local situations you had competing forces. The traditional political competing forces with long-time activists who had been with this issue for time immemorial before it had become popular and [on the other hand] a range of political opportunists who viewed this issue as a way to thrust themselves on stage. That was the most difficult period. And I must say I was so thankful that I had struggled with my political ego so that at least I wasn't contending to try to thrust myself on stage. That I could be in the background was truly an asset because it was an amazing set of personalities, political personalities and egos.

Q: Some you can describe or is that not the kind of thing you want on tape yet? Maybe 10 more years.

HILL: Ten more years. But I can describe trends because I do think that there are lessons to be learned from them. The important political lesson is that in most situations people do not have the same political reason for their involvement that we come to the table with, "we" meaning those of us who are political activists. I'm not an elected official so I have no constituency I'm trying to impress, but an elected official's reason for wanting to be involved is that they can't afford to appear like they are not in the know of this important political historical moment. So they're quite certain about having to be there on stage and—

Q: In the front row.

HILL: —in the front row and nothing will happen in my territory if you don't agree with how this will take place. Union leaders have important political consequences for their presence or not presence and they do come with money and they were an important funder of this effort. We had to include both Detroit geographically as a lead site of the automobile industry and workers as well as the union meeting that was taking place outside of Miami, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists meeting I think. I'll have to check that if it was that or whether it was the AFL-CIO general meeting.

But in any case there was no way to go to California and not go to both L.A. and San Francisco. There was no way to go to New York without going to both Manhattan and

Brooklyn and making four stops within Brooklyn. So there were a lot of political territorial minefields that we had to go through. Our advance people were not necessarily conscious of all of those political minefields.

Q: Because they were the technicians—

HILL: They were the technicians.

Q: Who were then brought in from Democratic Party infrastructures?

HILL: Party infrastructures, yes. And most of them worked. One was an investment banker, another—they had other jobs, but they would just take off during campaign times. But those political minefields were terrifically difficult to manage especially from DC.

Cecelia or myself would have to go out to talk. So when you go into the Bay Area, there's the Dellums[\[21\]](#) political leadership infrastructure and then there are the various groups who have been working on this issue and related issues, of course, for years. And groups rightfully felt that they should be given an opportunity to host a presentation by Mr. Mandela or by Winnie Mandela. The difficulty was time and the delegation itself.

Q: The delegation in terms of how many people there were or in terms of—

HILL: Well, whether they wanted to do one thing or another and whether they thought Mr. Mandela should be doing it or whether they thought Winnie should be doing it.

Q: So did one of you accompany the delegation to every place?

HILL: Yes.

Q: All of you?

HILL: Actually Roger Wilkins and Harry Belafonte and myself along with Harry's wife Julie. Roger flew to Canada along with Reta Lewis to meet the flight and pick up the delegation and bring them to the U.S. And then we—Mayor [David] Dinkins hosted a welcome reception at the airport. Jennifer was there, Jennifer Davis.[\[22\]](#) But a number of local and national leaders were there. And the Mandelas stayed at Gracie Mansion, I think it's called, which is basically the mayor's house there.

But I knew we were in political trouble at the press conference. Now Randall Robinson, as the president of TransAfrica, one of the major host organizations, was scheduled to welcome the delegation and give the press some idea where the delegation would be going. Significant issues, foreign policy issues, very brief. And then Mr. Mandela would say a few words. Zwelakhe Sisulu, who was part of the delegation and handled the press, said to me, this is the last time that anybody from your movement should speak. We are perfectly capable of representing our struggle and we don't need you to do this.

So I said, but Zwelakhe, that's not what we're doing. You have to have somebody to host you. You can't just stumble up on the stage alone. You're our guest and we are trying to represent to the press that we welcome you and that you will have an opportunity across the nation to talk about the long struggle and the struggle ahead. And I must say that the intensity of the hostility was—I was taken aback. And I didn't quite understand it at that time but as I traveled across the United States I got a very good glimpse of it.

Q: You mean from the delegation.

HILL: From the delegation. Not Mr. Mandela, not Winnie Mandela. But the operatives within the delegation. And again—in fact I was talking to Roger about this the other night—one of the points that we had not given serious political thought to was that most of these people were trying to demonstrate to Mr. Mandela that they were the heirs of the political leadership. They had political motives within their own structure for what they were doing. And here we are, not realizing that in some sense there was a competition with us and a resentment. Because while we had given thought to this being a solidarity struggle collaboration, it was very clear to me that that was not the perception of at least that group of leadership. I certainly don't know that it represents the African National Congress political view because I don't know that they even have a political view about solidarity groups, or see solidarity groups as a strategic force during the armed struggle phase, political phase, and the social reconstruction phases of the national liberation struggle. I know that there are individuals who have strategic views about this issue. I'm unsure whether there is an organizational view.

So there was always this constant tension. For example, when we got to Boston the women's group there had a meeting for Winnie Mandela to speak.

Q: A Boston coalition of groups?

HILL: A coalition of groups. And there had been a bomb threat and we had to also contend with the diplomatic secret service and their agenda. Now the thing about security people, and of course you can see it in the local context of efforts to minimize the threats of terrorism, is the way to keep something secure is you don't let it happen. So from their perspective if the delegation said they didn't want to go, it's fine. What did they have to do? You can stay in your hotel room. I don't have to do anything. I'm not putting words into mouths. The point is they had no reason to try to encourage them—that the site was safe from terrorism.

Q: To go out and meet people.

HILL: To go to this event. [So] these people were sitting over there waiting for an event that never happened. And so the credibility questions of our ability to manage the visit just started emerging right away and we had no—I just had no persuasive power. I tried but I just did not have persuasive power to say that they can secure this building with dog sniffing, they can go through it, it can happen. So that was the first event that was cancelled.

We got to Washington, DC, and the same issue of what is the role of the host delegation in facilitating the process emerged. I think this example captures it. As you know, we were in the Madison Hotel [across the street from the *Washington Post* newspaper], and Mr. Mandela and some members of the delegation had a meeting with the *Washington Post* editorial board and Zwelakhe insisted that they meet by themselves.

Now that sent a political message, not simply obstruction. But it also, as I said to him, you need advance people because when you walk into a room you don't want to walk into a closet door if you open—just simply because you don't know that that's the closet door as distinct from the entry door. That's what advance people do. They've already scoped it out. They enable you to move smoothly to your seat. They know where you're supposed to be seated and everything will be prepared for you. But politically I think that they very much thought that it was important for them to present themselves as autonomous politically.

Q: Do you think it was—in addition to a general autonomy, that's one thing—that it was already a conscious distancing from the solidarity which was seen as too left, in order to ingratiate themselves more with the powers that be? Within U.S. society, solidarity forces were seen as marginal. And so in moving ahead you want to meet the people who have power here. Is that your perception?

HILL: I think that that was part of it. I think it was beginning to happen, the seeds of it were beginning to happen.

Q: So in a sense the visit, although you were managing it, it was an exposure of all the contradictions existent and to come.

HILL: Right, right, right. And then just pettiness too was part of it.

Q: Ordinary human stuff.

HILL: Yeah, stuff. We get to Atlanta and the group announces—first of all I had been told by their chief of the delegation—now, [Thabo] Mbeki was a part of this delegation but he was not the leading person. A guy from England was the leading person. That number one, he did not want to talk to me. That if I had anything to say to him I need to say it to my chief, who was Roger, and then Roger will talk to him. So we had a level of—

Q: Formality.

HILL: —formality that just was unbelievable. Well, he announced that he needed to have a meeting and the meeting was that they had decided that they were going to go on to Ireland from Miami and that they would not be going to the labor meeting, Detroit or California. They were going to go only to California to pick up the flight to Ireland. I tell you, I could never recount the angst and anger in that room that evening. But I will never forget Roger's quote. He said, well, you all can do that if you want to, but in the

meantime you need to go hire yourself an airplane because this airplane is on its way to Florida. And if you are departing well, go right on. It was unbelievable.

So there was a constant threat that they were going to derail and leave and go, which ultimately they did. By the time we got to L.A. they claimed that they needed to be in Ireland. Cecelie had talked to the anti-apartheid activists in Ireland and they said, well, we don't need them here that early because there's absolutely nothing for them to do. We have them down for a scheduled date. So we knew that was just untrue. So when I confronted them with that being untrue, they decided they still wanted to go. Now we did go to L.A., we went to Detroit and then to L.A.

But when we got in San Francisco, in the Bay Area, the reason why Winnie Mandela did not speak to the event that Angela Davis and Alice Walker and others had organized is that they insisted—not Winnie, not Mr. Mandela, but that administrative infrastructure insisted—that they needed to leave for Ireland. So we could not reverse that and hence while they attended the outstanding stadium event where Mr. Mandela spoke and so forth, you've probably seen tapes of that, they did not attend the event that had been organized by the women's group. So that was the second women's group event that they did not attend.

I tell you, we were so emotionally drained after that, just trying to make sense of the politics of it. Now they very much felt that we were using their movement for our personal gain and I just think we've not been able to really challenge that openly and fully. They also were, I think, challenging Lindiwe Mabuza's leadership, who was the representative for the ANC here.

Q: Because you'd worked that out in coordination with her?

HILL: With her. We worked collaboratively with her. And, of course, remember that the success of her gain was also—her gain within the political structure of ANC was dependent on us successfully organizing the visit. When they arrived she was completely isolated. But Charlie Cobb wrote an article in '69 or so where he observed while he was in Tanzania that he thought that there would be a kind of class competition between black Americans and the comparable class structure there.

Q: In South Africa.

HILL: Well, not South Africa. He was really talking about in Africa. And it's one of the great challenges that I think we have. I have not done enough thinking about how to characterize the dynamic politically but—I'm sure the diplomatic corps at the State Department encouraged it. But there was—there still is that sentiment that we use this movement to gain personally.

Q: "We" being?

HILL: Well, Randall [Robinson] certainly would be a person who would be symbolic of it, but we meaning any of us who were organizers in that movement. I really don't think that they would think that of, say, the group from Ireland or the group from the Netherlands in large part because they are white and they don't necessarily—I guess their assumption is that they're doing that for genuinely humanitarian motives as distinct from why we are.

Q: Distinct from political motives or is it for—?

HILL: Distinct from personal gain. That's the essence of one part of that question. [Thabo] Mbeki, Cecelie Counts, and Sandra [Hill][23] and myself had quite an argument, to put it mildly. In that case the debate was framed in terms of nation-state versus solidarity group, where he was expressing that of course we didn't have equal political significance to the ANC because we were just a group. And the group, while it could raise \$200,000 over these many years, you had to consider that a nation-state would give several million dollars so of course they would be more important to the liberation movement.

What I think the rift reflects is also a lack of an understanding of how U.S. society works and what we have to do to politically influence a process or a policy. We were not saying that we were inherently important in influencing the geopolitics of the United States. But the power of the United States was important in their struggle and a constituency against U.S. foreign policy was central to challenging the power of the United States.

Q: So this perception and conflict that you were seeing was mainly coming from people who did not have experience living here, because there were a significant number of ANC people, not necessarily officials, who were involved and colleagues in anti-apartheid work, solidarity work here.

HILL: Right. But these were people who had principally not been inside the country, in South Africa. I mean as ANC people. They had been in exile in—

Q: But elsewhere.

HILL: —elsewhere. And I suppose that the rhyme and reason—for example, if you lived in England, there are certain ways that you would have to influence the process there that were quite different from here because of the way their political structure is organized and the fact that they have had a kind of historical left, both as a party and as a kind of organized labor tradition.

The same would be true for the Netherlands but that's quite different. For one thing, they had state-supported anti-apartheid activities. And there were many anti-apartheid groups here. Many liberation movements expressed concern that there were so many groups. So I think that the political landscape also raised those kinds of anxieties and in the absence of understanding politically why something is happening, one can assign personal motives to it, I suppose.

But it was very clear that the political reason for the visit was never understood or valued, in my view, by the ANC. As a political structure, that is. There are individuals who may have a view and there is a very strong feeling that the alliance with African Americans would convey a political reality that the ANC did not want to convey. And that was said outright by Barbara Masekela.[24] She said simply—this is virtually a quote—that, look, it's time for us to move on. We have to make allies with other groups of people. Now no one was saying that that's not true.[25] That's not the point. The point politically is when you ignore your historical allies, you really tell powerful people an important lesson about you that they can ultimately use for their own political advantages. You are also saying that you no longer need citizens as allies because corporate and government political forces are your allies. I think that is a strategic mistake of the highest order for the people of South Africa and all of Africa.

Q: One more question then, at a more prosaic organizational level. How long did SASP as an organized structure continue? Because all the different groups that were involved in solidarity have had to undergo complex transformations in dealing not only with present-day South Africa but present day Africa. That's a whole new topic that I don't want to get into today, but just quickly, comment on the evolution of SASP as a small group after the early '90s. Does it still formally exist as an organization?

HILL: No. That year [1990] was a year that drained us all just to do that visit. Subsequent to that we did a lot of slowing down work I guess. So we might have lasted into about '99, '98, somewhere about there. I'll have to look back at that. But SASP was very crippled in terms of numbers of people in our subsequent activity. I think pretty much by the time of the election, which was '94, right, shortly after that election we had started winding down. We participated in a number of events and organized some events, but our grassroots activism was beginning to wane. Part of it was grappling with what is the form of solidarity work, what should be the focus of it? And was there a post-apartheid role that we could play?

Q: For a small voluntary group—

HILL: Right, right.

Q: —that didn't have big money to invest or—

HILL: Absolutely.

Q: —or lots of resources.

HILL: And most of the people who were in that organization and did all of that work have never been to South Africa. I have. Cecelie has now. But Joseph [Jordan] has never gone. And many of the other members.

Q: Of the local people who were African American, I mean not from want of interest in going but just resources.

HILL: Resources, and they really felt they fought a good fight and they did what was historically correct to do and now it was on to the next phase of struggle. Some of them are in the reparations movement now. They're still activists.

Q: But in different areas.

HILL: Different areas. And so it's in that way that I would just say that I think that the members of the ANC did not understand. It wasn't a struggle we were trying to own, and while certainly we were empowered by their victory and the role that all of us throughout the world played, it wasn't an empowering that was self-serving and reaped any particular benefit. So I think that the post-apartheid South Africa—as you know, the first celebration—we were not invited to that celebration.

Q: Which celebration?

HILL: Of the Embassy, to celebrate the first election with the ambassador and so forth. So many things at the Embassy happened that we were excluded from that I think people just went on. It was very clear that we were useful at one moment in history and not anymore. When the *Washington Post* called to ask our thoughts on not being invited, I said we never participated in the struggle to be invited to a party, even though no one likes to not be invited to a party. When the new ambassador arrived, H. E. Franklin Sonn, he hosted a reception honoring African Americans who participated in the struggle against apartheid [on May 6, 1997]. Later Ambassador Sheila Sisulu invited many of the grassroots activists to South Africa's Freedom Day on the fifth anniversary of South Africa's freedom, April 27, 1999. But the real point here is that receptions are symbolic. The question is whether countries view political power as only vested within corporate and government power or do they think political constituencies are important to influence U.S. policies toward their countries. Anyone who thinks they can influence the U.S. political dynamics without political constituencies simply is denying historical reality and is doomed to being marginalized, if not invisible, within the political realities of the United States.

Q: That was the perception.

HILL: Yes, that was the perception. I'm reminded of the quote from the great African revolutionary Amilcar Cabral, "Tell no lies and claim no easy victories." But I'm also reminded of the admonition from the great African revolutionary Eduardo Mondlane, *a luta continua!*

[1] "The Free South African Movement," presentation to Conference on the Role of International Anti-Apartheid Movement, University of KwaZulu-Natal, October 10-13, 2004.

[2] TransAfrica Forum is the educational affiliate of TransAfrica, which was founded in 1977. See Randall Robinson, *Defending the Spirit* (New York: Plume, 1998), excerpted in this collection.

[3] The Sixth Pan African Congress (known as Six-PAC) was held in Dar es Salaam in June 1974. It continued the series begun by W. E. B. Du Bois and other Pan Africanists, and followed the Fifth Pan African Congress in Manchester, England in 1945.

[4] "The Free South African Movement," presentation to Conference on the Role of International Anti-Apartheid Movement, University of KwaZulu-Natal, October 10-13, 2004. Frelimo leader Samora Machel led the armed struggle before independence, and became the first president of independent Mozambique.

[5] "That Covenant Was Kept: Lessons of the U.S. Anti-Apartheid Movement," *CrossRoads* 50 (April 1995): 9-26.

[6] Professional association of physicians of African descent in the United States.

[7] The Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) was founded by Jonas Savimbi in 1966 as a rival to the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). It was involved in a series of wars against the MPLA that involved both the Cold War superpowers and Angola's neighbors, continuing until after the death of UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi in 2002. For an overview see William Minter, *Apartheid's Contras: An Inquiry in the Roots of War in Angola and Mozambique* (London: Zed Books, 1994).

[8] SWAPO (South West African People's Organisation) was the principal liberation movement in South West Africa (Namibia), and became the ruling party after independence.

[9] The African National Congress, founded in 1912, has been the ruling party in South Africa since the first democratic elections in 1994. See <http://www.anc.org.za>.

[10] American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees.

[11] Representative John Conyers Jr., from Detroit, Michigan was first elected to Congress in 1964. Representative Conyers has been a leading member of the Congressional Black Caucus, with interest in international as well as domestic issues.

[12] ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) was one of the two principal nationalist movements before independence of Zimbabwe, and has been the ruling party since independence in 1980..

[13] Jeanne Kirkpatrick was foreign policy adviser to Ronald Reagan in his 1980 presidential campaign and served as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations during President Reagan's first four-year term.

[14] See Sheila Collins, *Rainbow Challenge: The Jackson Campaign and the Future of U.S. Politics* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1986).

[15] Oliver Tambo was the president of the African National Congress from 1967 to 1991, and its key leader in exile over the three decades from 1960 to 1990. See <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/or>.

[16] Theo-Ben Gurirab was the chief representative of SWAPO at the United Nations from 1972-1986, secretary of foreign affairs of SWAPO from 1986 to 1990. He became foreign minister of independent Namibia in 1990, and served in that post until 2002.

[17] Amilcar Cabral (1924-1973) was the leader of the Africa Party for the Independence of Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde, and one of the most influential African political thinkers of the period. He was assassinated by Portuguese agents in 1973.

[18] Randall Robinson was the executive director of TransAfrica. See excerpts from his book *Defending the Spirit* in this collection.

[19] Roger Wilkins is currently Clarence J. Robinson Professor of History and American Culture at George Mason University. He was assistant attorney general during the Johnson administration. A Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, he has long been active in civil rights organizations and other public service organizations.

[20] Cecelia Counts was a staff member at TransAfrica during this period, as well as an active member of SASP. See Cecelia Counts-Blakey, "The FSAM Story," in the special edition of *CrossRoads* magazine edited by Joseph Jordan, "That Covenant Was Kept: Lessons of the U.S. Anti-Apartheid Movement," April 1995.

[21] Representative Ronald V. Dellums, of Berkeley, California, served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1971 to 1998. He was a leader in the Congressional Black Caucus and one of the leading progressive members of Congress. See his autobiography: Ronald V. Dellums and H. Lee Halterman, *Lying Down with the Lions: A Public Life from the Streets of Oakland to the Halls of Power* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000).

[22] Jennifer Davis was the executive director of the American Committee on Africa from 1981 to 2000. See interview with Davis in this collection.

[23] Sandra Hill was another key member of SASP.

[24] Barbara Masakela was appointed South African ambassador to the United States in 2003. In the 1970s and early 1980s, while teaching in New York, she chaired the ANC's regional political committee for the United States. In 1983 she was asked to head the ANC's Department of Arts and Culture, based in Zambia.

[25] This is also described in Randall Robinson, *Defending the Spirit*, 183.