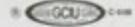


# ACTION NEWS

AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON AFRICA  
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## ACOA VIEWPOINT

**F**inancial constraints will make this the only newsletter for 1996. We apologize to our many loyal friends and supporters - but alas, our whole year has been marked by the contradiction between the urgent need for our efforts and the lack of funding to sustain them.

The brief trip I made to South Africa and Namibia this summer was by turns exhilarating, challenging and intimidating - because there is so much still

to be done.

Millions of people have still seen no meaningful change in their daily lives - they want jobs, housing and education. The tasks that face them sometimes seemed overwhelming. But every day was also rich in encounters with men and women beginning to use their old anti-apartheid organizing skills to build new lives.

The trip showed me once again how important U.S. policy will be in the many ways it impacts on Africa's future. Everyone I talked to shared the sense that what we do here about U.S. support for development and human rights will be critical not only to southern Africa, but throughout the continent.

Many old friends, men and women we supported or worked with closely during the long years of struggle for liberation, have gone from exile and prison cells to leadership in parliament and government. As I talked with them now - senior cabinet members, trade union leaders, teachers, journalists, bricklayers, bankers and factory workers - they reminded me that the struggle to achieve justice and equality in southern Africa is only half over.

"Now we can vote, but we still have to bring the jobs, schools and houses," was a frequent refrain. So was the question "How will you help us now?" More unexpected were the many questions I was asked about our ongoing work in support of democracy in Nigeria. Many underscored the importance of dealing with human rights crises before they explode into major catastrophes.

There is much ACOA is uniquely positioned to do. Closely linked to a network of concerned individuals, communities and organizations, it can help focus demands for a U.S.-Africa policy that supports development and human rights for people at the base. By strengthening links between groups in the U.S. and Africa - congregation to congregation, teacher to teacher- we can foster a synergy able to empower the ongoing struggle for social justice in Africa and the United States.

*Jennifer Davis*  
Executive Director



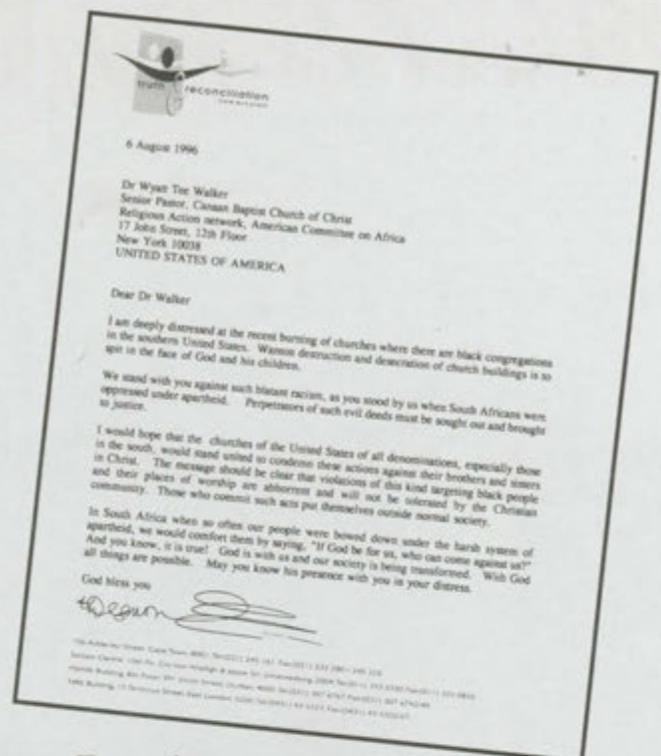
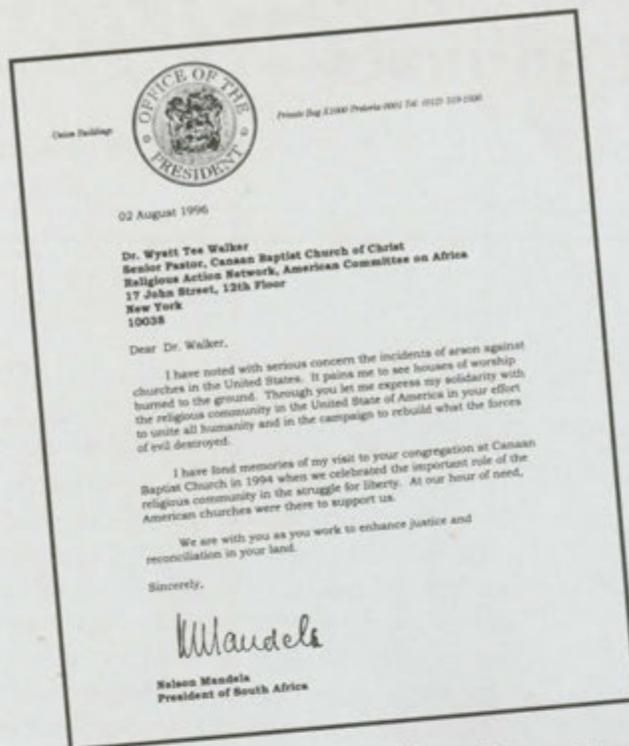
*Phelps Stokes President Wilbert LeMelle presents the Aggrey Medal to ACOA Executive Director Jennifer Davis at an awards luncheon in New York on November 19, 1996.*

*"...No organization has worked more genuinely for African independence over the past four decades than The American Committee on Africa.*

*"Through African Freedom Day Rallies, Declarations of Conscience, Emergency Relief Projects, Campaigns Against Political Oppression, Boycotts and Exposes of colonial exploitation, ACOA contributed uniquely to the end of colonial rule and the demise of the racist apartheid system."*

### Inside This Issue

- Mandela & Tutu on Church Burnings
- U.S. Aid to Africa
- Congregations Act on Nigeria



## Leaders Condemn Burnings

South Africa's President Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu responded swiftly to Wyatt Tee Walker when the American Committee on Africa sought international solidarity with congregations under attack in the U.S. We reproduce extracts below:

I have noted with serious concern the incidents of arson against churches in the United States. It pains me to see houses of worship burned to the ground.

Through you let me express my solidarity with the religious community in the United State [sic] of America in your effort to unite all humanity and in the campaign to rebuild what the forces of evil destroyed.

I have fond memories of my visit to your congregation at Canaan Baptist Church in 1994 when we celebrated the important role of the religious community in the struggle for liberty. At our hour of need, American churches were there to support us.

We are with you as you work to enhance justice and reconciliation in your land.

Sincerely,

**Nelson Mandela**  
President of South Africa

I am deeply distressed at the recent burning of churches...in the southern United States. Wanton destruction and desecration of church buildings is to spit in the face of God and his children.

We stand with you against such blatant racism, as you stood by us when South Africans were oppressed under apartheid. Perpetrators of such evil deeds must be sought out and brought to justice.

In South Africa when...our people were bowed down under the harsh system of apartheid, we would comfort them by saying, "If God be for us, who can come against us?" And you know, it is true! God is with us and our society is being transformed. With God all things are possible. May we know his presence with you in your distress.

God bless you

**Desmond Tutu**

# African Aid Struggle Continues

In 1995 Congress cut development aid to Africa by almost 20 percent; only widespread public pressure prevented the House of Representatives from making even larger cuts.

Congress also eliminated funding for the Development Fund for Africa (DFA), created in 1987 "to help the poor majority... participate in a process of long-term development through economic growth that is equitable, participatory, environmentally

sustainable and self-reliant." This separate budget allocation was important because it protected Africa funding from being raided by other interests.

In early 1996, members of the House of Representatives returned to the attack on development aid, seeking more cuts. ACOA decided to work on two issues - restoring the DFA and maintaining adequate funding.

Several Action Alerts informed our network to the need

to speak out on the issue both to members of Congress and the Senate and to the Clinton Administration.

In the summer, ACOA President Wyatt Tee Walker and RAN Coordinator Paul Harris took the message to the Hampton Minister's Conference, the Progressive National Baptist Convention and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, where thousands endorsed resolutions supporting continued aid to Africa and calling for the restoration of the DFA. In addition, ACOA organized visits in the home districts of key members of Congress to press for continuing aid.

With special help received from a joint initiative of the World and the Women's Divisions of the Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, we developed a special program to demonstrate to U.S. women the ways in which slashed U.S. aid to Africa would strike hardest at African women.

This effort bore fruit in July, when the Senate was preparing to vote on the aid appropriation, and major women's organizations joined several other national organizations in signing on to an "Open Letter to The Senate: Save U.S. Aid To Africa" which ACOA published in *Roll Call*, the newspaper which reaches the desk of every Senator and Member of Congress.

Shortly after this advertisement was published, the Senate voted to increase funding for development aid back to the levels approved in 1995. Members of Congress told ACOA that outside pressure was essential in preventing further cuts to aid to Africa, but we did not muster enough forces to restore the DFA.

Looking ahead to 1997 we plan to work closely with our allies, starting early in the year to confront any further Congressional efforts to decimate U.S. development aid to Africa.

**AN OPEN LETTER TO THE SENATE  
SAVE U.S. AID TO AFRICA**

This year US aid will help millions of African families build better lives. Forty-five thousand rural families in South Africa will have better water and sanitation. Thousands of children in Malawi and Uganda will attend primary schools for the first time. Women in Kenya will benefit from family planning. Reforestation efforts by Senegalese women will improve the living standards of their families. Other programs will strengthen Africa's emerging democracies and democratic institutions. We believe that these programs are vital to the development of Africa, the poorest and most under-developed continent.

The Development Fund for Africa (DFA) was created to ensure that this essential funding for sustainable development projects in Africa is not shifted to other regions or projects. This is why President Clinton proposed the restoration of the DFA in his foreign aid budget for Fiscal Year 97. We reject the decision by the House of Representatives to slash funding to Africa and to eliminate funding of the DFA. We further criticize their decision not to earmark funds to Africa.

As the Senate meets to discuss appropriations for foreign aid, we urge you to support aid to Africa. We call on the Senate to support the President's aid allocation to Africa and the preservation of the Development Fund for Africa. We believe justice demands that funds to Africa be guaranteed, as they are for other regions.

*We urge you to recognize that Africa matters.* Many millions of Americans wish to see it provided with adequate support.

**WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS:** Dr. Dorothy I. Height, Pres. & CEO, National Council of Negro Women; Bella Abzug, Pres., Women's Environment & Development Organization; Prema Mathai-Davis, Exec. Dir., YWCA-USA; Hattie Dorsey, President, Coalition of 100 Black Women; Nicole Etchart, Exec. Dir., Association for Women in Development; Lara Bergthold, Exec. Dir., Hollywood Women's Political Committee; Vivian Stromberg, Exec. Dir., MADRE; Dr. Leslie Wolfe, Pres., Center for Women Policy Studies; Gloria Johnson, Nat'l. Pres., Coalition of Labor Union Women. **PUBLIC POLICY/DEVELOPMENT:** Jennifer Davis, Exec. Dir. & Wyatt Tee Walker, Pres., The American Committee on Africa; Mayor Emanuel Cleaver, President, National Conference of Black Mayors; Rep. Lois M. DeBerry, Pres., National Black Caucus of State Legislators; Hugh B. Price, Pres., National Urban League; Randall Robinson, President, TransAfrica; Imani Countess, Exec. Dir., Washington Office on Africa; C. Payne Lucas, Pres., Africare; David Beckman, Pres., Bread for the World; Mora McLean, Pres., The African American Institute; Desiree and Blair Underwood, Sharon Gelman, Founders, Artists for a New South Africa; Melvin Foote, Exec. Dir., Constituency for Africa; Donna Katzin, Exec. Dir., Shared Interest; Nonceba Lubanga, Sec'y., Committee for Health in Southern Africa; Dana-Lee Smirin, Pres., African Development Opportunities. **RELIGIOUS:** Dr. Joseph Lowery, Pres., Southern Christian Leadership Conference; Rev. Joan B. Campbell, Gen. Sec'y., National Council of Churches; Nan Rich, Nat'l. Pres., National Council of Jewish Women; Dawud Assad, Pres., Council of Mosques; Cathy Rowan, Dir., Office of Social Concerns, Maryknoll Sisters. **ACADEMIC:** Prof. LaVerne Grant, Pres., African Heritage Studies Association; Iris Berger, Pres., African Studies Association; Bill Martin, Co-Chair, Association of Concerned Africa Scholars.

Initiated and paid for by The American Committee On Africa  
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ACOA's Open Letter was published in *Roll Call*, a prominent Capitol Hill newspaper, on Monday, July 15, 1996.

## U.S. Congregations in Action

Soon after Nelson Mandela was sworn in as the first President of a democratic South Africa in 1994, Religious Action Network (RAN) Secretary General Wyatt Tee Walker convened the first of a series of small meetings to develop a new mission for the Network. "We have functioned as the Religious Action Network against apartheid; now as we celebrate a victory on that front we must ready ourselves to grapple with new dangers on the road ahead," he said.

RAN has emerged from this transition with a new mission, summarized in its name - the Religious Action Network for Peace With Justice in Southern Africa. In May, more than fifty religious leaders representing various denominations participated in a RAN Africa Consultation in New York to review the new agenda and adopt a plan of action.

Participants heard addresses on the themes of development and democracy from Reverend Jose Chipenda, General Secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches, and South Africa's Ambassador to the U.S. Franklin Sonn.

Stressing that "African nations face economic isolation," Chipenda also underscored the importance of developing a U.S. Africa policy that did more than respond to crises after they had developed. It was empty to talk about building democracy or protecting human rights without also seeking ways of ensuring economic development. But economic growth by itself was also not enough - a rich slave state could never deliver justice to its members.

Speakers highlighted the need to take action on Nigeria. Nigeria's current problems date back to 1993 when Moshood Abiola won the election for President but was arrested by the military. Thousands of his supporters have been killed, imprisoned or driven into exile.

The meeting resulted with a three-point program for immediate action: (1) pledging active support for continued U.S. assistance for Africa; (2) calling for the nationwide marking of Nigerian Freedom Sunday on October 6; and (3) endorsing a



*Rev. Jose Chipenda addresses the RAN Consultation at the session chaired by Dr. Doreen Tilghman of the Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church.*

Declaration of Conscience urging all Americans to work for the restoration of democracy in Nigeria.

These themes dominated RAN work through the balance of 1996. Many RAN members joined ACOA's intensive efforts to protect aid for Africa and to preserve the Development Fund for Africa.

More than 60 congregations held special services on Nigerian Freedom Sunday in October, calling for the restoration of freedom and democracy in Nigeria. Congregations as far afield as Indiana, Ohio, Georgia, Washington and California called for the release of 7,000 religious, political and human rights activists jailed by the Nigerian military regime under General Sani Abacha.

At Canaan Baptist Church in Harlem, Hafsat Abiola, daughter of the jailed Nigerian President, appealed to the "American people to continue pressuring the Nigerian military regime politically and economically until democracy is restored."

In November RAN welcomed Hafsat Abiola back to New York to commemorate the first anniversary of the execution by the military regime of Nigerian democrat and environmentalist Ken Saro Wiwa. Thousands who heard her moving description of the imprisonment of her father and the murder of her mother rose to cheer her as she stood with Representative Floyd Flake at Allen AME Church. She spoke to equally enthusiastic audiences at Bethany Baptist Church in Brooklyn, and at Memorial Presbyterian Church on Long Island.



Wyatt Tee Walker, **President**, Rev. Michael Battle, **Vice President**, David Scott, **Vice President**, Canon Frederick B. Williams, **Treasurer**, Rev. Jon Chapman, Imani Countess, Ralston Deffenbaugh, Jr., Bill Henning, Stanley Hill, Elizabeth Landis, Tilden LeMelle, Edgar Romney, Timothy Smith, Doreen Tilghman, Stephanie Urdang, Jennifer Davis, **Executive Director**, Rev. Paul D. Harris, **Coordinator**.