Dear Friends,

As the political and economic struggles in Southern Africa intensify, we need to provide an effective voice for those scholars, teachers and students of Africa who do not fully support past and present United States African policies. In order to help alter United States policy and to provide a needed educational and research alternative about Southern Africa, we invite you to join with us to form an Association of Concerned Africanist Scholars. We will have our first meeting at the African Studies Association (ASA) Meeting in Houston (November 2-5, 1977) and a similar meeting at the African Heritage Studies Association.

History

The concern for scholarly input has increased with the successes of the liberation movements in Southern Africa, the U.S. intervention in Angola, and the growth of understanding about the U.S. corporate and government role in supporting the forces of oppression and reaction in Southern Africa. These issues have been raised in the Committee on Current Issues, but the committee lacks a permanent action component. In the past two years, scholarly opinion was expressed in the African Studies Association Committee on Current Issues poll of the opinions of ASA scholars on the U.S. Angolan intervention and in the more recent ‘Petition of Concerned Africanist Scholars’ which elicited over 600 signatures presented this past February to the State Department, National Security Council, White House and Congress by a panel of seven concerned Africanists of both the African Studies Association and the African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA).

From the mid-1960’s, small caucuses have met during the African Studies Association annual meetings to discuss means to further policy-relevant research, to alter the policy formation process in Washington, and to combat racism. A few individual efforts resulted in the formation of community-based, southern Africa-focused activist organizations of faculty, graduate students, and members of the community in various university centers.

In New York, three discussions were held late in 1976 and early in 1977 among about a dozen scholars and activist professionals, resulting in plans to seek to publish scholarly analyses of southern Africa and political economy through the Braudel Institute, SUNY-Binghamton. Some of these discussions were continued at a University of Minnesota southern Africa conference in March 1977, and then crystallized into a call for action at an evening meeting during a southern Africa conference at Michigan State University in May 1977. Mike Bratton, Bill Derman, Francis Kornegay, Joel Samoff, Ann Seidman and David Wiley were given the responsibility to formulate more specific proposals. This proposal is the result.

Basic Proposal:

The Concerned Africanist Scholars organization will (a) further research of scholars of southern Africa and on U.S. policy toward, and action in, Africa, and (b) to coordinate the research, opinion, and legitimacy of these scholars to effect the complex process of interest formulation in the United States as it affects Africa. The initial focus will be almost entirely on southern Africa, although this does not preclude attention later to all of Africa. The basic statement of our shared perspective is in the statement of principles (see attached statement).
Concerned Africanist Scholars
Draft Statement of Principles

We are an informal grouping of scholars interested in Africa and concerned with moving United States policy toward Africa in directions more sympathetic to African interests. For political and practical reasons, our emphasis for the foreseeable future will be on southern Africa.

We are encouraged by the overall direction of events in southern Africa, but we remain skeptical of United States government intentions in the area. We remember the crusading rhetoric with which the United States began its intervention in Indochina and the liberal image of the Kennedy administration during the time that intervention was expanded. We both recall and continue to be conscious of United States overt and covert intervention in Angola, of U.S. assistance to support Morocco's aid to Zaire, and of the legacy of United States and NATO support for Portugal in its former colonies. We note the de facto support provided for the system of white supremacy in South Africa by United States economic, military and nuclear ties.

The people of southern Africa have in recent years taken enormous strides in their struggles to liberate themselves. There is real danger, however, that the United States corporate and government involvement will hamper their full attainment of their goals. We as scholars, have both the possibility of, and the responsibility for, preventing this danger from materializing. We particularly feel the need for emphasizing the long-term interests of the African and American peoples, and clearly distinguishing these interests from those of the transnational corporations and the United States government.

WE WILL ACT:

1. To promote scholarly analysis and opinion vis-à-vis the process of national and international policy formulation.
2. To formulate and communicate alternatives to U.S. Africa policies to the peoples of the United States and Africa.
3. To develop a communication network among concerned Africanist scholars in order to (a) mobilize support on important current issues; (b) provide local sponsors for public education programs; (c) stimulate research on policy-oriented issues and to disseminate findings; (d) to inform and update members on important international policy developments.

This new organization is not intended to be in competition with other groups and organizations working on southern Africa but rather complementary to them. There is an important and distinct role that scholars can play in terms of research and analysis. The scholarly community is both a forum for substantial debate and a constituency for action. And scholars' very position in their community permits them to add credibility and legitimacy to particular analyses and policy positions.

WHY SCHOLARS OUGHT TO BE MORE DIRECTLY INVOLVED

As students of Africa, we have a responsibility to Africa. That responsibility requires that we be particularly sensitive to, and provide support for, African aspirations. Whatever our disciplines and areas of research interest, we
ought by now to be clear about the nature and causes of injustice, oppression, and exploitation in southern Africa. We also ought to be clear that peoples throughout Africa give high priority to the ending of white rule in southern Africa. Since the U.S. government and corporations are contributing to the perpetuation of white domination and underdevelopment of Africa, we must act consciously to challenge them.

This is a critical time. In the current verbiage about the reassessment of U.S. policy toward southern Africa, there may be some potential for new directions, or at least an opening to challenge a reaffirmation of the long-standing commitment to neocolonial relationships. We need to organize and act while we can have most effect.

This is also a critical time because black South Africans have once again reminded us of the vitality of their struggle. Their actions have once again exposed as myths the notions of African acquiescence and of the invulnerability of apartheid. Zimbabweans and Namibians are on the verge of genuine independence. We need to do what we can to remove the obstacles to their liberation.

Though our vision is broad, we do not expect to be able, quickly and by ourselves, to change the nature of world capitalism, or to initiate an entirely new United States foreign policy, or to overcome centuries of underdevelopment and racism. We do believe that on specific issues, at particular moments, we can employ our knowledge to exercise a positive influence. And we think that neither those issues nor our influence are inconsequential.

The image of a humane, peaceful, and just world, however distant, haunts and strengthens us. It clarifies what we have in common with the peoples of Africa. To have an effect at all, we must organize our strengths.

Initial sponsors of this proposal

Bill Derman, Michigan State University
Michael Bratton, Michigan State University
Dave Wiley, Michigan State University
Joel Samoff, University of Michigan
Ann Soldman, U. Mass., Amherst
Francis Kornegay, African Bibliographic Center, Washington, D.C.
Richard Lobban, Rhode Island College
Carolyn Klicahn-Lobban, Rhode Island College
Immanuel Wallerstein, SUNY-Binghamton
Ted Lockwood, Washington Office on Africa
Carol Thompson, Univ. of Southern California
Bill Winter, Africa News Service, Durham, N.C.
Allen Isaacman, University of Minnesota
Marcia Wright, Columbia University, N.Y.
Nzongola-Ntalaja, Atlanta University, Georgia
Tom Snick, Univ. Wisconsin, Madison
Paula Whitley, Howard University
Sean Carvase, SUNY-Binghamton
Edris Hawkward, Univ. Wisconsin, Madison
The Goals:

1. To facilitate the articulation of scholarly analysis and opinion with the process of national and international policy formulation with special focus on the policy of the United States government.

2. To formulate and communicate alternatives to U.S. Africa policies to the peoples of the United States and Africa.

3. To develop a communication network among concerned Africanist scholars in order to (a) mobilize support on important current issues, (b) provide local sponsors for public education programs, (c) stimulate research on policy-oriented issues and to disseminate findings, and (d) to inform and update members on important international policy developments.

A Proposed Organizational Form:

The initial organization and occupants of offices would be developed during the coming year, beginning with a formal mandate at the Houston ASA meeting with a follow-up meeting at the AHSA in the spring of 1978. Organization shall remain lean and functional, comprised of:

1. Chairperson or co-chairpersons
2. Committee for Research
3. Committee for Political Education
4. Committee for Membership
5. Newsletter Editor

The executive will be composed of the chairperson(s), the editor, and chairpersons of committees. When dues allow sufficient budget, an executive secretary will be employed.

Membership is open to all. Dues will be charged annually for membership, coinciding with the academic year. Dues, when paid, entitle the member to vote on matters of concern and to receive the newsletter. Dues per year will be $7.50 for students and unemployed scholars; $10.00 for Africanist scholars with salaries up to $10,000; $20.00 for scholars with salaries up to $20,000; and $30.00 for scholars with salaries up to $30,000.

The committee believes a new journal should not be initiated by CAS, but research and perspectives of members should be inserted in other publications where there is now a paucity of information and opinion on Africa and policy toward Africa. One aim would be to reach audiences outside the Africanist community.

Program of Inaugural Meeting, November 3, 8 pm, Shamrock Hilton, Houston

8.00 pm - Welcome - Prof. Edris Hakward, Convenor
8.05 pm - "American Scholars and the Political Economy of Southern Africa" Prof. Immanuel Wallerstein, SUNY-Binghamton
8.40 pm - "The Carter Administration and Southern Africa: An Overview" Dr. Edgar Lockwood, Washington Office on Africa
9.15 pm - Presentation of the proposed goals and mandate for an organization of Concerned Africanist Scholars. Discussion of goals, organization, procedures, issues, and officers. Vote to establish or not to establish CAS. Vote for officers for first year.

Please try to attend this very important inaugural meeting, and encourage others to attend also.