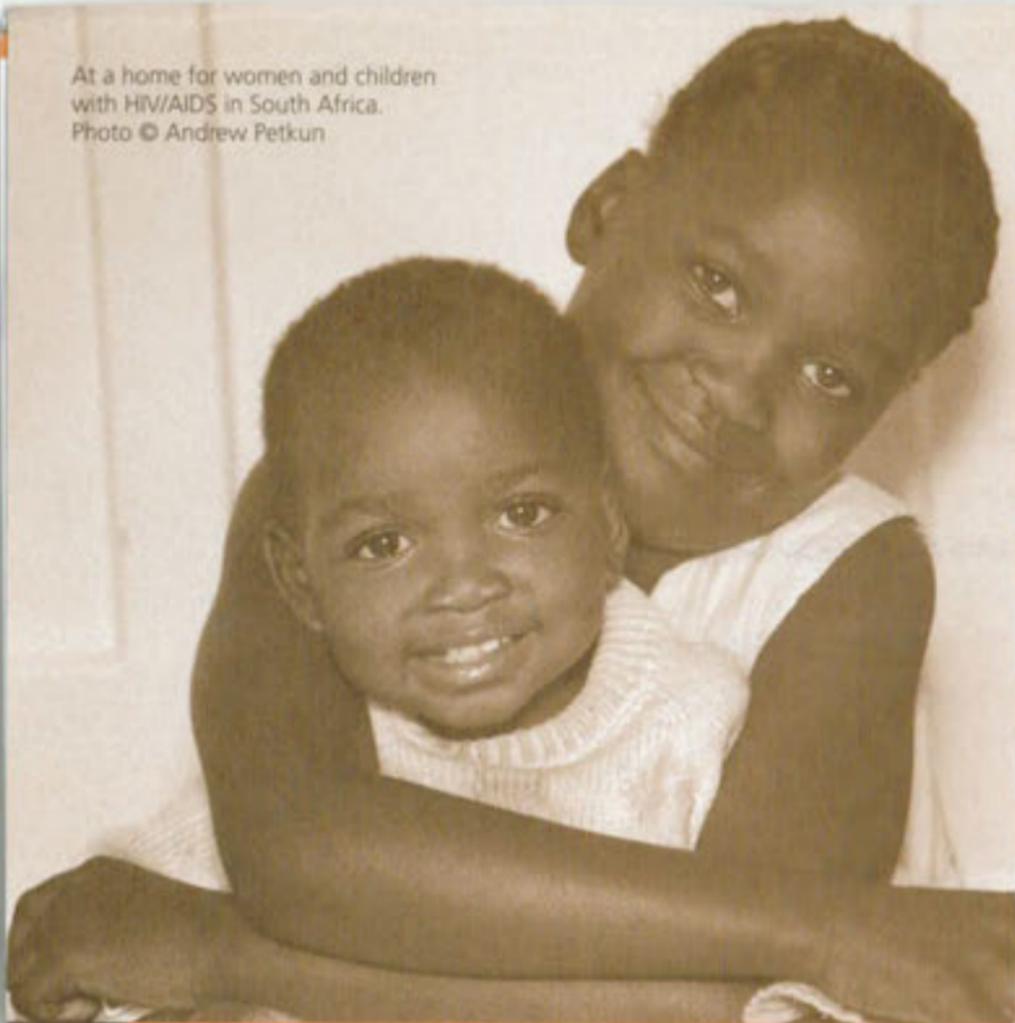


At a home for women and children  
with HIV/AIDS in South Africa.  
Photo © Andrew Petkun



# Africa Action

Special Report 2001

## Africa Action Is Born!

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

In 1953, the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) was founded in New York by a group of black and white civil rights activists who had organized support for the historic Defiance Campaign in South Africa at the request of liberation movement leader Walter Sisulu. ACOA, together with The Africa Fund, founded in 1966, provided key support for independence movements throughout Africa and built networks of U.S.-based advocates that became crucial participants in the anti-apartheid struggle.

The Africa Policy Information Center (APIC), founded in Washington in 1978, later pioneered the use of new information and communication technology to support advocacy work on Africa. The merger of these three groups in 2001 marries their complementary strengths: *people*, organized at the local level, and *information*, the foundation for effective action.

Next year will mark a half-century since the founding of Africa Action's oldest parent organization. The struggle today is no longer against colonialism and South African apartheid, but against *global apartheid*—the worldwide system of entrenched inequalities and racism that keeps Africa poor. Global issues, from the AIDS pandemic to the failure of peacekeeping to the burden of unpayable foreign debt, have their most devastating consequences in Africa. These challenges must be addressed in solidarity with Africans, if they are not to overwhelm the continent and the world.



From 1953 to 2001 ... Africa Action celebrates the publication of *I Will Go Singing*, George Houser's new book on Walter Sisulu. Top, from left: Salih Booker, executive director of Africa Action; Jennifer Davis, former director of ACOA/The Africa Fund; Sheila Sisulu, South African ambassador to the United States and Walter Sisulu's daughter-in-law; and George Houser, founding director of ACOA/The Africa Fund. Below, from left: Dumisani Kumalo, former projects director of The Africa Fund and currently South African ambassador to the United Nations; Salih Booker; and Bob Browne, a member of the ACOA founding group.

In partnership with activists throughout the United States and with civil society organizations in Africa, we're working to change U.S. foreign policy and the policies of international institutions in order to support African struggles for peace and development.

## A Note from the Executive Director

Support for Africa is as urgent today as it was during the anticolonial and anti-apartheid struggles—in many ways, even more so. The creation of Africa Action promises to strengthen that support in the years ahead, and I want to personally thank everyone who helped make this merger possible.

In the aftermath of September 11, we must draw the critical connections between lives lost to intentional violent acts and lives lost to structural injustices—impoverishment and inequality—around the world. Now more than ever, the struggles for human security, here and in Africa, must be joined. In the face of official disregard for Africa and Africans, we insist that all lives are valuable, and that the rights to security, health, and freedom from fear must apply to all.

Toward this end, we're expanding our work with religious leaders, state and local elected officials, youth, and AIDS

activists. We're stepping up our campaign for Africa's Right to Health, and increasing our media presence. Our own information network is expanding rapidly and providing resources for local organizers across the country and in Africa.

The support of thousands of individuals in the U.S. and abroad enables us to carry forward this work. Our deepest gratitude goes to them. Institutional supporters play a crucial role in helping to build this growing organization, and we greatly value those partnerships as well.

We look forward to your continuing solidarity and support. On behalf of the staff and board of directors of Africa Action, thank you!

Salih Booker  
Executive Director

## Mobilizing for Action

In the 1980s, widespread organized pressure in local U.S. communities finally forced Washington to abandon its unholy alliance with the South African apartheid regime.

Today, as then, local organization and local leadership by well-informed activists are key to forcing changes in national policies. Only when national groups work hand in hand with vigorous local networks will policy makers pay attention. This was the key finding of *Weaving the Ties that Bind*, a major research project by Imani Countess, former director of APIC, who spoke with activists and groups concerned with Africa across the United States. This work confirmed the enormous potential for greater mobilization on Africa—potential that Africa Action is determined to develop.

Two networks initiated during the anti-apartheid era—the Religious Action Network and the State and Local Elected Officials Network—remain central to our work today. A Youth Action Network is in formation. All three networks are currently engaged in the *Africa's Right to Health* campaign, launched by Africa Action on the eve of the U.N. General Assembly's special session on HIV/AIDS in June 2001.

Of the 3 million AIDS deaths worldwide in 2000, almost 2.5 million were in Africa. Life-prolonging drugs have cut AIDS deaths in rich countries, but neither these treatments nor other resources to combat HIV/AIDS are available to the vast majority of people in Africa. The spread of the pandemic and the world's failure to



Above: African health professionals are struggling to save lives, but foreign creditors have forced African governments to cut spending on health. Photo © Médecins Sans Frontières.



Left: Nkululeko Nxesi, director of South Africa's National Association of People with AIDS, addressed the press conference launching the Africa's Right to Health campaign in New York.

respond reveal a system of global apartheid in which the right to health is largely determined by race, gender, class and geography.

To ensure that Africans get the resources they need to confront the AIDS pandemic and the wider health emer-

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gency, Africa Action must be able to mobilize thousands of activists to demand a major increase in the U.S. contribution to global AIDS funding. Other goals of the campaign include the cancellation of Africa's foreign debt, equal access to treatment, and an end to IMF and World Bank policies that undermine Africa's public health care systems and allow the HIV virus to spread unchecked.

Africa Action helped organize a demonstration in New York during the U.N. special session on HIV/AIDS, calling on world leaders to cancel Africa's debt, increase global AIDS funding, and provide treatment access.

## Framing the Message: Work with the Major Media .....

Using a highly successful media strategy, Africa Action increased its visibility and reached vast and diverse audiences through dozens of media outlets last year:

- We placed opinion pieces calling for debt cancellation and increased AIDS funding in major dailies such as the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Baltimore Sun*, the *Providence Journal*, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. We also used syndicated services to reach many smaller papers. In addition, Africa Action was quoted in influential papers such as the *New York Times* and the *Boston Globe*.
- Africa Action staff were featured on radio and television programs reaching wide U.S. and international audiences, including those in Africa. Outlets included National Public Radio, Pacifica Radio, Fox News, CNN International, the BBC, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the Voice of America, and South African and Angolan radio and television—to name only a few.

- Director Salih Booker spoke at universities and churches, to elected officials, and to events such as the U.S.-Africa Sister Cities Conference and the African Refugee Network annual conference.
- *The Nation* featured "Global Apartheid," by Salih Booker and senior research fellow William Minter, on its July 9 cover. The article was distributed at the U.N. special session on HIV/AIDS and has been widely discussed.
- The Foreign Policy Association's *Great Decisions 2002* briefing book included our article on "AIDS in Africa." Salih was also a guest on the accompanying TV segment on AIDS in Africa that aired on U.S. public television; the book and program together reach an estimated 400,000 people.
- We are actively involved in the Foreign Policy in Focus project of the Institute for Policy Studies and the Interhemispheric Resource Center.

Work with the major media is essential, but it faces constraints, notably the low level of interest in Africa in most of the mainstream press. That's why outreach through our own electronic, radio, and print communication channels is critical to Africa Action's effectiveness.

Using these networks, Africa Action provides information directly and at low cost to Africa advocates around the world, including those in Africa. At the same time, we enable Africans to reach audiences in other countries with their perspectives on African realities.



Africa Action director Salih Booker hosts WFPW's *African World*, an hour of news and discussion on events in Africa and the diaspora. Salih discussed the IMF and World Bank role in Africa with Kenyan Njoki Njehi, director of 50 Years Is Enough, an international network for global economic justice. Photo © Rick Reinhard.

Our *e-mail distribution list* provides news and policy analysis to activists and educators in more than 75 countries, including at least 30 countries in Africa. An estimated 13,000 people, more than two-thirds of them in the United States, receive our information.

The Africa Action *web site* ([www.africaaction.org](http://www.africaaction.org)) is widely used and respected by educators and activists. Information-rich, it offers an archive of policy and advocacy documents along with links to other sources on every African country. It's one of the most referenced Africa sites on Google and Yahoo, and can be reached via links from many other sites. Visitors have increased steadily, with more than 1.1 million page views in 2001, up from 950,000 the year before.

Africa Action is exploring new ways to use on-line communications to foster advocacy. In 2000, we collaborated with the U.N. Economic Commission on Africa to co-sponsor an *electronic roundtable* that brought 500 people together in a structured on-line discussion of international policies affecting Africa. Africa Action published extracts from the roundtable proceedings in 2001, along with reflections on lessons learned.

## Global Connections

The year 2001 provided two important forums for global networking on African issues. Africa Action staff were active participants in both, spreading our message and making new contacts for Africa advocacy.

At the *United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS*, held in New York in June, Africa Action staff worked closely with youth attending the conference and related demonstrations. As a result, young people from 26 countries shared ideas on organizing strategies and issued a joint statement emphasizing the concerns of youth about HIV/AIDS. With a publicity campaign timed to coincide with the U.N. special session, we raised awareness of the global apartheid that perpetuates the AIDS pandemic.

Africa Action strongly supported the *United Nations World Conference Against Racism*, held in August in



Zackie Achmat, head of the Treatment Action Campaign, speaking at a joint press conference with Africa Action at the U.N. World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa.

Durban, South Africa, and participated in the nongovernmental portion of the event. We joined with South Africa's Treatment Action Campaign and other groups in a press conference focusing on the failure to address the AIDS pandemic as a contemporary manifestation of international racism.

### Financial Results 2001

<b>Income</b>	
Grants	\$296,700
Contributions	290,213
Miscellaneous	4,909
Interest	11,296
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$603,118</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Program	\$558,622
Administration	148,070
Merger	67,247
Fundraising	28,116
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$802,055</b>
<b>Balances</b>	
Current assets	\$375,887
Current liabilities	23,097
Fund balance	\$352,790

Results for 2001 are preliminary and unaudited, and include expenses from foundation grants received in 2000. Audited accounts for 2000 are available on request.

### Major Donors

Ford Foundation  
 Carnegie Corporation of New York  
 Boehm Foundation  
 Normandie Foundation  
 Samuel Ruben Foundation  
 Academy for Educational Development  
 Theodore A. Von der Ahe, Jr. Trust  
 Joseph Rosen Foundation  
 Communitas Charitable Trust  
 USA for Africa  
 Orisha Foundation  
 Barbara & Victor Ulmer Fund of the Agape Foundation  
 27 congregations of the Religious Action Network  
 General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Church  
 Women's Division, Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Church  
 United Methodist Office for the United Nations  
 Office of Corporate Witness, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)  
 Lutheran Office for World Community  
 AFSCME  
 UNITE Local 23-25  
 CWA Local 1180  
 Amnesty International

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Above: The Rev. Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker, president of the Africa Action Board of Directors and former chief of staff to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

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