MSN Meeting - March 1988
Chicago Notes

Introduction

MSN Meeting took place Friday, March 11, 1988 and Saturday, March 12, 1988 at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, Illinois.

Attending the meeting were:
Roberta Washington, Co-chair (New York); Lisa Anderson (Idaho); Alan Isaacman, Co-chair (Minnesota); Damu Smith (Washington DC); Dan Murphy (Iowa); Mackie Mcleod (Boston); Geri Seese-Green (Oregon); Chris Root (Michigan); Stephanie Urdang (New York); Paul Epstein (Boston); Bassiru (Madison); Andy Epstein (Boston); Bill Martin; Anne Evens (Chicago); Sister Joanette Nitz (Detroit); Carrie Pratt (Madison); Prexy Nesbitt (Chicago); Dave Wiley (Michigan); Heather Gray (Atlanta); Ned Alpers; Otis Cunningham (Chicago)

Regrets were sent by:
Mikel Johnson (Iowa); Kevin Danaher (California); Bill Minter, Kathy Sheldon and Steve Torzinski (California); Paul Voelkel (Wisconsin); Coke McCord (New York); and Todd Hawkins (Washington). Treasurer Lisa Brock was unable to attend due to the tragic death of her mother in Ohio.

The next meeting of the MSN is scheduled for September in Washington D.C. Details will follow.

I. Boston delegations trip to Mozambique

Mackie Mcleod discussed his trip to Mozambique. The delegation of 13 Afro-Americans included activists, service givers, artists and one reporter. They received warm welcomes everywhere and the Mozambicans placed an emphasis on the importance of MSN work in the U.S. The U.S. government did not greet them at the airport, though they were requested to do so prior to their departure.

The group was impressed by the green zones and other collectives. They also saw a model prison without bars. The group saw many people who had been attacked by MNR and were particularly impressed by the sight of a Mozambican hospital treating large numbers of MNR victims. The group had a 2 1/2 hour meeting with President Chissano. Part of the group went to Manica Province and the other part visited Sofala Province. Photographer Don West took many photos. He can be contacted through Mackie.

Suggestions for future tours include: bring an interpreter so that you don’t burden the Mozambican hosts; know all costs involved in traveling within the country; and keep the range of interests within the group narrow so that the Mozambicans can more easily plan an itinerary.

II. Mozambican Pastors visit to the U.S.

Though it was the original impetus of the MSN, the visit was taken over and organized by the National Council of Churches U.S.A. and the Church World Service. Despite the fact that NCCUSA and CWS never acknowledged various contributions made by MSN people to the success of the tour, everyone felt that the main objective was obtained, namely getting the pastors in touch with U.S. people in various areas. During their ten day visit, the pastors were in Georgia, New York, Kansas, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, and Washington, D.C.
III. Lina Magaia Tour

Minneapolis: Lina spoke at the Progressive Alliance Baptist Church along with Angela Davis. She spoke before 1,800 people and earned an honorarium for MSN. At Zion Baptist Church the pastor announced they were giving Mozambique $5,000.

Atlanta: She came on a weekend and her luggage was also lost here. She saw a childrens group, attended a potluck and spoke at a white Baptist church where people were really moved.

Washington: Washington Office on Africa (WOA) had a brown bag lunch with a South African Working Group and also attended MSN events sponsored by the Minters and Kathy Flewellen. She also did an interview for National Public Radio.

Iowa: Lina had a good press conference and visited Des Moines, Ames, and Iowa City. She enjoyed Professor Kruger's Portuguese class and as a result of her visit, he wants to bring in a Mozambican graduate student as a teaching assistant.

Chicago: Lina visited several universities and Women and Children's bookstore. She was the featured speaker at an evening of solidarity with the people of Mozambique along with Ambassador Ferrao. Lina was interviewed by the local, NPR-affiliated public radio as well.

New York: Lina attended a book signing party and a potluck which was given for her by APOIO, the local MSN nucleus. A reception was given for her by the American Committee on Africa at Hunter College. She also appeared on WBAI radio in New York City.

Boston: Lina talked to: 1) the delegation going to Mozambique; 2) a group who had been to the Arusha Tanzania ANC conference; 3) New Word's Bookstore; 4) National Conference of Black Lawyers; 5) Physicians for Human Rights

Canada: Lina visited and spoke in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Quebec

Overall Evaluation: 1) The schedule was too demanding; 2) should have been clearer financial guidelines; 3) Lina should have been given a basic speaker's kit including a map of Africa; 4) people in the regions should have been notified earlier about the groups and projects Lina wanted to work with. In general, it was a positive and helpful tour. Regrets were expressed that Los Angeles had to be omitted and San Francisco shortened due to Lina's problems leaving Mozambique.

III A. Tour of Col. Gaza (ZIMOFA) and other tours. Word has come that Col. Gaza from Zimbabwe may be coming to the United States in the late spring. It was decided that people should indicate to the central office their willingness to host Col. Gaza and/or others in their localities.

IV. Report on Mozambique-related developments and activities in Washington DC: Damu Smith (Director of Washington Office on Africa)

1. WOA agenda in Washington includes extensive work on Mozambique.
2. US government provides aid to Mozambique three ways but with various conditions:
   Economic Support Funds FY '87 $10 million to private sector farmers. FY '88 same amount and same terms. Also, provided President with favorable reports on Mozambique compensation to the Church for property.
Emergency Food Aid: FY '87 $75 million, FY '88 estimated at $75 million.
SADCC Aid: FY '88 $ 50 million. 50% to transportation sector, no aid to Angola, no aid to Mozambique as part of SADCC unless President assesses that it is the US national interest to do so.

3. The Mozambique Desk Officer at the US State Department is Greg Fergin 202-647-9429.

4. Congressman John Conyers' (Michigan) bill condemning RENAMO (H. Res. 189) currently has 52 co-sponsors and it needs 100. Senator Levin's (Michigan) related resolution (S. Res. 91) as of March, 1988 had no co-sponsors. A major problem seems to be the unwillingness of congress people "to go on the record" against a group which is viewed as 'anti-communist'.

5. RENAMO's lobbyists and supporters are lobbying Congress for food aid to Mozambique to be conducted via RENAMO.

V. Discussion on the Relationship between the National Office and Various Local Groups.

The following basic questions were addressed in this discussion: How does the center relate to the local? How are decisions made at the center? How does the center communicate to the local nuclei? What is the relationship of the MSN to other local and national anti-apartheid and solidarity groups? While the discussion was not definitive, it was felt that the local groups should decide what they are capable of doing. Further, it was felt that the bi-annual meetings of the core group should be the main decision making process with the co-chairs and other officers functioning in the interim. It was also felt that the national office should be a mode of information from Mozambique to the groups and from the groups and localities to Mozambique. In this regard, it was felt that there was a great need to see material, information, clippings, documents, resources, etc., pass through the central office more consistently and efficiently.

In general, it was felt that each and every local group or nucleus had to ask the questions: what can we do? what can we not do? Only on the local basis could it be decided whether or how material aid efforts would be initiated. The extent of such efforts was a major sense of the meeting. However, all felt that the primary business of the MSN was education and political mobilization of the U.S. citizens in support of Mozambique.
DECISIONS MADE

It was decided that the Chicago office would not be responsible for shipping things to Mozambique given the difficulty in transporting goods there.

We will do a Malagonana Poster and a "support sanctions" piece. Legislative work will be a primary focus of MSN groups.

Groundrules regarding money, scheduling etc. will be decided on in advance for future tours.

Minutes and other information will be shared with leaders of major national anti apartheid groups.

The MSN will get fully behind efforts to pass sanctions.

The National Office has been authorized to purchase a good copy machine.

The MSN plans to send a representative to the Fall '88 European conference.

The MSN is to send an official letter to the Presidential candidates inquiring about their position on Mozambique, as well as an official letter to all the members of the Democratic Platform Committee. (Damu Smith of WOA is supplying their names.)

The MSN has plans to hire a staff person for the MSN National Office in Chicago in the very near future.
PRIORITY FOLLOW-UP

Chicago:
- Prepare finance guidelines for future MSN-sponsored tours.
- Prepare a letter urging more national church denominations to do extensive work on Mozambique.
- Update resource list. Southern bulk mailing from WOA list to start MSN groups there.
- MSN poster.
- General information on dealing with the press which can be shared by request.
- Send MSN lists to the Embassy.
- Send more clippings to the field offices for distribution.

Field offices:
- Organize sanction support letters, thanking supporters and letting those opposed know that the movement will fight back.
- Send in clippings and other material relating to Mozambique.
- Let the office know if you can handle a tour of Malagatana in your area.

Co-chairs:
- Send a thank you letter to Lina Magaia.
- Draft a "mission" statement, i.e., a statement of purpose for the MSN.

FUTURE PLANS

In September 1988, discuss further the organizational structure of the MSN. (A proposed date is for Saturday, the 10th of September)

Communicate with and forge closer ties to national anti-apartheid and solidarity groups. One idea is to develop and design a letterhead that would reflect these ties.

Begin concentrated work in the South, including a major bulk mailing of information to WOA’s list of Southern activists.

Begin efforts to bring Mozambican children who are in need of surgery to the U.S.

MSN meeting notes were prepared by the Chicago office of the MSN, 343 S Dearborn, suite 601, Chicago, IL 60604. April 26, 1988.