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Presentation: The Free South African Movement

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"Solidarity is not an act of charity, but mutual aid between people fighting for the same objectives."
Samora Machel, President of Mozambique, 1975- 1986.

With these words, the Southern African Support Project (SASP) in 1978 fashioned itself as an international solidarity movement dedicated to, as our organizing booklet proclaimed, "Bringing the Struggle Home: Organizing for Action on Southern Africa." Our slogan proclaimed the links between our domestic struggle and the people of southern Africa. SASP was one of the groups that served as an organizing base for the Free South Africa Movement. So it is from that perspective that I share with you some of the lessons learned from this movement. My aim in this presentation is to give you a sense of the scope and depth of the launching of the Free South America Movement in its first year, from 1984-85. There remains a complex period from 85 through 94 but time does not permit me to fully explore this phase of the movement, so I want to acknowledge that this written presentation will not cover that important period of history although I will sketch the major events of that period.

On November 21, 1984, four Americans of African descent, Randall Robinson, Executive Director of TransAfrica, U.S. Civil Rights Commissioner Mary Frances Berry, Eleanor Holmes Norton a law professor of a prestigious law school (Georgetown), and Congressman (D-DC) Walter Fauntroy visited the South African Embassy to discuss the growing crises in South Africa. As the people of South Africa expressed their opposition to an increasingly brutal and repressive regime, we feared that the Botha regime would commit political genocide against the leadership of labor, youth and township activists. During that entire year of 1984 there had been a large number of labor strikes and youth protests with brutally repressive actions by corporations and government forces. In addition, a number of reports revealed the extent to which the apartheid regime had a devastating impact on the lives of rural South Africans and townships. Protests in various townships because of rent hikes, poor education, housing and apartheid policies were escalating and the regime was responding with brute force. The South African regime had stepped up its regional effort to stabilize its power. The Botha regime had also created a bogus constitution that denied black South Africans the right to participate in the newly constituted parliament while permitting Indians and so-called coloreds to have a limited representation. As South Africans protested this newly constituted parliament as an effort for the regime to pretend that they were making fundamental changes in the apartheid system, we watched with horror as police and security forces repressed political descent with customary brutality. For those of us facing another four years of the Reagan administration, the drumbeat of oppression seemed loud and overwhelmingly worldwide. For South Africans, with the Reagan administration's constructive engagement policy, the next four years could only be a political setback and a derailment of the momentum of their growing resistance internally. This was our political reality. Randall asked, "how much lower can we fall; we're already down?" Cecelie (Counts) loathed facing another year of lobby work against the Reagan enterprise. Adowa Dunn-Mouton faced a bleak year as a congressional staffer in the midst of the Reagan administration. The SASP leadership, Sandra Hill, Joseph Jordan, and me were dismayed that Reagan had won another term and wondered what is to be done? Richard Hatcher, Chair of TransAfrica's Board, felt that the organization needed to launch protest at the White House. We all felt a collective will that if nothing else we would break the silence of our opposition as a people. We decided on civil disobedience at the Embassy as the symbol of the white minority regime with African Americans protesting the oppression of Black people in South Africa.

In the weeks before this single act of civil disobedience about 7,000 South African soldiers joined police in house-to-house raids in townships near Johannesburg and Pretoria, "to rid the area of criminal and revolutionary elements" according to Louis Le Grange, the Minister of Police. Black workers in the Johannesburg area joined in one of the largest two-day general strike. Sasol, the state oil-from-coal company, fired 6,500 workers for their participation in the strike. It was this brutality in South Africa, coupled with our malaise with the Reagan re-election, that brought us to a political place of something is better than nothing mode of analysis. In addition, we had the memory of the previous four years of the Reagan administration's invasion of Grenada, the Contra wars and the administration's profound symbiotic relationship with the apartheid regime of South Africa. It's important to understand that many African Americans viewed Reagan and his administration as fundamentally racist and a supporter of white supremacy. Parren Mitchell, Democrat from Maryland, captured this sentiment, "people are seeing the way Reagan supports the white South Africans and the way he treats blacks here and are beginning to make a connection between the two (Washington Post.). So, it was not difficult for us to garner energy and the political will to challenge the Reagan administration's constructive engagement policy. The internal struggle of the people of South Africa at this historical moment and our connection to the region were important factors that contributed to us seizing this historical moment in support of struggle for justice in South Africa.

Another contributing factor to our ability to seize this historical moment, was the strategic decision by Oliver Tambo to allocate resources for the ANC to expand its presence in the United States. Before Lindiwez Mabuza was assigned to Washington, DC, the late Johnny Makatini served at the United Nations and did his best to stabilize national and international linkages with the ANC while working within the United Nations context. Without the laboring of these two people, it is likely that the historical moment may have passed without our having the knowledge and sense of the ANC's visions and goals. They worked tirelessly to build the kind of people to people ties with various small groups of people throughout the nation. Most importantly their roles were political. They collaborated and conferred with anti-apartheid groups. They reached out to traditional civil rights and women's groups. They spoke at forums and on many alternative media shows. South Africans in exile were also important such as Jennifer Davis and Dumisani Kumalo. Artists, both South African and US artists were important links to the South African struggle. They were the faces and voices of South Africa during those lean media years when hardly a radio, television, or print newspaper gave us a vision of what was happening inside South Africa or the region. We relied on the black press and the few alternative media operating at that time as voices of the invisible. While their work was important, it is also true that having solidarity groups focused on international issues, in this case the anti-apartheid struggle, were a link to groups focused on domestic issues.

The appointment had been set for the afternoon with the ambassador. Once inside and after a discussion that lasted about forty (40) minutes, the visitors confirmed with Ambassador Fournie that they would not leave. Randall stated, as planned, "please convey for us to your government our basic demand, which is twofold. All of your government's political prisoners must be released immediately. These would include, among other, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, the thirteen labor leaders arrested recently without charge and the three black leaders who have taken refuge in the British Consulate in Durban. We are further demanding that your government commit itself immediately and publicly to the speedy dismantlement of the apartheid system with a timetable for this task. (Robinson, p 152)." Outside the embassy were protesters marching on a picket line saying, "South Africa will be free; Mandela will be free." "South Africa will be Free; Namibia will be free." "Sanctions Now or One Person; One Vote." The Press was there, both domestic and international, both electronic and print. As the protesters sang, "We Shall Overcome" in the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the civil rights protesters, the handcuffed protesters were led away to the paddy wagons.

Over the holiday weekend, the protest action was designated the name Free South African Movement and William Lucy of labor, Roger Wilkens, author and social critic and myself, a founding member of the grass

roots organization, Southern African Support Project, joined Randall, Mary Francis and Fauntroy as the Steering Committee. We would meet daily, early in the morning, to chart a strategic course of political action and protests. Within that first week after the holidays the following arrest took place:

- Nov. 26th Representative Charles Hayes, D-III; The Rev. Joseph Lowery, Chairman of the Southern Christian leadership Conference
- Nov. 27th: Rep. John Conyers, D-Michigan; William Simons, President of the Washington Teachers Union
- Nov. 28th Rep. Ronald Dellums, D- California; Marc Stepp, United Auto Workers Vice President; Hilda Mason, DC Council .
- Nov. 29th Yolanda King, daughter of Martin Luther King, Jr.
Gerald McEntee, head of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
Richard Hatcher, Mayor of Gary, Indiana
- Nov. 30th Rep. George Crockett, D-Mich; Rep. Don Edwards, D-California
Lenoard Ball, Coalition of Black Trade Unions.

It was a combination of labor, black congressional representatives and civil rights leaders who constituted our first arrestees. They were people we knew and could call on quickly. By Monday the general public and organizations began to call TransAfrica's office to participate in the daily demonstrations. Within this same week public demonstrations against South African consulates, Krugerrand coin dealers, and corporations tied to South Africa spread throughout the United States. On November 23rd when the Local 10 of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) in San Francisco, California refused to offload cargo from South Africa and 250 people came in the rain to support the longshoremen's protest, we were elated that people were acting on their own to seize the moment to express their outrage with US foreign policy and the apartheid regime. As the internal struggle within South Africa continued to escalate, FSAM's act of civil disobedience centered the international media on the plight of the people of South Africa and the illegitimacy of the apartheid system. Worldwide demonstrations were taking place and being reported in the press. For the first time, we were regularly beginning to see images of the repressive brutality in action on television nightly news. Protesters at the embassy were uplifted by their call for sanctions, when Bishop Tutu, who had just been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize came to the demonstration. Using his stature as a Bishop and the winner of this prestigious award, he used every public forum to acknowledge the importance of the demonstrations as a witness against the travesty of apartheid and the need for the world community to collectively oppose apartheid.

The FSAM had wanted the original demonstrators to be charged with a misdemeanor of unlawful entry and awarded a trial in order to place the USA policy of constructive engagement on trial. US Attorney Joseph diGenova refused to try the cases of unlawful entry, saying the cases lacked prosecutorial merit. By December the 5th public demonstrations against South African consulates, Krugerrand coin dealers, and corporations tied to South Africa spread across seven cities. (USA Today, 12/5/84).

Beginning the year of 1985 we continued our march protesting US foreign policy towards South Africa. Then Senator Lowell Weicker, Republican from Connecticut, was the first Senator to get arrested in the protest on January 15th. Even when President Reagan canceled his January 1985 inauguration march because of the unusually low temperature we marched to demonstrate that weather would not stop our protests. As Cecelie Counts, a staffer of TransAfrica, a SASP member, and one of the coordinators of the daily demonstrations and arrest, observed we had to show that through sleet or snow, cold or sunshine we are prepared to protest the US's Constructive Engagement policy.

Over the year school children, Universities and hundreds of civic organizations would protest against apartheid. On the West Coast and other eastern cities like New York, demonstrations were taking place to promote sanctions. Sit-ins at Columbia University in New York and Berkeley ignited the student divestment movement in early spring. The long timework of the American Committee on African enabled it to successfully coordinate a divestment day on the anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination. In August Botha made his view clear. He vowed that, " he would not lead this country's ruling white minority on a road to abdication and suicide (Washington Post, August 14, 1985).

By August 1985, after the South African government established a State of Emergency and ban on public funerals, actor Paul Newman, former presidential candidate and civil rights leader Jesse Jackson, as well as major civil rights and labor leaders joined with the Free South Africa Movement in a "funeral" march of 10,000 people to the State department to protest the Reagan administration's policy of Constructive Engagement with the South Africa regime. The strategy was to keep public pressure on the United States' collaboration with the apartheid regime.

During September 1985 as public pressure grew, the first freestanding South African sanctions bills passed. In an attempt to prevent this congressional action, President Reagan wrote an Executive Order imposing minimal sanctions. The Senate majority leader, Robert Dole used a procedural maneuver to prevent the final vote on congressional sanctions measures. Actually, he claimed that the documents could not be found so Senate action could not take place!

In January 1986 the FSAM Steering Committee, after sitting in the local Shell office as an act of civil disobedience, joined with labor, religious and civil rights groups in the international campaign against the Royal Dutch Shell Corporation. The effort was to center the focus on the global corporate links with the South African regime.

On October 2, 1986 Congress handed President Reagan his first major foreign policy defeat by overriding his veto of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986.

Between February 17-20 in 1987 the U.S. and Britain vetoed a UN Security Council resolution that would have made the sanctions imposed by the 1986 Act global and mandatory.

In 1988 South Africa detained 30,000 people without charge, arrested thousands of children and banned every civic and political organization. Consistent with the Reagan administration's constructive engagement policy, the administration used every loophole in the 1986 law in favor of the South African economy.

By September 1988 the House passed HR 1580, the anti-Apartheid Amendments of 1988. Even though Shell led an anti-sanctions lobbying campaign and the British government lobbied vigorously against the bill, the sanction bill passed although with a strategic loss. The bill mandated divestment, almost a complete trade embargo and prohibited any company involved in South Africa's fuel sector from receiving new US government coal, gas and oil leases. The final sanction measure omitted the strategic fuel provisions. We had a two-track strategy with one bill being stronger than the previous 1986 Act but weaker than the Dellums' bill. We all nearly fainted when the Dellums' bill passed. As Cecelie Counts recalled, "while activists celebrated Dellums' bill to impose comprehensive sanctions against South Africa, the Senate voted to lift the ban on U.S. aid to South African backed forces in Angola (Crossroads, page 13). In effect the Reagan administration was giving money to the South African regime by funding Savimbi -led UNITA.

In February 1989 P.W. Botha resigned as head of the ruling National Party and was replaced by F.W. de Klerk. Government representatives begin to meet openly with representatives of the ANC. Like the ANC, FSAM feared that the political leadership in Congress would accept de Klerk's leadership as fundamental change in the apartheid regime. We felt that we had to do everything we could in solidarity to expose this effort by the apartheid regime to appear to make changes.

On February 11, 1990 Nelson Mandela was released after spending 27 years in prison. This was a great victory for the South African people and indeed people around the world identified even more with the struggle of the people of South Africa.

The Free South African Movement organized an eleven (11) day, seven city trip to the U.S. for Mr. Mandela and the ANC delegation in June 1990. Thousands of people greeted Mr. Mandela and the delegation throughout the seven cities. We viewed this visit as an opportunity to demonstrate to the political powers that there was vast popular support for Mr. Mandela and the African National Congress as well as an opportunity to mobilize funds for ANC to continue the struggle to establish a new South Africa. Mr. Mandela was the fourth private citizen in the history of the United States to address both houses of Congress. This was an important political leverage when you consider that both Mr. Mandela and the African National Congress had been viewed by the State Department at one time as terrorists. At the end of this visit, the Free South African Movement ended although individual organizations and individuals continued to work on international issues.

FASM was a catalyst for the visibility of the anti-apartheid struggle both inside South Africa and around the world. The visual, radio and print media crossed borders to tell this struggle. Witnesses against apartheid, numbering some 5,000 in the United States, made their opposition visible with their arrest. The bravery and momentum of the struggle inside South Africa became the visible example of all that was wrong with apartheid. As Mary Francis Berry answered when asked to get arrested at the embassy, "it is the right time and the right thing to do!" This very complex struggle that functioned on so many levels of spheres of influence gave us many lessons which I will highlight only four in this presentation.

1. CHANGING THE FRAMEWORK OF DISCOURSE

"Blackness" and the lives of black people of African descent in the United States have a complex role in the culture of the United States. On the one hand we are demonized and despised for what we look like. When political officials want to convey that they do not support liberal policies or black people, they use images and code terms to send that message. On the other hand, as a people we serve as a symbolic meaning of the modern day struggle for justice. During different periods of history, particularly when you examine USA administrations, we have been able to use the power of justice struggle to influence US power. The Free South Africa Movement was one of those periods because of the confluence of the stepped-up internal anti-apartheid struggle, the capability of US anti-apartheid movement, the sentiments and political preparation of congressional staffers, and the role of the media. The intersection of the corporate media and the ruling class in both the private and government sectors is so intertwined that it is difficult for progressive ideas to compete with the ways that realities are framed in national discourse. At the time of the launching of the Free South Africa movement, the Reagan administration, like all administration before it, argued that the primary strategic political interest was to keep communism from spreading to southern Africa. In its first administration, President Reagan and his foreign policy leadership had conceived a policy of constructive engagement as an attempt to provide a policy framework for its contradictory behavior in the world community. As revealed in a State department document leaked to Randall Robinson by an employee, the Reagan administration wanted to minimize the "pole cat" status of the South African regime (Robinson, 1998). With the acts of civil disobedience by Black people prominent in the civil rights struggle for South Africa, it illuminated the race issue in South Africa as opposed to whether the ANC would align itself with communism. As the embassy protests continued, the themes of racist minority regime, white supremacy, the unequal treatment of black people in the same work status, the lack of the rule of law and one person one vote for all South Africans became the dominant images of South Africa in public discourse. In the early days of the protest this changing reality of how the public was viewing the realities of US policy with the South African regime was clear when 35 conservative Republicans visited the South African Ambassador to warn that they would support economic and diplomatic sanctions if South Africa did not end apartheid.

The re-framing of public discourse by FSAM was challenged by the South African regime by employing people of African descent to implement a propaganda campaign to discredit FSAM. Thus, black men like Marcus Dawkins spoke to many groups to convince them that the FSAM's report on what is happening in South Africa was wrong. In effect their story line was that we were either lying, misinformed or grand standing for media attention! Many of us had to counter this propaganda attack with a public speaking campaign at a time when we had few resources and many demands on time and money. Nevertheless, the framework of the debate was effectively changed from anti-communism to racism. It then became a question of how long it would take to wage a legislative battle to enact comprehensive

sanctions and how to isolate those Congressional and administrative forces that wanted to influence who would be elected to lead a new South Africa.

2. MULTI-ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES MAKE STRENGTH

It was the common perception by many international solidarity activists and liberation movements that the United States had too many organizations working in the anti-apartheid movement. These organizations had emerged because of historical circumstances, geography as well as spin-offs of other work. For example, the emergence of the American Committee on Africa in 1953 was located in New York and had been founded by George Houser and later led by Jennifer Davis characterized its work by its activism with college students, divestment and material aid using its Africa Fund 501.C3 status. The American Friends Service Committee, a peace organization., located in Philadelphia had a division that worked on southern Africa and it also had many offices throughout the United States. Under Jerry Herman's leadership, the division expanded its education work and began to focus on targeting strategic cities in the southern region of the United States by carrying delegations of activists to visit editorial Boards of News outlets, churches, and Universities. Another organization, led by Gay McDougal during the critical years of 1980-1994, focused on the human rights and legal issues within South Africa. The Southern Africa Project of the Lawyer's committee for Civil Rights Under the Law performed outstanding work on key legal issues such as the illegal detention of activists inside South Africa. The Washington Office on Africa, located in D .C., primarily focused on developing a lobby network of church and labor representatives, also published information on what Congress was doing or not doing that was in the interest of Africa. In response to the church sectors growing demands for Corporate divestment, the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility was developed to coordinate church actions. Aside from publishing a newsletter called the Corporate Examiner, it coordinated church divestment, pushed for shareholder resolutions by churches and negotiated with companies (Harrison, 1995). The United Mine Workers, The Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and the AFSCME had increasingly become involved in the anti-apartheid struggle over the years as a result of the growing interest in assisting their counterparts in the struggle. Bill Lucy, President of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and also Secretary Treasurer of AFSCME, was pivotal in working within TransAfrica as a force for labor interests. Richard Trumka, then President of the United Mine Workers, established an office that focused on raising mineworker solidarity with the mineworkers of South Africa.

TransAfrica and the Southern Africa Support Project (SASP) were the youngest organizations with particular foci within this array of organizations. TransAfrica was the vision of the late Congressman Charles Diggs whose work during those critical years affirmed for him that the international consciousness of black people was critical if there would ever be change in US foreign policy towards Africa and the Caribbean . In 1977, his former congressional staffer, Randall Robinson, would become the leader of TransAfrica that was dedicated to building public support, particularly in the African American community, for a more progressive African and Caribbean foreign policy. Just about the same time, in 1978, the Southern African Support project evolved from a news collective into a community-based international solidarity organization. SASP's work consisted of mobilizing grassroots events to raise public consciousness on the struggle in the southern African region. SASP, like many other groups throughout the USA, mainly concentrated on its local conscious raising activities and would join national or international campaigns as they emerged. Their view was that they lived in the belly of the beasts and it was important to have a grass roots consciousness on international issues within the capital. Its years of strategic organizing had permitted them to develop a base of institutional support in the city of Washington. This is why SASP was a critical base of support for the daily protests at the embassy.

What is interesting and important to observe is that all of these groups represented a working organizational infrastructure of assets that gave the movement legal, labor, information services, grass roots activism, and connections with a range of organizational ties that could actually sustain a campaign and its many demands on time, changing knowledge, legal and legislative knowledge, creativity and people

power. While TransAfrica and its President, Randall Robinson became the symbol of the leadership of the anti-apartheid movement within the United States, it is important to remember that the ultimate success of the legislative sanctions strategy depended on all of these long term organizations that had honed their expertise and capability in ways that could sustain pressure against the USA government and transnational Corporations. It's also important to realize that the media focuses its attention on a leader and the actions of the moment in order to shape their stories and images. It is these stories and images that expanded the base of the movement. The Free South Africa movement recognized that the many facets of the work to be done could never have been accomplished by any one organization. Yet the movement did not sustain organizational strength across the various networks during the post apartheid decade for a variety of personal, political and strategic reasons that are too complex to engage in this particular forum. I think what we, as SASP recognized, is that trying to build a legitimate coalition with trust, respect, and democratic transparency in the midst of a complex international movement just couldn't happen. We only had the will and time to concentrate on the political and strategic organizational demands of the time. The best we could do was keep the peace among us and focus on the primary struggle of ending US foreign policy support of apartheid.

3. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SUSTAINED SYMBOLIC PROTEST

We had thought we could sustain a week-long protest and arrests. By the end of the week citizens began to call and request that their groups be arrested as a way of expressing outrage with out government's constructive engagement policies. Many critics dismissed the protests because they argued that people were not remaining in jail and that the protests were merely symbolic because people did not suffer. Yet the protests were powerful given their diversity of people, types of groups, spontaneity nationally and the ability to sustain popular activism. People came to protest at the embassy from all over the world and throughout the United States. Like the involvement in the United Democratic Front during the time of the ANC's banning, people came to the picket line under the banner of their organization or geographical space. The idea of naming a day of protest based on a constituency group emerged from the people. They called with a request for their organization, church, school or University to get arrested in protest of US support for SA apartheid policies. What I've come to believe is that the arrest is symbolic. It is a way to let the protester express opposition to a policy, practice, or government. It gives public voice to what is internal disdain for US foreign policy. It really isn't important that people are not jailed and placed on trial. 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. Of course even though protests create a political climate, the organizers must have the organizational infrastructure to respond politically to a legislative agenda and cracks in the power elite and its silent ones.

4. CENTERING THE STRUGGLE WITHIN THE MIDDLE/WORKING CLASSES

We were not absent of theoretical perspectives or simply political operatives. We had a political framework, and I think we had enough movement experiences to appreciate that talking with people who thought like you was not going to change US foreign policy. We had to shift our focus on the very people who elected officials at the local and national levels. One of the reasons that SASP and TransAfrica could be allies was our focus on centering the struggle within the middle class and working class. As a matter of policy, SASP designed conscious raising activities that were rooted in the popular cultural activities of different strata within the African -American community. For example, we organized gospel concerts that included a slide show on the situation in South Africa or we hosted a labor speak out so that workers could speak about their injustices within the context of the injustices South African workers were experiencing.

As the movement grew, we intersected with the upper middle class as they grappled with how they wanted to view themselves in this struggle. For many, this struggle represented an opportunity to right their failure to act during the civil rights struggle. Both TransAfrica and SASP knew that we would not be able

to influence the power structure until we had enough people power to signal to politicians that it's better to be with the growing visible opposition than other power centers. Otherwise one may find themselves on the wrong side of history. To this day, and in this current Presidential campaign, Vice President Cheney was "outed" by Vice Presidential candidate Edwards during a recent debate because as a Senator he voted against the Congressional resolution on Nelson Mandela. Mr. Mandela, continues to symbolize for many in the general public a hero with conviction.

Mass opposition against the apartheid regime and US foreign policy had another affect. It gave space for the growing number of black people who worked in corporations and other traditional centers of power to argue within their organizational structures that the corporation or organization needed to oppose apartheid. Thus, the Black Vice Presidents of Corporations against Apartheid emerged. It's not that these groups were going to be the types of allies that will take the most radical approach we might desire, but their willingness to reveal their views and act within the comfort of their workspace began to show cracks in the wall of silence.

CONCLUSION

Finally, a question I'm often asked is why did you do this? Why did the leadership of FSAM emerge? Many people suspect some ulterior motive of the quest for fame and riches. I want to dispel that notion by identifying what I believe are the reasons and publicly saying that none of us are among the rich and famous. First, we all had a tradition of activism and a commitment to internationalism. Some of us were activists in the civil rights movement, the black consciousness student movement and the anti-war movement. Others were key activists in organizing the Sixth Pan African Congress while others had served in summer Venceremos Brigades 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. Thirdly, we have a long tradition of Pan-African thought and activism that guides our international solidarity work (Magubane, 1987). We are in search of self-affirmation as a reclaiming of our humanity and political empowerment. It is an effort to be involved in, as Cabral would say, reclaiming our historical process as a people in the Diaspora. Thus, international solidarity, as the late Samora Machel, said, is about mutual aid between people fighting for the same objectives. As we enter this new phase of solidarity work, we have many challenges to re-define what international solidarity will mean in the age of globalization and the era of one super power. We urge that one final lesson must not be forgotten and that is the importance of constituency politics in the United States. In a complex society like the United States a country or group, outside of the Western power elite, has people power as one of its greatest arsenals against the tyranny of a superpower. Thus, international solidarity is not only important when a national liberation is struggling to achieve State power, but it is also very important as a nation state.

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