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by

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**“We Are an African People”:
The Development of Black American Solidarity with Portuguese Africa**

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“We Are an African People”:

The Development of Black American Solidarity with Portuguese Africa

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Dedication

To Julie, in what I hope will be the first of many dedications. We'll get that vacation someday.

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“We Are an African People”:

The Development of Black American Solidarity with Portuguese Africa

by

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Beginning in 1961, the struggle for decolonization in the Portuguese colonies of Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea-Bissau captured world attention. A transnational movement developed in the western world in solidarity with these predominantly socialist struggles for liberation. In the United States, African Americans helped lead the charge in the 1970s. Historians have tended to ignore this pivotal period due to its timing between the high tide of African independence and the rise of the anti-Apartheid movement, but the global campaign for Portuguese Africa represented a pivotal transition. It linked activists across national borders and provided models for organizing that would be carried into the solidarity campaigns of the next decade.

This solidarity did not emerge fluidly, but had to be forged by a combination of motivated African nationalists and receptive American audiences. Black minorities in the United States continued to sympathize with the independence cause in Africa, but responses to the 1961 Angolan revolution diverged on the question of the proper role of African Americans in shaping foreign policy. A radical minority helped develop sympathy into a wider activist movement through educational campaigns and rallies. Conducted in direct cooperation with liberation groups such as the *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (FRELIMO) and the *Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde* (PAIGC), these activities introduced blacks to the successful armed revolutions and socialist philosophies of Portuguese Africa. The assertive visions of black independence contrasted with the quieter struggle against Apartheid and helped inspire domestic calls for communal development in places like New York, Boston, and

elsewhere. This coalition of African nationalists and black American activists collapsed the distance that had always separated the poles of the global struggle for racial and economic equality and established networks of transnational exchange. Using the experience gained from this successful organizing, American activists expanded their support of leftist nationalist causes to the rest of southern Africa after the Portuguese states achieved independence in 1975.

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Introduction and Historiography

On May 27, 1972, tens of thousands of African Americans filled the streets of Washington, D.C. By the hundreds, they streamed through the capital of the United States, hopping from embassy to embassy where politicians, activists, and poets urged them to use their political clout to change American foreign policy and their own lot as the second-class citizens within the most powerful country in the world. Onlookers working in the city's buildings that Saturday afternoon likely assumed the demonstration aimed its ire at the Vietnam War, which had long attracted such vocal protests but was now winding its way toward a final conclusion. This, however, was not a new protest against the war in Southeast Asia – it was the first celebration of African Liberation Day. Blacks from across the country had gathered to express their anger at American complicity with the minority regimes that remained in power on the African continent. Young and old, rich and poor, college educated and high-school dropouts, radical and moderate, a gamut of the African American community pledged solidarity with black liberation leaders struggling for the establishment of new, independent nations in the Portuguese colonies, Rhodesia, and South Africa.

Though few people now have heard of African Liberation Day, such activities were not uncommon in the early 1970s. Southern Africa captured the imagination of many young African Americans during this period. The Portuguese colonies of Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau became particularly important symbols for protest against racial inequality and reactionary Cold War policies. From 1961 until the collapse of the Portuguese empire in 1975, these struggles for independence attracted international attention. Stateless and dependent on outside funding, the liberation groups used this global awareness to build a diverse and vibrant

solidarity network. In recent years, a small cottage industry has developed around Lusophone Africa's relationship with communist states like the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, and Czechoslovakia, who provided arms, supplies, and eventually troops to help achieve and maintain independence.¹ These international connections were vital, but emphasis on these states has overshadowed another important area of nationalist foreign policy: non-governmental organizations in the west. From Sweden to the Caribbean, the liberation leaders used religious, ideological, and racial ties to create a network of activists that spanned the political and racial spectrum. These interconnected western movements did not play the same role as the socialist and African allies who armed the freedom fighters, but they provided valuable material support, reproduced propaganda, and helped sway national politics against official aid to Portugal.

The western solidarity movement has largely disappeared within the ever growing corpus of books documenting the development of a transnational anti-Apartheid sentiment. As Swedish historian Håkan Thörn has argued, anti-Apartheid organizing represented a "globalization of politics" that helped give rise to contemporary discourses of a world "civil society." Borrowing from New Social Movement Theory, he argues that the anti-Apartheid cause – framed in terms of an anti-colonial struggle – united both new (racial, leftist, gendered) and old (labor, religious, humanitarian) social movements into a complex global network of national groups.² This ambitious analysis is absolutely correct, but in focusing narrowly on anti-Apartheid organizing it avoids the pivotal role played by Portuguese African nationalists in laying the

¹ See recent monographs by Odd Arne Westad, Peiro Gleijeses, Jeremy Friedman, Vladimir Shubin, and Edward George among others.

² Håkan Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2009), 4, 8.

groundwork for this diverse, transnational network of activists. Like many anti-Apartheid historians, Thörn depicts the struggles in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau as prologues and, on occasion, distractions from the more central goal of anti-South African activity.³ By privileging the South African perspective over a wider regional approach to the development of this global network, Thorn and other scholars downplay the relation between earlier radical anti-colonial organizing and later criticism of Apartheid.⁴

A pair of national studies reveal just how important this longer history of organizing was, not only for the questions of rhetorical formation and network construction emphasized by Thörn, but also for the invaluable “learning process” in the construction of successful movements.⁵ As Tör Sellström’s encyclopedic review of solidarity in Sweden has demonstrated, the rise of Portuguese African solidarity groups in Sweden directly contributed to the popularization of anti-Apartheid organizing when the activists transitioned after the collapse of Lisbon’s empire in 1975. It was during the pivotal years of the early 1970s, when Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and Angola dominated the African solidarity agenda, that European-African exchanges began in earnest, popular-political linkages were forged, and activists developed successful campaign strategies.⁶ Former activist Sietse Bosgra has documented a similar process of growth in the Netherlands, while recent articles have hinted at what was in fact a similarly

³ See for instance the various discussions of FRELIMO, most noteworthy Thörn’s use of African National Congress activist Sobizana Mngqikana to dismiss the Swedish focus on anti-imperialism in Portuguese Africa as “silly.” Ibid. 39. See also

⁴ See for example Francis Njubi Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans Against Apartheid, 1946-1994* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); Roger Fieldhouse, *Anti-apartheid: A history of the movement in Britain, 1959-1994 – A study in pressure group politics* (London: Merlin Press, 2004); and Donald R. Culverson, *Contesting Apartheid: U.S. Activism, 1960-1967* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999).

⁵ Thorn, 15.

⁶ See Tor Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, 2 vols. (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1999; 2002) and Tor Sellström, *A Suécia e as Lutas de Libertação em Angola, Moçambique, e Guiné-Bissau*. (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2008).

successful moment of Lusophone solidarity in the United Kingdom during this period as well.⁷ All agree that activists developed close ties with the liberation leaders, which directly influenced the national success of their anti-colonial campaigns based on mass mobilization of grassroots activism.⁸ These individual European examples illustrate the heretofore marginalized role played by discrete anti-colonial organizations in not only bridging the continental and racial gap, but also in developing transnational networks and working models of grassroots activism that would directly inform the later, more famous anti-Apartheid cause.

The European wing of this solidarity movement has received some scholarly attention due to its successes in influencing policy in Sweden and the Netherlands, but it was far from the only region of the western alliance that witnessed a growth in grassroots activity supporting Lusophone anti-colonialism. In fact, for much of the 1960s and even early 1970s, the Portuguese African socialists considered the United States the most important target of their popular diplomacy. As Portugal's most powerful – if not necessarily most complicit – ally, convincing the American government to fully abandon Lisbon's wars provided a boost to the cause of self-determination. African nationalists worked to develop relationships with a broad array of groups that would later come to inform the "Rainbow Coalition" of new movements and established labor and humanitarian organizations that would provide a national consensus on South Africa in the 1980s. The uneven history of solidarity activity among these various groups in the 1960s and 1970s has militated against a single (or any, for that matter) history, but each followed

⁷ Sietse Bosgra, "From Jan van Riebeeck to Solidarity with the Struggle," in SADET, Ed, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa Volume 3: International Solidarity*, 2 Parts (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2008); Norrie MacQueen and Pedro Aires Oliveira, "'Grocer meets Butcher:' Marcello Caetano's London Visit of 1973 and the Last Days of Portugal's Estado Novo," *Cold War History*, 10:1 (2010).

⁸ Specific examples include the Cahorra Bassa Campagin in Sweden, the Barclay's Boycott and End the Alliance Campaign in the United Kingdom, and the wildly successful Coffee Campaign in the Netherlands.

similar paths before finally converging in the mid-1970s. The central goals of the patient and complex diplomacy of the African nationalists can best be seen in their courting of the African American community. Through the decade and a half struggle for freedom, nationalists built ever stronger ties with their co-racialists in North America, while pushing them to broaden their cooperation with allies in the churches, radical left, and even traditional labor bloc.

The peak of activism in the 1970s has traditionally appeared as a quiet period in the scholarship of American anti-imperialism concerning Africa. Studies of the era have focused overwhelmingly on Vietnam. Only two sets of scholars have paid much attention to African internationalism: those studying African American internationalism and those later scholars who focus on the American anti-Apartheid movement, mostly in the 1980s. The former generally overlook Portuguese Africa due to its late decolonization. Authors like James Meriwether and Penny Von Eschen have examined anti-imperialism in the 1940s and 1950s, but they have adopted a pessimistic view of subsequent activities. They argue that Civil Rights, Cold War pressures, and disillusionment with the post-colonial state of the continent combined to silence an elite African-centered left-leaning internationalism.⁹ Peniel Joseph and scholars of recent Black Power studies recognize that Pan-African feelings remained important in the United States but treat the topic primarily as a static influence on African American radicalism. Continental activists appear in this literature primarily as stereotypes, sketches, or vague allusions.¹⁰ Only Brenda Gayle Plummer's recent examination of solidarity during the era of decolonization has

⁹ James Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2001). See also, Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anti-Colonialism, 1937-1957* (Cornell University Press, 1997).

¹⁰ Peniel Joseph, *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (Henry Holt: 2006).

begun to recover this vibrant Lusophone campaign, though it garners a relatively brief mention in a book whose wide breadth will likely inspire numerous dissertations.¹¹

The latter subgroup of histories focuses on the politics of the American anti-Apartheid movement. These scholars have viewed the 1970s as what British activist Christabel Gurney has called the “difficult decade,” in which the success of the early 1960s organizing against South Africa suffered through a *dénouement* before the high water mark of the 1980s.¹² Portuguese Africa appears fleetingly in these works as a prelude to more important activities. These historians and sociologists alike have downplayed the western network that developed around Portuguese African liberation and helped revive enthusiasm for self-determination in southern Africa. This movement bridged the anti-colonialism of the 1950s with the anti-imperial and anti-Apartheid critiques popular in the United States during the late 1970s and 1980s. The success of this movement owed much to the sustained enthusiasm for a new form of internationally conscious local organizing that it inspired in the United States, especially among African Americans.

The solidarity campaign with Portuguese Africa united radical and moderate black Americans. The success of the revolutions and their attractive ideologies convinced tens of thousands of activists to gather together and pledge their support to a distant cause. Socialist nationalists actively cultivated relationships with American groups, urging them to conduct political campaigns to diplomatically isolate Portugal. They rejected Cold War divisions and created a new international vision of an independent, pragmatically leftist Africa that could

¹¹ Brenda Gayle Plummer, *In Search of Power: African Americans in the Era of Decolonization, 1956-1974* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013). Portuguese Africa appears for approximately ten pages.

¹² Christabel Gurney, “The 1970s: The Anti-Apartheid Difficult Decade,” *Journal of South Africa Studies* 35:2 (June 2009). See also, Nesbitt and Culverson.

serve as a model for more assertive domestic organizing in the United States. African Americans in the 1970s embraced this model as a result of their own disaffection with previous internationalized tactics of non-violent resistance. African revolutions reinforced visions of a more assertive form of communal self-determination during the Black Power era. The Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA), the *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (FRELIMO), and the *Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde* (PAIGC) worked persistently to sell this identification. Leaders of the movements influenced the activities and ideologies of sympathetic Americans, using personal diplomacy and key allies to shape the directions and emphasis of solidarity activity. As such the liberation leaders played pivotal roles in these campaigns, though American groups often decided how to package and sell the Portuguese African cause to discrete racial and ideological constituencies. This hands-off diplomacy allowed African Americans to arrive at different and sometimes divisive interpretations of Pan-African solidarity, but it also invested individuals with a sense of ownership that would remain even after the victory of the colonies over Portuguese imperialism. These independent American actors helped increase knowledge of the revolutionary struggles and promote local activism in support of African self-determination. It legitimized a transnational network of activists committed to global equality, which would fuel anti-Apartheid organizing in the 1980s.

The Lusophone Influence on Pan-Africanism in the 1960s

The early 1960s were the heady years of the Civil Rights era, when African Americans adopted the Ghandian tactics of non-violence to give lie to the myth of American liberalism and force the country to confront its long history of segregation and inequality. Myriad histories have demonstrated without a doubt that while this may have been an American movement, it had international ramifications.¹³ Continental Africa looked on with more than impartial interest, and its concerns helped shape the response of both Dwight Eisenhower and his successor John Kennedy. Yet this story of global attention focused on the battle for American racial liberalism had a less noticeable if more radical counterpart, where African Americans chafing under the consequences of inequality sought more confrontational and sometimes less peaceful means to challenge the rigid system of legal and popular disenfranchisement. These less famous figures often looked to the ongoing African revolutions that now confronted more rigid resistance in the southern third of the continent. South Africa served as a familiar reference due to its well-known system of Apartheid, but beginning in 1961 the Portuguese colonies of Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau intruded on the popular imagination as the center of active resistance to a seemingly global system of white superiority. Though Lusophone nationalists had trouble establishing themselves at the forefront of African American concerns, a minority of radicals working at the grassroots levels adopted the cause, laying the groundwork for future organizing.

¹³ See Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Brenda Gayle Plummer, ed., *Window on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1988* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

The liberation struggles in Portuguese Africa first gained international attention in the early 1960s. As the remnants of a seafaring empire that had developed around coastal trading posts, the colonies were spread across the African continent with little connecting them but a common heritage of domination from Lisbon and a common language of the cities. These links combined with socialist programs of national reconstruction to promote cooperation among the primary liberation groups in Angola, Mozambique, and the small West African state of Guinea-Bissau. Each of these movements operated the struggles independently, but limited resources led to numerous attempts to create inter-group linkages, especially in the area of foreign policy. The most successful of these was the Conferência das Organizações Nacionalistas das Colónias Portuguesas (CONCP), which united the primary socialist liberation parties together on the international stage beginning in 1961 (PAIGC, MPLA, and –after its founding in 1962 – FRELIMO).¹⁴ Armed revolution began in 1961 in Angola, spreading to Guinea in 1963 and Mozambique in 1964. Political and ethnic divides hampered the Angolan revolution, preventing either the MPLA or the nationalist Bakongo Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (FNLA) under Holden Roberto from making noteworthy military gains after the initial shock of 1961. FRELIMO and the PAIGC united to lead the struggles in Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau more ably, achieving real military success in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Throughout this period, the nationalists made repeated appeals to western peoples to demand their governments withdraw support from Portugal. The Iberian state maintained a large army disproportionate to its small population and weak economy due in part to aid received from its membership in the North Atlantic Treaty

¹⁴ Patrick Chabal, *Amilcar Cabral: Revolutionary Leadership and People's War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 86.

Organization (NATO), continuing relationships with western states like the United States, and the expansion of international business contacts with corporations like Gulf Oil.

Yet in 1961, this brief outline of the Portuguese African revolutions was all in the future. The outbreak of violence in Angola that spring shocked the world, as Portugal's colonies had seemed to be among the quietest corners of a rapidly changing continent. Portugal had long attempted to isolate its colonies from both the economic and political influences of neighboring states. The Portuguese government under dictator Antonio Salazar continued to speak of the colonies as multiracial parts of the European metropolis, despite growing consternation from states like India. Resistance to Portuguese rule seemed weak, especially when compared to the more vocal and organized movements in the English and French colonies that helped make 1960 the Year of Africa, in which over a dozen countries gained independence. The advent of violence – first in February under the guidance of the MPLA and then again in March with Roberto's invasion of the region bordering the Congo – grabbed headlines worldwide. In the United States, an unprepared press relied heavily on official reports from Lisbon, which portrayed Angola in terms bordering on the apocalyptic. Articles described the Africans as terrorists and highlighted the brutality of killings. Under headlines like "Angola Witch Doctors Go On Terror Spree," the Associated Press and other news agencies spoke chillingly about "anti-white uprisings by machete-wielding Africans" that targeted men, women, and children alike.¹⁵ Coming as it did on the heels of Patrice Lumumba's assassination and the collapse of the Congo upon Belgian retreat, the Angolan revolution seemed to portend for many Americans an unsettling new trend

¹⁵ Associated Press, "Angola Witch Doctors Go on Terror Spree," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 19 March 1961; Associated Press, "Whites Slain in Angola; Airlift of Refugees is On," *New York Times*, 18 March 1961, p1. John Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution: The Anatomy of an Explosion (1950-1962)* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1969), 124-130.

toward instability in Africa and a possible invitation for Cold War intrigue. This fear lay at the heart of the government's attempt to push Lisbon toward accepting the idea of self-determination, lest inaction create what Dean Rusk referred to as "worse Congos."¹⁶ When Salazar refused to even rhetorically back American demands for moderate liberalization, the Kennedy administration felt compelled to maintain relatively normal relations with its North Atlantic ally.¹⁷ Portugal may have been walking a thin line between continuity and catastrophe, but the small Iberian state seemed to represent the best possibility for restoring and maintaining order in the underdeveloped African colonies – at least in the near term.

If fear animated the Kennedy government to take an interest in far-off Angola and its colonial sisters, a sense of opportunity motivated African Americans to pay attention to Portuguese Africa. African Americans had closely followed the decolonization of the continent in the 1950s. Ghana, the first nation to achieve independence from Britain, acted as a rallying cry for blacks seeking economic and social justice in their own country. In 1960, the independence of 17 countries promised a new era in which black peoples could control their destinies.¹⁸ This same year also provided worrying signs that the narrative of unambiguous progress may have been nearing an end. In March, South African police gunned down nearly 70 people who had been part of a group protesting the state's policy of Apartheid in the township of Sharpeville. The Congo also grabbed national attention, less because of the potential for Cold War

¹⁶ Telegram, SecState to AmEmbassy Paris, 7 March 1961, Box 1821, Central Decimal File, 1960-63, RG 59 Records of the State Department, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Md. (hereafter, NARA)

¹⁷ For an overview of the official American response to Portugal during this period, see Witney W. Schneidman, *Engaging Africa: Washington and the Fall of Portugal's Colonial Empire* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2004); Luís Nuno Rodrigues, *Salazar-Kennedy: A Crise de uma Aliança* (Lisbon: Editorial Notícias, 2002).

¹⁸ See Meriwether, Chapter Six; Kevin Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

intervention than the dramatic events surrounding the disappearance of the state's controversial premier. Lumumba's assassination shook the confidence of many black Americans who feared that reactionary imperial powers had successfully delivered the continent's largest and most mineral rich state to puppet leaders willing to work with European conglomerates at the expense of local interests. Small but noteworthy protests appeared throughout the country and particularly in New York City. Within this context, the Angolan uprising and the Portuguese military response became the premier contest between the powers of black liberation and white European colonialism.

Historians seeking neat conclusions have often overlooked this attention as it came in the wake of the Congo crisis, which supposedly contributed to a break with earlier Pan-Africanism. Aligning itself with the "wind of change," the black American press maintained past trends in its coverage of events in 1961 and became vocal champions of the Angolan revolution. The sensational writings of major dailies like the *New York Times* largely reflected the desired Portuguese perspective that emanated from the tightly controlled press in Lisbon and Luanda. In contrast, black newspapers generally took a more critical view of events, casting their lot overwhelmingly with the revolutionaries in what the *Chicago Defender* termed the "Angolan Summer" of 1961.¹⁹ Rather than reporting on the Angolan "terrorists" that populated Associated Press reports, black newsmen spent more time focusing on Portugal's "iron rule" in its overseas provinces.²⁰ Black reports emphasized the exploitation that Africans continued to suffer in order to give greater context to the uprising and justify the turn to violence. Articles highlighted Portugal's particularly infamous treatment of local peoples, introducing readers –

¹⁹ John McNutt, "African Theater Shifts Focus from Congo to Angola Where Strife Grows," *Chicago Defender* (daily), 15 June 1961.

²⁰ "Portuguese Colonialism," *Chicago Daily Defender* (daily), 21 March 1961.

many for the first time – to the country’s long history of mercantilist policies in its colonies. In March of 1961 when the *New York Times* reported on the grisly decapitation of white settlers, the *New York Amsterdam News* retorted with its own attention grabbing headlines, proclaiming “Slavery in Angola is 4 Centuries Old . . . and Still Going On.” It and similar pieces in papers nationwide went on to detail the harsh conditions that governed black African lives in the colony, including forced labor and a dearth of educational opportunities.²¹ Such conditions bred discontent, not any adherence to communism or tribalism. Norfolk’s *New Journal and Guide* noted that Africans had “tired of [the] ‘Yoke’” of Portuguese imperialism and were now working to gain equality for the four million blacks who were unjustly governed by a mere 200,000 whites. Revolutionaries had taken up arms because there were no other alternatives to achieve political, economic, and social advancement, and the writer hoped that the movement might inspire similar uprisings in South Africa.²² Similar sentiments were expressed throughout the black press. In the midst of the non-violent Civil Rights struggle, a broad swath of the African American media came out in defense of the armed rebellion as inherently just and worthy of African American support.

Black papers also became the most aggressive critics of Portuguese actions in Angola. Salazar relied on the lack of strict legal barriers in the colonies to argue that racial relations remained good and that the rebellion was a result of outside agitators. Echoing past imperial powers, the aged dictator claimed that the military response was meant simply to restore order and continue Portugal’s civilizing mission. The government hired a public relations firm to sell this message and actively cultivated Cold Warriors in the press, including the *Pittsburgh*

²¹ “Slavery in Angola is 4 Centuries Old,” *New York Amsterdam News* (New York), 22 April 1961.

²² “Angola Now Trouble Spot; Natives Tired of ‘Yoke,’” *New Journal and Guide* (Norfolk), 25 March 1961.

Courier's conservative columnist George Schuyler.²³ Mainstream white papers generally proved skeptical of such claims, but most black reporters skewered the Lisbon dictatorship for its reactionary response and attempts to manipulate international responses to the rebellion. In August, the *Chicago Defender* took direct aim at the "Portuguese propagandists" like Schuyler who "convey a false image of benevolence on the part of the colonial government at Lisbon." The article recounted that Baptist missionaries witnessed Portuguese troops attempting to eliminate local chiefs and all educated Africans in the colony.²⁴ Many papers such as the *Atlanta World* continued coverage of the Portuguese response to the rebellion, providing its own details of how the military response had matched and perhaps exceeded the initial level of African violence, with troops "getting out of control and committing atrocities" of their own.²⁵ Columnists for the outspoken *New Journal and Guide* went yet further in their defense of the African revolution, warning from their front page about Portugal's "Eichman-like program of genocide" that threatened to wholly exterminate the black African population of Angola under the guise of pacification.²⁶ These narratives stood in stark contrast to Portugal's preferred narrative of its civilizing mission.

²³ Through a front organization, Lisbon hired the Madison Avenue firm of Selvage and Lee to manage its image in the United States. Schuyler was one of the beneficiaries of such overtures, traveling to Portugal to see the supposed peacefulness of the country's race relations, which he dutifully reported upon in the pages of the *Courier*. See for instance, Daniel M. Friedenber, "The Public Relations of Colonialism: Salazar's Mouthpiece in the U.S." *Africa Today* 9:3 (April 1962), 4-6, 15-16 and George Schuyler, "The Portuguese Way: Racial Integration and intermarriage Promoted for 500 Years," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1 July 1961.

²⁴ "Exterminate Angolan Chiefs," *Chicago Defender* (daily), 8 august 1961. A similar story was also reported in the Philadelphia Tribune. "White Trying to 'Wipe Out' Educated Africans in Angola," *Philadelphia Tribune* (Philadelphia), 5 August 1961.

²⁵ "Portuguese Africa Scene of Massacre," *Atlanta Daily World*, 1 June 1961.

²⁶ "Portuguese 'Eichmann' Said Stalking Angola," *New Journal and Guide* (Norfolk), 29 April 1961. The author admitted that this was mostly hearsay from African countries' representatives at the United Nations, but the correlation of Portugal with the accepted evil of Hitler's Nazis became common fodder for the paper. Later it would explain that the PIDE relied on "Gestapo methods" to accomplish its goals of

As they had done for the previous two decades, black newsmen offered a racially informed reading of the colonial situation that flipped the scales of presumed justice, placing the power of moral suasion on the African side. Portugal may have been a Cold War ally, but blacks continued to view anti-imperial rebellions from the perspective of their own marginalized place within the American system. A sense of shared destiny continued to shape communal perceptions of Africa and link it to other global struggles. As radical columnist William Worthly explained to his readers after personally discussing the matter with Angolan rebel Holden Roberto, blacks were obliged to provide Angola and other movements in “Africa, Latin America, and Mississippi” with the “genuine moral support” since the government would not.²⁷

This understanding of the international dimensions of the color line found its most active manifestation in the early 1960s in the form of the Liberation Committee for Africa (LCA) and its publication, *The Liberator*. Radical New Yorkers founded the LCA in response to the Sharpeville Massacre and the ongoing Congo crisis as a way to demonstrate solidarity with the ongoing struggle for equality on the continent. It joined a number of radical grassroots organizations such as Carlos Cook’s African Nationalist Pioneer Movement that continued to emphasize exchanges with African revolutionaries.²⁸ Many of these groups remained centered in the traditional hotbed of Pan-Africanism that was Harlem, but they represented the tip of a much larger national iceberg that revealed itself through the shibboleth of disruptive events like the Angolan rebellion. From Chicago to the Deep South, African Americans used the events of 1960 and 1961 to help define a shared sense of subjugation and rebellion at the grassroots

silencing rebellion. “Portuguese Using Hitler Methods Again,” *New Journal and Guide* (Norfolk), 29 July 1961.

²⁷ William Worthly, “To Gain ‘Our Freedom,’” *Afro-American* (Baltimore), 1 April 1961.

²⁸ See Nesbitt, 27-30.

level.²⁹ Most Pan-Africanists found that their calls for unity would not or could not be met under the prevailing circumstances of the segregated United States. Famed iconoclast Robert F. Williams's attempts to create "the Angola of the Americas" in deeply segregated Monroe, North Carolina served only to force him into Cuban exile after his attempts at armed resistance went south.³⁰ Harlem and New York City offered a more open setting for recreating an assertive form of transnational solidarity. Under the leadership of African American Daniel Watts, the LCA sought to give life to the Pan-Africanism referred to by disparate elements of the black community like Robert Williams. As its first action, members participated in the "riot" at the United Nation following the announcement of Patrice Lumumba's death and subsequent public demonstrations.³¹ Public demonstrations served as a way to show African American concerns to the American government, but the LCA's most important contributions came through its newsletter.

The Liberator provided an ideological forum for the creation of a new and rejuvenated popular internationalism among the black community. Proclaiming itself "the voice of the Afro-American protest movement in the United States and the liberation movement of Africa," the magazine acted as a bridge between nations.³² Launching its first issue the same month as the armed conflict began in Angola, early issues devote a great deal of space to the foremost

²⁹ One Chicago man used the tumult of 1961 to articulate a common if generally unheeded call to action that "all black men and women who have sprung from the loins of Africa should make common cause against the race and color line." Emmett J. Marshal, "For Africa," *Chicago Defender* (daily), 3 July 1961. See also Laurence Llewellyn, "Well-Traveled," *New York Amsterdam News*, 2 December 1961.

³⁰ Robert Williams, "Let's Meet Violence with Violence," *Afro-American*, 3 February 1962. For an excellent account of the nascent Pan-African, Black Power thought of Robert Williams, see Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams & the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

³¹ See Meriwether, 233-236.

³² The magazine made the claim in its front matter in most issues in later years. See for instance, Front matter, *Liberator*, Vol. III, 1 (January 1963).

problems of the Lusophone colonies and South Africa. It became one of the first homes for radical intellectuals writing on Pan-African issues in the 1960s, while also acting as a megaphone for continental nationalists wanting to speak to the black community. In this latter arena, the *Liberator* broke new ground in letting Africans find their own voice in the American context. The August 1961 issue illustrates this groundbreaking formula. It included a letter from an Angolan *assimilado* (a legally assimilated African) who spoke of the open hatred among Africans toward the Portuguese and begged for an American-led international intervention in the region.³³ This perspective reinforced what African Americans read in their local newspapers, but it added a more direct call to action only hinted at by mainstream organs like the *New York Amsterdam News*.

The LCA became the first primarily African American organization to actively champion the armed revolutions of southern Africa in the 1960s. Liberation parties welcomed these events, as many of the Portuguese leaders as well as the African National Congress had been working to acquire allies in the United States.³⁴ Nationalists, however, had found communicating this ideology difficult due to their marginalization at the international level. The multiracial American Committee on Africa (ACOA) had been an important outlet for African anti-colonials, but its elite membership and audience rarely included large numbers of blacks, especially of the more radical variety.³⁵ The LCA and *The Liberator* solved this problem by providing forums for revolutionaries to present their cases directly to the American public. The

³³ "A Letter from Angola," *Liberator*, Vol I (August 1961).

³⁴ Internationalism was central to the CONCP strategy since its founding (see below), and the ANC had been actively cultivating contacts for much of the previous decade.

³⁵ ACOA had built relationships with a number of African nationalists, who it aided at the United Nations and sponsored at speaking events across the country. For a good overview of ACOA activities before 1961, see George M. Houser, *No One Can Stop the Rain: Glimpses of Africa's Liberation Struggle* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1989).

organization hosted live discussion with anti-colonial leaders. One public discussion in the wake of the Angolan crisis featured Portuguese African revolutionaries including future FRELIMO President Eduardo Mondlane, who urged Americans to rally around their cause.³⁶ The organization's newsletter also provided practically unhindered access to African perspectives absent from the mass press. One issue featured a pair of statements from the leading Angolan liberation groups, Holden Roberto's more ethnically nationalist United Party for Angola (predecessor of the FNLA) and the socialist MPLA. The fact that these two competing parties appeared side-by-side illustrates that *The Liberator* championed the freedom cause without a great deal of political judgment or ideological baggage. Such unbiased representations also introduced many American readers to the MPLA's communist-influenced message for the first time.³⁷ The publication helped play a similar role in its coverage of the turn to armed conflict by the African National Congress in South Africa during this period, which received much less publicity due to its relatively modest achievements during this transitional decade.³⁸ During these early years, the LCA may have remained a relatively localized New York institution, but its attention to the cause of African liberation attests to the continued salience of African American internationalism and demonstrates the pivotal role played by Portuguese Africa in these early years.

Under black nationalist Daniel Watts and leftist editor Lowell P. Beveridge, Jr., *The Liberator* drifted in an increasingly radical direction. The transnational critique of American liberalism that emerged from this period would launch the newspaper to new heights of

³⁶ "Pulse of New York's Public Life," *New York Amsterdam News*, 2 March 1963.

³⁷ See "Two Statements from Angola Explain Position of Major Organizations," *Liberator*, Vol II, 2 (February 1962), 2.

³⁸ See for example, L.P. Beveridge, Jr., "South African Leader calls Non-Violence 'Unrealistic and Fatal' in Apartheid's Land," *Liberator*, Vol II, 11 (Nov-Dec, 1962), 4.

popularity and contribute to the radicalization of African Americans in the mid-1960s. From its first public statements, the committee had been sharply critical of the American government and the larger western-backed status quo. The publication of the MPLA statement alone – though not overly socialist in its tone – demonstrated a certain disdain for the acceptable boundaries of Cold War liberalism, since no African American paper had given the organization much attention. The distance between the LCA and mainstream black opinion was best illustrated by its stance on Angola. In March of 1961, the Kennedy administration had voted against Portugal in the United Nations on the question of eventual Angolan self-determination, drawing the praise of many African Americans. One hyperbolic black editor had praised the supposed break with the Eisenhower policy of passivity in anti-colonial affairs as “paving new ground in the extension of democratic concepts” to Africa.³⁹ Liberation leaders were less impressed. With the administration continuing to provide arms to Portugal in spite of a professed embargo, nationalists like Mozambican Eduardo Mondlane soon lost hope in the promise of John Kennedy.⁴⁰ Taking their cues from the revolutionaries with whom they maintained contact, *The Liberator* became one of the earliest critics of the lackluster U.S. approach toward southern Africa in the 1960s. An article castigated the UN vote as posturing for “political capital.” If the administration was willing to take a strong stand against Portugal, the anonymous author asked, why did it not immediately end NATO aid?⁴¹ The rhetorical question offered its own answer, reflecting a far more strident demand for progressive

³⁹ “Angola Issue,” Chicago Daily Defender, 27 March 1961; “Our Foreign Policy,” Chicago Daily Defender, 28 December 1961.

⁴⁰ ACOA correspondence with the Portuguese nationalists is filled with disappointment at the waffling of the United States. As one Angolan national working with Holden Roberto explained, they had tired of an “American policy [that] is so ambivalent, in a situation in which there is no room for ambivalence.” Letter, Jose Lihuaca to Dorothy Stoneman, 21 October 1963, Folder 9, Box 79, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University (New Orleans, LA).

⁴¹ L.P. Beverdige, “Angola: Portugal's Crime, U.S.” Embarrassment,” *Liberator*, (June 1961), 6.

American engagement with colonial Africa than most blacks were willing to articulate in this period. It remained unclear whether African Americans would adopt such expectations and press for greater change in the policies of their government.

Black attention to Angola in the year following the beginning of the revolution demonstrates that the decline of Pan-Africanism and anti-colonialism has been greatly exaggerated. Activists like those in the LCA provided stinging critiques of continued American support for Portugal, though such sentiments did not necessarily represent black opinion generally. These more radical organizations pressed for greater action than mainstream newspapers, which nonetheless adopted distinctly black perspectives on events occurring in the African continent. More importantly, organizations like the LCA took the first step in developing a greater solidarity *with* specific nationalists groups that were fighting in the struggle against imperialism. In providing a forum for liberation leaders to discuss their visions for the future and express at least a basic overview of their ideologies, the New York activists took the first step in developing a politically motivated grassroots movement that could point to a specific, positive cause to champion. How far this concrete connection across the Atlantic would extend depended both on the continuing maturation of African American interest in the newly armed revolutions as well as the success of the parties themselves.

Civil Rights Setbacks and the Origins of Black Power

Widespread if not overtly political attention to Angola pushed national leaders to take a public stand on the now contested question of decolonization. As Portugal reasserted control of Angola into 1962, it became apparent that the continuation of the wave of independence was not inevitable. Though quiet for much of 1961, Civil Rights leaders felt compelled by these facts to take a new look at Africa and their role in supporting liberation. The disappointing results provide evidence for the power of the Cold War consensus to restrain the independence of black thought on foreign affairs. Yet adherence to the government's line did not mean that all elements of African American society accepted the status quo. Many, including the LCA and the noted Nation of Islam minister Malcolm X looked abroad to help define a more radical criticism of the American system of social, political, and economic inequality. With the revolutions entering a fallow period in the wake of the imperial victory in Angola, Portuguese Africa did not directly shape this emerging thought but continued with South Africa and other subjugated nations to act as symbols of resistance to the larger imperial system. The major themes of racial and economic unity that emerged during this period of ideological innovation would help define the next decade of Pan-Africanism and the origins of contemporary solidarity with continental liberation.

But before African Americans felt the need to plumb the largely untapped depths of populist Pan-Africanism, the community looked to the giants of their day for guidance. The relative silence of the Civil Rights leadership on international events in 1961 had been noteworthy. It was all the more surprising as many had expressed a deep interest in the continent. A. Phillip Randolph, James Baldwin, James Farmer and Bayard Rustin all sat on the

board of the American Committee on Africa (ACOA), one of the few organizations actively aiding the Angolan revolutionaries.⁴² Rustin in particular believed that the African American leadership should take a more forthright stand in support of the liberation struggle. At the behest of close friend and ACOA Executive Secretary George Houser, he pushed for a major convocation in the fall of 1962 to establish a black agenda for foreign policy as a way of pressuring the American government.⁴³ The conference would address all of southern Africa, considering not only the active revolution in Angola, but also the pending colonial questions in Portuguese Mozambique and British Rhodesia – as well as the problem of Apartheid in South Africa. The American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa (ANLCA), as it came to be known, aimed to “activize [sic] the political influence of America's 19 million Negro citizens on their government's role in the councils of the United Nations and other diplomatic channels on the critical areas of Sub- Sahara Africa.”⁴⁴ The participants who gathered at Arden House on the campus of Columbia University in late November were a practical listing of the Who's Who of the Civil Rights movement and black leadership, assembling more than 100 participants including conveners Randolph, Farmer, Martin Luther King, Whitney Young of the Urban League, and Dorothy Height of the National Council of Negro Women. Experts submitted dozens of reports to help illuminate the challenges of decolonization and development in Africa. Mozambican nationalist Eduardo Mondlane, a Northwestern-trained PhD who had taught at Syracuse University and had recently become the first president of FRELIMO, drafted the report on Portuguese Africa, providing a window into

⁴² Memorandum on March 17 Meeting, March 1962, ACOA Microfilm, Reel I. See also correspondence, Houser and Roberto, March 1962, Box 79, American Committee on Africa Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

⁴³ George Houser, telephone interview with author, 10 March 2014.

⁴⁴ “Press Release,” American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa, 4 September 1962, African Activist Archive, Michigan State University. Available: <http://africanactivist.msu.edu/index.php>. Hereafter AAA.

revolutionary concerns.⁴⁵ Angolan nationalist Holden Roberto also sent a delegation to act as observers.⁴⁶ Here was a real opportunity for African Americans to achieve a true demonstration of racial solidarity and help shift American policy toward support for liberation.

The gathering of so many people of African heritage to discuss African liberation illustrated the widespread interest in the topic and the possibility for concerted action. The dominance of Civil Rights leaders and associates of the anti-communist ACOA constrained the rhetorical and ideological criticism of American involvement on the continent. Some attendees, like the labor activist Randolph, tried to push the envelope. He urged strikes and demonstrations that would cajole the government and major corporations to isolate Portugal and South Africa.⁴⁷ Randolph's proposals were the most ambitious calls for solidarity yet seen in the country, but - unfortunately for the nationalists – confrontational tactics remained confined to minority viewpoints. More attendees agreed with Roy Wilkins, the head of the NAACP and keynote speaker, who warned that, "In developing this activity, we should not relax our prime effort to achieve our proper place in our own country." Wilkins believed, like many well-intentioned Americans before him, that aiding Africa depended on gaining equality in the United States. Once fully integrated into domestic society, blacks could guide the tiller of state in a parallel course with moderate African self-determination. No displays of international solidarity could prove more effective.⁴⁸ Here in microcosm was the division between African Americans in

⁴⁵ "Call 100 Top Leaders to 3-Day Summit Meet," Chicago Daily Defender, 19 November 1962. The article credits Mondlane with writing the briefing on Kenya, but this is likely an error. John Marcum, a white Lincoln University professor with close ties to Roberto, would draft the Angola document. Marcum would later shift his sympathies to the MPLA and play an important role in convincing Senator Dick Clark to investigate the intervention in Angola in 1975.

⁴⁶ ANLCA, "Resolutions," 13 December 1961, List of Participants, AAA.

⁴⁷ AP, "U.S. Negroes Urged to Back Africa," Christian Science Monitor, 24 November 1962.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

the early 1960s. Randolph's more radical solidarity with Africa as equals positioned itself alongside mass, grassroots action against an internationalized reading of the Talented Tenth. Wilkins' black *Americans* would help their continental brothers once they had integrated themselves into the government through adherence to the Cold War consensus. These two conflicting visions of Pan-African identity – one focused on direct action with a sense of popular struggle, the other one more elite-based and intent on a Cold War foreign policy toward Africa – hampered the growth of a meaningful solidarity movement in these early years.

Hemmed in by Cold War definitions of Americanism and focused primarily on the Civil Rights struggle, the less ambitious form of cooperation championed by Wilkins won the day in late 1962. The ANLCA's conclusions proved circumscribed. The conference eschewed Randolph's calls for protest, instead urging the American government to act on its behalf. The conclusions on Portuguese Africa are illustrative of the overall program. The conference recognized the need for self-determination, but avoided the question of armed revolution. It implored the Kennedy administration to end shipments of military equipment to Portugal, but it said relatively little about the continuing flow of arms and aid through NATO. It made no requests for political assistance to the liberation movements beyond informal humanitarian aid.⁴⁹ Willing to work for domestic gains within this structure, Civil Rights leaders positioned themselves as ideologically opposed to revolution, even where entrenched systems of racial oppression seemed to necessitate more aggressive action.

African nationalists involved were quick to criticize the resulting report that failed to promote any level of action. Eduardo Mondlane found little to praise. In the paper submitted on

⁴⁹ ANLCA, "Resolutions," 13 December 1961, Section V, AAA.

“The American Negro and the Struggle for Independence in Portuguese Africa,” Mondlane lambasted the Civil Rights leaders for towing the U.S. line: “American Negroes who are interested in Africa have been acting within the acceptable lines, typical of American bourgeoisie.” Wary black liberals had been unable or unwilling to define the connections between the American struggle for equality with their interest in African freedom, effectively crippling the growth of any real widespread solidarity. Mondlane noted that only the LCA had done any real work at this level, though he noted that its influence was limited.⁵⁰ Despite the liberation leader’s presence and his strong advocacy for greater American action, the constrained conclusions of the ANLCA did little to address the role of the majority of African Americans in the wider struggle for global political and economic equality. Dan Watts, in attendance representing the LCA, agreed with Mondlane about the disappointing results of the gathering; the ANLCA had done little but posture. “If our brothers and sisters in Africa are waiting or depending on the American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa for aid and support,” he wrote afterward, “they might just as well make their peace with [Prime Minister of South Africa Henrik] Verwoerd, [Prime Minister of Portugal Antonio] Salazar, and [Prime Minister of Rhodesia Roy] Welensky.”⁵¹

In the wake of the Civil Rights leadership’s failure to take a stand on the problem of global inequality, Watts and fellow black nationalists redoubled their efforts to expand their movement. Beginning in 1963, the pages of *The Liberator* became *the* forum for the creation of a distinctly internationalist view of African American radicalism. In its pages, a wide array of authors directly linked the liberation struggles in the United States and the African continent as

⁵⁰ Daniel H. Watts, “American Leadership Conference on Africa,” *Liberator*, Vol III, 1 (January 1963), 14.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

they drifted slowly leftward.⁵² Discussions of shared exploitation spurred by the Angolan crisis and the South African massacre began to incorporate elements of Marxist thought, identifying the oppressor as not simply white but also capitalist. Contributors like black leftist Harold Cruse called for a real Afro-American revolution, because “‘full integration’ . . . is not possible within the present framework of the American system.”⁵³ As a center of industry, he argued, the United States had reason to retain a subservient population to fill poorly paid positions, while it also desired to continue its exploitation of natural resources in Africa. Given the dual signatures of exploitation in the form of race and class, Cruse pushed for a merging of Marxist and anti-colonial critique of western society into a new ideology.⁵⁴ But Cruse offered more of a challenge to existing liberal heterodoxy than a complete theory of action. In looking to Africa and the idea of revolution, he had not yet found a specific model on which to base the American rebellion.

Cruse’s search for a new form of internationally influenced protest reflected the desires of a generation that Black Power thinker Roland Snellings came to call “the Africanists.” While participating in the Civil Rights movement, this generation of African Americans grew disaffected by the slow pace of change. Calling for complete systemic reform, they found themselves in closer alignment with the popular perception of African revolutionaries demanding wholesale change at a quicker pace.⁵⁵ This generation had yet to cohere as a movement, but connections were already forming at the grassroots level. Like Cruse, they lacked what one author called a “revolutionary ideology” championed by “a revolutionary group, with real roots among the

⁵² L.P. Beveridge, Jr. “Apartheid’s Allies,” *The Liberator*, Volume III, 12 (December 1963).

⁵³ Harold Cruse, “Rebellion or Revolution?” Part One, *The Liberator*, Vole II, 10 (October 1963), 20.

⁵⁴ Cruse, “Rebellion or Revolution?” Part Two, *The Liberator*, Vol III, 11 (November 1963), 10. Cruse specifically identified the cultural front – the creation of films, music, literature, etc – as the weakest segment of America’s industrial complex and therefore the first target for the African American revolution.

⁵⁵ Rolland Snellings, “The New Afro-American Writer,” *The Liberator*, Volume III, 10 (October 1963), 10.

people, to explain to the people what they are fighting for and to organize that fight.”⁵⁶ This was the missing component in the development of real solidarity with African liberation struggles. Africans were waging wars, and African Americans were interested, but they needed a common ideology and leadership able to bridge the Trans-Atlantic gap.

For a brief period, Malcolm X positioned himself to be the voice and organizer for this nascent movement. After Malcolm’s split with the Nation of Islam in 1963, he adopted a self-consciously Pan-African ideology.⁵⁷ He now spoke about developing a unity among dark-skinned peoples, but he also hinted at a deeper solidarity centered on goals and tactics. Influenced by journeys in Africa and the Middle East – including interactions with revolutionaries from Angola, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe – Malcolm transformed his once strident racial rhetoric toward a new anti-colonial, anti-capitalist critique of the international system.⁵⁸ The results of this transformation in thinking were twofold. First, Malcolm wanted to reproduce the national unity among black Americans that had occurred in places like Mozambique. He quieted his once strident criticism of moderate leaders like Martin Luther King and urged all blacks to come together. Second, his new view of the racial problem as an example of human rights, as compared to Civil Rights, struggle led him to look to the tactics of revolutionaries as models. He

⁵⁶ Richard Price and Bob Stewart, “Watts, L.A.; a First Hand Report Rebellion without Ideology,” *Liberator*, Vol. V, 9 (September 1965). In the same issue, another article defended black rights to self-defense, arguing that in the 1960s “Africans through force of arms and mass actions were upsetting white colonial empires,” providing some clarification for the black American question of “how best to survive.” Ossie Sykes, “Self Defense A Right and a Necessity,” *Ibid*.

⁵⁷ Part of his differences with Elijah Muhammad had come from the prophet’s lack of interest in Africa, which Malcolm had come to support at the beginning of the decade. After his split, he complained for instance that Muhammad had never said anything “pro-African.” Perry, Bruce. Ed. *Malcolm X: The Last Speeches* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1989), 139. See also Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Viking, 2011), 270-272.

⁵⁸ Malcolm had been housed with the stateless revolutionary leaders while attending a conference in Cairo.

argued that African Americans needed to stop appealing to the racist government of the United States. The situation of blacks in the United States was more like “South Africa, Angola, Mozambique, Hungary, the Arab refugee problem . . . a world problem.”⁵⁹ A comparison of these various pursuits of freedom illustrated to Malcolm that black people in the United States and on the continent had a “common exploiter” which hued closely but not completely to the color line.⁶⁰ Though Malcolm continued to refine his ideology, his global revolutionary critique of the American state increasingly tied together disparate national movements into the single global campaign for which Mondlane, Watts, and Cruse had been striving for the previous five years. By 1965, Cleveland Sellers remembered Malcolm X imploring an audience of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) activists to understand that their “struggle was not separate from Kenya and Liberia and Angola. . . .”⁶¹

The realization of a global problem of inequality broke down the artificial barriers of the Cold War consensus even as it challenged the equally constraining limitations of strict Black Nationalism. The question Malcolm dealt with in the last months of his life was how to forge unity domestically and abroad. Having rejected religion, he was in search of what biographer Manning Marable has called a “secular basis for common ground.”⁶² Racial identification provided one obvious answer, but so then did anti-capitalist solidarity against exploitation. In his final speeches, Malcolm offered both as foundations for a new ideology, as he was still seeking his own conclusion. His assassination prevented Malcolm from reconciling these two distinct

⁵⁹ Malcolm X, *Say Brother*, Episode 257, WGBH Archive (Boston, MA).

⁶⁰ Malcolm X, *The Last Speeches*, 167. In relaying this point to his audiences, Malcolm regularly used the Portuguese colonies as an example due to their familiarity to African American communities.

⁶¹ Quoted in Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 220.

⁶² Marable, 303.

pathways towards Pan-African solidarity, leaving a legacy of ambiguity that would continue to haunt relations with the continent. Events in Angola and elsewhere had inspired Malcolm and others to reassess their own beliefs, but it could not yet offer answers to how they could translate international trends to their domestic goals.

By the middle of the 1960s, radical African Americans had fully embraced revolutionary Africa. A Pan-African ideology had survived the suffocating environment of the Cold War, operating below the level of national attention at the grassroots level. Though historians have tended to privilege more familiar states like South Africa and Cuba, radical organizations including the LCA and black thinkers such as Malcolm X owed part of their continued fascination with the continent to Angola and the Portuguese African insurrections. Armed or otherwise aggressive struggles offered attractive alternatives to non-violent tactics that seemed to be achieving too little, too slowly. This globalized identification had yet to become mainstream, but with Malcolm X it found a voice and began to find a modicum of organization. This mixture of global consciousness and domestic dissatisfaction fueled the growth of the Black Power movement, championed by groups including the Black Panthers and leaders like Stokely Carmichael – examples of Snellings’ “Africanist” generation. Though there had yet developed no one established ideology, revolutionary organizations were on the rise and introducing large swaths of American society to a new identification with Africa. In contrast to the decade’s beginning, a generation of blacks stood ready to not only sympathize with African revolution but actively aid its mission. Angola’s collapse into interparty strife prevented its bickering revolutionary parties from establishing firm transatlantic ties, but as the other Portuguese colonies launched their own revolutions, they would find new allies in the United States.

Portuguese Africa's Popular Diplomacy and the Transnational Revolution

An ideologically attractive revolution was the missing component necessary to bridge African revolution with American struggles for social and economic equality. Armed struggle appealed to angry militants, but it was inspiration and guidance that African Americans most desired. They found the solution in the active revolutionary struggles of Portuguese Africa. The socialist parties of the Conferência das Organizações Nacionalistas das Colónias Portuguesas (CONCP), unified around closely related African iterations of socialism, appealed to Diaspora blacks. CONCP was the brainchild of Guinea-Bissauan leader Amilcar Cabral, who believed that cooperation toward a shared egalitarian liberation at the international level could help advance individual national struggles. This organization would become the international face of the movements, providing a forum for coordinating their diplomatic efforts to undermine metropolitan power and gain support for their revolutions.

Influenced by Marxist ideologies, the CONCP nationalists considered the international sphere a necessary component of the liberation campaigns. Their power paled even against the weakest state in Europe, and they relied on international aid to redress this imbalance of power. One of CONCP's primary objectives was the development of "propaganda in order to obtain the effective support of world public opinion." Understandably, they expected the primary sources of aid to come from Afro-Asian countries and possibly the Eastern bloc, but they saw western states as important potential allies.⁶³ In combination with more dependable aid from the Afro-

⁶³ Author's translation. "Estatutos da Conferência das Organizações Nacionalistas das Colónias Portuguesas (CONCP)," 1961, Documentos Amilcar Cabral (DAC), Casa Comum (CC). Author's translation. Comunicado da CONCP, no first page, 1961, DAC CC. See also "Preparativos para a realização da CONCP," 1961, DAC, CC. See also, "Opening Speech by Mario de Andrade," 18 April 1961, in Ronald. H. Chilcote, *Emerging Nationalism in Portuguese Africa* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972), 499.

Asian and Eastern states, the nationalists hoped that they could use existing currents of anti-colonialism in the West to isolate Portugal, which depended on foreign aid to maintain its overseas military. Anticipating a Third Worldism that would transcend the state system, the CONCP parties sought to build a “solidarity with the people of the countries in the struggle against colonialism and imperialism, in all of its forms.”⁶⁴ The key was publicizing and legitimizing the revolutions to the point that sympathetic westerners could compel their democratic governments to embrace or at least tolerate African bids for power. In the early 1960s, the parties worked out a kind of division of labor, with representatives from one group handling collective diplomacy in specific countries outside of Africa. The PAIGC operated an ultimately unsuccessful propaganda office in London, while the MPLA developed the closest relations with Moscow.⁶⁵ After its formation in June of 1962, FRELIMO developed the strongest program in the United States. Its efforts would eventually yield the first results among the African American community, paving the way for its allied parties to gain ground influence in later years.

From its earliest phases, FRELIMO was a self-consciously international party. The party began as a merger of a number of smaller nationalist organizations and chose as its first president Eduardo Mondlane. As evidenced above, the American trained professor had extensive contacts in the United States and counted influential leaders like Whitney Young and George Houser of ACOA among his friends.⁶⁶ Mondlane was in many ways a compromise figure; he had not been closely aligned with any of FRELIMO’s predecessor parties, so his selection

⁶⁴ CONCP, “Seminário sobre os problemas das colónias portuguesas, em Nova Deli,” October 1961, DAC, CC.

⁶⁵ “Comentários ao Plano da Organização do Trabalho do Secretariado da CONCP,” 27 May 1961, DAC, CC.

⁶⁶ Whitney young, “Spotlight on Africa,” Chicago Daily Defender, 15 March, 1969.

prevented any one faction from holding too much power. Of equal importance, however, was his uniquely internationalist background. According to Dos Santos, the party selected the “American” professor as its leader due to his “connections and influence abroad.”⁶⁷ Another party member later recalled, “he was able to speak for us the language of other men – the language of the diplomats, the language of the universities, and the language of power.” Mondlane did not necessarily speak the language of revolution, but he was able to command “respect for our grievances and for our struggle.”⁶⁸ Though not the most radical or revolutionary of the Mozambican nationalists, his colleagues believed that Mondlane was the public face needed to legitimize the nationalists’ claims in the court of world opinion.

Mondlane’s diplomacy was necessary in the Cold War context that made revolution difficult, especially for FRELIMO and its CONCP allies. The party applied a socialist reading of history to its position in the world. Mozambique was a colony of one of the poorest countries in Europe, which exported its class contradictions to the colonies through immigration. FRELIMO believed that Portugal itself was a neo-colony of its western allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and South Africa. Portuguese Africans therefore suffered under a doubly challenging form of exploitative imperialism, where a weak state built only the bare minimum of infrastructures in order to extract the rich resources of the colonies.⁶⁹ FRELIMO therefore had a dual mission in its revolution, to oust the metropolis and replace it with a wholly new state system that would better develop the country. This new nation forged through the party’s

⁶⁷ Marcelino Dos Santos quoted in Vladimir Shubin, *The Hot “Cold War:” The USSR in Southern Africa* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 121-122.

⁶⁸ Editorial, *Mozambique Revolution* 37 (February 1969) (hereafter listed as MR). One of the languages Mondlane spoke fluently was that of American football, which provided an important bond with supporters on more than one occasion. George Houser, *No One Can Stop the Rain*, (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989), 189; Prexy Nesbitt, interview with author, 28 August 2012 (Chicago, Ill).

⁶⁹ Eduardo Mondlane, *The Struggle for Mozambique* (Westport: Zed Press, 1983), 123-124.

struggle would be self-consciously egalitarian, state-centered, and devoted to the political, social, and economic development of a distinctly African identity. This vision of the new society was inherently hopeful and internationalist, viewing it as a single front in a larger struggle for self-determination on the continent and throughout the world. It was also heavily socialist if self-consciously non-communist, making it a difficult sell to the mainstream of Cold War western society.⁷⁰ Nonetheless, Mondlane, his party, and most of his CONCP allies believed themselves outside of this simple categorization. They were critical of the capitalist system, which had long promoted the exploitation of their land and peoples. They desired representative governments to take command of both the political and economic life of the country, emerging from African people and reflecting their needs. The challenge would be convincing much of the world of their right to demand self-determination by force, since Portugal would not peaceably withdraw or acknowledge a long timeline for independence.

The key country that FRELIMO needed to convince was the United States. Though the CONCP states had always expressed a confidence in popular opinion, many of the parties had first looked to the traditional arbiter of international relations: the government. The most powerful nation in the western alliance and Portugal's primary ally, swaying the United States to distance itself from the Lisbon regime would be a vital step in isolating the metropolis. The majority of the American officials remained suspicious of nationalist intentions, especially when they worked against the interests of NATO allies.⁷¹ Mondlane made some inroads with the Kennedy administration, garnering the approval of Robert Kennedy in particular who remarked

⁷⁰ See, Houser, 187.

⁷¹ See Thomas Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation: the United States and White Rule in Southern Africa, 1948-1968* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985), pp 61-110.

that the Mozambican “was a terrifically impressive fellow.”⁷² FRELIMO actually received a grant worth around \$100,000 dollars from the Ford Foundation arranged through official contacts, but Mondlane had considered this covert assistance to the educational wing of the party underwhelming and Kennedy’s continued ambivalence toward Portugal a “great disappointment.”⁷³ After the change of administration in 1963, Mondlane could not even gain an audience with American officials through his ACOA connections.⁷⁴ As a result, the initial promise that FRELIMO and other nationalists parties saw in the American government proved illusory, and they abandoned their ambitions of directly courting Washington.

This did not necessarily mean that the CONCP groups gave up on the west entirely. Instead, they shifted their efforts to shaping popular opinion. The socialist parties hoped to conduct an end run around recalcitrant governments by utilizing their democratic systems to forcibly change policies. Their common goal became the “international popularization of the liberation struggle.”⁷⁵ FRELIMO in particular believed that the problem was that many people who might otherwise support independence failed to understand how Portugal used its ties to the United States as a way of sustaining its empire. The party had to make these connections apparent. Through their publications, speeches, and allies like the multiracial American Committee on Africa, the party gave undeniable evidence that NATO arms and financial aid

⁷² Kennedy Dictabelts Conversation, 18B.3, Miller Center, <http://millercenter.org/presidentialrecordings>.

⁷³ Letter, Eduardo Mondlane to George Houser, 3 September 1963, Folder 38, Box 142, ACOA Papers, Amistad Research Center. According to FRELIMO’s Joaquin Chissano, this funding ceased when the liberation group undertook armed resistance in the Portuguese colony. Interview, Chissano, 2 May 1996 in Tor Sellström, ed., *Liberation in Southern Africa – Regional and Swedish Voices* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2002), 38. An interview with Janet Mondlane supports this assertion, but differs slightly on the issue of timing. Ibid, 42.

⁷⁴ Memo, Read to Bundy, 9 October 1965, Box 184, Messages, White House Central File, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library (Austin, Tx) – hereafter, LBJL.

⁷⁵ Author’s translation. “Agenda da I reunião do Comité Preparatório da CONCP,” 12 February 1965, DAC, CC.

sustained Portugal on three military fronts. In the mid-1960s, FRELIMO published an English-language bulletin out of New York that carried its regular accusations of American and NATO complicity in the Portuguese war.⁷⁶ This information campaign served as the first stages of CONCP diplomacy. This strategy would eventually bear fruit, but not until after domestic opinion, particularly among African Americans, grew receptive to the message.

Lacking funds and often recognition, personal diplomacy became the primary tool used by FRELIMO to present its message. Party envoys felt obliged to explain the circumstances of their countries directly to western audiences. The charismatic leaders proved the most effective. In the latter half of 1963 for example, Mondlane traveled throughout Europe and the United States making the case for popular action. In New York, he sought to combat the popular perception of African revolutionary movements as backwards and violent. The professor ably laid out the party's demands for negotiations based on the acceptance of self-determination in the colonies and explained how Portugal had refused to accept them. His party, he maintained, would only resort to military force as a last option, but it would not accept continued domination by a remote dictatorial regime.⁷⁷ Mondlane appealed to the "conscience" of the American people, hoping that humanitarian impulses and a commitment to equality could mobilize a mass movement to pressure Washington. As one appeal explained, "We are convinced that your democratic traditions will not allow you to forget that in our country millions of human beings are suffering under a most cruel and inhuman regime, and that they

⁷⁶ See for example, "The Fight of the Mozambican People for Independence," MR 4 (March 1964).

⁷⁷ "FRELIMO Diplomatic Activities," Mozambique Revolution 2 (January 1964). See also "West Germany Strengthens Its Links with the Portuguese Fascists," MR 7 (June 1964).

need help.”⁷⁸ This public relations barrage allowed FRELIMO the chance to tell its own story, but it met primarily with indifference.

The mid-1960s was a difficult period in the relations of the nationalist parties with the west. The failure of direct lobbying, the weak popular response to personal appeals, and the lackluster efforts of allies like the ANLCA illustrated the difficulty of dividing NATO and challenging the Cold War consensus. The MPLA and the PAIGC essentially abandoned hope of obtaining assistance from the capitalist states with the sole exception of Sweden. FRELIMO alone retained a strong interest in building solidarity in the United States. Given Eduardo Mondlane’s extensive connections and familiarity with the culture, he felt that there existed a potential for mass support. Primed by the development of radical Pan-Africanism in the early part of the decade, African Americans represented one of the few sizeable American constituencies with an interest in building Trans-Atlantic solidarity. However, indecision and ideological confusion hampered the growth of extensive contacts with FRELIMO and its CONCP allies when the party was at its most active internationally between 1962 and 1964. After the armed struggle began in earnest in both Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, the parties turned away from the promise of western solidarity and focused primarily on their military battles against Portugal. During this seemingly unlikely period, however, FRELIMO’s personal diplomacy began to pay new dividends in small if important ways.

⁷⁸ “The Fight of the Mozambican People for Independence,” MR 4 (March 1964).

The Rise of Solidarity with Portuguese Africa in the Black Community

In the mid-1960s, the connections that FRELIMO had established in the United States began to lead the Black Power generation toward the CONCP parties and their socialist ideologies. Many young African Americans inspired by Malcolm X's Pan-African ideology naturally gravitated toward FRELIMO and the PAIGC. Some journeyed to Africa specifically to meet with liberation leaders. Others developed ties to their representatives or domestic allies and grew to support the cause. Another segment of the black population learned of the liberation struggles through other African leaders, discovering Portuguese Africa through experiences in the revolutionary states of Guinea or Tanzania, transporting these lessons back to the United States. Whatever the circumstances, interest in FRELIMO, PAIGC, and CONCP grew steadily in the final years of the decade. By the mid-1970s, a sizeable and vocal minority of the black community participated in a solidarity movement with southern Africa, with the Portuguese nationalists garnering the majority of attention. Though this unity would prove fleeting, the lessons it imparted to activists and the identification it reinforced with Africa would remain visible within the black community.

This mass movement started quietly. Personal connections blossomed into larger national and even transnational networks. This process occurred in a number of western nations and numerous times in the United States, so following one individual, Robert Van Lierop, can be illustrative of the broader context. One of Snellings' "Africanists," the native New Yorker had only vague perceptions of the distant revolutions at the beginning of the 1960s. He was closely involved with the Civil Rights movement in the North, among other things working with the NAACP, but drifted in increasingly radical directions. Van Lierop did not fit the stereotypical

image of a black power advocate. Well educated and measured in his rhetoric, he held a law degree from New York University. He was nonetheless deeply influenced by Malcolm X's teachings on Pan-African and racial identification with the continent.⁷⁹ Like many other relatively successful, educated blacks of his generation, he had not known Malcolm personally. He came to respect his teachings after his assassination, which convinced many moderates to revisit his writings.⁸⁰ After finishing law school in 1967, Van Lierop visited Africa to experience firsthand the national reconstruction projects occurring in newly independent states like Tanzania. Upon arrival, however, the young man became enamored with the revolutionary struggle that President Julius Nyerere sheltered within his country.⁸¹ In the capital of Dar Es Salaam, he met Eduardo Mondlane on the recommendation of common acquaintances. The FRELIMO leader welcomed the American lawyer into his circle of international collaborators, which included a number of activists from the United States, Canada, and Britain. Here Mondlane had assembled a truly international collection of leftists committed to building a new Mozambican leadership that could win and reconstruct a truly egalitarian nation. Van Lierop did not stay long in Dar, but he left impressed by FRELIMO and newly dedicated to supporting its cause through activities in the United States.⁸²

⁷⁹ Robert Van Lierop, Interview with William Minter, 16 April 2004, New York, NY, NoEasyVictories.org, www.noeasyvictories.org/interviews/int07_vanlierop.php.

⁸⁰ The importance of Malcolm X to this generation of African American leaders is difficult to quantify, as almost all who looked abroad mention some element of Malcolm X's teachings as influencing their thoughts. Gene Locke, interview, with author, 8 May 2013 (Houston, TX); Interview, Owusu Sadaukai, *Say Brother* Episode 317: Malcolm X, 20 February 1974, WGBH Archive.

⁸¹ Tanzania became arguably the most important independent African nation for American activists after the coup in Ghana in 1965 as well as a primary bridge linking Americans with nationalist revolutionaries. Julius Nyerere's formulation of an African socialist state attracted young Black Power advocates, who often became even more enamored with the liberation leaders that Nyerere welcomed as allies in the struggle for continental independence. In addition to Van Lierop, Owusu Sadaukai and Randall Robinson could both trace their relationships with FRELIMO and the liberation cause to research trips to Tanzania.

⁸² Van Lierop, Interview.

Upon his return, he became extremely active in support of the African revolutions. He joined the governing board of ACOA in 1968, helping to guide that group toward greater support for socialist parties like the MPLA and building up its presence in the black community. The committee's primarily white liberal leadership and its historic commitment to anti-communism bred distrust among blacks during the radical era, leading Van Lierop to agitate for a more grassroots black organization.⁸³ He joined with a number of New York area activists including Betty Shabbazz, the widow of Malcolm X, to found the Pan-African Solidarity Committee (PASC) in 1969. Van Lierop believed this self-consciously Black Power organization would better link FRELIMO to the masses. The Brooklyn-based PASC aimed to foster an "international black political consciousness" through the celebration of an African Solidarity week. The committee focused on celebrating the lives of Malcolm X and Eduardo Mondlane, hoping their shared commitment to communal empowerment could provide a common link between African peoples.⁸⁴ Its first and only celebration included speeches by FRELIMO member Sharfudine Khan, who represented FRELIMO at the United Nations from 1967 onward.⁸⁵ The momentum created by the success of the first Pan-African Solidarity Week in May of 1970 faltered as the leadership of the PASC splintered due to political and personal disagreements.⁸⁶ The committee was an example in both its ideology and ultimate failure of a larger national phenomenon. Young men and women like Van Lierop were attempting to create movements based around the

⁸³ See letter, Prexy Nesbitt to Staff and Board of ACOA, 14 September 1970, ACOA Microfilm, Reel III.

⁸⁴ "Pan African Solidarity Committee," 1970?, P.A.S. Comm, Box 3, Robert Van Lierop Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library (hereafter, RVLP, NYPL).

⁸⁵ See flyer, "These brothers died fighting the racist system," no date (early 1971), Pan African Solidarity Committee, Robert Van Lierop Collection, Schomburg Center, NYPL.

⁸⁶ Robert Van Lierop, untitled Letter, 27 October 1970, P.A.S. Comm, Box 3, RVLP, NYPL.

dual identifications of race and an ideology of self-determination.⁸⁷ Yet each seemed to confront a problem: the average black community member failed to understand how foreign struggles applied to their lives.⁸⁸ Motivated cadres did not suffice, as personality conflicts and disagreements tended to undermine decentralized radical groups. The unresolved relationship of both racial and ideological identifications with the movements was one problem, but so were matters of age, tactics, and even leadership roles. To create a self-sustaining movement, the nationalists and their allies needed to inspire African Americans to adopt the cause of continental liberation as their own. They need to inspire self-sustaining grassroots movements based on individual commitment to a shared ideology of struggle.

Since he had returned from Africa, Van Lierop had been in regular contact with FRELIMO representatives on how best to achieve this specific goal. For its part, the Mozambican party responded favorably to growing American interest in its revolution. The coincidence of Black Power with the radicalization of wider American society by the Vietnam War weakened the Cold War consensus enough that a moderately leftist party like FRELIMO could gain new adherents. Recognizing the new state of affairs, Mondlane and his party had once more begun targeting American audiences with its propaganda efforts. In 1967, FRELIMO had relocated Khan, its former Cairo chief, to New York, where his duties also included building up a support base

⁸⁷ As an example, in 1971 local celebrations proclaiming a World Day of Solidarity with the African Community highlighted the liberation struggles. Gene Locke Interview.

⁸⁸ Recently, Martha Biondi has written that the average person had trouble embracing Pan-Africanism in their daily lives. YOBU member Mark Smith recalls that the average individual he met could not force such solidarity to “connect up, either an explanatory framework or an action path, with the conditions that people felt in their lives.” Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 237.

among sympathetic Americans.⁸⁹ Van Lierop recalled a number of conversations with both Khan and Mondlane about how best to grow the movement. Harkening back to his roots as an educator, the Mozambican leader believed that African Americans simply lacked knowledge of the Lusophone liberation struggles. If they were able to learn about the ideologies and actions at the heart of the revolutions, solidarity would grow naturally. The solution, he believed, was education through a media barrage, including a film.⁹⁰ FRELIMO invested heavily in this latter tactic, hosting filmmakers associated with its solidarity networks in Yugoslavia, the Netherlands, and Britain. Mondlane's assassination in 1969 temporarily derailed plans, but the party redoubled its international efforts afterward in order to assure supporters of the revolution's continuation. With the collapse of the PASC and the encouragement of his allies in FRELIMO, Van Lierop dedicated himself to making Eduardo Mondlane's vision of a media offensive a reality. In late 1971, he journeyed with SNCC photographer Bob Fletcher into the liberated territories of Mozambique to document the progress of the revolution.

Hours of filming and months of editing later, Van Lierop released *A Luta Continua* (The Struggle Continues). In a single reel, the film introduced audiences to the realities of revolution in Mozambique. Filmed, written, and produced by African Americans, the film self-consciously teases out the universal implications of FRELIMO ideology and its relevance to the black community. Brevity and Van Lierop's sympathetic gloss minimize foibles, but they do not purposely mythologize or caricature the revolutionaries. All simplifications reflect FRELIMO preferences, hewing closely to the party's self-styled image as a social-minded revolutionary organization that prioritized the construction of the unified state over armed conflict. The film

⁸⁹ Interview, Prexy Nesbitt with William Minter, September 2004, No Easy Victories, http://www.noeasyvictories.org/interviews/int08_nesbitt.php; ACOA funded much of his expenses.

⁹⁰ Interview, Van Lierop.

emphasizes three CONCP supported narratives: the global nature of the anti-imperial struggle, the primarily social character of the revolution, and the realization of complete equality.

FRELIMO and Van Lierop believed that depicting the revolution as it was occurring (at least in the ideal) would translate the struggle in an understandable way that could overcome the skepticism and indifference of the audience.

At the core of the film is an attempt to explain FRELIMO's scientific socialist theory of anti-imperialism in practical terms. A series of maps and satirical images lay out the interaction between capital and labor in Mozambique. Portugal occupies the position of imperial power, but its own poverty prevents it from properly investing in its colonies. Instead, the metropolis "seeks to export its class contradictions" to its colonies through a system of forced labor and educational barriers that rigidly maintain a racially informed class system. Still worse, the "neo-colony" of Portugal looks to its richer allies in South Africa and the west for the investment needed to properly exploit its imperial possessions. The Portuguese economy relies on foreign companies like Gulf Oil, the exportation of labor to South African mines, and revenues of Mozambican ports. Much like in the African American experience, profits are rarely reinvested in African areas. FRELIMO seeks to replace this state of affairs with a wholly egalitarian nation, removing distinctions of class, ethnicity, and gender by placing the means of production in the hands of a popular polity. By presenting FRELIMO's fight against the larger capitalist-imperial system at the outset of the film, Van Lierop establishes the national liberation struggle as a

threat to neighboring minority states and American forces complicit in exploitation.⁹¹ More importantly, the film privileges the ideological foundation for unity above the element of race.

The film concentrates on the positive social aspects of revolution, referencing the destruction of the imperial system only in passing. As Mondlane argued before his death, the goal of any revolution should be first and foremost the creation of a “new and popular social order.”⁹² *A Luta Continua* echoes this perspective and deemphasizes the centrality of violence, presenting the work of revolution as a positive multi-step process. Narration explains that “the people of Mozambique place their weapons in the proper perspective as tools. They are tools just as the pencil and the farm hoe are tools.” The stress here is not on military maneuvers, which account for barely one-sixth of the thirty minute playing time, but instead on the social and economic struggle. The film visually depicts Mondlane’s assertion that the construction of the new nation “must be undertaken even while the colonial state is in the process of being destroyed.”⁹³ These destructive and constructive aspects are inseparable, but the true revolution occurs in the creation of new communities. An examination of a military training avoids images of target practice and instead shows it as equal parts “an educational institution, an agricultural institution, a health institution, and a social services institution.” The film lauds farming, washing, and nursing as the proper occupations of a radical. Such images of bespectacled teachers and attentive children differed from stock depictions of massed soldiers expected by American audiences. The explicit message: revolution occurs within these people, not necessarily in battle. As Van Lierop explains, “one of the things that the revolution must do

⁹¹ Robert Van Lierop, dir. *A Luta Continua* (Tricontinental Film Center: 1972), 16mm. Copy obtained from Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Library, Chicago, Ill..

⁹² Eduardo Mondlane, *The Struggle for Mozambique* (Westport: Zed Press, 1983), 123-124.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 163.

is to change the pattern of life for the people waging the struggle.”⁹⁴ Communities must meet their own needs, since the capitalist-imperial state has failed to do so. The ideology synced well with the goals of Black Power at the time, but it catered to moderates who often felt alienated by the violence implied by radicals like the controversial Black Panthers. Van Lierop and FRELIMO argued that armed conflict was not necessarily a prerequisite for meaningful social change. *Luta* became a kind of filmic guidebook for launching communal reinvention along these more moderate lines. As one activist remembered decades later, such presentations meant that blacks could learn directly from the foreign movements about the “way things are put together” in practice and not just in theory.⁹⁵

In line with FRELIMO’s scientific socialism, *A Luta Continua* defines real victory as the achievement of equality and social cohesion. In Van Lierop’s eyes, the discipline and organization of FRELIMO party cadres are the ultimate models for emulation. According to the film, liberation leaders are first among equals, since all members acted as “policymakers.” The party eschewed ranks, preferring the label “responsáveis” (responsibles) in order to denote the two-way obligation inherent in socialist leadership. Van Lierop contrasts this image with the stereotype of middle class Civil Rights leaders and politicians who viewed the more populist demands for community action present within the Black Power movement as threats to their leadership. This comparison becomes explicit in the commentary on FRELIMO’s education system. For Mozambicans, the narrator states that “education is not a way to achieve upward mobility or isolate themselves as an intellectual elite nor is it a meaningless abstraction that

⁹⁴ *A Luta Continua*

⁹⁵ Gene Locke Interview.

leads to dependence on external economic conditions.” Education lifts students out of ignorance in a way that undermines class divisions associated with capitalist exploitation:

When school is out, the teachers do not go one way, into cars for a trip home to exclusive suburbs, while the students go another way deeper into a ghetto. Instead, they are all part of the same mass movement, and the teachers live, work, and struggle in the bush with all of the people.⁹⁶

Here, FRELIMO offers the solution to the weakness of the black American community.

Committed activists must sacrifice the trappings of the capitalist-imperialist system in favor of communal unity in order to sustain a meaningful social revolution. During a period when African American activists were gaining firsthand experience with the corrupting influence of power in places like Newark, this lesson had a major effect on the way they came to view both domestic unity and identification with African movements.

Upon its release in 1972, the film became the key text explaining FRELIMO ideology to American audiences. Van Lierop was incredibly liberal with rights to the film, meaning that almost any organization that could raise the money to order a reproduction could use it.⁹⁷ Groups like the Tricontinental Film Center, ACOA, and an uncounted number of local organizations offered copies for rent. This decentralized distribution system makes it difficult to gauge how many times the film played, but evidence suggests *A Luta Continua* appeared thousands of times nationwide, on multiple television broadcasts, and in a half dozen countries around the world.⁹⁸ In Chicago alone, the Committee for the Liberation of Angola, Mozambique,

⁹⁶ *A Luta Continua*

⁹⁷ Interview, Van Lierop.

⁹⁸ I have discovered advertisements attesting to showings in Chicago, New York, Newark, Lansing, Boston, Jackson, Washington, D.C., and Atlanta, though it is likely this represents a small portion of a much larger list. Television broadcasts occurred in New York and Boston. The Liberation Support Movement used the film in their traveling film series which extended into the American South. The film was also used in

and Guinea held over 100 screenings between the spring of 1973 and 1974. The committee noted that the film and FRELIMO had become so popular that it “sells itself.”⁹⁹ *A Luta Continua* came to represent the entirety of the CONCP struggle for socialist liberation, headlining events supporting the MPLA in Angola and the PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau as well as Mozambique. As such, the film symbolized the promise of all liberation struggles in southern Africa for thousands of blacks.

The way anti-imperial activists used the film to advance their cause was even more important than the number of showings. As Micheal Chanan has written in *The Cuban Image*, radical filmmakers produced a cinema that remained “incomplete without the actively responsive audience taking it up.”¹⁰⁰ This corresponded closely with Van Lierop’s vision for the film. The director and his activist distributors regularly participated in screenings, helping to mediate the film for the local viewers and convince them that the African struggle was theirs as well. Occasionally, nationalists like Sharfudine Khan would provide a direct bridge between the audience and the subject. The film acted as the visual centerpiece of programs that offered viewers of all races a way to participate in the revolution, either by joining in activities or donating directly to FRELIMO.¹⁰¹ Even where such activism remained underdeveloped, Van

Canada, Europe, and possibly in South Africa. Even the American government attempted to gain a copy for military training purposes.

⁹⁹ Minutes of the CCLAMG, no date – probably August or September of 1974, CCLAMG Notes/Minutes, Carole Collins Papers, Special Collections, Michigan State University, (Lansing, Michigan). CCLAMG Overview, 1975?, AAA. The CCLAMG records are by far the most complete of any local group to record showings of the film. Given estimated attendance between 30-50 people at each viewing, more than 4,000 people saw the film in the year-long period in the Chicago area alone. The CCLAMG continued to show the film dozens of times a year at the request of various groups until at least 1977.

¹⁰⁰ Michael Chanan, *The Cuban Image: Cinema and Cultural Politics in Cuba* (London: British Film Institute, 1985), 252

¹⁰¹ See Informational announcement, CCLAMG, “African Liberation Support Workshop,” 1973?, CCLAMG Materials, Collins Papers, MSU and advertisement, “Benefit Performance,” *Black New Ark*, 1 March 1973.

Lierop worked to engage the audience. A discussion guide for the film produced by his African Information Service gave background to the struggle and urged meaningful reflection on its lessons. It also recommended activities for those inspired by the film including boycotts of southern African goods, the organization of educational campaigns, and “mass political actions against identifiable imperialist targets (e.g. corporations with investments in southern Africa, communications outlets that have failed to report on the wars of national liberation).”¹⁰² This interpretative lens politicized the knowledge communicated by the film, inspiring many viewers to action. Sylvia Hill, an educator and activist, remembered leaving a screening of the film and “for the first time having this sense that you can have a science of change because you have to think methodologically about what you're doing. It's not just haphazard and just occurring willy-nilly all based on chance factors.”¹⁰³ The film and similar aspects of the information campaign challenged the way black Americans examined their own lives and the future of their communities. In these screenings, they found the tools – contacts, knowledge, and tactics – necessary to turn Pan-African sympathy into accomplishments, benefiting both local communities and continental movements.

Importantly, this film was only one small element of a much larger media campaign that grew from the diplomacy of the CONCP nationalists. In addition to its role supporting the film, Van Lierop's African Information Service (AIS) also hosted PAIGC leader Amilcar Cabral in the United States in 1973 and published his collected speeches in a widely read volume, *Return to*

For a rare recorded example of this interpretation, see *Say Brother* Episode 306, 15 November 1973, WGBH archive.

¹⁰² Africa Information Service, “A Discussion Guide for *A Luta Continua*,” AAA, http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-22D

¹⁰³ Sylvia Hill, interview with William Minter, Washington, D.C., 23 September 2003, NoEasyVictories.org, www.noeasyvictories.org/interviews/int11_hill.php

the Source.¹⁰⁴ It also produced a number of articles for popular magazines like *Ebony*, which introduced the main elements of the struggle to moderates who may have avoided radical cinema.¹⁰⁵ Multi-racial radical organizations also joined forces with these predominantly African American movements, with the Liberation Support Movement on the West Coast and the previously mentioned Chicago Committee for the Liberation of Angola Mozambique and Guinea being among the most popular with American blacks. As a result, FRELIMO helped introduce many young blacks to an entire continent of revolutionary thought and action. After more than a decade, the socialist revolutions of Portuguese Africa had gained the attention of the population. Films, books, and articles urged the mass activity that Mondlane and his CONCP allies had desired since the 1960s. The question now: how would it manifest itself among African Americans and to what effect?

¹⁰⁴ African Information Service, ed, *Return to the Source: Selected Speeches of Amilcar Cabral* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973).

¹⁰⁵ For example, Bob Van Lierop, "The Quiet War in Mozambique," *Ebony* Vol. XXVIII, 4 (February 1973).

People in the Streets: The African Liberation Support Committee

African Liberation Day (ALD) evolved from the same Africanist sentiment that had motivated Van Lierop and others to experiment with local demonstrations in support of Portuguese Africa. A national project, it took advantage of the increasing unity between the heretofore antagonistic poles of Black Power and Civil Rights political activism, buoyed by the formalization of this alliance in the inclusive National Black Political Convention held in Gary, Indiana. Beginning in 1972, it united African Americans from across the political spectrum in support of the liberation struggles. At the same time, it used the most well-known ideologies of the time – those of Portuguese Africa – to help remake the way that African Americans viewed their roles in both their local communities and across the globe. The celebration of ALD and the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC) that it spawned helped convince many African Americans that their full equality related directly to freedom on the African continent. The unreconciled views of racial nationalism and leftist solidarity would eventually divide the movement, but the momentum behind African liberation would continue through the fall of the Portuguese empire in 1974 and into the next decade.

A handful of scholars have given attention to this movement, most notably Brenda Gayle Plummer in her recent overview of African American internationalism in the era of decolonization. Historian Komozi Woodard has referred to the ALSC as “one of the most important forces for African liberation in African American history.”¹⁰⁶ Nonetheless, no study has delved into the origins of this key organization or fully revealed the debt it owes to Portuguese Africa. The roots of the ALSC lie in the personal diplomacy of FRELIMO and its

¹⁰⁶ Komozi Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Black Power Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 175.

interactions with ALD founder Owusu Sadaukai (Howard Fuller). As the head of Malcolm X Liberation University in Greensboro, North Carolina, Sadaukai championed the education of blacks in the skills necessary to reconstruct their communities into autonomous and assertive units. In the fall of 1971, he traveled to Tanzania in order to learn from the country's education system. What inspired him most in Dar es Salaam was not Julius Nyere's African model of governance, but the revolutionary national construction occurring in the liberated area of Mozambique. He met extensively with the FRELIMO leadership, discussing with them their model of liberation and how African Americans could support their struggle.¹⁰⁷ He also accompanied a patrol into Mozambique to see FRELIMO's educational and cultural activities in progress, actually joining with Robert Van Lierop for a short time as he filmed *A Luta Continua*.¹⁰⁸ In these various discussions, the freedom fighters stressed the importance of explaining the revolution to the American people – especially blacks. With knowledge of the revolution and the American role in sustaining Portugal, activists would surely provide “strong moral support” and show the world “our concern through massive Black protest and demonstration against U.S. involvement in Southern Africa.”¹⁰⁹ As a result, Sadaukai returned to the United States with a clear mission. Using the network of African American radicals and Civil Rights adherents that he had developed while founding the university, he helped assemble a broad coalition of black supporters. Among the notables who agreed to assist in preparing the first ALD were Newark's Black Power sage Amiri Baraka and his nationwide Congress of African People, Betty Shabazz, head of the Southern Christian Leadership Council Ralph Abernathy,

¹⁰⁷ Howard Fuller, telephone interview with author, 5 July 2013, (Austin, TX).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.; Interview, Nesbitt with author.

¹⁰⁹ Open Letter, African Liberation day, 17 February 1972, ALSC, FBI, 0983437000 HQ15725073 Section 1, Archives Unbound. Also,

Black Panthers Huey P. Newton and Angela Davis, *Black Scholar* editor Nathan Hare, Lucius Walker of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization, four congressmen, and dozens of others.¹¹⁰ Finally, this ad-hoc organization, brought together by the appeal of black liberation, achieved the communal unity that Malcolm X had desired.

The formation of the committee also hinted at the potential for mass demonstrations large enough to pressure Washington into moderating its support for Portugal. The rally would simultaneously educate and politicize a large segment of the African American population. Like *A Luta Continua*, organizers desired to show individual blacks that the distant struggles for economic and political equality were inherently linked. Physical protests at major governmental and corporate backers of Portugal and South Africa would help Americans connect forms of oppression at home and abroad. Moreover, these protests would demonstrate how African Americans could claim the rights of African peoples across the Diaspora without leaving the country. Quoting one delegate to the Gary Conference, Sadaukai explained that the goal of the ALD was to show that the “new negro” will “stand up for the right of his people – wherever they are.”¹¹¹ African Liberation Day would break down the traditional barriers that separated African Americans from their compatriots abroad, overcoming gaps in communication and creating a shared identity in a revolutionary struggle. As one editorial explained, ALD was fighting against the “thinking patterns of the black community” that saw the world “only in terms of the local and the immediate, and only in terms of pieces of the whole.”¹¹² Here then was the Africanist vision writ large. The agenda served as the peaceful if militant process of change around which

¹¹⁰ Interview, Fuller with author; Letterhead, African Liberation Day Coordinating Committee, no date (early 1972), provided to author by Fuller.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² “Understand the Struggle,” *African World*, 27 March 1972.

all Africans could rally. Supporting liberation would help groups like FRELIMO and the PAIGC, but it also provided the foundation for concerted action by African Americans as well.¹¹³ “The strengthening of Africa,” the black nationalist Amiri Baraka explained in the first public announcement of the ALD, “is the strengthening of ourselves.”¹¹⁴

Sadaukai and the committee chose visible cities for the rallies with large black populations in order to increase the chances that sizeable protests would draw official attention. Sites in 1972 included San Francisco, Toronto, and Antigua. The U.S. capital, however, would serve as the primary location for the ALD. As Baraka noted, Washington represented the ideal location for organizing since it contained “the government of our worst enemies, but paradoxically in a stronghold of black life.”¹¹⁵ Marches and rallies in front of embassies and the State Department would physically represent the demands for the United States to reconsider its policies toward reactionary foreign governments. At each location, noted speakers including politicians like Charles Diggs would educate the attendees about the individual crimes of Portugal, South Africa, Rhodesia, and the United States against African peoples. Preparations and speeches included attention to the entire continent still under minority rule, but organizers singled out Portugal. Blacks viewed the tiny Iberian state as the forefront of the recalcitrant white redoubt, holding back the flood of African independence that threatened to overtake the minority regimes. Finally defeating this last empire would seal the fate of countries like Rhodesia and South Africa. Sadaukai explained before the event that “Portugal today is looked upon as one of the most diabolical among all enemies of Africa,” with Pretoria “running a close

¹¹³ The search for African American unity was half the goal of the ALD and ALSC. As Gene Locke remembered, “it was easier to adopt that name as a foundation for coalition.” Gene Locke, interview.

¹¹⁴ Amiri Baraka, “African Liberation Day,” *Black News*, 1 May 1972.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

second.”¹¹⁶ Activists praised the Portuguese African revolutions as the vanguard of the “newest most effective stage in a line of historical resistance [to European rule].”¹¹⁷ As the campaigns in Mozambique and Guinea Bissau gained ground, African Americans hoped that their support might provide the final element needed to tip the scales in their favor. As one anonymous fan of the ALD suggested, perhaps “support[ing] the liberation struggles on our own homeland” might “thrust the Freedom Fighters [of the Portuguese territories] over that crucial hump after which total defeat of colonialism through armed peoples struggle will have to be admitted.”¹¹⁸

As the chosen day of May 27th approached, all signs pointed toward a truly impressive national gathering. Organizers expected a few thousand protesters, but the popularity of the liberation movements had grown due to efforts by Robert Van Lierop, Sadaukai, and many others. The largest planned demonstration in Washington, D.C. attracted African Americans from Richmond, Boston, New York, and as far away as Houston. In the culminating rally at the National Mall (renamed Lumumba Park) Sadaukai spoke before an assembled crowd of between 25,000 and 40,000 people, declaring “We are an African people.”¹¹⁹ Organizers proudly proclaimed it the “largest all-Black demonstration in Washington’s history” and the largest nationally since Marcus Garvey.¹²⁰ Another 7,000-10,000 gathered in San Francisco, while smaller crowds of roughly 3,000 attended rallies in Toronto and Antigua. Organizers may have

¹¹⁶ Owusu Sadauki, “Inside Liberation Mozambique,” *African World*, 4 March 1972.

¹¹⁷ See for an example, “Understand the Struggle,” *African World*, 27 May 1972.

¹¹⁸ “A Goal Worth Reaching,” *African World*, 22 January 1972.

¹¹⁹ “The African Liberator,” 19 May 1972, ALSC, FBI, 1126832000 HQ15725073 Section 4, Archives Unbound. More generous estimates from Baraka put the number closer to 30,000. The ALSC later claimed 60,000.

¹²⁰ “ALD March Orderly and Enthusiastic,” *African World*, 10 June 1972. See also

underestimated their own accomplishment. The coordinated demonstrations were perhaps the largest transnational black protest to ever take place in the Americas.¹²¹

The Nixon administration – acquainted with mass dissidence due to its Vietnam policies – downplayed the events, but the demonstrations proved more disturbing to representatives of governments in southern Africa.¹²² To these officials, the visible manifestation of black discontent with American policy in the region represented a new and possibly disturbing trend. The Portuguese ambassador tried to claim that the protests did not even disrupt the daily services of the embassy, but the rogue black nationalists who attempted to bomb the San Francisco consulate just a few days after the marches challenged his bravado.¹²³ Diplomats at the South African embassy proved more thoughtful. They had been observing the preparations for the campaign with unreserved skepticism and expressed surprise at the turnout in Washington. The ambassador noted the “special venom” that protesters reserved for the Portuguese, but overall questioned the commitment of the black community to sustaining this activism. Officials in the embassy came to the conclusion that “there is not enough evidence at this stage that southern Africa is a high priority in the black community.”¹²⁴ The first African Liberation Day had been a success, but it had merely been the first salvo in an attempt to push change – both within the black community and in wider American society. It had made an impression, but more sustained effort was necessary to expand popular participation and

¹²¹ “African Liberation Day Follow-up Measures,” *Black New Ark*, 1 July 1972.

¹²² “Potential for Violence in the Major Cities During Summer 1973,” 6 April 1973, 12-13, Ex HU 3-1, White House Central Files, Nixon Presidential Library (Yorba Linda, CA).

¹²³ The records of the Portuguese embassy from this period remain closed, so it is difficult to challenge Themido’s rather cavalier dismissal of the ALD two decades later. Given the concern he showed for the Gulf Boycott at the time, it is likely he may have been more worried than his memoirs reveal. Themido, João Hall. *Dez Anos em Washington, 1971-1981* (Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 1995), 98.

¹²⁴ Memo, Ambassador to Secretary, “Afrika Bevrydingsdag: Washington, D.C.” 2 June 1972, 1/33/3, South African Foreign Policy Archives (Pretoria, South Africa). [Author’s Translation].

convince onlookers that black identification with Lusophone and other nationalists was indeed a real phenomenon.

The movement proved more durable than its detractors predicted. Within months of the first ALD, the ad-hoc committee had formed into the permanent ALSC expecting to make the celebration an annual event. However, the year between the two rallies produced a change in the nature of the program away from racial identification as the primary unifying factor. This shift owed a great deal to the ideologies of the CONCP nationalists who had captured the imaginations of many black peoples. As interest grew in the movements, people sought more information about them. By 1972, *A Luta Continua* had become available. Sharfudine Khan regularly traveled from his base in New York, and the PAIGC's itinerant ambassador to Europe and the Americas, Gil Fernandes, made semi-regular trips to the country.¹²⁵ Publications catering to the black radical audience including *The Black Panther*, *The African World*, and Amiri Baraka's *Unity and Struggle* all reproduced key texts from leaders like Mondlane and Cabral in particular, while also giving increased space to the advancement of the movements. Cabral even visited the United States in the fall of 1972, addressing the UN and attending a question-and-answer session open only to the black community. The collection of Cabral's speeches in *Return the Source* became an invaluable guide to many African Americans, most notably his challenge to become a "comrade" as well as a "brother."¹²⁶ With greater interest in the socialist struggles came greater appreciation for their ideology among interested African Americans. With the aid of Portuguese Africa, the transnational leftists that had been part of Pan-Africanism since

¹²⁵ For an example of the role Gil Fernandes played, see interview, Gil Fernandes with John Slade, *Say Brother* Episode 220: Guinea Bissau, 1 February 1972, WGBH Archive.

¹²⁶ Amilcar Cabral, "Connecting the Struggles: an informal talk with black Americans," in *African Information Service*, 76.

Malcolm X had begun to overtake the racial component, which would have profound effects on the ALSC.

The ALSC's first major national campaign provides evidence of both this new Marxist inspired critique of a global imperial system as well as the central role played by Portuguese Africa in the evolution of this thought. In an attempt to solidify and expand solidarity, the committee backed a national boycott of Gulf Oil. The corporation was the single largest business operating in colonial Angola and essential for maintaining the Portuguese war effort. The \$61 million that Gulf would pay to Portugal in 1972 amounted to almost sixty percent of military expenditures for that year in Angola and just under a third of those in Mozambique.¹²⁷ A boycott represented the perfect opportunity to endow solidarity action with meaning, as the loss of oil revenue would strike a major blow to the Portuguese war machine. The Boston-based Pan-African Liberation Committee had launched the campaign in the black community under the leadership of South African exile Chris Nteta and Randall Robinson, a Harvard trained lawyer with ties to FRELIMO.¹²⁸ After garnering national attention from its week-long occupation of a Harvard administration building – holders of the single largest academic holdings of Gulf stock – the PALC began actively cooperating with the ALSC. In June 1972, Robinson proposed a nationwide campaign that would mobilize black public opinion against Gulf in over a dozen states, including seven of the most lucrative markets for the oil giant.¹²⁹ As Robinson explained

¹²⁷ For one example, see "Mozambique: Colony of America," *Mozambique Revolution* 10 (September 1964). ACOA Fact Sheet, "Why We Protest Gulf Oil in Angola," June 1973, AAA. See also George Houser, *No One Can Stop the Rain* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989), 185.

¹²⁸ Letter, Randall Robinson to Marshall Brown, 31 March 1971, Private Papers of Brenda Randolph (nee Robinson).

¹²⁹ PALC, "1971 National and State Gulf Product Distribution Breakdown," 8 June 1972, 1126832-000 --- 157-HQ-25073 --- Section 4. 6/8/72 - 11/21/72. African Liberation Support Committee. FBI Library. Archives Unbound. Of the three states without populations over ten percent, California, Pennsylvania,

to Congressman Charles Diggs, a pivotal member of the ALSC coalition, “if in the key states we can win overwhelming Black support in addition to marginal support from whites, Gulf’s profit margin can be substantially reduced.”¹³⁰ The ALSC approved the plan.¹³¹ Local chapters, many of which were associated with Baraka’s Congress of Afrikan People, coordinated the widespread effort. Subtly playing off Baraka’s own poem “SOS,” the PALC began by “calling on all Black people and others who believe in freedom to boycott the products of the Gulf Oil Company.”¹³² The activity would serve the twofold purpose of educating populations about the liberation movements, while also providing them with a local symbol of collective racial oppression on which sympathetic blacks could focus their energies. It appealed to all races, but it placed leadership of the boycott squarely in the black community

The results of the campaign were impressive.¹³³ In the run-up to the second May celebrations, the PALC coordinated the launch of an informational campaign across 20 states. In April a “flood” of bumper stickers, posters, and foldouts appeared from Miami to Seattle.¹³⁴ In Florida alone, the Gulf Boycott coordinator distributed 2,000 posters in two weeks across the state, with special emphasis on northern cities like Gainesville. Churches and community organizations opened their doors to anti-Gulf speeches, and local radio and TV stations allowed for a once-a-week news spot devoted to Gulf campaigning. In New York, the PALC representative covered subways with more than 2,500 posters and handed out informational

and Ohio all had large black populations concentrated in urban areas from which much of Gulf’s sales likely derived. Gulf’s next ten most profitable states included ones with heavy black populations including South Carolina, Louisiana, Maryland, Tennessee, and Alabama.

¹³⁰ Robinson to Diggs, 9 August 1972, BRP.

¹³¹ Letter, Robinson to Lucius Walker, 9 August 1972, BRP.

¹³² Randall Robinson, et. al, “Dear Friend,” no date (1973?), AAA.

¹³³ Letter, Nteta, Robinson, and Winston to Brother/Sister, 27 April 1973. The Full page advertisement appeared in Jet in the May 31 issue. Ebony appeared in the fall.

¹³⁴ Letter, PALC to Brother/sister, 9 March 1973. BRP.

booklets at the local celebration of African Liberation Day in 1973. Through Diggs, the PALC also assembled dozens of black celebrities and officials who would lend their names to the campaign.¹³⁵ The expansive list of the luminaries appeared on full page advertisements in *Jet* and *Ebony* declaring the Portuguese African struggle “is also our war,” which produced a frantic response from Gulf in the black media.¹³⁶ The barrage helped lay the groundwork for a national picket later in September of 1973, which included more than 25 cities.¹³⁷ By the end of the year, the PALC and its ALSC affiliates had played a pivotal role in establishing the Gulf boycott as a national movement. Gulf remained in Angola, but it began to worry about the impact of the protests on its bottom line. It took out full page advertisements in popular black publications that gave a more positive spin to its role in the community, while also increasing investments in minority training programs.¹³⁸ Gulf even proposed creating “betterment programs” in Angola that it could use to defray the domestic impact of protests.¹³⁹ Portugal remained confident that Gulf would not leave Angola, but the Portuguese ambassador warned his colleagues in Lisbon that they should not “underestimate what the campaign can do.”¹⁴⁰ A mass movement had developed that targeted the economic imperialism that continued to subjugate both southern Africans and blacks in the United States, and it was beginning to achieve results.

¹³⁵ Various Questionnaires Responses, Labeled Packet #2, no date, BRP. Memo, PALC to State and Local Organizers, 15 May 1973, BRP.

¹³⁶ See PALC Advertisement, *Ebony* (Aug 1973), p11.

¹³⁷ Memo, PALC to State and Local Organizers, 27 July 1973, BRP.

¹³⁸ Gulf Advertisement, *Ebony* (Aug 1973), p128. See for example, “The OIC and Gulf,” *Forward Times* (Houston), 5 May 1973.

¹³⁹ The program was proposed in response to Church protests that coincided and partially inspired the PALC protests. Harvard would use plans for these programs to help defend its refusal to divest. Telegram, Lisbon to Secstate, 10 November 1971, Box 2040, Political and Defense, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-1973, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁴⁰ Telegram, Washington to Lisbon, 25 April 1972, Processo 922, PAA 288, Arquivo Historico Diplomatico (Lisbon, Portugal).

Like the grassroots Gulf campaign, the 1973 celebrations also better reflected the practical scientific socialism of the Lusophone liberation parties. The major change was a shift from the mass rallies of the prior year in major cities to a series of smaller demonstrations scattered across the country. These local demonstrations highlighted shared elements of imperial exploitation and its impact on individual lives. Small rallies provided a venue in which local organizers could readily connect domestic symbols of oppression with similar situations overseas. In Newark, for example, the comparison became centralized around the Portuguese problem. Marchers designed a route that included “stops at many symbols of oppression against black people,” which included the Portuguese consulate and the Portuguese airline TAP. The result merged the problems and the solutions to African exploitation on the continent and in Newark into one interrelated whole.¹⁴¹ At the same time, organizers hoped to gently expand the base of their revolution beyond the strict limits of Black Nationalism. Adopting the wordy theme “There is no peace with honor – the war continues in Africa and against Black People in this country,” the ALSC hoped to canalize popular radicalism focusing on Southeast Asia into the southern African cause. As Sadaukai explained, “We feel very strongly that as the war ‘winds down’ in Vietnam it will be winding up in Africa.”¹⁴² These local demonstrations were less likely to affect national policy, but they exposed the initiated – black and white alike – to the looming threat of U.S. adventurism beyond Saigon. They offered opportunities to identify local collaborators with minority rule like Gulf Oil and give a wider array of people a sense of participating in the revolution. The decentralized activities sought to create a seamless

¹⁴¹ “Support World Afrikan Liberation,” *Black New Ark*, 1 May 1973. More than 2000 people attended the rally. “1000s March in New Ark,” 1 June 1973.

¹⁴² Letter, Owusu Sadaukai to Lu Walker, 27 February 1973, Box 1, Southern Africa Collective Collection, NYPL.

connection between international and domestic revolution, spurring people to assert their power in their own communities as they acted in solidarity with Africans abroad.

These changes produced an African Liberation Day far different from the previous year. In May of 1973, roughly 30 cities across the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean held rallies. Attendance differed from one city to the next, but widespread participation demonstrated a surprising depth of feeling among African Americans. New Haven produced well over a hundred; Raleigh, North Carolina more than 1500; and the less than radical city of Knoxville roughly 400. In Portland, Oregon, over a thousand attended, including more than a few white leftists, while another surprise turnout of nearly two thousand filled the streets of Columbia, South Carolina. In Houston, a few hundred marched outside of the Portuguese Consulate and in front of the Gulf Oil building, before attending a rally of more than one thousand. Harlem, San Francisco, and Washington all gathered roughly five thousand people for their rallies. Earlier festivities in Los Angeles raised \$17,000 from 3,000 attendees. Only in a few cities like Boston and Rochester did turnouts produce discouraging results, with poor weather being blamed for attendance. The turnout for the piecemeal ALD proved far greater than many expected given its diffuse nature.¹⁴³ Local committees raised more than \$41,000 in aid for the liberation groups.¹⁴⁴ Activist publications claimed that more than 100,000 people marched in the various cities, but the number was probably closer to 40,000 in the United States.¹⁴⁵ This number was disappointing in some ways as the movement failed to expand much beyond its previous success in terms of numerical turnout, but it likely involved more people in the

¹⁴³ For reports on the various programs in cities across the country and their attendance, see the reports filed from various FBI offices. ALSC, FBI, 1126832000 HQ15725073 Section 6, Archives Unbound.

¹⁴⁴ IFCO Project Analysis, "African Liberation Support Committee," 15 March 1974, African Liberation Day Coordinating Committee, IFCO Collection, Schomburg Center, New York Public Library.

¹⁴⁵ "Over 100,000 March on African Liberation Day," *Struggle* 1:5 (July 1973).

liberation cause than had the more centralized celebrations of the previous year. As one activist remembered, for every one person who attended the rallies, there were likely three or four who participated at some level beforehand or after.¹⁴⁶ The general success of the second ALD pointed to an ongoing solidarity with African liberation struggles and a greater incorporation of the socialist ideology into African American activity.

In spanning the country, African Liberation Day broke out of the niche of strictly racial interest. In locations such as Portland where leftists cooperated across the color line, whites participated in ALD activities, though not without some consternation at the national level.¹⁴⁷ Major media outlets paid greater attention to the marches, devoting space to the demonstrations and the transnational ideology they articulated. An article on the front page of the *Washington Post's* Metro section (above the fold no less) noted that the D.C. event was smaller compared to the prior year, but that it showed concretely "correlations between the history and problems of both [blacks here and Africans]."¹⁴⁸ The *New York Times* provided similar coverage. It explained that marchers merged international discussions of liberation with specific local grievances, including the construction of an unpopular state office building in the center of Harlem. Manhattan Borough President Percy Sutton declared the intersection in front of the structure African Liberation Square, effectively delineating it as a battleground that fit with the theme 'One struggle – many fronts.'¹⁴⁹ In places where celebrations received no coverage outside the black community, organizers charged racism. In Philadelphia, a group of young activists lambasted the *Inquirer* and other local media for their lack of attention,

¹⁴⁶ Thomas Blanton, telephone interview with author, 2 May 2013.

¹⁴⁷ Discussions about the presence of whites at the national level reveal that this was a wider issue. The decision was eventually made to allow white participation but to keep the leadership wholly black.

¹⁴⁸ Alice Bonner, "Rallies Support Africans," *Washington Post*, 27 May 1973.

¹⁴⁹ "African Liberation Day Marked by a March and Rally in Harlem," *New York Times*, 27 May 1973.

complaining that the ALD deserved at least as much coverage as Irish, Jewish, and Chinese parades. “A press that can uncover the Pentagon papers,” they stated tongue firmly in cheek, “cannot claim to have been unable to uncover information on African Liberation Day.”¹⁵⁰ The ALD may have been a black project, but its organizers aimed to gain the attention of all segments of the country.

The size and breadth of the celebrations also had a meaningful impact in Washington. There had been a sense since the first ALD that Africa could become a substantial issue in domestic politics if trends continued. In the wake of the previous year’s success, Charles Diggs had organized a Congressional Delegation that traveled around the continent, discussing the growth of black interest in the liberation struggles and urging coordinated pressure on the United States by independent governments.¹⁵¹ Some individuals within the State Department believed this burgeoning transnational coalition on Africa could have real consequences for American policy toward the minority regimes. In Luanda, one American official warned his Portuguese counterparts that cooperation with their imperial designs seemed unlikely to last. With Vietnam winding down, the Consul General Richard Post remarked, a “large number of critics of that war will be in search of a cause and may well adopt southern Africa. This in turn could put additional domestic pressure on [the] U.S.”¹⁵² FRELIMO agreed. Sharfudine Khan used the ALD celebrations and their enthusiastic reception on the continent to needle American

¹⁵⁰ Lear Len, “Media Charged with Racism in African Liberation Day Treatment,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, 5 June 1973.

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¹⁵² Telegram, Luanda to Secstate, 30 June 1972, Box 2040, Political and Defense, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-1973, RG 59, National Archives and Records Administration (College Park, MD).

officials, who continued to avoid discussions of isolating their Iberian ally.¹⁵³ One State Department report openly wondered if such a shift in policy might not be inevitable if the Congressional Black Caucus and its allies could replicate the sustained successes of similar activities in Europe.¹⁵⁴ The first ALD had demonstrated the viability of a politically influential solidarity, so future celebrations would measure how large the movement could grow.

Recognition of the potential power of this anti-imperial coalition extended beyond Washington. Portugal feared that its increasingly good relations with the Nixon administration could succumb to a newly hostile legislature, which threatened to become a reality as popular interest developed.¹⁵⁵ The second ALD confirmed official concerns about the growth of more vocal calls for isolating Portugal and the minority regimes. In the months preceding the nationwide demonstrations, the specter of popular reaction influenced an U.S. vote in the United Nations against Portugal and constrained the executive desire to finalize a new lease on military bases with Lisbon. In the fall of 1973, Congressional pressure materialized in the form of an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act that would enshrine the arms embargo against Portugal as law, which was sponsored by a pair of white senators from states with politically active African American minorities – Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts and John V. Tunney of

¹⁵³ Memcon, Sharfudine Khan with David Matthews, 22 June 1972, Box 2491, Political and Defense, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-1973, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁵⁴ Bureau of Intelligence and Research, "Portuguese Africa: Growing Western Support for Liberation Movements, 21 August 1972, Box 2040, Political and Defense, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-1973, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁵⁵ Portuguese Ambassador to the United States Hall Themido was dismissive of the ALD and the Gulf boycott, but he noted that the changing attitude of the congress represented "the only initiative with a really onerous character." Themido, 99. The ultimatum that the Black Caucus made in its June 1972 "Bill of Rights" included a demand to end all aid to Portugal, which both worried and infuriated Lisbon. Telegram, Washington to Lisbon, 2 June 1972, Processo 922, PAA 288, Arquivo Historico Diplomatico (Lisbon, Portugal).

California.¹⁵⁶ In the midst of these events, the exasperated Portuguese Minister of Foreign Affairs Rui Patricio complained to Assistant Secretary of State David Newsom that “10,000 people marching in African Liberation Day should not form U.S policy.”¹⁵⁷ By the end of 1973, popular manifestations of solidarity with southern and, principally, Portuguese Africa had begun to make inroads in Washington. While awareness of these issues had not yet penetrated the White House, activists had made allies in Congress and their actions constrained State Department interactions with Portugal.

Success at the national level did not resolve the ideological split that had lain dormant in the national black movement, subsumed as it was behind a common front with the liberation movements. The shift to the left angered many nationalists who considered race as the defining factor of solidarity over political ideology. Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael) championed this nationalist group against Owusu Sadaukai and the majority of the ALSC. For years, Ture had discussed the importance of understanding the “scientific socialism” taught by Malcolm X. His iteration of the ideology was critical of capitalism, but not necessarily because of its monopoly characteristics. Rather, capitalism ran counter to traditions of African “communalism.” Under this ideology, racism did not evolve from capital’s attempts to divide the working class but from the natural clashing of races and European attempts to subdue darker peoples. In this view of

¹⁵⁶ “Portugal Bid for U.S. Aid in Africa Reported,” *Los Angeles Times*, 14 November 1973. Around this time Congressman sympathetic to southern Africa also began serious work to repeal the Byrd Amendment, which had allowed the import of Chrome from Rhodesia since 1971.

¹⁵⁷ Memcon, Rui Patricio and Luis Navega with David Newsom and Richard Post, 20 March 1973, Box 2555, Political and Defense, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-1973, RG 59, NARA. The vote under discussion had been praised by Diggs from his CoDel in Africa, calling it “a real breakthrough.” Telegram, Dar es Salaam, 29 November 1972, Box 2558, Political and Defense, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-1973, RG 59, NARA.

the world system, Ture proclaimed “Pan-Africanism is the highest form of Black Power.”¹⁵⁸ This was an exclusionary vision of solidarity, which made room only for darker peoples who understood the specific experience of racial exploitation. Communism had little to offer. Supporters of Ture like the poet and ALSC member Haki Madhubuti said that blacks could not benefit from theories belonging “to the white boy.” Dismissing famed communists like Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, Madhubuti gave voice to the suspicions of many black nationalists that they were simply “another set of white boys that are just as racist as Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, John Kennedy, etc., each using their special system of control both steeped in and based on white supremacy.”¹⁵⁹

Other nationalists may have hesitated to lump Kennedy with Guevara, but many would have agreed that most socialists outside of Africa were nothing more than what one former ALSC member referred to as “red fascists.”¹⁶⁰ Communists could not understand the needs of blacks, and adoption of their tactics threatened to undermine the movement toward racial self-determination. These critics found ammunition for their fight against the leftists in the liberation leaders, who eschewed defining themselves as communists and regularly questioned Marxist preoccupation with the working class.¹⁶¹ To these activists, the ALSC’s adoption of this Marxist ideology betrayed not only blacks in the United States but also Africans fighting for a peculiarly continental form of communal socialism in Portuguese Africa and elsewhere.

¹⁵⁸ “Carmichael returns from Africa sojourn,” *Milwaukee Star*, 5 June 1971.

¹⁵⁹ Haki Madhubuti, “Enemies: From the Left and the Right,” in ALSC, FBI, 1126832000 HQ15725073 Section 13, Archives Unbound.

¹⁶⁰ Omowale Luthuli, telephone interview with author, 27 April 2013.

¹⁶¹ See Africa Information Service, 88. Cabral said to a group of African Americans “To have ideology doesn’t necessarily mean that you have to define whether you are a communist, socialist, or something like this. To have ideology is to know what you want in your own condition.”

This division played out most dramatically over the issue of Angola. An outgrowth of the impressive fundraising achieved during the 1973 celebrations was the decision about how to divide the funds amongst the liberation organizations. With regard to the situations in Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, there was little need for discussion. FRELIMO and the PAIGC were the only fighting organizations and commanded widespread loyalty. In Angola, however, the situation differed. CONCP member MPLA jostled with the upstart União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) under Jonas Savimbi for foreign aid in both the United States and Europe. The MPLA positioned itself alongside its socialist allies as the more progressive group, fighting not only imperialism but also the “tribalist trends and racist prejudices fostered by the colonialists.”¹⁶² The party publicly proclaimed a willingness to accept the support and efforts of whites, and even invited Portuguese troops to desert with their arms and “cross to the side of the nationalists, avoiding the shame of participating in an unjust war that is as dirty as the war in Vietnam.”¹⁶³ This rhetoric helped endear the party to whites like Liberation Support Movement leader Don Barnett, who championed the MPLA’s cause in the United States and Canada, but it did not have universal appeal to blacks. Robert Van Lierop and others who worked equally well with organizations such as ACOA and black groups embraced the MPLA partially for its ideological commitment and multi-racial goals and more often because it flowed naturally from previous associations with fellow CONCP member FRELIMO.

Strict black nationalists within the United States who directed their anger at all whites found such multiracial rhetoric troubling. UNITA took advantage of the nationalist aspects of the culture and appealed to African Americans along racial terms. Leaders dismissed the MPLA as

¹⁶² “Victory Is Certain in Angola – MPLA,” *African World*, 19 February 1972.

¹⁶³ Agostinho Neto, “A Message to Comrades,” in Don Barnett and Roy Harvey, *The Revolution in Angola* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972), 31.

the party of whites and Portuguese educated mulattos. The party lambasted supporters of their rivals. Basil Davidson earned special approbation, since his writing had become widely read within the black community. His articles appeared in such important publications as *The Black Panther*, praising the MPLA at the cost of UNITA. UNITA sought to undermine such reports, dismissing praise as the misinformed opinions of “white gurus [speaking] on black peoples struggles.”¹⁶⁴ This racial and ideological divide pitted socialist supporters of the MPLA against the nationalists backing UNITA. In the fall of that year, the ALSC decided that UNITA was most actively advancing the struggle and deserved funding.¹⁶⁵ This decision represented a small victory for the nationalists, but it was a limited victory as the leftists retained the leadership of the committee.

Over the next year the socialist-nationalist divide would tear apart the ALSC. By the fall of 1973, ideological discussions at the top of the organization had descended to the local levels with disastrous results. In local meetings, nationalists and leftists confronted each other, often descending into violence.¹⁶⁶ In less polarized communities, local chapters of the ALSC often sided with one element or the other of the national leadership. In Ohio, one local leader removed his group from the national structure and promised to host a celebration of Malcolm X in direct competition with the ALD.¹⁶⁷ As historian Manning Marable summarizes the situation, “old friends turned against one another; marriages were broken over which African liberation

¹⁶⁴ Letter, Jorge Sangumba to Mailk Chaka, 15 November, 1973, File: African Liberation Day Coordination Committee, Box 22, Interreligious Foundation for Community Organizing Papers, NYPL.

¹⁶⁵ Memo, Lucius Walker to Owusu Sadauki, 18 April 1973, Folder: Requests to visit Mozambique, Box 3, Robert Van Lierop Papers, NYPL.

¹⁶⁶ Luthuli Interview; Nesbitt Interview with Author.

¹⁶⁷ Memo, Cincinnati FBI to Director, 14 May 1974, in ALSC, FBI, 1126832000 HQ15725073 Section 14, Archives Unbound.

organization one chose to support.”¹⁶⁸ This confrontation came to a head at the Howard University Conference held ahead of the annual ALD of 1974. Ironically, the adoption of the Portuguese African cause that had bound them together now helped provide the fuel with which they would divide themselves. Both sides used Cabral and the ideologies of FRELIMO to defend their positions, giving no quarter to their opponents.¹⁶⁹ The result of this ideological impasse was a split in the movement. The ALSC would continue, but it would represent the leftist elements of the former united organization alone. Until the late 1970s, African Americans celebrated two African Liberation Days, in competing and sometimes directly antagonistic ways.¹⁷⁰

The collapse of the ALSC did not end African American interest in the struggle for liberation. As the continuation of the ALD in its nationalist and socialist forms attests, black commitment to liberation had become part and parcel of their identity for many blacks. The collapse of Portugal’s empire in 1974 validated the work activists had undertaken for the movement. Many former members of the ALSC and similar organizations would shift their focus to the nascent struggles in Zimbabwe and later South Africa, utilizing the identities and skills they developed as part of this earlier movement. Noteworthy activists that emerged from this movement included PALC chair and Gulf Boycott mastermind Randall Robinson, Washington activist and founder of the Southern Africa Support Project Sylvia Hill, and dozens of others. While Sadaukai would drift away from solidarity work, most other leaders including Robert Van

¹⁶⁸ Marable, *Race Reform and Rebellion*, 135. In an interview with the author, Prexy Nesbitt remembered firefights breaking out at meetings over the question of the MPLA vs. UNITA.

¹⁶⁹ Phil Hutchings, “Report on the ALSC National Conference,” *The Black Scholar*, July-August 1974, 18.

¹⁷⁰ Kwame Ture and his All African People’s Revolutionary Party sponsored the nationalist celebration, attracting more than 10,000 people to Washington in 1977. Margaret Tarter, “The politics of African liberation organizations,” *Bay State Banner* (Boston), 7 July 1977.

Lierop remained committed to the cause of liberation, providing influential guidance to a new generation of solidarity organizers who emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s. Congressmen had also joined with radicals in supporting liberation, and many black members of the Democratic Party in particular would become increasingly active in the solidarity movement in an attempt to impress voters. Perhaps most importantly, the dramatic demonstrations had drawn the attention of a wider public, which opened new avenues for cooperation within the legislature and local communities. Especially for the leftist majority that maintained control of the ALSC, cooperation with sympathetic white groups provided a way to amplify their criticisms of U.S. policy both domestically and abroad. The growth of this new, more active Pan-African movement in the 1970s endowed the famous anti-Apartheid struggle of the next decade with the tools, contacts, and alliances necessary to realize its goals. Though African Americans had only tangentially contributed to the collapse of the Portuguese Empire, their influence would grow as the “Wind of Change” finished its slow sweep down the continent.

Conclusion

The preceding narrative demonstrates the workings of the transnational network supporting southern African liberation in the 1970s. The cooperation between Americans with FRELIMO and the CONCP states emerged from a complicated history. Portuguese Africa became a symbol of assertive change on an international scale, which appealed to African Americans demanding full equality in their own societies. Internationalists such as Daniel Watts of the LCA and Malcolm X linked the liberation cause with an emerging domestic radicalism, illustrating that even the Cold War conformity of the 1960s did not completely silence Pan-African solidarity. As a result, a new generation of activists looked abroad for inspiration about what their identities and communities could be. They found their answer in the patient and ever-optimistic diplomacy of the state-less liberation movements of Portuguese Africa. The active support of radical nationalist parties like FRELIMO and their models of social reconstruction encouraged African American to take more confrontational positions. A new ethos of assertiveness collapsed the distance not only between Africa and the United States, but between foreign and domestic policy. In the subsequent decade, African Americans would greatly expand their influence in international affairs, most notably in the establishment of the extremely successful TransAfrica that emerged from the networks and experiences of the ALSC. Though centered in Washington, TransAfrica relied for its persuasive power on the popular black commitment to African causes that surpassed the elite anti-colonialism of the 1950s in breadth and energy. Dozens of other organizations local and national similarly drew on this deep reservoir of established talent who had developed an interest and expertise in the cause of African independence.

The end of the Portuguese empire in 1975, though only tangentially related to American activism, created a new momentum for the support of African liberation. Malcolm X, the LCA, the ALSC, and myriad local organizations like the PALC forged a sustainable solidarity with the struggles in the region that would lay the groundwork for future organizing. Distance, language, and culture had always separated African Americans from their co-racialists abroad. Individuals from W.E.B. DuBois to Malcolm X to Owusu Sadaukai had bridged the gap in the formation of their own ideologies, but it had been difficult for such thinking to take root in the wider black community, especially at the national level. 1970s organizations like the LASC and the PALC helped establish a shared identity by utilizing themes of economic exclusion and exploitation salient to the post-Civil Rights generation. In supporting the positive cause of liberation advanced by socialist parties, blacks in the United States discovered a new identity with which they could challenge the rigid conformity of a Cold War foreign policy based on reactionary anti-communism and unrestrained capitalism. These popular organizations crafted what scholar Komozi Woodard has referred to as a “fictive kinship” that collapsed the distance that had divided Africa and the Diaspora since World War II.¹⁷¹ Taking hold even before the Soweto uprising refocused popular attention on South Africa, this sense of solidarity would provide fertile ground for later organizing. When anti-Apartheid activists went looking for people to support protests and divestment campaigns in later years, they found, according to Joseph Jordan, “a receptive audience among people whose consciousness had been raised during the

¹⁷¹ Komozi Woodard, “Amiri Baraka, the Congress of African People, and Black Power Politics from the 1961 United Nations Protests to the 1972 Gary convention,” in Peniel Joseph, ed, *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 62.

campaigns of the 1970s.”¹⁷² This new consciousness owed a debt to a generation of black internationalists who embraced the popular diplomacy of a group of ambitious African socialists.

¹⁷² Joseph Jordan, “The 1970s” in *No Easy Victories*, ed. William Minter, et.al. (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2008), 123.

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