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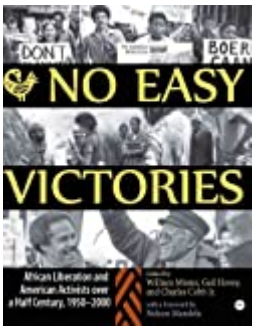

William Minter, Gail Hovey, Charles Cobb Jr., eds. *No Easy Victories: African Liberation and American Activists over a Half Century, 1950-2000.* Trenton: Africa World Press, 2008. xvii + 248 pp. $29.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-59221-575-1.

Reviewed by David Hostetter (Robert C. Byrd Center for Legislative Studies, Shepherd University)

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Chronicling a Half Century of Shared Struggle

The late Samora Machel, the first president of independent Mozambique, asserted that "International solidarity is not an act of charity. It is an act of unity between allies fighting on different terrains for the same objective" (p. 200). The engagement of Americans with African struggles against colonialism and apartheid is the story of activists attempting to live up to Machel's maxim. The edited volume *No Easy Victories: African Liberation and American Activists, 1950-2000* endeavors to provide a "panoramic view" of a half century of solidarity efforts for African independence and against apartheid in South Africa. The editors, activist-scholars William Minter, Gail Hovey, and Charles Cobb Jr., have crafted an account of U.S. activism that celebrates the strengths and analyzes the weaknesses of solidarity with Africa. The book, much like the movement it recounts, is an ambitious coalition effort. The 8.5 by 11-inch paperback combines a foreword by Nelson Mandela with analytical essays, interviews, personal statements, documents from the movement, maps, and a rich array of photographs.

The book's title comes from African independence leader Amilcar Cabral, who said "Tell no lies; claim no easy victories." To that end, the book is organized into decade-specific chapters that cover American solidarity efforts from the fifties through the nineties. Co-editor William Minter provides a valuable overview of American connections with Africa in his introductory essay titled "An Unfinished Journey." Minter recounts his personal engagement with the continent while analyzing the solidarity efforts of civil rights, religious, labor, student, and left-wing activists. The underreported, underappreciated organizing of the fifties, sixties, and seventies came to fruition in what Minter calls "the antiapartheid convergence" of the eighties, which marked the zenith of American-African solidarity and remains a remarkable accomplishment (p. 39). Minter's introduction provides the context for the more specialized selections that round out the book.

The essays on each decade are written by a variety of authors, providing a rich variety of perspectives on the trials and triumphs of Africa-focused activism. Each essay is accompanied by interviews with and profiles of activists from the decade described, providing important personal insights on the context and character of those

years. Historian Lisa Brock's contribution covers the fifties, when solidarity with the anti-apartheid movement began to gain notice. She deals with the divide between the Council on African Affairs (CAA) and the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) that first appeared in 1952. Brock states: "ACOA did not give credit to or claim any continuity with the CAA. Silences in history speak as eloquently as words, and this omission, given the times, may suggest if not outright anticommunism on the part of ACOA, then at least fear of being associated with Communists" (p. 63). Brock follows her historical evaluation with profiles of George Houser and Bill Sutherland, both founders of the ACOA, and Charlene Mitchell of the Communist Party USA, all of whom maintained their Africa-centered activism from the fifties through the nineties.

Brock's essay is interesting and well argued, but contains a silence of its own in regard to the reasons for the rift among the then small network of activists concerned about Africa. ACOA's founders were understandably leery of the Council on African Affairs' connections to the Communist Party (CP). Those who formed ACOA's antecedent, the Americans for South African Resistance (AFSAR), in 1952 in order to support the Defiance Campaign in South Africa included A. Philip Randolph along with his protÃ©gÃ©s Bayard Rustin and George Houser. Randolph had resigned the presidency of the National Negro Congress in 1940 after the NCC had affiliated with Labor's Non-Partisan League, effectively aligning it with the Communist Party during the period when the CP defended the Hitler-Stalin pact. Randolph's Communist-backed replacement was Max Yergan, co-founder of the International Committee on African Affairs, which in 1942 became the Council on African Affairs. Yergan's 1947 political about-face, when he turned to the right and became an advocate of U.S. Cold War policy, helped to destroy the left-liberal alliance that had previously characterized the CAA.

During the forties Randolph and his allies successfully pressured President Franklin Roosevelt to end discrimination by armament manufacturers fulfilling defense contracts and compelled President Harry Truman to end segregation in the military. This record of achievement, along with the experience of Houser, Rustin, and Bill Sutherland in the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), is reflected in the strategy and tactics later developed by ACOA. ACOA's founders acted not out of fear but from principled political disagreement and long-standing practical experience when they rejected the invitation of Alphaeus Hunton, once Max Yergan's ally in the National Negro Congress, to join with the CAA in demonstrating support for the Defiance Campaign. When it began to champion sanctions and divestment ACOA built upon Randolph's exemplary pursuit of concrete achievements against segregation in the United States to support the anti-apartheid struggle. The militant resistance of the CAA and incremental reform advocated by the ACOA would later be blended to produce a successful new movement not riven the by the divisions of the old left.

While *No Easy Victories* details the evolution of activist strategies, a more explicit analysis of the role of nonviolence is missing. This is unfortunate because ACOA's support for the Defiance Campaign arose in large part from the excitement elicited among its founders by the application of Gandhian methods to the fight against apartheid. George Houser's 1953 pamphlet "Nonviolent Revolution in South Africa" expressed hope that the nonviolent precedent set by the Defiance Campaign would spread throughout Africa and beyond. The grand plans of nonviolent activists in the fifties to build a pacifist international rooted in Africa were tempered by the 1960 massacre at Sharpeville as well as the move away from nonviolence by the first wave of independent African leaders once they gained state power. Support for economic sanctions, advocated by the South African liberation movement and adopted by international solidarity campaigners, took hold after Sharpeville when the African National Congress and its counterparts determined that nonviolent resistance was no longer sufficient.

The ACOA, the Washington Office on Africa, and TransAfrica as well as allied organizations active on the local level are all examined. Another group that finally gets rightful recognition is the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). AFSC, arguably the most indispensable progressive change organization in twentieth-century America, had a hand in many of the activist efforts dealing with Africa. The Service Committee made its first connections in Southern Africa in 1932. During that visit AFSC's delegates were hosted for a time by Max Yergan, then a Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) official based in South Africa. Despite many years of internal struggle over the efficacy of sanctions and divestment, as well as the challenge to pacifism posed by solidarity with liberation movements engaged in armed struggle, AFSC helped to foster the cooperation needed for a decentralized, locally led movement to be successful. Heretofore most historians of anti-apartheid activism have underplayed the centrality of AFSC's con-

tributions to the anti-apartheid struggle. *No Easy Victories* helps to remedy this oversight by establishing that the Service Committee, through its talented staff, international network, and local U.S. offices, spread the message of the movement to many places that would otherwise not have been as connected to Africa's struggles.

A common thread that runs through *No Easy Victories* is the emphasis on the role of activist media in the production of political culture. The stories of *Southern Africa Magazine* and Africa News Service provide insight into an era when the now anachronistic tools of the landline telephone, tape recorder, and photocopier were essential to disseminating information often omitted by the mainstream media. In addition, Robert Van Lierop recounts the production and distribution of his 1972 film on Mozambique, *A Luta Continua.* These examples of grassroots media helping to build political movements offer inspirational models for activists to emulate in a time when the technological options are more bountiful.

Of the many documents and commentaries from movement participants, including Alphaeus Hunton, Julian Bond, and Walter Rodney, the essay "How I Learned African History from Reggae" by Angela Marie Walters, a student of co-editor Lisa Brock, stands out. Walters recounts growing up in New Mexico, isolated from Africa and African Americans yet connected to diasporic concerns through the recorded works of musicians from Jamaica. Although brief mentions of the 1986 *Sun City* album and a section on Miriam Makeba by Gail Hovey are included, popular culture as a crucial venue for spreading and strengthening support for Africa is not analyzed.

It is important to remember that at the height of the anti-apartheid convergence, activists understood that in order for Americans to be moved to action an issue must gain media coverage and then amplification through popular culture. The 1984 Thanksgiving eve arrests and subsequent year-long picketing of the South African embassy, through which TransAfrica launched the Free South Africa Movement, stands as the textbook example of how to time and execute a demonstration to maximize media coverage. Books, music, and movies about apartheid proved elemental in swaying public opinion and increasing the impact of the anti-apartheid movement on American political culture.

Publication of this book comes at a moment when a leading contender for the American presidency is the offspring of one of the Kenyan students who studied in the United States through the efforts of the African-American Student Foundation directed by ACOA activist Cora Weiss. Barack Obama's first foray into political activism, which he recounts in his autobiography, came when he spoke at an anti-apartheid demonstration during his undergraduate days. The complex connections that have obliged recent U.S. presidents to travel to Africa and produced a presidential contender with African roots make the history that Minter, Hovey, and Cobb's book chronicles even more vital.

At a time when a generational divide may be reemerging in American politics it is important that *No Easy Victories* includes testimonials from activists in their twenties who, too young to have supported the independence struggle or to have been active in the anti-apartheid movement, are building on the activist heritage that *No Easy Victories* elaborates. Along with Connie Field's recent documentary film *Have You Heard From Johannesburg: Apartheid and The Club of The West* (2006), this book makes the story of American concern for Africa accessible to students while providing sources useful to scholars and activists. The book's creators have established a website at htpp://www.noeasyvictories.org to facilitate ongoing discussion of the questions raised by their work. While there are still no easy victories in sight in the struggle for justice and peace in Africa, the struggle does continue, building on the legacy of shared objectives that have been transformational for Americans and Africans alike.

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