

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

JEROME VOGEL

*Interviewed by: Dan Whitman
Initial interview date: May 29, 2010
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[Note: Mr. Vogel did not edit this interview prior to his death.]

Q: Jerry, you were the director of Operation Crossroads Africa. Let's go back a little bit further than that and I'm going to ask you about your childhood, your education. You can be as thorough, or as quick as you want to be. You are a New Yorker, I think?

VOGEL: Yes, I was born in the Bronx, went to New York City public schools through high school, which was Bronx Science, then I went to Hamilton College. When I finished at Hamilton, I got a Fulbright Scholarship to go and study for a year in Dijon, which is I guess where I began to know French.

Then I came back, studied English literature at Yale, got my first job in Washington, teaching English literature at Georgetown, and it was while I was there that somebody from the State Department called the head of the English Department and said they needed somebody who could teach American literature in a francophone African university, so they needed somebody with some background in French.

Since he knew I had it, he asked me if I'd be interested and without taking it very seriously I said, "Sure, give him my name," and the next thing I knew I was down somewhere signing a contract for year.

Q: So this is not a Fulbright?

VOGEL: Yes, it was, it was a Fulbright professorship. I was the first one at the University of Abidjan. This is 1964, the country had only been independent for four years and I was the first non-French person to teach there. There were no Ivoirians, certainly. There wasn't even a Belgian. It was still a hundred per cent French.

Q: No Italians, no Russians, no British, no nothing?

VOGEL: No Africans, God knows. The university was still run by the central French university thing. The rector was French. The administration was all French and as far as they were concerned, they wanted it to stay that way. So, a difficult year.

It turned out that the embassy had negotiated with the Ivorian ministry of education, but had decided not to tell the university anything about this, because they knew they'd be opposed.

Q: Opposed to having a non-French person?

VOGEL: Yeah, so they just brought me there and then announced it after I was there. It was not the ideal way to begin my position.

Q: So administratively you weren't dealing with Ivoirians at all, you were dealing with French administrators, professors and all that? And the French are thought to be very territorial about their former colonies. They certainly were in the Sixties, I think.

VOGEL: Well, this was in the Sixties. Yes and I had assumed I'd be teaching American literature, in my naiveté, which seemed to me innocent and non-political but it turned out that any suggestion that there was any culture besides French culture was political. So while I was brought there to teach American literature, word came down from Paris that that was forbidden.

Q: I'm speechless, because not long after that

VOGEL: After I'd started...

Q: French students in Paris were studying Lolita, not long after that.

VOGEL: But French students were one thing, they didn't belong to the French government the way Africans did.

Q: Amazing.

VOGEL: So I ended up teaching a course in the Victorian novel.

Q: Wait a minute, so you never did teach American literature?

VOGEL: I started.

Q: Were forbidden?

VOGEL: The class was scheduled for the evening. There were no evening classes and it was assumed no one would come to an evening class. But actually students did come, so then word came down from Paris, canceling two courses: my American literature course and a course in African anthropology that some French person was teaching. Those two were forbidden.

Q: You said this was a difficult year. Were you socially ostracized?

VOGEL: No, not by the English Department. But I was refused the status of *coopérant*, so I had none of the duty free privileges or anything else that a *coopérant* would have and the university refused to house me.

Q: There was an English Department, but you were the only native English speaker teaching in it?

VOGEL: Yes. I was the only person who spoke English without a French accent. But the rector said they were very concerned about my spoiling the accent of their students, which was supposed to be British.

Q: So, you ended up teaching Victorian British literature?

VOGEL: And a conversation class.

Q: So, you adapted?

VOGEL: And even there, *en thème à version*, which is the way they taught English,

Q: En thème à version?

VOGEL: You know, somebody reads to you

Q: Yeah, right, yes, a very structured

VOGEL: Where you read them a passage and they have to write it down in English, and they were using a French textbook.

Q: Oh, a dictée.

VOGEL: Yeah, they were *dictées* and it was all written translation and it was all translation of events in French history. At some point I tried to use some other texts, and again I was called in by the rector and told I wasn't allowed to do that.

Q: Amazing.

VOGEL: It was amazing. I was in the habit, after teaching at Georgetown, of standing around before classes, talking to the students and I was called in and told that that was not dignified.

Q: This is not why the Fulbright people sent you to Côte d'Ivoire. Did they know what was going on?

VOGEL: Well, the USIA people, who were the ones nominally in charge of me, heard all of my complaints constantly.

Q: And though they commiserated, they didn't ...

VOGEL: Yes, they commiserated. They were not what I would call effective.

Q: Right, they had not a whole lot of options here: either let you stay, or not, I guess, since you were totally under their control. I didn't know any of this. You never told me this stuff.

VOGEL: I went there as very pro-French.

Q: After an idyllic year in Dijon, I guess. Was that a very nice...

VOGEL: Well, no, there were a few American Fulbrighters there. Certainly none of the French students showed any interest in us or wanted to have much to do with us.

Q: So the year in Dijon was not idyllic?

VOGEL: It was great, I loved it, but not because of relations with the French university.

Q: Now, you were supposedly teaching and you did teach, but not

VOGEL: Since I had a conversation class that I taught, I used that to discuss whatever topic I wanted, which was rarely pro-French.

Q: An insurrectionist undermining things. I didn't know you were such a social activist.

VOGEL: I wasn't. I was really an innocent to all of these cultural wars.

Q: I believe you.

VOGEL: I remember the French and the Ivoirians who had absorbed it from them had a sort of a view of all events as being not nearly as innocent as they seemed on the surface, and I remember being asked by people who did I think had really killed Kennedy?

At the time I was so innocent I really believed that the American government didn't lie. It was only years later that that occurred to me. This is 1964. I believed the Warren Commission. No Frenchman or Ivorian believed the Warren Commission.

We believed pretty much what the government said. That's from growing up in the Second World War, I think.

It was interesting in that the Ivorian university students, and there were not that many, the students at the university were still half French. They were *assistants techniques* and people like that. The French could avoid military service by doing that for a couple years. So I had a lot of them in my class as well as Ivoirians.

Q: There were many, many French people in Côte d'Ivoire at that time. Any idea how many?

VOGEL: Yeah, the interesting thing about Côte d'Ivoire is the French population doubled after independence. There were said to be 75,000 in Abidjan at that time and Abidjan only had 300,000 inhabitants. Everywhere else, the number went down, except in Côte d'Ivoire.

Q: Oh, really? Okay. Well, Côte d'Ivoire was the economic locomotive of that region and remained so for a few decades.

VOGEL: And it's still totally dominated by the French. Even 15 years later there were still French advisors, even in the ministry of culture.

Q: Now, in 2010, much less so, I think.

VOGEL: Oh, since the events a couple of years ago, when there was a demonstration that was fired upon and some number of people were killed, the violent anti-French feeling is really very extreme.

Q: Our French employees at our African regional services center in Paris are discouraged from going through the Abidjan airport, because being French is regarded there as a serious security matter, a couple of years ago.

VOGEL: The French all left. There were anti-French riots and a lot of peoples' houses were broken into, supposedly robbed, supposedly women raped and so on, and thousands and thousands and thousands of French left. There were even airlifts.

Q: That would have been in the early part of this century, right, 2003 or 4 or 5, something like that?

VOGEL: Maybe even a little later and the Ivory Coast Air Force bombed the rebels in Bouaké and killed some French at some point there, and so there were reprisals. The French bombed and destroyed the entire Ivorian Air Force at that time.

It's sort of one of the few places in the world, really, where it's good to be American. A couple of years ago there were no others. Now there may be others. At a certain time, it was almost the only place. Maybe Israel, I don't know.

Q: And other countries in West Africa, I think, but, yes, in fact there are surveys and the Ivoirians love us and we sometimes don't know why.

VOGEL: Well, the president's wife's children went to school in Atlanta. She is supposedly an evangelical born-again Christian, with roots in churches in Atlanta.

Q: I have no idea if that has influenced, for better or ill, any of the things that the Ivorian president has done, and he's done some pretty bad things, but we don't know what goes on in his mind.

VOGEL: For a while, after Gbagbo visited the U.S., I did keep in touch with him and then when he fled he wrote me from France, actually, saying he was now a political refugee, he needed a job, could I help him get a job teaching in the United States, though he admitted that he didn't know any English.

But in any case, my Ivorian friends told me, "Stay away from him. Houphouët-Boigny knows everything that goes on, and if you help him you're liable never to get back into the country." So I didn't reply.

Q: I spent of course many, many hours over thirty days with Gbagbo as his interpreter when he visited the U.S., and I remember all of his comments about some day wanting to be president, I swear they were jokes, they were ironical, sarcastic jokes.

VOGEL: He was the leader of the opposition for a while, but nobody thought he would ever get anywhere. That group also had a very pro-Houphouëtiste person in it also, and the person who is the inventor of *Ivoirité*, the origin of all this stuff that's happened there. They were there together. And I must say at the time I thought Jean-Noel Loucou was a lot smarter than Gbagbo.

Q: Gbagbo was absolutely charming, he was hilarious, he was funny, he was knowledgeable about his field, which is history and he's kind of a goofball. That's why it was so much fun to be with him.

VOGEL: If you remember, he got sick and he had a terrible allergic reaction to something and he was terrified, so he came and stayed a night in my house, because people felt he was

Q: "People," that would have been me, I guess.

VOGEL: I guess, felt he was real scared and he needed reassurance.

Q: Thank you for doing that. We have not gone in a linear way.

VOGEL: You're the one who asked me about my past.

Q: I know, I blame myself. So let's get you from 1964 to whatever happened next.

VOGEL: After that year, I came back and I realized I really didn't want to go on teaching English literature. I liked teaching a lot, but I didn't really feel I had 25 years of it in me and I had liked the exposure to Africa a lot. My relations with Ivoirians were fine, it was just the French.

So I decided to look around for a job that would somehow keep me in connection with Africa, and I asked a woman in the State Department if she knew anybody who might give somebody like me a job.

She knew Dr. Robinson, who was the founder and the head of Crossroads Africa and put me in touch with him. They were looking for somebody who could manage their volunteer program in Africa, which included a lot of groups in francophone Africa, so they needed somebody who spoke French.

So my completely irrelevant ability to speak French, as I saw it, turned out again to get me something useful. So I started working in Crossroads.

Q: I didn't realize you started that early.

VOGEL: '66.

Q: Let's spend a moment on Dr. Robinson, much revered and I remember in the Crossroads orientations there were always reverential comments about him. I never met him. Who was Dr. Robinson?

VOGEL: He was a Presbyterian minister, Reverend James A. Robinson. He had started Crossroads in 1958. He got interested in Africa from going there on some kind of church-related trip, I believe, and then came back and got interested in the idea of creating something to connect American university students with African university students, and to try to form, at the same time, a sort of group of Americans who had some ties in Africa.

This was before Peace Corps, so it was not competing with Peace Corps, it was doing something Peace Corps hadn't yet started, and it was supposedly one of the inspirations for the Peace Corps.

Q: '58, Ghana had become independent in

VOGEL: '57.

Q: Had he been to Ghana?

VOGEL: I don't know if he was there at independence. He'd certainly been in Ghana and Nigeria some number of times.

Q: Now, it's often said that Dr. Robinson's activities, Operation Crossroads Africa, was a model, if not the model, for the Peace Corps. The OCA programs were usually six or eight weeks, I think.

VOGEL: Yeah, they were summer programs. They involved volunteers. The volunteers were somewhat self-financed, that is there was a fee to go on it. The idea was, at least initially, to work primarily in villages, on some small scale community development projects, like building a school or a medical clinic or a dispensary or something.

And the idea was that there was supposed to be a group of African university students involved, so that people had the experience of living and working together. And there was some element of trying to persuade Africans that manual labor was not degrading. Who ever saw a French person using his hands, except maybe to grab somebody?

Q: American culture, certainly at that time, favored manual labor. Manual labor was a good thing, it was part of a democracy. So the culture created mixed manual labor and discussions?

VOGEL: Yes, people were living together and friendships formed. And if you look around at the people teaching African history or political science or even African art, a surprising number of them actually went to Africa for the first time on Crossroads.

Q: As volunteers?

VOGEL: Yeah. The first groups went in '58.

Q: And then it grew

VOGEL: And then sometime in the early Sixties he sold the State Department on the idea of a reverse Crossroads. There was no government money at all in the Americans going to Africa, but he sold the State Department on the idea of bringing roughly comparable people, that is young professionals, more than university students, here, again, on short term visits, six to eight weeks, which were supposedly professionally oriented. They had appointments with people in their fields, and it was called the African Youth Leaders Program.

Q: Which is I think the name that stuck.

VOGEL: It stuck. Well, eventually, the Y dropped and it just became the African Leaders Program and the people got older and at a higher level.

Q: As they became similar, in some ways, to the International Visitors, the traditional exchange programs.

VOGEL: They did, yes. Well, this is the way I found it, it was doing this and it was relatively small in scale. At this point Crossroads was sending about 300 Americans to Africa and I don't know, it started out maybe there were twenty Africans coming here.

The scale of it changed a lot over the years, and its structure changed somewhat. People always came in groups of three or four and they were organized by profession.

Q: But mixed, according to nationality?

VOGEL: They were always more or less organized so that people spoke the same language, francophone or Anglophone. At some point there were some Lusophone groups.

Q: So, my gosh, you were the executive director from the very start?

VOGEL: No, I wasn't the director of this volunteer program in Africa until Dr. Robinson died in 1972. Then the board asked me to replace him, which was complicated, for a number of reasons.

Crossroads was one of the few organizations that had been started by a black person and here was a white person taking it over, and I was also having to take over from somebody who had been a very, very, very good fundraiser, but in a very personal way. People didn't give money to Crossroads, they gave money to him, and that was very hard to take over from.

Q: Whatever difficulties there were because of race, you say that the board actually asked you to take over.

VOGEL: The board asked me to, but the American students we were sending to Africa, there had always been a very strong effort to get as many, I guess they were called black Americans at that point. Dr. Robinson still called people Negroes, but they were "black" at that point. It was later that they became African-American.

But there'd always been a strong effort to get as many black Americans in the group as possible. And some of these years, there were things like sit-ins at Cornell and the same people that had been organizing the sit-ins came on our program, so that racial issues were really very tense through the Sixties and Seventies in our group

Q: So the volunteers, you're suggesting, when they saw you, had just sort of an instinctive distrust?

VOGEL: I didn't have that hard a time with them, actually. I managed somehow, but it required very careful talking and footwork on my part. Usually I didn't have too hard a time.

But many of our groups that we sent to Africa had at that point in the course of their stay there all kinds of racial difficulties, splits.

Q: Because they were racially mixed?

VOGEL: But they didn't always mix, sometimes they split.

Q: Was that actually part of the agenda, to get African-Americans and others together?

VOGEL: Yes, it was, and it was complicated of course for the Africans who were with them, in that there were pressures put on them also to take sides.

Q: Ah, because this was an American domestic issue that Africans didn't want to

VOGEL: Didn't want to be involved with, no.

Q: And I guess, so, there could have been some issues then between I guess the African-Americans and the Africans, because the Africans did not respond to their overtures?

VOGEL: Sometimes, yeah, so they would refuse to boycott the white Americans, or stuff like that.

Q: Not what Dr. Robinson had in mind?

VOGEL: No, he didn't deal with that very well, actually. He was a very charismatic figure. I can remember when I first started working at Crossroads, after he talked to the group at orientation, people would just sort of come up and want to touch him. He excited people greatly.

By the time I had been there for a while he was old and tired and he was just out of touch with what was happening. I think it was hard for him. There were lots of people who thought he was an Uncle Tom.

Q: Okay, he was of a generation where the simple objective of integration seemed like an absolute good and other nuances, or other agendas, he just wasn't...

VOGEL: It was a different generation.

Q: Pre-Malcolm X.

VOGEL: I don't know what he would have thought of what was happening to Africa, as it became less and less interested in getting Western understanding. He knew people like Nkrumah, who had actually gone to the same school he went to, he went to Lincoln University, which is where people like Nkrumah and Sékou Touré were students.

Q: He believed that if you put things together, that would create just a harmonious future. In retrospect, if not naive, then a little bit not fully adapting to things as they became more complicated after independence.

VOGEL: Through the Sixties and Seventies, with what was happening on university campuses and in cities. Hell, I remember, we had a leaders orientation for the leaders of the group going to Africa every year. In '67 we were having it at International House in Harlem and we couldn't go out during it for a while because everybody thought Harlem was going to explode and be burned down to the ground. So events in the United States made this kind of point of view a little hard to use with university students.

Q: Everyone was baffled. The rage and the unexpected things that happened, even the people driving those events couldn't quite absorb the enormity of what was happening in the late Sixties. It was a very, very, very conflictive period, in so many ways.

VOGEL: I can remember adding to the bibliography of the students *Roots* and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and stuff, which I don't think Dr. Robinson would have approved of, but I did it anyway. He was a Martin Luther King type.

Q: Well, we can guess how he might have adapted.

VOGEL: He didn't, really. He didn't really change his way of talking. He got old and sick and as I said died in 1970 feeling, I think, quite unhappy over the fact that he no longer had the same kind of effect on young people that he had once had. I think that was very painful and hard for him.

Q: Well, I just remember from a couple decades later, every reference to him was reverential, deeply respectful, whether it was the OCA staff, or Americans who had known him, of whatever age.

VOGEL: He created something. I think he was frankly, for many sort of higher level white people, he was probably the first black person they ever spoke to and listened to and sort of did respect. People were bowled over by him, and there's still lots of the old line Crossroaders who feel that way about him. I didn't know him at his best.

Q: You knew him at the end.

VOGEL: Well, no, I worked for him for six years, I guess, but for a long time I was the integrating element on staff there, too.

Q: Were you the only white person?

VOGEL: I was the only white executive. There were some white secretaries.

Q: Was it always at 150 5th Avenue?

VOGEL: From the time I knew it, yes.

Q: That office that many of us have incredible nostalgia for, because it was a place where such fascinating things happened.

VOGEL: So, anyway, in terms of the government program, it had started out sort of small and it gradually started growing and getting altered, in that it sort of involved people at a higher level and at some point we negotiated with, the person I first dealt with, Ken Chard.

Q: And I think the program grew

VOGEL: Enormously under Ken. He was not USIA, he was State Department. I don't know how he got so involved with us. No money exchanged hands.

Q: I remember Ken and he loved your program. He was a great advocate. I think he caught the spirit.

VOGEL: Well, he also allowed us to do several things, or somebody allowed us to do several things, that nobody else allowed anybody to do. One was every year we came up with a list of ten or twelve themes for groups, which we developed ourselves and then had discussions with government officials about.

There were some things we sort of had to do. We had to do programs for journalists. And there were a few other areas where we knew that we just had to do them.

But then they'd let us do other kinds of things like solar energy specialists, or museum curators, or once even artists or film makers. They would let us put in a couple of things like that each year.

Q: Now they do that all the time.

VOGEL: But who finds the topics?

Q: I think it's a combination. I think the administrating organizations talk with people in government, I think they talk it through and then they vet it with the geographic area cultural coordinator and they come up with a list, a cable goes out.

VOGEL: The other thing they let us do, though, was participate in the selection, which was very important, I think. What we ended up doing in a lot of countries was having a selection committee with the PAO [Public Affairs Officer] or CAO [Cultural Affairs Officer] or whoever it was and us and sometimes, in South Africa, a couple of the locals.

And there, I can remember the couple times I went there, we did it in Pretoria, Johannesburg, Durban, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, so we really traveled all over the place and had a little selection committee in each place and then had a sort of final selection.

Q: Did you find what they would now call pushing back, on the part of the embassies, to have someone come in from the U.S., and in effect tell the embassies how to do their business? Was there ever any reaction to that?

VOGEL: They participated. No, it was a bargaining session at the end. There was always somebody who they were determined to get on to the program and there might be one or two who I was determined to get on the program. So there was horse-trading.

Q: But never a breakdown in the relationship? You were seen as a recruiter coming from New York?

VOGEL: There was no specific quota by country. So in a sense, if they got along with us, they were more likely to get more grantees. At the time, I think it didn't come out of their embassy exchange budget.

Q: It's all gravy.

VOGEL: So they had some reason to get along with us. And also, I think, as this had gone on for a couple of years and the idea grew of using us to maintain relationships with the people who had gone on our programs, they would usually have a cocktail party or something when one of us came through. They'd see the startling degree to which people actually came and they began to realize, and I thought this was important, that we could be used as a way of maintaining relationships with people, something that they were not usually very good at.

Q: We call them alumni now, the people who have been on your programs, who loved the experience and I've spoken with some of them recently overseas, they adored it, I think. So there was a loyalty.

VOGEL: That was partly maintained by our coming through the countries and seeing people.

Q: We should mention that simultaneously there was the International Visitors Program, the more traditional one, which preceded and survived OCA, which was not completely different, but it was run entirely by the cultural section of an embassy and so the continuity lasted only as long as the cultural affairs officer was there. Whereas, in your case,

VOGEL: I can remember the time I came down to South Africa years later, there was a reception for me and this was 15 years after

Q: '97 or '98.

VOGEL: Okay, I had left Crossroads in '84, so this is 15 years later and an astonishing number of people showed up for it. I was very gratified, but I was also amazed.

Q: I was there. So this is a really amazing formula that worked amazingly well and it's a great legacy, plus the people are still there. Although Crossroads doesn't still exist, the alumni ...

VOGEL: Yeah, there's Bako.

Q: Yeah, well, okay, evidence of success.

VOGEL: For a long time, the wife of the head of the African Union.

Q: At that time, okay.

VOGEL: At one point, especially probably in the francophone countries, we had an astonishing number of ministers and so on who had been Crossroads visitor grantees. We didn't get people when they were ministers, but got them before they were.

Q: I think that Crossroads had more of a people-to-people inspiration, but later evolved into the IV concept, which is to try to identify who the future leaders will be, but get them while they're still young enough to have new experiences, and not already decided in their view of the world. I think Crossroads evolved into that, to the point where

VOGEL: These weren't, by and large at that point, countries with a huge pool of well-educated civil servants, so that if you were trying to pick intelligent, dynamic, and well-educated individuals, either they would end up being killed, or they would end up being carpenters. At least one of our people did get cut up into little pieces in Mali.

Q: That was a grant that was not really good.

VOGEL: Well, it was after he became minister of education and then he was cut into little pieces by the junta.

Q: I had a grantee who was Zairian, a mid-level ministry of education official. When I went to Kinshasa and called him up, he said, "Come on over immediately, I've just been named minister of education."

I went over there and I remember, he was in a very bad mood. Everyone else was celebrating and drinking beer and I said, "What's the problem?"

He said, "You understand that when Mobutu makes you a minister, it's because he's about to put you in jail," which is exactly what happened. The guy spent a year in jail and then he was out.

But in that system the president would identify possible rivals, make them ministers, make sure that they were doing something illegal and then arrest them.

VOGEL: I should mention another thing that we did for USIA. Because we were ostensibly not governmental, because we had some reputation already in Africa, although we didn't hide the fact that this program was funded by the government, we were often invited to countries where the embassy could get absolutely no agreement to have people come on International Visitors Programs.

I know I went to a number of countries where the embassy just could get nowhere talking to the government about having anybody come here, and we often opened up countries that had no participation in the IVP (International Visitor Program) at all.

Guinea was one of them. I went to Conakry at one point. It happened to be at a point where Sékou Touré had decided he was going to open up to the West slightly, so while I expected nothing to come of it, all of a sudden I got to meet all kinds of ministers and they actually sent some people on the program. We were the first ones to do that.

We did the same in Mozambique. Later on, when we started doing North Africans, we had a spectacular success in getting like the entire graduating class of the ENA (École nationale d'administration) here. That was unheard of. Nobody ever expected anything like that.

Q: We hadn't had diplomatic relations with Algeria since the war in '73.

VOGEL: I went there. I met with people.

Q: We had just renewed relations and I believe that your program, I think there were seventy

VOGEL: Yeah, a huge number.

Q: Was the first cultural exchange since renewing diplomatic relations and I remember that one very vividly. That was amazing.

VOGEL: We did that in some number of countries. The ones I can remember, because I went to them, are Guinea, Mozambique and Algeria, but I suspect there were others.

Q: Now there was another category of countries, like I think Cameroon, where the government would say, "Yes, we'll allow people to go, but we will choose them." Did you encounter that? I know the IV Program had problems with some regimes. Did you ever feel that the local government was usurping

VOGEL: Well, they nominated people, but we didn't have to take them. If there were let's say 15 nominees in a country and we really only had places for three or four, there were occasions when somebody in the embassy would say, "I'm sorry, but you're just going to take this person."

I can remember going to Mauritania, for instance and the people in the embassy saying, "You're going to find when you interview people that the black Africans are ten times smarter than the Arabs, but you've got to take an equal number," because of the internal politics of the place. And we weren't crazy enough, or idealistic enough, to say no.

Q: There are local political requirements and it doesn't serve a purpose to be kicked out of a country.

VOGEL: And so if Ahitu had wanted to send his daughter-in-law, I suppose we would have taken her. I don't remember that actually happening. I doubt that we would have said no.

Q: I understand. I remember dealing with the embassy on a non-Crossroads IV program and the embassy was very frustrated. They were fighting the requirements of the ministries, the ministries would choose the candidates, the embassy would resist and they were valiantly struggling at the embassy to resist.

VOGEL: It probably helped a little to have outsiders come in.

Q: That's the point. I think that OCA, the way it evolved and the way you ran it, I think was more nimble, because it was receiving government money, so it could exist, but it had its own identity. I think it was able to have access that the embassies never had.

VOGEL: There were countries, like in Mali at one point, the minister of the plan had been a Crossroad volunteer a couple of years before and I can remember, we'd interviewed all the people and then I can remember going to a bar with him and sitting there for two or three hours negotiating who would come. That was the sort of thing that happened.

Q: And so there was a personal relationship that made it possible to continue the program?

VOGEL: He was a very sharp guy. I'm sure there were people who were in some way useful or related to him in this group, but he wasn't trying to suggest fools.

Q: Right, it wasn't nepotism.

VOGEL: The other side of Crossroads benefited a lot from this, in that we often used people for setting up our work camps who had had some connection with this, so that was another way of keeping people involved.

Q: Alumni then helped set up the summer program, because the American volunteers kept going during this period.

VOGEL: For instance, in places like Sudan, where Americans didn't work at all, we were able to start sending work groups after bringing somebody from the ministry of youth over here. So we used those contacts then to send Americans in the other direction. And that was good, because it kept an involvement with people.

Q: And the State Department had the wisdom to recognize this as something that helped U.S. objectives. It was mutual understanding, as called for in the Fulbright-Hays Act and it had a double or triple purpose, I think.

VOGEL: Yeah and people in the country did see all these young Americans coming there, presumably for idealistic purposes and so on. It was nothing but a good effect on people's perceptions of the United States.

Q: Later followed by Peace Corps. By this time, you had both things.

VOGEL: We must have worked in countries that never had Peace Corps, though I couldn't tell you which ones they were. After this had gone on for a while, NEA asked why Egypt and Sudan couldn't participate in the OCA programs.

Q: Because Africans consider North Africa to be part of Africa, but the State Department doesn't.

VOGEL: The Maghreb countries play in the African soccer league, which is all that counts. Indeed, in the World Cup, they're considered part of Africa.

We started dealing with those countries also. We didn't do separate groups, we threw them in with the others.

It was at that point we sort of started bringing Sudanese here. Sudan was one of my super favorite places, so I tended to go there.

Q: Sudan is now back in the Africa bureau [at State]. Of course, it's a problem child.

VOGEL: Hadn't we closed our embassy there for a while? And is the embargo still on?

Q: There are all sorts of embargos. It's a very troubled relationship. Looks like, there's a referendum next year, the south will secede and then God knows.

VOGEL: I went to the south. I flew down to Juba and interviewed people. I insisted that if we had Sudanese in our programs they had to include the south and we did take a few southern Sudanese each year. It was hell going down there.

Q: Still is.

VOGEL: And hell being there, but it seemed like you just had to do it.

Q: Well, sure. There's some stunning people from that part of the country.

VOGEL: They were sure stunning. Every time I was sitting there interviewing them I had a hard time not just staring at them.

Q: Very stately, very impressive.

VOGEL: With astonishing scarification, like you didn't see hardly anywhere else.

Q: Really? What was your experience, those who did go, southern Sudanese, they were so isolated.

VOGEL: A lot of them probably had European educations or something. We had a lot of people from the University of Khartoum. I also got to know a lot of archeologists and so on. We had a whole series of them, who were great people.

Q: Pyramids in Sudan? People go to Egypt to see pyramids.

VOGEL: The archeologists at the museum actually got me a Land Rover from the museum once to go up to see the pyramids there. The Sudanese were just incredibly hospitable.

Q: It's a remarkable place.

VOGEL: I loved it.

Q: I've had a little bit of that experience myself, the extreme disconnect between the politics and dealing with people.

VOGEL: I think many, many, many of the university people I was friendly with are no longer in Sudan. A lot of them I think were teaching in universities in the Gulf, where they got, of course, ten times the salary, and I think they probably fled because they didn't like the intellectual atmosphere anymore either.

I can remember having a discussion with somebody who taught English literature at the university. He taught a course on D.H. Lawrence. And I asked him, "How can you teach D.H. Lawrence to a class where you know that all the women in the class have had their sexual organs removed? Doesn't it create kind of a strange atmosphere?"

You could talk to people about subjects like that. It was very rewarding. He said he was afraid to go away. He knew that the minute he went away, his mother and his grandmother were going to take his daughter and get her circumcised, and that it was sort of a major issue.

He obviously was a sort of Westernized, modern person. On the other hand, if his daughter remained untouched it could well be that no one would ever marry her, and he couldn't trust his mother or his grandmother for a second.

Q: His daughter, was she old enough to have an opinion about this?

VOGEL: She may have been like 13 or 14 during that time, yeah.

Q: I know the pressure is enormous to go with the tradition. There are also, I think, increasing numbers of mothers and fathers opposed.

VOGEL: One of the things we did was try to get women grantees. We took women and obviously gave them preference in our regular subject groups, but we also did a few groups of just women's rights types. I can remember taking them to Indiana when the African Studies Association was meeting there.

We did that kind of thing. We did try to involve the academics, some of the academic associations here.

Q: A Togolese woman in one of those groups said to me that she had to decide between having an academic career or a marriage. In her generation it was not conceivable to do both, because you were tainted, and you were not marriageable as a woman historian. This was a comment from one of your grantees.

VOGEL: I think almost all women we brought were married and had careers, but I certainly knew a certain number of highly educated Ivorian women who were still unmarried at forty. There was a little of that there, men didn't want to marry women who were too smart.

Q: Now, at some point, South Africa became part of

VOGEL: We'd always had South Africans. The problem with South Africa was that all of our groups mixed nationalities. The policy of the embassy in South Africa was that you couldn't just take black South Africans, and we had to get a special waiver on that by saying that if we put white South Africans in these groups with other Africans they were going to be murdered, there was just going to be total mayhem.

Q: Oh, I see, so the rationale you had for getting the waiver was that it would just be too conflictual, too difficult for the white South Africans?

VOGEL: Can you imagine them with Nigerians, say?

Q: Yeah, they'd be hated from the first moment. You did include white South Africans later, but that was later, I think.

VOGEL: We did always have colored South Africans, too.

Q: And colored South Africans were perceived as what?

VOGEL: Here, you have a drop of black blood, you were...

Q: Yeah, but what about a Nigerian? Was there any problem integrating colored South Africans into sub-Saharan groups?

VOGEL: Not that I ever particularly noticed, no.

Q: So you got special permission to take only black and colored South Africans?

VOGEL: Yeah and we mixed them into our groups. We also, at one point there was special money for South Africa, started doing a number of groups that were all South African.

Q: Single country projects?

VOGEL: Yeah, we got money outside of our regular contract for that.

Q: This could have been later, actually. When it looked like change was imminent, there was extra money given for South Africa, because it was a prime policy objective.

VOGEL: We're talking now about like 1980-84, but there was special money for that. We started getting it and we brought a particularly large number of South Africans.

I should say they didn't actually mix that well with the other groups, and part of it was that they were much more aggressive and sophisticated. They tended to dominate discussions and they of course wanted to talk about South Africa. Sometimes the other Africans complained, really, that discussions seemed to only deal with South Africa. But they were totally fascinating people.

Q: Just as you've just said, although supposedly they were isolated from the rest of the world, they were so worldly. None of them had traveled, but they knew everything and they were aware of all intellectual trends.

We were mystified. How could this be?

VOGEL: Well, we got the absolute cream. I think we were really getting the cream of black South Africans, in that I remember spectacular doctors, community organizers. We had one guy who became the special assistant to Bishop Tutu, people like that.

And I can remember a black guy who worked for Mobil Oil, who when I was there had a party for me and everybody who came, they were all black, came in Mercedes and BMWs. I didn't know there was a black society like that in South Africa. I was astonished.

Q: Now, we're in the Eighties, now?

VOGEL: Early Eighties.

Q: Bart Rousseve?

VOGEL: He was what I guess in South Africa they would have called colored. He was the director of this grantee program at OCA.

Q: And Bart did not survive a car accident in 1994. It was a sad moment for OCA, which no longer existed, I think.

VOGEL: It had gone bankrupt. I left there in '84. And it went bankrupt maybe like three or four years later. First it lost its government contract, and then it had two people in charge of it -- I didn't have a lot of contact with it at that point -- who I think had no sense of how to manage money and didn't work very hard at raising money.

Q: Amazing how you can go bankrupt when the U.S. government is pushing money at you.

VOGEL: I left in '84. Just in that year we must have picked up three or four unexpected government contracts, for instance just before I left, we brought a group of English teachers here. People were throwing money at us all the time.

Q: Pretty hard to go bankrupt under that

VOGEL: Well, they lost that contract.

Q: Yeah, badly managed, I think. I'm willing to say that, because I remember.

VOGEL: Well, I think the person who replaced me had much more of a leftist political agenda that she insisted on trumpeting.

Q: And this scared away the money, I think.

VOGEL: I think it did, yeah. The years when we were getting all this government money coincided with the Reagan Administration and it wasn't easy to deal with those people, but we managed to. The people we dealt with were political appointees. That's who we were dealing with and they were to a very high degree political, at least the people deciding things. I somehow managed.

Q: Again, I try not to editorialize in these things, but I was there, I believe you were able to accommodate yourself without any hypocrisy.

VOGEL: Well, they insisted, for instance we gave books to the grantees, and at one point they insisted we had to give them a book by an African-American sociologist who was a very right wing Republican.

Q: Yeah, I remember the book program was very politicized.

VOGEL: And so we gave it to them. That was part of the political dialogue in the United States, you couldn't deny it. Maybe if I could have waved my magic wand and made it go away, I would have.

Nobody ever told us, "You can only give them this." They told us, "You have to give them this." And he came and spoke once at one of our orientations, but nobody said you can't have a different point of view.

Q: I think you normally took groups to the Republican National Committee and also to the Democratic National Committee. And who could object to that? They never did.

VOGEL: We were using, after all, these international hospitality people, Co-Serve, is that what it was called?

Q: It was called Co-Serve. Now it's something else.

VOGEL: They tended to be nice, upper middle class ladies who were probably mostly Republican. So a lot of the sort of personal home hospitality people got and so on I'm sure was with people who voted for Reagan.

Q: And that's part of America. So, again, I think that you accommodated this

VOGEL: But I don't think the person who replaced me did. The year she was hired, she'd never been, I don't think, in Africa. She traveled with me during the summer to visit some of the volunteer groups and I remember going to the embassy in Abidjan with her and meeting with the PAO and probably with the ambassador and so on and her talking about her attitudes towards things and my thinking, "Oh, my God, this is going to be a disaster." Fortunately, in that embassy the people were all friends, and I think they kept their mouths shut.

Q: You can't keep the lid on that forever, and the government found out.

VOGEL: My guess would be they didn't manage money very well. One of the other things I should say about us that was sort of weird was when we first started doing this in a big way, we were a volunteer program, we never had any money, so we were used to doing everything cheaply.

So we ended up at the end of a contract year having a few hundred thousand dollars left and returning it. Again, I was naive enough to think people would be pleased.

Q: Bureaucracies don't allow unspent money.

VOGEL: They were furious and it was virtually impossible for us to spend all the money. So eventually someone got permission to let us carry money over from one fiscal year to another, so that we would do a few more groups. We'd sort of announce them and pick people before the end of the fiscal year, but bring them in the next fiscal year.

We ended up having these pots full of money that kept being recycled and that was another reason I think that we grew a lot. We were cheap. We didn't pay the same

salaries that others did, we didn't have the same kind of overhead that others did, we were just plain cheaper than anyone else.

Q: Even to walk into that office, it was obvious that it was a non-profit, really.

VOGEL: That's where our roots were.

Q: Now, of course you could say that in a way AII was a competitor, but now they are out of the business, pretty much, also. They exist, but I don't know if they do any IV programs at all anymore.

VOGEL: They've changed their name, too.

Q: Really? Something went very wrong with AII as well. It's very sad.

VOGEL: Well, for a while, Don Easum was running it. He should have known.

Q: That was in the Eighties, right? And this bad thing, whatever has happened, has been in the last 15 years.

VOGEL: When I left Crossroads, at some point, that's still under Reagan, there was political pressure on USIA to start giving some of these sort of exchange programs, the IV program, to other kinds of organizations that were not in Washington and were not liberal-leftist and so on.

And one that got these funds instead was a thing called Mid-America Corporation that was headquartered in Chicago and they had never done anything of this sort at all, but they had political clout and so they got a contract.

And somebody in USIA insisted that they had to hire me as a consultant to help them to do the program, because they didn't know anything about it. So I helped them run an orientation and set up stuff.

But this was politically inspired, and people like that got it.

Q: These were the days when there was this so-called black list of speakers who actually had marks by their names, meaning this speaker cannot go overseas. They did have a list under Charles Wick.

VOGEL: I didn't know that. But it was for people going overseas, not speakers coming here?

Q: That's right. People like Noam Chomsky, for example. His name was explicitly on a list. This intensified after USIA no longer existed to defend itself and it became the public diplomacy ethos within the State Department.

VOGEL: I was sort of carefully walking through all of this.

Q: And very successfully, I think, in maintaining a program that could give an open view to Africans. I remember Africans, they loved meeting Republicans, because they demonized them and they wanted to meet them and they invariably would say, "This was the best meeting we had," because they actually got to see, face to face, people they thought they would dislike and they found them in fact very intriguing and that's the whole point of these visits.

VOGEL: Well, Africans always would like to meet whoever's in charge, I think.

While I'm talking about OCA, at some point we also started bringing people here from the West Indies, the Caribbean.

Q: Because of their African origins?

VOGEL: And we also had a volunteer program for high school kids in the West Indies, which might have suggested that we had some interest in that area. I never had much.

Q: There are places in the West Indies where African origins are very prominent, and those where they're not. Jamaica, Haiti ...

VOGEL: I remember a lot of Haitians.

Q: Which, in those days, were mixed with francophone Africans, because of the language, it was easy. And, now, again, I think they do that.

VOGEL: We got people from Barbados, Jamaica, so on. Not a lot, but a few.

Q: Mixed in to the sub-Saharan

VOGEL: I think the Haitians were.

Q: Whereas, when you say programs, did you also have volunteers going to the West Indies?

VOGEL: High school kids.

Q: So this you added in the Eighties?

VOGEL: Late Seventies, probably. I don't know when they started coming here. Maybe that's in the Eighties. It's certainly well after we started including the North Africans.

Q: Okay, so, this got bigger and bigger and it was still called Operations Crossroads Africa, but it included

VOGEL: We could always just call it Crossroads. I tended not to like “Operation,” which sounded so Fifties.

Q: Sounds like psychological operations, I guess. But Crossroads is also a very important community in Cape Town.

VOGEL: I visited it, because of the connection.

Q: Really?

VOGEL: Yeah, the embassy in Cape Town said, “You ought to go there.” It was at a time, one of many times, when they were about to be thrown out of there. And I went there because of the connection in names, actually. And it was a heartrending experience, altogether.

Q: Crossroads was a very troubled place.

VOGEL: I don’t know what year it might have been, ‘81, ‘82, but they were in one of their many times when the government was saying, “We’re going to bulldoze the place and throw you all out.”

Q: Yes, to bulldoze a squatter community, to create, what, another squatter community somewhere else? It was pretty brutal. The whole South Africa saga is a whole story in itself. I will not start it fresh here.

Okay, so, Crossroads, you left in ‘84. Crossroads was finished by the late Eighties.

VOGEL: Maybe a little sooner than that.

Q: And did amazing things during the 25 years.

VOGEL: In 2008 it had its fiftieth anniversary. It went bankrupt. A black Presbyterian clergyman who worked in the Presbyterian Church in the interchurch center up on Riverside Drive bought the logo and the name.

Q: I googled it once and I saw that it exists.

VOGEL: It still exists, it’s still doing some number of volunteer programs in Africa.

Q: Really?

VOGEL: Not a lot, some. Basically the same kind of thing. I think probably primarily in Anglophone Africa. And they had a fiftieth anniversary celebration in 2008, with a sort of reception in the delegate’s lounge at the UN, which I went to.

Q: So they consider themselves the inheritor, the succession of OCA?

VOGEL: The person who did this had actually worked in our office for a few months and he couldn't get along with Bart, so he got fired.

Q: Couldn't get along with Bart? I can't imagine.

VOGEL: Bart and he really, his name is Willis Logan, they really didn't get along and Bart finally persuaded me to fire him.

Q: Bart was about the gentlest human being ever born.

VOGEL: I don't remember what the source of the disagreement was. And so for a long time I didn't have much to do with Willis. But at some point before this whole thing happened he called me up and said, "Let's have lunch and talk," which we did.

And he was having a very hard time, because he really didn't have any money and the church was no longer willing to put any money into it, and he didn't really know what to do.

And I gave him what I thought was a sensible plan of action, which was use your fiftieth anniversary to have a huge campaign to get money from alumni, which I think would have been possible. But I don't think he ever did anything very active about it, and at that point he wasn't really sure how long he could keep going.

Q: Is he the one who bought the logo?

VOGEL: Yeah. I don't know, really. I haven't been in touch with him, it's now two years.

And I'm still very friendly with one woman, who worked in the office on the volunteer program, actually of West Indian origin and I still see her on a fairly regular basis. She runs a community outreach program for Columbia called Community Impact. So she's an example of somebody, I guess, doing something that Crossroads pushed her into.

Q: While the budget never worked out and the organization doesn't bureaucratically exist, the spirit is still there.

VOGEL: I've been running this academic program in Africa since 1984. The first time it was done I was still working for Crossroads and I realized that a lot of the sort of Crossroads attitudes towards things very much inform it and I think it could fairly be said that when the Museum for African Art started a certain amount of it was sort of Crossroads attitudes, and were very much part of the museum, too.

Q: And individuals. '84 was the year you resigned.

VOGEL: Yeah and it's the year that the museum started, too. And there's a clear connection there, in a sort of point of view.

Q: The academic program that you created in 1984, just tell us a bit about what that is and how it's going these days.

VOGEL: Well, it started working through Parsons School of Design, which was, of course, just a couple of blocks from the Crossroads office at that point. Actually, our travel agent put me in touch with the executive dean there, David Levy and said, "I always thought you ought to know each other."

So we came up with this idea of having art students and artists go to Africa for roughly a month, it was a little shorter than the Crossroads program, and do sort of hands on training with African artisans, potters, weavers, bronze casters, sculptors and so on.

And the idea was, at that point, that they worked in villages with people. In that sense it's very like the Crossroads philosophy of getting to understand people by working with them and so on, although this always gave academic credit and it was more sort of academically oriented. A lot of where people spent their time, and a lot of the emphasis on developing personal relationships with people and so on is, I think, very like what Crossroads did.

Q: Like many of us, you have gone through tumultuous, unexpected, conflicting situations and you've always managed to

VOGEL: Without any pre-planning.

Q: Be quite nimble in taking on situations, from the very start, with your French colleagues in Abidjan telling you what you could and could not do,

VOGEL: Telling me I would ruin the accent of their students.

Q: Which I'm sure you tried to do and did, maybe.

VOGEL: No, I never tried to sound like the Queen.

Q: This is real intriguing, the crazy twists and turns that took place and you just kept at it.

VOGEL: I guess, yeah. Afterwards, when I left Crossroads I didn't really know what I wanted to do for a while. Then I started getting clothing made from local fabrics and so on.

And that I guess came directly out of the fact that the academic program I was doing there had dealt with weavers and dyers, so that I sort of found myself wandering into

doing that. And I of course had an OCA grantee who was living in Abidjan and who worked with me on it.

Q: You got clothing and you marketed it in the U.S.?

VOGEL: It was made of African fabrics, but in Western styles.

Q: And going to the very present, you're going, you say, this summer

VOGEL: It's probably the last version of this program that started in 1984.

Q: The last version, because you are tiring of it?

VOGEL: Well, in 1991 Parsons had a financial crisis and they decided to eliminate the office that did all their overseas programs, and eliminated most of their overseas programs. Despite the fact that our program always made money, it got cancelled in the interests of saving money.

Q: I know of a similar case in Washington, at a university that I live near.

VOGEL: So at that point somebody I didn't know all that well, who taught at Drew, called me up and said, "I hear this is happening. Would you ever consider working with Drew?"

So I said, "Well, let's talk about it" and I ended up just moving it to Drew, where it changed a little bit. It became somewhat more clearly academic and it was sort of being supervised by an academic department, which it wasn't really at Parsons.

Q: And why's this going to be the last year? Same reason, Drew

VOGEL: There's a new guy there, who's very helpful and supportive. Drew has a new dean and a financial crisis. It cancelled a number of overseas programs that it's done for years and years and years. It always prided itself on having a big emphasis on giving students international experiences, but that was a plan of two presidents ago.

There's a new president and a new dean, they're having a money crisis and there's a fight, there's a war, actually, between the faculty and the administration on this.

I somehow slipped through, but it's been on and off four times. They keep giving me conditions that they think are impossible to fulfill. We fulfill them, and then they make it harder.

But at the moment we're on and we agreed to pay for plane tickets that are not refundable. It's on, but it's been on and off a couple of times in the last week. So I think it will go.

They have an international office, which is run by people who, as far as I can tell, do nothing whatsoever. They didn't get the brochure out 'til February, when it's supposed to be out in November and so on.

Normally the recruiting of students goes from stuff being sent to the people who've taught on the program, by now, twenty people. All of them teaching in universities have been on it and they recruit, but they didn't send them information for a long time.

When I finally realized this had happened it was too late. Just a mess. So I wouldn't work with Drew again unless there were some major change in how they do things.

Q: More neglect, you think, than policy?

VOGEL: Well, in the dean's office, I think it's policy. As far as I know, no program in Africa has run as long. This is more than 25 years. Certainly there is no program dealing with this kind of subject.

Q: When you say program, this is Parsons/Drew?

VOGEL: Yeah.

Q: Which is you, basically?

VOGEL: Yeah.

Q: Let's get into South Africa. Now, you can start wherever you want, Jerry, but part of the point of what we're doing is to remember how it was in the Seventies and Eighties in South Africa, when there seemed to be no hope, or very little hope, of social change for the better.

And there you were, sometimes with the help of colleagues from the American embassy, pushing the limits of the system and succeeding in getting South African visitors to the U.S.

Where would you like to start here?

VOGEL: Well, there was a strong sense of pushing the limits of the system there, in lots of ways. When we started having groups of South Africans, we'd sometimes get ten of them at once, or something, either in a program where they were mixed with other people, or later on, where they were by themselves.

One of the striking things was they didn't trust each other. They were very reticent, at first, about talking in public. They were never reticent in talking to us, but they were very reticent in talking in a public meeting with a number of them present. And eventually someone told us that was because they hadn't yet figured out who was the informant.

Q: And they always assumed that there was one, if there was a group?

VOGEL: They always assumed if a group was allowed to come there had to be an informer.

Q: And was there, usually, do you think?

VOGEL: We don't know. We never had any incidents of anybody being stabbed to death or strangled, or something. But I think among themselves they figured out who they thought it was and they were very careful about what they said, because they assumed there had to be one. I don't know if that's true or not.

Q: You say groups of ten or so, or up to ten. What was it about U.S. policy that allowed such a larger number to come, when other countries didn't have those numbers? This was before the changes that we knew were going to happen, but we didn't know it until

VOGEL: I didn't think they were going to happen 'til they happened. I must have been there three times, working on this program. I could not believe that there was the slightest hope of a bloodless solution to that problem.

Now I admit that the peculiarities of our only taking black and colored South Africans meant that when I went there I didn't know anybody white, so I had very limited contact with any white South Africans. I met some at cocktail receptions at the PAO's house or something like that, but I didn't ever really meet any white South Africans to speak of.

Q: Again, you said this earlier, the policy, which was a Crossroads policy, I think, of having only black and colored, were you saying before this was less a political agenda than it was for the administrative functioning of the program, because white South Africans would have had such a tough time?

VOGEL: Yes and as I realized perhaps later, not when we were arguing for that, it was hard to imagine a mixed group of South Africans traveling together, in terms of even the most liberal white South Africans.

Q: Though it did happen later, a little bit, somewhat.

VOGEL: The black South Africans always said, this was something that people just said to me all the time, that they had never talked sort of completely openly with a white person before and I think you remember we used to have those parties in our houses, I think many of them had never been in a white person's house before.

Q: They said so, yeah.

VOGEL: And it was a little surprising at first, because there were plenty of white South Africans who were fighting to change *apartheid*, but they didn't trust them or have much confidence in them.

One of the things that surprised me a lot about them was many of them had fairly negative attitudes towards English-origin South Africans and I can remember their saying many times, "I prefer the Afrikaners. At least you know where you are with them. The British say one thing and do another."

And there was an extreme lack of confidence in them. I don't know whether that's still the case or not.

Q: When I lived there, the joke was that if you were a black South African in the home of a white and if you made the gaffe of sitting in the wrong chair, the British host would say, "Sir, perhaps you would be more comfortable in another chair," whereas the Afrikaner would say,

VOGEL: "Get your black ass out of my chair!"

Q: And that was the joke. In the late Nineties, there were enormous amounts of humor and self-deprecation.

VOGEL: Well, there is a similar kind of thing that I've heard from African-Americans, saying that they for a long time preferred white southerners, you knew where you were with them.

Q: Well, so, again, for whatever reasons, there was more money available to bring larger numbers of South Africans?

VOGEL: There was special money for South Africans. I don't know where it came from, but there was special money.

We had our regular budget, which let's say let us bring 160. We often had left over money, which would let us bring another twenty or thirty.

And now I'm talking about special contracts beyond this, that we didn't negotiate at the beginning of the contract year, but were funds that would often get diverted to South Africa or something like that.

Q: Somebody at the State Department or USIA decided to make more resources available for South Africa. That's a political decision.

VOGEL: Yeah, but I don't remember their doing that for let's say Nigeria, which you would think would be, with all its oil and everything else, a major priority country. I don't remember extra money for that.

Q: Good point. There was later lots of AID money left, anyway.

VOGEL: We never got AID money. I inherited a situation where we got money from the State Department. But I guess there were lots of AID international visitor programs and so on.

Q: They had university exchanges. They may have had the equivalent of an IV program.

So, at some point, was it because of the numbers that you began to actually go to South Africa to recruit?

VOGEL: Well, no, this was part of our general recruiting.

Q: So you had always been doing that?

VOGEL: We started doing that I think roughly the same time that we started going elsewhere.

Q: About 1980, something like that?

VOGEL: Maybe late Seventies, 1980, we started doing it and gradually South Africa became I guess a priority for us, too.

At first I didn't like the idea too much at all. This is the period when you kind of thought you shouldn't have anything to do with South Africa.

The emotional quality of the South Africans was just a whole other thing from anybody else and we all got very involved with them. They came with this kind of intensity of emotion that would burst out of them once they got here.

They couldn't stop talking, they talked very personally and emotionally, in a way that other people didn't, until you knew them fairly well. It was like an explosion coming out of them.

Q: Is it safe to say that they were doing this maybe for the first time ever, because they were in the U.S.?

VOGEL: And they figured no one was recording, no one was listening. Now, again, that's, if you think about it, a little strange. They knew the money for this was coming from the U.S. government. Why were they so trusting? We could say, "Oh, we're not government employees," but who was actually paying our salaries indirectly?

Q: I've heard from South Africans earlier this year, who were OCA grantees, that just being there, just the sense of freedom was something they had never experienced before, tinged though it might be with this indirect contact of funding coming from the government and politics.

But just the sense of walking down the street and being able to speak freely, to go into a restaurant that's mixed race, I've heard them say that this was so exhilarating they almost couldn't stand it.

VOGEL: Which was one of the reasons why they were kind of a problem in our general orientations. Not only were they so dominant, but to some extent they interested us almost more. They were an interesting bunch and it was so exhilarating.

That carried on. The first time I went there to pick people, I of course knew the people who had been on the program before, and I was very startled by the fact that they all wanted to see me, they all wanted to talk. It was very difficult, because the situation there didn't really allow meetings.

Q: Well, let's get to some of the anecdotes, which I know are very intriguing.

VOGEL: And they'd been in my house, so they felt they had to invite me to their houses.

Q: What were the prohibitions in effect?

VOGEL: Well, white people were not allowed to go to the townships without permission and the embassy told me it was not their policy to ask for permission. They told me, "Defy it!"

And I said, "Well, when I come out of my hotel in the morning, there're two guys in raincoats waiting and they follow me wherever I go. I don't care about getting into trouble here. I assume the worst thing they would do is expel me from the country, they're not about to send me to Robben Island.

Q: Robben Island was segregated, actually.

VOGEL: And I said, "I'm worried about getting them into trouble."

Q: And you didn't have to live there and they did.

VOGEL: I was going at night for dinner, every night and I was going into peoples' houses. And at some point I can remember sitting on a sofa with a woman grantee and we both suddenly thought, "Oh, my God, we are breaking an incredible number of laws."

Q: Your being in the townships, different races being in the same room, any others?

VOGEL: Nobody ever bothered me at all. I never had any contact at all with any kind of authorities, though they had to know this was happening.

Returned grantees would have me to dinner, but they would very frequently invite a number of their friends. I don't know whether it was to let me see their friends, or to let their friends see me. Both were possible.

I remember some guy who worked for Mobil Oil, so he was much better off than most of our grantees, invited me to his house, which was in Soweto, in a neighborhood of great enormous houses. He had a big cocktail party, with a lot of the business community I guess, and the driveway was full of Mercedes and BMWs and stuff that I didn't think black people had or were allowed to have.

But people like that existed already, I don't know how many. But we had really quite an extraordinary cross section of people, ranging from people like him, who had obviously really already made it, to people who were community organizers, to some number of teachers and doctors and journalists and so on. But I was startled by the sheer social and economic range, and educational range I guess.

Q: Now, tell me more about the embassy encouraging you to test the limits, or go beyond the limits, of the rules.

VOGEL: They had warned me: "Don't talk about anything in your room. Your room is surely bugged. Be careful."

Although at least the first time I went there I know I stayed in the Carlton in Johannesburg, which was a couple of steps above the level of hotel I normally stayed in and they said, "We put you there because it's international, black people can come and visit you here."

I didn't invite them up to my room, I don't know what that would have done, but I can remember having a drink or having lunch or dinner or something with them in the restaurant and it was allowed. Black people felt extremely uncomfortable going into that place, but that was allowable.

Q: Uncomfortable because they were probably being watched. How did the Carlton get

VOGEL: There were hotels that were called "international hotels," that had a special sort of permission.

Q: This is like the Soviet Union, where in certain places, only foreigners, could spend hard currency.

VOGEL: Not many black people obviously had occasion to go to these hotels. I believe the international ones were all super expensive ones. So it was kind of window dressing.

So I could meet people there, as I say, but not comfortably. I remember, I think it was in Cape Town, meeting with one of our grantees who was a community organizer and somewhat further to the left than most of the people we had and we finally went and sat down in a park.

He was a guy with a beard, sort of ferocious looking. I looked like myself. And we sat there for a couple of hours having a very animated conversation and I can remember the police kept walking by, they didn't stop us, they didn't speak to us, they didn't say anything to us whatsoever, but they made it very clear that they were watching us.

Q: Why the park?

VOGEL: Well, it happened to be a place where black people and white people were allowed to sit down next to each other. There were not a lot of places like that.

Q: How did a person know where you were allowed to do this? Were you briefed by the embassy?

VOGEL: Not specifically on that.

Q: Were there signs?

VOGEL: No. Even in the airport, in the bathrooms, there were signs that said white and non-white, which I had to admit I had seen in my childhood, in the South, it wasn't the first time in my life I saw such things.

Q: But how did you know, as a visitor, that this park was okay, whereas some other one wasn't?

VOGEL: I probably said, "Where can we sit down and talk?" and he must have said where.

Q: So South Africans would know? The American officials who encouraged you to go, did you have a sense, did every one of them have that viewpoint, was it a policy that came from Washington, or was it something that sprang up out of the embassy itself? Any idea?

VOGEL: I'm sure I paid a courtesy call on the ambassador. I mostly had dealings with the USIA people, both the Americans and the local staff, which was terrific there, at another level from the local staff really anywhere else I ever went in Africa.

So I don't really know how the economic officer felt about it or the sort of regular State Department people. I only really had much to do with the USIA people. I think they were all very much in favor of social change.

I wouldn't say that was true of all USIA people I ever met anywhere else in Africa. I met plenty who had a pretty contemptuous attitude towards the Africans and the countries they were in.

Q: So was there something about South Africa that attracted certain Foreign Service Officers?

VOGEL: It might have just been if you were even remotely open-minded, and had any particular contact with South Africans, you had to see that they were pretty far removed from chimpanzees.

If you dealt with them in any way, it seems to me you had to see they were, at least some of them, there is (President of South Africa) Zuma. I don't remember ever dealing with people like him, that's what I'm saying.

Q: He's not worldly. He's not sophisticated.

VOGEL: I can remember hearing somewhat unflattering remarks about the ambassador from some of the USIS people.

Q: Much to be said about Reagan's policy and constructive engagement. And someday someone will figure out whether it was a positive or a negative.

VOGEL: I can remember, I was fundraising for Crossroads, aside from the government money, during these years, and I did discover that companies that had refused to join the boycott of South Africa tended to be better prospects for giving money to something like Crossroads than others, probably because they were trying to improve their image.

Q: And were they part of the Sullivan Principles thing?

VOGEL: No, they were probably opposed to it, is what I mean.

Q: I did interview someone recently who had gotten the assignment reluctantly, he didn't want to go to South Africa because he didn't like the regime, so much so that he didn't want to deal with it, and he was told by somebody at State not to develop any sympathy for South Africans. His answer was, "It's too late."

There certainly were people, I don't know the percentage of them, who were friendly only to the regime. I guess USIS stands out as a little entity within the embassy that was pretty uniformly opposed to the status quo.

VOGEL: I can remember, I think this must have been in Pretoria, because it was the house of somebody in the embassy, probably it had to be USIS, I think. It was in a neighborhood with a lot of great big houses with thatched roofs and there we went to a party and met some white South Africans, including one very nice guy who was writing books on rock paintings and who very nicely, from there I was going to Lesotho and then coming back to Pretoria, drove down there, met us and drove us back to Pretoria, visiting a number of sites where there were rock paintings.

Q: Okay, you were encouraged in general by USIS people, we don't really know that much about the attitudes of the rest of the embassy. Did the USIS people go with you sometimes in these daring night raids into the townships?

VOGEL: No.

Q: They left you to go on your own?

VOGEL: No, I didn't go with the local employees either, I don't think.

Q: Now this sounds like this was you, more than any sort of institutional

VOGEL: No, people invited me. It was as simple as that. I didn't say, "Gee, I'd like to see your house" or anything. People wanted to reciprocate hospitality.

Q: And so you had personal relationships with lots of people, because many of them had been to your house in New York?

VOGEL: Well and as I say, because during their stay here, they had these sort of intense conversations with me and Bart. Bart was certainly the one I think responsible for starting this kind of atmosphere of relationships with South Africans. He went to South Africa two or three times before I did.

I didn't want to go. I thought, (a) he would be more effective there, because he wasn't white and (b) I didn't like the idea of being a white person in South Africa and sort of looking as though I was just one of these white South Africans. So I didn't want to go, but eventually he persuaded me that I should.

Q: It's the opposite of what you would expect.

VOGEL: Really?

Q: Well, you have an African-American urging a white American to go to a country with a racist regime. There are many paradoxes here.

VOGEL: I think it was partly that he found the tension of being there very tiring.

Q: He told me once his visa said "Honorary White" or something like that and literally black people were not admitted to South Africa. If the regime, for expediency, had to admit somebody, it falsified their race.

VOGEL: Somebody from the State Department took my passport into the South African embassy and said, "We want this person to have a visa." But I don't think I could have gotten a visa otherwise. There was pressure.

Q: Why not? You're a white American.

VOGEL: But they knew why I was going, and how happy could they be for an organization that's bringing black South Africans over here?

Q: So you had support not only in South Africa but in the State Department?

VOGEL: They definitely got me my visa the first time. In those days, if you were going to South Africa, you could get a separate passport just for that and I got one of those and then I did not take my passport in to get a visa, someone from the State Department did.

The theory was I wouldn't have gotten one otherwise. I think Bart had to have the same kind of support in order to get a visa.

Q: Was it his first trip to South Africa, the recruiting for OCA?

VOGEL: Yeah.

Q: Did he have a reaction, after

VOGEL: I know what it was like for me, the sense that in most interiors, except in the embassy, you couldn't really talk. Being in the hotel room and figuring you were being listened to, knowing you were being followed, especially when you know you're doing illegal things, is very tense.

I spent maybe two weeks there traveling around the place and it was an incredibly intense, satisfying, exciting kind of experience, but when I left, I did sort of feel like a weight had been taken off my shoulders, too, because I was back in Africa, where you didn't have to think about things like that.

I think I flew from there to Gabon, which, God knows, was not a liberal paradise, but I just felt relaxed in a way that I never felt in South Africa.

Q: You were under scrutiny. Did you feel that your interlocutors, the people you were visiting, did you feel they were in jeopardy by mingling with you so freely?

VOGEL: Well, that's what I asked the people in the embassy, and I don't know who said this to me: "Don't worry about it. They know how to deal with the system here. Leave it up to them. If they say, 'Come to my house in Soweto,' figure they know where the line is."

Q: So they were never concerned about your own personal safety?

VOGEL: No.

Q: They weren't concerned, really, about anything? It sounds as if they were only permitting you to do anything you wanted to do, because you were not a U.S. government official.

VOGEL: Well, they didn't suggest I have interracial sex or anything else that was forbidden. But in terms of visiting, yes. They did certainly have receptions and cocktail

parties in their houses and they were certainly interracial. I don't know what the rules were about the houses of diplomats, but they certainly did have parties that mixed people, and that's how I quickly found all these people.

Q: I think it was frowned upon, it might have even been forbidden. There really wasn't diplomatic immunity, actually. But there was brinkmanship on both sides, I think.

VOGEL: They certainly had big sort of cocktail receptions when I came through, or when Bart came through, where they were receiving our grantees.

The other thing we did with the South Africans that I don't think I did with very many of the others is stay in touch with them by writing. The others I saw when I traveled, but I didn't, except for a very few people that I was close friends with, write them or call them. But some of the South Africans did write.

I can remember writing to one who was in jail. Bart was very good on hearing the gossip on people, so he knew who was where. This was a woman who had organized a domestic workers union or something and at some point she got arrested and I can remember Bart telling me this, and my asking him, "Can I write her? What should I do?"

He said, "You can write her, just be careful what you say."

And I can remember trying to write a letter, assuming that somebody was going to read it before she got it and so on. That was all kind of complicated.

Q: So the mail got delivered and we don't know if it was being read or censored, but we assumed that it was?

VOGEL: I assumed it was read or censored, so I couldn't say much except something like, "I'm thinking about you", "Hope you're all right" and so on.

Q: What could have been going on in the minds of the bureaucrats in South Africa who didn't make up the rules, but whose job it was to execute them? Were they in this reluctantly?

VOGEL: My assumption, which probably came as a result of talking to people in the embassy or in Washington, was that nobody in the South African government was happy about this kind of thing, but right at that point they didn't want to have a confrontation over things that weren't really central and crucial.

Q: Not happy about what you were doing?

VOGEL: Yeah, not happy about our going there, not happy about the whole program, but not wanting to go so far as to say, "No, we won't allow this." I can't remember, were there people that we accepted for the program who couldn't get passports and travel? It

seems there were occasional things like that, but it was individuals, not in relation to the whole program.

Q: I know that the embassy staff did amazing things in getting passports for people who would normally not be able to get them.

VOGEL: It seems to me there was an occasional person who didn't.

Q: There must have been, because the whole program, I think, the government didn't want this to happen.

VOGEL: No, absolutely not, but they didn't want to go so far as to forbid it, because that would have been a real confrontation. There were all these laws and yet they seemed to be enforced in a kind of irregular manner. I remember in Cape Town, I guess, two women who had been on the program who worked in some corporate situation, they were black women, they were quite well off for black South Africans, and I can remember their saying, "Oh, you're in Cape Town, we should take you on a tour of the wine country."

I said, "Okay, that would be nice."

Q: Again, contrary to everything you would expect.

VOGEL: And we did this, we went into a couple of wineries, had the tour and so on. There were certainly no other black people doing that there. And then they said, "Let's have lunch" and they took me to some very nice restaurant, I don't know if it was in Stellenbosch or where it was, it was somewhere around there, and they took me to quite an elegant French restaurant, which was like a French country inn, a remarkably good reproduction of one.

We walked in and sat down, two black women, one white man, which is an unheard of combination in South Africa, and we were served, nobody batted an eye about us.

Q: There must have been invisible rules that we could never know that they knew. I'm sure they knew where they could go and where they could not go, as was the case in Washington, DC, in the 1950's.

VOGEL: But the thing about this, two black women, one white man, what could they conceivably be doing together, only one thing. My theory was, they know what they're doing, if we're not about to get arrested or anything and, indeed, people were entirely polite to us. They might have probably been close to passing out when they saw that the women were paying the check, but there it was. And we were doing things like that all the time.

Q: People who lived there knew individuals and places, and they maybe personally knew the owners.

VOGEL: These were women in what I guess was the upper crust of black society at the time. We ran the whole gamut, people with beards and dirty jeans to people like this and I guess they moved in a group that was somewhat more knowledgeable about how this part of the system worked.

Q: Now, this vivid visual image of you sitting on a park bench with a guy with a beard and the police pacing back and forth, was this one of a kind? Did this sort of thing happen frequently, or more than once or twice? You didn't plan for it to be a clandestine meeting?

VOGEL: You don't sit in a public park in the middle of the day and hope you're clandestine.

Q: Exactly, but it was the South African's idea that you meet there, because he knew where you could not meet? Is that it?

VOGEL: My assumption is and this is a long time ago that he met me at USIS and we walked there. Remember, this is still a time where, I don't think this was true in Cape Town, but in some cities of South Africa black people got off the sidewalk and stood in the street when white people walked by. That was the law.

Q: That's amazing, because that's so not the case now.

VOGEL: The opposite is probably the case now, but that was the law then. Nobody ever screamed "Nigger lover" at me or anything as I was walking down the street, but I assume that this must have been a shock.

Q: Yeah, it's hard to know, perhaps, what people thought. You say that there was some money that suddenly became available and this was very fascinating, so intense and

VOGEL: And we felt this was uniquely useful, because other Africans now do have an opportunity to go places, if money comes in, and their governments are happy to educate people, give them opportunities to get out of the country, see the rest of the world.

In South Africa we were obviously doing it against the wishes of the government and you felt, well, their own government is not going to do anything to make this possible, so it seemed particularly useful for us to do it, since we could.

And certainly the South Africans all told us, "This has changed my whole life." So you felt that this was, for them, a real life changing experience, in that they could relate to other people in a way that, certainly to white people or to people who were culturally different from them, in a way that they had never been able to before, and they could talk at a level they never could before.

I assume, also, that the black South Africans had never had this kind of relationship with colored people, either.

Q: Possible.

VOGEL: Now I can remember one guy that I was particularly friendly with who had a Chinese girl friend, but he was colored. I think Chinese were considered colored then, too. He was flirting with trouble, but I don't think he was absolutely violating, I can remember people telling me that Chinese were called colored and Japanese were called white.

Q: That's right.

VOGEL: So he was nominally dealing with somebody in his class, but actually

Q: I was going to ask this later, but let's get to it now, the effect that these opportunities apparently had on the grantees. At what point did they tell you things like, "This changed my life"? Was this, obviously, after their trip to the U.S.

VOGEL: Going back, yeah.

Q: Did they tell it to you back in South Africa, when you saw them the next year?

VOGEL: I think so, or in writing.

Q: In what way do you think their lives were changed?

VOGEL: Well, it wasn't so much in professional terms. It was their own sense of their worth and, to some extent, their recognizing that they could move in a relatively sophisticated world society and be as good as anyone else, which, God knows, nothing in South Africa had ever led them to think.

Q: They were grateful for this experience, even if they went into it with some skepticism. Who were they grateful to? You, personally? The U.S. government? Everybody they met walking down the street?

VOGEL: I think maybe more that. I don't know. They didn't particularly talk about the U.S. government, though, as I say, it was obvious where the money came from and since they had all been interviewed in the USIA office.

And we traveled around a lot. I know I was in Pretoria and Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban. One year I went to East London and Port Elizabeth and I think I even once went to Bloemfontein.

So we really moved around a lot, but there were a lot of regional USIA offices in those places. I think all of those places may have had them.

Q: I'm not accusing you of being overly modest, but you had all these invitations, there must have been some feeling personally towards you.

VOGEL: Yeah, I think so. Yeah, why not?

Q: Not only because you made the opportunity possible, but you say that you corresponded with them, you stayed in touch, you talked with them

VOGEL: I liked them. I very much enjoyed the personal relationships with them and it was somehow very easy to establish a personal relationship with them.

Q: They were very forthcoming.

VOGEL: I guess I was, too. I was very interested by what they had to say. You couldn't help but get involved with the whole situation there.

Q: As I remember it, during those orientations, they would come up to us, it didn't take much coaxing. They went to you as the authority, you were the main speaker at those orientations, you were the one fielding questions.

VOGEL: For the first couple of groups, the person they'd seen in South Africa was Bart. I assumed at first their relationship with Bart would necessarily be different from their relationship with me, just for racial reasons. But after a while that didn't seem to me to be the case.

Q: That's the way I remember it, also. You say that the professional advantages weren't evident.

VOGEL: Sure, they were there, but I don't think that was the primary benefit for them.

Q: You said that you noticed, maybe, without examples, did you have a sense that those who went on those trips later found themselves in leadership positions? It was called the Young African Leaders Program. Did that actually happen and, if so, was there cause and effect, do you think, as they took up more important positions?

VOGEL: Part of my problem here is that I left Crossroads in '84, so I didn't necessarily follow what happened. I do remember one guy, I remember Bart telling me he'd become special assistant to Bishop Tutu. We did have journalists and so on. As I say, I don't know. The embassy, as far as I know, doesn't keep records. How can that be?

Q: Well, let that stay as a rhetorical question. It's just simply amazing.

VOGEL: You invest all that money in people.

Q: Well, in somebody's wisdom, what they used to call the list of contacts was abolished. Somebody got a promotion by abolishing it, one of the stupidest things ever done. Not only at the embassies, but the records at USIA were destroyed.

VOGEL: Don't they have mailings? Don't they send people announcements of concerts or art exhibitions and stuff?

Q: They do, of course, but it used to be standardized worldwide. The standard was removed and now each embassy does this in stand-alone fashion. Some do better than others in maintaining lists of past visitor grantees and of course their memories are only as long as those of their local employees. So as those employees die and retire, this link is being lost.

VOGEL: Local employees, other than in South Africa, don't necessarily have a very long professional life with USIA. When a new PAO comes, they often have conflicts.

Q: That's true.

VOGEL: So they often don't last there. They don't necessarily last much longer than the Americans. In some places they do.

Q: In other countries there are no professional options and they stay because there's nothing else.

VOGEL: But if some American comes in who has a totally different vision of how this should be done, and they can't stand it, they get fired. I know of quite a number of cases like that, say, in Mali or the Ivory Coast.

Q: In recent experience, I think these clashes do occur. I don't think that the local employees resign as often, I think.

VOGEL: I didn't say resign.

Q: Get fired, because there are also protections against being fired.

VOGEL: Well, I'm thinking of the guy I dealt with for years and years in USIS Abidjan, but I haven't kept in touch with the embassies. I did with the one in Abidjan for a long time, partly because for a long time the PAO was married to a former Crossroads volunteer.

Q: The PAO in Abidjan, you mean?

VOGEL: The consul was married to a Crossroader who was like the DCM, I think. So I sort of stayed in touch and I know that the guy who handled cultural exchanges and educational exchanges got fired, having been accused of, I can't remember whether it was sexual abuse of people who wanted to go on the program, or getting money from

them. It was some kind of thing like that. I don't know whether it's true or not. Who knows?

I remember him at one point pushing me very hard to take some well known Ivorian female singer with a huge bosom on the program. I don't know if there's a connection or not.

But he was there for like seven or eight or nine years and I knew him quite well.

Q: Back to South Africa, with your group programs in the U.S., you had maybe 20 or 25 countries represented and at the time South Africa was only one of them. Did you feel that they got a disproportionate amount of your attention?

VOGEL: Yeah, probably.

Q: Partly because of their special needs and partly because of their charms and because of the

VOGEL: Interests, and because what was happening in their country was, at the time, sort of a major issue for anybody who was involved with Africa. South Africa got an exceptional amount of attention from the rest of the continent, because it was the last country to be decolonized.

Q: Right, now, but you said earlier today that

VOGEL: Remember, we didn't work with any other countries that could be described as still colonized.

Q: True. You said earlier that during the period when you were at OCA you did not believe that peaceful change could take place.

VOGEL: When I left OCA, in 1984, after making maybe three trips there, I didn't see anything but a bloodbath.

Q: What kept you going in this endeavor, if you believed that this was not going to change the society?

VOGEL: I didn't say that I thought a bloodbath would necessarily lead to *apartheid* winning. I wasn't trying to create a bloody revolution. No, I just didn't see white South Africans ever accepting giving up being dominant.

Q: Well, did this not give a sense of futility to what you were doing?

VOGEL: Well, no, I didn't assume all these people were going to be executed or killed, whatever they became.

Q: Was it the benefit on the individual level that was very obviously happening, is this what inspired you or encouraged you to keep going?

VOGEL: I guess so.

Q: It was by individual human contact?

VOGEL: Let me say one other thing that was explained to me. We had these little selection committees in each town that we went to, which usually included one of the Crossroads staff, a local employee and a couple of other people. And they were rather tense, the atmosphere in the local selection panel, in terms of who we took, what they represented, what they were associated with and so on.

Q: Tense in terms of different points of view of the different members of the panel?

VOGEL: Yeah. There were issues: are we taking colored, are we taking blacks, are we taking people who are relatively acceptable to the regime, or people who are on the absolute fringe and so on?

Usually one or two of our former grantees were on these panels. I can remember talking to either the USIA staff or the PAO about this and being told, "What you don't realize is there are people who wouldn't serve on a thing like this, who wouldn't set foot in this building. You are getting the people who are relatively moderate. And there are people who would not go on a U.S.-government financed program."

So while we certainly got lots of people who didn't approve of much of anything about South Africa, what I realized was that people who would deal with us at all or with the embassy at all, they were already fairly moderate. There was a whole part of society that wouldn't have ever had anything to do with us that I never saw.

I might have met some of them when I was there through people who'd already been on exchange visits, but there were lots of people who wouldn't set foot in the embassy. They were probably all out there with Kalashnikovs, I don't know.

Q: Speaking of which, this was not OCA but there was an IV program, you may remember, the MK, the militant wing of the ANC, was put together with South African police in an IV program, and they were forced to coexist in the U.S. These were people trying to kill each other only weeks before.

VOGEL: Good God! And they agreed to be in it together?

Q: This was much later. This was in '93, I think and an amazingly risky thing.

VOGEL: Did they share rooms?

Q: They did not share rooms, but they shared discussion sessions. I remember that at the debriefing at the very end, they mutually selected somebody to be the spokesman and it was one of the white guys, who said, in a rather surly way, to the U.S. government representatives present, "We understand what you were trying to do here. You were trying to create understanding between us and them. We don't like each other, but we have to admit that you did succeed in your objective. We now understand each other. We now understand what the military targets of the MK were. They were not people, they were not soft targets, they were hard targets" and in a very begrudging way the spokesman gave tremendous credit to the U.S. government for doing the impossible, which is to get these people to spend a month together and not kill each other.

VOGEL: Yeah, I would never have thought of even daring to try that.

Q: It could not have been done before 1993, I think, maybe.

VOGEL: I never felt racial prejudice or tension on the part of the black South Africans, although I very often, very often, I can't even tell you how many times one of them said to me, "I've never talked to a white South African the way I talked to you." I did very much have the feeling of being the representative of the white world to them. And I guess that mattered to me.

Q: Well, again, we're straddling the very personal and macro social change. It sounds as if you approached this on the very personal level.

VOGEL: Yeah and I think that may have been as much on their initiative as mine. Somehow it seemed as though you could relate to them personally. I related to them much more personally than as a representative of an organization or something, which may be my method in general, that may be my way of dealing with people in general.

Remember, I had had the experience of being an integrating element in the Crossroads staff, I was the only senior staff member who was not black and I had then had the experience of running the organization through the Seventies and Eighties, through all these wild times on campuses and having to deal with really very militant black African-Americans as a white person.

So I probably had more direct exposure and indoctrination in that. And then I'd go around summers and visit these groups, which had often split into black and white separate groups who were barely communicating with each other.

So I might have had more exposure to that than your average person. I can't say I ever enjoyed it.

I did enjoy dealing with the South Africans. I did not enjoy dealing with the black-white issues among Americans.

Q: I have to ask you, how did you survive? These were very troubled times and you were a target.

VOGEL: Yeah, I was a target and I'd taken over a black organization, of which there were not many.

Q: The hostility, which I have experienced myself, on a lesser scale, you dealt with this every day. What was it that kept you there? It was fun?

VOGEL: It was fun. I felt it mattered. I still do. What keeps me dealing with Africa now? There are easier parts of the world and more lucrative parts of the world to deal with.

Q: What is it that you find alluring, charming, engaging about, you're more involved with Côte d'Ivoire and with Mali now, what is it that's so alluring?

VOGEL: I'm not the only person who finds something very sort of appealing about Africa, Africans and African society. There is a kind of ease and openness in human relations.

A friend from Côte d'Ivoire, he would like to feel that once he goes back I'll come and spend a month or two visiting on a regular basis, and one of the things that he said he knew appealed to me about it was the kind of ease of human relationships there, which is true.

Q: Fewer rules that restrain a person's behavior, I think.

VOGEL: You meet people, you talk to them. I don't do that here. This Ivorian friend talks more to the people that live in this building than I do. They all talk to him. I say hello, but that's the limit of it, by and large, whereas he talks to them.

Q: South Africa, what a tremendous pressure cooker that country has been and now the pressure is escaping, in many ways.

VOGEL: I don't really know. I didn't have much relationship with South Africans that I didn't already know in some way, so I don't know.

The time I most felt that, actually, was in Lubumbashi, which was very southern African in the way it was structured and the way society worked there in the colonial period. I can remember going for a walk by myself, coming back afterwards and saying to the consulate's public affairs officer, "It's very strange. Nobody said hello to me."

In West Africa, everybody says hello to you and nobody spoke to me and nobody looked at me.

And he said, "Well, those were the rules in colonial times." This was 1970, not long after independence and he said Africans didn't look at you and they didn't speak to you." And,

indeed, that was a very segregated city. There was an African township way outside of town.

But that's the only time that I had ever directly experienced that. I must have wandered around South Africa by myself, or maybe not, very much. Maybe I always had some South African with me.

Q: In this regard, how much has Africa changed since the Seventies?

VOGEL: I don't think South Africa has changed nearly as much as it needs to.

Q: What needs to happen?

VOGEL: You ride along the road from Pretoria to Johannesburg and you still see the white people in their elegant cars and you still see black people walking along the road wrapped in blankets. That's what I think has to change, the whole economic situation.

Q: That's the distance from Baltimore to Washington and it's like space travel, sometimes. Maybe a good bookend for this conversation.

VOGEL: I went to see *Invictus*. Actually, I went to see *Invictus* with my Ivorian friend.

Q: That's one reason why we're doing this interview. I realized that the story you are telling is equally important, maybe more so.

VOGEL: Well, this was before that. What I'm talking about is before that happened. Mandela was on Robben Island when I was there.

Q: But you mention it for a reason.

VOGEL: Because, even though I haven't been that professionally involved with South Africa, not in this sense, for a very long time. The Museum for African Art at one point did a number of exhibitions of contemporary South African art, partly because there's very good contemporary South African art. It's more related to what's going on in the rest of the world than a lot of other African art, and partly because there was some funding available that couldn't be anywhere else and so on.

So at that point I had quite a bit of dealing with South African artists, and to some extent with the people who were doing the funding of this, who were wealthy white South Africans.

*Q: Is this what brings *Invictus* to mind?*

VOGEL: No, I'm just saying that's the only direct connection I've had with South Africans since then. At one point, we ran something here called "Season South Africa," which involved an exhibition of about 15 South African artists, black and white, in the

museum and also in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, and we brought over an opera company which had a season in the rectory.

So at that point I had a lot of dealings with South Africans. They were people in the arts. But otherwise I guess I haven't had that much recent dealings.

Q: That's acceptable. We're capturing moments from the Seventies and Eighties that are beginning to be forgotten.

VOGEL: One of the things that struck me about this whole "Season South Africa" thing was the people running it were eighty per cent white. There was one black person in the sort of committee that was doing it, but I noticed he seemed to be kind of window dressing. He never said much in the meetings. He was there, he had to be there. But I felt that was why he was there.

The artists, they were mixed, but again they were mostly white and of course the art dealers there are all white, as far as I know.

Q: I think white South Africans want to put apartheid in the past, they want to believe in what they're doing, they want to imagine that they're part of a diverse society. It's not exactly reality.

VOGEL: One of the things they say to you constantly is, "I'm an African and I resent people saying I'm not an African."

Q: What is the meaning of that? Why is it so important to them?

VOGEL: Because they assume that and it's true, when you think of Africans, do you think of white South Africans? No, you think of black people. I don't think of Tunisians, either.

Q: Why does an Afrikaner feel so strongly that they're African and not a Dutch person? Why does it matter to them?

VOGEL: Where does your family come from?

Q: Who knows?

VOGEL: Do you insist on being considered an American?

Q: Lithuanian, certainly not, no. I don't even know my grandfather's name.

VOGEL: I know where my mother's father was born. I don't know where my father's father was born and I don't care. I'm an American.

And I assume if some South African came to me and said to me, “You’re not an American,” or if an American Indian said to me, “You’re not an American,” I would be indignant.

I understand. Where else can they go? Well, they go to Australia, they go to various other racist places, I guess.

Q: You should always try to imagine the predicament that any person is in, it’s always a predicament.

VOGEL: Well, they lived in a world where being white usually meant you were going to be economically comfortable, and all of a sudden that’s been upended.

Q: Although you’ve said that the economic changes have not taken hold.

VOGEL: There now are economically disadvantaged white South Africans and they had all at some point been better off.

Q: They used to call it apartheid affirmative action. The competent and the incompetent were all assured to have work. No longer the case.

Thank you enormously for reliving these fantastically crazy moments.

VOGEL: I haven’t thought specifically and in depth about any of this for a long time. It’s good for me to sort of rethink it. It’s a part of my life that I sort of don’t particularly think about and I enjoy it.

Q: Well, thanks for being willing to do it.

End of interview