

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

STEVE McDONALD

Interviewed by: Dan Whitman
Initial Interview Date: August 17, 2011
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Retired from the Foreign Service	1980
Professor at Drury College in Missouri	1980-1982
Consultant, Ford Foundation's Study	1980-1982
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Head of U.S. South Africa Leadership Exchange Program	1982-1987
Managed South Africa Policy Forum at the Aspen Institute	1987-1992
Worked for African American Institute	1992-2002
Consultant for the Wilson Center	2002-2008
Consulting Director at Wilson Center	2009-2013

INTERVIEW

Q: Here we go. This is Dan Whitman interviewing Steve McDonald at the Wilson Center in downtown Washington. It is August 17. Steve McDonald, you are about to correct me the head of the Africa section...

McDONALD: Well the head of the Africa program and the project on leadership and building state capacity at the Woodrow Wilson international center for scholars.

Q: That is easy for you to say. Thank you for getting that on the record, and it will be in the transcript. In the Wilson Center many would say the prime research center on the East Coast.

McDONALD: I think it is true. It is a think tank a research and academic body that has approximately 150 fellows annually from all over the world looking at policy issues. I think there are a lot of competitors in town, but I think it is fair to say we are primarily a non partisan organization. We try very hard. We are not an advocacy group. We are not one political party or another or one stripe or another.

Q: Which all claim to be but not all succeed.

McDONALD: No, some succeed better than others, and there are those who would accuse us of not totally succeeding. We try very hard.

Q: I would not be one of those people. I can never detect a tendency here. I just hear wonderful information and wonderful people coming.

McDONALD: Thanks.

Q: Now we are here mainly to talk about your experience in South Africa which is almost painful because you have done so many things, and we want to get to that some day on this project which is called "Outsmarting Apartheid" As you know some people who have interviewed for this project have mentioned you several times. You were a political officer or the POL-Com, I don't know.

McDONALD: I was political officer.

Q: Political officer. Let's just start with the immediate, like the moment you were knowing you were assigned to South Africa in that capacity. What year would that be?

McDONALD: Well that is kind of interesting, Dan, because it would have, these things don't always work out as you plan them, but I took a year's sabbatical to finish up a masters degree in Southern African policy studies in the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. That was in 1975. When I did that, I did so with the understanding that my next posting would be South Africa, which it turned out to be.

Q: Amazing.

McDONALD: Which for a whole year it could have easily been changed. So I did hope and suspect that in late '74 or early '75. But at that point I was the desk officer for the Portuguese African territories. So I was working on those transitions. I handled all of them, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe. Through September of '75 when I left to start school.

Q: Isn't that exactly when all of these countries started getting independence?

McDONALD: Exactly. I was the very last desk officer for the Portuguese African territories. At the time I left the post, and I was there at that period quite by design. When I left the post then it was divided between AFW, AFS and new desk officers assigned to the several countries that I used to cover all by myself. So I took them through independence, and also the beginning of the civil war in Angola and all sorts of other things.

Q: Mozambique became a bit ugly also. So remembered as Lorenzo Marx.

McDONALD: Lorenzo Marques was renamed Maputo after independence. But I first visited Lorenzo Marques, just as I visited Salisbury in Rhodesia, which I was also covering after I arrived in South Africa.

Q: Fascinating. As if planned but it wasn't. It just happened. That is just amazing.

McDONALD: Because I was at AFS as desk officer. Then I got a commitment from the country director at AFS to send me to Pretoria, a commitment which held up after my year of absence, my sabbatical.

Q: If only these things could be done today. Well great, so armed with a masters in southern Africa studies you arrived in Pretoria, right.

McDONALD: That is correct. I was assigned to the embassy in Pretoria as political officer. At that point in time it was a very simple set up in the embassy. There was a political counselor, there were two political officers. There was one political officer/counselor. So there were three of us under the political counselor. Three of us in the political section but one had a divided portfolio, doing both political and counselor work. The other two were very simply divided in their duties. There was a political officer covering black affairs and a political officer covering white affairs. I was the black affairs political officer.

Q: OK, which would explain partly why you were motivated and able to come up with great candidates for the international visitors program.

McDONALD: I worked very closely with USIA which was a very different animal in those days. I worked very closely with them on nominating candidates for IVs. I almost had Steve Biko for an IV but he decided to wait a year, and that year was the year he died.

Q: I am certain you are going to get to that story. It is very significant. I can just say that what you have just said is corroborated by other people, buy USIA people.

McDONALD: I sure hope so.

Q: Well I found them. We want to get to Steve Biko, that is a major story, but let's go chronologically. You arrived in the fall of '75?

McDONALD: No that is when I went on to school. I arrived in the mid summer of '76. I was in London from the fall of '75 through, I don't remember exactly, April or May, through May of '76. Then I went to South Africa.

Q: Again this is the time of the Soweto uprising.

McDONALD: Yeah, I got there exactly at that time, and was then there until December of '79.

Q: Well you arrived and you knew quite a bit about the country and the region. There you were and there were the riots. A momentous time in that history.

McDONALD: Yeah, it was a momentous time, and I was thrown in the middle of it so to speak. Mind you by my previous assignment as desk officer of the Portuguese territories had allowed me to travel to the region on a couple of occasions. So I had a passing familiarity and already some contacts built up. But also my year in London had been very helpful. I met several people who knew South Africa well, including interesting people like Harry Oppenheimer and Zack de Beer whose daughter was in school with me. It was just all coincidental things, but I formed some connections that would serve me well.. But still basically I was going into South Africa with no experience on the ground.

Q: Did you know the diamond people?

McDONALD: NO, they were not the diamond people. Zack de Beer was the executive president of the Oppenheimer family owned mining house, t Anglo American. De Beer diamonds are not directly connected to Zack. But Zack was also the leader of the Democratic Party, the main parliamentary opposition party at the time.

Q: So the Democratic Party which was not the Nationalist Party.

McDONALD: It would be the liberal white opposition.

Q: Actually let's start with that. You knew this person in London.

McDONALD: Yes. I met him through his daughter, Wendy de Beer, who was in school with me.

Q: Tell me how this appeared. It is most fascinating. You met a major opposition person during your studies in London. Tell me a little about that interaction.

McDONALD: Well there is not so much to tell in London as it is when I get to South Africa that the contact mattered. As I said, I was going to school with his daughter and I told everyone I was in school with that my next assignment in the foreign service would

be in South Africa. She asked me, "Oh would you like to meet my daddy." Sure whoever he is. I had no idea of the importance of Zack de Beer at the time. Well we met at a pub one time and had a beer together. So on two different occasions we had dinner and drinks with his daughter. One time with Harry Oppenheimer in tow and one time with his wife in tow. We kind of hit it off, but that was it. We talked South Africa, I wouldn't be able to recall any of the substance of what we said to each other at that time. But the key thing was he told me to be in contact when I got to South Africa. So, after I arrived and began to work my contacts, he was there on my list. So I gave him a call. Now the relationship changed. He said, "Oh I remember you well. Thank you so much for being a friend to Wendy. Can you come by for lunch on Sunday and we will play a little tennis and have a glass of wine and chat." So I thought that was really great. I was a pretty junior guy here, not at the top of the list by any means, only on my second overseas assignment in the foreign service. The first was in Uganda. We will talk about that another time. But I already had on the ground embassy political officer experience for almost three years in Uganda. So my wife and I went on the appointed date and the appointed time to have lunch with Zack and his wife. Very friendly and warm afternoon with probably too much wine as often happens in South Africa, and a little bit of tennis and lots of conversation, but in the end what he said to me was very interesting, he said, "Well," and he was very frank about this. "Well Steve I dine with the Ambassador and etc, so we are not quite on the same level but what I want to do for you because I like you and I want you to be plugged in is bring together a group of contacts that you should meet. I will invite them to the Anglo American headquarters. We will be in the chairman's dining room and I will put this event on for you and I think you will make some connections that will be valuable for you. So he did that. It was really helpful for me.

Q: What type of person?

McDONALD: Well these weren't black leaders. Remember I said I was covering black politics, but it was important for me to understand all aspects. So around the table were a number of people who became fast friends for life. Most of them were executives either out of Anglo American itself or, well I shouldn't say executives; some were just employees, or Democratic party stalwarts. The one who remained the closest friend was Peter Soal. He and Dan Naser were very close friends, and Peter would later introduce me to Dan. Dan wasn't at that lunch, and that was when the new Republican Party was merging with the Democratic party and they began to coalesce the white opposition. But Peter would later become a very strong Democratic Party member of parliament, and more or less he and Helen Suzman. And Zack de Beer as well but he and Helen Suzman were the ones who really led the fight against Bantu education, homeland policies, and other issues that victimized the black community.

Q: I remember Helen Suzman was not a member of the party.

McDONALD: Oh yes. She was. We have a long storied history with Helen. I got to know her well too, but Helen had been the original, along with Alan Paton the famed author, Democratic Party person. At one point she was the only opposition member in parliament. There was another white opposition party, the old UPI, United Party, I said

UPI, but it was UP, United party, which originally goes all the way back to Jan Smuts. It was the official opposition to the National Party. However, it was still basically Afrikaner, all white and much more conservative than the Democratic party. What happened was the United Party had basically disbanded by 1978. That is what Dan Nesor was so involved in, bringing more liberal elements of the United party into a merger with the Democratic Party to make a coalition party which morphed into the Democratic Reform party, then eventually changed its name back again to the Democratic party. The politics are too convoluted to even bother to talk about although it doesn't really matter much. By the time the Democratic party was solidified again by the early 80's, it really represented all white opposition by that point.

Q: I gather when the names changed there were friendships and coalitions that sort of went through the period I think.

McDONALD: Sure.

Q: In some cases if I remember Dan Nesor it was a coalition for allowing different parties to be there but trying to get them to work together.

McDONALD: And Dan and Peter Soal were key players in building those coalitions. They were able to get the agreements across.

Q: Well before we get to your portfolio, let's tell me a little bit more about these shifting alliances at a time when I think the individuals involved in this must have felt that history was not yet on their side in the 70's. It must have been kind of a Quixotic. What was the spirit that motivated other than wanting to do the right thing? Did they actually have a plan that realistically could have given them enough power to change the society?

McDONALD: That is a difficult one for me to respond to because I am guessing at motive and there is no way I can prove it one way or another. I had some close personal relationships in which these things were talked about. I think there were individuals who probably, well I am going to take that back. I think they hoped they could change things. I don't think they realistically felt they could. No matter what anybody says to you, the changes that occurred in '89 and '90 were not things that any of us at that point in time in the late 70's could foresee. At that point in time the National Party looked like an absolute granite block out there. There was really no way of shattering that block. This was also before any significant pressures from sanctions and disinvestment and things like this, so no one would see where the cracks were coming at that time. So there was quite a bit of shouting in the wilderness and therefore I have to believe that really intelligent people like Helen Suzman and others must have just been doing it because they knew it was right. They felt strongly about it. They were sacrificing a lot in their own lives. They weren't free of criticism from the left and the black side because they still lived in privilege. They heard that all the time as did I. So they weren't gaining any warm fuzzy feelings any direction they turned. They were doing this just out of their own conviction. There were ones that joined them not necessarily in political parties. Dan Nesor represented one of those elements, but people I think of in particular, are like an

Afrikaner minister in the NGK, the Dutch Reformed Church, Reverend Beyers Naude who started the Christian Institute and was banned for years by the government, was a prominent Afrikaner who was even considered prime minister material at one stage in his life. He just broke with his tribe and his people and devoted himself to working for black rights out of the convictions of his heart.

Q: I got to meet him by the way.

McDONALD: I knew him quite well and was very embarrassed that I lost the name for a minute. So these were people who were doing things because they really felt that it was the right thing to do.

Q: I asked the question because maybe it is important to underscore the credit that history should give them for doing this. Looking back it seems they did things that we can recognize and be seen as the right thing. At the time there was no foreseeable outcome that would go in their favor so I think they deserve a lot of credit for sticking their necks out.

McDONALD: There were a lot of people like Willie Esterhuyse, Sheena Duncan, and also Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert and just quite a number of them who were lonely figures out there in a sense and who suffered, sometimes were banned.. But they were doing this purely because it was the right thing to do.

Q: Now let's go to the portfolio; quite a different subject.

McDONALD: Quite a different subject. Of course I had no idea going in what I would be covering. I had one other portfolio you might want to touch on later and that was because we now handled Rhodesian affairs since the 1972 unilateral declaration of independence from Pretoria. I was assigned Rhodesia as well. So I did reporting on that. In the first instance it was kind of following newspaper articles and things like, just reporting on things that were happening, although I did go up a couple of times to Salisbury. But when the Anglo-American proposals – which later morphed into Lancaster House negotiations - began with Henry Kissinger's first trip down there and later with subsequent developments, we got more involved. So I was actually support staff for Ambassador Steve Low from Zambia when he came in to begin negotiations. He and I spent a lot of time in Salisbury. By then I was talking to most of the key players, Joshua Nkomo, Bishop Abel Muzorewa, and Ndabaningi Sithole etc. But that is another subject.

Q: Was there a certain Mugabe at that time?

McDONALD: Oh yeah, Mugabe. He was in Mozambique for the most part, so he was being handled by our embassy there, although I did meet him on a couple of occasions, but he wasn't inside yet. Joshua was in Zambia so I met him there with Steve.

Q: They emerged to be rivals if I understand.

McDONALD: Oh yes. They had rival groups at the time ZAPU (Zimbabwe African People's Union) and ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union), and after the elections that Mugabe won and ZAPU came in second, Joshua Nkomo remained a minister and member of parliament. He had a significant role for awhile. But his supporters were decimated by the (North) Korean trained brigade that went into Matabeleland in 1984 to begin to brutally solidify the support around Mugabe. It began pretty early in the game. So that is another interesting history.

Q: It certainly is.

McDONALD: And, I might say when I was leaving the post, I was also leaving the foreign service. This is taking us ahead a bit, but one of the things Dick Moose, the then Assistant Secretary of State for Africa said to me was to offer me to open our interest section in Salisbury, which was to become Harare, Zimbabwe. Which I didn't do because I was leaving the foreign service. Jeff Davidow went up to take that position. Jeff had been a predecessor of mine in my Pretoria position. He took the Zimbabwe position, and as they say, the rest is history. He was named ambassador when we established full relations. He was also the ambassador in Zambia and then came back as deputy assistant secretary of state in the Africa bureau before going to Mexico and then became Assistant Secretary of state for Latin America.

So my portfolio in South Africa was black affairs. Now this is a very interesting time for us as an embassy in Pretoria. We had the consulates in Durban and Cape Town. So my beat, as I understood it from Ambassador Bill Bowdler, my first ambassador. My second ambassador was Bill Edmondson. Bill Edmondson by the way was in a very unusual progression. He was my DCM when I first got there under Bill Bowdler, and then was appointed Ambassador when Ambassador Bowdler left. So he moved from DCM to Ambassador in the same country. I liked them both very much, but we were in there first under President Ford and then in '78 under President Carter. It was at a time when we saw South Africa as a very valued ally in the cold war context. It was before President Reagan so there was none of the "Oh you were an ally in WWII and therefore you are an honored friend," which was Reagan's view. In that sense, it got to be worse later in terms of our closeness to the apartheid regime. But I couldn't anticipate that at the time. We were still sort of on the fence. In fact our official policy was to neither encourage nor discourage investment.

Q: It was like NATO.

McDONALD: Oh yeah. It really was. It is worth going back and bringing that language out to see how it was stated. We had a set way of talking about U.S. policy that was really on the fence.

Q: So this was in the period where there was a movement in the U.S. for disinvestment.

McDONALD: Not yet, not a serious movement yet. That movement didn't begin until some years later. But already there was attention to that issue. You may recall that

Ambassador, I mean Reverend Leon Sullivan. Actually the Sullivan Principles resulted from a time when he went down to South Africa as a member of the board of Ford Motor Company to look at their employment policy in South Africa out of his concerns for the Ford investment there. He was quite an activist. So he went down and was appalled to find some of the working conditions, apartheid in the work place, and worse than that. There were salary differentials, there were no blacks in management. Blacks didn't have pension plans and things like this. So what became the Sullivan code later, which became very controversial, was actually his attempt to respond to Ford Motor Company's presence down there, and much of that was based on what he heard from South Africans, South African blacks that he interviewed, and we helped set up many of those meetings for him. At that time, blacks were not telling him oh we want disinvestment and let everybody withdraw. At the time what they were saying was what we want is freedom in the workplace. We want an open workplace. We want opportunity. We want to be able to move into management etc. Attitudes would change dramatically in the years to come, and I think one of the real reasons they changed was not Soweto '76 What happened on June 16, 1976, but the subsequent two years where that kind of violence rippled all through the country through townships and everything else. My personal belief is that at that point in time, in the middle of 1976, the demand of black South Africans was for fairness. They, too didn't think there could be an assault on the system per se. It was only after the brutality of the response that first of all those elements of Black society would be willing to talk. I remember very distinctly the Black Parent's Association which was led by Sally Motlana, an activist and community leader who was the wife of Nthato Motlana, and a man named Manes Buthelezi, who was a Lutheran minister and not I related to Chief Buthelezi. But they were the heads of the Black Parents Association. When the first demonstrations took place on the issue of Afrikaans as a teaching medium in the schools, and kids were coming out to protest, they asked the kids to back off, not to protest. You are going to cause violence and stuff.

Q: They were the Black Parents Association.

McDONALD: The Black Parents Association, and I think although my memory is not perfect, I think there was a Sunday Times headline article where she says, Where Sally is quoted as saying, "We will talk to Jimmy Krueger, the minister of the interior and we will negotiate this issue out and everything else." The next day Krueger made a statement to the press that he would not speak with or accept a phone call from Buthelezi or Motlana. I bring that story up because by the end of the horror of that period that followed, organizations, church and school and parental organizations that represented black interests and had some power of negotiations with government, I shouldn't say power. Power is probably the wrong word, but impact in negotiations with the government on issues like this totally lost their credibility with the youth. They had been rejected by the government. The government response had been totally brutal. I think there was just despair now that there would ever be any positive response from officialdom, from government.

Q: So looking backwards you could say it was extremely stupid of the regime to radicalize people who were willing to talk.

McDONALD: Extremely stupid. Of course it did radicalize them, but in the first instance you might say, if you were Jimmy Krueger, who was a really cold character -- like when Biko died in prison, he was quoted in the papers as saying that Biko's death "leaves me cold." He is a bad guy. But what he and everyone else in government thought was that a few youth rioting in the streets would turn their attention on each other and just tear things up and eventually what does that matter. But what happened of course was it opened up a space. Because remember the ANC and the PAC had not been operating openly since their banning in '62. The reason was not only because of the effectiveness of the security police who had a Gestapo like effectiveness. But because the community didn't really accept violence as the alternative. So the police were able to have informers. The ANC could not walk freely out there in the townships. After June, '76 that opened up entirely. So by the middle of 1978 you had the first bombings in the Carlton Hotel in Johannesburg. You had the famous bombings of the electric transmission lines in the Cape Province. All targets that were non- personnel targets were beginning to re-emerge on the ANC's objectives. You could now get cadre in there to operate and they are...

Q: How is a hotel not a personnel? I mean there were people in there.

McDONALD: No, nobody was killed, they did it when it was closed. No that is not true. I think one or two people were killed, but it was at the back. The Carlton was a Hotel and an office block. They did the bombing at the office block lobby.

Q: Again just shots in the dark. I don't know enough about this. I think I heard that the Carlton was one of the few places where races could be seated together. I don't know why they had that policy.

McDONALD: Well, legally there was something called an international license you could apply for. You could apply for it if you had international people staying at your hotel and dining at your restaurant etc. And that would allow blacks to be seated.

Q: Is that one reason it was a target do you think?

McDONALD: No, I think it was a target just because it was a prominent landmark in central Johannesburg. It didn't remain a target in subsequent years because people like me were using the Carlton all the time to meet with multi-racial groups.

Q: And Jerry Vogel and Bart Rousseve who you may have known.

McDONALD: Oh yes, I knew Bart very well.

Q: This work is dedicated to Bart by the way.

McDONALD: I saw that on the thing yesterday.

Q: Well I have to open a parenthesis here. Other people, isn't it odd that we are here in the 70's and 80's looking at an intransigent party. You see where I am going. The Communist Party in the Soviet Union at the same time was making the same types of blunders and the opening took place at about the same time. Is this a coincidence that the timing was...

McDONALD: Well remember that although the Communist Party was a part of the African National congress coalition and certain individuals like Joe Slovo and...

Q: I am thinking of the Soviet Communist Party.

McDONALD: I understand. But the South African Communist Party really wasn't a major factor in the movement. But the Soviet and the Communist movement worldwide had been very supportive of the ANC. And thence the charges that it was communist. ANC was never really true. Communists had membership in it, and some individuals played important roles. So maybe I am not picking up on where your question is trying to take us, but it wasn't like this was part of the international.

Q: Not that is yet another important point. But what I was thinking though, politics aside and communist party aside, you had an intransigent regime in South Africa and in the Soviet Union and both of them began to break up at about the same time. I don't know.

McDONALD: I think it was coincidental. I have heard Brezhnev and F.W. de Klerk compared in the historical flow and maybe there was a connection between them. Maybe there was something about worldwide communism beginning to fail. Well I am changing my mind as I answer. I am changing my mind because there probably was an element of the fact that worldwide communism was losing its edge and not being seen as the threat it had been. Therefore, the reason for allowing a dictatorial and oppressive regime like the national party in South Africa to continue because they were anti communist began to lose its appeal. But that was just played out at that time. By the 1980's when disinvestment and sanctions campaign was seriously underway, that is when that comes into effect. For the South Africans it doesn't really change until '89. But in the mid 70's it was coincidental.

Q: I will just insert myself for half a minute. The strategies and tactics of public diplomacy operations in Eastern Europe and South Africa, there, there were some parallels. Dealing with the communities and civil society to the extent that was permissible,. The strategy in dealing with the two areas did have some similarities. Whether the occurrences, whether there is any logic, point taken. This could have been just a coincidence. OK, end of parenthesis. Going back to your portfolio, you mentioned the Black parents Association. Sadly losing their edge because of the radicalization. They sort of lost their middle I guess.

McDONALD: Well they got caught in the middle. The student Representative councils were being formed in all of the townships. These represented all of the radical youth. I was at the formation of several of these at the Pretoria townships, Mamelodi, Ga-

Rankuwa, Atteridgeville, etc. In fact one of their constitutions was written in my living room.

Q: Yes, you have got to get that straight. SRCs were evolved into being political actors of great significance and introduced in some cases exemplary and influential leaders. You actually witnessed the formation of these in the Pretoria area.

McDONALD: Yeah in the Pretoria area. I was aware of course of them elsewhere. I met with Soweto SRC leaders and others around the country. But in the Pretoria area, - and it was not coincidental that. Tom Hall refers to some of the people we are about to mention – because we had a local employee in our consular section named Victor, I am forgetting his last name, so I will have to leave that blank.

Q: It can be filled in later.

McDONALD: Who lived in Atteridgeville, and he had a friend named Stan Kweyama who Tom mentions who also lived in Atteridgeville. Now Stan worked for the orange, for the citrus board of South Africa. He was an older fellow with a legitimate job. He had a couple of children of his own who were high school age, teens. His place, because he was just one of those guys who let their children gather with friends at home, was an open house for student leaders. So Victor, whose name may come because I am saying all of this, was kind enough and thoughtful enough after he got to know us, to invite me and a few of my colleagues to come to Stan's house and meet the students. For awhile Richard Baltimore was the political/consular officer who I worked with. We were all about the same age and Peter Eicher the other political officer who spoke Afrikaans and covered parliament, who was the one who went back and forth every six months to Cape Town. So he was the one doing white affairs. But our responsibilities were not really that tight and we overlapped a lot. Peter and Richard also covered a lot of black affairs and had their own associations. So Peter and I went out to townships a couple of times together. In fact the first meeting with Steve Biko was Peter and I together. So we formed some friendships and it was partly social, just going out to have drinks and dance and tour the community. And from the work I had done in Uganda where we weren't facing these kinds of problems of apartheid, I knew that you started doing your job by building a trust and friendships with people. That is what we did as a good way to do our jobs. So it was the same body of students, several of who are still friends of mine today, who got caught up in the June 16 miasma when it was launched in Mamelodi and Atteridgeville, But all this began unfolding in the weeks and months following the June 16 outbreak in Soweto. Some of these students who were just people I went out to have a drink with or went to dance with or talk with or have a meal with, at Stan Kweyama's were thrown in jail. So I went down to visit them and bring them fresh fruits and magazines and chat with them and see them in Pretoria Central Prison. This formed some friendships so that when they were coming to the point of forming their student representative council, they asked me for some advice. So they actually did, I guess it was about six of them came one Sunday afternoon to my home where we sat around. They brought the drafts and everything. I will never forget as long as I live. It was one of the last times I have seen one of these

things. We actually did this on a Rollio. Do you know what a Rollio is? A Mimeograph. We typed them on a Mimeograph machine.

Q: Like Cuneiform with clay tablets.

McDONALD: Almost. So we were writing it all out by hand with some of us typing it into this Rollio, and then we ran them off on that. Amazing stuff. But remember that what was going on was the Black People's Convention was the primary organization for black youth. The game in town at the time was black consciousness. Smangaliso Mkhathshwa, and Biko of course Mamphela Ramphele and others, Barney Pityana, in particular, were the sort of brains behind all this, the inspiration and movers and shakers. There were other people. Thoko Williams, who was the editor of a magazine on black theology. The black consciousness inspiration originally came from a lot of Martin Luther King's writings but also from the New York Seminary and James Cone, who is the famous black liberation theologian.

Q: The point being the church was very much, or members of the church.

McDONALD: Members of the church were part of this and this grew, not out of a sort of a Black Panther syndrome of black consciousness, but of a black theology sense of the need for blacks to understand themselves, to be independent as a community. It was never about exclusiveness or anti-white or anything like that. It was understanding ourselves. But the SSRs where we started on this were being formed as organizational focuses, not in rivalry with the black people's convention which later became AZAPO after Biko's death. The black people's convention had grown out of dissatisfaction with NUSAS, the National Union of South African Students which had been the white forum on campuses around the country which had invited black members. But the black members were uncomfortable with it after awhile and they formed their own black group, SASO or the South African Students Organization. Then the black people's convention came out of that as a national political body as opposed to a student organization.

Q: Just along the way you mentioned that you visited students who were arrested. Was there anything in getting authorization to do that?

McDONALD: Not at that point. It became more difficult when. I started visiting other leaders. I had gotten to know people like Percy Qoboza, the editor of The World and a number of others who ended up in the Fort, the big prison in central Johannesburg. That was harder to get access to. We even tried on one occasion to see Robin Island the prisoners, but we weren't allowed at all to do that.

Q: Did your diplomatic passport give you entrée?

McDONALD: Well it gave me no entrée, but I could still ask the question.

Q: Another thing, maybe a stupid question. Biko was from the Eastern Cape I think. Was he in Pretoria because this was a national meeting?

McDONALD: No I have been confusing. I brought that in because I had met him first in King Williamstown.

Q: OK, I thought he was one of those gathered in Pretoria. So he was Eastern Cape and the ones you initially knew were the ones in Pretoria.

McDONALD: NO, every one I mentioned, Smangaliso and Barney Pityana, and Mamphela Ramphele Biko and Thoko Williams all were in Eastern Cape. They were in King Williamstown. The Black Consciousness movement was particularly strong there. The Black People's Convention was headquartered there and they also had a local self-help organization called the Black Communities Program, not to be mixed up with the black people's convention. All were King Williamstown based.

Q: Now just a bureaucratic question on King Williamstown. Your portfolio, I understand you had different types of things to cover. But you were national? These things were not done obviously out of Cape Town.

McDONALD: I am mixing things up. When I got there I was still only going to be covering black politics and it was a national thing. So I was expected to go out and meet homeland leaders as well as with township and other political leaders. At first I was kind of working the Transvaal working Pretoria and Johannesburg where I lived and where I had closest access. But then, I forgot to tell you I met Gatsha Buthelezi, the Chief in KwaZulu, in London when I was in school through a mutual friend who was the secretary for the Royal African Society and remained a friend until her death recently. And she introduced me to him. So I went down to see him in Natal within the first few months I was in the country. I had a long conversation introducing myself and everything else and started a very good relationship with him. I immediately got through my Ambassador, Bowdler a scathing message back from the consul general in Durban saying, "What is this guy doing in my territory? Gatsha is my contact."

Q: That is the old bureaucracy. We knew and loved it.

McDONALD: Absolutely. So it took me awhile to dig out of that one because I had now established the connection. Buthelezi and his political movement, Inkatha, had a representative named Gibson Thula who headed his Johannesburg offices. . Later Gibson became a good friend and I passed all my messages to Gatsha through him, so I didn't meet with Gatsha all that often out of deference to my good friend the consul general.

Q: Whoever the equivalent was in Cape Town did not have these conflicts.

McDONALD: Did not have that problem. I pretty freely met with people around Cape Town. Remember the African population in Cape Town was mostly Xhosa so there was a connection between all my Eastern Cape Xhosa contacts as well. The Eastern cape wasn't a problem at all because they weren't covered either by Cape Town or Durban.

Q: An abandoned area.

McDONALD: Well remember we once had a Port Elizabeth consulate but that had been closed some years before. So it was kind of not being covered. So as far as the way I operated in country it was the Transvaal, the Eastern Cape on a regular basis, and other things like homelands in the Transkei, Ciskei and Bophuthatswana were fine. But when I got to KwaZulu I had to be very careful how I was handling that.

Q: So you had an American Zulu content.

McDONALD: ...very early on there was a perception both by the consul general in Durban and by Chief Gatsha Buthelezi himself that I had been hornswoggled by the black consciousness movement, and I had now become an advocate of theirs. They felt that I wasn't really seeing the whole picture, what they really were and that Gatsha Buthelezi was really going to be a thorn in the side of authority and was apart of the revolution and the struggle. I didn't see it that way quite honestly, but I always tried very hard to report things as I saw them. Just get to know people and report on what I thought they were doing and thinking.

Q: Speaking of reporting, the messages again from this project, my guess is that many Americans serving in South Africa had a similar perception, that South Africa either was changing or should change and were reporting that. Now what were you getting back as feedback from Washington. I am not asking for secret stuff.

McDONALD: I am not sure I can give you the secret stuff. First of all I know that my relationship with the ambassadors was always strong. But they did want to kind of keep a lid on me and not let me get too far astray. My relationship with the CIA station chief was a bit frayed because I knew, from my days as Angola Mozambique desk officer, that there was a very strong intelligence relationship between our two countries. I was top secret cleared. I saw a lot of their reporting, all of it. They saw all of my reporting. So they knew who I was interacting with and who I wasn't interacting with. But they were seeing it from a very different angle and we had kind of a correct but tense relationship with the station chief. This plays out in several ways. It plays out with sometimes me getting called on the carpet. None of this ended up in the files anywhere but with the ambassador saying, "Steve, you have got to be careful staying out all night in the townships." And me saying, "But that is the way you get to know people." Then for instance, now we are flashing ahead a year or so, but when Biko died in September of '77, I was invited to come to the funeral by the family. I had gotten to know the family very well. His brother, his sister, his mother all knew me and liked me because they knew I had been down several times by then and had gotten to know Steve pretty well. I had stayed at his mother's house in the township of Ginsburg. I was a fun loving guy. Biko was a big whiskey drinker and we shared that love as well as the game of Rugby. He played Rugby, as did I, and that was a big thing for blacks. So our colleagues, even Mamphela Ramphele to this day when she sees me she calls me Big Steve, because he was as tall as me but much thinner. He was little Steve and I was big Steve. So I was invited down to the funeral and Ambassador Bowdler told me "no." The diplomatic crew

wasn't going down. We didn't want to get on the wrong side of the government etc. Well OK, Mr. Ambassador I understand, but I have been invited as a personal friend, so I am going to take some leave and I am going to go down." True story. So I did, and I took about three or four days for the funeral and ended up spending a whole week down there. But after I had gotten down there, I was called at my hotel, probably not by the ambassador but by the DCM who said, "Well we have just been told that the Norwegian Ambassador (or somebody) is going to attend the funeral. So Ambassador Bowdler had been instructed to be present at the funeral. So could you talk to the family and see if we could get an invitation to the funeral."

Q: Incredible.

McDONALD: Swear to God.

Q: 180 degrees.

McDONALD: Yes, 180 degrees. But it took someone else in the diplomatic corps taking the lead. At first he was so cautious. Our whole policy was one of caution. It was don't piss off the South African government because they are a valued ally. It had very little to do with trade. It was all about anti communism, all about the Cold War factor. So in the end I actually arranged for a rather moving thing to happen. Don McHenry can tell you if you ever get a chance to talk to him about this. Don was in country at that time. He was our Ambassador to the UN and he had taken over the South West Africa/ Namibia negotiations as the leader of the Five. He had been out in Namibia on a negotiation mission When he heard about the funeral going on he said he would like to come to the funeral too. So Bowdler and McHenry came down together. It was the day before the funeral, and I was able to get them a private viewing in his mother's home in the Township of Ginsburg where the Biko family lived. It was an open coffin viewing, and a few minutes alone with Mrs. Alice Biko, the mother and with Bandi, his sister, and her other brother. So it was a very moving moment. They said the right things and everything else. Then they left. That was the morning of the funeral. That was very early in the morning just before the funeral procession proceeded to go to the soccer stadium where the actual ceremony took place.

Q: I am not trying to play journalist here or dig but it seems as if people's opinions and approaches were not exactly uniform as you mention. But it seems as there were also a certain collegiality. I mean you were asked by the DCM, don't do this, and it turned out to be the right thing to do. Was there ever any...

McDONALD: I think there were some divisions in the embassy that were deeper than that but I don't think they were within the political section. That means between the political counselor, the DCM and the ambassador. I think we all felt the same about the situation there, but the ambassador and the DCM felt constrained for the obvious reasons, because of their positions. If you interviewed them about this, they probably would say that they actually liked it that I was sort of straying off reservation and making these connections and all. They used it sometimes. When we had Charlie Diggs coming down

who said he wanted to meet with black students and called on me to help bring together a group of black students. So they used my connections to do things like that.

Q: Was it not Diggs who demanded there be a Soweto library.

McDONALD: He was involved in that, yeah. We set up the reading room and so forth. And of course our showing of Roots in the reading room at Soweto, USIA showing Roots was a revolutionary event. We got raided by the police. It was just really tremendous. But there was a deep division between our administrative staff. I would also say at least a vision and perception between the economic counselor and the political section.

Q: Was this personal or professional. I mean was it the style of the person like the fellow in Durban who was territorial?

McDONALD: No, it wasn't that. In this case. He was territorial, but this was a difference in philosophy. Our administrative counselor and the GSO, in particular those two individuals. I know their names but I won't name them. They had been there a very long time. The GSO actually in the end got busted for corruption because he was making deals with Afrikaner businessmen where he was getting kickbacks. He married a South African woman and ended up staying there and the U.S. government in the end couldn't reach him because we didn't have any agreements with the South African government to extradite him. But I remember discussion with him at the marine house over a drink on Friday night in which they really felt Black South Africans were not ready to take over self government.

Q: Since when does a GSO make policy?

McDONALD: They don't make policy but you said were there differences of opinion. But they felt supported by the government because our policy was so cautious. Our policy, however we characterize it, basically did favor white South Africa. We said that white South Africa, the Apartheid government was a partner with us in the anti communist fight.

Q: Even under Carter.

McDONALD: Well under Carter it changed in rhetorical terms and the famous Vice President Mondale's Geneva statement about one man one vote, when South Africans got so pissed at us because of that. Which did really create a tension in our relations which hadn't been there before on the official level. So the whole human rights focus was basically rhetorical as it applied to South Africa; it really was, because nothing really changed on the ground in terms of how we were handling the relationships. .

Q: So this is pre constructive engagement?

McDONALD: Oh yes. That is Chet Crocker. That is much later. And Reagan. That is its own controversy.

Q: Well actually do you have a judgment of constructive engagement? Was it a step forward; a step back. That is really outside of your time that you were there.

McDONALD: It is outside of my time but I was still very involved in South Africa, and Chet was a good friend and we still are. He is on my advisory council here. But I thought it was a step backwards. Chet was an Africanist. He understood. He had been working in this area for a long time. I actually did a chapter in a book "South Africa into the 1980's," for which he and Richard Bissell were the editors. I respected his opinion and he respected mine. But when he put together constructive engagement - you go back and look at that Foreign Affairs article he wrote - it was really meant to be something other than the way it ended up being implemented and perceived of by black South Africans. The theory was we need to engage with a South African government that is doing the wrong thing in terms of apartheid policy, but because they are who they are and the world in which we work is what it is, that is the cold war, that we don't reject them; we don't break relations with them. We engage them and constructively begin to change the way their policy is.

Q: I think that is the way I always took it. I know it became a dirty word.

McDONALD: It became a dirty word because black South Africans saw it quite differently. They saw it as engaging officially with the white South African regime and leaving them aside. I think we had a very bad ambassador in the first instance. Herman Nickel, Herman the German is what we used to call him. Ambassador Herman.....

Q: Got it.

McDONALD: And I will tell you a story about him and I think it tells you exactly what I am talking about. I had by then left the foreign service. I was back in Washington heading something called the U.S. South Africa leader development program. This was in the early 80's, USSALEP I was the executive director. So I was back and forth to South Africa all the time. I never stopped going to South Africa through all these years. I was beginning to work with black community development. The black consumers union and black lawyers association etc. WASA, the black media workers association. So I was kind of Mr. South Africa. I was doing some writing and other things, working closely with Helen Kitchen who was then at CSIS heading their Africa program and on the board of USSALEP (United States-South Africa leader Exchange Program). So Herman Nickel came by to see me when he got his appointment. He had been in Newsweek Magazine, he was a pretty la-di-dah big deal affair, but he didn't know anything about South Africa to speak of. And he came to see me and I gave him a briefing and everything. It was very straight forward and fine. So when I took a trip back down to South Africa I paid a courtesy call on the ambassador which one does. He received me warmly and we sat in the embassy chatting and having coffee and talking about this and that. I was telling him as a former political officer and foreign service officer I was always looking to be helpful, my innocence. I said to him, "Well I am here in my new role but I have been around talking to all of my contacts and things and I am hearing feedback from the black

community that the embassy really doesn't have anything to do with them anymore and the kind of access that I had, and other colleagues, it was not just me, Tom Hull and others, we were out in the communities going to funerals, going to church, Meeting them out there, drinking things like that. The access we had is not being done anymore." He said, and this is as close to a quote as I can give you with all these years falling in between. He said to me, "Well Steve, first of all I invite blacks to the Fourth of July Day, and I have a job to do. I am accredited to the South African government. So you talk to USIA because they are the ones who conduct my community relations." That was his response. And when I got back I went in to see Chet because I was upset. I said, "I am very concerned about your ambassador," and I told him what happened.

Q: In this collection there are some accounts of USIS people who were there at that time. Bob Gosende among others.

McDONALD: Oh Yes I know Bob.

Q: Who has again corroborated what you say and has said the liability of an embassy if it ever had to report to Washington on its contacts he saw it, I hope somebody is not in the room, but he thought it was best not reported because the equity had been lost. That was his opinion.

McDONALD: I didn't say that to Nichol at the time, but I did say it when I reported this to Chet. I said, "And look Chet, I am not talking about some radical students. I am talking about people like Franklin Sonn."

Q: Who was the ambassador here.

McDONALD: He became the ambassador here, but he was on everybody's contact list. At that time he was the Chancellor at Peninsula Technikon. He was on everybody's invitation list. He came to every do when you had a visitor coming from Washington you trotted him out. Really he was kind of a token, but we are talking about that level of people who were used to interacting with the American community who were not being invited anymore. So it was at that level.

Q: This would be like mid 80's.

McDONALD: It would be about '82-'83. But early 80's.

Q: You might again just an anecdote, Chet Crocker came, I was program officer and he came in '96 or '97. I had to program him to be speaking in public, and I was a little concerned because I know he is associated with a policy that was unpopular with some people, but they loved they guy. It was a very multi racial audience. They were fascinated. I mean they loved him.

McDONALD: Well by '96 they would have. Had you done that earlier it would have been a much different proposition. But I am not taking anything away from Chet. First of

all, Chet is magic. He knows how to handle a crowd. But by then he had re-invented himself. I am not being unkind when I say that. I don't know what Chet says to really good intimate friends about that period but he came to realize. I can even tell you that one of his special assistants once told me in the mid 80's that he was appalled at Chet going in for visits and Chet himself wouldn't see black leaders, and only by pushing him would they get him to because he had a different focus. It was the Cubans and it was all of these macro issues they were dealing with. In his mind it wasn't that I am ignoring black South Africans, it was that I have these really important things I have got to do. But I think after all that had played out and he was out of government and out of the line of fire, if you read his book about this, I think he gave a great deal of thought. I was in up in the Poconos in a conference that was put on by one of the foundations Ford or Carnegie during that time frame in about '87. I was still at USSALEP so I was often invited to be a speaker. Chet was a speaker. It was a gathering that was beginning to look more closely at disinvestment issues and stuff. So Chet was not a popular guy in the room. He gave his address but most of these were human rights and international rule of law activists. The sort of thing the old anti apartheid coalition of TransAfrica. So they weren't friendly towards Chet. Because I knew him and I hadn't really interacted too much in recent years, I caught him one evening. It was a wonderful inn up there It was snowing. They had the fireplace roaring. It was one of those scenes out of White Christmas with Bing Crosby. I walk into the room and went up with a glass of brandy and brought Chet one and sat down by the fire with him. I said, "Chet, we are friends, and I have always wanted to, wouldn't it be better if you would just engage these guys, because you are so persuasive. Instead of stonewalling the TransAfrican people." Because Randall Robinson of TransAfrica was very hard to deal with. "Bring them around privately, engage them, and tell them what your definition of constructive engagement is and how you wanted it to play out, and accept the fact that it has been misperceived from what you intended. Miss perceived by lots of people including black South Africans." He was friendly about it, but he said, "So Steve, I am not going to do that. He really did close himself off at the time. He was under great pressure and great fire, but was of course doing what the Reagan administration wanted him to do, so he was on good stead with the secretary and with the president. So he just felt he was on a larger mission. I think in the end he felt that he succeeded in that larger mission which he did. So be damned what people thought of constructive engagement per se and he has just gone forward thinking that. He doesn't like to discuss it a lot anymore.

Q: The two things go together in most people's minds, constructive engagement and Chet Crocker. He was an assistant secretary I think. So to what extent was he doing this because the higher ups told him to do it and to what extent was it really his own notion? Any idea there?

McDONALD: I believe to be correct - you should ask him- but I think it was his own notion. I think as we say these days he wanted it branded. He wanted to bring in a new way of looking at it. I don't have a copy of the book here but if you read that book that we wrote called "South Africa into the 1980's," edited by Richard Bissell and Chet Crocker who was at CSIS at the time, he knew that apartheid was what it was. He understood that it was seen as a horrible system by most people in the world and he was

looking for an approach to justify what he thought was the best policy to influence change. The Foreign Affairs article in which he coined the phrase “constructive engagement” was published after he became assistant secretary of state, but he wrote that long before he went into the office. Now maybe he already knew he would get the job, because someone had suggested that he was in train for the job because he was in long negotiations over it. I am not sure how these things happen. It is not overnight that a president makes a decision, but rather it takes lots of conversation going on for a long time. I remember even writing a letter when the appointment was announced saying I was now out of the foreign service, but asking if there is anything I could ever do to help him. I told him that it was wonderful that we got someone in the job who really knows the job and knows Africa. Well we never lost connection or contact. I think Chet would be gracious enough to say that as well. After I had that conversation with Herman Nickel, Chet and I kind of cooled, because, well I don’t know if he was offended that I was questioning him. But I really wasn’t questioning him. I was just saying you have got an ambassador out there.

Q: At the time ideologically he had very few friends on one side or the other. It must have been pretty lonely.

McDONALD: Oh it was. But that is what I am saying; he made himself lonely. My wife and I went over to his house for dinner when he was first appointed and when I first got to USSALEP. In fact he brought me into his office at his request one time to talk to me because it was still before the Anti Apartheid Act of 1986, 1988? I think ’85-’86 was the first year Reagan vetoed it, and the second year he vetoed it again but they over rode his veto. I think it was ’88. We have to check that. Anyhow long before that he was already thinking about how he could constructively engage and how he could get USAID funding in. He brought me in to talk about how USSALEP could be a recipient of government funds? We didn’t receive government funds as a matter of policy. We wouldn’t take government funds from USAID or any other form because we wanted to be totally independent of government. He said “Look if you could talk to your board and see because what you guys do we would like to help support the community development and the impact you are having. I would like you to talk to your board and see if this could happen.” He said they were not going to open a USAID office but they wanted to begin to put USIAD money into the situation because “we know we have got to make a connection and work with the black community and assist the black community.” So I dutifully took it back to my board who totally rejected it. All I am saying is I did have that kind of relationship with him. After that, I knew his wife who was a bubbly woman whose name I have forgotten now. But after that meeting about Herman Nickel, he never invited me home again. We sort of said hello to each other in public fora but he would never invite me to the office again. Later Ashley Wills who had been in USIA down there at the same time as me, and was now still in government, was actually asked by the State Department to do an assessment of what happened during that period of Constructive Engagement.

Q: Really?

McDONALD: yes, Talk to Ashley. He actually did a classified study on what had occurred during the constructive engagement period. He interviewed me about all of this. Actually my memory was much sharper then so maybe I had a different memory of that time. I would see Chet at many fora. The African Studies Association was held here in Washington during that time, for instance, and he always kept himself apart, didn't mix with people, come up and say his piece and then off he would go. That is why I approached him that night in the Poconos and Buck hill resort. I said, "As a friend I think you are not doing yourself a service here. There are reasons why you have done what you have done and I understand all of that. There are misconceptions about it, but there are perceptions about what you have to deal with here because reality is all in the perceptions. If you just talk to people including..."

Q: The radicalization you describe in the black community in South Africa was sort of echoed in the U.S. among the Randall Robinson, the activists.

McDONALD: That is true, yeah.

Q: And where they might have been more inclined to parley and talk at one point I think it became...

McDONALD: The polarization became pretty complete.

Q: I used to take African groups to meet Randall Robinson. He was very angry. I do remember that.

McDONALD: Well Randall really was. I am not patting myself on the back, but I was considered an expert on South Africa at the time, one of the few people who had lived and worked with black community members at that time down there. Now it is a silly thing to say. Everybody in the world who goes to South Africa spends lots of time and knows everybody. I know it is with tongue in cheek I am saying it. So when I first took the USSALEP position I called Randall up And said, "I am going to be in town now I would like to come over and talk to you and see what kind of synergies we might find to work together." I did that with everybody. Randall wouldn't see me.

Q: That is what I would guess.

McDONALD: I was close to Ted Kennedy and close to Nancy Kassebaum and others. I think the whole CAAA passage in the end was a remarkable tribute to bipartisanship and that although the Randall Robinsons played their role and the American Committee on Africa and others played their role, if it hadn't been for Lugar and Kassebaum and other moderate Republicans working with their counterparts, none of that would have ever happened.

Q: Kassebaum was from Kansas. How did she get into this?

McDONALD: By her aide Phil Christiansen, who was her state aide at the time.

Q: That explains everything.

McDONALD: Phil is a good friend and he is a bit crazy and he was an activist and really cared about this.

Q: That is enormously explanatory. I had no idea. OK that explains that. Maybe I should go have a talk with Phil.

McDONALD: You would enjoy it I will tell you.

Q: He was a foreign service officer for a number of years.

McDONALD: He was a foreign service officer for just a couple of years. I never knew him in that context. I think he worked with Helen Kitchen who was my predecessor at USSALEP. In fact I think he may have worked for USSALEP for awhile, and that is how I met him. But that was before he got on the Hill.

Q: Yes, now we are recording. It is Dan Whitman interviewing Steve McDonald. It is October 26, 2011 continuing from where we left off a few weeks ago, who knows how many weeks. But in the last discussion Steve, we were talking about USSALP, Ashley Wills. I will just toss out some of these things that we discussed. The Anti Apartheid act under Reagan. You mentioned the role of Nancy Kassebaum and Phil Christiansen in policy. I am just tossing these things out. Some of the international visitors. You were political so you weren't managing the program but you were giving valuable input.

McDONALD: Yeah I was political officer and, as I explained, was covering the black community. We re asked to nominate candidates. Now we didn't manage nor make the final selections. Actually we didn't even play a role in the selection process, but the ambassador and USIA asked us to nominate candidates, so I would be asked to write names and make suggestions.

Q: In some embassies they have a committee once a year and people go to a poker game and

McDONALD: I think they had a committee but I wasn't on the committee.

Q: Well I guess the bottom line is you did make some nominations. Some of your nominations were approved. Tell us about the process, any individuals that come to mind who were able to travel and do this or the type. Let's say the type of individuals that you felt could benefit from the program.

McDONALD: Well this is really imperfect memory, all these years later. I think what I was probably trying to do, my value added was reaching out to a community of activists that the embassy didn't really normally tap. But it was limited in the numbers even of the types of people we could even approach on that. Some were obvious like suggesting

Percy Qoboza the editor of The World, the first black newspaper, which was closed by the government, and then became the editor of the second black newspaper which was called the Sowetan.

Q: It is still there I think.

McDONALD: It is still there, yeah. I think he worked for the Rand Daily Mail as well. But included some others, but the famous one who didn't go was Steve Biko. I think I mentioned this before because I did talk with Steve about it. He was very attracted by the opportunity and saw it as a way of really widening his world because he had been a great reader of Martin Luther King and James Cone and the whole liberation theology body of work, and he wanted to go talk to these people. But he said "I have got to check with my people and see if it is going to be OK with BPC, the Black People's Convention." But he was extremely positive. In the end he did not turn it down. He said, "Not this year; next year." And next year never came.

Q: I have to ask the year because...

McDONALD: He died in 1977 I think. It would have been in 1976 or early '77 that I made the offer to him or had the discussion with him, I never ran that by the ambassador or anybody else. I was going to when I knew what his response was. I am trying to think. I don't remember any others.

Q: What actually since you mentioned it and we are all in hypothesis here. What do you think the ambassador might have said? Would the ambassador have been cautious about sending a lightning rod type of visitor?

McDONALD: The ambassador at that time was Bill Bowdler. I think he wouldn't be at all upset with me if I called him a cautious man.

Q: Ambassadors are supposed to be cautious.

McDONALD: But he was known to listen to reason after awhile, so we had lots of discussion around things. I don't know, but I think in the end he probably would have accepted it, but of course that is before we tried to run the gamut of trying to get him out of the country. The authorities would probably never let him go anyway.

Q: Oh the exit visa and passport and all that. You said something at the very beginning which I wasn't aware. You said the black community had not been previously tapped for the IV program.

McDONALD: Not the black community. I said the activists within the community. So we didn't have people from the student's representative councils and from the townships and from the various city councils. People like that. We pretty much stuck with the kind of mainstream, educators etc.

Q: So you were venturing into a new area here. That was actually your assigned job.

McDONALD: Yeah, that is what I thought it was.

Q: And you did so and we will never know. And we also will never know how Biko might have benefited. It is a sad thing to think about. So that is a very famous late person. Then you mentioned the editor of Sowetan. Are there any others that we need to mention who stand out?

McDONALD: There are none popping out to mind right now. Maybe as we go along I will think and come back tomorrow.

Q: My question earlier was what types of person would benefit. I think you have answered that by saying that you were beginning to look at activists in the student movement and elsewhere. Did you do that, tell me if this is a fair question or not. Was it a sense of social justice on your part? Was it a sense that history might change and now we use this expression being on the right side of history. It is a recent expression. Do you remember what was going through your mind when you delved into this area?

McDONALD: Well I was struck, moved by the situation in Black South Africa. I didn't know, I had no inkling that in my lifetime history would change that situation. No one could foresee what was going to happen in '89 and '90 etc. I mean the bulwark of Afrikanerdom and National party rule and the efficiency of the police state that they had created around them was at its peak in the mid 70's when I got there. There was no seeing your way through that. So I was trying to get some sense of social justice balance in my mind. We had a policy at that point in time driven originally by Nixon and pocked up by Ford and then not dramatically changed in any way by Jimmy Carter even though he cited human rights as one of his driving motivations. We had a policy of basically live and let live. We saw the South African government as an ally in the cold war and we weren't going to rock that boat. So such statements as neither encourage nor discourage investment from the U.S. in South Africa are things we said about our policy. You can go back into the history books and look that one up.

Q: Is that a phrase people used?

McDONALD: Yes, that one pops to mind because it was an official phrase. I was something that was said by State Department spokesmen on a regular basis. So that- and I think I have talked about this already Dan - our relationships with the likes of student leaders and the more radical leadership in the Black People's Convention, and AZAPO later and the PAC and the ANC were not really existent at that point in time on the ground in South Africa itself. Those relationships were kept very distant and under wraps. I was allowed a little bit of a free hand and probably took liberties that my ambassador would not always be comfortable with, just in my relationships that I built over time. So I was very cognizant of the growing anger and the real lack of social justice in that country, and thought probably on the one hand that it was the right thing to do, but on the other hand that my country, the United States was being perceived by the majority

of people in that country, South Africa, as on the wrong side. That is what I was reporting about then. I did want black South Africans to see a different face of American and I did know enough about the international visitor program to know that they would see if they went to America, social activists and civil rights advocates and all this stuff. They would be regenerated and inspired and also know that America was not just the face of officialdom that they had been seeing. Even when I came to South Africa, although it was a long time since the American ambassador prior to Bowdler, who was a Texas millionaire appointed by President Nixon named John Hurd had famously gone grouse hunting on Robben Island because he was invited by foreign Minister Pik Botha. Hurd, I understood, was sort of taken aback that anybody cared he had done that. "I like to hunt you know, the foreign minister invited me," he reportedly said, and added "what is the problem." So that was kind of the image we had that I was trying to counteract.

Q: I understand. It is not up to me to defend Jimmy Carter. During the human rights policy much criticized for its unequal application, there were a few countries that were threatened by him. I think Zaire was one. Now I don't know if he ever followed through on those threats. Do you think that when you put Carter in the same category. I rephrase that. In that succession of presidents where there was no major policy change, do you have any thoughts about how Carter might think of it looking back at this point? That is a double hypothesis. I retract that question also.

McDONALD: Probably part of his response would be "if you had given me a second term it would have been different." Seriously, because the rhetoric had changed already, and you will remember Vice President Mondale's famous speech in Geneva about "one man, one vote" which was his response when cornered by reporters as to what the US wanted in South Africa, I forget what he was doing in Geneva at the time but it was some international event. We were still using that kind of the rhetoric reflected in the NATO charter, self determination for all peoples as what we believed in. When asked "what do you mean by that," Mondale actually said, "Well of course what we mean is one man, one vote." That exploded things down in South Africa for us. The tension that arose between our governments was rather major.

Q: Was he talking about South Africa?

McDONALD: Yeah, it was about South Africa. It was a specific question about South Africa. There had been a meeting about South Africa. P.W. Botha had come up to the meeting. It was a meeting on things South African. I can't remember the details of it, but Mondale was pushed into that response by reporters talking about South Africa. So there was an immediate protest by the South African government, "What are you trying to do." They even took an action against us. You probably remember that they declared persona non grata one of our military attaches just to make a statement against us. Things did get pretty sour and never really totally recovered, because as we go forward in time and the war in Angola heats up and South Africa feels betrayed by us because they thought we were going to support them in their incursions into Angola against the Cubans etc. So all of that really began to sour things. P.W. Botha was Minister of Defense at that time and was playing a major role in the Angolan war. He would later say publicly quite frequently

that the United States betrayed him in Angola. But that was the beginning, and that all began under Carter obviously. So Carter sort of rhetorically was on the right page and when people finally called his bluff so to speak, with that interview with Mondale, the Administration did say the right thing in my mind, and that began to create the tension. But it was coming at the same time, it was like '78-'79 around there after the election of '78 for Carter, so it must have been '79 or '80 that the Mondale statement was made and the nature of our relations began to change.

There was also the growth of the Verlichte Afrikaner pressures from within as well.

Q: That was the enlightened.

McDONALD: The enlightened views which of course came mostly in the person of people like Willie Esterhuysen at the University of Stellenbosch and Beyers Naude at the Christian Institute. The white opposition had always been there in the Democratic party with Helen Suzman and others, but the important pressure on government came from the growing questioning from Afrikanerdom. Johan Heyns, the famous NGK (Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk) domineer (minister) who was assassinated later...

Q: The father of Christof Heyns.

McDONALD: Yes, and etc. So those voices were beginning to be heard too. Fleur de Villiers is a name you may or may not recall but was a writer for the Sunday Times, an Afrikaner who began to be very critical of government. So those kinds of pressures were beginning to build. That came at the time when the Carter Administration was there, so the tone did change dramatically. But in essence, the policy didn't much change. It began to open things up in terms of our dialog with blacks so that what I thought was a fight in the beginning when I had to decide whether or not to tell the ambassador what I am doing here and who I am meeting opened up. By the same token by '82 we had Reagan in office and the tone went right back to where it was pre-Carter.

Q: And yet one of the ironies is that the legislation came under Reagan didn't it?

McDONALD: That's right.

Q: Now this may have been sort of despite him, but...

McDONALD: It wasn't despite him; it was because of him I think. The growth of the disinvestment movement and the withdrawal of banking and other international linkages was not a big deal in the 70's, with no talking about it as an international movement or within black leadership in South Africa. I actually had a conversation with Desmond Tutu about '77-'78 somewhere around there talking about the Sullivan code of employment and that sort of thing. He said to me that he thought very much that was the direction things ought to go. It should be equal wages and benefits and training and a chance to move up in management. It should be fairness as opposed to withdrawal. I was to speak to him years later, I knew him quite well, and when he was here in the United States and

quite a spokesman for the divestment campaign in the 80's I reminded him of that conversation. He said, "Oh no, I didn't want it to go this way, but when Reagan came into power we had no other option but to start to call for divestment because we knew that nothing else could move this off of Square one." Desmond Tutu said that to me. So he was the first to say, privately what he wouldn't say publicly back in the 1970's, I don't know what he would say now. I haven't talked with him about this issue in years because it doesn't matter much anymore. He privately would say I know who is being hurt by divestment and that is the black community. We all knew that. So the propaganda of the corporations, Exxon and others, who didn't want divestment to happen, used this argument and there was a grain of truth to it. But the point is divestment was the lesser of two evils, because Tutu and others thought that the only way they were going to get the United States to stop being the best friend in the world to South Africa was by this kind of pressure.

Q: That does explain an irony or a paradox. The other I believe the Reagan administration took credit for the arms embargo, or let's say it happened at the same time. Is that a little bit sophistic. It happened I believe the U.S. stopped selling weapons to the South African regime under Reagan. Now this could be a coincidence it happened at this time.

McDONALD: I think it was probably a coincidence. I don't know about taking credit for that. It is quite true the CAAA, the Comprehensive Anti Apartheid Act passed under Reagan, but it passed over his vetoes. People forget that. He vetoed it once and there weren't able to over ride it. They reintroduced it in the next year and they over rode the veto that time. And I mentioned to you before there are some things I think are extremely important in this history because when the CAAA was finally passed in 1988 you had this state of emergency. Soweto was long behind us from '76 but now you had the '82-'84 state of emergency and all of the famous necklacings and the killings and all of this. I remember when Nightline came down and broadcast for a week long with Ted Koppel in South Africa showing this stuff nightly on the news. It was awful stuff, as horrid as anything we see out of Libya and everything. Now people kind of have forgotten that now but that had such an impact on the American viewing audience. You of course had the ongoing activism of the American committee on Africa and TransAfrica and Randall Robinson and liberal members of congress like Howard Wolpe and Ted Kennedy and Don Payne and the black caucus members, Charles Diggs in particular, who were driving this hard, but they were never going to over ride a Reagan veto. The key came as it did later on other pieces of legislation on Africa that have gotten passed like the Africa Growth and Opportunities Act and things like that. When things were at such a point where they could cobble together a non partisan coalition, the key drivers on that were Richard Lugar and Nancy Kassebaum. Of course there were moderate Republicans who had a conscience and knew a few things and wanted to find a way through. But I think people were influenced not only by the horror Ted Koppel and other news media were showing now on a nightly basis, but they had also been highly influenced by Desmond Tutu himself. It wasn't just the protest in front of the South African embassy where people like Harry Belafonte and labor union people were getting arrested, and people could connect to that kind of protest. But Tutu was such a different, non- threatening

character. I really feel strongly about this. He won his Nobel Peace Prize. He was now here in residence in at the theological seminary in New York, and was appearing on the news constantly and speaking at churches all around the country all the time. His good humor had a way of disarming people. But his firmness about what needed to happen there really started to change people's perceptions because up to then it was an unknown. People thought "Are we really talking about a bunch of black communists revolting down there who are going to kill and maim and do awful things". That doesn't track anywhere. But now it was "Look at this nice gentleman telling me about this revolution." So all of that pulled together with the really constructive role of Kassebaum and Lugar in taking the lead on the Republican side to get the veto override to happen.

Q: Most interesting. Fascinating. So the importance of one person and his ability to be a communicator it is impossible not to be charmed by Tutu. He charms Afrikaners and everybody. He is always there with a joke.

McDONALD: There were a lot of other South African spokespersons who were coming with the same kind of message. I am thinking of Allen Boesak who was also speaking in churches, and was a man of the cloth, but didn't have anywhere near the impact. That was sort of brothers in arms thing where he was marching with Jesse Jackson and that sort of thing. So it didn't resonate to the sort of average middle class white American out there who was kind of fearful of all of this but always wants to do the right thing. I really think Tutu had a major impact on that demographic. And remember you had other spokesmen giving the opposite view. Chief Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi was here in the US all the time. Exxon put his daughter in college and supported her throughout, paying the chief indirectly, and he was here arguing against disinvestment. But others, I can't even think of all of them. There was this famous, Lucy Mvubelo who was a minor labor leader who US corporations put up to talk against disinvestment. There were some others like that. I can't think of all the names anymore.

Q: Do you have an opinion when Harvard, when Derek Bok actually, was convinced by individuals we know to actually oppose disinvestment and rather to put the money into scholarships for black South Africans. Again in retrospect that looks like a very clever thing to do. It was very bold and very unpopular at the time. We may be way off the track of your own.

McDONALD: I was not involved in that obviously. But I do remember that time. I was at USSALEP and later I was to move over to the Aspen Institute. I had long since left the foreign service, but I was still very involved in South Africa, down there all the time, back and forth all the time. So I was often involved as a speaker on campus, Dartmouth, Harvard, Yale and other places where the disinvestment movement was very strong. I will never forget the apartheid village on the commons at Dartmouth when I went up there to speak one winter, where the kids had camped out for months in a shanty town they had built in solidarity with the people of South Africa.

Q: Apartheid village.

McDONALD: Dartmouth.

Q: It gets so cold up there.

McDONALD: Oh it was cold up there. There were a couple of feet of snow on the ground when I left. I will never forget that as long as I live. These kids, talk about activism. Talk about our “Occupy Washington” group. These guys have nice little tents out there and someone comes to feed them every night.

Q: Yes, insulated.

McDONALD: But all by the way of saying I don’t really know what drove Bock but what he did was in the same vein as a lot of other people were thinking . First of all on the corporate side, the Sullivan Code side, remember they increased their enforcement a lot and monitored companies and sanctioned companies who didn’t follow the code, so all by way of trying to raise salaries and equalize salaries and do training. Then in terms of CAAA itself, remember there was a component in CAAA that wasn’t just disinvestment. It provided aid to the victims of apartheid. So it basically created our USAID program down there. It wasn’t officially in place until a few years later, but it opened the door for that with money for black education, money for community development. I know of that because I got into that when I was still at USSALEP.

Q: Now we have missed a step here to get you from the foreign service to USSALP. Let’s connect those two dots.

McDONALD: Yeah. Well the career projection is a part of this isn’t it.

Q: We want to know where you were when you....

McDONALD: Well I decided to leave the foreign service when I was still in South Africa in 1979. When I actually separated from the foreign service it was probably January or February of 1980. I offered my resignation while I was in South Africa. It had a lot to do with South Africa, but not in the context we are speaking. It wasn’t about policy or being disgruntled because I didn’t think we had the right policy. It was several things. I had been support officer for the Rhodesian Zimbabwe transition talks starting with Kissinger and the Anglo American proposals right through to when Andy Young was running it and the lead up to it became Lancaster House agreement, including a meeting in Malta. I was in and out constantly reporting on the round and meeting with Muzorewa, Sithole, and Joshua Nkomo. Mugabe was not included, but....

Q: Mugabe’s rival.

McDONALD: Yes, ZAPU. Joshua Nkomo. I also was supporting the beginning of the efforts of the five on Namibia or Southwest Africa.

Q: So you were doing this as political officer.

McDONALD: As political officer because remember we didn't have anybody in Rhodesia at the time. After the unilateral declaration of independence in '72, we had closed all missions there. So I think the Finns or somebody were representing us. So doing all of this plus the work I had been doing with black South Africa sort of assessing the stuff and what was going on in that community and all the reporting I had been doing and everything else, I got to the point where I felt two things. First of all, as the guy in the field, I didn't expect to change policy, but the guy in the field wasn't even being listened to. When Kissinger came through, he didn't even talk to me. I had to give Andy Young a little bit of credit because he and his chief of staff, Stoney Cooks, at least had me in the room in the discussions. But I, the guy who knew everything there was to know about this, and I am not being egotistical to say that, was not a part of the policy side of these discussions. They brought their own people along with them, and they talked to the ambassador, but I was not included in the dialog around these negotiations. Then second of all, I had come to the conclusion even at this early stage of my career that most of the people around me were just hell bent on securing their jobs and getting through a nice career towards that pension eventually. All they wanted was to not rock the boat. Most people's lives revolved around going to the office, coming back from the office, going to the Marine House on Friday nights for drinks and going out to play tennis on Saturday, whatever it was. Entertaining each other at Brais and stuff. The community was pretty closed.

Q: If I said it is still that way I would sound bitter so I won't.

McDONALD: I have an opinion about that. I just said to myself that I had done well and had received praise for my reporting and I had gotten good commendations. But I knew I was going to work my way into trouble eventually. I knew I was going to be a dissident of some sort. So I decided 10 years was enough. I was 34 years old. It was a hell of a good time to make a change in my life. I was quite flattered because Secretary of State Cyrus Vance sent me a personal letter to make an appeal that I not resign. Dick Moose was Deputy Assistant secretary of state for Africa at the time and called me into his office and made me a couple of offers that were quite interesting. But, my decision wasn't about what I was going to do next or anything, I really had decided it was going to be frustrating for me. Let me take another track. And I did that without any job waiting for me. I hadn't gotten an offer from any big corporation. General Electric hadn't called me, like some of my foreign service colleagues who got...

Q: A golden parachute, yeah.

McDONALD: So I quit and I went back to Missouri, taught for a year. I did some consultancy work. I stayed involved with South Africa because one of the things I did was work as a consultant for the Ford Foundation's study on "South Africa: Time Running Out." Remember the volume they came out with. I was a key consultant for that for about a year and a half. I did some of the writing and set up the whole trip of the commission that was established, which was headed by Franklin Thomas, the president of Ford at the time, and other prominent American academics, Alan Piper of Carnegie was a

member as were others. It was really a hell of a project to be involved in and again it got me back to South Africa. I was for six months again in South Africa the first year I was out of the foreign service doing that study. But it was not until a year and a half later, in early '82 that I got a job offer from USSALEP. Helen Kitchen, a name who I am sure you know, was head of USSALEP and would go on and take over CSIS from Chet Crocker when he became assistant secretary of state. Helen knew me. We had worked together a bit, and had been out in the field a few times. She asked me if I would be interested in taking over at USSALEP because she was leaving, so I said Yes. I took over as head of USSALEP. That was obviously directly related to all the time I had spent in South Africa, the expertise that I had gotten. But I think It was also related to the board's desire to change the focus of USSALEP. Historically, it had been the U.S.-South Africa Leader Exchange Program and had focused on bringing South Africans to the U.S. We would change that name while I was there to the Leader Development Program. We would get more focused on community development rather than exchanges because the original motivation was inter racial, break down the barriers and get blacks and whites together in different fora and exchanges etc. That had been valuable in the 1960s and 70s, but it was beginning to be a different world now. So that was fun and I spent about five years doing that. But it was a time of great, fervent turmoil around issues driven by the disinvestment...

Q: You mentioned AID. USSALP was a private organization of course funded by a variety of sources.

McDONALD: Right, pretty small potatoes in today's world. Carnegie and Ford were funders. Some corporations funded us. We had some General Electric money. I can't name them all, but most of it was foundation funding.

Q: I remember it as being based in DC.

McDONALD: It was. But we had an office also in Johannesburg. Actually in Pretoria when I took over, but we moved to Johannesburg.

Q: Makes more sense, that is where the people are. So '82 to '87 more or less.

McDONALD: At which time I actually left USSALEP. I had a disagreement with the board on what I saw as not being as involved as it should be with the community. And again because I don't plan things ahead, I left without another position in mind. But Dick Clark, former Senator Dick Clark, was just forming the Southern Africa policy forum at Aspen institute and heard I was on the market and signed me up. So I went straight to the Aspen Institute with about a four month hiatus in between.

Q: Now the five years at USSALP, so it served it looked like the right thing in '82 when you took Helen Kitchen's offer. You felt that the when you say it didn't have enough engagement. In other words you are saying that their previous practice of mixing South Africans was more compelling to work directly with black communities.

McDONALD: Yeah, that is the direction we were moving when I was hired. We had a man named Willem Grobler heading our office. You can guess from the name, without knowing, that he was Afrikaner. He was a former South African foreign service officer who had headed our office down there for a very long time. That is when we were in Pretoria. Within a year I had at least gotten an agreement with the board to move to Joburg and change leadership. Grobler was a fine guy but we needed to move from someone who knew the white government well to someone who knew the black community. We hired a white man named Mike Sinclair, who was a young activist who had worked with the community and was well known to the Mass Democratic Movement at the time and AZAPO and the other political bodies. So that gave us more relevance down there. I was trying to move us towards relevance. In the beginning we sort of stayed with the exchanges, but we were able to make them more meaningful. We started the young academics program which brought over a mixture of blacks and whites. We started a young lawyers exchange which was working directly with the black lawyers association and brought over black lawyers for training. These were month long visits.

Q: BLA I think.

McDONALD: Yes, Black Lawyers Association. But there were many other entities like MWASA, the media workers association of South Africa, the Black Consumers Union and many others that Mike Sinclair and I were establishing relations with. We wanted work with them, but do something that had meaning for them. I mean we sponsored a Neiman Fellow for instance every year. Now they had been all white to begin with. We had solved that but it still was the old thinking. OK, one year the Fellow was white and the next year he or she was black. Well what about colored and how do you figure that out. So it is white, black, colored, Indian.

Q: You have to wait four years for your turn.

McDONALD: Wait four years for your rotation. So I wanted to broaden that. So one of our former Neiman Fellows. Zwelakhe Sisulu, who was the son of Max Sisulu, the brother of ANC President Walter Sisulu, had come to the US as a Neiman. Zwelakhe was very good and was working at that time for the Rand Daily Mail and the Sowetan. He had started the Media Workers Association of South Africa, which was all black. It was black consciousness leaning but that was not what was important, the politics. We wanted to start doing the training there, not bring them over here. We thought that would be more meaningful. We got the University of South Carolina Law School to bring over actual trial lawyers. We were doing trial lawyer mentoring and training with the Trial Lawyers association. Really good stuff and we were moving more and more in that direction. I think the board just got really uncomfortable with it because the board was mostly much older folks, now that I am a much older folk myself, I have to be very careful about saying that. Some had been involved from the onset of USSALEP in 1957-'58 onward and saw this as just going beyond the mandate that we were supposed to be about because it was not involving blacks and whites together anymore. It was focusing on the community. It did the same thing with the black consumers union and some others. So it was just growing tension between us that got me frustrated. Then Mike Sinclair left to

come to the United States because he got very frustrated with it, and I hired a colored South African named Garth le Pere. So for the first time we also got a black to head the South Africa board, Franklin Sonn, later to be ambassador to the U.S., became chairman of the board on the South African side. David De Villiers, a progressive Afrikaner lawyer, had been the chairman since God had invented the earth so this was a major change on the South African side and created a lot of tension. Some of the whites on the South African side were lobbying our people saying this is going too far and threatening to resign. I guess they felt the solution to it was to get rid of me.

Q: Well the history books, Frank ____, Mandela. We did pretty well there.

McDONALD: I never had any reason to doubt the course of events. But then my next job pretty well keep me involved in South Africa, and that came around just as changes were coming in South Africa. We played a very important role in that series of events. We started at the Aspen Institute a project called the Southern Africa Policy Forum, and this is Dick Clark's special role he played with all the Carnegie money that supported what he did. He had been doing it with the Soviet Union and then with Indochina and particularly Vietnam which were, of course, key issues at the time for the United States. Then at the request of members of Congress, Dick began a program on South Africa and asked me to manage it for him. The purpose was to bring members of Congress together with key players from South Africa to inform the members about developments there. It wasn't for staff. It wasn't for anyone outside of Congress. It wasn't to be on the news. We would gather maybe 25 members of the House and Senate, Republican and Democrat, and conduct 3-4 day seminars. When we first had done this we couldn't meet in South Africa because of apartheid situation. So in our first meetings, in 1989 we chose Bermuda. That may sound a little like a boondoggle but it was because the South Africans from South Africa could travel there easily. It was a part of the Commonwealth so those who were in exile in Zambia or London could also get there easily, and it was very inexpensive and easy for members of Congress to get to. But a nice place to meet. Then we found out something that we didn't know. The very first meeting we had there, in which Thabo Mbeki was representing the ANC, we got a lot of the other key players. Mandela was still in jail at that time. But, we had Helen Suzman, Nthato Motlana, Fikile Bam, Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert, Johan Maree, Oscar Dhlomo, Willie Esterhuysen, Smangaliso Mkhathshwa, Murphy Morobe, Colin Eglin, Cyril Ramaphosa, Mamphela Ramphele, Johan Heyns, Franklin Sonn, and Helen Zille, amongst others. The National Party's senior representative in the first meetings was Gerrit Viljoen, Minister of Constitutional Development. The Conservative party was represented by Koos Van der Merwe. Then we had others like Dikgang Moseneke representing the PAC. We had everybody represented. It was really amazing, and all these members of congress. But when the Conservative Party guy, Koos Van der Merwe, got there after they agreed to be involved – remember they were far right of the NP, and they got there one night Koos comes in and says, "We are happy to be here. We assume you chose this because you know that there is the Afrikaner cemetery and prisoner of war camp here." I hadn't the foggiest idea. It turns out it was used during the Boer War as a prisoner of war camp for captured Afrikaner rebels.

Q: Bermuda?

McDONALD: Bermuda. There is an actual cemetery with Afrikaner dead in it. There is a small but very evoking little museum that has been run by a descendent - like a great grandson - of one of the guys who passed away there. These Conservative Party guys all knew it. They thought we must have know it as well and that was kind of our sop to them to honor Afrikanerdom or something.

Q: It worked.

McDONALD: Well I didn't know but it was to our credit. They said, "Well can we have some time off on this afternoon to go and see it." "I think it would be a great idea, but let's invite everybody." I swear to god, everybody went. I have pictures of Thabo Mbeki and Koos Van der Merwe at the cemetery. These guys got there together and then being addressed at the museum by this Afrikaner descendent who was talking about the war and the horror of the concentration camps. They were brutal.

Q: I know. That is why they were created.

McDONALD: So interesting things happened. Anyhow, so we did that. We had a number of meetings before the unbanning of the parties and the release of Mandela and Suzulu, etc. Then we were able to hold it inside South Africa for the first time. Then we had the parties represented for the first time at the highest level. We had Mandela and we also had for the first time de Klerk. We hadn't gotten de Klerk there yet as president. We also had Buthelezi instead of just his representative, Oscar Dhlomo.

Q: The Aspen Institute got this together.

McDONALD: The Aspen Institute. Yes. I have had subsequent conversations with Thabo Mbeki and others, Constitutional Court justice Dikgang Moseneke, and Gerrit Viljoen who was minister for homelands development and a key player in the whole constitutional negotiations process, CODESA in '92-'94. I have had them just talk with glowing praise about those Aspen Institute meetings. As a matter of fact they did a testimonial for Dick Clark about this, the role that this played in the whole transition for South Africa, that this was the first time these people met face-to-face as human beings, got to talk to each other, carried on relationships after they got back to South Africa. Because we had a series of meetings where they got to meet over and over again. I know that Willie Esterhuysen and his people were doing some similar work at the same time in Lusaka and in London, but it all contributed in the same way to the kind of opening that was going on.

Q: Where was Idasa (Institute for Democracy in Africa) at this time?

McDONALD: Idasa didn't exist yet.

Q: Oh it didn't exist.

McDONALD: Well, it came about long about then. It was started by Alex Boraine and Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert. Now Van Zyl Slabbert was also involved in our meetings, Boraine was not. We knew both well, but we had to choose a single representative from each group, so Van Zyl Slabbert represented Idasa. We couldn't have so many people come. So we never had more than about 10-12 South Africans at a time.

Q: So you had members of Congress present?

McDONALD: Yes. I even have some of those reports here which gives the names of the Members who were there. They are all hard copy reports. I don't know, they might be at home. They might not be here. I brought in some of my old literature. I will take a quick look. We had anywhere from 15-25 Members at each meeting, both Republicans and Democrats, House and Senate. It was quite unusual.

Q: Mandela was in these meetings? I don't understand.

McDONALD: Yes, he was in the one in 1991 after he was released. That is my most famous Mandela story. Have I told you my Mandela story?

Q: No, Released in 1990 I thought.

McDONALD: 1990, but we went on to 1992 with this effort.

Q: So shortly a year or two after his release, you had him and de Klerk in a meeting together.

McDONALD: Him and de Klerk before he was president. He was president of the ANC.

Q: Yes, he was elected in '94.

McDONALD: This was '91.

Q: I have not heard the story.

McDONALD: Well let me tell the story and that will be the end of our interview. For today. So what happens I had gotten to know Thabo Mbeki quite well over the years, I had met him a couple of years before in '76. Thabo and I are pretty good friends. In making all the arrangements for the conference which took place in Cape Town at the Mount Nelson Hotel in late April of '91. . So we lined everybody up and we knew who was coming. We had like 25 members of Congress and so Mandela had agreed, through Mbeki. I hadn't talked to Mandela directly, but he had agreed to take part. He is going to come down. He is not going to attend the whole conference. He is going to come down for one day. Of course that is OK with everybody. So Mbeki calls me. I am already in South Africa, Cape Town, He calls from Johannesburg. He says, "OK, Steve here is what we are going to do. We are coming down on a private jet. We are not going to let ANC people know we are going to be there because he might be mobbed. He will never get out

of the airport for God's sakes. So what I would like to do is to have you bring the car and driver onto the tarmac and come back to the freight area there and pick him up and bring him back." So that is exactly what happens. I drive in, get it all arranged. Of course everything is being done with the security and everything else, so we are clearing everything. So I pull up and there is the little jet commander, owned by Anglo-American, and the steps are already down. I pull up with the car. I get out of the car and Thabo comes to the top of the stairs and comes running down and greets me, shakes my hand, looks inside to make sure there is no body else there but the driver and then he turns and waves. Mandela comes down and I am introduced to Mandela, and he sits down in the car. I sit in the back seat with him. We have a driver. So we drive to the Hotel from the airport, which is quite a distance, probably about an hour's drive. So I start doing my job. "Good to see you Mr. President. Let me tell you what to expect. We have so and so from congress, and I named the members. They have met with Buthelezi yesterday and de Klerk the day before, and are looking forward to meeting with you. The format is fairly informal. You would be expected to say 10 or 15 minutes of opening remarks but what they want is an exchange with you. Just an informal exchange to hear your views on how things are going and what is happening. So I finish all that, then I say Mr. President. You know the route.

Q: Well no. I have been to both places.

McDONALD: The airport is out on the flats behind Table Mountain. So you drive through a pretty desolate area of townships and industrial crap and smokestacks and stuff. So then I get a little more personal and say to him, "Well my own history is I have been working in South Africa for many years. I know your wife Winnie. She and I met back in the 70's. She and I met in Brandfort. So I make small talk. He is not saying much, just nodding. And grunting when it is appropriate. Then as we come around by the University of Cape Town there on the curve that is going to take us into the city and you look out over the harbor and way out there in the distance is Robben island. But you are also just seeing the edge of Table Mountain and stuff. Well my next thought was to tell him that I was going to make it a more meaningful experience for the members of congress because I had set up some visits to Crossroads squatter camp and Khayelitsha Township and also was going to take them up to Table Mountain. So I said that to him. He says, speaking for the first time since we got in the car, well the first time something was said other than just a response to what I am saying, "You know when I was a young man in 1949" don't hold me to the year, "I climbed that mountain. Every year when I was out there," and he points out to Robben Island, "I stood there and looked back at that mountain and said, 'I will one day be on top of that mountain again.'" Now needless to say even today this brings a little tear to my eye. But I was dumbstruck then. I never said another word all the way in. When we got to the hotel and Mandela and I got out and Dick Clark is there and everybody is there. So he is whisked away from me. So I have got a nice picture of him here at the conference. That is this picture here at the conference. This picture isn't the end of the story though because in this other picture, he is president now. I am at the African American Institute in 1996 I think it is. We have honored Mandela with our annual award. He is coming here on a state visit staying at Blair House going over to visit Clinton. When we told him about the award, he said, "I am very honored that you are

giving me the award, but I can't come to New York for it. I don't have time to do that." So he asked that someone receive it on his behalf. It was the ANC representative here. But, he said, "I will be glad to receive you here in Washington if you want to come to Washington." Of course we were in New York at the African American Institute, but we were delighted to come to Washington to meet him. The receiving line had three people. It was Maurice Tempelman, who at that time was chairman of the board of AAI, Vivian Lowery Derryck, who was president of AAI, and myself. So we come down and waited in the receiving room at Blair House, and pretty soon Mandela is ushered in. Of course we stand up in protocol order. Maurice receives him and of course he knows who Maurice is. I don't know if they have every met before, but I assume they had because this is six years later, whatever it is. So they chat, chat, chat," how is Jackie" or whatever they are saying (Maurice was a companion to Jackie Kennedy). Then he greets Vivian and lastly comes to me. I start by saying, "President Mandela you probably don't remember," this is far as I got. He said, "Steve, I can't tell you how meaningful that day was for me. I was so moved that day, and I will never forget that day and our drive from the airport down to Mount Nelson. It was good meeting the members of congress. I enjoyed that and was glad you invited me. But it was just that drive with you that was so evoking.

Q: As the legend says. It is absolutely true.

McDONALD: Whatever they say about him is absolutely true.

Q: Ok, I am going to hang up here. Signing off for today.

Well here we are, so much the better at Wilson Center with Steve McDonald and Dan Whitman. It is November 21, 2011. There is so much to go over, and how can we even start. I am going to leave this up to you.

McDONALD: Oh no you can't do that.

Q: Let's take it from your, maybe does it help to think back to the Wolpe-Mandela encounter. Does that get us back chronologically back to the time?

McDONALD: Well I suppose it probably does. The project that brought us together. I can't remember what we said about this the last time. I by that time had left USSALEP and was over at the Aspen institute with former Senator Dick Clark. The project we were running was for members of congress. Howard Wolpe was the Chair of the Africa subcommittee in the House of Representatives and he became intimately involved in that project. The purpose of the project was to bring together key players from the southern Africa in the days before the unbannings of the party and the release of Mandela and Suzulu and others. We had to hold those meetings off site in the Bermuda and in Europe. We were only able to hold them in South Africa after those unbannings. I sort of described the thrust of the Mandela relationship and stuff coming out of that. I don't remember if we got in to the impact as I see it. The greatest impact coming out of this was the bipartisan understanding and sort of coalition that was molded during the

meetings. The key players on the Republican Senate side were Lugar and Kassebaum and a number of others, and of course Wolpe was a leader on the House side. Ted Kennedy was a leader in the Senate, but he was not involved in the workshops we were holding. But I think that not just reaching across the aisle but reaching between the Senate and the House of Representatives was really important, so that when the consideration of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act came up and Reagan vetoed it they were able to make a strong stand and over ride that veto. That of course and I think we did get into that. The atmosphere around the "Save South Africa" movement and Desmond Tutu's presence in the country after he won the Nobel Peace Prize. All of that stuff contributed. Certainly it made an impact on all the divestment movement, and probably in the end did encourage peaceful change in South Africa.

Q: I think we spoke with, but I didn't get your take on the divestment process because there were two sides to the argument.

McDONALD: Oh sure.

Q: What was your take on that? Derek Bock did what he did and went against what a lot of people thought.

McDONALD: Well I did already give you a little bit on that. Actually it encapsulates how I felt about it. Actually it is the story about Desmond Tutu. I had known Desmond for a long time. In a much earlier conversation in the mid 70's in talking to him about these issues, and even in the early 80's when I was heading USSALEP and interacting with him, he was not for divestment. For the reasons of the impact on black employment and loss of income etc. By the mid 80's when all of this was going on, including the Aspen Institute seminars, as well as the growth of the divestment movement and the pressures on the Derek Bocks of this world, the institutions and schools to show social responsibility in the investment of their pension portfolios etc. Desmond was leading the charge on the other side saying yes, yes, yes, we must divest and in a chat with him at that point in time, he said that with Reagan becoming president he despaired there was any other way to change American policy towards South Africa. Chet Crocker might quibble with this in what he meant by constructive engagement as the assistant secretary of state at that time and a very knowledgeable person on the situation down there, but the perception of Reagan was that he was in bed with the South African government. That they were honored allies from WWII And the Korean War and they were our partners in the fight against communism and we would support them all the way. So it was the Desmond Tutus of this world who had seen the nuances. They weren't screaming left wing radicals in the streets or anything but just knew there was a way of effecting change without changing the way they approached this particular issue. And point of pressure. It wasn't obviously the only point of pressure on the South African government to change, but it was a very significant one.

Q: Now just in case, this is way off track, but ambassador Terrance Todman, there were rumors in 1987 that President Reagan wanted him as ambassador to South Africa and he said no. Do you have any....

McDONALD: I haven't any insight on that. I remember the rumors., and I knew Terrance Todman. I had met him on a couple of occasions, but I never knew him. I had several colleagues who did know him, particularly African American foreign service officers, because it was a very small community in those days as you well know. So they told me that was absolutely true, that it had been explored with him, and he turned it down.

Q: He did. Just for the record he was my boss at the time and he said to the Scandinavian press, I think this is an exact quote, "As soon as the United States has a credible policy, I will be glad to serve. He had to actually have a statement because in fact the rumor was he had accepted and he had to make it clear the record. Anyway...

McDONALD: I didn't remember that detail. But that is not off track. Others did choose to serve, other African-Americans as you well know.

Q: One other in particular. Todman was to be punished for that, but he got very solid backing from the black caucus and was rewarded with the ambassadorship to Argentina. So this gets us to the second half of the 80's, you are with AAI, is that correct?

McDONALD: Well now it gets us through the second half of the 80's. In 1992 is when I left the Aspen Institute and went to the African American Institute. The transition wasn't direct because '92 was, as you will recall, when the CODESA Talks got underway in South Africa and things were opening up and we all knew it was moving towards what we hoped would be a peaceful transition into majority rule in South Africa by '94. I hope he will forgive me for saying this but my boss Dick Clark at the time, felt that the issue had sort of lost his sexiness. He wouldn't be able to really get the congressional participation in ongoing programs focused on South Africa, because the Apartheid issue had resonated so much with the Americans with our own race relations etc. and it now seemed on its way to resolution. And he didn't want to turn his attention to what I thought were important issues of development and poverty etc, not thinking those would really get out the kind of congressional participation he wanted. Because this was really a kind of special program he ran. So he was going to change direction entirely. I looked around for something else to do. I actually had another offer which I won't go into because it won't matter, but at that point in time Vivian Lowery Derryck, the President of the African-American Institute, gave me a call and asked... I don't know if she heard that I was on the market or what... but she gave me a call to ask if I would be willing to consider coming up as her executive vice president. Now that was the position Frank Ferrari was holding at the time. Frank Ferrari was a legend in his own right in Africa and in the African American Institute. But Vivian was a relatively new president; she had only been there a year or so, and I guess she was looking to put her own team together. The idea was that South Africa was about to open up because the African American Institute had not been previously involved in South Africa for the obvious reason that they couldn't deal with the Apartheid government. But now that was opening up and the focus on education was something very badly needed down there. The idea was to get Frank down there because he had a very good set of relationships with the players as did I

in South Africa. But to move him down there to open up our office in South Africa prior to the election so we could be involved in that election transition as well, and have me come up and take over his position.

Q: So AAI had an office in South Africa.

McDONALD: No, did not. We were going to open one.

Q: Going to.

McDONALD: Frank opened it. So Frank was taken out of the New York based executive vice presidency to go down and head our newly opened office in South Africa. He opened the office in South Africa. We had a representative down there before that time, but not an office.

Q: Was it in Johannesburg?

McDONALD: Johannesburg, yeah.

Q: So this would have been what, '91

McDONALD: '92. Very early in '92, April or so.

Q: So let's see, Vivian Lowery Derrick was the CEO I think.

McDONALD: Yes, president and CEO, and her history, she had a long history in Africa. She had been the Administrator for Africa for USAID, had worked with NDI for a number of years, had been a deputy assistant secretary of state for Africa at one point in time. Early in her career she taught in west Africa and had a lot of experience on the continent. But AAI was very much focused on human rights development and higher education with its famous doctoral, post doctoral graduate studies, post graduate studies scholarship series, in which thousands of people going all the way back to President Obama's father had come to the United States. She wanted to also begin taking some different directions and begin looking at democracy and governance issues, elections, processes and etc. and she saw me as a good ally in all of that. But she also just needed someone senior, someone with a lot of experience to take over the position that Ferrari was leaving. So I welcomed the opportunity readily not just because I was looking for another position, but because I was anxious now to get back in to the rest of Africa. I had started my career in Uganda and the Portuguese African territories as we talked about before, but had spent the last 15 years involved only in South Africa. This job allowed me to get back into other parts of the continent, because we at that time, it has changed dramatically since, but we at that time, the African American Institute had 24 offices in Africa in 24 different countries of Africa including the one we were just opening in South Africa. Most of them were servicing our educational programs. Most of the representatives were part time, , the only full time directors were the one in south Africa and the one in Nigeria. The others were professors in the university or had other full time

positions but ran our affairs for us in a small office. We saw that as a huge resource. There was nobody else who had that kind of presence on the continent to be able to do a lot of other things.

Q: And at this time with some support from USIA.

McDONALD: Well yes. First of all African American Institute took funding from a lot of sources and had its own endowment that had been established long before by previous presidents, including Don Easum. I think about it, the major donor was USAID funding the education piece. It was at that time called AFGRAD, the graduate program. It had a different name earlier, but that had been established in 1957, a long time in doing that. Now we were to get further significant USAID funding for a project that Vivian and I presented to USAID as an unsolicited proposal that was called the African Regional Electoral Assistance Fund AREAF was its acronym. Our thinking behind that was, well our prompting of it was my coming in on board with a different set of experiences outside of higher education, but also the fact that we were involved in educating an awful lot of Africans who could not go back to the country because of the conflict there. If we weren't addressing reasons for conflict as well as democratic transitions, then we were missing the holistic approach to development. So we thought that legitimate. We won the contract. We were the prime contractor, and we brought in as subcontractors the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, the Carter Center and the International Republican Institute. We were to proceed managing that contract for the next five or six years. Through it we did all kinds of civic education, training of local monitors, officials, actually observing and monitoring elections. A number of things working on democratic transitions all over the continent from Uganda to Benin to Gabon to Madagascar. From South Africa to Kenya to Ethiopia. In fact the very first mission I took on that was to Ethiopia for the elections in the middle part of 1992.

Q: Now sometime about that time, let me just mention Bart Rousseve who worked there at AAI at some point.

McDONALD: I knew Bart quite well but I hadn't known him before I came to AAI. I learned later that we probably were on parallel tracks in life, both having worked in South Africa at about the same time. He was working in the executive office there and was a valued employee. So when I met him we became fast friends and worked very closely together but only until I got to really know him did I realize how closely intertwined our careers over the years.

Q: He is one of the strands throughout the whole collection because between OCA and AAI, and I think there was another. I think he selected AFGRAD.

McDONALD: Well he was working under Heather Monroe, the person who ran the AFGRAD program and the whole education piece. Bart worked with her and was one of the senior people. So yeah, he was working on the AFGRAD program. I remember he headed the office at the Crossroads Africa as well.

Q: As I say he is one of the strands, and we lost him in 1994. some say he took the express train to heaven.

McDONALD: Well I remember the shock of that. I had just really gotten to know him again, but the impact that had on the staff around AAI was tremendous He was an extremely well liked guy.

Q: And elsewhere.

So let's think about if we were to tell your whole life we would be here more weeks than you have available. This particular project is focused on South Africa but these related are extremely relevant. Let's think a little bit structurally about where to go from here in our talk.

McDONALD: Well South Africa informs most of the things I have done since. As I said before the AAI opportunity offered me an outlet back into Africa north of the Limpopo, which I welcomed, but South Africa loomed large even then. We covered the '94 elections. We helped with training for the elections process. We were directly involved and our education program there took off after '94, a huge piece of the work we were doing. But when I say South Africa informed what I have done it is because in subsequent times the work I did here at the Woodrow Wilson Center, for instance, focused on Burundi and the Democratic Republic of South Africa (DRC), both countries where South Africa was the facilitation nation for those peace processes, the Arusha Accords for Burundi and the Lusaka and Sun City Accords for DRC were both led by South Africa. So I just went seamlessly from one to the other because there we were back in South Africa to consult Jacob Zuma, Thabo Mbeki and Welile Nhlapo and the other individuals who were working on those peace processes and were supporting them. They were very supportive of the work that we were doing. Again I am talking about how Howard Wolpe intersected in our lives. We were working on conflict resolution, post conflict recovery programs first in Burundi and then moved into DRC in the mid 2000's and Liberia. So in the relationships we have built over the years, the South African piece is never far away.

Q: And with a very happy outcome in Liberia eventually I think and not bad in Burundi.

McDONALD: Well, I worry about both of them a bit today. It is interesting you would say that because, first of all, on the Burundi piece, I think we have made the important breakthroughs in particular in the security sector and reform work we did during the whole DDR period, Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration exercise, for which we established an office there called the Burundi Leadership Training Program. This had an immense impact. What had happened was we had gone into Burundi to begin working with all of the political parties across the political spectrum to rebuild trust and collaborative capacity for them to be able to govern. Things had gone back to war footing as you know, after the transition started in 2000. We didn't get the ceasefire signed until 2003, so for a couple of years there we were working in a pretty perilous situation trying to do what I just described through a series of workshops for all of the top leadership. We were able to work with that group through the 2005 elections, working with the political

party leadership to make those elections go very well without violence and intimidation and the parties working quite nicely together through that period. But in early 2003 we had a couple of the rebel group leaders, still no cease fire signed at that time, and the chief of staff of the Burundi army come to us and say that our workshops have had a tremendous impact and been transforming, but if we don't do this kind of work with our military commanders we will never get through the cease fire and the DDR exercise. So our funding up until that time had been through the World Bank, but we were able to get some supplementary funding through the European Commission and DFID, the Development fund of the British government. We started working first with a workshop for military commanders that we had to do in Nairobi because the war was still underway. That morphed, without going into a whole story about this, into work with a cease fire commission, then with a commission that was established to work with the army command, and finally training the joint United Nations Burundian observation teams. They were made up of one representative each of all of the rebel groups and the national army. So there were eight Burundians and then the two UN advisors on each of the teams and there were 12 teams for the 12 demobilization centers around the country where all the troops were being brought in. So they were the teams who actually went around the country and managed the demobilization and disarmament exercise. So we trained them, and then we were asked to work with the military command itself, this would be now from about 2005 until 2008. We were responsible for training about 350 of the field grade commanders in the new national Burundi army which included the integrated armed forces of the CNDD-FDD and the other rebel groups. Then we were also training trainers for the military academy. I am mentioning that in detail because we are now speaking just after the 2010 elections. As you are probably aware, whereas we got through them without any serious violence, the 2010 elections did not go well. There were accusations in the first round, meaning municipal elections, of fraud by the ruling party so that the three major parties, including the FNL which is one we had never worked with, all boycotted the presidential and parliamentary elections. We had talked to the FNL in 2002, but they were the only party that didn't come in for our training because they had not signed the cease fire until 2006. But they had boycotted the other elections along with the two other major opposition parties, one of the old ones, CNDD of Leonard Nyangoma, which was the original party from which Pierre Nkurunziza's party, the CNDD-FDD split from, and then the newly formed party, founded by an individual called Alexis Sinduhije who is a former journalist and a quite flamboyant character.

Q: Given the CPJ International Press Freedom Award.

McDONALD: He has formed his own political party. He is proving quite effective now too. It is called the MDS, Movement for Development and Security. But those three parties then boycotted the presidential and parliamentary elections. Now they boycotted on the grounds that the municipal elections had been rigged. Whether they were right or not and there is no evidence from international observers that there had been any rigging, and there certainly wasn't any significant violence around the first round of elections, which had occurred as I recall in June of that year and then the presidential and parliamentary were following later in July and August. So they boycotted those elections and the elections went forward and Nkurunziza won the presidential election, which was

expected. You might say the others didn't want to contest it because they didn't have a chance of winning it. Which may be true. But what they have done, of course, is to cut themselves out of the whole thing. They are now extra-parliamentary parties. They are not in the parliament. There are a couple of old line parties in parliament, but no real opposition. So there is great tension there that is building level of violence that is inter party violence. On September 19, there was a major massacre in Katumba, a suburban section of Bujumbura, in which about 40 members of the FNL were killed, slaughtered in a restaurant bar setting, and there have been other instances of violence since then. A lot of international observers are quite concerned about that, as am I. But the reason I went through all this about the security sector reform piece we did, is that is the one thing that is holding and holding the country together is the national army. In past years, had there been an incident like the one I just described to you in Katumba, it would have blown up, and the army would have been right in front and probably leading the violence. Now whether there was elements of the army involved in this as some people charged or whether they just tolerated it and didn't do anything about it as others charge, It is hard to say. But I believe at this point in time the Burundian army is professional, and sees itself as representative. It is majority Hutu so it does not reflect the old Hutu-Tutsi divisions anymore. None of the institutions of government do. They are holding the line. They got us through these recent elections without things blowing up. I personally think we have got a rocky road ahead of us. We are just about to go back to working with the top party leadership including the extra parliamentary parties, and President Nkurunziza, with whom I had a discussion just recently, has committed himself and his party to that process. So I hope we can get beyond this. But in any case it is not a return to the old days of genocide and inter-communal massacres and so I think that is good. Liberia I also think is a troubled place. You have seen what happened to the elections, similar story almost.

Q: Did anyone, I certainly didn't expect that. The president gets a Nobel Prize, everyone loves her. The next thing you know there is a very hotly contested election in her country. What was I not noticing?

McDONALD: What you weren't noticing was the situation on the ground. Many people weren't. This is not meant to be totally derogatory about Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the President, who is a very intelligent, caring leader. But she has yet to come to grips with the core causes of conflict in that country. There is a wide split between the Americo-Liberian and the indigenous peoples. Most of us know that history in terms of the way the country was settled. There has been no sense of representation of the aspirations and development needs of the indigenous peoples in the countryside as far as they are concerned. The political divisions out there are counties instead of provinces. In the 15 counties of Liberia, including Montserrado, which holds the capital city of Monrovia, all of the county superintendents are appointed by the president, not elected. Most of them, quite the majority of them, with only a couple of exceptions are Americo-Liberians who come from abroad, who are friends of the president, and have taken those positions .I know them all personally and they are very nice people, but most of them are not development education specialists. They are a bit aswim out there on how to manage the counties. They are rejected by the people around them. The country is also rife with

corruption, which is probably most insidious at the county levels where all of the land dispute issues and many other things are playing out. The magistrates who are supposed to be out there adjudicating on these things are notoriously corrupt and just aren't trusted by people. So there is this perception that the central government just doesn't care about us. But you know the president is Americo-Liberian. I know she would immediately dispute me on that saying her grandfather was German, not American, but it doesn't matter in terms of the common perception out there what the white nationality was. And about 60% of her cabinet are also Americo-Liberian and have come from abroad to take their positions, And corruption issues abound, even among her cabinet ministers, and she has been slow to respond on tackling this. There are other things like the truth and reconciliation report which has been thrown under the table for the time being and not dealt with. Let me give you an example of this perceptions. I get asked this all the time. how is it possible that a warlord like Prince Johnson, who did all these horrible things during the civil war, gets elected to the senate by his people. Well the fact is he is the devil they know against the devil they don't know and it is as simple as that. He is from where they come from. He promises them they will be represented. They know he is a powerful man and I don't think they do it out of fear for his power, I think they do it out of a lack of trust for central government and a sense that they have been abandoned.

Q: He is their guy.

McDONALD: Yeah, he is their guy. So that is an element of this that was not addressed in the 2006 elections. Most of us were never aware of the fact she lost the first round of those elections and barely won in the second round, probably only won because of the incompetence of the other side, led by George Weah, the famous soccer star who could have mobilized his forces and this youth following much better and probably won that election, but didn't. Coming out of those elections, she also had only about 30% of the senate and house represented by her United Party. She had no majority and no way of moving things forward, so there was a stalemate. An awful lot of the poverty reduction agenda and the development agenda has just stalemated and has not gone forward. So a lot of money has poured into the country, but the results of it are now only being seen five years later with some infrastructural development is happening, road building and other things. But the country still has no electricity being generated in it. Water is still from bore holes. There is no municipal water system there. Everything is being run by generators. In Monrovia, if you drive through and keep the windows up in your car, you don't notice this because the street and house lights are on now. But they are all being powered by huge Chinese supplied generators that are as big as a city block. It is amazing. So the cost is immense. The infrastructure was never all that good in Liberia but there was a significant road system. Now, there are places you just can't get to in Liberia in the rainy season, you just can't access at all.

Q: Now President Johnson has said here are so many problems and here is what I am doing. She is quite good at articulating I think. Do you guess or do you know she will be making adjustments because of the events in the last two months.

McDONALD: Well I hope so. We have a project out there and are represented on the ground. I travel there frequently. I haven't been there since January of this year, so it has been nine or ten months since I have been out there, but I talk on the phone daily with people. I know that you started these questions on Liberia by asking whether we were surprised by the actions of the main opposition party, that is the CDC the Coalition for Democratic Change, which is headed ironically by Winston Tubman, who is an Americo-Liberian descended from a famous Liberian family and George Weah, who is indigenous Liberian.. I will never know what drove them to adopt the strategy they took. It was very unwise. I have let my friends in the party know that, and I know several of the very highest officials of the party. But I also know now they are desperately looking for a way. They also boycotted the presidential election. They are there in force in the senate and the house. They won 13 seats in a 30 seat senate and I forgot the number in the house. In any case they are looking for ways to mend the fences and want us to work with them

Q: When you say that strategy do you mean having an Americo-Liberian at the front of that party? Is that what you mean? You said....

McDONALD: No, no, not that part of the strategy. Actually I will take that back. It is not what I was referring to, but that was kind of a strange strategy too. But I thought that boycotting the second round of the elections was a strange strategy. It was unlikely they could have won that second round at that time, but to boycott it left them out of the mix and delegitimized them in the eyes of the world, which is not good in this case. I mean it really angered the State Department and the British and other governments who are critical players here. It was just not a good move. So making themselves a legitimate player in the future is going to be hard for them. Now what is Ellen going to do, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the President? I know she has made a verbal commitment, I have never seen it in writing but she has made a verbal commitment to do what I think would be a major breakthrough and that is within the first two years in this term to have elections in the counties for the county supervisors and the county superintendents for education and development who run affairs out there. Just that single act would bestow more legitimacy on her than anything I know. She needs to deal with the truth and reconciliation commission findings because they haven't been dealt with. She has been very adept at getting a big flow of private sector money and investment through giants like Mittal Steel and expanding the rubber plantations for Firestone-Bridgestone and etc. And a lot of others. There is even now the possibility of oil there in the gulf of Guinea. They have got concessions that they are beginning to talk about leasing. So in an ironic sense, they are totally unlike Burundi, which in the best of circumstances is a desperately poor country with nothing but agricultural resources, a small amount of nickel and a small amount of gold. On the other hand, you have got an immense potential of wealth and resources coming out of Liberia, and an awful lot to work with. So if Ellen needs, in the next few years, to have an impact on the welfare of the people in a significant way which she hasn't had had in her first six years. No matter what she says, she hasn't had it. Yes, I know there has been a level of economic growth that is pretty impressive based on GDP etc. But you are coming from such a low level and what that means outside of Montserrado county and Monrovia is pretty minimal. The farmers still aren't growing produce because they can't get their product to market. Mittal Steel comes in and all that

it is going to offer when it is all set up and everything else, is several hundred if not more than a thousand jobs, but at the same time they are displacing farmers and people with their huge land concessions. The same thing with the expansion of the Firestone-Bridgestone plantation size, so she is insisting on better labor performance and better wages and better living conditions for workers and things which is right and should be done, but there are two sides to every single question that you deal with out there. So there is good will and it has begun to really show some progress. I don't know where this stands right now, but when I was last there in January, I understood that a Brazilian consortium had finally taken or gotten a contract for redoing the dam and the hydroelectric production of electricity which was destroyed during the war. If you can begin to get that electric generation back in place and begin to electrify into the rural areas particularly. Road construction has been underway since the middle of 2009, but obviously it has been radiating out from Monrovia. So first it was paving the downtown roads in Monrovia. You could hardly drive around that city without falling into potholes over your head. So most of the roads in Monrovia have been fixed now, and it is beginning to radiate out, but still it has not really affected the countryside. In places like Bomi and Bong County in the northwest and far southeast, or were you to try to drive down to Buchanan or down to the border, it would take a two day 2 ½ day.

Q: It is crazy; not that many kilometers.

McDONALD: No it is very short.

Q: I have 2 ½ more questions. We can go with you on that if you wish, but let me tell you what is on my mind and we can take it in any order or go in some other direction. We did sort of skip the part when you went from AAI to Wilson Center. Maybe we could just go through that and maybe tie to that is through this scenario USSALP and the embassy and AAI and the Wilson Center, there is Steve McDonald that goes through and I see, am fascinated to hear that as the director of a regional office of a research organization you have actually been able to implement things in the field. Tell me how that works with the Wilson Center, and by the way when did you start at the Wilson Center?

McDONALD: The first and the last questions tie in directly together so this will be a nice segue. What occurred briefly and simplistically is when Vivian Lowery Derryck left AAI they hired a new president, Moira McLean. She wanted her own team around her. So I stayed around for just short of seven months, I can't remember how long a transition, but I was looking for another position. I had actually come back to Washington. This was in '97 or '98, I can't remember exactly I had come back to Washington and was doing some consultancy work including for the Atlantic council of the United States and USAID. Just looking for things, and here is where Howard Wolpe comes back into my life. We had formed a friendship and our wives knew each other very well, particularly from the years we were conferencing with the Aspen Institute where they would go off and play in Bermuda while we were in our serious sessions. And they were serious sessions. So Howard and me and our wives were having dinner one night in 2001. Wolpe is a key to this transition. We are having dinner one night and I love to tell this story, because it says so much about Howard Wolpe as well. He had been the special envoy for the Great Lakes

in Africa for President Clinton. He had left the administration now, but had been a key player in the Arusha Accords peace process for Burundi. When he left the administration in 2000 he was doing a little consultancy work for World Bank and some things here and there too. But he felt very strongly about what was wrong in Burundi, they had returned to war. He felt all along there should have been a facilitation amongst the antagonists to the conflict. That there was no trust building, no capacity building exercise being done to make these guys realize their own interdependence and their need to work together towards progress. He carried this belief through work he had done long before in his public life when he was still a young graduate student and his mother was a clinical psychologist. He had worked with her during the civil rights era during the riots in Detroit and also down in some small communities in the South with schools and in racially divided communities. They had done reconciliation work, including using some simulations and other powerful tools that conflict resolution specialists use, loosely based on the work of William Gamson at Boston College and Roger Fisher at the Conflict Management Group at Harvard University. What was called the Harvard Negotiations Project was based on what they call interest based negotiations, and basically what it means is if you don't take into account the interests of the other party, that there is no reaching accommodation with each other and working together. So Howard had seen the power of that kind of work with individuals, the transforming of individuals. He thought this could work in Burundi. We spent an evening having dinner with our wives and him talking about all of this. I got rather enthused about it. I am not a conflict resolution person. I have worked in peace processes before. I think I said to you in earlier stages of this interview that I had worked in Rhodesia to Zimbabwe negotiations and settlement and I had worked on the Namibia settlement, so I had been in all these peace processes, but I had never worked on conflict resolution itself. So I was sort of going with a little bit of trust on his experience there, but it sure made sense to me that if you didn't rebuild not just trust and collaborative capacity but just basic communications and negotiation skills and problem solving skills, so that people were able to find the common ground and the common vision and understand their interdependence then they couldn't move forward together. It just made all the sense in the world to me. So he then said to me after talking about this for a very long time, and in particular talking about Professor William Gamson's simulated society exercise which he found so compelling, he said, "I have been talking to the World Bank post conflict unit and they said they would be interested in receiving a proposal on this. But I have never done anything like this." I responded, "Well that is what I do. So let me work with you. I am at a point in my life where I don't have any nine to five to go to so just let me work with you on that." So we did. We spent about seven months first of all putting the proposal together and the budget and everything, vetting it with the World Bank. It got bounced back a couple of times and we restructured some things. We finally got a grant from the World Bank for almost a million dollars. \$980,000 for an 18 month program in Burundi. Then, and this is exactly the way it happened. Howard never tells it quite the same. Then we realized we couldn't receive this money ourselves. By this point in time Howard had come to the Woodrow Wilson Center as a public policy fellow because his old friend Lee Hamilton from their congressional days, is now the President here. So Howard had an office and was sitting at the Wilson Center. I told Howard that to get the grant, we have got to find a 501C3 non-profit organization to receive this grant for us. So Howard did exactly that He said, "Let's

go upstairs and talk to Lee,” and we did Lee said sure he would receive it for us, so both Howard and I went to work for the Woodrow Wilson center as consultants to run this Burundi project. Some months later when a man named Gilbert Khadiagala, I don’t know if you know Gil.

Q: I do know Gilbert.

McDONALD: Well Gilbert is now down in Wits University in South Africa. But he was at that point in time heading SAIS Johns Hopkins Africa Studies program, and was part time directing the Africa program at the Wilson Center but he took his sabbatical to South Africa which resulted in him taking the position at Wits in their international relations program. But when he was leaving, Lee offered Howard the Africa Project directorship. Now the reason that is important is I stayed on directing our programs in Burundi which would morph into our projects in DRC and Liberia. Actually I also wrote and did some other work. So I was sort of our field guy out there putting the offices together, actually putting the workshops together and things like this. Then when Howard was invited back by the Obama administration to become special representative for the Great Lakes region again in 2009, he asked me to take over the program here. That is what brought us here, but that is also the explanation of why we have this rather unique relationship which is almost an aberration for the Woodrow Wilson Center. We were practitioners on the ground, doing field-based activities that no other program in the Woodrow Wilson Center has. Our Mexico program and our Russian program, the Kennan Institute both have offices in Mexico City and in Moscow, but they are academic support offices. They aren’t actually doing field work as we are doing. We jealously guarded that because we think it is so important. Lee Hamilton and Mike Van Dusen, our executive vice president here and our new president, Jane Harmon, when she came on board, quickly realized this was establishing a very unique reputation for the Africa program worldwide, not just in conflict resolution circles but elsewhere. So they were very happy to keep it going. But it really is a function that no other program in the Woodrow Wilson Center has.

Q: It sounds like something that USIP would dream and love to do and probably was meant to do but here it is being done by those who are able to do it.

McDONALD: I am the first to admit that. It is interesting that you said it that way you did, having it done by those who can do it. We work closely with USIP and everybody else around town.. So this doesn’t diminish anything else anyone is doing which is very valuable. But we also readily realize that going into this, our entry point in Burundi and later in DRC and Liberia was a function of our kind of special relationships there. I first went to Burundi in 1972 during the genocide and had been working there through the 90’s just like Howard had. Howard had a very intimate position in terms of interaction with the government and with rebel groups. So, we were in a very special situation of being known and trusted by, and having access to all the key players. So when we say we are dealing with the key players. well we meant it. From the president on down to the president of every single rebel group we were talking to the very top players and even brought in every single living president in Burundi to be in our workshops. So it was a

very unique position to be in which is not replicable anywhere else. I have actually done assessment missions for Togo, for Ivory Coast, for Kenya, for East Timor, even outside of Africa. I have often advised others on how to structure projects and even brought in some of our resource people as facilitators. We work with a cadre of exceptional conflict resolution facilitators. We took these projects on because we had that gravitas, that aura of knowledge and access to make it work. So that is often what is wrong with other organization. You cant' just pitch up no matter how academically qualified and knowledgeable you are about...

Q: yes and personal connections.

McDONALD: Personal connections are essential.

Q: I know time is lacking. We have come way away form South Africa. Would you be willing to offer any thoughts about F.W. de Klerk. What made him tick. Why did he do what he did? We are on, yes.

McDONALD: Well yeah, I had cursorily known F. W. de Klerk when I was down there as a political officer. At that time he was considered an apparatchik. He was pretty much a party guy, was a member of parliament from the Pretoria area, and then later I was to meet him again coming down with Dick Clark, when we were developing our program. De Klerk got involved as all the changes were underway, so I have had an opportunity to chat with him on a number of occasions. Most recently I hosted him here as former president and former Nobel Peace Prize winner. In fact he has a leadership institute which does work in South Africa and elsewhere. He talked to me about Sudan, about coming to work with him in Sudan. That still might happen because he has some interesting inroads to some of the leadership in Sudan. But all of that is by the way of saying I am not an intimate friend of F.W. de Klerk. I have had an opportunity to be in close proximity to him and hear him talk about himself over a long period of time both before 1992-'94 and since. Whereas he as done a lot of revisionism on what drove him then when he talks about it now, I think he was just the ultimate pragmatist. I had one on one sessions with him when he was still a young parliament member but certainly already being groomed to be a prime minister. He was being groomed as a real bedrock of Afrikanerdom and the National Party ideologies., But, he did grow and I just think he saw the changes going on around him and responded to them. I believe his motivation was not necessarily a belief majority rule. I think it was protecting of white minority privilege and position. But you couldn't protect white minority privilege and position by staying in power. You could only do it by sharing power in some way. I would suspect that if we knew what was in his heart of hearts, we would find that what happened is that events got away form him. When he started the process of change he couldn't control it anymore. I believe he probably thought he could control it to begin with, that he knew he could bring along the whites. You remember when he surprised everybody, I think it was '92, when the CODESA process was already underway, and I think the dates for the '94 election were already set, and he called the White referendum on the new constitutional. He called a referendum amongst whites. It infuriated Mandela and the ANC and everybody else. Every black person in the country. But he called it a white referendum on the

constitution. The whole point of that was to show how weak the conservative party was because you had Andries Treurnicht and all these guys out there railing, you had the real right wing, the bombastic guy on his horse.

Q: Yeah, the French name.

McDONALD: Yes, Eugene Terre'Blanche. So they made a lot of noise. It was almost impossible to assess what power base they had. When they came up with only 24% of the vote in the constitutional referendum and the National Party just swept it, de Klerk had his mandate. I think that even though outraged Mandela by doing it, he actually really strengthened his hand and allowed him to lead the white population into an agreement on the new constitution.

Q: Do you think he did this because he was afraid of being hung out to dry?

McDONALD: Oh yeah. I think two things I think he really did by now see the writing on the wall. He was not sure. He thought he could make coalitions. He thought he could control the process at least a piece of the process to majority rule and protect white privilege. Remember his only role model was what happened in Zimbabwe where there had been a ten year guarantee of white presence in parliament. So exactly what he was thinking in that regard we don't know, but he knew the direction it was going. By calling the referendum he would either get a mandate for doing what he was trying to do from the white people or he wouldn't and then he could wash his hands of it and let it go. So it was kind of a no brainer for him. He couldn't really lose in a sense. Then he kind of becomes a hero to history if he loses it because it is not his fault after all. He tried.

Q: There were of course the bitter enders who would try to do anything but. It is outrageous to compare de Klerk to Gorbachev?

McDONALD: I don't think it is outrageous. A lot of people are really uncomfortable with that comparison, but I don't think it is outrageous at all. I did it myself at the time. I don't know Russian history, Soviet history well enough maybe to defend this well over someone who actually knows what Gorbachev did. But my perception of what Gorbachev did is very much what de Klerk did. That he understood a change was coming. A world force was moving here. The winds of change from Prime Minister McMillan's speech in 1962 had finally come to pass. So now they are going to have to go with the flow. De Klerk never said this to me, nor did he ever hint at it in my presence. But one time when I was an embassy officer in Pretoria in the 70's, I did a series of reports on white and black attitudes about change etc. Now as you have heard me describe I felt pretty well plugged into the black community, so I didn't have to do much research there. On the white community side, sure I had neighbors and I knew members of parliament, but it wasn't my portfolio. So I tried hard to understand the community and I talked to a lot of rural South African farmers along the Zimbabwe border and in the northeastern Transvaal at the time where the most conservatives were supposed to be. The findings in the end have colored my opinions ever after that. Those findings were, first of all, that I actually found a gamut of political and social opinion from real bitter

enders and absolute racists and people who thought God had sent them here to take care of these benighted natives, to actual ANC supporters, to the majority who were in between, who just felt they could roll with the punches. These whites thought that, from the Boer War to today, they adapted to change as it came along, they protect their interests as best they can and they always come out in the end. They haven't got another option in their lives or any place to go, so they will make do. They were survivors. I thought what a remarkable attitude for white people. Some of that was couched in kind of semi racist. Like well you know I grew up speaking nothing but Zulu until I was ten years old and my best friends and playmates were all Zulus. What that implied was a comfort level and a sense of belonging because I knew on the other side that the official ANC doctrine as laid down in the 1956 Freedom Charter, which was their ruling doctrine, that their struggle wasn't about the white South Africans. They belonged. They were Africans. They had as much right to being in South Africa as blacks did. It was just the system they were against. So that is how I saw de Klerk. I was reminded years later of that predominant attitude that we will get by. We will be players. Nobody is pushing us into the sea.

Q: Well I am willing to do this for the next three months.. I think we have gotten to a pause. Is there anything that must be said in addition?

McDONALD: Not that I can think of. I think the best next step is for you to pull all this together and then look at it and see what...

Q: With the microphone on I want to thank you for a fantastic interview.

McDONALD: My great pleasure. Thank you, Dan.

Q: Thank you so much.

End of interview