



Ford Foundation records, Developing Countries Program, Office Files of David Bonbright

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English

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Rockefeller Archive Center

15 Dayton Avenue

Sleepy Hollow 10591

archive@rockarch.org

URL: <http://www.rockarch.org>

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Summary Information

Repository:	Rockefeller Archive Center
Creator:	Ford Foundation
Title:	Ford Foundation records, Developing Countries Program, Office Files of David Bonbright
ID:	FA710
Date [inclusive]:	1979-1987
Physical Description:	3.6 Cubic Feet
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	The Office Files of David Bonbright, Assistant Program Officer (1983-1986) and Program Officer (1986-1987) of the Ford Foundation's Developing Country Programs (DCP), document his oversight of grantmaking and administration of field offices throughout Africa, with an emphasis on his work in developing a Foundation portfolio in South Africa. The collection spans 1979-1987 and consists of correspondence and subject files. The records were transferred to the Ford Foundation Archives in 1991, and were fully processed in 2006. The arrangement of the collection follows the original order established by David Bonbright.

Preferred Citation

Information regarding the Rockefeller Archive Center's preferred elements and forms of citation can be found at <http://www.rockarch.org/research/citations.php>.

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Biographical note

David Bonbright was Assistant Program Officer (1983-1985) and Program Officer (1986-1987) of the Ford Foundation's Developing Country Programs. His areas of responsibility were South Africa, regional African grants, and New York support for African field offices. With DCP Vice President William Carmichael, Bonbright represented the Foundation at meetings of the Study Group on Southern Africa,

a committee of foundation and university executives convened by the Carnegie Corporation to promote better educational opportunities for black South Africans.

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Organizational history

The administration of Ford Foundation international programs was restructured in 1980-1981, and a new office for Developing Country Programs (DCP) was created. DCP coordinated the work of Foundation field offices overseas, and of New York-based staff responsible for grants to developing countries. David Bonbright oversaw DCP work throughout Africa during 1983-1987, and played a key role in the development of the Foundation's South Africa portfolio.

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Segment One: International Activities of the Ford Foundation: An Overview

The Foundation's aspiration to become a national and international philanthropy for the advancement of human welfare was first formally expressed in the seminal 1949 report of the Gaither Study Committee, *Report of the Study for the Ford Foundation on Policy and Program* (RAC Library, call letters 361.7 GAI), which was commissioned by the Board of Trustees to chart the Foundation's future. Foundation Trustees launched Ford's international grantmaking activities in 1950 when they approved the committee's report and its embrace of peace, democracy, and freedom. Since then, the Foundation has tackled these goals using a variety of strategies and responding to changing contexts, from the Cold War to the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall and beyond.

Toward the Foundation's aspirational goal, "the establishment of peace", its international activities have comprised a wide range of conceptual approaches and focus areas. These include international affairs, international studies, international understanding, arms control and disarmament, international law, international economic concerns, and overseas development in nearly every region of the world. Three distinct periods emerge for the international grantmaking defined by external contextual changes and internal changes in Foundation leadership and structures: the expansion era of 1950-1965; the transition and restructuring years of 1966-1988; and the post-1989 shift away from Cold War dichotomies. During each of the distinct historical periods the consistent objectives were: 1) to ensure freedom and democracy in developed countries; 2) to foster education and international understanding in all countries; and 3) to contribute to the social, economic, and political development of less developed countries.

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Segment 3. Period Sketch - Transition and Restructuring 1966-1988

In the 1960s, the Ford Foundation Trustees began to rethink the role of the Foundation in the context of the era's dramatic political and cultural changes. For instance, the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act created a domestic policy context in which the Foundation could more deeply engage with issues of rights and social justice. Events overseas starting in the late 1960s would extend the rights agenda to international affairs and development operations at the Foundation -- all advanced by the leadership of McGeorge Bundy (president, 1966-1979).

McGeorge Bundy was appointed president in 1966, following a significant career in national security and academic administration. During World War II, he worked with the Army's intelligence division, and in the early post-war years was a political analyst at the Council on Foreign Relations. Even without a postgraduate degree, at the age of thirty-four he became dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science at Harvard University. In 1961, President Kennedy appointed Bundy to be Special Assistant to the President for National Security - a position he held for five years under both Kennedy and Johnson. Those significant years saw the Bay of Pigs invasion, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the beginnings of the Vietnam War.

When Bundy arrived at the Foundation, he initiated a restructuring that modeled government departments rather than the academic ones President Henry Heald had established in the 1950s. At the same time, he had to contend with serious financial constraints due to Ford's overspending in the prior periods and to economic downturns in the global economy. The Board of Trustees mandated an annual spending of over \$100 million.

These economic constraints meant that Foundation programs had to be more selective across the range of its programs. Nonetheless, international activities remained prominent with the new president and trustees. President Bundy and key trustees such Eugene Black (1960-1968, former head of the World Bank) and Robert S. McNamara (1968-1986, former U.S. Secretary of Defense and then head of the World Bank, 1968-1981) reflected a commitment to the international activities. Bundy also added to the board in 1972 the first trustee from a developing country, the Indonesian activist and scholar, Dr. Soedjakmoto, the former Ambassador to the United States from his country and then Special Adviser on Social and Cultural Affairs to the Chairman of Indonesia's National Development Planning Agency.

To create economies of scale, Bundy unified US-based international and overseas activities under one division: the International Division (using the name for the first time). That division comprised Resources for Development (area studies, languages, and exchanges), Population, International Relations, Planning and Evaluation, and the country programs. David Bell, an economist and the first administrator of the US Agency for International Development (1962-1966), was named vice president and served in that capacity until the end of Bundy presidency.

In 1966, Bundy terminated the long-standing internationally oriented but domestically based International Training and Research Program. Several large domestic programs -- including support of centers of international studies - were phased out in the 1970s. Instead, Ford launched under its international affairs efforts a focused but robust program in security and arms control. Over Bundy's tenure, the overseas offices were reduced from twenty in 1966 to twelve in 1979, when he retired.

The Foundation increasingly turned its attention to different set of international issues including human rights and working in repressive societies, such as South Africa. The military coups in Latin America during the late 1960s and early 1970s led the Foundation to initiate in 1976 a human rights program housed in Vice President Bell's office.

In 1979, Franklin Thomas was named president of the Ford Foundation (1979-1996). In contrast to Bundy's international and defense policy background, Franklin Thomas brought to the Ford Foundation his experience in law, housing, and community development. Prior to joining the Foundation, Thomas, a lawyer, was a Foundation trustee. He chaired the Rockefeller Foundation-funded Study Commission on U.S. Policy towards South Africa and led the Ford-funded Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation in New York from its beginning in 1966 until he left in 1979. Earlier, he had been deputy police commissioner of NYC.

In the first decade of Thomas' tenure, the international work was still framed using the post-war East-West dichotomy. Several trustees brought to the board active engagement in international issues: Donald F. McHenry (trustee over the period 1981-1993) had served as ambassador to the U.N. and was active in the anti-apartheid movement; and General Olusegun Obasanjo (trustee over the period 1987-1999) had been Nigerian head of state from 1976-1979, and was then president of the African leadership Forum. Along with McNamara and Soedjakmoto, Rodrigo Botero, an internationally renowned economist from Colombia and former Colombian Minister of Finance and Credit from 1974 to 1976, remained on the board over the period 1978-1989.

During the early years of the Thomas presidency, the scope and strategies of the Foundation's activities were also influenced by economic and global pressures, leading to reduced assets and further financial stringencies. Thomas' board-mandated reductions resulted, for example, the firing of twenty senior staff at the same time. To achieve more effective and efficient programs, Thomas had a vision of Ford as one foundation, linking the domestic and overseas activities under new program themes: Urban Poverty, Rural Poverty and Resources, Human Rights and Social Justice, Governance and Public Policy, Education and Culture, and International Affairs.

The restructured Foundation comprised two programmatic divisions led by vice presidents: U.S. and International Affairs Programs (USIAP) headed by Susan Berresford; and Developing Countries Program (DCP), headed by William Carmichael. Berresford had been at the Foundation since 1970, coming from the U.S. Manpower Career Development Agency. She served in the National Affairs area, first as program assistant and then program officer (1972-1980), becoming head of women's programs in 1980. The main international efforts under USIAP were housed in Rural Poverty and Resources, Human Rights and Governance, and International Affairs. The other programs - Urban Poverty, Education and Culture, and Program-Related Investments - also addressed a scattering of international issues related to their main themes.

Carmichael had joined the Foundation in 1968 as Representative in Brazil. In July 1971, he was named Head of the Office of Latin America and the Caribbean, and in September of 1977, he became Head of the Middle East and Africa Office. The DCP program was responsible for all the Field Offices: Andean and the Southern Cone, Brazil, Mexico and Central America, Bangladesh, India, Southeast Asia, West Africa, Eastern and Southern Africa, and Middle East and North Africa.

When the Foundation initiated a Human Rights and Governance program (HR&G) in 1981, it was the first instance of a Ford program explicitly entitled "human rights," despite the fact that human rights grantmaking that had started officially in 1976. International Affairs remained separate from HR&G. In 1987, however, the Board conceptually linked three programs, creating a Trustee committee called Human Rights, Governance, and International Affairs, which existed until 1992. Operationally, however, the programs relating to these fields did not often work together.

International governance remained a commitment under Thomas. The Foundation, for example, had a long-established relationship with the United Nations: from 1951 until 1988, the United Nations received ninety grants from the Foundation (it received another 198 over the period 1989-2009).

In these early years of the Thomas presidency, dramatic changes were occurring in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Under President Mikhail Gorbachev's leadership since 1985, the USSR was opening up to the international community, the rule of law in society was taking prominence there, and press freedoms were spreading. The foundation developed new programs in the region, drawing on the \$60 million already spent to promote human rights and free expression and increase Western understanding of developments there.

Given the continuing economic constraints facing the Foundation and rising debt in developing countries, the Foundation shifted support under DCP to smaller scale community-based initiatives in the field offices. Thomas was also charged by the Board to increase the diversity of grantees, especially to favor populations "most affected" by the problems of concern to the Ford Foundation. The Foundation built on earlier efforts and sharpened its focus on women's issues throughout the world, including shifting the focus of the population program to women's reproductive health and child survival.

In the 1980s, Carmichael and others, with strong support from Thomas and the board, continued the 1970s' support of South African grantees for training large numbers of black lawyers and litigating sensitive cases in the South African legal system. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of discrimination in South Africa, the Foundation not only advanced the rule of law, but also strengthened civic organizations, women's groups, and educational institutions. Further, it supported a number of activist organizations in the United States that were energetically advocating US governmental sanctions against South Africa and for private disinvestment. The Foundation also played a role in shaping US policy on apartheid through the role Thomas played from 1985 to 1987 chairing the US Secretary of State's Advisory Committee on South Africa.

The Foundation's overseas staff also sought to improve the economic situation in poor, marginalized communities through targeted loan programs particularly to women head of households, beginning with the innovative work in Bangladesh of Professor Mohammed Yunus, the founder of the Grameen Bank. The results led the way to establish the field of microfinance with the aim of empowering women living in poverty conditions, such as through a microfinance network in Latin America starting 1980 and a global lending program for women starting in 1987.

Thomas encouraged staff to share results at worldwide meetings. During those meetings, Ford staff in the country offices and in New York tried to follow the mandate to work as “one foundation.” The persistent challenge toward meeting that goal, however, was that initiatives emerging from the New York-based programs, or indeed any program developed in one country, were not always adaptable, relevant or acceptable in other countries or regions. It remained a challenge to develop a unified program, despite the commitment at the highest level of foundation leadership.

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Segment 3. Period Summary - Transition and Restructuring 1966-1988

During this era, the Foundation’s earlier interest in business and the economy evolved into a commitment to improving conditions for people living on the margins of society. The Ford Foundation promoted advancements in women's rights around the globe and introduced micro-lending into grantmaking. At the same time, the economic issues that were shaping program strategies also affected the Foundation's assets. Severe cuts resulted in a significant restructuring of country programs and reduced budgets across all programs.

Even with the cuts in country offices, in the 1970s Ford grantees in developing countries received approximately 80% of the International Division budget. The remaining fifth went to Population, Development Studies, and International Affairs. Although representing a much smaller piece, the International Security and Arms Control program from 1973 was the Foundation’s most concerted effort to make meaningful inroads in disarmament and nuclear issues - those challenges most directly linked to the Foundation's historic concern for peace. By 1979, the Ford Foundation was the biggest funder of arms control as a field, both in the U.S. and overseas.

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Scope and Contents

The Office Files of David Bonbright document Developing Country Program grantmaking and program administration throughout Africa during the period 1979-1987. A substantial portion of the collection relates to Ford Foundation policies towards, and activities in, South Africa.

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Arrangement

The Office Files of David Bonbright are arranged in two series:

I. Correspondence, 1979-1986 II. Subjects, 1983-1987

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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15 Dayton Avenue

Sleepy Hollow 10591

archive@rockarch.org

URL: <http://www.rockarch.org>

Processing Information

Level 1 Minimal Processing has been conducted to establish basic intellectual and physical control of the material and assess immediate preservation and conservation needs. Material remains as received, in original folders and storage boxes.

Conditions Governing Use

Completion of a use agreement is required prior to providing scholarly access. See RAC Head of Reference (or applicable designee) for details.

Ford Foundation holds title, copyright and literary rights in the collection, in so far as it holds them.

The Rockefeller Archive Center has authority to grant permission to cite and publish material from the collection for scholarly purposes. Permission to publish extensive excerpts, or material in its entirety, will be referred to the Ford Foundation.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Ford Foundation archive was deposited at RAC in 2011. Ford Foundation records, correspondence, reports, program files and officers papers were transferred to, and accessioned by, RAC beginning in 2011. Accessions continue as necessary.

Conditions Governing Access

Records more than 10 years old are open for research with select materials restricted as noted. Brittle or damaged items are available at the discretion of RAC.

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Collection Inventory

Correspondence, 1979-1986

Scope and Contents

This series contains incoming and outgoing letters, memoranda and attachments that document Ford Foundation program development, grantmaking, grantee activities and administrative matters throughout Africa, with an emphasis on South Africa. Letters exchanged by Bonbright with South African political figures, leaders of the anti-apartheid movement, Ford Foundation leadership and others concerned with South African social and political conditions illuminate the activities of the Foundation and other philanthropies operating in the region. Collectively, these documents provide a vivid account of the political scene, current events, social and economic conditions, and philanthropic work across the region.

Arrangement

The correspondence is arranged chronologically, and is further sorted alphabetically within each year. Letters are filed by the individual recipient's last name, not by institutional name.

Title/Description	Instances	
1983-1985	box 1 (SK 31085)	folder 1-21
1986-1987	box 2 (SK 31086)	folder 1-15

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Subjects, 1983-1987

Scope and Contents

Series contains records related to meetings of the Ford Foundation Board of Trustees held in South Africa during 1982 and 1983, including briefing papers, background readings and grantee information. Also filed here are minutes and related documents of the Study Group on Southern Africa, a regular convening of foundation leaders, NGO staff, academics, political figures and others concerned with international policy towards the apartheid regime in South Africa and regional political issues. Also included are reports on African social and political conditions prepared by the scholar Thomas Karis, the Institute of Current World Affairs, and others organizations.

Arrangement

This series is arranged alphabetically by subject.

Title/Description	Instances	
Association for Guidance and Assistance to Pupils, 1983	box 3 (SK 31084)	folder 1
Board of Trustees South Africa Trip, 1982	box 3 (SK 31084)	folder 2-3
Board of Trustees South Africa Trip, 1983	box 3 (SK 31084)	folder 4-6
Center for Applied Legal Studies, 1982	box 3 (SK 31084)	folder 7
Conference in Solidarity with the Liberation Struggles of the Peoples of Southern Africa, 1981-1982	box 3 (SK 31084)	folder 8
Institute of Current World Affairs, 1980-1983	box 3 (SK 31084)	folder 9
Kairos Theologians, 1985	box 3 (SK 31084)	folder 10
Karis, Thomas, 1979-1985	box 3 (SK 31084)	folder 11
Labour Monitoring Group, 1984	box 3 (SK 31084)	folder 12
Miscellaneous reports, 1979-1985	box 3 (SK 31084)	folder 13
Study Group on Southern Africa, 1984-1986	box 3 (SK 31084)	folder 14-19
Workshop on Africa, 1985	box 3 (SK 31084)	folder 20

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