



GLOBALISATION, MARGINALISATION & NEW SOCIAL  
MOVEMENTS IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

A joint project between the Centre for Civil Society and the  
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## **A Moral to the Tale: The Treatment Action Campaign and the Politics of HIV/AIDS**

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UNIVERSITY OF  
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Steven Friedman and Shauna Mottiar

In 2001, when multi-national corporations were meant to be invincible, demonstrators pressured international pharmaceutical firms, represented by the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers' Association (PMA), into abandoning court action to prevent the government importing cheaper generic medicines (TAC Statement, 24.04.01). In late 2003, the government sanctioned a plan to distribute anti-retroviral medication (ARVs) to people living with HIV/AIDS, a course of action it had resisted (TAC News Service 2003).

The common thread between the events was the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC). It had been responsible for the 2001 demonstrations and also played a pivotal role in a campaign to win access to ARVs for people infected with HIV and AIDS. The second victory helped confirm TAC's iconic status internationally and at home. It and its chair, Zackie Achmat, have received several awards and have been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize (TAC News Service 2003b). TAC has also been cited repeatedly as a model of a social movement which has won gains for its constituency: it was said to have served as a model for a campaign by the SA Council of Churches and National Land Committee for the expropriation of land from absentee landlords (Kindra, 2001).

Is TAC a model for other social movements? Are its methods effective? Has it developed ways of winning gains which could be adopted by others demanding social equity? And does TAC offer an approach which enables the poor to claim the rights promised by democratic citizenship?

These questions have ramifications well beyond the –important – question of how people infected with HIV/AIDS can be heard and can claim a respected place in society. Unlike a previous wave of democratisation, the current international spread of democracy has not reduced social inequality. A key reason is that the poor have been unable to use democratic rights to win policies which might reduce inequality because classic forms of organisation, such as trade unionism, are less effective, as changes in the labour market exclude the poor from the formal workplace (Friedman, 2002). There is, therefore, a pressing need for approaches which enable the poor and weak to use democratic freedoms to win greater equity. Given its status as a model, TAC's experience may shed light on possibilities for effective social activism in current circumstances.

This paper is a modest attempt to examine that experience. It examines TAC, its history, characteristics and strategies, in an attempt to suggest implications for ways in which democracy can also yield greater social and economic equity.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is an abbreviated version of 'A Rewarding Engagement?: The Treatment Action Campaign and the Politics of HIV/AIDS' which can be consulted on the website of the Centre for Civil Society, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

## **Method**

The study relies largely on interviews with TAC activists and officials: interviewees ranged from the national chair to grassroots participants. Interviews were conducted in Western Cape, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. While the selection of interviewees is heavily weighted to metropolitan areas, it does encompass the major centres of TAC activity. One of us also attended TAC's national conference, branch meetings and social functions. While some grassroots activists were wary of speaking to us after experiences with the media in which they felt they were not quoted accurately, TAC and its officials were extremely co-operative.

Interviews were also sought with those who deal with TAC – government, pharmaceutical companies, allies such as the Congress of SA Trade Unions (Cosatu) and other social movements - since we believed a more accurate picture would emerge if we researched how others saw TAC as well as how it sees itself. Co-operation from government and pharmaceutical firms was extremely limited: only one company, Boehringer Ingelheim, agreed to see us – Pfizer and GSK (GlaxoSmithKline) refused but did not give reasons. Two senior Department of Health officials, Dr Nono Simelela and Dr Humphrey Zokufa, agreed to meet but repeatedly cancelled meetings. It is unclear whether they were reluctant to be interviewed or could not fit us into their schedules.

Interview material was supplemented by documents and secondary literature. Gaining access to documents was extremely easy since TAC operates openly and we are unaware of any documentation which was withheld from us. Indeed, much of the material we required was available freely in electronic form.

## **ANATOMY OF THE MOVEMENT: TAC'S KEY FEATURES**

TAC campaigns for affordable treatment for people living with HIV and AIDS. Other goals are to 'prevent and eliminate new HIV infections' and to 'improve the affordability and quality of health-care access for all'. It was launched on 10 December 1998, International Human Rights Day, to 'campaign for greater access to treatment for all South Africans, by raising public awareness and understanding about issues surrounding the availability, affordability and use of HIV treatments'. TAC says it also 'campaigns against the view that AIDS is a "death sentence"' (TAC, About TAC, 2004).

Although TAC is probably best known for securing concessions from the government, its founders expected it to be tackling pharmaceutical companies: they did not expect the government to deny the link between HIV and AIDS and to oppose roll-out of ARVs (Interview, Heywood, 29.03.04). It was, partly, government failure to respond to the withdrawal of the PMA attempt to halt the import of generic drugs by 'rolling out' ARVs which prompted its clash with TAC.

The organisation employs a multi-strategy approach to campaigning, and its methods range from civil disobedience and street demonstrations through action in the courts (the AIDS Law project at the University of the Witwatersrand works closely with TAC) to measured scientific arguments. In TAC's own understanding, it maintains its visibility 'through posters, pamphlets, meetings, street activism and letter writing' (TAC, About TAC, 2004). TAC also runs programmes which provide services. Most important are the treatment project, which provides medication for some TAC and 'community' members

(Interview, Khwaza, 18.02.04), and the treatment literacy campaign which advises people undergoing or administering treatment. (TAC, Treatment Literacy, 2004: Interview, Dabula, 18.02.04; Interview, TAC Volunteer, 12.12.03). Both have a political purpose as well as a 'service' dimension. The literacy campaign includes content which may raise consciousness (Interview, Mkhutyukelwa, 28.01.04). The treatment project shows that ARV programmes can be implemented effectively and that TAC can put in place effective treatment. It is, therefore, also a campaigning tool, and a demonstration of the role TAC could play in the roll-out. TAC also combined service provision with civil disobedience when, on occasions, it imported cheaper medication, ignoring pharmaceutical company patents (Reuters, 2002). So campaigning remains primary, even when TAC is providing a service.

### **Finances and internal organisation**

Social movements are seen by some as new forms of organisation (Desai, cited in Fakir, 2004). So how new is TAC's structure?

TAC is in many ways a conventional membership organisation, although aspects of its internal structure are unconventional. Thus there seems no clear distinction between members – who usually do not pay dues– and 'supporters', 'volunteers' or 'activists' (Interviews, Mvinjelwa, 18.02.04, Mpongose 12.12.03, Nkala, 03.12.03). One official insists that "‘volunteers’ and members are really the same thing' (Interview, Berold, 19.02.04). The primary means of becoming a member is to join a branch (Interview, Cele, 03.12.03) and activists seem more comfortable counting branches than members. While some branches charge a small membership fee,<sup>2</sup> this is not the norm. It may, therefore, be more accurate to describe people active in TAC as 'participants' rather than drawing a clear distinction between members and supporters. Membership does become relevant in the election of office bearers, although even here there is divergence from the norm: members elect its national executive committee, but social sectors are also represented – children, youth, faith based organisations, health professionals and labour (Interview, Cele). Cosatu is automatically represented on the TAC NEC (Interview, Mpolokeng, 17.05.04). In KwaZulu-Natal, doctors, nurses and local councillors are encouraged to attend TAC meetings (Interview, Nkala).

Membership in early 2004 was said to be around 8 000 (Interviews, Achmat, 19.02.04, Geffen, 19.02.04);<sup>3</sup> this rose to 9 500 by mid-year, although TAC acknowledges that some people listed as members have died (Personal Communication, Geffen, 23.07.04). Whichever figure is used, this is a very small percentage of the 5m people estimated to be living with HIV and AIDS, although the fact that TAC draws some of its members from people living with a virus and that some lose their lives is, in the view of its leadership, one reason for its limited size (Interview, Achmat). An activist suggests also that the stigma of being identified as HIV positive deters membership (Interview, Mpongose). TAC activists point out that the numbers participating in its marches – which they estimate at between 8 000 and 15 000 – indicate an ability to mobilise well in excess of its membership (Interview, Geffen). TAC officials insist that its strength is not based on numbers – a view strongly endorsed by activists in other social movements (Interviews, Desai, 19.05.04, McKinley, 25.05.04). But TAC leaders recognise that the size of its base

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<sup>2</sup> Observation of TAC University of KwaZulu Natal TAC branch meeting October 15 2003 Durban.

<sup>3</sup> A communication from TAC in early January gave a membership of 7 698, but with the rider that it had increased since this count by an unspecified amount. Rukia Cornelius to Shauna Mottiar, 6 January, 2004.

does constrain it by ensuring that it cannot undertake some campaigns and cannot win issues by organised strength alone (Interview, Mthathi, 19.02.04).

TAC has grown in size, activities and funding. It has substantial full-time staff, administration, and funded programmes – features rarely associated with social movements. Thus it employs 40 people and has a budget of R18m for 2004/2005 (Interview, Heywood) - roughly double the income for 2002-2003. All revenue is sourced from donations. In 2002- 2003, the last financial year for which audited statements are published, 98 per cent of income was derived from grants from ten donor organisations – the rest from individual donations (Interview, Khumalo, 19.02.04). Donors include some European governments: this suggests a growing ‘respectability’ but ‘some (official donors) are nervous of TAC because they see us as too critical of government’ (Interview, Geffen). Funding is donated for core costs and specific purposes. The largest donation, from the church organisation Bread to the World, is core funding whose only condition is a preference that some be used on workshops (Interview, Wilson, 01.04.04). TAC does not accept donations from the government or pharmaceutical companies (TAC Funding and Finances, 2004) - or from some official donors such as USAID (Interview, Geffen).

The bulk of TAC activity remains concentrated in the provinces which house the three largest urban centres – Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. Within the provinces, metropolitan areas are the prime focus of membership. But it does have active branches in smaller towns in KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape particularly, and is seeking to build a presence in provinces which are further removed from major urban centres (Interviews, Heywood, Geffen).

### **Political loyalties**

TAC is not affiliated to a political party and members are said to support a variety of parties (Interview, Mthathi). One branch reports maintaining contact with several parties (Interview, Mvoto, 18.02.04). According to an interviewee, tension between African National Congress and Inkatha Freedom Party supporters has surfaced: ANC supporters were reluctant to take ARVs, reflecting government policy at the time, IFP supporters more likely to take them (Tongaat Branch Member, 12.12.03). This mirrors similar conflicts in the early days of the trade union movement (Friedman, 1985): once movements recruit members on the strength of a common interest, a membership with diverse political loyalties is likely – and may become a challenge for the organisation, since leaders may have strong political preferences which are not shared by all members. In TAC, ANC members are numerically dominant (Interview, Mthathi) – as they are in most membership organisations given the ANC’s majority. Treasurer Mark Heywood says TAC is ‘neither anti-government nor anti-ANC’ (Interview, Heywood). It is prepared to oppose both fiercely if needs be but appreciates that ‘if there is a party composed of the poor it is the ANC’ (Personal communication, Heywood, 09.07.04). Frequent statements by Achmat that he is a ‘loyal member of the ANC’ elicit criticism from activists in other social movements (Interviews, Desai, McKinley). Senior TAC officials acknowledge that, while it endorsed the role in the ARV ‘roll-out’ of the ANC-NNP Western Cape government, this may have been impossible if the province was governed by the Democratic Alliance (Interview, Geffen). So, despite its independence and diversity, TAC, unlike most social movements, has a political identity which ensures a relationship with the government and ANC.

Its relationship with the ANC is more complex than its critics suggest. Achmat has called for the democratisation of the ANC, which, he argues, largely ignores civil society. And before the 2004 election, he suggested that ‘the ANC would like TAC to endorse a boycott of elections so that we can lose legitimacy’ (Interview, Achmat). Nor did ANC support within TAC dissuade it from attempting to charge the Ministers of Health and Trade and Industry with culpable homicide because of their stance on HIV/AIDS. To activist Ashwin Desai, this mixture of sympathy and opposition is a legacy of Achmat’s and Heywood’s days in the Marxist Workers’ Tendency, which sought to remain in the ANC while criticising it from the left. He suggests that this is inappropriate: social movements should work outside party politics (Interview). But, since TAC has internal democratic procedures, it is highly unlikely that two leaders shape its direction without broad membership support. The ANC expresses the political identity of many TAC members – but this does not still opposition when it is seen to obstruct treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS. The closest analogy is to TAC’s ally Cosatu which is loyal to the ANC but pursues its interests when these conflict with ANC policy– although Cosatu is a formal ANC ally, TAC is not.

### **Interests and identities**

Why do people join TAC? Because they are HIV-positive and want medication? Or because they are socially aware and identify with people living with HIV and AIDS? It would be misleading to classify TAC as either an interest-based organisation or one driven by identification or identity, because it is both.

Discovering how many people join because they are HIV positive is not possible since it is an article of faith within TAC that people should not be required to reveal their HIV status (although they are encouraged to do so). Estimates of the proportion of participants with HIV and AIDS range from 50% (Interview, Geffen) to 70% (Interview, Ramothwala, 18.03.04). And people may join for both reasons – Achmat is HIV positive and a left activist. Participants who are not HIV positive are active as a result of social commitment or, in some cases, because people in their lives have been infected.<sup>4</sup> Common sense might suggest that people at the grassroots are more likely to join because they are HIV positive, senior leaders more likely to be motivated by a cause. But a crude distinction between social activists at the top and HIV positive people at the bottom does not bear scrutiny. Not only are several office bearers HIV positive, but motives for participation offered by branch members included parents and children infected with the virus and a public-spirited desire to spread awareness (Interviews, KZN branch members, 12.12.03).

Clearly, the main reason for participating is a wish to see people living with HIV and AIDS receive treatment, not a common identity. While Achmat’s identity as a gay man of Muslim background is often commented on – and TAC might remember with respect and affection Simon Nkoli, a gay human rights activist who succumbed to AIDS and is cited as one of its ‘catalysts’<sup>5</sup> - TAC is not primarily a vehicle for gays and lesbians. About the nearest we may come to an identity-based rationale is that TAC is likely to attract people who believe that social action to secure state provision of necessities is desirable. But

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<sup>4</sup> For example: ‘The reason I participate in TAC is because I have 2 sisters who are ill’ (Interview, Khumalo, 03.12.03); ‘I participate in TAC because I believe in the need for social service – I also know someone who died of AIDS and I am angry about it because, given the appropriate treatment, it need not have happened’ (Interview, Pithouse, 04.12.03); ‘I joined TAC because I am a parent affected by AIDS – I am a trained counsellor and received further training from TAC’ (Interview, Verulam Volunteer, 12.12.03).

<sup>5</sup> Interview, Heywood. In a similar vein, he mentions Gugu Dlamini, who was murdered because she openly declared her HIV positive status.

interest in treatment, or identification and empathy with those who need it, is the spur, rather than religious, political or social identities.

Interviewees repeatedly stressed that more was at stake for people at the grassroots than the need to receive medication. Many noted the sense of hope, efficacy and self-worth people drew from TAC (Interviews, Grassroots Activists, 28.01.04). It also seeks to help eradicate the stigma of HIV/AIDS (Interview, Mvoto). 'TAC's biggest success has been that it has gone some way to ending discrimination about HIV/AIDS. People are not afraid to be open about their HIV status any more' (Interview, Mthethwa, 03.12.03). 'I would be dead by now if it wasn't for TAC – they gave me the courage to accept my status and be open about it' (Interview, Activist, 12.12.03). Thus, living with HIV and AIDS can give TAC membership an identity dimension even as it pursues a cause shaped by common interest.

TAC's membership is largely poor and black. According to Achmat: 'The demographics of TAC are 80% unemployed, 70% women, 70% in the 14-24 age group and 90% African' (Interview, Achmat). So TAC speaks for people who do not share the advantages available to middle-class activists and may be unable to participate in complicated debates in English. This raises two dangers – that the concerns of the grassroots are not informing the leadership's agenda and that TAC faces conflict as grassroots leaders feel their route to an effective role blocked. Again there is an analogy with the union movement: initially, talented worker leaders, who had no difficulty operating effectively in the workplace, found it hard to graduate to positions which required a grasp of technicalities usually available only to people with more schooling (and familiarity with English).

The first issue is dealt with in our discussion of decision-making. The second, TAC acknowledges as a problem. Significant efforts are being made to ensure that grassroots leaders are empowered for national leadership. There is, Heywood acknowledges, 'a tension between the profile of the leadership and base'. Effective grassroots leaders 'are often quiet at NEC meetings but active on the ground'. A racial attack on him by Health minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang<sup>6</sup> reminded TAC leadership of the need to 'ensure that grassroots activists led the organisation at the top' (Interview, Heywood). TAC has sought to empower people to rise in the ranks through training. Another technique is 'parallel hiring' in which people are promoted in staff jobs and someone is hired alongside them to train them to take over. KwaZulu Natal Provincial Co-ordinator Thabo Cele, who began as a branch member, is cited as a leader who emerged from the grassroots: he has taken the podium on behalf of TAC at an international AIDS Conference. Others include Deputy Chair Siphon Mthathi and National Secretary Mandla Majola. National Treatment Project Co-ordinator Nonkosi Khumalo has risen in the staff hierarchy, beginning as an executive secretary (Phone interviews, Heywood, 14.06.04, Geffen, 14.06.04).

Mthathi notes that the new TAC leaders are still trying to shape their political views and create a place for themselves in the new society. TAC gave them the space to do this (Phone interview, Mthathi, 15.06.04). It remains possible that TAC's emerging leaders will adopt differing political strategies. Later generations of union leaders, emerging from the grassroots, did adopt more overtly political positions than the first generation of largely middle class leaders.

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<sup>6</sup> The Minister said people 'come with busses and go to commissions where they wait for the white man to tell them what to do...Our Africans say: Let us wait for the white man to deploy us; to say to us: toyi-toyi (protest) here' (MassiveEffort.org, 2003).

Do TAC participants see it as a vehicle for social change – or simply as a means of securing treatment for people living with HIV and AIDS? One of TAC’s founders, Heywood, insists that no broader political agenda lay behind its formation, despite his and Achmat’s history of left-wing activism: it is concerned ‘with the politics of health, not politics *per se*’ (Interview, Heywood). Many activists see TAC purely as a fighter for people with HIV and AIDS (Interviews, Mbali, 08.12.03, Mpongose, Ncala, 24.03.04) – it is criticised by a social movement activist because it is said to refuse to place its campaign in the context of government macro-economic policy.<sup>7</sup> But a focus on immediate goals may reflect the needs of many of its constituents, who see TAC as an instrument to win treatment. And it may read accurately a reality in social movements. Andile Mngxitama of the Landless People’s Movement (LPM) argues that some activists overstate the movements’ ‘revolutionary’ impulse: ‘As an LPM leader explained recently to the disappointment and chagrin of the “revolutionary left”: “We want the government to listen to us”’ (Mngxitama, 2004). Nor is a focus on HIV/AIDS alone necessarily avoiding the issue of unequal distribution of power and resources. TAC leaders are convinced that their campaign for treatment addresses some of these inequalities – Heywood describes the initiative to import generic drugs in defiance of patents as ‘our first campaign on a structural issue’ (Interview, Heywood).

But some leaders do expect TAC to play a broader role. Mthathi suggests that: ‘HIV AIDS is an entry point. We want to ensure a better society and equality’ (Interview, Mthathi). Achmat agrees: ‘TAC is not a single issue campaign– we also deal with governance, corporate governance and domestic violence. We are aiming to reorder the health sector. We need to build a culture of complaint, we need communities to become more active. We have a progressive social democratic vision and shouldn’t hide it’ (Interview, Achmat). Nor is explicit political engagement ruled out. If the ANC were to split, TAC might find itself in an alliance with that section which ‘offers alternatives’; even if that does not happen, the idea of TAC as part of a ‘social justice coalition’ is attractive to its national leaders (Interview, Heywood).

Thus TAC has committed itself to a People’s Health Campaign. It has joined a trade union campaign to oppose textile imports (TAC Newsletter, 2004). It also organised, with the Basic Income Grant (BIG) Coalition, the first march for a BIG (TAC, 2002). It needs, KwaZulu-Natal deputy chair Gugu Mpongose suggests, to mobilise people to claim social grants and monitor access to them (Interview, Mpongose). And some middle level officials share a vision of a role concerned not just with HIV treatment but healthcare in general (Interview, Kunene, 24.03.04).

There is no simple distinction between a campaign which aims to change the structure of society and one which seeks immediate gains. Single issue campaigns may challenge society’s ordering, if they seek to redistribute power and resources. Embarking on these campaigns, winning gains and building on these could be the most feasible way to achieve social change (Friedman, 1985). ‘TAC is a political movement, but not a party political movement’ (Personal communication, Heywood, 09.07.04). But the fight for treatment for people living with AIDS will not in itself end the poverty and powerlessness of many TAC participants. Whether TAC can help to tackle these wider inequalities is unclear. And, while it is led by people who harbour a vision of change which goes well beyond

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<sup>7</sup> ‘We link GEAR and its neo-liberal stance (e.g. privatisation) to the problems we are highlighting. TAC never makes any mention of the macroeconomic framework’ (Interview, McKinley).

treatment for people infected by AIDS, it does seem likely that, for the foreseeable future, the demands on its time and resources placed by HIV/AIDS will be so great that active engagement in a wider agenda will remain sporadic and secondary. TAC will continue to face pressures from outside its ranks for involvement in other issues. But its constituency may judge it on progress in winning treatment. Ensuring that it does not lose focus on their expectations will be a continuing challenge, as its mobilising ability makes it a desirable ally for those seeking support for other campaigns.

## **Gender in TAC**

Like most or all South African institutions and organisations, TAC is still far from full gender equality.

Most TAC members are women – one source estimates 60%-70% (Interview, Mbali). This is not surprising, since women are far more likely to be infected by HIV (Department of Health, 2002; Fredriksson and Berry, 2002). Organisers also say women are more active in branches (Interviews, Majali, 18.02.04, Xaba, 02.12.03, Cele, Nkala, Pithouse, Kunene). Mvotoho speculates that men are reluctant to participate because they are more likely to fear the stigma of being known to be HIV positive (Interview, Mvotoho). Women are also subject to domestic abuse compounded by the advent of HIV, and this is said to give them an added incentive to participate (Interview, Mvotoho). But, while some office bearers insist that there is a roughly equal gender distribution among office bearers and staff (Interviews, Mthethwa, Cele), an interviewee estimates that only about one third of office bearers and about half of staff members are women (Interview, Xaba). Measured simply by how many women occupy senior positions, TAC has made significant progress. Formally, its secretariat consists of four people – three men and one woman were elected at its last conference. But one of the men resigned and was replaced by a woman so the split is now equal. In practice, the secretariat includes senior staff members in *ex officio* positions and, on this measure, TAC is run by four women and three men. Most people in provincial management positions are women (Personal communication, Geffen, 23.07.04). But its public face remains predominantly male – Mthathi, the most senior woman in TAC, does not yet have the profile of Achmat, Heywood and other men who lead it. A woman activist suggests that this is a consequence of ‘the patriarchal system and the fact that women don’t seem very keen to step into leadership roles’ (Interview, Mbali).

TAC is concerned about gender equity – current ratios between men and women are a result of a request by Achmat and its national executive to ‘balance the gender make up’ (Interviews, Mthethwa, Xaba). While this is not expressed in a formal policy, ‘TAC is very sensitive to gender. TAC does empower women and give them leadership positions – in recruiting staff we also take this into account’ (Interview, Berold). Its leaders insist it is learning to handle gender with greater sensitivity. Thus, several years ago, an incident in which a male volunteer struck a female colleague was handled ‘inappropriately’ – the man was given too light a punishment and the woman was ‘not handled with sufficient dignity’. But ‘we learned from our mistake’ – subsequently, a national office-bearer was dismissed, partly for sexual harassment. It has also sought to educate its male members about women’s rights (Personal communication, Geffen, 23.07.04). And despite the continued imbalance, the perception that TAC ‘gives women a voice’ is cited as an important reason for participating (Interview, Pillay, 08.12.03). Given the centrality of gender issues to AIDS, treatment literacy workshops do address topics of particular concern to women (Interview, Mkhutyukelwa). Achmat and Heywood stress TAC’s role

in giving some of the politically weakest sections of society, including grassroots women, a voice.

TAC did not invent the gender prejudices which inhibit women from playing a more prominent role in it. Its leaders do seem set on challenging these. But, despite advances, it has some way to go before it becomes a vehicle for gender equality. TAC is providing opportunities for women to lead attempts to tackle HIV and AIDS at the grassroots. There is considerable potential for it to become an acknowledged vehicle of women's participation in society and its leaders are not closed to this. But it is not yet an organisation in which women are clearly playing a public leadership role at the national level.

## **WHO GOVERNS TAC?: INTERNAL DECISION-MAKING**

Participation in social movements is meant to offer participants a voice –this could be the most important rationale for participating. Movements must be able to influence their social environments for, if they do not, the voices of their participants are not heard. They must be able to give participants a voice in the organisation to ensure that, if it does influence the environment, it does so on their behalf (Pateman, 1976; Fishkin, 1997; Scholte, 2002). The internal governance of social movements is, therefore, an important indicator of whether they do offer a voice.

Despite its unconventional approach to membership, TAC has a formal structure which provides for internal representative democracy. The basic unit is the branch. Each province in which it is active also has a provincial executive committee (PEC), and it has a national executive committee (NEC), its prime decision-making structure. National leadership is nominated by branches and elected at a national congress every two years in a ballot supervised by the Independent Electoral Commission. At TAC's last conference, in August 2003, the chair and treasurer were elected unopposed, while elections for deputy chair and secretary were contested (TAC Conference Report, 2003). PECs and branches meet monthly. Despite the ambiguities about membership, participation at branch meetings is largely restricted to members. An innovation is the district, introduced because 'branches began to take on more and more tasks and there was just too much burden on the provincial office to oversee them all' (Interview, Mvoto; Interviews, Majali, Xaba). The three provinces in which interviews were conducted have set up district offices but not all are fully operative.<sup>8</sup>

There is broad agreement in TAC that major strategic decisions are initiated by national leadership.<sup>9</sup> What is less clear is whether branches have significant influence. National proposals are passed to the provinces and then the districts, which are meant to confer with branches and send responses to the provincial level, which communicates them to the national office. National is the ultimate decision-making authority, although some compromise with other levels is made: the NEC rejected a district proposal that volunteers be paid – but did agree to a low fee although this 'is still a point of contention among volunteers' (Interview, Mvoto).

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<sup>8</sup> KwaZulu Natal has four districts, Gauteng six and Western Cape nine.

<sup>9</sup> 'Decisions about tactics and strategy are generally made at national level and then taken to provincial and district or branch level' (Interview, Xaba).

In theory, provinces are able to take strategic decisions, according to one official, but in practice this seems limited. Thus Western Cape decided to hold a demonstration disrupting a speech by deputy president Jacob Zuma. 'At the last minute we had to call our plans off because of an enraged call from Zackie (Achmat) who claimed that we had to wait for the civil disobedience campaign. We told him we felt this was the right time and he said quite angrily that the national office would announce when the right time was – we can't be sure how he found out about it, but there was one person who didn't agree with our plans and so perhaps he said something. We had to inform our members that they could not whistle, toyi toyi or disrupt Zuma's speech – this ruined the spirit and made people question how much authority we really had' (Interview, Mvotoho). Relations with the national office are said to be 'fine' after this incident, suggesting that the conflict has been effectively managed. But there are tensions between the national leadership and provinces: 'Often there is resistance to national control: national has directed that all the treatment literacy campaigns be run in the same way in all provinces – but we here in Gauteng have some ideas of our own and are constantly voicing our need to do things our way' (Interview, Ramothwala). At present, these do not seem a serious source of conflict. But, if internal democracy proves less effective in substance than form, they could become so.

Finances are tightly controlled at national level, a strategy justified as a necessary guard against waste and corruption (Interview, Wilson). Each province must submit a monthly budget and, on approval, funds are transferred to it. If money is needed urgently beyond the amount budgeted, it can be transferred only in response to a detailed account of the purpose. Tight financial controls have not entirely prevented misappropriation but have, TAC officials say, enabled them to detect it (Interview, Wilson). Whatever the merits of national control, strong protections against corruption are a strategic necessity because of TAC's dependence on donations, and because a movement premised on retaining the 'moral high ground' cannot afford financial scandal. To retain trust, financial information is available on TAC's website (Interview, Wilson).

National is meant to be the highest decision-making level. But does membership have a say? Cele implies that it does: 'Provinces and branches are consulted. Responses and suggestions go back to the national office before the final decision is taken' (Interview, Cele). The civil disobedience campaign was 'thoroughly discussed by all PECs' even though the decision was made by the national office. In at least one case, a strategic decision by national leadership was overturned by branch members (Personal communication, Geffen, 23.07.04). Some participants insist there is also effective communication from branches to national (Interview, Nkala). To ensure that TAC leaders stay in touch with other levels of the organisation, each province is allocated a national representative to attend provincial and district meetings. Provinces also send representatives to the NEC (Interview, Cele).

Not everyone agrees that upward communication is effective. One activist says her branch has better contact with the national than the provincial level which 'does not provide us with much input' (Interview, Pithouse). Another says minutes of branch meetings are sent to the provincial office 'but I am not too sure if they are ever used or sent to the national office. It seems our link with the provincial office is only strong during a crisis.' He adds that national leadership's attempt to stay in touch with members is not effective: 'I was once invited to a TAC meeting in Durban just because I happened to know someone in national leadership: the rest of my branch did not even know about it. Our branch only

found out about the civil disobedience campaign after it was decided' (Interview, Ndlovu, 28.01.04). 'Communication between our branch and the province is bad – I e-mail them all our minutes but they never respond' (Interview, Pillay).

Some informants insist that responses from the provincial office to branches have improved greatly. In particular, the formation of a youth task team with representatives from all branches is said to have helped to form stronger links with the provincial office: 'concerns are well articulated' (Personal communications Pillay, 22.07.04, Pithouse, 22.07.04). More generally, complaints of a lack of liaison are a minority view: 'TAC is a democratic organisation – it's not as if Zackie says something and we all follow. Branches are given the opportunity to input' (Interview, Mbali). 'The PEC takes branch meeting resolutions very seriously - June was declared Youth Month as a direct result of the call from youth branch members' (Interview, Ramothwala). Issues raised in treatment literacy workshops are said to be effectively conveyed to the NEC (Interview, Mkhutyukelwa). An activist suggests that communication and participation are uneven: 'Relationships between various levels are never fixed –sometimes TAC works top down and other times bottom up' (Interview, Ramothwala).

Over-romantic views of democracy within TAC are inappropriate. There are structural constraints to some expressions of democracy because some TAC strategies require technical knowledge unavailable to people who lack formal education. It is inevitable that at times a divide will emerge between the grassroots and national officials whose formal education or political histories or both give them an advantage in addressing technical and strategic issues. Rhetoric claiming that strategy is powered by the grassroots would deserve scepticism, and it is to the credit of TAC's national leadership that it did not make these claims.

But it would be equally misleading to reject TAC's constitutional structures as a fig-leaf for control by a small group. TAC members are free to speak – interviewees were happy to talk openly, including those who offered frank criticism of the leadership, and this speaks to a high degree of tolerance within TAC. There is no disciplinary procedure for people who hold dissenting views – discipline is used only to address financial mismanagement: 'TAC has a culture of speaking openly' (Interview, Berold). The reverence with which grassroots members talk of Achmat could raise concerns of a personality cult but there is no evidence that TAC leadership encourages this: the fact that participants express strong loyalty to him may simply mean that he has won the affection of the grassroots. Most importantly, the fact that TAC does have functioning democratic structures is in itself an important guarantee that members retain a voice since they build in mechanisms which force leadership to respond to membership, even if this happens in practice less often than it could.

The fuzziness of membership and automatic national representation of sectors may enhance inclusiveness but could also obstruct democracy, even if there is no sign that this has happened yet. While some analysts and activists exalt the looseness of social movement organisation, democratic structures are not impositions by bureaucrats but the means by which participants gain a say in their organisation. In TAC, the structures ensure that it remains democratic. But historical disadvantage is a substantial barrier to the exercise of voice in TAC and, as some of its leaders acknowledge, it could do more to ensure a voice for its grassroots members.

## TAC AND THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

The opportunities and constraints which face social movements are determined not only by their own organising and strategic efforts, but also by the external environment.

Social movement theorist Sidney Tarrow thus proposes the notion of a ‘political opportunity structure’ - ‘consistent – but not necessarily formal, permanent or national – dimensions of the political environment which either encourage or discourage people from using collective action’. The most salient changes in opportunity structure result from the opening of access to power, shifts in ruling alignments, the availability of influential allies and cleavages in and among elites. State structures create stable opportunities, but it is changes within states that provide the openings that ‘actors can use to create new movements’ (Tarrow, 1994:18). This helps us understand the circumstances in which social movements might flourish and those in which they might wane.

In post-apartheid South Africa, two dynamics could offer opportunities for collective action in social movements: changes in the political environment and in social conditions. The key change in the political opportunity structure is democratisation since 1994. This opened up opportunities by removing the threat of repression from some collective action – and by creating opportunities for influence, such as use of the constitutional court or engagement with government. But it also ended a key reason for popular action, apartheid. On the second score, the growth of social movements is frequently linked to government macro-economic policy, which is said to have worsened social conditions, creating new rationales for collective action.<sup>10</sup> How applicable are these explanations to TAC?

That TAC was not formed before 1994 probably has to do with political context, not repression. ‘There could have been a TAC without the transition. But our space to operate and our role would have depended on ANC politics’ (Interview, Heywood). Because TAC would have been active mainly among victims of apartheid, the opportunity structure would have been shaped by the anti-apartheid ‘struggle’. Issue-based activity did form part of anti-apartheid activity, but there were expectations that it be pursued in a manner which could advance the fight against the system. TAC would thus have been expected to link its activity to the wider problem of apartheid. Also, it would have faced pressure to choose tactics least likely to bestow legitimacy on the system. This does not mean it would have been prevented from taking opportunities presented by the system: the union movement did this throughout the ‘struggle’. But it would have been expected to adopt an adversarial attitude to the state. A further pressure could have been reluctance to highlight HIV and AIDS for fear of fuelling white stereotypes about black sexual practices: this concern was expressed in the union movement during the 1980s. But TAC did not arise as a possibility under apartheid primarily because, in the heat of battle against it, attentions were focussed elsewhere.

The environment has changed, creating new opportunities and constraints. But there are strategic continuities: ‘Many of us with activist backgrounds are doing old things in a new environment’ (Interview, Heywood). The constitutional court is seen as a resource: the case in which it ordered the government to supply ARVs to some citizens was a

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<sup>10</sup> Interview McKinley. This does not necessarily mean that the perception of worsening economic conditions for the poor is accurate. A more nuanced view is offered by, for example, Borat, 2003. Clearly, however, many people continue to live in dire poverty, creating potential fuel for activism.

‘breakthrough’ which ‘forced the government’s hand’ (Interview, Mbali). It will be used if the roll-out does not materialise: ‘the government is afraid of the constitutional court’ (Interview, Geffen). The rights which make a court challenge possible now were not available before 1994. But the courts were used under apartheid too – by unions and activists contesting residential segregation and influx control. And, while an activist accuses TAC of over-reliance on the law, he acknowledges that ‘TAC has managed to find a balance between (using the courts) and the masses in the streets’ (Interview, Desai). The use of international solidarity, of broad alliances and civil disobedience also show continuities with tactics under apartheid.

Despite considerable conflict with the government, TAC now has allies as well as opponents within it (Interviews, Mthathi, Heywood). Another key asset, the support of people who are strategically placed in society, such as former President Mandela, Anglican Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane and the Medical Research Council President Malegapuru Makgoba, are also products of a post-apartheid opportunity structure. And apartheid’s end has weakened obstructions to tackling treatment for people with AIDS on the grounds that the anti-apartheid struggle was more pressing.

Democratisation has also created new strategic challenges for social movements. Winning and retaining public opinion matters more than during the anti-apartheid struggle, when support could often be assumed. The legitimacy of the government and popularity of the ruling party are also new realities which activists forget at their peril: ‘A major tactical error would be to lose support among our members as other social movements have done when they are seen to be threatening democratically elected leaders’ (Interview, Achmat; See also Chance and Mbali, 2004). TAC is unusual among social movements in its appreciation of the need to change strategic calculations to accommodate formal democracy.

Whether the government’s failure to improve the conditions of the poor prompted TAC depends on whether the government refusal to roll out ARVs is seen as a consequence of economic policy or AIDS ‘denialism’. But TAC clearly has grown in an opportunity structure in which perceived government failure to address social challenges has fuelled activism.

### **To defy or not?**

The issue on which some of these considerations crystallised, is the 2003 civil disobedience campaign in response to the government’s failure to sign an agreement at the National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac) agreeing to an AIDS treatment plan. Mthathi recalls: ‘Civil disobedience was a difficult decision because it was historically used against a government most people did not support. There were fears that it would make us politically vulnerable if we seemed anti-government’ (Interview, Mthathi). The campaign also promoted tensions between the ‘middle class’ component of TAC and the grassroots (Interview, Heywood). Cosatu did not participate because: ‘We felt that our members would see this as an attempt to overthrow the government. It also placed them at risk if they participated’ (Interview, Mpolokeng). Decisions which would have been straightforward before democracy, became complicated under democratic conditions.

The decision to undertake civil disobedience was taken because TAC leadership judged that the campaign could be defended and conducted in a way which would not lose it the moral high ground. Part of this was showing that the decision was not taken lightly: ‘We were forced to enter into a civil disobedience campaign because we had exhausted all other means. We recognise the legitimacy of the state and are fully prepared to take the consequences of breaking the law. We held off our first planned civil disobedience at the request of Deputy President Zuma in the hope that a Nedlac meeting would resolve the dispute’ (Interview, Achmat). It was essential that the campaign be conducted in a manner which showed that TAC behaved non-violently and its activists accepted the consequences of defying legitimate laws. Anyone who wished to could opt out, and under 18s needed informed consent (Interview, Achmat). Later, the campaign was called off to allow the government to respond. The methods used were also underpinned by TAC’s concern to maintain a moral consensus in its support: ‘We found ourselves engaging with police officers on HIV issues in their families and communities’ (Interview, Achmat).

The calculation appears to have been vindicated: the campaign is seen within TAC as a success and is credited with achieving the Cabinet decision to roll out ARVs (although the evidence for this is inconclusive): ‘The campaign was very successful – it gave the people a voice, it was an outlet for grief at deaths that had affected them– it brought allies out of the woodwork’ (Interview, Mbali). More than 600 people participated (Interview, Achmat).

The disobedience campaign may indicate the challenges and potential rewards of a democratic environment. It shows that, in a democracy, careful strategic calculations are needed if social movements are to maintain a successful coalition. But it does show too that, providing the need to retain the support of key allies and the public is taken seriously, social movements can win major gains under democratic conditions without sacrificing the mobilisation which is their lifeblood.

### **TAC and the government**

The relationship between social movements and the government depends to a degree on the nature of the political system – and of the movements’ perception of it.

Where a political system is hostile to social movements, the relationship will be adversarial – relations between the apartheid state and resistance organisations are an example. Even where movements use levers provided by the system, this will not lead to co-operative engagement with government: it may produce what students of the labour movement call ‘militant abstentionism’ (Buhlungu, 2000:90; von Holdt, 2003). Some social movement approaches exhibit this. The state is seen as an enemy (Ngwane, 2003) and the system solely as a source of inequity (Vally, 2004). TAC’s approach assumes a more complicated relationship, in which co-operation and conflict are employed together. Behind this is an assumption that ‘we can win gains from this system – far-reaching reform is possible’ (Interview, Heywood).

This is particularly so since the Cabinet decision to agree to an ARV roll-out. Ensuring that it is implemented is repeatedly stated as a key goal by TAC activists. Much activity is devoted to this. TAC’s statements on the roll-out insist that it is an enthusiastic government partner in this venture. An activist talks of plans for a forum of NGOs, local government and provincial government to ‘work together to make roll-out a success’

(Interview, Ncala). A critic suggests that ‘joining with government to provide ARVs will cost TAC its independence and turn it into effectively a parallel structure to the state’ (Interview, Desai). But TAC and government leaders know the roll-out is not the unfolding of a voluntary government strategy, but a reluctant response to pressure: ‘There seems to be no real political will from government on HIV treatment’ (Interview, Majali). Certainly, some in the ANC and in government favour a roll-out, but the circumstances in which it became a reality mean there is considerable resistance to implementing the policy change. Nor has the government displayed great enthusiasm for a working partnership with TAC. It was initially excluded from the SA National AIDS Council (SANAC) established by the government. Now, several SANAC members are leaders or sympathisers of TAC, but only because the government no longer appoints all members but allows sectors to choose their representatives (Personal communication, Heywood, 09.07.04). (Tshabala-Msimang is said to want to close down SANAC – because it is now too sympathetic to TAC.) It was - not surprisingly, in the view of TAC leaders - excluded from the government task team established to direct the roll-out: ‘We did send a response to their findings – needless to say, we did not receive a reply’ (Interview, Majali). ‘Government still wants control over everything on HIV/AIDS, and its relationship with TAC is still conflictual. TAC did try to engage with the task team, to no avail’ (Interview, Claasen, 19.02.04).

Given this, TAC’s intention to make the roll-out succeed is primarily a means to hold the government to its promise. This could entail further confrontation and court action (Interviews, Achmat, Geffen). It might be accurate to see it not as an abandonment of mobilisation for change, but an intention to pursue the battle by other means. TAC leaders acknowledge, as many movements which have won policy changes know, that, where concessions are reluctantly made to campaigns by governments, ensuring that they do what they say they will do is as much a challenge, if not more of one, than winning the concession. Cele notes: ‘In the longer term, TAC must have a role in making sure the ARV plan is sustained’ (Interview, Cele).

That said, its strategy on the roll-out does indicate an approach to engagement with the government unusual in South African social movements. TAC’s primary goal is not to help the government, but to ensure ARVs for people with AIDS. But while this may entail continued campaigning, it cannot mean only that: it will entail co-operation as well as conflict, for, when authorities further the roll-out, TAC’s activities become an important resource to them. Just as the Social Development Ministry has discovered that mobilising civil society organisations can help ensure that people access the social grants to which the law entitles them, so might a government official concerned to ensure effective roll-out come to see TAC as a resource.

This has two important implications. The first is that making sure that concessions won by campaigns are implemented, poses significant challenges to movements concerned to win gains rather than to act only as vehicles of protest or resistance. The delicate strategic challenge of knowing how to combine co-operation and conflict, partnership and challenge, poses far more complicated dilemmas than the politics of winning the concession.

Second, social movement activism can be an important resource for governments on issues on which they share goals championed by the movements: TAC’s challenge to the PMA did defend a law passed by the government. There may be some in government who

see TAC as a useful partner as well as a sometime adversary. But the lack of response from the task team shows that this is hardly a universal view. And to the extent that it is not, the government is depriving itself of an important strategic resource. The government may also vastly exaggerate the threat posed to it by social movements – a senior government politician is said to have told TAC activists it feared being overthrown by TAC’s campaign (Interview, Geffen)! The government, suggests an activist, ‘sees TAC as political competition’ (Interview, Kunene). This may reflect a wider government fear of ‘populist’ movements which causes it to overstate their power (Interview, Political Analyst, 29.06.04). While this may make it possible for movements’ demands to be taken seriously even when they have little support, it constrains co-operation.

TAC wants the roll-out to work, for it gains little if government fails and much if it succeeds. The issue-based incrementalism which TAC pursues does create an interest in strengthening government which is rare among social movements. Mthathi observes: ‘TAC’s relationship with government will always be difficult—we are dealing with a life and death issue. But we would like to be engaging more constructively’ (Interview, Mthathi). Far from seeing the pursuit of treatment for people with AIDS as a means of exposing the weaknesses of the system, TAC regrets government resistance to partnership as a constraint to the search for treatment. As long as TAC relies on government delivery to achieve its goals, they will remain, to a degree, mutually dependant, regardless of the conflict between them.

TAC does not see the government as a monolith, and has allies within it. It has lobbied sympathetic Cabinet members, even during periods of open conflict (Interview, Mthathi). Several interviewees suggested that relations with their provincial health departments were good (Interviews, Mpongose, Mkhutyukelwa, Ramothwala, Xaba), in contrast to tense relations with national government (Interview, Kunene). This is further evidence of a strategy based on using every possibility for engagement with the government. It clearly presents challenges: ‘On the one hand we are offering help to the Minister of Health, and on the other we are saying she is mad’ (Interview, Geffen). But influence depends on finding the balance, not on refusing to seek it.

TAC’s mode of engagement with government, in which co-operation and conflict are intertwined, is not simply born of convenience. It does also recognise that, while the power of democratic governments could be used against the grassroots, they are elected by the majority of voters and so cannot be dismissed as ‘enemies of the people’. TAC’s approach does recognise that alliances with democratic government are possible and that co-operation and confrontation can be complementary strategies.

## **THE BIGGER PICTURE: TAC AND THE REDISTRIBUTION OF POWER AND RESOURCES**

A key function of social movements is said to be the vehicle they offer the poor for exercising power, albeit in a limited sphere (Desai, 2002). Does TAC empower the poor and marginalised? Does it enhance the deepening of democracy and the redistribution of resources?

An earlier section touched on this by examining whether the grassroots enjoy a voice in TAC. But as important is whether TAC gives people, particularly the most powerless, a sense of their ability to become active citizens. TAC leaders insist it does: ‘We are

reconstituting civil society in places like Orange Farm (informal settlement): our members are not used to thinking of themselves as people with agency and power. Participation in TAC makes them aware of what they can do' (Interview, Heywood). TAC has also become a vehicle for grassroots initiatives such as the Thatnusizo Support Group in Inanda, Durban, which initially consisted only of three people who had lost children to AIDS (Interview, Mambo, 28.01.04). TAC's role in fighting the stigma of HIV/AIDS and giving people living with it a sense of efficacy, is itself an important contribution to changing roles in society. And basic information on the virus and how to cope with it helps participants take control of a vital aspect of their lives.

The level of grassroots participation in TAC does suggest that it is doing far more than providing a vehicle for people to find medical relief from a deadly condition – although even that may empower its members (Interview, Geffen). Its workshops, campaigns and discussion of strategic options at branch level are, in the view of interviewees, offering members an opportunity to become active citizens rather than passive subjects (Mamdani, 1995). And this is empowering them to become more active within TAC. 'We were a top down organisation but now our members are showing a potential to lead. Branch members used to just keep quiet in meetings, but are beginning to participate actively – it started small but then it grew' (Interview, Kunene). In this way, TAC implicitly aids democratisation by ensuring that people are better able to participate as democratic citizens.

Winning victories in the courts is also said to 'facilitate empowerment' of members (Interview, Mvoto). Winning gains is thus paramount: 'We do not just want a voice, we want to win our demands' (Interview, Geffen). At TAC, as well as in the union movement during the 1970s and 1980s, winning gains is a means by which grassroots people become more aware of their capacity to change their world.

There is, however, a widespread view among TAC activists that it needs to deepen its roots in the society: 'We are working to make TAC more visible in the communities' (Interview, Mvoto). The People's Health Summit was also meant to 'give communities a voice' (Interview, Mthathi), and so broaden participation in the campaign for change. Similarly, there are plans for grassroots members to play a greater role.

TAC is pursuing a redistributive agenda, albeit one which its critics feel is not thorough-going enough. It has, with its allies, pressed multi-national companies to make medication available at lower prices, or to give up their right to exclusive supply to manufacturers of generic medicine in exchange for a royalty (Interview, McKenna, 28.04.04). It has also prompted the government to agree to use its resources to provide ARVs to people who cannot afford them. TAC, despite its focus on an issue not automatically associated with poverty eradication, is working, with some success, towards the redistribution of social power and resources.

## **THE POLITICS OF THE MORAL HIGH GROUND**

TAC's senior leadership readily acknowledge that it has not won major gains because of organised strength in numbers. While it has a larger membership and a more organised structure than most other social movements, its leaders and activists in other movements agree that its power – and that of other social movements - lies elsewhere. But where?

Achmat is specific on TAC's prime source of strength – morality. 'TAC is not a numbers game. It is more about the ability to create a moral consensus. The button we were aiming to push (in planning civil disobedience) was that the government is morally weak. Morality is usually left to the churches, but we all have a duty to be moral. The left needs to give a sense of morality to politics' (Interview, Achmat). Morality is thus both a principle and an important strategic weapon. The 'politics of the moral high ground' is a key resource for TAC because winning the moral argument gains it and its cause substantial support and weakens its opponents. A company executive notes: 'Whatever we might feel about their campaign, TAC and other activist organisations did persuade us to see the need for a middle ground between our need for returns on investment and the poor's need for medication' (Interview, McKenna). While he insists that companies were persuaded by the argument, not embarrassed into concessions, and the government has insisted that the roll-out was not a change in policy,<sup>11</sup> TAC activists and most analysts assume that in both cases, moral embarrassment played a significant role in winning the change in policy and practice.

Analyses which assume an irreconcilable conflict between those who wield power and those over whom they wield it, imply that the weak can gain power only by forcing the powerful to concede it. Even if a compromise is possible, this can be seen purely a matter of strategic calculation, as a 'game', in which actors use their strategic resources to wield power over their opponents.<sup>12</sup> This does not automatically exclude the possibility that the powerful may be induced to give ground because they have been persuaded that their policy is immoral – a key tenet of the Gandhian perspective. But it tends to obscure it, encouraging thinking which sees redistributive gains purely as a consequence of the use of power by the powerless, or the powerful making concessions to head off worse outcomes. But TAC's experience suggests that persuading a range of audiences that the actions of a power-holder are immoral, is itself a vital source of power.

At first glance, this is trite: all movements which make redistributive demands seek to portray their denial as immoral. The difference lies in the way in which morality is understood and the uses to which it is put. If redistribution can be gained only by rallying the powerless to seize power from the powerful, movements might see morality as a convenient 'weapon' which can rally their constituency to their cause (since other social interests are assumed to be beyond moral appeal). But in this view, morality is a tactic used for a specific purpose and is not central to the movement's manner of operating.

TAC's objective has been far more ambitious – to create a 'moral consensus' behind its demands (Interview, Achmat). This assumes that it is possible to win support among a variety of constituencies, including some which may be seen as hostile to redistribution, by using moral argument. Thus a government could be morally weak because important constituencies on which it relies – international business or key domestic constituencies – are persuaded that its conduct or position on an issue is immoral. Being seen as immoral may also be damaging simply because human beings prefer to feel their actions are moral - why else would authoritarians surround themselves with people who assure them they are moral? The TAC approach assumes, therefore, that it is possible for a small movement with limited organisational power to compensate by appealing to a sense of compassion and fairness across many of the social barriers which are often assumed to impede a

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<sup>11</sup> Before the Cabinet announcement, the government repeatedly insisted that it was not opposed to distributing ARVs, but was 'piloting' their use in public health facilities.

<sup>12</sup> For an analysis which blends both perspectives see Przeworski, 1987.

common morality. Since morality in this view is an indispensable resource, it must become a permanent part of the movement, not a tactic to be used or discarded depending on circumstance. Paradoxically, morality may be most effective as a strategy when it is not seen as a strategy, but as an indispensable element of a struggle for rights or entitlements.

This has important strategic implications. If morality is an integral part of how a social movement operates, it must become essential to all activity – from financial management and internal decision-making to the way in which campaigns are designed - since losing the moral high ground would be to lose one of the movement's reasons for existence. This means accepting constraints which do not apply when morality is seen only as an occasional strategic device. One example is Achmat's decision not to take ARVs while other people did not have access to them, which threatened at one stage to cost him his life (although this does not seem to have been a point of TAC principle: a key reason why it introduced its national treatment project was 'to prolong the life of TAC activists and take care of them') (Interview, Khumalo, 19.02.04).

The politics of the moral high ground requires that tactics be evaluated, not only by whether they enhance the movement's ability to force others to do what it wants them to do, but also by whether they retain the 'moral consensus' which underpins its work. 'How do we build a moral consensus? By knocking on doors, educating and drawing people in. Tactics which show militancy but alienate people destroy that consensus' (Interview, Achmat). As the debate over the civil disobedience campaign shows, this does not mean avoiding all militancy. But action must be morally justifiable – far beyond the core of committed activists. Thus one activist notes that TAC's first step in fighting a campaign would be to communicate with government. 'If this didn't work, we would consider litigation, and failing this we would turn to demonstrations and protest' (Interview, Mthethwa). Demonstrating that all other avenues had been exhausted and ensuring Gandhian tactics, – breaking the law in an open and non-violent manner and inviting arrest – were seen as essential means of retaining the moral high ground.

It could be argued that this approach was feasible only because of the issue on which TAC organises. In this view, moral consensus can be built over the denial of medication to people infected with a deadly virus – even from those who would oppose broader social change. Certainly, health issues are amenable to the politics of the moral high ground: 'Business is far more vulnerable to moral attack on medicines and health than any other issue. Many people see making a profit out of illness as immoral, no matter how much we show that without us people would not have effective medicine, 'pharmaceutical executive Kevin McKenna observes (Interview). But the TAC approach may be more replicable beyond health issues than it seems.

HIV/AIDS may have considerable potential as a source of moral unity. Even government 'denialism' seems to have recognised the need for moral empathy for people living with the virus – the insistence that HIV was caused by poverty or did not really exist did not impugn the morality of those who live with it, just as the claim that ARVs are toxic did not undermine the moral credibility of those who wanted them. But so broad has the moral consensus underpinning HIV and AIDS become, that its considerable potential to be morally divisive has been ignored. A moral assault on the TAC position which began by picturing the demand for ARVs as an attack on intellectual property rights needed for the fight against disease, could have been accompanied by an attempt to portray people

living with HIV and AIDS as sexual profligates who were the cause of their own infection. The racial element in attitudes to HIV/AIDS - racists have tended to stigmatise it as a 'black disease' - may have given the government a powerful incentive not to stigmatise victims, but might also have given sections of international opinion a reason to see HIV/AIDS much as bigots see conflict in Africa, as a sign of the primitivism of Africans. So the fact that denying treatment to people with AIDS is seen by world opinion as morally repugnant - a key pressure impelling the government to concede the roll-out - can be attributed to the effectiveness of the moral campaign waged by a variety of organisations and movements, into which TAC effectively tapped. It was hardly inevitable that HIV/AIDS would be seen so widely as a cause for sympathy. Activism made it so. And, if that is acknowledged, the potential for morality to become a key element of the campaign for extended rights and entitlements in many other areas, too, may be substantial.

The TAC experience shows that the politics of the moral high ground can help win single issue demands. It does not say the same about wider redistributive programmes. But there are few demands for greater equity on which moral appeals are likely to be ignored by everyone except a social movement's constituency. The moral high ground may, therefore, be available to social movements on a wide range of issues, as long as each is approached separately. This implies a need for movements to engage in strategic thinking on potential recruits to a moral consensus - and to analyse potential for recruiting allies beyond their normal constituency for each demand.

### **Thinking alliances**

Allied to the politics of the moral high ground in TAC's armoury, is a stress on alliances.

At first glance, there seems nothing exceptional about seeking allies: but alliance politics is not simply a matter of gratefully accepting the support of those who agree. It requires, firstly, rejection of a purism which insists on working only with natural allies: it assumes that common ground can and should be found with those who differ. Secondly, it needs an acknowledgement that alliances - like morality - are rarely cost-free. Where it entails reaching out to those who have different interests or goals, the politics of alliances requires compromises. In TAC's case, this is so even in the case of a like-minded ally such as Cosatu. Its unwillingness to support civil disobedience disappointed some in TAC. Nevertheless, concessions were made to retain it as an ally. Cosatu says the campaign was called a 'protest' in an attempt to dispel the impression that it was a rebellion against government authority, and it was agreed that Cosatu's failure to participate would not jeopardise the alliance, which continues (Interview, Mpolokeng).

The TAC-Cosatu alliance is a natural 'fit', given the similarity in approach and that Cosatu's members are affected by HIV/AIDS (Interview, Mpolokeng). TAC activists also cite predictable allies such as the SA Council of Churches, SA NGO Coalition, Medical Research Council (Interview, Mthethwa), SA Medical Association and Nursing Unions. But one ally, the counselling group ACCT in Soweto, is financially supported by a drug company (Interview, Kunene). TAC's view is that, since ACCT is a service organisation, it has no objection to it taking money from the companies and will work with it (Personal communication, Heywood, 09.07.04). And there are alliances which required adjustment on each side - such as that with the Catholic Church, which is opposed to condoms, considered essential by TAC to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS. In this case, the alliance

acknowledges difference and seeks co-operation despite it. Alliance politics does not mean suppressing 'controversial' opinions – Mthathi has insisted on raising the occupation of Iraq in donor meetings (Interview, Heywood), and Achmat called for the defeat of President Bush at meetings in the United States (Schindler, 2003). But it may be necessary for TAC to adjust its actions and strategies to maintain allies. Achmat insists that his activist past taught 'the development of united fronts despite differing views' (Interview). The concern to form alliances seems to have become ingrained: in Khayelitsha, local organisers plan to seek co-operation with youth and religious groups, schools and business (Interview, Mvotho).

The politics of alliances requires more than deciding which civil society organisations are potential partners. Some politicians and officials were TAC allies, even when TAC was in conflict with the government: 'we have sympathy for our cause from some senior executives in Anglo American as well as half the cabinet' (Interview, Geffen). These alliances may require compromises. The media have been a substantial resource: the civil disobedience campaign 'received a lot of media coverage, local and international, and for the most part the media stayed on TAC's side' (Interview, Geffen). A social movement activist says a positive aspect of TAC's performance has been its ability to use the media – which social movements campaigning against water and electricity cut offs have failed to do. 'Even when they brought in those drugs illegally, they got media support' (Interview, Desai). While the media are not a TAC ally, strategy presumably should take into account a need not to alienate them.

A penchant for alliances does not mean working with everyone on any terms. TAC, in its initial phase, fought heated battles in the AIDS Consortium, the network which brings together all sources of AIDS activism in South Africa, to establish treatment as a key goal against those who favoured an exclusive stress on prevention. 'We had to create a demand for treatment. There were some fierce fights with people in NAPWA and some academic specialists' (Interview, Heywood). TAC is also accused of refusing to work with other social movements because it fears their militancy will jeopardise its attempts to build winning coalitions (Interview, Desai). TAC insists it is not afraid of their militancy, but believes that their tactics and approach will not yield change. It insists it is it, not they, which mobilised some 3 000 people to march in support of a Basic Income Grant (Personal Communication, Geffen, 23.07.04). Almost by definition, alliances entail conflict and co-operation, a strategic appreciation of who, on any given issue, is an opponent as well as an ally.

TAC leadership approaches issues in a way which can best be described as 'thinking alliances'. Indispensable to the planning of any campaign is considering where support can be sought from significant constituencies, including unlikely ones. Thus, one rationale behind the People's Health Campaign is the expectation that the middle class has a strong interest in health reform (Interview, Achmat). Whether or not this is vindicated, it demonstrates an approach which assumes that, without the support of key constituencies, a campaign will be pushed to the fringes of policy debate. Chances of success, therefore, depend on avoiding relegation to the margins by attracting the support of influential allies. Absolutely indispensable is a refusal to assume that a constituency is beyond reach of a campaign unless thorough analysis indicates this - as well as avoidance of purism in selecting or rejecting potential allies for particular campaigns. And this assumes a politics which does see winning particular issues and demands as desirable.

This propensity to ‘think alliances’ is particularly important when we consider current constraints to redistributive politics. Mainstream development approaches, by insisting that anti-poverty programmes be targeted so that ‘the non-poor’ do not benefit, politically isolate the poor and may create conflicts between the poor and less poor, obstructing broad alliances in support of redistributive programmes (Friedman, 2002). Since the poor and marginalised lose influence when they are isolated from other groups, strategies are likely to strengthen the voice of the poor only if they can transcend isolation. The more campaigns for social equity are restricted to weak sections of society forced to act on their own, the likelier it is that they will be ignored. Since none of the constituencies pressing for equity are majorities, only social coalitions can win gains. In principle, TAC, by ‘thinking alliances’, is opening new potential frontiers for effective action against inequality by raising the possibility that, on most, or perhaps even all issues, those campaigning for change can find allies and so win a seemingly unwinnable campaign. While the days in which the poor, organised into unions and labour parties, could win redistributive social programmes by forming durable electoral alliances (Przeworski, 1987) may be over, issue-based alliances may be more possible than they seem.

### **HANDS ACROSS THE SEA: THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION**

TAC’s most strategically important alliance may have been that with international allies.

International support has been important in two ways. It placed pressure on pharmaceutical companies because their head offices abroad feared being portrayed as unsympathetic to the poor (Interview, McKenna). And the fact that TAC and other organisations secured international opposition to government policy on ARVs must, given government sensitivity to international opinion, have played a role in winning the roll-out. ‘A background in Trotskyite activism taught an understanding of international solidarity’, according to Achmat (Interview).

This is important because, while globalisation is frequently seen as a constraint to collective action in pursuit of equity, it may be a potential resource. The claim that states are unable to chart their own social and economic policy directions lacks compelling evidence (Friedman, 2002a). However, advances in communications technology have ensured that ideas and information can travel more quickly than ever before. An environment in which a company official can face immediate unfavourable publicity in America and Europe because of actions in Africa, offers considerable scope for activists. International solidarity has also strengthened TAC by exposing it to information which it has been able to use to campaign more effectively (Interview, Achmat). A key feature of international alliances in the era of electronic communication, is that they can be sustained without significant resources – ‘we don’t need a direct presence abroad to build international support’ (Interview, Morgan, 01.04.04).

TAC’s most consistent international ally has been the Belgian NGO Medicins Sans Frontieres (MSF), which, with the activist group Act Up, ‘were putting Clinton and Mbeki under pressure about health issues. Organisations such as Gay Men’s Health Crisis and the Treatment Action Group ran workshops for us, making the science of the virus user friendly’ (Interview, Achmat). International Co-ordinator Njogu Morgan insists this is not a ‘one way relationship’ – TAC can ‘share our experiences and lessons, and so strengthen what our international partners are doing’ (Interview).

But international alliances are also not cost-free. Just as the anti-apartheid movement discovered that its international allies felt entitled to a veto over strategic compromises, such as the ANC decision to lift sanctions in the early 1990s, so, it appears, did some TAC allies. ‘When we agreed with two drug companies on a formula which made cheaper medicine available, while recognising some of their concerns, our allies said we should have taken them to the competition tribunal’ (Interview, Morgan). TAC leadership insists that alliances need not erode its autonomy: ‘We are always careful in our contact with international organisations to stress that we are involving ourselves as equals and are not being told what to do’ (Interview, Achmat). Like the ANC in the 1990s, TAC has made compromises opposed by international allies. And, while at least one cross-national alliance did collapse as a result of strategic differences, most continue despite them.

TAC is seeking to broaden its international base by strengthening a Pan-African network of AIDS treatment activists. Passing on experience in coalition building is a key goal, since it believes that, in many African countries, treatment activism is restricted to people living with HIV/AIDS, and that this isolates it and renders it ineffective. One rationale is a need to share its experience and resources: ‘There is an emotional bond between us. This country does owe a lot to others in Africa’ (Interview, Morgan). But solidarity also enables regional pressure for treatment. The network engages the secretariat of the Southern African Development Community and African Union, potentially creating new momentum towards treatment in South Africa and other countries. And the regional focus does concentrate on international equity issues, such as global trade regulation and its effect on the availability of anti-AIDS drugs. South African trade negotiator, Xavier Carrim, ‘says we have made his life easier’ (Interview, Morgan).

This last observation raises the possibility again that activism can be an asset as well as a challenge to African governments, strengthening their ability to press for a fairer international economic order. While there are few examples of governments seeing independent activism as a resource, ‘it is too pessimistic to say that activist-government co-operation is impossible,’ Morgan insists. Prospects of a productive relationship depend significantly on the degree of democratisation in particular countries – prospects of a ‘constructive’ relationship with African governments are thus most pronounced in Kenya and Ghana (Interview, Morgan).

International activism remains a key resource for TAC, which has won it significant gains. But cross-national activist networks have not managed yet to make inroads into what are seen as structural inequities in the international system, which militate against adequate treatment for people living with AIDS in Africa. A campaign against the US administration’s AIDS policy may indicate that these issues are being pursued with increased vigour (TAC News Service 2004a).

### **Beyond race?**

Is TAC able to transcend the politics of race?

While left social movement activists might insist that, in the struggle for justice, common interests override racial identity, that is not the view of the LPM’s Mngxitama: ‘To date, what has often happened in these social movements in South Africa, is that historically dominant voices — primarily white-left intellectuals — have been the main mediators of

the identity and aspirations of the poor... we are witnessing the re-inscription of racial domination ...'. (Mngxitama, 2004).

That race could be a source of division within TAC occurred to Minister Tshabala-Msimang. It occurred also to Thandoxolo Doro, National Organiser of NAPWA, who, at a meeting in March, 2004, is said to have attacked Heywood and a white member of the AIDS Consortium. After the meeting, NAPWA members reportedly toyi-toyed, led by NAPWA Director Nkululeko Nxesi, singing 'Mark Heywood the white racist has succeeded in dividing black people - that was his agenda all the time'. An intervention to stop this by Consortium Chair Mazibuko Jara led to a chant that Jara was the 'new black bourgeoisie'. Heywood charged that 'the similar language used by the Minister and Nxesi and Doro, with whom she has regular contact, is no coincidence'. And a consortium statement questioned NAPWA's motives: 'These NAPWA representatives are known to have financial discrepancies and questionable business activities within their own organisations' (TAC News Service, 2004). But, even if these claims are accurate, the power of race may lie precisely in the reality that people can use it to hide questionable motives.

Given this background, it is significant that the attempt to introduce racial division into TAC seems to have failed. Not only does Heywood insist that black members have enthusiastically supported him against these attacks (Interview). In not one of our interviews at all levels of TAC did race emerge as an issue, overtly, or in the code which South Africans tend to use to express racial sentiments in a non-racial way (complaints of excessive influence by 'middle class people' might have acted as a surrogate).

This does not necessarily mean TAC has defied the laws of South African political gravity by 'transcending race'. If circumstances did emerge in which grassroots frustration could be linked to the prominent role of white activists, racial sentiments might surface. But, thus far, like the union movement and other activist organisations, TAC's experience does seem to show that people in a society with South Africa's history of racial division can co-operate across race barriers in search of a common interest in social equity.

As Mngxitama's critique implies, however, this does not mean TAC can afford to assume that, in this environment, 'colour-blindness' is possible: failure to take seriously a history of racial disadvantage could privilege whites whose access to formal education and other resources gives them a dominant position. If that was allowed to continue unfettered, black frustration would be probable. TAC is aware of this – hence the commitment to develop grassroots leadership and the recognition that race must play a role in appointments. TAC has not 'transcended' race, but it is managing it fairly effectively thus far. Continued success will depend on recognising the need to nurture black leadership.

## **WHAT IS NEW?**

Is TAC a model for 'new social movements'? That depends on whether it can be seen as 'new' – or, indeed, a social movement. For, if it is, in the eyes of some, the most successful of these movements, it is also different from most others. Activists in other movements say the chief divide lies in its failure to situate its campaign in a critique of government macro-economic policy (Interviews, Desai, McKinley). Its frequent use of the law is also seen as distinctive. It is criticised because it 'seems to work within the corridors of power – it tries to be part of the (ANC) alliance. It is often in top level closed

door meetings which may demobilise (its) base' (Interview, McKinley). It is seen to rely too heavily on 'a bureaucracy of full time personnel who could become the decision makers' (Interview, Desai), and to distance itself from other social movements: 'They seem to see us as wild troublemakers – they need to recognise that we could work together' (Interview, McKinley).

But the difference may be more fundamental than differing attitudes and positions – it may lie in the reality that TAC, unlike many other movements, engages with the post-apartheid system and accepts that rights can be won within it. To use the law implies that it is not inherently biased against the poor, and can offer them gains. To lobby politicians implies that those who demand equity can find allies in mainstream politics. To help the roll-out, albeit in a way which may require confrontation, implies that the government can, with prodding, meet the needs of poor people living with HIV/AIDS.

Many social movement intellectuals would, however, be more inclined to endorse this view:

The post-apartheid state is primarily the guardian and protector of ... dominant economic interests and the guarantor of capitalist property relations... liberals view the state as an agent of a democratic social order with no inherent bias toward any class or group. They fail to understand the elementary truism that the state in a capitalist society is not neutral in relation to different classes. This misconception is the fount from which all sorts of reformist illusions arise. (Vally, 2004)

Logically, then: 'It seems increasingly unlikely that open confrontation with the repressive power of the post-apartheid state can be avoided' (Desai, 2002: 147). In this view, engaging with the state is futile, since the problem is not that poor people have failed to assemble the power they need to influence it, but that it can never be influenced by the poor.

TAC's strategy of engaging with and winning incremental gains from the state sets it off from many other social movements, even if it is not unique (Habib, 2003:18). It also categorises it clearly as a civil society association, one which 'interact(s) with the state but (doesn't) want to take it over' (Chazan, 1993:14). This describes a form of engagement with the democratic state which is held to enrich democracy, since citizens claim the right to be heard through their associations. It also describes TAC's approach to democratic government. There is no contradiction between being a social movement and operating in civil society – 'When civil society networks join forces on a scale and over a time-span significant enough to force through more fundamental change, they can be classified as social movements' (Edwards, 2004:33; See also Habib, 2003). And so we best understand TAC as a social movement which chooses to operate in civil society.

This notion of a social movement as a type of civil society association which relies on mobilisation is not what many champions of 'new social movements' have in mind. For them, social movements are defined by more than that they mobilise people. Two broad criteria are said to distinguish them – their agenda and mode of operation. On their agenda, one study emphasises that they intentionally seek a far reaching restructuring of society (Zirakzadeh, 1997). Similarly, a concept document written to guide the project to which this paper contributes defines social movements as 'politically and/or socially directed collectives... focused on changing one or more elements of the social, political

and economic system ...' (Habib, Ballard and Valodia, 2003:2). Another definition sees them as: 'Purposive collective actions whose outcome in victory, as in defeat, transforms the values and institutions of society' (Castells, 1997:3).

The movements may be seen as vehicles of fundamental change - 'the torch-bearers of the new socialist revolution' (Mngxitama, 2004). Activist Trevor Ngwane thus talks of the need to 'fight with your own national bourgeoisie' (Ngwane, 2003). Alternatively, intellectuals may see them, not as attempts to overthrow the existing order, but to create an alternative within it (Desai, 2002: Centre for Civil Society, 2004). Neither view, however, sees movements as a means of winning gains from the state by engaging with it in that mixture of conflict and co-operation employed by TAC as it operates in civil society.

But the weakness of defining social movements by their aims is revealed when we apply it to TAC. It is unclear why, beyond the rhetoric of its leaders, a movement seeking subsidised electricity for the poor is pressing for structural change, while one which wants poor people to enjoy free AIDS medication is not. And defining social movements by how radical they are seen to be is arbitrary. If TAC is a social movement because it seeks to change the distribution of resources in society, most of civil society would be included. If social movements are distinguished by something other than their reliance on mobilisation, the distinction must lie in something more fundamental than the details of their demands.

Social movements are therefore distinguished by some from civil society organisations in their mode of action. 'This movement... is about creating new forms of organisation. It is about creating and enacting horizontal networks instead of top-down structures like states, parties or corporations... it does not seek to solicit hegemony as a part of civil society... Instead, it seeks to "reinvent daily life as a whole"' (Desai, 2004). For others, refusal to engage in mainstream politics is vital: 'Social movements ... result from protests against predominant social structures. This implies a natural opposition to established politics' (Cited by Sachs, 2003:24) - 'the vote is meaningless unless we can run our own economy' (Desai quoted in Kingsnorth, 2003: 121).

Added to this is a suggestion that new forms of action are being employed - so new that they are defined only in the negative. Social movements are thus not an advocacy network, not a labour movement - indeed, not anything the author is willing to define (Waterman, 2003:28). Another view is more descriptive, talking of 'largely atomized and prolonged mobilisation with episodic collective action, and open and fleeting struggles without clear leadership, ideology or structured organization' (Cited by Fakir, 2004: 143). Others talk of multiple, hybrid, forms of action. But, while definition is often vague, the consensus is that social movements offer a new form of activism (Cock, 2003:21) - one in which the rules of civil society engagement do not apply.

If this is what defines social movements, TAC does not fit, since its strategies are entirely consistent with that of civil society organisations as understood here. It too seeks to engage with the state without taking it over, and employs the methods of civil society engagement - lobbying and coalition-building, public protest and legal action: organisations which mobilise people are firmly within civil society if they also engage with the state to win concessions. Nor is civil disobedience incompatible with operating in civil society: openly and non-violently breaking the law to draw public attention to a

perceived injustice is compatible with the loyalty to the state and willingness to respect its rules associated with civil society. But if we understand social movements as associations which mobilise people, TAC clearly qualifies. Thus its activists want it to be seen as a social movement since they associate the term with advocacy and are adamant that TAC will always remain 'a campaigning organisation' (Interviews, Heywood, Morgan, Mthathi). TAC is, clearly, a social movement. What sets it apart from many others is that it is hard to see in which way it is 'new'.

Much more is at stake than definitions. The stress on 'new' social movements assumes that 'classic' democratic modes of engagement with the state cannot deliver gains for the poor, and that something new is needed. But if the most successful of the 'new' movements is not 'new', then TAC demonstrates that mobilising in the traditional way in civil society can yield real gains for the poor and marginalised, and that no new approach is needed. While its stress on the moral high ground, its use of alliances and its tactical flexibility are all important assets which may provide useful pointers to more effective action for equity in the current environment, none suggest that a significantly new form of activism has emerged in TAC. The lesson of TAC's experience, then, is that it remains possible to use the rights guaranteed and institutions created by liberal democracy to win advances for the poor and weak. The claim that a new form of action is needed is not vindicated by TAC's record.

But this too must be qualified. TAC's experience has much to teach about how social movements or civil society organisations can win single issue battles. It cannot point to strategies for more fundamental change because that has not yet been its goal. Whether this approach can win the sustained policy changes and programmes which will enable the poor and marginalised to claim their place as full citizens remains untested. But, by suggesting that the possibility of winning allies across divides is greater than we may think, that 'globalisation' provides unprecedented opportunities for cross-national action, and that the politics of the moral high ground and its assumption that all human beings have a moral sense and are vulnerable to shame can be effective, it has held out the possibility that organisations of the poor which apply these lessons can make an impact on the structure of inequality as well as its symptoms.

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 Ndlovu, Zodwa. TAC volunteer, Umlazi Branch. 28.01.04  
 Nkala, Sfiso. TAC KwaZulu Natal Organiser. 03.12.03  
 Pillay, Kimendhri. TAC University of KZN Durban branch. 08.12.03  
 Pithouse, Kathleen. Chair TAC University of KZN Durban Branch. 04.12.03  
 Political Analyst. 29.06.04  
 Ramothwala, Pholokgolo. TAC Gauteng Coordinator. 18.03.04  
 TAC Activist. 12.12.03  
 TAC Grassroots Activists. 28.01.04  
 TAC KwaZulu-Natal branch members. 12.12.03  
 TAC Tongaat branch member. 12.12.03  
 TAC Verulam Volunteer. 12.12.03  
 TAC Volunteer. 12.12.03  
 Wilson, Dawn. TAC Financial Manager. 01.04.04  
 Xaba, Zakhele. Secretary TAC PEC KZN. 02.12.03