

**“FUEL FOR COLONIALISM”: GULF
OIL CORPORATION, THE AMERICAN
COMMITTEE ON AFRICA AND
COMPETING VERSIONS OF EMPIRE,
1956-1976**

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Portugal, Spain and their Imperial
Twilights

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ARGUMENT

- ◉ My paper addresses the international pressure exerted by African-Americans and their allies against American imperialism and Portuguese colonialism in Angola. Using Sociologist George Steinmetz's definition of empire to analyze the establishment of Angola as a site for a global empire, Gulf Oil Corporation's presence in Angola is representative of American imperialism. Though not directly controlling Angola's government, Gulf Oil provided money to the Portuguese government in exchange for oil exploration rights, which in the end allowed the Portuguese government to maintain a firm grip on Angola until its independence in 1975
- ◉ The international pressure exerted by African-Americans and their allies led to new questions and concerns regarding the intersection between the Civil Rights Movement, the Cold War and African decolonization- in this case, Angola. The response of African-Americans against Portugal's presence in Angola resulted in the use of civil rights tactics, such as boycotts, and was also subjected to Cold War tensions. Those individuals and organizations, such as the American Committee on Africa, that supported Angolan decolonization, were accused of being communists.

SOURCES

- ◉ Mainstream press and media outlets, such as the Black Press, in order to see what African-Americans and organizations, such as the ACOA were doing to assist Angolans against Portuguese colonialism. As well as protesting against Portuguese colonialism, African Americans also used the black press to report their progress against Gulf Oil's paternalism in the U.S. and abroad.
- ◉ The papers of the American Committee on Africa, the United Church of Christ and the Gulf Oil Boycott Coalition, in order to see how they responded and organized aid for Angolan liberation movements. Other primary sources included pamphlets and literature from organizations, such as the Portuguese-American Committee on Foreign Affairs, a group which was formed in the U.S. by the Portuguese government to promote Portuguese colonialism at the time African-Americans and the ACOA openly protested against it.
- ◉ Declassified government documents which provided insight into the response of the American government towards the Portuguese government and the situation in Angola.