

WITNEY W. SCHNEIDMAN

EXPERIENCE

2023 to Present

CEO, Schneidman Associates International

I lead an independent advisory firm that works with companies and non-for-profits active in Africa. Current clients include an American Life Sciences company that I have assisted in developing an MOU with the Africa CDC for the study of the African genome; an American logistics company that is active across Eastern and Southern Africa; and an American company that manufactures modular bridges and is exploring an acquisition of a similar company in Kenya. I am also on the board of Mengo Hospital Partners, which is raising funds for a pediatric center of excellence at Mengo Hospital in Kampala, Uganda, among several other not-for-profit activities.

2010 to Present

Senior Non-Resident Fellow

Africa Growth Initiative, The Brookings Institution

Over the course of nearly 15 years, I have written numerous blogs and reports on African political and economic issues and U.S.-African relations. I have also convened and moderated numerous panel discussions on these issues, including an address by President Clinton on the African Growth and Opportunity Act. On numerous occasions, I have represented the program in responding to press inquiries as it relates to various African issues.

2012-2023

Senior Advisor for Africa & Chair, Africa Practice, Covington & Burling LLP

As a non-attorney, I developed an Africa Practice at the firm and served as chair of the practice group. In that capacity, I coordinated the law firm's work in Africa that involved more than 100 lawyers from each of the firm's 13 offices in the U.S., Europe, Middle East, Asia, and Africa.

In addition to overseeing the opening of an office in Johannesburg, I advised clients from the U.S., Europe, India, Korea, Japan, China, and Africa on issues that they faced in various sectors across Africa. Several examples include working together with former Attorney General Eric Holder to resolve a \$5.2 billion commercial dispute encountered in Nigeria by MTN, Africa's largest telecommunications company; advising Freeport McMoran on the sale to China Molybdenum of Tenke Fungurume, the world's largest cobalt mine located in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and advising Microsoft on its support for the Obama administration's Mandela Washington Fellows Program.

My pro bono work involved advising the Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Foundation in Monrovia, Liberia; the establishment of Emerging Public Leaders, an NGO active in Liberia, Ghana and Kenya that fast-tracks talented university students into the civil service; and advising Good Governance Africa, a Johannesburg-based NGO. I also contributed regularly to CovAfrica, the firm's Africa-focused blog, on various regulatory and policy issues facing our clients.

2001-2012

President & CEO, Schneidman & Associates International

I started my own consulting practice after serving in government with a focus of helping companies align their commercial objectives with the development and growth objectives of African governments. In that capacity I worked with companies such as Lazar Kaplan International in Angola's mining sector, the Hess Corporation in Equatorial Guinea, and the Sabin Vaccine Institute to address Neglected Tropical Diseases with President John Kufuor of Ghana. I also advised the RLJ Companies on the creation of the Liberia Enterprise Development Fund and the Leon H. Sullivan Foundation, where I helped to conceive and implement the Africa-China-U.S. Trilateral Dialogue that was sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations, the Brenthurst Foundation of South Africa, and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing.

1997-2001

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Bureau of African Affairs, U.S. State Department

As a Clinton administration political appointee in the State Department's Bureau of African Affairs, I was responsible for economic and commercial issues in Sub-Saharan Africa and had regional responsibility for Southern Africa. The Bureau's offices of Southern African Affairs and the Economic Policy Staff reported directly to me, as did the ambassadors and embassies across Southern Africa.

During this time, I was involved in the passage and implementation of the African Growth and Opportunity Act, mobilizing U.S. diplomatic support for President Olusegun Obasanjo following his election as Nigeria's first democratic leader in twenty-five years, working to implement the Lusaka Peace Accords in Angola, and initiating the process that led to the arrest and conviction of Russian arms merchant, Viktor Bout. I was also involved in the planning and implementation of President Clinton's six country-12 day visit to Africa in March-April 1998, which remains the most comprehensive visit to the continent by any U.S. president. In March 1999, I led the planning office for the "U.S.-Africa Ministerial: Partnership for the 21st Century," that included President Clinton, nine cabinet members, representatives from Congress, business, and civil society, and 180 ministers of defense, foreign affairs, finance, and trade from 43 African countries for four days of consultations on U.S.-African relations.

1992-1997

Senior Vice President, Samuels International Associates

At this boutique consulting firm, I worked with U.S. and African companies across the continent. A principal client was Standard Bank of South Africa where I was part of its newly-created Africa Banking Group as the financial institution sought to re-establish its presence in Africa following the release of Nelson Mandela from 27 years in prison. In addition to frequent visits to South Africa, travel with the Bank also included visits to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. Boeing was also a client, where I helped them assess commercial opportunities in post-apartheid South Africa. A third client was the Made in USA Trade Fair, the first gathering of U.S. companies following South Africa's transition to democracy.

1992-1997

Senior Associate and Coordinator of the South Africa Working Group, Africa Program, Center for Strategic and International Studies

I conceived and managed the South African Working Group at CSIS under the direction of Program Director, Dr. Helen Kitchen, which brought together leading individuals, including Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, from the U.S. government, South Africa, business representatives, policy analysts, and journalists, among others, to monitor and assess South Africa's democratic transition. In addition to making regular contributions to program's monthly publication, CSIS Africa Notes, I represented the program as an observer in Angola's first democratic elections in 1992.

1991-1992

Consultant, Office of the Vice President for the Africa Region, World Bank

My responsibilities included speechwriting and policy analysis for Kim Jaycox, the Vice President of the Africa Region, and advising on the opening of a World Bank office in South Africa. In addition to making frequent trips to South Africa to meet with senior ANC officials, and representatives from South Africa's business community and civil society, I coordinated the work of the Africa Region's Council of African Advisors and advised on the creation of the African Capacity Building Foundation in Harare, Zimbabwe.

1990-1991

Senior Analyst, Investor Responsibility Research Center (IRRC)

The not-for-profit IRRC was established in the early 1970's by Harvard's then-president Derek Bok to provide universities with an independent source of analysis to evaluate the social implications of their holdings in university endowments. My job as a Senior Analyst at the IRRC was to evaluate compliance with the Sullivan Principles, one of the first independent codes of corporate social responsibility, by U.S. companies with investments in South Africa. Over 18 months, I visited more than 20 U.S. companies in South Africa and wrote reports for universities who used IRRC research on the degree to which companies were implementing the Sullivan Principles. IRRC reports were first-hand accounts of operations and made no recommendations on whether universities should hold or divest related stocks in their endowments. The IRRC was sold to Institutional Shareholder Services (now MSCI) in 2005.

1987-1989

South Africa Analyst, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, U.S. Department of State

As the State Department's analyst for South Africa, my job was to follow events in South Africa and write regular analytical reports for the Secretary of State on developments in that country. These reports were produced for the Secretary's daily briefing book as well as stand-alone longer analyses. Topics included the political influences in the African National Congress, the ability of the South African government to withstand international and U.S. sanctions, and scenarios for governance in a post-apartheid South Africa.

CURRENT ASSOCIATIONS

Life Member, Council on Foreign Relations
Board Member, Corporate Council on Africa
Advisory Board, Economic Club of Africa in New York
Advisory Board, Friends of the Legal Resources Center, South Africa
Advisory Board, Center for the Study of the United States, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa
Advisory Board, Tanzanian American Chamber of Commerce
Board Member, Mengo Hospital (Kampala, Uganda) Partners

AWARDS

The Amos Lawrence Award, Lawrence Academy, Groton, MA, given to alumni for outstanding volunteer service to the school, May 2021.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS AND APPEARANCES

Engaging Africa: Washington and the Fall of Portugal's Colonial Empire, (2004: University Press of America). Foreign Affairs [describes](#) my book as a “must-read for anyone interested in decolonization or Cold War diplomacy.” It was based on my doctoral dissertation, “American Foreign Policy and the Fall of the Portuguese Empire in Africa.”

This Africa Idea: A Memoir of Discovery, Diplomacy and Opportunity, (To be published by Bloomsbury, September 3, 2026).

I have written extensively on African economic and political issues and have appeared on CBS News, CNN, National Public Radio, the BBC, and the South Africa Broadcasting Corporation, among various media outlets.

Many of my blogs for Brookings can be found here: www.brookings.edu/author/witney-schneidman/?type=posts.

RECENT BLOGS

“[South Africa, AGOA, and nonalignment](#),” The Brookings Institution, April 17, 2024.

“[Modernizing AGOA for the 21st Century](#),” The Brookings Institution, February 15, 2024.

“[Kissinger in Africa: A Cautionary Tale - The Africa Report.com](#)” The Africa Report, December 15, 2023.

“[Will Biden go to Africa this year?](#),” with Gracelin Baskaran, September 22, 2023, The Brookings Institution.

“[Africa's Critical Minerals Could Power America's Green Energy Transition](#),” with Vera Songwe, Foreign Policy, August 3, 2023.

[“How to drive US Investment to Africa,”](#) with Gracelin Baskaran, June 14, 2023, The Brookings Institution.

[“Diaspora Bonds: An Innovative Source of Financing,”](#) with Admasu Tadesses and Abyssinia Lissanu, May 27, 2022, The Brookings Institution.

[“Will Biden Deliver on his commitment to Africa in 2022?,”](#) January 10, 2022, The Brookings Institution.

[“How the Biden Administration Can Make AGOA More Effective,”](#) with Kate McNulty and Natalie Dicharry, November 21, 2021, The Brookings Institution.

[“Ethiopia, human rights, and the internet,”](#) June 15, 2021, The Brookings Institution

[“It’s Time to Help Africa Fight the Virus,”](#) with Charles Holmes and Anthony Lake, Foreign Policy, April 29, 2020.

SELECTED VIDEO INTERVIEWS, PODCASTS AND PROFILES:

[Conversations with Gofaone Modise: Revitalizing U.S.-African Economic Relations with Witney Schneidman,](#) March 2024.

[“AGOA: The Road to Renewal,”](#) the Wilson Center, November 2023.

[A Bridge to Go Abroad: Witney Schneidman Invests in Temple Students Traveling to Africa | Temple University College of Liberal Arts,](#) September 14, 2023.

Named one of [35 Most Influential People](#) in US-African Relations by Forward Global, July 2023.

[“What’s Next for U.S.-Africa relations under the Biden administration?,”](#) Podcast, The Brookings Institution, May 25, 2022.

[Witney Schneidman | #USAfricaBizForum | Understanding the Why and How of Investing in Africa - YouTube](#) October 11, 2022.

[A Journey of Reckoning and Discovery: Witney Schneidman’s journey to establishing the Lemon Scholarship Endowment,](#) W&M News, February 28, 2022.

[GTABC 2022 | Spotlight Series | Dr. Witney Schneidman - YouTube,](#) Georgetown Africa Business Conference, February 26, 2022.

Vele Africa Views & Voices: [US-Africa relations](#), with Dr. Witney Schneidman, December 2022.

[Witney Schneidman on expectations for Pompeo's visit to Africa - YouTube](#), CGTN America, February 18, 2000.

RECENT PANEL DISCUSSIONS:

May 7, 2024: “Future of U.S.-Trade and Investment: AGOA and Beyond,” 16th U.S.-Africa Business Summit, Dallas Texas.

April 10, 2024: “Leveraging the African Continental Free Trade Area to Accelerate U.S. Trade and Investment in Africa,” The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C.

November 2, 2023, “Partnering to Build a Resilient AGOA,” AGOA Private Sector Forum, Johannesburg Conference Center, Johannesburg, South Africa.

September 27, 2023: “U.S-Africa Policy Development,” Advanced Seminar Series, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

June 21, 2023: “Private Sector-led Development in Africa: Strategies and Experiences,” Strathmore University School of Business, Nairobi, Kenya.

April 13, 2023: “Expanding U.S.-Africa Trade, Investment & Economic Cooperation,” at the AGOA Civil Society Spring Conference, Washington, D.C.

April 12, 2023: “Accelerating Intra-African Trade with Fintech under the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement,” Africa Fintech Summit, Washington, D.C.

September 18, 2022: “The Biden Administration and Africa,” Global Africa Business Initiative, New York, New York.

November 17, 2021: “[U.S. Trade and Investment in Africa](#),” Testimony before the Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C.

EDUCATION

1987: Ph.D., School of International Relations, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA.

1980: M.A., Department of Political Science, University California, Los Angeles.

1977: M.A., Department of Political Science, University of Dar es Salaam, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

1975: B.A., Cum Laude, Department of History, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA.

