South Africa, Harvard, and You

South Africa

This past summer has brought South Africa to the center of world attention. The government of P.W. Botha has lost control; its policy of racial separation and inequality is a complete failure. The jailing of schoolchildren, the beating of demonstrators, the torture of political prisoners, and the death of thousands have brought the injustice of apartheid into clear focus. President Botha’s speech of August 15, reaffirming his government’s commitment to apartheid, laid to rest the argument that constructive engagement is the most effective way to fight apartheid.

The worldwide response is evident in the news each day. The universal condemnation of apartheid has crystallized into action as individuals, states, and corporations have sought to do whatever they can to encourage substantive change in South Africa, and thereby end the violence that goes hand in hand with apartheid.

France has instituted wide-ranging sanctions against the South African government. The US House and Senate passed a bill, which President Reagan signed under pressure, that prohibits US computer sales and bank loans to the South African government, and bans the US sale of the South African gold coin, the Krugerrand. The Krugerrand ban alone will deprive South Africa of approximately $500 million, and the Botha regime of $70 million. Several companies, including Apple Computer and International Harvester, have ceased their operations in South Africa. Dozens of major stockholders, among them Connecticut, New Jersey, Massachusetts, New York, San Fransisco, Philadelphia, Rutgers and Columbia University, have withdrawn their funds from companies that do business in South Africa.

Harvard

Harvard, too, has a part to play in the effort to pressure the South African government into change. Harvard can add its voice and strength to the growing international condemnation of apartheid by selling its stock in companies that do business in South Africa. Harvard can divest.

Black South Africans support divestiture. A Gallup poll revealed that 77% of them support the use of such economic sanctions as a method of forcing the South African government to change its policies [The Boston Globe, August 26, 1985]. Bishop Desmond Tutu, during his visit to Harvard in January, condemned Harvard’s investments in apartheid. This respected leader agrees with the majority of Black South Africans: economic sanctions such as divestiture will weaken apartheid and force the institution of majority rule. The widespread support for divestiture among black South Africans makes it clear that divestiture is the proper move for the stockholder who wishes to work against apartheid.

You

You have a part to play. There is strong support for divestiture among students, faculty, and employees at Harvard. Join us. Aid us in educating the Harvard community about apartheid and about the role of investments in sustaining apartheid. Talk to your friends. Write President Derek Bok and tell him that you believe Harvard has an obligation to divest. Learn more yourself. Come to a general meeting sponsored by the Harvard-Radcliffe Southern Africa Solidarity Committee (SASC), every Wednesday in Emerson Hall at 8pm (watch for the poster announcements of each meeting) Please join our contact list. We don’t just protest. There are literature, film, canvassing, coalition, outreach, publicity and press committees—many ways to contribute. Get involved. Do your part.