To: Media

From: Rochester Delegation of the Genesee Ecumenical Ministries to South Africa

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The Rochester delegation to South Africa of church and community leaders is outraged that its second application for visas to South Africa has not been confirmed as they approach the 2 p.m. Saturday flight time. Application for visas was made over four months ago.

The team was sponsored locally by the Genesee Ecumenical Ministries by invitation of the South African Black Dutch Reform Church. The purpose of the trip was mainly to exchange views and listen to South African church people in an effort to learn firsthand the role the church is playing in the South African situation under apartheid, and also to spend some time in visits to American corporations, government and media representatives.

An added purpose was to deliver a fund for scholarships in South Africa for Black South African students. This fund will be sent regardless of the trip.

All of the criteria of the South African Consulate have been met. Beyond the intended dialogue with church people, contacts were made with government agencies, organizations such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Eastman Kodak and Xerox Corporations. Cablegrams confirming appointments with these groups were sent to the South African government in Pretoria as directed. Despite supportive arrangements and planned seminars by Eastman Kodak and Xerox, the visas were not granted.

The pressure on the group and their families and South African hosts has been a great imposition, though small compared to the suffering of South African Blacks.

Extensive preparation by the delegation included reading and listening to national church leaders with expertise on South African affairs, and even included a visit by a member of the South African Consulate, Deputy Consul André Brink.

The refusal by the South African government to grant visas shows the fallacy of all the claims made by the South African government such as the lack of tension and acceptance of separatism by the Black South Africans. If such claims were true, why would the South African government not grant visas to a church group such as ours?

We look on our preparation for this visitation as an opportunity to speak to Rochester community, church and school groups and to encourage dialogue and action.

The group feels that this 2nd refusal is not only a breach of accepted norms of international conduct, but a justification for renewed effort on our part to join with national and international campaigns to:

- oppose all bank loans to South Africa
- support state and local initiatives calling for the transfer of funds from U.S. banks and industries in South Africa
- call for the divestment of U.S. corporate interests in South Africa.
It is ironic that at this time Foreign Minister R. H. Botha is meeting with President Reagan, and that only a few weeks ago South African military personnel were engaged in secret meetings with U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Jeanne Kirkpatrick...while American church and community leaders are refused visitation rights to South Africa.

We encourage the public in Rochester to continue to send checks to the Genesee Ecumenical Ministries earmarked for the "scholarship fund" which will be sent within the next month. We also ask community groups and individuals to join with us in local efforts around this critical issue of the U.S. Role in South Africa.