

THE HOLLYWOOD POLICY CENTER FOUNDATION

10530 Culver Boulevard, Suite I, Culver City, California 90232

213 559-9334
FAX 213 838-2307

M E M O R A N D U M

To: Friends and Members of Artists for a Free South Africa
From: Karen Russell, Executive Director
Re: South Africa Now
Date: October 25, 1990

I am dismayed to report that the Los Angeles public television station KCET Channel 28 will no longer broadcast "South Africa Now", a weekly newsmagazine because it asserts that the series is biased in favor of the African National Congress, the party of Nelson Mandela.

In reaction to this unfortunate decision, we are asking our members to make phone calls, send letters and faxes of protest. Attached please find a sample letter with the appropriate names, numbers and addresses. Please mail a letter and make a phone call today!

I have also included some background material on this issue, as well as a copy of AFSA's press release.

I urge our out of town members to keep a watchful eye on their local PBS stations!

KCET Claims Bias, Won't Air Any New 'Africa Now' Shows

■ **Television:** A conservative media group claims victory after its letter-writing campaign against the public affairs program.

By SHARON BERNSTEIN

Claiming that the series "South Africa Now" is biased in favor of the African National Congress, programmers at Los Angeles public-television station KCET have decided not to carry the public-affairs program when its new season begins in November.

The Committee on Media Integrity, a conservative media coalition, claimed victory Friday for the decision. The group, led by David Horowitz, a former Ramparts magazine editor who went on to co-author the book "Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts About the '60s," has been waging a letter-writing campaign and threatening legal action against KCET Channel 28 for airing "South Africa Now" and other programs that it claims have a leftist bias.

Horowitz, who said he is opposed to apartheid but also is opposed to the African National Congress, said that he had had several meetings about "South Africa Now" with Stephen Kulczycki, senior vice president and station manager at KCET.

"I felt that the show was posing as a news report, but it was really just doing propaganda," Horowitz said.

Kulczycki denied Friday that pressure from Horowitz's group had anything to do with his decision not to renew the series, which has been running on Sundays at 9 a.m. He said that "South Africa Now," which is produced in New York by Globalvision Inc. and is seen on 80 U.S. public-TV stations, gives only cursory attention to views of liberal whites and blacks, as well as to the South African government and others who differ with the policies of the African National Congress, the party of Nelson Mandela.

"As time has gone by, it appears more clear that the main issue in South Africa is not

whether there will be apartheid, but what kind of anti-apartheid government in South Africa would come into power," Kulczycki said. "When it ['South Africa Now'] was an advocacy program and the only issue was apartheid, that was something many people were willing to accept. But in recent weeks and months, the story has become more complicated and the producers don't seem to want to present a broad spectrum of views."

Kulczycki said that KCET was planning to run a number of specials about South Africa, which would present all sides of the issues there. And he said that if Globalvision were to produce specials instead of a series, he would consider them "on a case-by-case basis."

The decision not to renew "South Africa Now" has sparked anger and surprise among leaders in Southern California's African-American community, who have begun to wage a telephone and letter-writing campaign of their own to urge the program's re-instatement.

"Whatever happened to the marketplace of ideas?" said Gerald Horne, a professor of black studies at the University of California at Santa Barbara. "I guess KCET is saying that their marketplace is limited, that you can only do a certain amount of shopping there."

Los Angeles City Councilman Robert Farrell, who has been active in the anti-apartheid movement, said Friday that he is so outraged by KCET's action that he is considering asking the council to withhold funding from the station next year. Last year, city-approved grants to KCET totaled \$25,000.

"KCET puts its integrity on the line with this decision," Farrell said. Even if the program does focus on the African National Congress, Farrell said, "The ANC

Please see 'AFRICA,' F7

SATURDAY

OCTOBER 20, 1990

HIGHLIGHTS

KCET DROPS "NOW": KCET Channel 28 has come under fire from the African American community for deciding not to renew the series "South Africa Now." The public television station says the series is biased in favor of the African National Congress. F1

'AFRICA'

Continued from F1

is in fact engaged in a discussion with the South African government leading to what is going to be a democracy in South Africa. [KCET] says the ANC is not the voice of the South African majority—[South African President] F. W. De Klerk obviously thinks it is."

Farrell said that he is working with other leaders in the black community to oppose the decision. And the councilman said he plans to meet personally with members of the KCET board of directors and with station president William Kobin.

Horne said that he has watched "South Africa Now" every week since it went on the air in 1989 and does not believe that it is biased.

"It covered the black consciousness movement, it covered Desmond Tutu, it covered the Pan African Congress, and it covered the white minority regime," Horne said. "I take it that those who opposed 'South Africa Now' would also have opposed a show on opposition to Idi Amin or the opposition to Germany in 1936 and wanted balance there."

Danny Schechter, executive producer of "South Africa Now," said that he resented the claim that his program was biased. "I have won several news Emmys, including two national Emmys for work on [ABC's] '20/20,' where I was a producer for nine years," Schechter said. "I've been a Neiman Fellow at Harvard. I've been covering this issue for 20 years."

SUGGESTED TEXT FOR KCET LETTER

Date _____

KCET
4401 Sunset Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Dear _____:

I am writing to register my disappointment and outrage at KCET's decision to cancel the Emmy award winning program, "South Africa Now."

As a citizen concerned with the struggle for democracy in South Africa, I depend on the public broadcasting system for uncensored news program's like "South Africa Now", which provides a balanced and accurate account of the current events in Southern Africa and the frontline states.

The airing of "South Africa Now" is a valuable service to the community you have pledged to serve. I respectfully request you to reconsider and to reinstate "South Africa Now" as a weekly prime time program on KCET.

Sincerely,

(over)

We really need your help. Please call and fax your letters **today** to:

William Kobin

President & CEO

KCET

4401 Sunset Blvd.

Los Angeles, CA 90027

Tel: (213) 666-6500

Fax: (213) 665-6067

Stephen Kulczycki

Senior Vice President

and Station Manager

KCET

4401 Sunset Blvd.

Los Angeles, CA 90027

Tel: (213) 666-6500

Fax: (213) 665-6067

Beatriz Stotzer

Vice President Community Relations

& Government Relations

KCET

4401 Sunset Blvd.

Los Angeles, CA 90028

Tel: (213) 666-6500

Fax: (213) 665-6067

Board of Directors

KCET

4401 Sunset Blvd.

Los Angeles, CA 90027

Tel: (213) 666-6500

Fax: (213) 665-6067

Please add my name to a joint letter from the members of Artists for a Free South Africa!

RETURN THIS FORM BY FAX OR MAIL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!

or call Karen or Yvonne @ 213-559-9334

Name _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

You may fax this form to 213-838-2367 (no cover necessary)
or mail it to **AFSA**, 10536 Culver Blvd., Culver City, CA 90232

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10530 Culver Boulevard, Suite I, Culver City, California 90232

213 559-9334
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 24, 1990

CONTACT: KAREN RUSSELL
YVONNE STYLES
(213) 559-9334

**Artists For A Free South Africa Respond to KCET's Cancellation of
South Africa Now**

LOS ANGELES -- Artists for a Free South Africa (AFSA), a newly formed group of entertainment industry professionals dedicated to the support of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, is outraged by KCET's decision to cancel the weekly news magazine show "South Africa Now." AFSA disagrees with the decision to cancel the show and the manner in which the decision was reached.

A conservative pressure group, the Committee on Media Integrity has been waging a letter-writing campaign against the show and other programs that it claims has a leftist bias. The group's leader, David Horowitz admits that he is opposed to the African National Congress, and he has had several meetings regarding "South Africa Now" with Stephen Kulczycki, senior vice-president and station manager at KCET.

Kulczycki denied that pressure from Horowitz's group influenced his decision to cancel the series, which had been running on Sundays at 9:00 am. Kulczycki states, "that the main issue in South Africa is not whether there will be apartheid, but what kind of anti-apartheid government in South Africa would come into power." His statement mirrors the sentiments of many in the media who believe that the struggle against apartheid is over simply because Nelson Mandela is free.

According to AFSA's Executive Director Karen Russell, "It is terribly shortsighted to think that the process of change is irreversible in South Africa. Mandela and three-quarters of South Africans still cannot to vote. Even as changes come about in South Africa, we still need to monitor the reforms. Moreover, even if we come to a point when sanctions are lifted, there will be a profound need to keep pressure on our own government to ensure economic assistance for a post-apartheid government. As artists, members of AFSA are particularly concerned with issues of censorship and the erosion of free speech in the United States. We are disturbed that KCET met with this right wing group and made the decision behind closed doors without hearing voices that support the continuation of such a vital show. This is not a black vs. white issue, but an issue that raises questions about the public's right to be informed about the struggle in South Africa. As a regular viewer of the show, I must state for the record that "South Africa Now" is the only outlet that I'm aware of that works with the South African producers and journalists and presents a view of South Africa from South African press; rather than through the eyes of Americans."

The management at KCET has cancelled the only show that reports regularly on South Africa and the frontline states citing a desire for a more balanced view on of events in Southern Africa. Only after cancellation, has KCET stated that they had a problem with the show's content--KCET never told the producers of this emmy award winning show that they had a problem with the show's content. Yet they met with this right wing group to discuss content and made a decision without including the all the necessary parties. The producers of "South Africa Now" were never informed that there was an effort being made by this right wing group to discredit their program.

In a letter inviting an AFSA representative to attend a meeting at the station, "the purpose of the meeting was to have an open dialogue with us and hopefully gain insight on the community's concern regarding your decision." Karen Russell sincerely hopes that the channels of communication will re-open and that KCET will reinstate "South Africa Now" in a primetime slot.

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School of CINEMA-TELEVISION

Film-Television Production
(213) 743-3173



October 24, 1990

Mr Stephen Kulczycki
Senior Vice President and Station Manager
KCET
FAX #213-665-6067

Dear Mr Kulczycki,

I thank you for taking the time today to explain to me KCET's position in regards to pulling "South Africa Now" off the air. I am tremendously upset by your actions and I want to tell you why.

First of all I want to say that I represent both myself and other professors on this campus. Together we are a legitimate and important group to KCET because we use your programs as examples of the best in diverse American opinion and programming and because your station represents one of the few options available to Los Angelenos to be educated and understand other points of view. I find it amazing that you cannot (or will not) find the time to talk to me and my colleagues about this very important issue.

Last year I taught a course entitled "Film and Theatre in Southern Africa", with two colleagues, Professor Michael Renov, Head of our Critical Studies Division and Professor Herbert Shore of our Division of Drama. "South Africa Now" was required viewing for the course. It was the only television show that we could rely on to give us consistent and varied information on the region and the country.

The program was critical for the class. The networks, during a very important period in South African history, could not be counted on to cover the country extensively or often at all. We found the program to offer a full range of vital information including who was breaking sanctions with South Africa, the connection of American banks and debt relief to the country, and how South Africa was manufacturing and selling arms worldwide. Of course the program also paid attention to the release of Nelson Mandela and provided viewers with a wonderful interview with Alistair Sparks which really helped Americans understand not only Mandela's political position but also his tremendous compassion and humanity. I will never forget that when Sparks asked Mandela what was the most important thing that had happened to him since his release, Mandela replied that it was the first moment that he closed the bedroom door of his own house and was able to talk in total privacy with his wife and share his dreams, convictions and feelings. What a wonderful moment of television that was only covered by KCET with "South Africa Now".

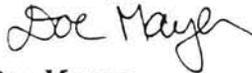
The program has also been required viewing for our introductory course in television because we felt that it was one of the few shows that dealt with a difficult and contradictory subject in depth and with grace. Of course the ANC is strongly represented and well it should be. It maintains a major role in the changes that are occurring as we speak and is certainly a critical player in terms of the future of the country. Other points of view have been fairly represented however. I remember sequences on the PAC as well as on rightist and liberal white groups. The program is

also important to us because it helps tie the region together with its sections on Namibia, Angola, and other front line states. It helps Americans understand the interconnections within the the region and why it is so tied together both economically and politically.

You told me on the phone that you found the show too biased and too involved with ANC theories. I respectfully submit, that having watched the show carefully for the last fifteen months, I strongly disagree with your reading. You said that you were not influenced by right wing groups. I find it hard to believe that you would have removed a show like this, particularly one that was buried at 9am on Sunday morning, without outside pressure.

I must admit that I do have some concerns about the program. I find the culture segment, which I think is an excellent idea, all too often filled with silly music videos that don't really explore this rich and diverse culture in a meaningful way. Nevertheless, considering the lack of competition, I think it is critical that this program be continued on KCET. I understand that you plan to provide other programming about this area. I applaud that attempt but it won't take the place that this particular show fills. I think that in pulling "South Africa Now" off the air in Los Angeles you are making a very serious mistake.

Sincerely yours,



Doe Mayer
Assistant Professor

cc. Bill Robin President KCET
cc Elizabeth Daley Head Of Production, USC Cinema/TV