

FACTS

SEATTLE WOMEN RALLY AGAINST APARTHEID



Nearly a thousand chanting demonstrators marched in front of Seattle's South African Consulate at the Harriet Tubman Day Rally Against Apartheid on Sunday, March 10. The rally was one of the largest and liveliest of the weekly protests that have been held since last fall to demand the consulate's closure. Chanting "Hey Swing, can't you see—South African women will be free," demonstrators expressed their determination to end apartheid and women's oppression from South Africa to Seattle.

A diverse coalition of organizations and community leaders, including the Seattle Coalition Against Apartheid, Seattle Radical Women, KiKora Dorsey of the Minority Executive Directors Coalition, Selma Waldman of Africa Network and others came together to organize the rally, held to commemorate International Women's Day and mark 72nd anniversary of Harriet Tubman's death.

Rally organizer Maryamu Eltayeb of the Church Council's South Africa Project opened the program with a passage from a famous South African women's song, "When you have touched a woman you have struck a rock, you have moved a boulder and you will be crushed." This defiant song set the mood for the day's events.

"To our South African sisters—we see your tears, we feel your pain and we will support your struggle" declared Clara Fraser of Radical Women and the Freedom Socialist Party. "Often unrecognized, women are leading the battle against apartheid there and here, and today we pay them tribute, for the struggle to end women's oppression and the fascist system of apartheid are bound together."

Jane Martin, representing the Northwest Indian Women's Circle, asserted that "We stand in solidarity with the women of South Africa, and that means a lot, because as Native women we know firsthand the effects of colonialism...and like them, we continue to fight and grow stronger!" she concluded to cheers from the crowd.

Reflecting the rally's mood, Mona Bailey of Transafrica vowed that a Seattle Municipal Court judge's refusal to dismiss charges against anti-apartheid demonstrators last week would not stop their efforts to close the consulate and to press City Attorney Dough Jewett and other city officials to drop the criminal trespass charges. "We stand here today on the strong shoulders of Harriet Tubman...we ain't stopping" she promised.

Numbers of women community leaders read solidarity statements and poetry which linked the efforts of South African women to end apartheid with the struggle of U.S. women, especially Black women, to end racism and sexism at home.

International greetings to the rally included a statement sent by an African National Congress representative, and a special appearance by Ray Hooker, Nicaraguan National Assembly member, who expressed his country's support for the Black South African liberation movements.

The crowd cheered and sang as the Total Experience Choir gave an exhilarating performance, but quieted to a hush as 15 women, most of them Black, walked up Swing's steps to be arrested. Sadikifu Akina-James introduced the arrestees, each of whom was arrested in the name of a South African woman who has been banned, detained or murdered by the Pretoria government. Those arrested were: Zenko Dayton, Maryamu Eltayeb, Bunny Wilburn, Zakiya Stewart, Tony Wright (Obiageli), Esther Mumford, Zola Mumford, Clara Fraser, Amy Lolly, Betty Lou Valentine, Vanessa Gilder, Selma Waldman, Su Docekal, Carletta Wilson, and Hellyne Summerise.

Elizabeth Jackson, rally chairperson, concluded the event by urging everyong to return next week, and to build the movement by reaching out to more and more of the community.