

southern africa solidarity committee

Statement of Purposes and Objectives

The Southern Africa Solidarity Committee is an official organization of students, faculty and staff at Harvard University, dedicated principally to the achievement of genuine majority rule in South Africa, Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia) and Namibia. Our motto, borrowed from the Late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., is, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

The Southern Africa Solidarity Committee seeks the broadest possible participation of individuals and organizations of goodwill. Membership is without regard to race, sex, university status or national origin. The Committee seeks to develop fraternal ties with other anti-racist, anti-apartheid groups in the Boston metropolitan area.

WE BELIEVE that the complete denial of fundamental human rights in southern Africa is an affront to humanity. The disenfranchisement, deprivation and intimidation of the black majorities, the muzzling of the press, and the banning of men and women of conscience, constitute a form of official terrorism repugnant to international law and opinion.

The South African system of apartheid is based in large part on the exploitation of a black labor force reduced to virtual bondage. This is why the rate of return on investments in South Africa is amongst the highest in the world. This is why American and West European firms invest in South Africa in a first place.

About 400 U.S. corporations are doing business in southern Africa, with investments in South Africa alone totalling \$1.7 billion—about 40 per cent of all U.S. investment in Africa. This investment is concentrated in manufacturing and petroleum refining, contributing to the military and economic strength of the apartheid regime. For example, three-quarters of U.S. investment in manufacturing in Africa is located in South Africa. In addition, private bank loans from the United States to the South Africa government are estimated at over \$2 billion, accounting for about 28 per cent of all such loans from all countries.

Virtually all anti-apartheid organizations in South Africa have called for an end to foreign investment there. Among them are the Christian Institute of Southern Africa, the South African Congress of Trade Unions, the South African Student Organization, the South African Student Movement, the African National Congress of South Africa, the Pan-Africanist Congress, the Coloured Labour Party, and the Indian Congress of South Africa. They are joined in this call by the Organization of African Unity, the United Nations General Assembly, the Congressional Black Caucus, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, and the World Council of Churches.

These groups argue, and we believe compellingly, that one of the few remaining ways of shortening the duration of violence and bloodshed is through economic pressure—pressure which could help motivate the changes necessary to bring justice and peace in southern Africa. The Late Nobel Peace Prize winner, Chief Albert J. Lutuli, has stated: "The economic boycott of South Africa will entail undoubted hardship for Africans. We do not doubt that. But if it is a method which shortens the day of blood, the suffering to us will be a price we are willing to pay."

As members of the Harvard community, we are particularly concerned about the role of the University in southern Africa. We are

dismayed that Harvard continues to invest heavily in transnational corporations with extensive holdings in southern Africa, and banks (such as Manufacturers Hanover and Citibank) that support apartheid by extending credit directly to the South African government and its parastatals—credit financed by the deposits of American consumers and businesses, and that might otherwise be available to help rejuvenate our financially strapped cities, towns and neighborhoods. We are appalled by the University's failure to give consistent support to stockholder resolutions which seek to compel company managements to reduce or curtail southern African interests.

As the oldest institution of higher learning in North America, Harvard's prestige and credibility is unrivalled; its institutional voice is respected in academic, government and corporate circles. Moreover, with an endowment approaching \$1.5 billion, the Harvard Corporation controls more assets than any other university, or, for that matter, the Rockefeller and Mellon foundations combined. If Harvard were a commercial bank, it would be among the one hundred largest (78th to be exact); if it were an industrial corporation, it would probably be among the Fortune 500.

It is therefore unconscionable that Harvard should fail to exercise its institutional clout in the service of the cause of human rights in southern Africa. It is difficult to understand how a university committed to the unfettered exchange of ideas, critical thought and democratic liberties could behave in a manner implying a commitment to profit over principle or people.

It is our firmly held opinion that the University position—however well-intentioned it may appear—to oppose disinvestment is, in the long run, only impeding the change that is essential if South Africa is to be rid of apartheid. As the African National Congress has argued, "it is not enough for transnational companies to grant higher wages here, better working conditions there, for this leaves the apartheid system intact, in fact props it up longer—the very source of our misery and degradation." Recent events in South Africa make this abundantly clear.

IN CONSIDERATION of the above, the Southern Africa Solidarity Committee advocates the withdrawal of commercial, defense, intelligence and agricultural attaches from South Africa; an end to tax credits and Export-Import Bank credits to American companies doing business there; and support for strong United Nations sanctions against South Africa and Southern Rhodesia.

Furthermore, we believe that the Harvard Corporation should begin to disentangle itself from the system of apartheid by the following initial actions:

1. immediately divesting itself, with full public explanation, of any and all stocks, bonds, or other financial instruments of U.S. or foreign commercial banks extending credit to the South African government or its parastatals;

2. supporting unequivocally all shareholder resolutions calling upon managements of corporations with activities in southern Africa to reduce or curtail their operations there, and initiating resolutions to withdraw operations where none have been proposed;

3. issuing a clear public statement of its policy on southern Africa, and inviting other universities, foundations, pension funds, churches and private investors to follow suit.

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