Dear

The Boston Coalition for the Liberation of Southern Africa was organized in 1975 as a coalition of progressive individuals and organizations to do political work on southern African issues. In our work we expose the racist and oppressive nature of the white minority regimes and oppose any U.S. corporate or governmental support for them. We work to aid the liberation movements, the only valid alternative to these regimes.

Our recent campaigns include: asking individuals and organizations to withdraw their money from the First National Bank of Boston (the largest commercial bank in New England) which has made loans to the South African government and corporations doing business there, help in a successful effort to make the government of Massachusetts divest its pension funds of holdings in companies doing business in South Africa ($5,000,000 so far!), support for the referendum in the City of Cambridge, last November when two-thirds of the voters approved a measure asking the city to divest, and most recently our participation in the Zimbabwe Action Campaign.

We have been raising material aid for the Patriotic Front—ZANU & ZAPU by showing our slide show to various community, university, union, and religious groups. We have pointed out the great dangers in the current proposed settlement in that Lord Soames has overtly sided with the Smith-Muzovera forces and aided them against the Patriotic Front. We also raised $2300 recently at a benefit concert which we divided equally between ZANU and ZAPU.

We have recently formed a media committee in order to organize our work more effectively and locate more resources for our outreach campaign. We are asking your assistance in helping us obtain taped materials, including interviews, as well as printed materials of liberation movement leaders and Front Line State spokespeople. While focusing on the liberation struggles, we also want to show the efforts of the FrontLine States and their sacrifices necessary to promote the struggle.

Please let us know if you can make these kinds of materials available to us, on a continuing basis if possible. We already have numerous media contacts to make good use of them. At this crucial time, we are intensifying our efforts.

Alfred Kagan
for the BCLSA
Over the last few years, the movement against apartheid and in support of the liberation of southern Africa has grown tremendously in the U.S. For many of those who are new to this movement, the question of support for the liberation forces in southern Africa is a new issue.

In this brief position paper, we present first the reasons why BCLSA (Boston Coalition for the Liberation of Southern Africa) supports the liberation movements, and then the reasons why we consider explicit, open support for the liberation movements to be a necessity for the anti-apartheid movement in this country.

By the liberation movements, we mean those forces that are based on popular support and are sincerely struggling for self-determination of black people in southern Africa. They include not only historically recognized liberation organizations, but also emerging black consciousness movements.

WHY WE SUPPORT THE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS

1. We recognize that it is the liberation movements that are actively struggling against apartheid and colonialism in Africa. By this, we are not urging support for one organization or another, but rather support for the process for liberation. The colonialist regimes can only be overthrown through internal struggle led by strong and organized movements of African people. Our efforts are meaningful only if we aid their efforts.

2. While colonial powers, racist states, and the United States can arrange "settlements" with non-representative black leaders, only the liberation movements can represent the aspiration of the African people for true independence. If we look at the experience of the liberation forces in the former Portuguese colonies, we can see that MPLA of Angola, Frelimo of Mozambique, and PAIGC of Guinea-Bissau each developed a program dependent on popular involvement. While liberation movements face tremendous difficulties in building social programs that reflect the goals of their people, they are the sole forces that offer concrete change for the development of Africa in the interests of African people. The strategies of liberation forces do not stop at the tearing down of colonial structures and attitudes; they also include the building of a new society.

Replacing the structures of colonialism and apartheid can not take place through constitutional processes established by that same colonialism. It can only take place by breaking collaboration with apartheid regimes and their international financial and military investors.

WHY OPEN SUPPORT FOR THE LIBERATION FORCES IS ESSENTIAL AT THE PRESENT TIME

1. If we look at the form the struggle has taken in Zimbabwe and Namibia, support for the liberation forces is an immediate and practical question. In both of these countries, the colonial governments and their international supporters are attempting to forestall true independence by "internal" settlements. At the Turnhalle negotiations in Namibia and in the Zimbabwe talks, the minority governments are dealing with selected black "leaders" who are willing
to operate within the legal framework established by white rule. The liberation forces of SWAPO and the Patriotic Front, whose armed struggles have been responsible for forcing Vorster and Smith to negotiate, have been excluded from these talks. The goal of these discussions is to legitimate governments with black faces at the top, black faces selected from government-appointed chiefs and collaborating politicians in elections supervised by the whitecontrolled armed forces. Such governments would in no way threaten U.S. and white minority interests; nor would they attack the bases of exploitation of the people.

If a neo-colonial settlement is made, the United States will support it. In order to expose these agreements as a continuation of white rule, it is necessary to make clear that it is the liberation forces who are and have been fighting for true independence. We would be failing in our duty if we did not lay groundwork for opposing this settlement.

2. If we do not support the liberation cause, our work becomes indistinguishable from the position of U.S. foreign policy. Most people in the U.S. say they are against apartheid, including Jimmy Carter. The U.S. denounces apartheid because it diverts attention from real U.S. interests; retaining economic and military control over the resources of southern Africa. U.S.-backed "internal" settlements are not going to give black people in southern Africa the right to determine their own destinies. The only way to distinguish between support work against apartheid and U.S. official denunciation of apartheid, is to openly support the liberation forces.

3. If we do not actively support the strength and justice of the liberation cause, we can not justify support work here. Most people see that demonstrations, university divestment campaigns, bank withdrawal campaigns, and Krugerrand boycotts are not going to bring down apartheid. Unless we make clear that our action is in support of the liberation forces who are directly engaged in bringing down apartheid, our actions are baseless and without focus. U.S. support work is only support work and as such must be support work for a specific cause.

4. In the Vietnam war, the National Liberation Front was directly fighting U.S. forces. Progressive people in the U.S. organizing against the war made a strategic decision not to raise as a slogan, "Victory to the NLF," thinking it would undercut mass support for opposition to the war. Their position was that numbers of people who knew there was something wrong with U.S. intervention could not conceive of calling for the victory of forces who were killing U.S. men and women. The U.S.-southern Africa situation is different, thus requiring different tactics for mobilizing opposition to apartheid. In southern Africa the illegitimacy of the minority government is widely recognized, as is the justice of the African cause, while U.S. lives are not yet at stake in the war. Furthermore, U.S. people have learned by the experience of Vietnam that U.S. foreign involvement is not all-powerful, especially when it is opposed by grass-roots organizations struggling for liberation. Vietnam also educated U.S. people to recognize that a settlement supported by the U.S. government is not necessarily a just and lasting settlement.
Thus the Vietnam example, rather than justifying a reluctance to call for support of liberation movements, creates the preconditions for the expansion of people's consciousness to support oppressed people struggling for liberation in southern Africa.

5. The U.S. has not yet intervened militarily in southern Africa. It is important to have in the U.S. significant and articulated support for liberation movements before such U.S. military involvement because:
   1) already mobilized support for the liberation movements reduces the likelihood of U.S. intervention; and
   2) if the U.S. does become militarily involved, people who have already articulated support for liberation movements will be more likely to continue that support and their criticism of U.S. policy than if they had never clearly supported liberation movements.

6. Many people choose to do southern Africa support work because they realize the links between conditions in southern Africa and conditions in the U.S. U.S. corporate and military investments directly contribute to the apartheid regime in South Africa. The export of U.S. industry to South Africa not only exploits black labor in South Africa; it also contributes to higher unemployment and recession in the U.S. This also is an effective tool to keep U.S. labor docile; by threatening to remove operations and therefore jobs out of the region if labor makes too many demands. By supporting the liberation cause as the true aspiration of black Africans, we can also point out worsening conditions in the U.S. through U.S. foreign policy.

7. All too often, anti-apartheid work describes the black people in southern Africa as weak and pitiful victims. This is an offense to both black Africans and black Americans. We must call attention to the active resistance of black people to their oppression. The African liberation movements are a clear manifestation of this resistance.

8. One of the main forms of solidarity work is material support for the liberation movements. How can we do this without declaring our support for them?

SERIOUS QUESTIONS SHOULD BE TREATED SERIOUSLY

The question of support for the liberation movements is very important. It should be dealt with in a clear and principled way. To say it is simply a question of "rhetoric" denies the real issues involved. Even slogans of a demonstration are important because they represent the political program of the action. For those who see the publicity for the demonstration, or learn of it through the media, the slogans define what the demonstration supports.

We have argued that it is essential both to support the liberation movements and to advance this support publicly. Those who disagree with this have different strategies, if not goals, and we urge them to justify them.
We don't think that raising support for liberation movements is going to "turn off" any significant segment that would otherwise support our demonstrations. Those who are concerned enough about oppression in southern Africa to come to a demonstration, but unwilling to support the liberation movements, are surely few in number. We are not testing ideological purity, but are urging a strategic political program. Many people whose views on the liberation struggle are undefined will come to a demonstration and clarify their position through a strongly laid out presentation. On the other hand, a refusal to support liberation movements will preclude any action of those potentially most committed to southern African liberation.

Finally, we would urge every group to make a serious study of the liberation movements. Although this would include a history of the PAC-ANC split and the factional problems in ZANU, these can only be understood by gaining a historical perspective of the liberation process, including the theory of the national liberation struggle and the successes of liberation movements in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau. We also think it is important for those involved in support work in the U.S. to understand U.S. and corporate complicity with apartheid.

Boston Coalition for the Liberation of Southern Africa