

SOLIDARITY MESSAGE

TO

CHICAGO AREA BLACK LUNG ASSOCIATION

DELIVERED BY KATHY DEVINE OF
ILLINOIS LABOR NETWORK AGAINST APARTHIED

By: Nomonde Ngubo

International Representative
United Mine Workers of America

November 19, 1989

It is with great pride and honor that I am able to send you greetings from the United Mineworkers of America, the South African National Union of Mineworkers and (COSATU).

Last year you gave me a warm reception. This year you extended the same hospitality to Tony Kujawa. But you did something more significant, you demonstrated your solidarity and support for The Pittston strikers by raising \$5,000 to send to those men and women who are struggling for their rights to the benefits long fought for and won. Since health is a big part of The Pittston strike, a voice coming from an Association of Black Lung victims is a very moving gesture.

In South Africa as miners we know well that the working class has to fulfill its historic mission and the path to winning that objective is frot with pitfalls. We share the same pain of having to deal with laws which try to take away our benefits.

Currently, the South African Mines and Works Act Regulation removes Health and Safety from the area of collective bargaining, whilst in this country the Labor Department is using Collection Agencies to go after Black Lung Recipients.

As the leader of Solidarity Lech Waleńsa recently stated at the AFL-CIO Convention:

"Sometimes we feel as if we are swimming chained hand and foot, trying to summon all our energy just to make it to the shore. And on the shore there is a cheering crowd of people who offer us their admiration instead of simply throwing a life belt."

I am more than pleased to say that the Black Lung Association, the one I have worked with, with Paul Siegel at the helm defies such tendencies.

I would like to share with you some of the victories of the people. The unconditional release of eight political prisoners on October 15 is a victory due to international pressures; sanctions, the Shell Boycott, lobbying and a massive internal Defiance Campaign by the Mass Democratic Movement, COSATU and the UDF.

We here today know that de Klerk has desegregated all public facilities: No, Sisters and Brothers, it is not de Klerk who did. It is us; our pressure has forced them into this position.

As we rejoice in the accomplishments and gains we've made, let us intensify the support for the mass defiance campaign.

You must continue the squeeze. We rejoice at the good news about the victory of the people of Namibia and this gives us more courage that victory is certain.

I'd like to conclude by asking Sister Kathy Devine to sing the ever true miner's song: "Step by Step the Longest March Can be Won."

Only this time she can sing the song with a quickened pace. The steps are drawing nearer to the winning row.

Power to you all.