From Oct. 18 through Nov. 4, 1981, the COBLSL Coordinator was part of an AFSC-sponsored tour of 7 southern states. Others on the tour included: Rebecca Matlou (African National Congress-S.A.); Lindiwe Mabuza (ANC); Jean Sindab (Washington Office on Africa); Jerry Herman (AFSC/Southern Africa Program); and Wilfred Gray (International Defense & Aid Fund).

The trip was aimed at developing contacts on which to build future work and sharing resources (both people and films) not readily available in that region. The tour gave us a better understanding of the local political, social and economic conditions that must be taken into consideration in doing anti-apartheid work in the South.

Below is an impressionistic overview of the tour and some brief summaries of whom we met and spoke to on the tour.

Charlottesville, Va.: We met with a small group of students and community activists on the Univ. of Va. campus (17,000 students, only 400 of them black). Workshops focussed on analyzing the divestment movement on campus and on political prisoner work. Although the turnout was small, the people present struck us as very committed to continuing work on this issue. We discussed strategy and groups' difficulty in developing a united multiracial divestment campaign.

Greensboro, N.C.: We finally began to feel we really were in the South: the terrain so much more rural and people we met more readily speaking of the community's rising racial tensions following the Nov. 1979 shootings. A meeting with representatives of black community groups (NAACP; NBUF; black churchmen, businessmen and academics) focussed on Reagan Administration moves closer to So. Africa and on similarities between So. African apartheid and segregation in the South. After a meeting with local Quakers and 3 newspaper interviews, we spoke at a black Baptist church 3 blocks from the 1979 Klan shootings. The audience asked about how to organize against local bank lenders and local companies with So. African subsidiaries (IBM; textile cos.).

Atlanta, Ga.: All the new construction lining the highways underscores the economic vitality of this home to Coca Cola. We arrived during the last week of the mayoral campaign; our being welcomed by Coretta King, Rev. Jos. Lowery, the Mayor, a County Commissioner and a State Legislator at a press conference underscored the high level of consciousness on the South Africa issue in Atlanta. It also underscored, in this birthplace of Dr. King, how this tour was a sort of pilgrimage to key points of struggle in the civil rights movement. Speaking about denial of basic human and civil rights in South Africa was paralleled by discussion of local struggles to maintain the gains of the civil rights movement in every community we visited from Atlanta on. We had excellent press coverage here (several radio, TV and press interviews) and met with the Black Journalists Assoc. at Clark College (one of a network of black colleges throughout the South that invited us to speak). We met with the Christian Council of Greater Atlanta, informally with Andy Young at his Campaign headquarters, and spoke to 250 predominantly black students at Atlanta University.

Julian Bond, Jan Douglass (aide to then Mayor Jackson) and Beni Ivey sponsored a reception for us at a local restaurant frequently patronized by Atlanta's black political leadership. We also spoke at a meeting sponsored by the local anti-Reagan Coalition and met personally with Coretta King. Our most challenging meeting was with a bankers/business/
academic group, the Southern Center for International Studies headed by Cedric Suzman, nephew to Helen Suzman. About 60-70 people were invited to discuss policy issues re So. Africa. Board members of SCIS included officials of Coca Cola and IBM, so divestment and bank lending were prominent discussion issues. Other questions raised at this meeting included concern about "violent change", USSR backing of SWAPO. A meeting with campus activists to discuss strategy was perhaps most productive; the group has continued to meet to plan activities in the coming months. Several people also discussed initiating campaigns at the municipal, county and state levels re divestment.

Birmingham, Ala.: Perhaps one of the most meaningful of our stops on the tour; we spent an afternoon sitting at lunch counters and reflecting on how many sacrifices blacks had made in the US (and were still making in SA) to win the right to sit at a lunch counter. Our first evening, we met informally with civil rights veterans who were on the Executive Comm. of the Southern Organizing Committee for Social & Economic Justice: Rev. Shuttlesworth; Anne Braden; Ron Chisholm; CT Vivian of SCLC; Rev. Woods, a Baptist minister; Rita Anthony, NAARPR/community leader; and others. A representative of Mayor Arrington welcomed us to the gathering and to B'ham. All of us were tremendously moved.

The next day we were introduced to the tradition of black preaching at the Mt. Calvary Baptist Church Men's Day Celebration. A brilliant sermon on political and civil rights struggles in the US and SA by Mayor Arrington (who came out to the church steps to see us off) both moved us and reminded us of the historic role of black churches as the cradle of the civil rights struggle.

During our stay we spoke at a high school for gifted students, Miles College (where we met a city council member), the Univ. of Ala., on a church radio station, and at a press conference held in a local Baptist church.

A high point was our talk to the Perry Co. Citizen's League in rural Marion, Ala. About 40 people came to hear us speak, all black, from a rural majority black county, with a long history of fighting the KKK. There were excellent questions, esp. about white control of South African land.

Jackson, Miss.: Our visit was assisted by Delta Ministry staff, who helped set up meetings at Tougalou and Jackson State Colleges, at the Black & Proud School (black nationalist in orientation), with a local CARD chapter, and with local media (including the Jackson Advocate, where we met Mayor Eddie Carthan of Tchula, Miss., focus of a campaign to get black office holders out of public office). A key theme in discussions with local folks was the rise in racial tensions and lynings in Miss.; recent instances of prisoners found hanging in their cells were eerie reminders of similar supposed suicides by SA blacks held in detention.

New Orleans, La.: The cosmopolitan culture of this port city underlines its difference from the Deep South; it is much closer to the Caribbean in style, terrain and its economic dependence on trade for survival (as in its lack of productive corporate investment in the area). Our visit was assisted by Kalamu Ya Salaam, editor of the Black Collegian (which had just published an article on divestment). We visited the Ahidiana Work/Study Center, a model for self-programming education whose materials embody a strong critique of capitalism within a black nationalist perspective. We later spoke at several universities, including Xavier (the only black Catholic Univ. in the US), Dillard (another black University), Univ. of New Orleans, State Univ. of New Orleans and at several community centers, a Unitarian Church (on US/SA nuclear collaboration) and a local high school. Each program was sponsored by different groups, including: the National Black Independent Political Party; AFSC & Xavier Student Awareness Comm.; People's Coalition (a multiracial group formed to protest Reagan's Sept. visit to N.O.) and 9 other groups; SANE, NAACP and several fraternities; Militant Forum; People's Bookstore (firebombed 3 times by right-wing Cuban/Nicaraguan groups); AFSC & LASIS (gay women's group).

Mobile, Ala.: Our visit began with a visit to the 3rd Baptist Church in nearby Whistler, where we briefly addressed the congregation toward the end of the service. We later met Angela Lee, Town Councilmember of Pritchard, a majority black town just outside Mobile, & met informally at a potluck with local activists, mostly New American Movement members, members of CAVAR (Comm. Against Violence & Racism which fights police brutality) and some ecologists and local pastors of white churches. Some press people from Pasca-goula, Miss. also came to do interviews.
That evening was spent in Africatown, USA, a community of people descended from the last slaveship to land in the US (in Mobile in 1859). Community leaders hope to turn it into a historic park as part of a plan for community redevelopment; it contains the first technical school set up in Ala.

Our next day included a one-hour call-in radio interview (listener questions concerned Reagan policy; whether white rule was better than Idi Amin's; issues of "violent change" and communism). We subsequently spoke at a Teach-in at predominantly black Bishop State Jr. College and at South Alabama State College (we experienced the first of a pattern of hostile questions, subsequently repeated in meetings in Fla., that in the end helped generate some spirited discussion).

St. Petersburg, Fla.: I had to leave the tour early, so this is a summary provided by other participants. The tour met with about 65 local leaders, including a City Councilman, and generated excellent discussion. Once again, however, a person in the audience claimed we were misrepresenting So. Africa and asked why AFSC was sponsoring a tour by an ANC member. An evening meeting at Univ. of Fla. in Tampa attracted campus leaders and others; police were present at the meeting room for unexplained reasons.

Tallahassee, Fla.: A discussion with the Black Student Union stressed the need for anti-apartheid committees to reflect both campus and community. A number of media interviews were done before an evening session attracting about 150 people. The sponsoring group, Center for Participant Education, received a threatening call prior to the meeting threatening trouble, but none was encountered and our reception enthusiastic.

A Few Reflections:

The tour underlined several key points and issues related to organizing in the South:

- the importance of black churches and colleges as essential points of contact and work with the black community;
- the urgency the black community feels to roll back the hard-won gains of the civil rights movement, esp. attacks on the Voting Rights Act, the rise in lynchings and other violence against blacks (whether by police or the KKK), and erosion of the economic gains of blacks;
- the immediate responsiveness of the black community to the issue of repression in So. Africa as compared to whites (though sometimes folks would ask why we sought their support when they were faced with so many problems in their struggles here at home);
- the isolation of black and white communities from each other; rarely did they ever intersect or jointly participate in an event;
- the way racial tensions conditioned responses by blacks and whites everywhere we went, as they tried to deal with us individually or collectively as a multiracial group;
- the tremendous potential for successful state and municipal legislative campaigns in cities and counties with black majorities or substantial black populations (local legislators seemed very responsive);
- the power of 'naming names'—pointing out local banks and corporations which have lent to or invested in So. Africa, which often elicited shocked reactions from audiences;

In discussions among tour participants, we also saw a number of significant parallels between Reagan's election in 1980 and the Afrikaner Nationalist Party victory in 1948. Both groups represented, on coming to power, regional rather than multinational corporate interests and have intensified segregationist ideology and practice (sometimes in new guises) as rightwing groups have been on the rise. Forced relocations of blacks out of urban areas in So. Africa is paralleled by a real estate market in the US which is effectively relocating blacks to declining suburbs ringing newly gentrified inner cities. Both have tried to militarize their societies (though with somewhat different degrees of success). Despite many differences, there is enough similarity in the social and economic theories underpinning their approaches to policy and government action to merit further exploration. What struck all of us was how much U.S. and South African realities and histories illuminated each other.