ARCHITECTURE AND RACISM
Position Paper #1 of the Architects' Resistance

One of the architectural profession's most prestigious firms, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, is putting its skills, resources, and name behind the brutal racism of South Africa. For the sake of profit, the firm is building for a government which says: "We want South Africa White...Keeping it white can only mean one thing, namely White domination, not leadership, not guidance, but control, supremacy." (Prime Minister Verwoerd, 1963)

Written into the laws of the Republic of South Africa this policy has kept 3 million whites the slave masters of 11 million black Africans. This is Apartheid and SOM is helping underwrite its furtherance. On March 21, 1960 in Sharpsville, South African police fired on a crowd of peacefully demonstrating black Africans killing 67 and wounding hundreds more. They were protesting the laws which require them to carry pass books -- the dog tags which label their bondage.

In the following year South Africa's economy almost collapsed after a flight of capital from the country which resulted from fear that the Sharpsville massacre might lead to bloody revolution; fear that South Africa's expulsion from the British Commonwealth might reduce profits and that the economic boycott by small nations might snowball. But the U.S. Corporations rescued the economy by pouring in $223 million additional investment so that by 1963 South African gold and foreign exchange reserve had tripled to a record high -- and the Apartheid regime was secured. Since then business has boomed and the strength of the white oppressors has multiplied.

An indication of the current state of the economy is the Carlton Center complex designed by SOM. It will occupy a super-block formed by five city blocks, includes the world's tallest concrete building (for offices), a 400-bedroom hotel with 90 additional apartment suites, two department stores and parking for 3,000 cars. There will be gardens, fountains, sidewalk cafes and a skating rink. The estimated cost of the project is between $50 and $100 million and is the largest commercial development in Africa.

AND SOMEWHERE AN SOM ARCHITECT IS DRAWING THREE SETS OF BATHROOMS -- WHITE, "COLORED" AND BLACK.

This project is financed by Anglo-American Corporation of South Africa, whose director is the infamous New Jersey profiteer and multi-millionaire Charles W. Engelhard. Through various holding companies he is said to control 23 South African firms with total assets of more than $2.57 billion. Engelhard, along with David Rockefeller's Chase Manhattan Bank, Dillon, Read and Co. and over two hundred other American companies, have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in industrial development in South Africa.

The Carlton Center has been made possible because U.S. business continues to be attracted to South Africa by a modern, developed, industrial society with 3 million prosperous white customers and a labor force of 11 million black Africans prohibited by law from organizing unions, collective bargaining, striking, moving without permission, and voting. The Apartheid policy keeps the average black miner earning less than $1 a day, while in 1962 for example, the American companies in South Africa earned $72 million. This was easily double the 11.8 per cent average profit reported by the U.S. Department of Commerce on U.S. investments in all foreign countries.
Skidmore, Owings and Merrill has climbed aboard this gravy train -- a train fueled by the blood and misery of 11 million black Africans.

We, the Architects' Resistance, say that Skidmore, Owings and Merrill's support of Apartheid reveals them for what they, and most of the architectural profession, are: unprincipled practitioners of an art for its own sake and, mainly, for the sake of profit. The pursuit of profit and fame have led SOM and most of the rest of the profession to build their monuments in reflection of their own egos -- at the expense of those whose labor builds them and with small regard for those who must live with them.

SOM's other "social" works, such as their involvement in Baltimore's highway program, incriminate them. To present themselves as advocates of black American communities, no matter how up-to-date their techniques, is, after South Africa, sheer, unprincipled hypocrisy. To build for corporations whose profits come from the exploitation of oppressed masses -- be they South African Blacks, Peruvian copper miners, or American Blacks; to build for governments to maintain themselves at the price of brutal oppression and genocide -- be it South Africa at Sharpsville or the U.S. in Vietnam; and to build for profiteering middlemen whose only concern with social order and for the masses' use of what is built is the profit that can be wrung: this is cynical, evil, and dangerous. The urban crisis, the Vietnam war, the violence of a Chicago are all born of the shallow moralism typified by our profession.

We, as architects, must see ourselves as servants of the social order whose environment we form.

TO BUILD FOR OPPRESSIVE INSTITUTIONS IS TO SUPPORT THOSE INSTITUTIONS.

We are socially responsible for our actions.

We ask architects and architectural students who cannot tolerate the role they have been asked to play to join the Architects' Resistance in our efforts to change architecture from irrelevant and oppressive profit-making to an art truly in the service of a society based on fundamental human values.

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The architectural profession designs a mere 10% of buildings constructed in this country. This 10% is mostly monuments built for the business world to symbolize its power and wealth and to attract more profit. It is mausoleums to house the Government and its oppressive agencies. It is schools where creativity is treated as a discipline problem, and cultural differences as delinquency. It is inhuman housing built for profit, or to house those whose real neighborhoods have fallen before highways. It is prisons. And because we continue to see ourselves as an elite group of "artists" we keep ourselves from soiling our hands with the remaining 90% of construction that forms the grey desert out of which our sparkling monuments rise. By the creed of the American Institute of Architects we must sit in our carpeted offices waiting for those who can pay our fees or who want "art" to come and accept our sculptural vision.
We live in a country where power lies in the hands of a few, and we serve those few -- as the Master Builders of history served their kings. The people do not have power over the formation of their environment but must accept whatever is forced on them. We, as architects, are not taught, or even permitted, to go out to the user and apply our skills to put physical form to his vision. We serve only to put "aesthetic" form to the avarice and power of rulers -- even those who have openly enslaved millions under Apartheid.

THE ARCHITECTS' RESISTANCE

The Architects' Resistance has been formed so that this prostitution of the profession may be stopped and so that we may move towards a society where the power lies with the people, and where architecture is a tool of that power. We wish to find means to assist the rehumanization of society by restructuring the architectural profession to deal with living people on human terms.

Architecture is a tool for mobilizing people, for making them more aware of themselves and their human dignity. Architecture must not be merely the handmaiden to the dehumanization of object-oriented capitalism. Architects must not respond exclusively to the industrialists, the financiers, the politicians, nor to the acclaim of the professional journals.

Architecture is not an abstract art existing in a social vacuum. It is an integral part of the totality of forces molding our society: political, economic, social. It cannot continue to operate in a moral void.

The Architects' Resistance hopes to fill that void by bringing ethical and political conscience to the practice of architecture.

The Architects' Resistance is an action group, a communications network, a research organization. We will issue and mobilize behind future position papers on broad topics within the profession -- registration, the awarding of commissions, mechanisms for open competitions, etc. -- and specific instances of the misuse of our professional skills. A partial catalogue of such abuses in this city is appended to this statement.

AS A PRE-CONDITION TO THE RESPONSIBLE PRACTICE OF ARCHITECTURE WE DEMAND AN IMMEDIATE END TO THE COLLUSION BETWEEN ARCHITECTURE AND RACISM. WE DEMAND:

1. that SOM and Paul Weidlinger Assoc. (engineers) immediately dissociate themselves from the Carlton project and remit any profits therefrom to Black organizations in South Africa.

2. that the AIA publicly and immediately censor SOM and any other firms from membership if they refuse to halt their operations in South Africa.

3. that the AIA refuse to hold their national convention in Chicago and publicly condemn the police state tactics of Mayor Daley.
WE URGE:

1. that all architects of conscience examine closely the nature of the work they and their firms are engaged in and resign immediately from those organizations they can no longer morally support.

2. that all architecture and planning students examine their future associations very critically before entering the brothels.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WHITE (Europeans)</th>
<th>BLACK (Africans)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population (millions)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Per capita income (1959)</td>
<td>$1,819</td>
<td>$109</td>
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<td>Average wage in mining (1962)</td>
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<td>Ages subject to tax</td>
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<td>18-65</td>
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<td>Income exempt from tax</td>
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<td>Education expenditure per pupil (1962)</td>
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<td>Infant mortality per 1,000 births</td>
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<td>200+</td>
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<td>Percentage of population (balance: Asian and mixed)</td>
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<td>Percentage of land reserved</td>
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<td>Persons in registered trade unions</td>
<td>340,000</td>
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<td>Persons convicted of pass offenses (1962)</td>
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<td>384,000</td>
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