Most likely the last time you formally heard from HRAAA, the Executive Committee was trying to create a broader political mission for the organization to include issues of diversity on campus beyond apartheid and divestment. Nelson Mandela had been released from jail and the ANC had begun formal negotiations with the government of South Africa. Meanwhile issues of race and gender were boiling over on Harvard's campus as elsewhere.

The divestment issue had fueled over a decade of activism, several Overseers election campaigns and the creation of a very large, contributing membership for HRAAA. But that issue died and the next step was not at all clear. Our plan in June, 1991 was to try to raise enough money to hire a permanent salaried director who would be charged with bringing new contributing generations of alums into HRAAA on a continuing basis, recruiting the Board to further define objectives, and linking HRAAA to on-campus and alumni/ae groups which shared these goals.

We recognized that it is possible to have a movement composed of committed individuals who can bring about significant political change with scant financial resources such as the anti-apartheid movement which was strong before HRAAA was actually formed. However, to build a viable long-term network which can survive the waxings and wanings of emotional commitment and the political changes such as those in South Africa and at Harvard, required at least some dependable money.

What we discovered was that the recession and the soul-searching among progressive people in general has led everyone to think carefully about which organizations most need to survive, and which are less clearly important. At the same time, our own core membership of over 2000 seems to quite widely diverge in what it expects of HRAAA. A substantial section is interested entirely in Harvard’s complicity with
South African oppression. A seemingly larger section would like to see a progressive alternative to the Harvard Alumni Association. But very few people want to be HRAAA activists. There might be a large group that would value continued communication from us and the chance to vote for progressive Overseer candidates. But only a salaried director could satisfy these needs.

We cannot raise this salary. We tried and there is now ample evidence that this is not going to work. And this may be entirely appropriate. We are not the most pressing need on the long list of needs people like those who have belonged to HRAAA face.

Therefore, we are writing to many of you who helped to found the anti-apartheid movement at Harvard, to ask for help and advice in these ways. Please take a few moments now to send up your thoughts:

1) We want to send out a very upbeat "Last Hurrah" to everyone on our 2000+ core mailing list reminding them of events in our history, victories, overseers campaigns, etc. and would greatly value text and concrete suggestions for this. We can't overstress this--help us reconstruct the events so as to make everyone see how valuable their contributions of time and energy and money were. Perhaps you can also help us with some up-to-date info about South Africa or Harvard (i.e. Derrick Bell's enforced departure) which could go into the mailing. Also, what do we say in a statement to the Crimson, etc.?

2) How should we use our extremely valuable mailing lists, both our core of 2000 and our electoral campaign list of over 50,000, to best advantage? Which solidly functioning organization or network most closely matches up with the causes to which we have been dedicated? So far we've though of alum groups or networks, or FreeSA the Boston-based anti-apartheid ANC-aligned group with whom we've worked in the past, but we're open on this.

3) We have a small bank account and a computer which can be donated also.

We would like to have a CONFERENCE CALL on SUNDAY DECEMBER 6 from 7:00 - 9:00 pm. Please consider being part of this. If you agree, call 617-868-6100 BY TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24 and leave a message with the PHONE NUMBER WHERE YOU WILL BE the evening of December 6.
Send all WRITTEN COMMENTS to HRAAA, Box 2000, Cambridge, MA 02238 or FAX to Jan Handke 617-496-5321 by TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24. This is the only way we can circulate them in time for people involved in the conference call to read them. Please send specific suggestions of organizations you recommend receive a copy of the mailing list/s and/or our other resources so that we can make a decision on this during the conference call.

We need and welcome your ideas, whatever you're thinking about HRAAA. Please send them in the enclosed envelop. We look forward to hearing from you.