September 1984

Dear Friend,

Earlier this year, before joining the staff of ACOA, I spent four weeks as a journalist in South Africa. In the face of mounting international propaganda about "change" I went to see for myself what apartheid looks like today.

Perhaps the most stark evidence that life has deteriorated for most South Africans is provided by the impact of the policy of removal. In the past twenty years three and a half million black people have been uprooted from their homes and sent to impoverished bantustans, incapable of sustaining life. Today, nearly two million more live under threat of removal.

I visited Driefontein, a village where this threat is a daily reality. Driefontein is a "black spot," where Africans own land in an area designated for "whites only." The government wants them out.

It is a community under siege. Pensions for the old are refused, applications to work in the cities are denied, and the villagers are faced with constant harassment and assault by police and white farmers. People are hungry and angry and worried. But they stand fast and refuse to move.

I talked to Beauty Mkhize who saw her husband, Saul, leader of resistance in the community, shot dead by a white policeman on Easter Sunday last year, just before he was to address a meeting. She recalled his words to his people shortly prior to his death. "He said he knows there are people hunting to kill him" she told me, and then, quoting him, "But I will be happy if I am laid to rest next to the graves of my grandmother and grandfather, because I am fighting for the place where I was born. But even if they kill me I know that right around the world I have sisters and brothers who will help us."

Part of my work with ACOA will be to help alert Americans to this terrible situation. This fall we will start a major effort on the removals issue: sending out speakers, working to alert church, union, civil rights and other community leaders, and producing resources that will be used to build the campaign. We are confident that when Americans learn about these removals there will be an outcry that can help stay the hand of the South African government.

Won't you help us realize Saul Mkhize's vision of help from sisters and brothers around the world? Your generous contributions will make this vital work possible.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Urdang
Research Director
“When are they going to come and force us to move? I want to know the exact date, because on that day they can come and shoot me. And bury me here beside Saul without a coffin. Because I am not moving. I am not leaving Saul.”

—Beauty Mkhize