June 9, 1965

Dear Friend:

I am writing to you to express appreciation for your interest and help in the deportation case of the five South Africans who originally came as part of the cast of Sponono. As you may have read in the press, the government withdrew its deportation order on May 27. It was with mixed feelings that both the American Committee on Africa and the Workers Defense League greeted this action. On the one hand, the five South Africans were greatly relieved that they no longer have to live with the threat of deportation hanging over them - at least for the time being. But on the other hand, we did not get the decision we hoped for and which we feel is so important - that opponents of apartheid can find political asylum in the US.

I am enclosing a memorandum by Rowland Watts, who has been the attorney in charge of the case, which makes a brief analysis of the decision.

There is no doubt that the many letters and telegrams which were sent to the Secretary of State and the Attorney General did some good. We feel that it is possible to get the broader decision we think fully justified and so essential.

In the next few days in our consideration of the government action, we expect to have some thoughts for further action. These we will communicate to you. If in the meantime you have proposals to make, please let me hear from you.

Sincerely,

George M. Houser

GMH/jkb

enc.
MEMORANDUM ON THE DISCONTINUANCE OF THE DEPORTATION PROCEEDINGS AGAINST THE FIVE SOUTH AFRICAN ENTERTAINERS IN THE UNITED STATES

Prepared by Rowland Watts, President, Workers Defense League

The Immigration and Naturalization Service of the Department of Justice, on May 27, 1965, withdrew its order "to show cause why Paul M. Makgoba, Herbert M. Manana, Ernest T. Molhomi, Obed M. Dira, and Victor Shange should not be deported from the United States." Thus, the government avoided for the time being the politically dangerous decision of whether or not the Republic of South Africa's policy and practice of apartheid amount to "physical persecution" of Africans within the meaning of the American immigration law.

The determination of the State and Justice Department officials to avoid this basic decision was one of political expediency. It was a disservice to the men. Voluminous evidence was introduced in the four days of hearings on the cruel reality of life under apartheid. These men and the American people were entitled to a decision on its merits.

Its effect is to leave the men in legal limbo. When Hungarian, Chinese, and Cuban refugees from Communism were permitted to enter the United States on an emergency basis, they were given the legal status of "parole". (The Hungarians who fled after the 1956 uprising were later able to adjust their status to permanent residence under a special 1958 law.) The South Africans have no status whatsoever. Because they have no status, the deportation proceedings can be reinstituted at any time. Many lines of possible employment are closed to them. They cannot leave the country even temporarily with any hope of return. There is no way in which they can bring their wives and children to join them here.
The relief for them, under existing law, is somehow to remain in the United States in this "no status" situation for ten years and then seek suspension of deportation. The only other possibility is for a private bill to be passed by the Congress, according to them permanent residence in the United States.

If one of the bills now pending in Congress to abolish the "national quota" immigration law is passed, it is hoped that these men may be able to obtain relief under it. This is by no means certain, however. The proposed acts are unduly restrictive of the number of immigrants that can enter each year. In addition, because of proposed priorities for specialists, other occupational groups, and aliens who have relatives in the United States, a new and very long waiting list will be created for those, like these men, who have no special indispensible technical talents, and have no prior ties in the United States. They are just very good dramatic entertainers who are seeking refuge here from a life of South African degradation.

June 3, 1965
New York, N. Y.