

UNITY IN ACTION

Towards a Program to End Cultural Collaboration With the Apartheid Regime in South Africa

Post Office Box 17627
Los Angeles, CA 90057

October 10, 1983

The purpose of tonight's forum, sponsored by the Media Forum and according to the press conference held by Brock Peters, is to disseminate facts and information on indigenous South Africans under economic exploitation and fascist oppression.

Unity in Action--a coalition of organizations formed to give political and, whenever possible, monetary support to African Freedom Fighters such as the African National Congress (A.N.C.) and the South-West Africa People's Organization (S.W.A.P.O.) welcomes with open arms those artists and athletes who also are expressing their concern. The struggle against colonialism and its apartheid form of oppression is gaining momentum day by day--victory is inevitable.

While the brunt of the struggle is, of course, shouldered by the liberation movements themselves, practically every Frontline state which is likewise engaged in the struggle has become a target for South African reprisals and destabilization. The work of support for the liberation movements in Southern Africa becomes all the more crucial as the multi-national interests and the government that represents them come under attack. Your involvement in this work, through the boycott and hopefully through other organized action, becomes part of local, national and international efforts to bring an end to apartheid.

We will not allow attempts by the Reagan administration and other champions of "anti-communism" to obscure the legitimate and anti-colonial struggles of the A.N.C. and S.W.A.P.O. as manifestations of East-West conflict. We are fully aware that the coziness between Reagan and Botha is not new, since ties between South Africa and the U.S. date back to 1782; and the increased level of military and economic cooperation between Washington, Tel Aviv and Pretoria has ominous implications for Freedom Fighters everywhere in the world.

We have a special duty, given our strategic location within the apex of imperialism, to develop effective political opposition to the U.S. government and multinational corporations which support and/or invest in Southern Africa. The purpose of a forum such as this one should be not only to discuss the problem, but also to determine an effective course of action on the larger issues. Dr. Nkrumah once admonished the onlookers and the activists that we must "think as men of action, and act as men of thought". Thus, once one becomes aware of the social problem, one incurs

an obligation to act.

"It should be fairly evident by now to even the casual observer, that boycotts and demonstrations have been the key to at least getting an offending artist's attention in order to further educate him or her. Since this is obviously the case, it stands to reason that any sincere and genuine effort to stop artists from going to South Africa must contain some punitive measure to make the exorbitant sums being offered seem less attractive when compared with the embarrassing protest. That is, unless a dichotomy is to be created in this movement where some forces are left to confrontations in the streets while others, amidst much fanfare, are to be seen above the fray, cavorting with celebrities in the suites. A class stratification is the least contribution that the protest movement needs at this time".

All journalists, film-makers, broadcasters, entertainers and athletes--media people--have a special role to play. It is not just a coincidence that Hollywood has selected the comedian Richard Pryor to "star" as our cherished leader Malcolm X, in an attempt to degrade and commercialize this uncompromising martyr, and Pryor himself had the audacity to accept. Conversely, Lou Gossett is being cast in the role of Anwar Sadat in a vain effort to sell the policies of a man who betrayed Arab and African people vis a vis Israel. Similarly, while progressive heads of state and liberation movements boycotted Sadat's funeral, Stevie Wonder attended--to represent whom? Certainly, Muhammad Ali represented the interests of the U.S. government when he urged African nations to join the U.S.-initiated boycott of the 1980 Olympics. These are but a few examples of artists and athletes taking political positions contrary to the interests of African people on the continent and in Diaspora. On the other hand, in the matter of the boycott, we have in our collective efforts obtained either letters of apology or promises not to return to South Africa from artists including George Benson, Betty Wright and James Moody.

We all are aware of how greatly images and trends depicted on television influence public opinion. This is especially true for Black people in media because, for better or for worse, the media has turned our leaders into celebrities and celebrities into leaders. What is said and done by selected Black artists and athletes is always prime-time news. But leadership is not just another "starring role" or "starting position". Rather, it is an awesome responsibility. And, while it is commendable to publicize the boycott, at the same time celebrities who lead should take the opportunity to fully expose apartheid, including those who--even in our own midst--collaborate with the South African regime. For example, it is ironic that while fascist South Africa has been barred from the Olympics since 1970, Tom Bradley has seen fit to graciously welcome its consulate to L.A.--the site of the 1984 Olympic games. The sponsors of this forum have declined to publicly denounce this act, which so clearly undermines the boycott and all other anti-apartheid efforts.

On camera and on stage celebrities who are sincerely dedicated to the

just struggle in South Africa must encourage decisive and continuous action by fans and colleagues. They must recognize and encourage them to join the work that takes place behind the scenes and out of the lime-light. Support for liberation movements is no media event... "The Revolution will not be televised."

Unity in Action appealed to the forum sponsors to inform the audience of several on-going projects which are hastening the defeat of apartheid to which serious and committed persons might lend their energies. The request was refused. Therefore, we have prepared the enclosed literature to help you analyze and understand the larger issues which spawned the boycott. We would also like you to know the work of those organizations in Africa, as well as in the U.S. which actively serve the struggle. Most importantly, we would like you to know what you can do to enlarge your support for the cause of freedom in South Africa and elsewhere on the continent.

Not to act is to act. Do not end up supporting fascist policies in Southern Africa by default--study the material in this packet, then act on it and encourage others to do the same.

Along with Southern Africa, we would want you to be conscious of and committed to the struggle of Congolese patriots against the U.S. and Israeli-supported Mobutu dictatorship. This critically significant confrontation is between the Congolese National Liberation Front (F.L.N.C.) and virulent neocolonialism. A change in the color of the master's skin does not necessarily change the essence of the state. Understanding and opposing neocolonialism is also our responsibility.

The overall objective of the Unity in Action Coalition is to develop political and material assistance to African struggles for liberation and self-determination from a mass-based anti-imperialist perspective; our concern is primarily, but not exclusively, African people's struggles.

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IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IN UNITY IN ACTION PROJECTS, PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO: UNITY IN ACTION COALITION, P.O. BOX 17627, L.A., CA 90057

Name _____

Address _____
(Number) (Street) (City) (Zip)

Telephone _____

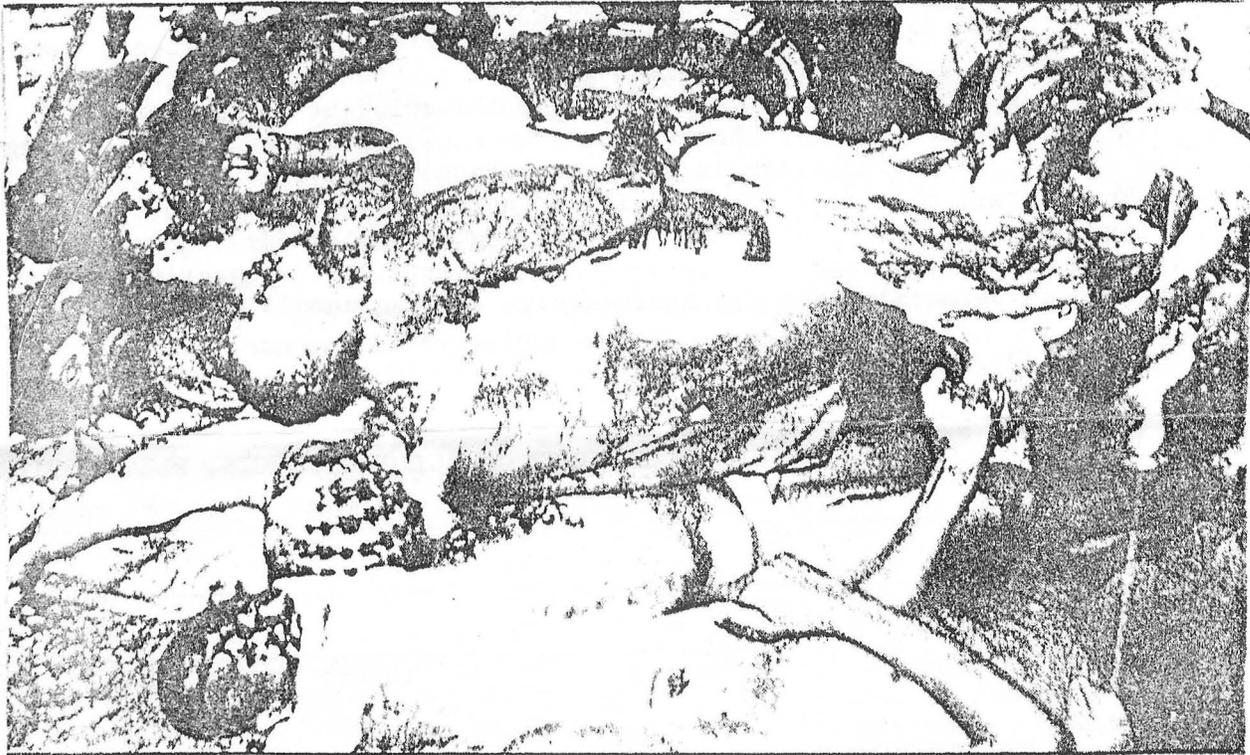
I can contribute the following:

Please check - Time Money Other
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Building public awareness and support for the A.N.C. and S.W.A.P.O. in Southern Africa is a task high on the agenda of Unity in Action. Regularly-scheduled pickets against the South African Consulate and assistance with the divestment campaign continue to require large expenditures of our time and energy, as well. While support to the F.L.N.C. in Congo (Zaire) and to Grenada continue as major areas of concentration, active solidarity with resistance movements in the Middle East and Central America are also our concerns.

The organizations that form the Coalition are Southern Africa Task Force, Southern Africa Support Committee, Patrice Lumumba Coalition, Southern Africa Resource Project, November 29th Coalition and the Congo Support Committee.

Through the collective vigilance and hard work of those in the U.S. and other nations in this hemisphere who have seriously undertaken the cultural boycott, we have reduced the flow of U.S. artists to South Africa from roughly 50 in 1981, to about 22 in 1982, to only 8 so far this year. Still, much work remains to be done. We invite you to join our effort.



GRUESOME SIGHT: Above are some of the bodies of the 42 South African refugees including children and women--some of the women pregnant--killed by South African soldiers in a raid in Maseru, Lesotho, Dec. 9.