

UNITY IN ACTION

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

20 ~~October~~ 1984
November

P.O. BOX 77515

LOS ANGELES, CA.

90007

Bishop Desmond Tutu
General Theological Seminary
175 Ninth Avenue
New York, New York 10010

Dear Bishop Tutu,

A very serious problem has developed here stemming from the invitation to you from the NAACP to receive its "Stevie Wonder Key of Life" award on December 4. While on the surface this may seem like an honor, in reality it is an act of hypocrisy which makes a mockery of all that you represent, for the NAACP is considering, for the same program, awarding artists who have performed repeatedly in South Africa in defiance of the cultural boycott. We feel it is our responsibility as an organization deeply committed to the liberation of Black South Africans to bring to your attention this contradiction.

On several occasions the NAACP has capitulated to apartheid. In 1972 and again in 1975 NAACP executive director Roy Wilkins went to South Africa, of course as an "honorary white" guest of the government. In press conferences following these trips he expressed the official view, reassuring the world that the solution to the problems faced by Black South Africans would come through "better employment", "better pay", and integration with Afrikaners. He apparently saw no need to bring down the racist Boer regime.

Unfortunately, recent actions by the organization tend to be consistent with those of the last decade. An examination of the Los Angeles NAACP's image award participants in the past two years alone reveals a startling line-up of individuals who have consciously violated United Nations and Organization of African Unity sanctions against cultural collaboration with South Africa. The following is a partial list of those persons.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1983 - 1. Tom Bradley, member of honorary committee | -welcomed South African Counsel General with keys to city of Los Angeles |
| 2. Ray Charles, winner | -performs in South Africa regularly |
| 3. Aretha Franklin, nominee | -performed in South Africa |
| 4. Stephanie Mills, nominee | -performed in South Africa (apologized in 1984) |
| 5. Sandra Crouch, nominee | -performed in South Africa |
| 1984 - 6. Tina Turner, nominee | -performed in South Africa |
| 7. Danniebelle Hall, nominee | -performed in South Africa |

While the NAACP claims to back the boycott, it has not conditioned the image award nominations beforehand with a requirement that entertainers have honored the boycott, nor has it joined the effort to secure apologies from the offenders. When Unity in Action asked at least that the 1984 nominations of boycott violaters be withdrawn, the NAACP refused. We have noted also that tickets for this event are priced at \$25, \$75, and \$200, obviously yielding a high margin of profit. There is no reason to expect that any of the proceeds are designated to aid the liberation struggle in South Africa, however.

It is a principal duty of Unity in Action to accelerate the collapse of the oppressive apartheid system by exposing and boycotting artists, without exception, who have failed to honor international sanctions and who go on to defend their wrongdoing. We cannot imagine you, who have devoted your life to the cause of freedom, sharing the same platform with those who have shown themselves to be uncaring and greedy opportunists.

We do not believe the NAACP is sincere in naming you to receive the award. The facts lead us to conclude that their interest and motivation are superficial, momentary and selfish, and that they have capitalized upon your notability, given the publicity in connection with your Nobel Peace Prize.

For the reasons stated in this letter, we appeal to you as a man of principle and an internationally respected symbol of opposition to the fascism and genocide that are experienced every second by our people in South Africa, not to compromise with those who are undermining the struggle. We respectfully request that you consider the following actions.

1. You could bring your influence to bear in order to obtain agreements from the two current NAACP nominees named above, which conform to standing criteria. Normally, offending artists are removed from international boycott lists as soon as a signed statement in press release form admitting past error, denouncing apartheid, and pledging not to return to South Africa until there is Black majority rule, has been secured. A highly desirable, though optional, commitment is that the artist perform educational work designed to enlighten the public and discourage colleagues from such collaboration in the future. These criteria are the outgrowth of a series of international conferences which have included representatives of both the U.N. Center and Special Committee Against Apartheid, as well as activist organizations. Perhaps you can help the NAACP to see the disservice it performs when it salutes persons who, as tools of apartheid, present a dubious image of indifference and defiance.
2. Should the above effort be unsuccessful, we ask that you decline to accept the award.
3. If the artists refuse to acknowledge their error in the manner set forth above, we shall proceed with our standard response of organizing a demonstration and picket line in front of the Dorothy Chandler Pavillion on December 4, commencing at 5:00 p.m. We trust that you would not cross the picket line, and we invite you to join us.

Recognizing how demanding your work must be, we regret that this issue has come up. However, we believe we would have been less than responsible had we not called it to your attention. Please let us know soon of your determination. I can be contacted at (213) 291-8459 should you wish to discuss this development.

Toward the Liberation of South Africa,

Ron Wilkins, Chairman
Cultural Boycott Task Force

cc: Mr. E.S. Reddy, U.N. Undersecretary General, U.N. Center Against Apartheid
Mr. David Ndaba, African National Congress
Mr. Stevie Wonder
Mr. Benjamin Hooks, Executive Director, NAACP
Mr. Willis Edwards, President, Beverly Hills-Hollywood Branch, NAACP
Hon. Maxine Waters, Assemblywoman, 48th District
Councilman Robert Farrell, Transafrica

Encl