

V. CULTURAL, ACADEMIC AND SCIENTIFIC COLLABORATION

A. Cultural boycott

The South African regime sees expanding international cultural contacts as one way to break down white isolation and undermine black morale. Millions of dollars have been channeled into bringing well-known United States and other foreign entertainers to perform in South Africa.

International support for a cultural boycott was greatly stimulated in 1965 when South Africa enacted strict regulations prohibiting multi-racial performances and audiences.¹⁰² That same year the American Committee on Africa launched the “We Say No To Apartheid” campaign which urged United States artists, writers, and entertainers to pledge not to perform in South Africa or let their works be distributed there.¹⁰³

The campaign in the United States was further stimulated by the 1968 passage of a United Nations General Assembly resolution - resolution 2396 - calling on the world community to boycott cultural, educational and sports contacts for as long as South Africa continued to practice apartheid.¹⁰⁴

The cultural boycott has the support of South African liberation forces headquartered outside the country, as well as of black political groups inside South Africa.¹⁰⁵ In 1980 and 1981, the Azania People’s Organization (AZAPO) and the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) organized successful boycotts of tours of some black American entertainers. Such actions undercut the argument advanced by apartheid apologists that the boycott only hurt black South Africans. It was clear that black South Africans would rather live a little longer without American music if such isolation might help shorten apartheid’s duration. In 1981 AZAPO, with the support of several other black organizations and leaders, issued a call for a world-wide boycott of artists who had performed in South Africa.

¹⁰² “Register of entertainers, actors and others who have performed in apartheid South Africa,” *Notes and Documents*, 20/83, United Nations Centre against Apartheid, October 1983, p.2.

¹⁰³ George Houser, “The International Impact of the South African Struggle for Liberation,” *Notes and Documents*, 2/82, United Nations Centre against Apartheid, January 1982, p.20.

¹⁰⁴ Conference in Solidarity with the Liberation Struggle of the People of Southern Africa, 9-11 October 1981, Working Papers: Michael Beaubien, *Boycotting Cultural and Entertainment Events: Achievements, Problems and Recommendations*, p.1.

¹⁰⁵ United Nations Centre against Apartheid, *Notes and Documents*, 20/83, *op. cit.*, p.4

Many individual artists abided by the boycott in the 1960s and 1970s, some choosing instead to perform at pro-liberation events. However, cultural contacts continued between apartheid and the United States.

The brutal nature of apartheid was again exposed in the repression that followed the Soweto uprising of 16 June 1976. As even South Africa's allies voiced criticism of the system, calling for changes to improve apartheid's image, South African whites were shaken by the internal events and the threat of greater isolation, while black South Africans drew strength from their unity and ties with supporters throughout the world.

The travesty of an "independent" Bophuthatswana in late 1977 provided South African promoters with a convenient new angle. They told foreign entertainers they wanted to book them for a newly independent African country when they signed them on for Sun City, the \$42 million sports and entertainment resort located in the puppet bantustan.

Two South African theatrical productions were brought to the United States to propagandize for apartheid, "*Ipi Tombe*" in 1976 and "*Umbatha*" in 1978. The effort backfired, however, as New York anti-apartheid activists held nightly picket lines in front of the theaters, creating bad publicity and exposing the purpose of the shows. Both shows closed earlier than their producers had expected.¹⁰⁶

The most intense efforts made to break the boycott came in the 1980s. Fees offered to entice artists to go to South Africa were enormous. Frank Sinatra received \$1.79 million for nine performances in Sun City in 1981. (Showing contempt for the reasons for the boycott, Sinatra returned for another engagement in 1983). But other performers stood their ground and refused to go along with apartheid. Black rhythm and blues singer Roberta Flack turned down a reported \$2.5 million, rather than break the boycott.¹⁰⁷

United States activists sought ways to enforce the boycott. The structure of the entertainment industry presented certain kinds of problems that at first were hard to overcome. Its decentralized character meant that often it was not known that an artist had signed a contract to go to South Africa until he or she had returned. It was hard to carry out an education campaign to make sure no one went out of ignorance. It was very difficult to contact agents and entertainers, though some success came through this direct approach.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.18.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.5-7.

¹⁰⁸ Mike Fleshman, "Building the Cultural Boycott," *Southern Africa*, New York, January-February 1983, pp.3-4.

Activists began to organize picket lines at performances of boycott violators in 1982. The National Black United Front established the Coalition to End Cultural Collaboration with South Africa - along with the United In Action network of the Patrice Lumumba Coalition, and African Jazz Artists Society and Studios (MASS) – and it organized picket lines in several cities.¹⁰⁹ The picket lines put pressure on the artists and carried the message that their United States earnings might be jeopardized by the tainted money they were accepting from South Africa. Media coverage helped in educating people about the issue. Black artists and audiences were particularly responsive to the approach because of traditional bonds with Africa.

In September 1983, the cultural boycott work in the United States was put on a national footing by the formation of Artists and Athletes against Apartheid (AAAA), an organization of prominent members of the entertainment and sports industries committed to explaining the boycott and apartheid to their colleagues and fans.¹¹⁰ AAAA is co-chaired by Harry Belafonte and Arthur Ashe, with the Washington DC-based lobbying group TransAfrica helping co-ordinate the work. Some 30 national and international groups support it. AAAA has done large direct mailings to its constituencies, held symposia aimed at the same, and promoted the boycott and an understanding of apartheid on a series of televised public service announcements.¹¹¹

The United Nations Centre against Apartheid issued the first authoritative “Register of entertainers, actors, and others who have performed in apartheid South Africa” in October 1983. Over 80 United States entertainment figures were included. The list is issued to help those wishing to bring pressure on violators and to give credit to those who have taken a principled stand despite large monetary inducements to do otherwise.¹¹²

All these activities appear to have had an impact. While some thirty major entertainers a year went from the United States to South Africa in 1981 and in 1982, many fewer were willing to go in 1983 and 1984. TransAfrica reported that the Bophuthatswana entertainment manager was complaining that there was much resistance to bookings there by United States managers and artists.¹¹³

B. Academic and Scientific Collaboration

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.3.

¹¹⁰ Artists and Athletes against Apartheid promotional literature, September 1983.

¹¹¹ Interview with TransAfrica, 17 May 1983.

¹¹² United Nations Centre against Apartheid, *Notes and Documents*, 20/83.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

Academic exchanges between the United States and South Africa occur on many levels. Some contacts are organized at the government level, many are between educational institutions or academic societies. The United States Government describes its programme as: (1) being based on humanitarian considerations where programmes relate to refugees; (2) providing benefits for academics and professionals; (3) providing educational opportunities which South Africa cannot or will not provide for its black students; and (b) providing benefits from exposure to the United States economic, political, and cultural setting. As discussed in Chapter IX below, a further consideration motivating some programmes appears to be exchanges with South Africans who are, or could be in the future, in key economic and governmental roles.

Since the 1960s, the United States Government has provided opportunities for black South Africans to attend United States educational institutions. Until recently, most came under the auspices of programmes for refugees from apartheid, such as the Southern Africa Scholarship Programme (SASP), a programme administered by the African-American Institute. (See Chapter IX). A small number of South Africans in South Africa (both black and white) qualified for the Fulbright scholars programme; others came to the United States through Ford Foundation's Black Faculty Fellowship Programme.¹¹⁴ As described in Chapter IX, new programmes aimed at providing a United States education for black South Africans have turned away from refugees toward students coming from inside South Africa.

About forty-five South Africans are in the United States under the Fulbright programme. About 80 per cent are black South Africans. They come from all academic disciplines except for liberal arts, and come for graduate study. They are affiliated with a university which provides them with the necessary support. The selection process involves submitting a research proposal.¹¹⁵

The Council for International Exchange of Scholars has an African Senior Scholars Programme which brings participants from countries in Africa with friendly relations with the United States, including South Africa. The scholars do research at United States institutions for a four-month period.¹¹⁶

The United States Government's International Visitor Programme brings black and white South African professionals to the United States for 30-day "exposure" trips. These are in a wide range of professional areas, and include tours of university and research centres for multi-racial teams or individuals. The

¹¹⁴ David Smock, "South African Education Programme: Scope and Status," *Program*, Winter 1981, p.4.

¹¹⁵ USIA, conversation with Michael O'Brian, 17 May 1984.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

IVP for South Africa is the largest for any country on the continent, equalling the total number from the rest of Africa.¹¹⁷

There are programmes enabling American scholars to travel to South Africa, but they are rather small. There are one or two United States students a year going on Fulbright scholarships, but no professors are there at the moment on teaching or research grants under the programme. The United States Information Agency (USIA) sends one or two “American Cultural Specialists” a year, academics from any discipline who spend from two to six weeks in a pre-arranged academic programme.¹¹⁸

The USIA also administers the American Participants Programme which sends people from the United States Government, media and academia to South Africa for 3 or 14-day speaking tours bringing them into contact with South Africans in their field. They speak to both academic and non-academic audiences.¹¹⁹

It is difficult to discover the full scope of United States-South African academic exchanges, because so much is carried out on a private basis between academic institutions. A cursory survey of the South African press gives an idea of how varied are the institutions, however.¹²⁰ Over the 1980-1983 period, professors from the following schools went to South Africa: Yale University (History), Cornell University (Engineering), New York Medical College, SUNY (African Studies), Columbia University Business School, University of Arkansas (Political Science), Harvard University Business School, University of Wisconsin, (African Languages and Literature), University of California, and the Citadel (Political Science). Their itineraries took the professors into a wide range of South African academic settings - University of Stellenbosch, University of Witwatersrand, the Heart Foundation of South Africa, South African Institute of International Affairs, University of South Africa and its Business School, University of Cape Town and its Business School, University of the Western Cape, and the University of Pretoria’s Institute of Strategic Studies.¹²¹ The latter contact did not actually take place because the Citadel professor got sick. The Citadel is a military academy which provides more officers to the United States military than the official service academies.

Scientific contacts are also carried out at the official levels, as already noted in Chapter III on the arms embargo, and the exchange of scientific and technical

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Unpublished survey, American Committee on Africa, 1980-1983.

¹²¹ *The Citizen*, Johannesburg, 8 October 1981.

information under corporate auspices can, at the moment, only be guessed at as being very extensive.