

## VI. SPORTS CONTACTS

The issue of apartheid in sports was first raised as an international concern in the 1960s, although South Africa had instituted the policy of strict racial separation in sports in the 1950s.<sup>122</sup> The formation in 1959 of the South African Sports Association provided an organizational means to raise the issue of black South Africa's participation at the international level in sports recognized as Olympic sports.<sup>123</sup> Some superficial bending of South African sports policy has occurred in the ensuing years, to the extent that "multi-racial" teams are on occasion fielded for international competition. This veneer belies the reality, which is that sports in South Africa remain more than 99 per cent racially segregated by law.

In the 1960s and 1970s, many international sporting federations which have United States affiliates suspended or excluded South African teams from participation in international competition. These included federations for such sports as boxing, fencing, gymnastics, hockey, ice hockey, soccer, squash, table tennis, wrestling, and weightlifting.<sup>124</sup> Nonetheless, the trend over the last few years has been for increased sports contacts between the United States and South Africa, with the United States becoming one of South Africa's major sports partners. Enforcement of the boycott of apartheid sports has been up to concerned sportspeople and anti-apartheid activists in the United States.

Organizing to block these contacts has provided a fruitful convergence of interests for anti-apartheid and civil rights activists, enabling them to build broad coalitions able to both educate the public, and at times, to block the contacts. The coalition headed by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) which brought out 6,000 protesters to oppose South Africa's participation in the 1978 Davis Cup tennis match in Nashville, Tennessee, is an early example.<sup>125</sup> The work done around the 1981 tour of the Springbok rugby team is another. In the Springbok case, the matches scheduled for Chicago and New York City were cancelled solely due to pressure which activists brought to bear through the media, organizing in the communities, and influencing political figures. The only public match was held in Albany, New York, and it was

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<sup>122</sup> 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.14.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21; Conference in Solidarity with the Liberation Struggles of the People of Southern Africa, 9-11 October 1981, Working Papers: Richard Lapchick, *The Struggle to Isolate South African Sports*, p.B2.

<sup>125</sup> Lapchick, *op. cit.* p. A1.

picketed by 2,500 protestors who vastly outnumbered those who came to see the match.<sup>126</sup>

The most recent such coalition was the 1983 Soweto Solidarity Coalition in New York City. It organized opposition to the World Boxing Association's junior-middleweight match which had originally been scheduled for Sun City, but ultimately was held at Madison Square Garden on the anniversary of the 16 June 1976 Soweto Uprising. The choice of this day for an apartheid-related sports extravaganza was viewed as an insult to the memory of the hundreds of young black men and women shot down in the streets of Soweto by the South African police. Several thousand people protested against apartheid in sports in one of the largest anti-apartheid demonstrations in the United States for many years.

South Africa is pouring enormous sums of money into the campaign to attract prominent United States sports figures. The United Nations Centre against Apartheid maintains a register of sports figures (athletes, coaches, promoters) who are sports mercenaries willing to lend legitimacy to apartheid for money. This register is a helpful tool for boycott organizers. Sports figures like John McEnroe should be commended for resisting the tempting financial offers that the South Africa's apartheid makes to them.<sup>127</sup> Working through Artists and Athletes against Apartheid (AAAA), some sports figures are trying to educate their colleagues and their fans about the existence and the reasons for the boycott.<sup>128</sup> ACCESS, the American Coordinating Committee for Equality in Sport and Society, a coalition of many groups, also continues to monitor sports contacts between the United States and South Africa in order to mobilize for actions against them.

Although South Africa was formally excluded from the Olympic Movement in 1970,<sup>129</sup> the inclusion of individual South African athletes and teams who had previously competed with apartheid teams has caused controversy, leading some countries to boycott the Olympic Games. Such action was taken by many African countries in 1976.<sup>130</sup> The 1984 Olympic Games, to be held in Los Angeles, are likely to provide a key testing arena for South African efforts to re-enter international sport. This year there are South African athletes who plan to compete from countries of which they are new citizens, in violation of the International Olympic Committee's own requirement of three years minimum citizenship before competing as part of an adopted country's Olympic

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. A2.

<sup>127</sup> 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.32.

<sup>128</sup> Artists and Athletes against Apartheid promotional literature, September 1983.

<sup>129</sup> Houser, *op. cit.* p.32.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

contingent.<sup>131</sup> There are also many indications that South Africa intends to lobby hard for re-inclusion by 1988.

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<sup>131</sup> *Rand Daily Mail*, Johannesburg, 11 April 1984.