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# South to Freedom? Anti-Apartheid Activism and Politics in Atlanta, 1976-1990

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SOUTH TO FREEDOM? ANTI-APARTHEID ACTIVISM AND POLITICS IN ATLANTA,  
1976-1990

by

LAUREN ELIZABETH MORAN

Under the Direction of Dr. Charles G. Steffen

ABSTRACT

This study examines Atlanta's role in the international anti-apartheid movement during the 1980s. As the movement to end apartheid in South Africa intensified throughout the decade, Atlanta's universities, government officials, and corporations came under pressure to respond to the mounting crisis. While the anti-apartheid movement was constructed on a global scale, in any given locality a transnational movement must intersect with a variety of unique political, social and economic forces. In Atlanta, grassroots activists worked through the Southern Regional Office of the American Friends Service Committee as well as through the Georgia Coalition for Divestment in Southern Africa to hold institutions accountable for their ties to South Africa. However, at the same time these efforts collided with a local political regime in which African American politicians eagerly partnered with corporate interests, resulting in anti-apartheid activism in Atlanta that was often less confrontational or radical than that found in other U.S.

cities. Examining this moment in Atlanta's history sheds light on the way that diverse groups jockeyed to shape metro-Atlanta's political identity on both a local and a global scale. Further, examining the overlap, cooperation, and competition between groups with varying organizational scales and focuses contributes to the broader literature on social movements. This dissertation emphasizes the need for scholars of movement building to consider the influence of local dynamics when analyzing transnational social movements.

**INDEX WORDS:** Atlanta, Anti-apartheid, Social movements, South Africa, Coca-Cola, Local politics, American Friends Service Committee, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Thandi Gcabashe, Andrew Young

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2014

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## INTRODUCTION

My dissertation argues that global social movements cannot be fully understood without giving proper attention to the unique political, social and economic forces that influence movement building on a local scale. The anti-apartheid movement of the 1980s took on different characteristics in Atlanta than it did in London, New York, or Washington D.C. A narrative of anti-apartheid struggle in Atlanta would be incomplete without taking into account the historical context in which this struggle emerged. This introduction provides a brief history of Atlanta, giving particular attention to the way that race and class have shaped the city's political climate. The story of anti-apartheid activism in Atlanta during the 1980s must also be placed in the context of the long history of this transnational social movement. Thus, I provide a brief history of the anti-apartheid movement with a focus on events occurring within the United States.

Floyd Hunter and Clarence Stone have written the pivotal books on Atlanta's city government. In his ground-breaking 1953 work, *Community Power Structure: A Study of Decision Makers*, Floyd Hunter examined the critical - yet informal - linkages between Atlanta's elected officials and its business leaders during the 1940s and early 1950s. This business elite was a close knit group both politically and socially and made important decisions through informal negotiations. William Hartsfield was Mayor from 1942 to 1962 and consistently consulted local business leaders before making policy decisions. In *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta, 1946-1988*, Stone picks up the story where Hunter left off. By Hartsfield's 1949 reelection campaign, the number of black voters had climbed to 27 percent of the electorate, as a result of the supreme court striking down the state's all-white primary three years earlier. This campaign marked the first time that mayoral candidates actively sought black votes. Stone argues that beginning with

the 1949 election, white business leaders allied with middle-class African Americans in a biracial coalition. He uses the word “regime” to refer to the type of informal collaborations that make a city governable. In Atlanta, this regime would survive several transitions to remain the dominant political force into the 1990s.<sup>1</sup>

In 1949 African Americans in Atlanta formed the Negro Voters’ League, an organization that would interview and endorse white candidates. In a trend that frightened whites, the city’s African Americans voted as a block, in an attempt to boost candidates that they felt would best represent their interests. The main impact of black votes in the 1950s and 1960s was to prevent openly racist candidates (like Lester Maddox) from winning. As in 1949, Hartsfield won reelection again in 1953 and 1957 with the support of the city’s African Americans. Hartsfield considered his black allies the price of doing business, and was not one to advocate significant changes in the racial status quo. The trend continued with Ivan Allen’s election in 1961. Allen was only slightly more enlightened than Hartsfield on matters of race, but he won the election by emphasizing the need for moderation, in contrast to the race baiting of his opponent whose rhetoric alienated enough moderate whites to ensure his victory. At the same time, city government embarked on an activist politics that prioritized redevelopment of the central business district. Since then, the Atlanta regime has valued corporate development with almost no restrictions, as well as opportunities for minority-owned businesses. These values indicate the priorities of both partners of the governing regime. To a significant extent the white business elites and their new political allies from the African American middle class, continued to make

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<sup>1</sup> Clarence Stone, *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta, 1946-1988* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989) 27; Floyd Hunter, *Community Power Structure: A Study of Decision Makers* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969); Larry Keating, *Atlanta: Race, Class and Urban Expansion* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001) 73, 199; Ronald Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth Century Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 26.

decisions in the fashion described by Hunter: through backroom meetings and confidential deals.<sup>2</sup>

By 1970, blacks made up a majority of the city's residents. The mayoral election of 1973 demonstrated the effects of the new racial demography: Maynard Jackson was elected as the city's first black mayor. His election marked the second successive mayoral election in which black voters and white business leaders supported opposing candidates. Jackson was elected by African American voters, middle class white neighborhood activists and the city's small liberal Jewish population. At the beginning of Jackson's administration it seemed that the governing coalition would not survive. Jackson was a political outsider and unfamiliar with the workings of the Atlanta regime. At first tried to govern without the support of white downtown business interests, relying instead upon the new alliance that had brought him to power.<sup>3</sup>

Jackson entered office committed to an inclusive and pluralistic approach to governing and a desire to incorporate a wider range of groups into the decision making process. These tendencies and goals marked a significant departure from the characteristics of Atlanta's governing regime over the previous several decades. Jackson explained to Atlantans that African Americans were "merely seeking their legal rights to inclusion in Atlanta's politics and economy." His commitment to affirmative action programs and providing city contracts to minority owned firms provided tangible benefits for a segment of Atlanta's African American community.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta*; Clarence Stone, *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta, 1946-1988*.

<sup>3</sup> Keating, *Atlanta: Race, Class and Urban Expansion*, pg 79; Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta*, 49.

<sup>4</sup> Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta*, pg 51, Keating, *Atlanta: Race, Class and Urban Expansion*, 78.

White business leaders resented these changes. Despite their long time alliance with middle class African Americans, Atlanta's business elite still thought of their black allies as junior partners in the coalition. In *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth Century Atlanta*, Ronald Bayor describes white business leaders' reaction to Jackson's first years in office as "between serious concern and panic." Business leaders accused Jackson of being "anti-white," and threatened to leave downtown Atlanta for the rapidly growing northern suburbs. Jackson was accused of mismanaging the city's affairs and was criticized by the *Atlanta Journal* and *The Atlanta Constitution*, the city's mainstream news outlets that consistently championed the agenda of the business community.<sup>5</sup>

Jackson was not as anti-business as he at first appeared, and he made efforts to sooth the business community and sought reconciliation. As Stone argues, "an electoral coalition is not the same as a governing coalition." Jackson soon learned that the electoral alliance of African Americans, middle-class white gentrifiers and liberal Jews which had put him in office was not helping him to run the city. As Larry Keating explains, in *Atlanta: Race, Class and Urban Expansion*, Jackson came to recognize that if he hoped to have success with major economic development initiatives, "he needed the cooperation of business leaders, not only because conflict with them made such projects much more difficult and cost too much politically, but also because the organized effort required for such projects would be much easier and more likely to succeed if he could rely upon the cohesiveness , the expertise, and the resources of the business elite." These capabilities were the very reason for the existence of the governing coalition. By the time Jackson ran for and won reelection in 1977, he had gained a cautious endorsement from a significant segment of the business community. During his second term as mayor, Jackson backed off his reform agenda and began to embrace a partnership with business leaders. The old

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<sup>5</sup> Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta*, 49.

alliance between middle-class African Americans and the downtown white business elite had changed in form now that African Americans were a majority of the city's electorate, but to a great extent the city's governing coalition remained intact.<sup>6</sup>

In 1981, Andrew Young was elected as the city's second black mayor. Although Young came to office without significant support from the downtown elite, he immediately worked to reassure the business community that he had their interests in mind by prioritizing downtown redevelopment. Despite his background in the civil rights movement, Young was a supporter laissez faire capitalism, and as mayor he pursued a business oriented agenda that re-solidified the relationship between the black controlled city hall and the white business elite. During the civil rights movement, as a close associate of Martin Luther King Jr, Young had often worked to negotiate with business interests regarding segregated facilities. Young had come to understand the power that business often had over local affairs and came to believe that business interests could be a force for progressive social change. Although Young was a Democrat, his views on the economy largely mirrored those of the concurrent presidential administration of Ronald Reagan. Thus, he ultimately gained support from many white Republicans in Atlanta.<sup>7</sup>

Unfortunately, the problem with Young's model was that the interests and needs of most working-class black Atlantans' were ignored. During the '70s and '80s the economic status of the city's majority population – poor African Americans – continued to decline. Keating suggests that “class insularity and class bias may have been a part of the reason for this, but Young also believed that the economic development he sought was a partial antidote to black poverty and

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<sup>6</sup> Keating, *Atlanta: Race, Class and Urban Expansion*, pg 81; Stone, *Regime Politics*, xi.

<sup>7</sup> Alton Hornsby Jr., “Andrew Jackson Young: Mayor of Atlanta, 1982-1990, *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol 77, No 3 (Summer 1992) 159-182; Maurice Hobson, *The Dawning of the Black New South: A Geo-Political, Social and Cultural History of Black Atlanta, Georgia, 1966-1996*, Dissertation, University of Illinois, Urbanan-Champaign, 2009; Andrew J. DeRoche, *Andrew Young: Civil Rights Ambassador* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc, 2003); Frederick Allen *Atlanta Rising: The Invention of an International City, 1946-1996* (Longstreet Press: Marietta, 2009).

that the issues of poverty, lower income housing, and social programs were largely national and not local responsibilities.” The economic growth which Young facilitated during his administration did nothing to shrink the income gap between the city’s majority population of impoverished African Americans and the small population of wealthy residents, black or white. Instead inequality worsened. Certainly racial factors continued (and continue) to shape Atlanta’s history, politics and culture. However, as Bayor argues, “After the election of black mayors...the class splits within the black community became sharper and illustrated more clearly the part class factors play in urban development.”<sup>8</sup>

Despite Young’s close relationship with business interests, the urban regime as described by Stone had weakened by the end of the 1980s. While the coalition between black elected officials and white business elites was still the strongest alliance in Atlanta, the metro area had become so sprawling and diffuse that the downtown area held less importance as a business center. Also, as businesses increasingly became active participants in the global economy, executives tended to move frequently, and their engagement in the civic life of the city was less prominent. Finally, as Keating explains, “Another major reason for the diminished power of the governing coalition is the diminished power of Atlanta City government...Fewer resources have led to a lessened role for city government in economic development.”<sup>9</sup>

Despite the inattention of black elected officials to the plight of the urban poor, working class African Americans did work to organize politically and improve their status in society, while the globetrotting mayor attempted to sell Atlanta to the world. Two important works shed light on these local counter-movements. Winston Grady-Willis’ *Challenging U.S. Apartheid: Atlanta and Black Struggles for Human Rights*, analyzes the black freedom struggle, which

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<sup>8</sup> Keating, *Atlanta: Race, Class and Urban Expansion*, 87; Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta*, 256.

<sup>9</sup> Keating, *Atlanta: Race, Class and Urban Expansion*, 193.

formed the backdrop to regime formation. Grady-Willis chooses not to use the term Civil Rights Movement, on the grounds that it elevates acts of Congress, such as the 1964 Civil Rights Act, over the grassroots struggles that sustained the movement. Further, Grady explains that black activists did not think of their struggle in terms as narrow as those suggested by “civil rights.” Grady-Willis also rejects the phrase, “Jim Crow segregation,” as he believes it has a folksy connotation that masks its repressiveness. Grady explains that Atlanta is a perfect place to study the intersection of diverse ideas and approaches to human rights struggle. Because numerous organizations made their headquarters in Atlanta, activists from all over country flocked to the city.<sup>10</sup>

While the narrative of civil rights in the fifties is well known (Rosa Parks, Brown v. Board, etc), Grady-Willis chooses to begin his account of black human rights struggle in Atlanta in 1960. Grady discusses two publications of 1960, “Appeal for Human Rights” and “The Negro in Atlanta, A Second Look.” These works emphasized that the struggle for black equality had a long road ahead, as the city’s African American population faced discrimination in all areas of life. The early 1960s were characterized by the sit-in movements throughout Atlanta. During this time, ideological differences regarding tactics began to emerge, but activists were able to preserve a united front and achieve their limited objective of desegregating lunch counters.<sup>11</sup>

During the mid 1960s activists were influenced by the teachings of Malcolm X who had left the Nation of Islam to lead the Organization of AfroAmerican Unity. Sit-ins continued, and during this time the protests often lost their earlier civility that had been valued by the black clergy and Atlanta’s black elite. Grady Willis also examines the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee’s controversial Atlanta Project. This project is best known for the

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<sup>10</sup> Winston A. Grady-Willis, *Challenging U.S. Apartheid: Atlanta and Black Struggles for Human Rights, 1960-1977* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> Grady-Willis, *Challenging U.S. Apartheid*.



debate over whether whites should no longer have voting rights in the organization. Grady Willis suggests that the reality on the ground involved more than just white voting rights within SNCC, and that the debates were shaped by an ongoing analysis of white skin privilege.<sup>12</sup>

Grady-Willis argues that black activism in Atlanta continued into the 1970s. The focus of the movement during the 1970s centered on improving wages and working conditions for poor blacks. Simultaneously, black women worked to assure that gender issues relevant to their experience moved to the forefront of the agenda. Also during the 1970s the Georgia State chapter of the Black Panthers worked to recruit young Atlantans to their organization which implemented local “survival” programs in several areas of the city.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, Tomiko Brown-Nagin’s *Courage to Dissent: Atlanta and the Long History of the Civil Rights Movement*, provides a unique “bottom-up” legal history of civil rights activism within Atlanta. Brown-Nagin strives to shed light on the ways that social movements respond to courts, the law and lawyers. She focuses on tensions between national and local activists and between African Americans of differing class backgrounds. The latter two-thirds of *Courage to Dissent* covers the same time period as does *Challenging US Apartheid*. While Grady-Willis focuses his coverage of the 1970s on the efforts of the local branches of SNCC and the Black Panthers to promote racial and economic justice, Brown-Nagin turns her attention to legal efforts to enforce *Brown v Board of Education* in Atlanta during the 1970s. Brown-Nagin’s account examines the contrasting interests of poor and middle-class African Americans and the often conflicting goals of national organizations, local black leaders and working-class activists. Although each group acted rationally and had the ultimate goal of improving educational opportunities for black Atlantans, their methods undermined one another, and ultimately the

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<sup>12</sup> Grady-Willis, *Challenging U.S. Apartheid*.

<sup>13</sup> Grady-Willis, *Challenging U.S. Apartheid*.

Atlanta Public Schools serving African Americans on the south-side of the city would continue to decline.

Like *Challenging U.S. Apartheid*, *Courage to Dissent* has much relevance for my dissertation project. Activists in the United States sought to influence the U.S. government to adopt sanctions against the South African apartheid regime. Local and national activists forged connections to transnational networks in their efforts to change US policy. This history lends itself to the sort of bottom-up marriage of legal and social history pioneered in *Courage to Dissent*. In addition, Brown-Nagin closes her final chapter by arguing that “legal and social movements fortify one another, regardless of whether the plaintiffs achieve victory in court.”<sup>14</sup>

In conclusion, the biracial governing coalition in Atlanta is not as strong as it once was. However, this regime maintained its preeminent role in governing Atlanta into the 1990s because of a lack of viable alternatives. Business organizations like Central Atlanta Progress (an advocacy group for the central business district) and the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce continued to wield more power and influence than did neighborhood groups or labor unions, because they had the ability to organize funding for major development projects. Both lower-class African Americans and middle class whites did not find their interests represented in these organizations, as neither group was part of the governing coalition. Some researchers anticipated that changing demographics in Atlanta during the 1990s could alter the character of the governing regime as middle class blacks moved out of Atlanta and middle class whites moved in. An alliance between middle class whites and the remaining majority population – poor African Americans, could have potentially emphasized populist and neighborhood politics. Instead, throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, a modified black regime that could be described as

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<sup>14</sup> Tomiko Brown-Nagin, *Courage to Dissent: Atlanta and the Long History of the Civil Rights Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 7-10, 14.

neoliberal continued to govern and to promote conservative, pro-growth policies while consciously ignoring black poverty.<sup>15</sup>

One of the unique qualities of Atlanta's politics is that civil rights veterans of the 1960s have been incorporated into the local power structure. Andrew Young, Julian Bond, John Lewis, Hosea Williams, and Tyrone Brooks all held elected office during the 1980s. To a significant extent, even civil rights groups like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference under Joseph Lowery could be seen as part of Atlanta's political mainstream. One of the ways that the black urban regime in Atlanta deflected criticism from politically aware, working class African Americans during the 1980s was by giving support to the anti-apartheid movement. The anti-apartheid movement in Atlanta was thus managed in a political away. The fact that the black leadership in Atlanta held political power – in alliance with Atlanta's corporate leaders, particularly those of Coca Cola - meant that the black leadership was constrained in its abilities to lead a militant anti-apartheid movement. The anti-apartheid movement in Atlanta was not severely limited by these characteristics; rather it survived and thrived with tacit support from Atlanta's political regime and dedication from committed activists outside the mainstream.

#### NARRATIVE AND HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE INTERNATIONAL ANTI- APARTHIED MOVEMENT

In 1948 the National Party of South Africa formalized the country's defacto segregation with a series of laws that established apartheid, the world's strictest system of racial segregation. While other countries around the world slowly began to moderate their approach to race relations in the aftermath of World War II, South Africa moved to solidify white political, economic and

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<sup>15</sup> Manley Elliott Banks II, "A Changing Electorate in a Majority Black City: The Emergence of a Neo-Conservative Urban Regime in Contemporary Atlanta," *Journal of Urban Affairs*, V22: 3, 265-278; Keating, *Atlanta: Race, Class and Urban Expansion*, 74-75.

social supremacy. Threatened by anti-colonial movements elsewhere on the African continent, the Nationalist party passed laws that severely oppressed over 80 percent of the population. Under apartheid black South Africans, who made up about seventy percent of South Africa's population, were not considered citizens of South Africa, and thus could not vote. They also could not own land or live in cities without proof of employment. "Petty apartheid" laws affected every imaginable public space, and prohibited marriages between individuals of different racial classifications. Black South Africans were required to carry identification cards at all times as a result of the hated "pass laws." These laws were accompanied by horrifying police brutality, and limited educational and work opportunities for black South Africans, Asians and mixed-race peoples classified as "coloured."<sup>16</sup>

Although protesting against the government could be considered treasonous, and the government ultimately banned many opposition groups, resistance to white minority rule was persistent. This resistance predated the formalization of apartheid. The African National Congress (ANC) established itself under the name South African Native National Congress in 1912 to protest segregation laws under British rule. In its early years, the ANC was quite moderate in its tone and demands, which focused not on ending British rule, but instead on gaining equal treatment under British law for black South Africans. Historian Francis Meli, who has written a complete history of the ANC emphasizes the significance of the organization's founding: "This meant the creation of a loyalty of a new type – a non-tribal loyalty...By forming the ANC, they established African political opinion as an autonomous factor in its own right in South Africa." In 1944 Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and other young members of the ANC, created the ANC Youth League to provide an outlet for a younger generation of frustrated South

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<sup>16</sup> Nancy L Clark and William H Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid* (London: Pearson, 2004); Leonard Thompson, *A History of South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

Africans. They introduced nonviolent civil disobedience and strikes to protest laws such as the Native Land Act of 1913, which reserved almost 90 percent of South Africa's land for the whites who made up less than twenty percent of the population. In the late 1940s, distraught over the formalization of apartheid, the leaders of the ANC Youth League moved to take over the leadership of the ANC and to move the organization towards a more active stance. Under this new, invigorated leadership, the ANC adopted a "Program of Action" in 1949 to use mass action to challenge the implementation of apartheid.<sup>17</sup>

During these years, South Africa's mineral wealth enticed the United States and other western nations to maintain friendly relations with South Africa's ruling party. Not only did the United States import gold, diamonds, and uranium from South Africa, but South Africans purchased \$187 million in American products in 1947 alone. Also in 1947, as Cold War tensions began to intensify, South Africa became an important American ally in the effort to contain communism. As the Cold War political climate in the United States dampened the potential for radical critiques of domestic racism and economic injustice, the same influence was felt by those who spoke out against the slow pace of decolonization in Africa in general or the intensifying racism and segregation in South Africa in particular. Still, some Americans, including members of the NAACP and Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) began to correspond with ANC leaders and used leaflets and mass mailings to encourage Americans to stand up for equality both within the U.S. and throughout the world.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Francis Meli, *A History of the ANC: South Africa Belongs to Us* (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1988) 40; Clark and Worger, *South Africa*, 53.

<sup>18</sup> Donald R Culverson, *Contesting Apartheid: U.S. Activism, 1960-1987* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999) 27, 29; Francis Njubi Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans Against Apartheid, 1946-1994* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004) 8; See also Hakan Thorn, *Anti-Apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006).

A new monograph by Rob Skinner discusses early anti-apartheid activism in Great Britain as well as the United States. *The Foundations of Anti-Apartheid: Liberal Humanitarians and Transnational Activists in Britain and the United States, 1919-1964* is a ground-breaking work because it pays attention to the historical roots of what would ultimately become a mass movement. Skinner argues that in both Great Britain and the United States, anti-apartheid activism drew on a legacy of humanitarianism that had its roots in the abolition movements of the nineteenth century. The moralist tone of the anti-apartheid movement in both countries was connected to the heavy involvement of Christian missionaries and activists. However, Skinner explains that even in the early decades of the movement, the contributions of anti-colonial forces and leftist organizations cannot be ignored. Skinner emphasizes the importance of transnational networks with long historical roots, connected to those earlier organizations that formed in response to African slavery in the Americas or the horrors perpetrated by Belgium's King Leopold in the Congo.<sup>19</sup>

Although Skinner's coverage of Great Britain is more thorough than his analysis of anti-apartheid activism in the United States, he describes numerous episodes of social activism and connections between the United States and South Africa that have not been analyzed by historians. First, Skinner discusses the travels of South African activist and intellectual Sol Plaatje. Plaatje journeyed to the United States between 1920 and 1922 where he met with Marcus Garvey and developed a relationship with W.E.B. Du Bois. Although Plaatje and Garvey had vastly different political views and rhetorical styles, perhaps the connection between Plaatje and

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<sup>19</sup> Rob Skinner, *The Foundations of Anti-Apartheid: Liberal Humanitarians and Transnational Activists in Britain and the United States, 1919-1964* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2010).

Garvey's UNIA contributed to the influence of Garveyism in South Africa, which Skinner says was notable during the 1920s.<sup>20</sup>

During the 1940s the Council on African Affairs (CAA) was the most significant American organization focused on Africa. The CAA was founded in 1937, and was the vehicle through which radical African American leaders Paul Robeson and WEB DuBois collected funds for African liberation groups and organized demonstrations in hopes of influencing U.S. policy towards Africa. The CAA was shaped both by pan-Africanist thought and by Robeson's belief that anti-colonial freedom movements were inextricably linked to class struggle, a stance that led Robeson to seek coalitions with white workers and leftists worldwide. The CAA lobbied the United Nations to pass sanctions against South Africa in 1946, two years before apartheid was formalized. Also, in a 1946, New York meeting attended by 19,000 people, CAA rallied in support of a South African Miner's strike and against the South African annexation of Namibia. Cold War hysteria soon began to undermine the influence of the CAA, however. The CAA was included in a list of subversive organizations in 1947, and the NAACP published an attack on the CAA in 1950. Robeson's passport was withdrawn shortly thereafter, and the CAA collapsed. The disintegration of the CAA is indicative of the extent to which both the black and the white left in the United States was marginalized in the early Cold War years. In the immediate aftermath,

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<sup>20</sup> Skinner, *The Foundations of Anti-Apartheid*, 32-33. Skinner also discusses the unusual career of African-American Max Yergan and his shifting opinions on and connections to South Africa. When Yergan first traveled to South Africa as a Christian missionary with the YMCA, his approaches can be compared to those of Britain's liberal humanitarians, as he called for Africans to undergo a type of "cultural adaptation" that would combine the best aspects of both African and European cultures. It wouldn't take long for Yergan's experiences in South Africa to radicalize his outlook to such an extent that he could no longer work within the framework of the YMCA. Although Yergan worked alongside leftist Paul Robeson during the 1930s and 1940s, founding the International Committee on African Affairs in 1937, he would reverse course in the 1950s, becoming an apologist for the South African Apartheid government and lauding that nation's contributions to anti-communist Cold War efforts.

anti-apartheid leadership in the United States would have to come from liberals, many of whom were motivated by Christian beliefs.<sup>21</sup>

In the early 1950s, the ANC began to call for black South Africans to reject the segregation laws of petty apartheid. These efforts coalesced into the Defiance Campaign of 1952; by this point the ANC had over 100,000 members and was under the leadership of Chief Albert Luthuli. Thousands of participants broke apartheid laws in the name of the campaign and were arrested. In 1955, representatives from the ANC and other community groups met outside of Johannesburg and adopted a document called The Freedom Charter, which would serve as the general policy statement of the ANC in the coming decades. The Freedom Charter called for South Africa's definition as a non racial society and was part of a campaign to enlist the participation of the black masses, as well as to gain support from the outside world. This 1955 meeting was broken up by the police, who recorded the names of all the attendees. The following year police used this information to arrest 156 leaders, who would be spend the next five years battling accusations of treason in court. The government also responded to the Freedom Charter by intensifying censorship.<sup>22</sup>

Since anti-apartheid protest from the left had been silenced in the U.S. by anti-communism, African American liberals formed Americans for South African Resistance (ASFAR) in 1952 to show support for the ANC's Defiance Campaign. In 1954, ASFAR was renamed the American Committee on Africa (ACOA). The ACOA would serve as a critical link between African liberation movements and American activists, and would play a crucial role in the development of a mass American anti-apartheid movement over the following thirty-five

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<sup>21</sup> Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 6, 20-23.

<sup>22</sup> The defendants in the Treason Trial were all found not guilty; although Mandela and other would later be convicted in the Rivonia Trial of 1964. Meli, *A History of the ANC*; Clark and Worger, *South Africa*, 56-57; Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 17-19; Thompson, *A History of South Africa* 208.



years. In 1957 Martin Luther King Jr joined the ACOA as a member of its national committee, and George Houser served as the Executive Director of the ACOA from 1955-1981. The character of the organization reflected Houser's roots in the domestic civil rights movement and his commitment to nonviolent direct action. Founded during the height of the McCarthy era, the ACOA sought support from a racially integrated cohort of pacifists and liberal internationalists and walked a fine line to avoid the kind of attacks from the U.S. government that had brought down the CAA.<sup>23</sup>

In 1959, tensions between the ANC leadership and a group of members who favored a strictly African (as opposed to multiracial) liberation movement led to the formation of the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) under the leadership of Robert Sobukwe. When the ANC planned a mass demonstration against South Africa's pass laws during the spring of 1960, the PAC tried to grab the momentum by planning its own protest for a week earlier on March 21. The PAC's influence across South Africa wasn't extensive, and in most towns the demonstrations were small and uneventful. However, in the small town of Sharpeville, where the PAC had focused most of their organizing efforts, about 5,000 protestors showed up at the police station. When a scuffle broke out, police began to fire into the crowd at short range. They continued shooting as the crowd ran away, shooting many people in the back. Sixty-nine people were killed, and 180 were injured in what became known in the worldwide media as the Sharpeville Massacre.<sup>24</sup>

Black South Africans responded to this outrage with demonstrations and strikes throughout the country. 50,000 people attended a funeral for the victims on a national day of mourning, and strikes shut down most major cities. ANC president, Chief Albert Luthuli burned

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<sup>23</sup> David L Hostetter, *Movement Matters: American Antipartheid Activism and the Rise of Multicultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 15; Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 25.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Klinloch Massie, *Loosing the Bonds: The United States and South Africa in the Apartheid Years* (New York: Doubleday, 1997) 60-64.

his passbook, inspiring thousands of South Africans to follow suit. The South African government responded by declaring a state of emergency, followed by brutal police raids, and it showed an increased willingness to detain people without trial. Perhaps most significantly, the government passed the Unlawful Organizations Act in early April, which banned the ANC and the PAC. The Sharpeville Massacre and the ensuing unrest was a critical turning point in the South African liberation movement. ANC leaders became convinced that nonviolent passive resistance would not end apartheid in South Africa. The ANC leaders believed that the South African government's willingness to resort to violence and suspend the rule of law necessitated a new approach. The ANC established a militant wing called Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), which began to engage in acts of sabotage by bombing post offices, and other government buildings, as well as rail lines and electrical installments. Within several years, however, the MK had been infiltrated, and most of the ANC leadership was in exile or imprisoned.<sup>25</sup>

The Sharpeville Massacre was also a watershed moment in South Africa's relationship with the international community. In Great Britain and elsewhere in Europe, the boycott movement against South Africa intensified. On March 25, 1960 African and Asian member state petitioned the United Nations Security Council to condemn South Africa for the massacre. The Council passed a resolution which condemned the violence and called for the South African government to abandon the policies of apartheid. The United States Ambassador to the UN, Henry Cabot Lodge II voted in favor of the resolution. Later that year, John F Kennedy was elected president, and it seemed that U.S. policy towards Africa might change for the better. Any changes proved to be mostly superficial, however, as the South African government continued to be seen as an important U.S. ally in the fight against communism for decades to come.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 66-67; Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 210-211.

<sup>26</sup> Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 37, 41.

Outrage over the Sharpeville massacre, as well as excitement over the increasing rapidity of decolonization in Africa, contributed to growing pan-Africanism and black nationalism within the United States in the early 1960s. A new generation of activists took a more serious interest in the history and culture of Africa. While some liberal African American activists found the shift towards black nationalism troubling, a diverse group of leaders, including liberals, radicals and black nationalists, came together to form the American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa (ANCLA) in 1962. The media compared the conference to previous pan-Africanist gatherings, such as the 1919 pan-Africanist conference organized by WEB DuBois. The leaders at the ANCLA consciously emphasized the links between the American civil rights struggle and the independence movements in Africa. The conference focused on increasing the role of African Americans in shaping U.S. policy towards Africa, and apartheid in South Africa was a key aspect of the conference agenda. The ANCLA presented Martin Luther King Jr's and Chief Albert Luthuli's joint "Appeal for Action Against Apartheid" which "called on the U.S. government to support United Nations sanctions against South Africa; to impose a total arms embargo, and to discourage public and private investment in the regime."<sup>27</sup>

In fall of 1962, African nations presented the UN General Assembly with a sanctions resolution that the General Assembly passed with a large majority. The United States, under President Kennedy, refused to endorse the sanctions. Anti-apartheid leaders around the world were outraged and disappointed, and U.S. diplomatic relations with African countries became increasingly strained. President Kennedy did endorse a voluntary arms embargo on South Africa at the UN, and imposed a ban on the sale of U.S. military supplies to South Africa. This decision drew criticism from many members of the U.S. State Department, but was considered too little

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<sup>27</sup> Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 44-47, 48; Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); James H. Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

too late by most African nations and anti-apartheid activists. The ACOA continued to urge the United States to pass comprehensive sanctions against South Africa and to support the existing UN resolutions. After failing to influence U.S. government policy, in 1966 the ACOA began a campaign which focused on U.S. banks that provided loans to South Africa. The group urged individuals and organizations to withdraw funds from banks with close financial ties to South Africa. This effort was a precursor to the more widespread divestment campaigns of the 1980s.<sup>28</sup>

By the mid 1960s both Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr were increasingly influenced by pan-Africanism, and both became more vocal on African issues. In 1964 Malcolm X twice traveled to Africa and spoke at the Organization of African Unity Conference. There, he urged African leaders to bring up American racial discrimination at the United Nations. Malcolm and young American activists were impatient with the ability of the old tactics of marches and peaceful demonstrations to yield further change, particularly in the Northern United States. He worked to build connections between black Americans and Africans through travel and study. Inspired by Malcolm's advice, a group of SNCC workers also traveled to Africa during 1964. The group included Atlantans John Lewis and Julian Bond, and all the participants emphasized what a profound impact the trip had on their consciousness. By 1964 even King became sympathetic to the necessity of the armed struggle in South Africa, noting that South Africans did not have the protection of the Constitution that organizers in the American South relied upon. In 1965, King made an important speech on Africa at the Human Rights Day Rally in New York where he emphasized the connections between the American civil rights movement and the South African anti-apartheid struggle. King's increasing radicalism coincided with the rising

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<sup>28</sup> Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 49-52, 55; Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*.

popularity of black power groups in the United States and of the emergence of black consciousness in South Africa.<sup>29</sup>

As SNCC and the Black Panthers adopted “third world ideology” and anti-imperialism, it became more difficult for white and multiracial organizations, like the ACOA to collaborate with them in the anti-apartheid struggle. These developments and tensions emerged at the same time that the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa filled the vacuum created by the banning of the ANC and the PAC. In 1969, Stephen Biko founded the South African Students’ Association (SASO). Biko and his fellow students were inspired by the Black Power movement in the United States, and intended for SASO to facilitate a renewal of black activism and pride throughout South Africa. Biko and his counterparts were deeply admired by the students of Soweto who would rise up in 1976. While the emergence of Black Consciousness in South Africa inspired radical African American anti-apartheid activists, at the end of the 1960s, many progressive Americans felt despair as they reflected on the recent assassinations of Malcolm X, King and Robert Kennedy.<sup>30</sup>

One of the greatest successes of the American civil rights movement was the post 1965 election of hundreds of African American officials at various levels of government. As more African Americans began winning election to the U.S. House of Representatives in the late 1960s, they believed that their causes would benefit from creating a formal alliance. The Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) was initially founded and led by Charles Diggs, who also served as the Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Africa in 1969. Diggs made apartheid a

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<sup>29</sup> Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 57-62.

<sup>30</sup> Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 254-255.

major priority, and the CBC would take a leading role in anti-apartheid activism when the movement became more mainstream in the late 1970s.<sup>31</sup>

If the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960 became a watershed moment in the history of resistance to apartheid, the Soweto uprising of 1976 and the violent response of the South Africa government, must be viewed as an equally important turning point. In early 1976, government officials announced that they would begin enforcement of an old law that required fifty percent of students' courses to be taught in Afrikaans (previously most courses were taught in English). Standardized tests would also be administered in Afrikaans. Students were upset about the change, both because most of them had only limited knowledge of the language, and because they hated Afrikaans, and considered it the language of the oppressors. This shift fueled an already volatile situation. In Soweto, the townships southwest of Johannesburg, schools were horribly overcrowded. Government officials intentionally did not build additional schools in order to encourage children to leave Soweto and return to the homelands for an education. Estimates suggested that in 1975, 35,000 children in Soweto did not attend school at all.<sup>32</sup>

After several weeks of walk outs and small demonstrations, on June 16 thousands of high school students and younger children gathered for a mass rally. Police threw tear gas canisters into the crowd, but the students refused to disperse. A policeman began to fire his revolver into the crowd at short range. A thirteen-year old boy named Hector Petersen was the first to die. While some of the children ran away, many held their ground and began to throw rocks at the police force. Mass chaos broke out; many government buildings were burned to the ground, and police behaved as if the area was a war zone. When students lit schools on fire, police shot at them. While two whites were killed by rioters, at least 176 black youths were killed. Extreme,

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<sup>31</sup> Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 74.

<sup>32</sup> Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 395-398.

widespread violence lasted for weeks after the initial incident and spread throughout much of the country. Workers all around South Africa went on strike in support of the students. As they did in the aftermath of Sharpeville, the government again responded to the disturbances by banning resistance organizations and arresting and detaining thousands of protestors. In August 1977, police arrested Steve Biko for the third time that year. The following month, Biko died a slow and brutal death at the hands of interrogating prison guards.<sup>33</sup>

Concerned observers around the world were shocked and horrified by Biko's murder and the widespread violence. In the United States the Congressional Black Caucus formed TransAfrica, a group to lobby to shape U.S. foreign policy towards Africa. According to historian, Francis Nesbitt, "TransAfrica would become the most important lobby for Africa and the Caribbean ever created by African Americans. Its emergence marked a turning point in the anti-apartheid movement and signaled the coming of age of African Americans in foreign policy. Like the Council on African Affairs, TransAfrica combined educational and direct-action techniques to influence foreign policy." The key differences between the CAA and TransAfrica allowed TransAfrica to have much greater longevity and influence than did its predecessor. While the CAA was a black radical organization, TransAfrica was shaped by liberal African Americans. Further, TransAfrica benefited from a higher level of black consciousness that had emerged by the 1970s, as well as the fruits of the civil rights movement, which resulted in a significant African American presence in Congress. TransAfrica's would later be the force behind the launching of the Free South Africa Movement of 1984.<sup>34</sup>

Calls for U.S. companies to withdraw from South Africa also heated up. Rev. Leon Sullivan, a Baptist preacher, civil rights leader and African American businessman, had an

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<sup>33</sup> Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 395-398, 421-422.

<sup>34</sup> Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 99, 103.

alternative idea. During the 1970s, Sullivan was on the General Motors board of directors. From 1971 to 1975, every year at the annual board meeting, Sullivan advocated that General Motors should withdraw from South Africa. The other board members refused to act. In 1975 Sullivan began to reconsider his demands. He decided to focus on workplace reforms rather than on corporate withdrawal. In March of 1977, Sullivan announced his “Statement of Principles of U.S. Firms with Affiliates in the Republic of South Africa.” The statements called for non-segregation of workplace facilities, equal pay and fair employment practices, training programs that would prepare non-whites for supervisory position and technical jobs, increasing the number of non-whites in management positions, and making efforts to improve employees’ lives in areas outside the work environment. Sullivan initially persuaded twelve companies to sign on, and many more would follow suit in the coming years.<sup>35</sup>

Critics immediately pointed out the flaws in the Sullivan Principles. The ACOA called the principles “an exercise in triviality.” The principles did not call for any fundamental change in South African society; they did not address the fact that black South Africans had no political rights. Anti-apartheid leaders believed that American corporate presence in South Africa could have no positive impact. Many critics believed over the following years that the Sullivan Principles served as a distraction that took momentum away from efforts to convince American corporations to withdraw from South Africa. Other weaknesses of the Principles included the fact that there was no enforcement method, and that American companies in South Africa were subject to the laws of the land, and thus limited in the kinds of changes they could promote. Eventually over 140 companies signed the Sullivan Principles, and seven different task groups did gather and report information about compliance. However, by 1985 even Reverend Sullivan began to question the efficacy of the principles. In 1987, Sullivan made a public statement to the

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<sup>35</sup> Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 387-388, 408.



media, acknowledging that after ten years of implementation, the principles had not influenced the South African government. As a result, he too began to call for immediate and full corporate withdrawal from South Africa.<sup>36</sup>

President Ronald Reagan's election in 1980, as well as the Republican takeover of the U.S. Senate, alarmed anti-apartheid activists. Soon after his election, Reagan appointed Chester Crocker as the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. Crocker believed that the hostile language that the Carter administration had used towards the South African government only served to alienate the white South African leaders and to discourage the government's willingness to gradually dismantle apartheid. With these beliefs in mind, Crocker created the Constructive Engagement policy. Constructive Engagement would involve friendly dialogue with between government representatives and a reduction of punitive measures, such as international sanctions. Once trust was regained, Washington could gently influence Pretoria towards gradual change.<sup>37</sup>

J.E. Davies' *Constructive Engagement? Chester Crocker and American Policy in South Africa, Namibia and Angola, 1981-1988* analyzes both the explicit and the implicit aims of Crocker's policies and provides a critique of the failures of Constructive Engagement. Although Crocker claimed that "persuading Pretoria away from apartheid" was a priority for the U.S. government, Crocker's true intentions were to "enable Washington to preserve its beneficial relationship with Pretoria without public or political embarrassment." Crocker's policies were flawed in several ways. Constructive Engagement demonstrated that Crocker "did not... appreciate the extent of the desperation and anger in the black community. His insistence

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<sup>36</sup> Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 579; Leon H Sullivan, *Moving Mountains: The Principles and Purposes of Leon Sullivan* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1998), 90-94.

<sup>37</sup> J.E. Davies, *Constructive Engagement? Chester Crocker & American Policy in South Africa, Namibia & Angola, 1981-1988* (Oxford: James Curry Ltd, 2007), 1.

on gradual, white-led change infuriated the black population.” He also underestimated the determination of the white population to hold onto their power by preserving minority rule. Constructive Engagement failed in both its explicit and implicit goals. The relationship between Washington and Pretoria must be understood within the Cold War context generally, and as an aspect of the Reagan Doctrine, specifically. Reagan called for vigorous containment of communism and South Africa was the United States’ chief African ally in this endeavor.<sup>38</sup>

With the Reagan administration pursuing Constructive Engagement, anti-apartheid activists focused on convincing individual companies to withdraw from South Africa – a difficult challenge made even more so by the fact that companies could point to having signed the Sullivan Principles as a way to deflect criticism. 1980 also marked the beginning of increased collaboration among anti-apartheid groups. The ACOA, American Friends Service Committee, Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, TransAfrica and others came together in late 1980 to launch the Campaign Against Investment in South Africa. The coalition would convene a national conference on public investment in South Africa the following spring. Over 200 elected officials from across the country attended the event in New York City where they were joined by grassroots activists, religious leaders and scholars. Georgia State Senator and civil rights veteran Julian Bond addressed the group on the urgency of acting on the local, state and county levels in the face of a hostile federal government:

Among all of us who are gathered here, there is a particular group: legislators and council members, who are here...because we are all sworn to uphold the public good. There could certainly be no greater good than the cause for which we gather...We are here to complete the process of halting American complicity in the most hideous government on the face of the planet...In less than six months, the new government of the U.S. reversed even the halting Africa policies of the Carter administration and has embarked on a course of arrogant intervention into African affairs in the most hostile way...America’s policies towards Africa have changed...from benign neglect to a kind of malignant aggression...Our cause is to

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<sup>38</sup> Davies, *Constructive Engagement?*, 198-199.

take whatever action we can to end American complicity with this international problem. Our contribution is to...facilitate the expansion of public prohibitions against the expenditure of public funds from inhuman purposes. In short, we intend to end American investment in evil.<sup>39</sup>

Many state and municipal governments did respond to Bond's calls for divestment, which means to sell stocks and bonds because of ethical motivations. College students also responded to calls for activism on behalf of divestment. A few institutions had begun to divest in the late 1970s. In 1978, student activists at Princeton University staged a twenty-seven hour sit-in at the campus's main administration building, demanding that the university divest. In the early 1980s though, calls for divestment on college campuses shifted from occasional, isolated events to a broad based action representing every region of the United States, and every type of institution of higher learning, public and private. As historian of U.S.-South African relations Robert Massie writes, "More and more institutions came to view the question of divestment in South Africa not as something that the U.S. government should decide, but as a topic that could and should be discussed by the thousands of universities and other nonprofit institutions around the country." Most universities came to this conclusion only under pressure from students. According to Massie, "Many of the students involved in the divestment debate came to see that their education was not only about courses and teachers, but about the structure of the institution itself, about its goals and values, its purpose and principles. Education, in other words, went beyond acquiring skills for personal advancement and encompassed understanding and creating a moral community."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Julian Bond, "Public Investment in South Africa," in Eds William Minter, Gail Hovey, and Charles Cob Jr, *No Easy Victories: African Liberation and American Activists Over a Half Century* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2008), 175-176; Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 479.

<sup>40</sup> Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 433-434.

Sociologist Sarah Soule published two articles and a dissertation in the 1990s that examine anti-apartheid activism on American college campuses, focusing on the popular tactic of building shantytowns in public spaces on campus in order to increase awareness of living conditions in South Africa and to convince their respective colleges to “divest of South-Africa related securities.” Between 1985 and 1987 divestment policies suddenly and rapidly spread across the country as seventy-five colleges agreed to divest in South Africa related companies. According to Soule, universities divested to “protect their public image as progressive and socially responsible.” Soule’s 1997 article, “The Student Divestment Movement in the United States and Tactical Diffusion: The Shantytown Protest,” discusses the way that an innovative method of protest spread among college campuses in the US. Beginning with Cornell University in 1985, student activists constructed shantytowns on campuses. Soule argues that the tactic spread among colleges of similar size and prestige. She explains that “social movement activists do not have to reinvent the wheel at each place and in each conflict. Rather, they often find inspiration elsewhere in the ideas and tactics espoused and practiced by other activists.”<sup>41</sup>

In an article published two years later, Soule again discusses the shantytowns built on American college campuses during the mid 1980s. In “The Diffusion of an Unsuccessful Innovation,” Soule argues that the shantytowns were not effective at encouraging university divestment and examines the reasons why this tactic spread despite the lack of success. Soule explains that “colleges and universities that had shantytowns actually had slower rates of divestment than those that did not have them.” Soule does not suggest reasons for this trend, but rather focuses on why such an unsuccessful protest tactic spread so widely among student activists throughout the United States. Soule argues that the diffusion of the shantytowns was a

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<sup>41</sup> Sarah A. Soule, “The Student Divestment Movement in the United States and Tactical Diffusion: The Shantytown Protest,” *Social Forces*, 75:3 (March 1997), 859; Sarah A. Soule, “The Student Anti-Apartheid Movement in the United States,” (Phd Diss., Cornell University 1995), 31.

result of two factors. First, the mainstream media consistently made connections between the shantytowns and university divestment. Thus, the student activists believed that this method of protest was successfully influencing university policy. Second, the construction of shantytowns was compatible with student activist experience, as “the shantytown tactic evolved from the familiar tactic of the sit-in...that had been used on campuses in the US since the civil rights movement.”<sup>42</sup>

During 1984, resistance to apartheid within South Africa intensified. In 1984 the South African government introduced a new constitution that allowed for political participation by Indians and Coloureds, but not by black South Africans. The new constitution triggered widespread rebellion, as opponents of the apartheid system viewed the constitutional change as a way to co-opt the country’s minority groups and halt the momentum for completely overthrowing the apartheid regime. The grassroots rebellions coalesced into a new anti-apartheid organization called the United Democratic Front (UDF). The establishment of the UDF created a new political space for opposing apartheid, while rebellions and violence escalated. In September 1984, the United Nations General Assembly voted unanimously to condemn a spree of political arrests in South Africa, but the United States abstained from voting, once again protecting the apartheid regime. In November of that year, President Reagan was reelected by an overwhelming majority, a major blow to American anti-apartheid activists, as well as black South Africans.<sup>43</sup>

In November 1984, the same month that Reagan won reelection, Randall Robinson, President of TransAfrica, was arrested at the South African embassy in Washington D.C., along with U.S. Congressman, Walter Fauntroy, and U.S. Civil Rights Commission member, Mary

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<sup>42</sup> Sarah A. Soule. “The Diffusion of an Unsuccessful Innovation.” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 566 (November 1999), 120-133. See also Bradford Martin, *The Other Eighties: A Secret History of America in the Age of Reagan* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011).

<sup>43</sup> Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 124.

Frances Berry. Robinson, Berry and Fauntroy met with the South African ambassador and demanded the immediate release of all political prisoners. They refused to leave the premises until their demands had been met. The ambassador called the police, and Fauntroy, Robinson and Berry spent the night in jail. The next day, Fauntroy and Robinson announced that they intended to launch a national campaign, which was called the Free South Africa Movement. The prospect of four more years of a hostile federal government led by Reagan necessitated the change in strategy and convinced anti-apartheid leaders that it was time to begin using more confrontational tactics. Five days later, on November 26, 1984 a second group of demonstrators, including Rev. Joseph Lowery of the SCLC were arrested at the South African embassy.<sup>44</sup>

The leaders of the Free South Africa Movement planned for the demonstrations to go on indefinitely, and thus limited the number of participants to three a day. Celebrities, politicians, academics and other volunteers were arrested at the South African embassy on a daily basis. The arrests received substantial coverage in the press and soon spread to other cities throughout the United States. The sit-ins recalled the days of the civil rights movement, and attracted a large and diverse coalition of supporters. According to David Hostetter, “Linking grassroots demonstrations to foreign policy legislation is a difficult and delicate business,” but the Free South Africa Movement saw remarkable success with this difficult task. The demonstrations coincided with increased violence within South Africa and even caught the attention of many Republicans in Congress.<sup>45</sup>

In 1985, the U.S. Congress passed a mild anti-apartheid bill which would have banned new loans to South Africa as well as ended federal subsidies to companies that did not support the Sullivan Principles. While this bill had support from a third of the Republicans in the House,

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<sup>44</sup> Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 558-559; Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 124-125.

<sup>45</sup> Hostetter, *Movement Matters*, 83; Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 559-560.

Reagan preempted it by signing an executive order in September of 1985 that banned the sale of U.S. computers to South Africa and the importation of Krugerrands. According to historian Francis Nesbitt, “Most of these actions were superfluous and clearly designed to save face for the White House and forestall congressional action.” Members of the Congressional Black Caucus and anti-apartheid activists nationwide were disgusted by President Reagan’s scheme to avoid a showdown with Congress. Six months later, Congress again considered stronger anti-apartheid legislation when Democratic Representative Ron Dellums introduced a bill that required the United States to sever all ties with South Africa’s apartheid regime. The House passed Dellum’s version of the bill, but the Senate passed a more moderate piece of legislation. The House accepted a compromise bill in anticipation of Reagan’s veto. Reagan did indeed veto the bill. Congress overrode the veto with the support of thirty-one Republicans in the Senate, and eighty-one Republicans in the House, along with an overwhelming majority of Democrats. This outcome was a major blow for the Reagan administration, and particularly significant in that Congress almost never overrides a Presidential veto on matters of foreign policy.<sup>46</sup>

To explain how the United States came to pass this legislation against the apartheid regime, Audie Klotz, author of *Norms in International Relations: The Struggle Against Apartheid*, analyzes U.S. policy towards South Africa as well. Klotz argues that political theorists who assume “that individual states will circumvent sanctions in pursuit of economic gain” have been short-sighted in only acknowledging material costs and benefits. Klotz suggests that social benefits can accrue from supporting an international norm, such as racial equality. Klotz calls for more weight to be given to such norms: “a norm of racial equality plays crucial roles in defining identity and interest, rather than simply functioning as a weak constraint on more fundamental strategic or economic interests.” Traditionally weak, non-state actors in the

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<sup>46</sup> Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 138-142.

United States, were ultimately able to force the United States government to adopt sanctions against South Africa through their grassroots antiapartheid activism, and because of the salience of the global norm of racial equality.<sup>47</sup>

In *United States Relations With South Africa: A Critical Overview from the Colonial Period to the Present*, Y.G-M. Lulat provides a detailed account of the events leading up to the passage of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, as well as thorough analysis of what the Act did and did not do. The Act prohibited trade in most commodities between the U.S. and South Africa as well as new loans to and investments in both the government and the private sectors of South Africa. The Act stipulated that sanctions would not be removed until Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners were released, the state of emergency was repealed, the cornerstones of apartheid were removed, and negotiations with black leaders had begun. While Lulat acknowledges that some antiapartheid activists were disappointed that the Act did not go further, the passage of this legislation was still significant. The effects of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986, coupled with the impact of corporate disinvestments, and the passage of sanctions against South Africa by many countries around the world, began to have a serious effect on the stability of the South African economy.<sup>48</sup>

In the years following passage of the 1986 Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, violence and rebellion continued in South Africa in the face of state sanctioned oppression. On the other hand, within the United States, fervor for continued action against the South African government waned. For a decade the movement had been focused on sanctions and divestment, with those goals achieved (for the most part), the anti-apartheid movement within the United States stalled. Lulat blames the movement's faltering on the relative weakness of the U.S. antiapartheid

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<sup>47</sup> Audie Klotz, *Norms in International Relations: The Struggle Against Apartheid* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 9-10.

<sup>48</sup> Lulat, *U.S. Relations with South Africa*, 316-321.



movement as a whole, which can be attributed to a combination of racism, ignorance, the weak foreign policy role of black Americans, the media strength of conservative forces and a lack of coordination between various activist groups. South Africa's transition to democracy began under President FW de Klerk with the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners in 1990. Mandela's release and his subsequent travels in the United States will be discussed in my conclusion.

### PLAN OF DISSERTATION

My research focuses on the way that the unique history of Atlanta shaped that city's response to the crisis in South Africa during the 1980s. This dissertation explores the ways that educational institutions, city government, transnational activist organizations, corporations, and local civil rights groups in Atlanta responded to the mounting crisis in South Africa during the 1980s. With its central place in the American civil rights movement, Atlanta enabled experienced activists to borrow language, tactics and approaches from earlier decades of activism in their campaign against South African apartheid. No other study on anti-apartheid activism has examined an individual city as the nexus where local, national, and transnational organizations and tactics intersect and interact. While the anti-apartheid movement was constructed on a global scale, in any given locality that transnational movement must intersect with a variety of unique political, social and economic forces. During the 1980s this international human rights movement collided with a local political regime in Atlanta in which African American politicians eagerly partnered with corporate interests. Examining this moment in Atlanta's history sheds light on the way that diverse groups jockeyed to shape metro-Atlanta's political identity on both a local and a global scale.

Examining the overlap, cooperation, and competition between groups with varying organizational scales and focuses contributes to the broader literature on social movements. Often times, scholars writing about transnational social movements tend to lose sight of local dynamics. At the same time, Historians or Sociologists who examine movement building on a local level may not acknowledge the extent to which local actors are influenced by transnational organizations and national leaders. My project seeks to rectify this shortcoming in the context of one social movement in one city.

## CHAPTER 1: ATLANTA'S UNIVERSITIES CONFRONT APARTHEID

This chapter will discuss and compare the responses of the Atlanta University Center campuses, Georgia State University and Emory University to the crisis in South Africa during the 1980s. I use student publications, local newspapers, university archival records, and oral history interviews to reconstruct a timeline of events at these Atlanta universities when the intensity of resistance in South Africa increased to a point where the country was almost ungovernable and a simultaneous mainstream, nation-wide, anti-apartheid movement emerged in the United States. In Atlanta, the wide variety of universities, meant a wide range of responses to the crisis of South African apartheid. Internal dynamics at each institution shaped the type of student activism found on campus.

Anti-apartheid activism on college and university campuses generally tended to focus on the role played by institutions of higher learning in maintaining or condemning the apartheid state, specifically in regards to university investments. Between 1985 and 1987 divestment policies suddenly and rapidly spread across the country as seventy-five colleges agreed to divest in South Africa related companies. Divestment means to sell stocks and bonds because of ethical motivations, and universities chose to divest to maintain their reputations as progressive and socially responsible institutions. This decade of activism culminated with a significant victory for Atlanta's student activists when the Georgia Board of Regents – the governing body for the state university system – elected to divest its holdings under pressure from Student Coalition Against Apartheid and Racism.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Sarah A. Soule, "The Student Anti-Apartheid Movement in the United States," (PhD Diss., Cornell University 1995), 31; Soule, "The Diffusion of an Unsuccessful Innovation," *Annals of the American Academy of Political Science* (Vol 566: Nov 1999), 120-131; Soule, "The Student Divestment Movement in the United States and Tactical Diffusion: The Shantytown Protest," *Social Forces* (Vol 75, No 3: March 1997), 855-882.

University students in Atlanta participated in campus protest that had much in common with the activism found at colleges throughout the Northeast and Midwest as described by Sarah Soule and Bradford Martin. Both of these scholars have analyzed the divestment movement on American college campuses during the 1980s. Soule, a sociologist, examines the popular tactic of building shantytowns in public spaces on campus in order to increase awareness of living conditions in South Africa and to convince educational institutions to divest. Soule argues that the construction of the shantytowns shared much in common with the sit-ins of the civil rights movement, and her analysis seeks to demonstrate the ways that such tactics diffuse between activists who are not necessarily in direct communication with one another. Martin emphasizes the extent to which the building of the shanties on campuses contested public space, which he views as a legacy of the 1960s campus free speech movement at the University of California.<sup>50</sup>

The Atlanta University Center is the largest consortium of historically black colleges in the United States. During the 1970s and 1980s this consortium included Clark College, Morehouse College, Spelman College, and Atlanta University, a graduate school. In several ways anti-apartheid activism on the Atlanta University Center campuses differed from the campus anti-apartheid movements as they are generally perceived to have occurred throughout the United States. First, as early as the late 1970s student activists in Atlanta University's Political Science Department were actively protesting South African apartheid, in contrast with most white American college students who would awaken to the situation in South Africa until the mid 1980s. Second and most significantly, while most campus protest nation-wide focused on university policies generally and divestment specifically, the student activists at the Atlanta

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<sup>50</sup> Soule, "The Student Divestment Movement in the United States and Tactical Diffusion;" Bradford Martin, *The Other Eighties: A Secret History of America in the Age of Reagan* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011), 46.

University Center looked beyond their campuses to participate in and influence the anti-apartheid movement emerging in various segments of Atlanta.

Throughout the 1970s Atlanta University Political Science Department graduate students, under the leadership of department chair Mack Jones, worked to bring attention to Southern African issues. One such student, Earl Picard, explained that he and his colleagues held a weekly “Black Issues Forum,” which focused on a specific topic for debate and discussion and hosted guest speakers. Picard said that Southern African issues probably made up about twenty percent of the issues discussed at the forum. Picard and his fellow graduate students handed out leaflets advertising the weekly events to undergraduate students. Attendance varied, and although sometimes the group would attract up to forty attendees, Picard said participation was never what they hoped it would be. At the same time that Picard worked to raise awareness among students, he attended meetings with leaders such as Joseph Lowery and Coretta Scott King to discuss the possibility of mounting protests against the presence in South Africa of both the Coca Cola Company and M&M products, a black owned hair-care company.<sup>51</sup>

Throughout the 1980s, Atlanta University Center-based activists continued to engage with other socially aware Atlantans. Dr. Mack Jones and Father Issac Miller of the campus Episcopalian ministry, Canterbury House, established the South Africa Support Group by 1982 which worked with local government officials, representatives from the African National Congress, and well known civil rights activists, including Julian Bond, John Lewis and Lowery to organize teach ins in both AUC classrooms and local public schools, as well as public rallies and workshops. Later, Jones became the co-chair of the Georgia Coalition for Divestment in South Africa which would become the primary anti-apartheid organization in Atlanta by the mid

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<sup>51</sup> Interview with Earl Picard, April 30, 2012.

1980s. Another Atlanta University Political Science graduate student, Adolph Reed, was deeply involved with the African Liberation Support Committee throughout the 1970s.<sup>52</sup>

In July of 1985, AUC students moved to found a chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference on campus. This move was inspired by the crisis in South Africa, and SCLC representative, Rev Timothy McDonald, sought to explain to students the connections between South Africa's apartheid policies and domestic racial oppression in the United States: "There are miners in Alabama who are unemployed because U.S. companies are buying cheaper coal from South Africa. And imagine the jobs that would be available for American workers if companies like GM, Coca Cola, Ford and others would close their South African plants." In August 1985, the SCLC, along with the Young Democrats cosponsored an anti-apartheid prayer vigil at Morehouse, which was attended by nearly 2,000 students.<sup>53</sup>

In October AUC students continued their relationship with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference when that organization launched a protest against grocery store chain, Winn Dixie for selling of South African products. Among the Clark College students who participated in the picketing was Student Government Association President, Kevin Houston, who in the *Clark College Panther* stated: "Winn Dixie has been very blatant in their racism... In addition to having South African products in their stores, Winn Dixie has fewer than 100 black managers in approximately 1,200 stores." This protest was considered significant enough to warrant coverage in the student newspapers of each Morehouse, Clark and Spelman Colleges. The following month students established the Atlanta University Center Students Against

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<sup>52</sup> Papers from Mack Jones personal collection; Interview with Adolph Reed, March 22, 2014.

<sup>53</sup> "AUC Students to Begin SCLC Chapter," *The Atlanta Inquirer*, July 27, 1985, pg 2; Turner Reed, "2,000 Attend Anti-Apartheid Vigil at Morehouse College," *Atlanta Constitution*; August 28, 1985, A4.

Apartheid (AUCSAA) with the goal of educating students as well as the general public about the issues of apartheid.<sup>54</sup>

The Atlanta University Consortium also participated in global social movement networks by hosting numerous South African leaders on campus and by publishing articles by leading activists in student newspapers. For example, February 1986, Randall Robinson and Walter Fauntroy, among others co-authored an article titled “Putting Our Country on the Right Side of History,” which appeared in *Morehouse Tiger* newspaper and explained the goals and methods of the newly formed Free South Africa Movement based in Washington, DC.<sup>55</sup> By the following year, Leah Tutu, wife of Bishop Desmond Tutu, Reverend Allan Boesak, president of the United Democratic Front, and Oliver Tambo, president of the ANC had all visited campus to speak and/or receive honorary degrees. Granting these anti-apartheid leaders honorary degrees provided a highly visible platform from which the activists were able to address the American public.<sup>56</sup>

On April 26, 1986, the Spelman board of trustees voted to divest from companies doing business in South Africa. The decision came as a result of student pressure, which continued even after Spelman officials had decided to sell stock in corporations that did not support the Sullivan Principles. Spelman sophomore, Yolanda Williams commented, “Had it not been for our expressions of dismay with Spelman dealing with racist companies...I don’t think today’s action would have happened...We definitely played an important role in the decision.” While some Spelman students patted themselves on the back for the work they had done, board

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<sup>54</sup> Deloria Steward, “Students Join in Winn Dixie Protest,” *The Clark College Panther*, November 19, 1985, pg 1; Tracey L. Wells, “AUC Forms Student Group Against Apartheid,” *Spelman Spotlight*, October 1985, pg 3.

<sup>55</sup> Walter Fauntroy, Randall Robinson, Mary Frances Berry, Eleanore Holmes Newton, and Roger Wilkins, “Putting Our Country on the Right Side of History,” *Morehouse Tiger*, February 26, 1985, pg 11.

<sup>56</sup> Lisa M. Harriston, “Tambo Receives Honorary Degree,” *Clark College Panther*, February 16, 1987, pg 1; Ronald P. Wilson, “Leah Tutu Delivers Address on ‘Challenge and Hope,’” *Morehouse Tiger*, November / December 1985, pg 1; “South African Leaders Cited at A.U. Center,” *Atlanta Daily World*, November 14, 1986, pg 1.

chairman Marian Wright Edelman worried about the financial ramifications for the college's endowment. Other campus activists continued to voice their opinions after the divestment decision. In October of 1986, Spelman members of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority launched Project South Africa, a week-long event that included the construction of a shantytown and ended with a "well attended" vigil. Building a shantytown on campus after a divestment decision had already been made was certainly not the typical order of events among college anti-apartheid activists. However, the continued action on Spelman's campus after divestment demonstrates an example of AUC students looking beyond their campus borders to the broader issues of injustice in South Africa. Instead of losing interest in the apartheid issue after Spelman divested, students continued to work to build awareness of racial injustice in South Africa.<sup>57</sup>

Meanwhile, Georgia State University had a very different campus culture from that of the Atlanta University Center just two miles away. During the 1980s, GSU was a large commuter campus serving approximately 21,000 students, many of whom were non-traditional and/or night students. While Spelman and other college campuses around the country became host to shantytowns and other indicators of student activists calling for University divestment from companies doing business in South Africa, Georgia State's Student Government Association balked at the notion of such activity. Student activist Dwayne Redding commented,

"Georgia State has never had a lot of students that were involved. I think because it's an urban campus, and people really just scheduled classes around their work schedules...At that time, I think that a lot of students were involved (in student government) to build their resumes. They really didn't have an interest in the issues...So that was kind of the mood of the campus; Georgia State was never really a hotbed of activism."<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> David Stokes, "Spelman Forfeits Profits With Divesture," *Atlanta Inquirer*, May 3, 1986, pg 1; "Spelman Divests," *Spelman Messenger* (Vol 103, No 1), pg 4; Donna Lucas, "Deltas Sponsor Project South Africa Week," *Spelman Spotlight*, Spelman College, November 1986, pg 1.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Dwayne Redding, March 9, 2014; Andy Downs, "Condemn Apartheid? Not GSU," *The Signal*, Georgia State University, April 9, 1985, 1a, 6a.



In April of 1985, GSU's night student body vice president, Doris Taggart, did sponsor a resolution calling for the university to disclose all financial investments over \$10,000; the list of investments would then be compared to a list of companies doing business in South Africa. The resolution was defeated in the student senate. Student senators expressed various reasons for opposing the resolution, including the thought that the senate should "not mix in international politics."<sup>59</sup>

Undeterred by her unsupportive colleagues, Taggart returned with another resolution just over a week later. This time, in a nine-to-six vote the senate approved a her proposal to hold two referendums in which students would express their views on South Africa. The first would ask whether students supported a measure to call upon the University to disclose information on business transactions and investments. The second question asked students whether they supported or opposed divestment if indeed the University did have investments in South Africa. Despite the approval of the referendum from the Senate, six senators still voiced their opposition. One of them, Sarah King, who voted against the referendum, argued that since most students probably would not vote in the referendum, the results would not accurately reflect the wishes of the student population: "If it does go through, it could be national news, and I think it would be terrible if the vote didn't accurately represent the student body." King went on to reference the student protests and sit-ins occurring at other schools: "I wouldn't want people to think of Georgia State the way I think of Columbia University." Another student senator opposed to the referendum voiced the fatalistic opinion that "I don't really think there is anything that we, as students can do about apartheid."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Andy Downs, "Condemn Apartheid? Not GSU," *The Signal*, Georgia State University, April 9, 1985, 1a, 6a.

<sup>60</sup> Andy Downs, "Divestment Issue to go Before Students in Referendum," *The Signal*, Georgia State University, April 16, 1985, 1a, 6a.

In the two weeks between the time that the referendum was approved and the scheduled vote occurred, Taggart and her supporters formed the GSU Coalition for Divestment and launched an educational campaign to inform students of the realities of apartheid South Africa. Additionally, several articles appeared in the *Signal* both supporting and condemning divestment. A letter to the editor by Brian Bowman presented the typical Cold War era argument that the United States must continue to support the apartheid government of South Africa because “South Africa is the only country which is even moderately pro-Western in the bottom third of the African continent.” Bowman argued that South Africa human rights violations are not as severe as those occurring in the Communist Soviet Union. Bowman concluded by stating that the United States cannot expect South Africa to change overnight, and that Americans should not dictate to South Africans what they should do.<sup>61</sup> The following issue of *The Signal* included a rebuttal from Assistant Professor of History, Hugh Hudson. Hudson’s editorial was the first indication of the leading role that faculty would take in Georgia State’s anti-apartheid activism. Hudson refuted Bowman’s claims that the apartheid government of South Africa was not as brutal as the dictatorships in the Soviet Union, and goes on to argue that “Supporting Hitler, or South African imitators, is not necessary to preserve America. Allying oneself with Nazis is a poor way to defend democracy.”<sup>62</sup>

When the referendum occurred in late April 1985, the referendum passed with sixty percent of the vote, despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that only five percent of students participated. The bill called for “disclosure of Georgia state University’s and the Board of Regents’ transactions with banks and corporations doing business with South Africa,” as well as

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<sup>61</sup> Brian Daniel Bowman, “US Divestment From South Africa Would be the Wrong Course to Take,” *The Signal*, Georgia State University, April 23, 1985.

<sup>62</sup> Hugh Hudson, “No, we don’t need South African Dictators More than they Need us,” *The Signal*, Georgia State University, April 30, 1985.

disclosure of the Georgia Teacher's Retirement Fund and to divest in all companies doing business in South Africa.<sup>63</sup>

In the six months that followed the referendum, *The Signal* published multiple articles and editorials on South Africa and divestment in almost every issue. The articles portrayed the wide range of opinion among students at Georgia State. Much of the coverage depicted the ongoing tension between students attempting to organize for divestment and the Student Government Association. In a May 21<sup>st</sup> letter to the editor, Ronaldo Karunungan, leader of the Committee on Apartheid education, claims that the Student Government executive committee was "in favor of the status quo – a white minority rule in South Africa" and that SGA "has attempted to gag the committee on divestment."<sup>64</sup>

Meanwhile, SGA president Danny King disbanded the Committee on Divestment because the Committee had seven members who were non-students (including history department faculty member Hugh Hudson, acting as co-chairman), as well as two students whose low grade point average did not leave them in good standing with the university. The feud escalated when the administration provided the requested list of business investments as requested by the referendum. Roger Miller, vice president for Financial Affairs, turned the list over to the SGA. The SGA refused to allow the Divestment Committee access to the list. Hudson explained that the divestment committee needed access to the list to facilitate research. In the report released by SGA explaining the reasons for the disbanding the Divestment Committee, SGA accused the Divestment committee members of having "strong opinions."<sup>65</sup>

Following *The Signal's* coverage of the disbanding of the Divestment Committee, several students wrote letters to the editor expressing concern that the SGA did not seem to be

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<sup>63</sup> Nick Gold, "Voting Students Favor Divestment," *The Signal*, Georgia State University, April 30, 1985, pgs 1a, 7a.

<sup>64</sup> Ronaldo A. Karunungan, "Divestment Article Was Misleading," May 21, 1985, pg 13a.

<sup>65</sup> Diana Minardi and Bob Inman, "Taggart Rebutts Charges by King," *The Georgia State Signal*, May 28, 1985, 1a.

complying with the mandate of the referendum. One student lamented, “On April 24, like so many others, I took time out to vote for student government officers. I was led to believe that this would lead to representation of the needs and wishes of the student body. Imagine my surprise then to learn that these officers are openly defying the will of the majority which voted them into office by effectively killing action on the divestment issue.” Again on July 9, in a guest editorial sponsored by the GSU Committee for Apartheid Education, the authors claimed that the SGA action failed to fulfill the mandate for action provided under the terms of the student referendum. The committee demanded that the SGA open dialogue with the Board of Regents and that the investments of the Teachers Retirement System be investigated. The apartheid education committee followed this editorial with an announcement that the organization would begin publishing its own newspaper, to be called “Rights and Freedoms.” The publishers of “Rights and Freedoms,” including Andee Goldstein suggested that progressive students at Georgia State needed an “alternate place to voice their opinions.”<sup>66</sup>

When the SGA finally made public the results of the requested list it turned out that Georgia State did more than \$10,000 of business with ten South African-connected companies. However, GSU financial officers immediately responded that state purchasing laws prohibited any divestment action. Because the University was required to award contracts based on competitive bidding, Roger Miller, vice president of financial affairs, claimed, “If you’ve got a problem with (the state laws), then you’ll have to take it to the legislature.” This answer seemed to satisfy SGA president Danny King, who responded “Sooner or later you’ve got to realize that

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<sup>66</sup> Gary Ellis, “Apartheid Education Committee Demands Complete Divestment,” *The Signal*, Georgia State University, July 9, 1985; Gladys Patrada, “Apartheid Education Group Starts Publication,” July 9, 1985, *The Signal*, pg 3a.

all this research doesn't matter – it's not that relevant b/c the university can't do anything...I don't think the referendum mandated us to go out and try to change the laws.”<sup>67</sup>

Also in July of 1985, *The Signal* posted six passionate editorials from students debating whether divestment would lead to a “bloodbath” in South Africa. The first editorial, written by attacked the divestment movement and even suggests that the SGA went too far in its efforts to follow through with the requirements of the referendum. The writer began her editorial by saying “the issue of the divestment of Georgia State University’s holdings in South Africa seems to me a tired one.” She went on to criticize Georgia State students for wanting to follow the example of “more liberal Ivy league” institutions. This editorial elicited strong responses from those in favor of divestment calling her statements, “inaccurate” and “offensive.”<sup>68</sup>

In the Fall of 1985, GSU student activists, recognizing the limited autonomy of University officials, became more active in pressing the state board of Regents to make the decision to divest. The Georgia State students were joined in this effort by representatives from seven other state schools, and the group planned to attend the Board of Regents’ monthly meetings to protest the state’s investments in South Africa. In November, the students were disappointed when the Board of Regents voted unanimously to continue its South African investment in companies that supported the Sullivan Principles. The Sullivan principles were an employment code that called for desegregation of the workplace, fair employment practices and equal pay. Although these goals were admirable, many black South African leaders as well as anti-apartheid activists worldwide, increasingly believed American companies should use their leverage to force fundamental change in South Africa and that their continued presence in South Africa only served to preserve the status quo. Furthermore, the extent to which the endorsers of

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<sup>67</sup> Andrew Downs, “Ten Companies Found with South African Ties,” *The Signal*, July 16, 1985, 1a, 3a.

<sup>68</sup> Editorials, *The Signal*, July 9, 1985; Editorials, *The Signal*, July 23, 1985.

the Sullivan Principles actually abided by them in practice, remained questionable. With this background in mind, Goldstein wrote in *The Signal*, that “the Regents endorse apartheid by endorsing (the Sullivan) Principles.” He continued with the following question: “Is it not apparent that the Sullivan Principles, authored by a Board Member of a large investor in the South African economy, are a means by which apartheid can continue under a guise of concern and petty reform?”<sup>69</sup>

When Goldstein departed Georgia State, he handed the reins on the South Africa issue over to fellow student, Dwayne Redding. Redding established the GSU Student Coalition Against Apartheid and Racism (GSU-SCARR) and sought collaboration with students at campuses throughout the city and beyond. Redding reminisced,

That’s how we got our strength. When we went to Emory, Emory may have had two or three students that were organizing on divestment issues; Georgia Tech was the same way; Clark AU the same way; Morehouse and Spelman, there were always not more than four students who were on the frontlines. We grew because we shared ideas; we shared information, and that was how we established our own camaraderie... The most important thing that helped us with the GSU anti-apartheid piece was that we began to travel to conferences across the country... And when we went to those conferences oh my God, that was just like, our gas tank went from empty to full. We learned from other student activists and it was always the same scenario, opposition from the administration and only a handful of students who were fighting it... So we drew our strength from attending those national conferences in New York City, and we got the knowledge and the tactics and the strategies, and we shared those, and we began to employ those at Georgia State. And the administration didn’t know this b/c we were not funded... So they didn’t know that we were traveling. They had no way of knowing that we were traveling because we were traveling on our own dime... I loved it. It was everything. It was knowledge; it was tactics, it was camaraderie. We had so much information... We could tell you how much the California board of regents had, how much the Oregon board of regents had, it was organized. It was a well oiled machine.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> “Episcopal church commentary on Sullivan principles,” *The Signal*, November 19, 1985; *The Signal*, November 26, 1985.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Dwayne Redding, March 9, 2014.

Redding and GSU SCAAR began hosting weekly rallies and marches at the Board of Regents Office demanding that the Regents divest from companies doing business in South Africa. During 1986, the Chair of the Board of Regents was Dr. Eldridge McMillan, the Board's first African American chair. On December 10, 1986, under continued pressure the Board of Regents voted to sell its interests in all companies operating in South Africa. Redding recalled, "Eldridge called me, and said we're meeting in January, and I want you to be there because we are going to divest. I was just ecstatic... a part of me could believe it, and a part of me couldn't because during the course of that campaign we would attend the regents meetings, and they are basically telling us, we will never divest." McMillan stated to *The Signal*, "I feel reasonably certain that in time the decision would have happened anyway, but its far to say that (the student group at Georgia State was) instrumental in moving it to the front burner." In 2014, McMillan downplayed the decision,

If my memory serves me correctly, it was not a big discussion or a big issue on the board. There were discussions and pleas and requests from student groups and other organizations that the board would do that, but I think the impetus was already in place. Several of the major corporations...had done it...so it was not virgin territory for the board...The whole business of divestment in South Africa, a lot of that was led on the national scene...it became a thing to do, and there were no contentious discussions going on at the Board of Regents about it, at that time, it was the right thing to do.

Redding further recalled that several months later, a representative from the Regents called him to explain the finances and specific transactions that had occurred to demonstrate that the Board had followed through on its commitment to divest.<sup>71</sup>

This victory was followed by a resolution to divest retirement funds from corporations doing business in South Africa. The resolution was written by Hugh Hudson and Associate Professor of Sociology, Paula Dressel and sponsored by the Georgia State History Department .

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<sup>71</sup> Interview with Eldridge McMillan, May 7, 2014; Interview with Dwayne Redding, March 9, 2014.

The resolution was approved at a January 1986 faculty meeting. Hudson explained that during the mid 1980s, the dynamics in the History Department, the university administration and the student body were changing: “It is true that the student body was not particularly active, but there was a growing small segment of the student body that did understand, and this I think also reflected the growing small presence of African American students at Georgia State.” Hudson believed “that it would be useful if the students saw that the faculty were not just ignoring reality” and that “it was an opportunity for students and faculty to work together.” Hudson reflected on the bigger changes occurring at Georgia State during the 1980s:

“There was an increase in the African American student population; Georgia State was ceasing to be just totally a conservative environment, so a lot of things were coming to a head, and the South Africa divestiture movement really was a symbolic act for many students that just reflected that they were sick and tired of the sort of Reaganesque nature of Georgia State, and the fact that they took a lead I think played a major part in the subsequent development where African American students said Georgia State’s not a bad place to go.”<sup>72</sup>

Following this success, the issue virtually disappeared from the Georgia State campus. During the 1987-88 academic year, not a single article appeared in *The Signal* about either anti-apartheid activism in the United States or about any other topics related to the situation in South Africa. This absence is in contrast to approximately fifty articles that published during the previous two years. Perhaps because anti-apartheid activism at Georgia State was so narrowly focused on divestment, once this goal had been achieved students were unsure of where to focus their energies. Also between September of 1986 and March of 1987 the United States Congress had passed two rounds of legislation establishing economic sanctions against South Africa, a victory for anti-apartheid activists nationwide. However, white minority rule and human rights violations continued in South Africa. Georgia State students were apparently content with their successes in the divestment arena.

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<sup>72</sup> Interview with Hugh Hudson, January 24, 2012.



Less than seven miles away from Georgia State, Emory University approached South Africa from a vastly different background. Unlike GSU, Emory was a private institution and did not require a mandate from the State Board of Regents to make financial decisions. However, Emory's close and historical ties with the Coca-Cola Company shaped the university's approach to the crisis in South Africa. As was the case at Georgia State, Emory's student newspaper, *The Wheel* published frequent articles depicting a wide range of student opinion on the situation in South Africa. Like Georgia State, Emory had a small group of dedicated students who agitated for progressive change in South Africa, and also like Georgia State, as well as a number of students who wrote articles promoting a thinly veiled endorsement of the apartheid status quo in South Africa.

The most unique aspect of Emory's response to the crisis in South Africa was that the initiative was taken by the faculty, rather than the students. Associate Professor of Theology, Jon Gunnemann lamented,

“We held public hearings, and almost no students would come. And I finally joked with them at one point. I said, ‘You know what we should do, we should have a faculty sit in. We’ll have the president of the university and various faculty members go to the student dorms and say, we’re not letting you out of your dorms until you do *something*.’ So reversing the 1960s sit-ins, where everyone was sitting in the administration buildings at Harvard, Yale, you name it. And here, nothing’s happening. That’s the big difference is that it’s top down.”

While the apathy of the majority of Emory's student body may have been surprising, the fact that the impetus for action on South Africa came out of Emory's Candler School of Theology is less surprising. Emory has a strong institutional tradition of liberal Protestant theology.<sup>73</sup>

From 1977 to 1993, James Laney served as the president of Emory University. Like Gunnemann, Laney was a product of Yale University's Divinity School and had been a faculty member in the Candler School of Theology. In September of 1985, Laney appointed a South

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<sup>73</sup> Interview with Jon Gunnemann, March 7, 2012.

African Advisory Committee to research and make recommendations regarding how Emory should respond to the crisis in South Africa. To lead the committee, Laney chose Gunnemann, who had a long history of familiarity and involvement with issues regarding South Africa and American universities. As a graduate student at Yale in the late 1960s, Gunnemann and a fellow student created a South African study group and became concerned about the nature of Yale University's investments in companies that did business with South Africa. With collaboration from a Yale Law School professor, this small study group grew into a year-long graduate level course, productive discussions with members of the Yale Corporation (the university's governing body), and a book titled, *The Ethical Investor*. The book, coauthored by Gunnemann, John Simon and Charles Powers, was published by Yale University Press in 1972.<sup>74</sup>

In *The Ethical Investor*, Gunnemann and his coauthors suggested that universities should continue to purchase stocks based on maximum return principles. However, the authors called for universities to take seriously a commitment to self-regulation, specifically requiring universities to use "shareholder action to deal with company practices which appear to inflict significant social injury." The authors of *The Ethical Investor* did not believe that divestment is an effective technique. Gunneman reflected on these ideas forty years later: "One of the things we discovered, we had economists look at and say, if a major institution...did divest, would it have any impact on the company they divested from, and the answer, simply is no. And we also looked at, we had graduate students in economics run various equations regarding stock prices going up and down, and what happened if huge blocks of stocks were sold, and immense amounts of things like that." Gunnemann and his colleagues concluded that even institutions that

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<sup>74</sup> Interview with Jon Gunnemann, March 7, 2012; John Simon, Charles Powers and Jon Gunnemann, *The Ethical Investor: Universities and Corporate Responsibility* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972); Robert Kinloch Massie, *Loosing the Bonds: The United States and South Africa During the Apartheid Years* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 314-318.

held large amounts of stock in a given company, could have only an extremely limited impact on the prices of shares overall. Thus divestment was only recommended as a last resort: A security should not be sold unless a company's violations were grave, and other methods of correcting the company's practices had failed. Gunneman, Simon and Powers believed that colleges and universities must become committed to self-regulation, and in so-doing, these institutions could at a minimum play a role in the effort to "limit or halt the destruction of life, of opportunity, and of beauty."<sup>75</sup>

Under Gunnemann's guidance, the Emory committee met frequently during the '85-86 academic year and again, Gunnemann took part in a serious study of the benefits, risks and limitations of divestment and the options facing university investors. In a 1986 interview appearing in the *Emory Exchange*, the Candler School of Theology publication, Gunnemann voiced his genuine concerns about total divestment:

"It's highly ambiguous. Some forms of divestment might be effective in helping. Some might not. Blanket divestment or disinvestment tends to be a one shot deal. That is, you sell your whole portfolio, make a symbolic statement, and the most you can hope for is that...it might contribute to a snowball effect. But if none of that pans out, if Coca-Cola and others bow out, ending their involvement in South Africa, and if ten years down the road apartheid is still there, we'll have to let whoever is running that country work on it."<sup>76</sup>

When the Committee published a series of recommendations in May 1986, all participants agreed that Emory's trustees had an obligation that went beyond making investments that benefited Emory financially, and that certain moral and social traditions and values must be upheld. The bigger challenge was deciding how those moral obligations could best be met. The committee's recommendations expressed the opinion that the Sullivan Principles could play a role in creating change in South Africa. The committee used recommendations adopted by

<sup>75</sup> Simon, Powers and Gunnemann, *The Ethical Investor*, 9, 14; Interview with Jon Gunnemann, March 7, 2012.

<sup>76</sup> Richard E. Brown, "Emory Takes a Step: Gunnemann on South Africa," *Emory Exchange*; Candler School of Theology Publication, 2/5/1986, pg 11 – from presidents advisory committee on SA papers.

Stanford University as a guiding framework. The Stanford approach, articulated by political science professor David Abernathy called for trustees to commit themselves not to purchase shares in South African based companies which have not signed the Sullivan codes, or which have signed the codes but have a poor record of enforcement.

The Committee's final report stated that "We are convinced that no investment in South Africa can be ethically neutral." The report called for companies with investments in South Africa to go beyond the Sullivan Principles to actively work to change the political and economic structure of apartheid. For example, companies should provide legal and financial support for employees arrested for violating apartheid laws and engage in discussions with major black leaders. The report argued that companies who made honest efforts to meet these goals might actually have "some creative role in the abolishing of apartheid."<sup>77</sup>

Yet it is necessary to acknowledge that however earnest Emory's Advisory Committee on South Africa may have been in their belief that American corporations could have "some creative role in the abolishing of apartheid," a year later in 1987, Leon Sullivan, author of the Sullivan principles declared his guidelines to be a failure. Sullivan admitted that although 127 American companies in South Africa agreed to abide by the principles, in ten years they had failed to undermine apartheid. Therefore, Sullivan argued, it was time for a new strategy, and American companies should pull out of South Africa.

Some committee members dissented, refusing to approve the final report. These members, along with a small group of vocal students, strongly favored divestment as the path Emory should take. However, divestment was never a serious option for Emory because of the university's extremely close historical relationship with the Coca-Cola Company. The Emory

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<sup>77</sup> "Report of the Advisory Committee on South Africa," September 8, 1986; Emory University President's Advisory Committee on South Africa papers.

Committee's final report specifically addresses Emory's relationship with Coke. The report has an upbeat tone toward Coke's investments in South Africa stating, "The fact that several members of Emory's board of trustees sit on the board of Coca Cola opens the door to long-term, fruitful dialogue. Even more, we hope that Coca Cola will be an exemplary corporate citizen in word and deed in its opposition to apartheid." The report acknowledges that Coke's ratings on the Sullivan Principles are "good although not the very highest in all categories." These conclusions were made after meetings with Coke Vice President Carl Ware as well as Coke director, Donald McHenry. Although both men seemed to believe that Coke's presence in South Africa was a force for good, not all Atlantans felt the same way. A Coke boycott led by groups including The American Friends Service Committee continued through 1987 and will be discussed in Chapter Five.<sup>78</sup>

In addition to analyzing Emory's financial ties to South Africa, subcommittees were also established to study Emory's educational connections to Southern Africa. These subcommittees called for a renewed commitment to African studies and the establishment of funded programs that would allow qualified black South African students to study at Emory. These ideas were non-controversial and easily adopted by the committee.

Similar to the situation at Georgia State, interest in South Africa seems to have diminished at Emory during the 1987-1988 school year. While this change could possibly be attributed to the four year cycle of new students entering and leaving the university, I believe that after the US government passed sanctions, many American activists wrongly believed that their work was done. Unfortunately it would be another seven years before apartheid fell in South Africa when Democratic elections were held for the first time.

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<sup>78</sup> "Report of the Advisory Committee on South Africa," September 8, 1986; Emory University President's Advisory Committee on South Africa papers.

## CHAPTER 2: JOSEPH LOWERY, THE SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE, AND ANTI-APARTHIED

This chapter will discuss the role of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in the anti-apartheid movement. Founded in 1957 to coordinate the political activities of black churches and maintain the momentum created by the Montgomery bus boycott, the SCLC declared that its primary mission was to promote social and political equality for African Americans. However, its commitment to justice in South Africa began with that of founding member and president Martin Luther King Jr. The SCLC continued to be a significant presence in anti-apartheid circles during the 1980s, and then-president Rev. Joseph Lowery's personal advocacy, lobbying and civil disobedience contributed to the expansion of anti-apartheid activity within the United States as a whole and within Atlanta and the southeastern region in particular.

Perhaps to a greater extent than any other American organization advocating for an end to apartheid in South Africa, the SCLC connected the plight of Black South Africans to the struggles of African Americans to achieve racial justice in the United States. By 1957, Martin Luther King had traveled to Africa and began to take seriously his role as an advocate for African peoples in general and black South Africans in particular. Beginning as early as 1962, King called for an international boycott of South Africa. Twenty-five years later in 1987, the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) published King's speech in its entirety in honor of the National Protest Days for South African Sanctions and Divestment. Within the SCLC as well, King's commitments to South African freedom continued to reverberate.<sup>79</sup>

Because of the SCLC's early interest in South Africa as well as the organization's esteem among the African American community and the respect it garnered from liberal white circles,

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<sup>79</sup> Lewis V. Baldwin, *Toward the Beloved Community: Martin Luther King Jr and South Africa* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1995).

leading national anti-apartheid organizations, such as the ACOA and TransAfrica, as well as the Congressional Black Caucus, all sought Rev. Lowery's support for their anti-apartheid efforts and stayed in close communication with Lowery and the rest of the SCLC leadership from the late 1970s through the 1980s. In 1977 Lowery wrote to then Ambassador to the United Nations and former SCLC member, Andrew Young, pledging SCLC support for an arms embargo and economic sanctions against South Africa. That same year Lowery led the SCLC in protest against the Southern Company, an electric utilities provider for its purchase of South African coal. This move was particularly pro-active for the time, as it would not be until the following decade that terms like divestment and disinvestment would become part of the American lexicon. During the 1980s, when the anti-apartheid movement expanded its presence in the United States, the SCLC initiated a boycott against Winn Dixie Food Stores in response to their stocking of imported South African goods as well as their poor track record of promoting African Americans to managerial positions, again connecting local conditions to the international struggle for racial and economic justice. In November of 1984, Lowery was among the first people arrested at the South African Embassy in Washington DC, launching the Free South Africa Movement. This chapter will describe and analyze each of these moments in SCLC and anti-apartheid history.<sup>80</sup>

During the late 1950s, King undertook serious study of the situation in South Africa. He learned that like the Southern segregationists, the apartheid government of South Africa often sought to tarnish the reputation of its critics by brandishing them communists. He realized that the lack of a natural rights tradition or constitutional protection in South Africa made the challenges in South Africa unique and even more daunting than those facing civil rights activists in the United States. King also contemplated the demographic differences between the US and

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<sup>80</sup> Joseph Lowery, letter to Andrew Young, 10/28/1977; Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Book Library, Emory University, SCLC papers (1083), box 87, folder 8.

South Africa. He concluded that the racial make up of South Africa, where whites made up only a small minority of the total population resulted in an elite desperate and determined to cling to its privilege and power by any means necessary. (could add George Fredrickson secondary lit stuff here?). King read about – and was inspired by – the 1952 Defiance campaign led by Chief Albert Luthuli, a series of mass demonstrations against South Africa’s unjust apartheid laws. For his part, King became known and respected in South Africa following his leadership during the Montgomery bus boycott of 1956. In 1957, the same year that King and his associates founded the SCLC, King joined the American Committee On Africa as a way to expand his involvement in international issues. Throughout King’s life, the SCLC remained focused primarily on regional goals, while the ACOA’s mission was to support the anti-colonial struggles in Africa without isolating these concerns from civil rights activism within the United States.<sup>81</sup>

Despite the demographic and constitutional differences between the South African and American contexts, King continued to draw direct connections between the freedom movement in the southern United States and that in South Africa. He saw “the apartheid regime in South Africa as symptomatic of a world problem; namely the irrational preoccupation with skin color, the need for whites to dominate and control peoples of color, and the failure of persons to grasp the extent to which they are interrelated and interdependent.” With this focus on the common enemy of white supremacy, King co-sponsored the 1957 “Declaration of Conscience” calling for a Human Rights Day of Protest against the apartheid government of South Africa. 1957 also marked the beginning of King’s relationship with ANC leaders Chief Albert Luthuli and Oliver Tambo. When these men were among over a hundred South African activists arrested under suspicion of treason, King led fundraising efforts in the United States to support their legal defense and contributed to efforts to publicize and condemn the treason trials in South Africa.

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<sup>81</sup> Lewis, *Toward the Beloved Community*, 29, 31.



Although King and Luthuli never had the opportunity to meet in person, their correspondence reveals two men with the upmost respect for each other's work, philosophy and character. Until Luthuli's death in 1967, King continued to believe that his leadership and vision represented the best hope for a nonviolent, multi-racial South Africa.<sup>82</sup>

The 1960 Sharpeville Massacre led many observers to conclude that non-violent protest would never work in South Africa. The following year the ANC subsequently launched its own armed struggle under the banner, Umkhonto We Sizwe, or Spear of the Nation. While King feared the prospect of race war in South Africa, he refrained from publically commenting on these new tactics. Instead, in 1962 King and Luthuli became the initial sponsors of the ACOA "Appeal for Action Against Apartheid." World response to the appeal was overwhelmingly positive, and the document attracted the signature and support of over 150 world leaders and spurred a new period of interest in events in South Africa among African Americans. When King won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, he took the opportunity to bring his message and commitment to South Africa to an international audience. In London, King gave a speech titled, "Address on South African Independence." On December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1965 the ACOA sponsored an event in honor of International Human Rights Day. Held at Hunter College in New York, and attended by 3,500 people, there King gave a speech, which would be reprinted and referenced by anti-apartheid activists and organizations for decades after his death. In this speech, King called for a major international boycott of South Africa and called out American corporations for their support of the South African economy and thus its apartheid regime.<sup>83</sup>

During the last two years of his life, King's commitments to struggles against racial and economic injustice within the United States provided him little time to actively contribute to the

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<sup>82</sup> Lewis, *Toward the Beloved Community*, 4, 18-21.

<sup>83</sup> Lewis, *Toward the Beloved Community*, 36-38, 47-49.

anti-apartheid movement. At the same time, the SCLC began to struggle financially, in part because of potential donors' rejection of King's militant opposition to the U.S. position in Vietnam. During these years, King worried about the growing appeal of racial separatism as indicated by the rise of the Black Power Movement within the United States and Black Consciousness in South Africa. He attempted to get a visa to visit South Africa at the invitation of the Anglican Students Federation in 1966. As anticipated, King's request for a visa was rejected by the South African government which labeled him a communist and a danger to stability within South Africa. Black South Africans grieved King's death in April of 1968. For many of the more radical members of the ANC, this tragedy served as confirmation that nonviolent movements could not succeed in the face of a violent white society.<sup>84</sup>

While King's legacy within South Africa may have begun to fade during the 1970s as the armed struggle and Black Consciousness Movements gained increasing support, this trend did not replicate itself in anti-apartheid circles outside of South Africa. Instead, within the United States, activists used King's legacy as a way to bring the civil rights and anti-apartheid movements together. This trend certainly held true within the SCLC. SCLC leaders, Jesse Jackson, Ralph D. Abernathy and Bernard Lee followed King's lead in calling for international economic sanctions against South Africa throughout the 1970s and urged the United Nations to consider dispatching a peace keeping force following the Soweto Uprising of 1976.<sup>85</sup>

The SCLC promoted King's legacy on South Africa more extensively during the 1980s, when the organization as a whole became more committed to the anti-apartheid cause during Reverend Joseph Lowery's presidency. On Human Rights Day in 1983, the SCLC republished King's speech from the 1965 Hunter College event. Pamphlets with King's speech in its entirety

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<sup>84</sup> Lewis, *Toward the Beloved Community*, 50, 60-62.

<sup>85</sup> Lewis, *Toward the Beloved Community*, 79-80.

were widely distributed. Even though his words were spoken almost twenty years earlier, in 1983 they still rang true: “We are in an era in which the issue of human rights is the central issue confronting all nations...With respect to South Africa, however, our protest is so muted and peripheral it merely mildly disturbs the sensibilities of the segregationists, while our trade and investments substantially stimulate their economy to greater heights.” The same pamphlet also quotes Joseph Lowery’s own Human Rights Day appeals to eliminate apartheid, as well as King’s 1962 joint statement with Chief Albert Luthuli, urging international sanctions against South Africa.<sup>86</sup>

Perhaps because of the SCLC’s direct connection with Martin Luther King’s legacy, from the beginning of Reverend Lowery’s presidency in 1977, the leading anti-apartheid organizations in the United States consistently sought his support and leadership, as did smaller grassroots groups. Lowery’s rise to the presidency of the SCLC coincided with a newly dedicated anti-apartheid effort among African Americans in the wake of 1976 Soweto massacre and the murder of Steve Biko in 1977. Further, the election of many black politicians to the House of Representatives, made possible by the gains in the Civil Rights Movement, meant that for the first time, issues relating to Africa could expect more than just cursory attention from Congress. This resurgent effort was led by the newly formed TransAfrica, founded by members of the Congressional Black Caucus in 1977. Under the leadership of Randall Robison, TransAfrica began to influence American policy on South Africa through lobbying, educational campaigns and direct action approaches. TransAfrica would ultimately launch the Free South Africa Movement, and become the architects of the 1985 Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Southern Christian Leadership Conference Papers #1083, box 221, folder 22; Emory University, Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library.

<sup>87</sup> Francis Njubi Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans Against Apartheid, 1946-1994*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 104.

Just as the ACOA sought support from Martin Luther King during the 1960s, TransAfrica called for Joseph Lowery to sign on to letters and lend his support to conferences and other events throughout the 1980s. In 1984 Lowery would become one of the first individuals arrested at the South African Embassy as part of the Free South Africa Movement's civil disobedience campaign. In 1979 Lowery was invited to participate in the Summit Conference of Black Religious Leaders on Apartheid in New York City. Lowery attended along with Andrew Young, Jesse Jackson and Leon Sullivan, and served as "toastmaster." The goal of the conference was to dramatize the plight of the victims of apartheid and raise awareness that "in many instances the oppressor is our common enemy – the machinery of multinational corporations based in the United States." Increasingly, activists and concerned observers made the connection between US economic support of the South African economy and the ability of the apartheid government to continue its oppression of the black masses.<sup>88</sup>

In 1985, Lowery received correspondence requesting that he speak at an anti-apartheid rally and march in Atlanta organized by the Phi Alpha fraternity. More than 1,000 fraternity members gathered and heard speeches from Andrew Young, Coretta Scott King, and Maynard Jackson. The fraternity members marched carrying fifty empty coffins to memorialize the recent violent deaths of hundreds of South Africans under the apartheid system. This event was a particularly appropriate one to gain support from the SCLC. During the high point of the organization in the late 1950s and early 1960s, mass marches were the preferred method of protest as the SCLC challenged segregation in Alabama, Washington DC, and throughout the South.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Southern Christian Leadership Conference Papers, #1083, box 89, folder 1; Emory University Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Library.

<sup>89</sup> Pousner, Howard, "Hundreds in Fraternity Rally Against Apartheid," *The Atlanta Journal*, August 12, 1985, A6; Pousner, Howard, "1,000 Fraternity Members Rally Here Against Apartheid," *The Atlanta Constitution*, August 12,

Lowery certainly recognized that his support and opinions could influence the anti-apartheid movement. He used his position to undertake his own lobbying efforts, corresponding with many individuals in positions of power beginning in the late 1970s. Lowery sent at least two letters to Jimmy Carter during the President's last years in office. In June, Lowery wrote Carter to show his support and commend the work of former civil rights ally, Ambassador to the United Nations, and fellow Atlantan Andrew Young. Lowery wrote, "We support and commend efforts to by Ambassador Young to sympathize our own nation, as well as the nations of the world to the entrenchment of racism, conscious and unconscious...The nations of the world need assurance of the US determination to identify and eliminate racism." This letter on behalf of Young followed a period of controversy in which Vice President Walter Mondale had agreed to sit down for discussions with South African Prime Minister John Vorster, a vocal rejection to Young's call for a more firm US and United Nations stance against the South African government.<sup>90</sup>

The following year, Lowery again corresponded with Carter. Lowery wrote to urge Carter not to lift economic sanctions against Rhodesia in the wake of that country's whites only elections. Carter generally agreed with Lowery's sentiments that sanctions should continue until free elections occurred. Lowery's correspondence with the President gained notice from the Congressional Black Caucus, which wrote in support of Lowery's demands and urged fellow supporters to make their voices known "in light of the attacks by the conservatives and the

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1985, A1; Carl Walton, "The Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Beyond the Civil Rights Movement," in Ollie Johnson and Karen Stanford, eds, *Black Political Organizations in the Post Civil Rights Era* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), pg 132. Also in 1985 Lowery agreed to join the advisory board for the Southern Africa Media Center, which intended to produce films on South Africa to "galvanize public opinion." In 1986, Lowery was invited to participate in a march and rally in New York City, organized by the New York Anti-Apartheid Coordinating Committee. Also in 1986, Randall Robinson urged Lowery to sign on to a letter urging congressional representatives to stand up to President Reagan's policies on South Africa.

<sup>90</sup> Southern Christian Leadership Conference Papers #1083, box 104, folder 2; box 89, folder 1; box 101, folder 1; box 103, folder 4, Emory University, Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library.

efforts that have already started in congress to reverse the president's decision." In April of 1981, Lowery spoke out against the U.S. veto of the United Nations condemnation of South Africa's invasion of Angola. Lowery said that the decision was "an assault on the lives and (sic) liberties of black Africans and places the United States government squarely on the side of racist oppression and military aggression in Southern Africa." Lowery was the first American civil rights leader to comment on the veto and emphasized that "It seems obvious that...the administration's conciliatory posture towards South Africa would encourage resistance to liberation and majority rule." Lowery went on to call for US disinvestment from South Africa.<sup>91</sup>

Under Lowery's leadership, the SCLC became one of the first American organizations to respond to the ANC's call for boycotts of South African products. An SCLC pamphlet honoring Lowery's contributions describes that he "led attacks against US businesses having contracts with South Africa before it was popular to do so." As early as 1977, the SCLC contacted the Southern Company, an Atlanta based utilities provider and parent of Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Gulf Power Companies, regarding its contract to buy 7.7 million tons of South African coal over a ten year period. The Southern Company's Florida subsidiary, Gulf Power began purchasing low sulfur South African coal in 1974 in response to newly implemented air quality standards in that state. In a March 1977 mailgram to Southern Company president, Clyde Lilly Jr, the SCLC states "We call upon the Southern Company to cancel this contract. The South African coal may have a low level of sulpher but it contains the highest levels of human shame." Articles in the *Atlanta Journal* and *Atlanta Constitution* quote Southern Company spokesmen as claiming that before the coal contract was signed a study was conducted and mines visited. Southern Company representative, Gale Klappa stated that labor conditions were "comparable to

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<sup>91</sup> Southern Christian Leadership Conference Papers #1083, box 89 folders 2 and 3; box 221 folder 22; Emory University, Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library.

those in U.S. mines” and that the contract specified that slave labor cannot be used. Southern Company president, Lilly explained that the prices for American coal cannot compete with the low priced South African product: “This is strictly a price arrangement.” The *Atlanta Journal* article concluded by stating that the SCLC was beginning a campaign to end South African apartheid, and that the protest of the Southern Company indicated the public launching of this effort. Dr. Lowery followed up the March communication with an additional letter the following month: “Our black brothers and sisters from South Africa insist that their plight will never improve under the present government and that economic support from America drives nails into their coffins.” In this letter, Lowery goes on to connect the plight of South Africans with racial justice within the United States, calling for the Southern Company to appoint a black representative to its board of directors and to provide information regarding how many black executives the company employs.<sup>92</sup>

Joseph Lowery and the SCLC were not successful in convincing the Southern Company to break its contract with the South African coal mines. However, in the mid 1980s when that contract was nearing its expiration, and the anti-apartheid movement within the United States gained momentum, the SCLC renewed its efforts to convince the Southern Company to seek other sources of coal. In May of 1985, Lowery and over 1,000 picketers protested outside the Southern Company stockholders meeting in Biloxi, Mississippi. Lowery told the press, “This coal is dipped in the blood of blacks in South Africa.” Southern Company representatives continued to claim that South African miners were paid fairly regardless of race. However,

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<sup>92</sup> Southern Christian Leadership Conference Papers, #1083, box 87, folder 5 and box 2, folder 19; Emory University Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Library; Sam Hopkins “African Coal Ban Urged,” *Atlanta Constitution*, March 25, 1977; “South African Coal Deal Draws SCLC Attack,” *Atlanta Journal*, March 24, 1977; Bob Deans, “Don’t Buy South African Coal, SCLC Asks Southern Co.,” *Atlanta Journal*, May 16, 1985, D1 (accessed online).

Lowery pointed out that black South Africans are not legally allowed to obtain the status of “miner,” and are thus limited to lower paid positions.<sup>93</sup>

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference was joined in the Biloxi protest with members of a miners union in Alabama. A representative from the United Mine Workers of America explained that their protest was inspired by both humanitarian concern for the terrible treatment of black mine workers in South Africa, as well the fact that the cheap South African coal undermined the American mining economy. The United Mineworkers’ protest against South African coal went back to the mid 1970s. During the Fall of 1974, an organizing conference called Stop South African Coal was held in Atlanta and sponsored by the United Mineworkers, the African Liberation Support Committee, and the Southern Conference Education Fund. Nearly 200 people attended the conference, including representatives from the Philadelphia Coalition to Stop Rhodesian and South African Imports. These representatives shared with the group information on their successful campaign to stop Southern African chrome from being unloaded on local docks.<sup>94</sup>

As of June of that year, Southern Company president, Edward Addison still refused to say whether or not his company would renew their contract with the South African coal mine. Although company spokesman, Gale Klappa said that the contract would be reviewed, she emphasized that the deal with South Africa would be altered only if it became economically advantageous. In 1986 the SCLC continued to pressure the Southern Company not to renew its South African contract. By that point the Southern Company was purchasing about 800,000

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<sup>93</sup> Mike Christensen and Steve Harvey, “Apartheid Called Issue of the ‘80s,” *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, September 29, 1985, A1 (accessed online); Bob Deans, “Don’t Buy South African Coal, SCLC Asks Southern Co.,” Southern Christian Leadership Conference Papers, #1083, box 221, folder 22, Emory University Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Library.

<sup>94</sup> Eileen Whalen, “South African Coal Conference,” *Southern Patriot*, January 1975, Georgia State University Southern Labor Archives, L1991-13, box 3389, folder 9.



metric tons of coal, worth \$46.4 million from South Africa each year. The 1986 Southern Company stockholders meeting was held in Birmingham Alabama on May 28<sup>th</sup>, and again the SCLC led the protests outside the meeting, joined by members of the United Mine Workers. Southern Company leaders attempted to stop the picketing before it began by notifying Joseph Lowery a week earlier via letter that the South African coal would indeed be replaced by other sources *when* the contract expired. However, at the annual meeting, the stockholders rejected the adoption of a proposal to prohibit future purchases of coal from apartheid South Africa. The Southern Company continued to insist that its decisions were based solely on economics, as low sulphur coal from the United States had become more readily available in the ten years since the original contract had been in place. Lowery expressed his disappointment that the Southern Company refused to make a statement of moral disapproval of the apartheid system.<sup>95</sup>

The SCLC's most well-known boycott was of Winn Dixie grocery store chain. During the mid 1980s high point of American public interest in South Africa, the boycott of Winn Dixie again connected the plight of blacks in South Africa with that of African Americans. The SCLC called out Winn Dixie for selling canned peaches and pears from South Africa, as well as for the store's poor record in hiring and promoting African Americans to managerial positions. Joseph Lowery explained "we believe the selling of South African products may be symptomatic of a deep insensitivity to the need for racial justice and equity in Winn Dixie employment practices." The South African products were discovered by a member of the SCLC's Women's League while shopping at the store. The SCLC later learned that the stores within the Winn Dixie chain carried frozen fish from South Africa as well. While Winn Dixie claimed that the canned fruit

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<sup>95</sup> Robert Snowden Jones, "Southern Seeking to Fight Suit," *Atlanta Journal*, May 28, 1986, D1 (accessed online).

came from a one time purchase, frozen whiting fish from South Africa continued to arrive at its stores.<sup>96</sup>

The boycott officially launched on September 24, 1985, less than three weeks after the South African products were discovered at the store, and two weeks after Winn Dixie president Dano Davis neglected to respond to Lowery's request for a meeting. Davis did finally respond to the initial request, with an offer to meet with Lowery individually. A week into the boycott, on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, Lowery, accompanied by two other SCLC officials, traveled to Jacksonville, Florida and tried unsuccessfully to speak at Winn Dixie's annual stockholders' meeting. Despite having purchased stock in the company, Lowery was not allowed to speak, and the meeting was abruptly adjourned. Also on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, Davis informed the SCLC office via telegram that he was no longer willing to meet with Lowery as long as the boycott remained in effect.<sup>97</sup>

On October 22, 1985, Lowery sent a letter to all SCLC board members and chapter presidents explaining the necessity of the Winn Dixie boycott. In addition to emphasizing that Winn Dixie's sale of products from South Africa was harmful to the international anti-apartheid movement, Lowery stated that "Winn Dixie has a dismal history of negative labor and racial policies and practices. Numerous complaints of racial discrimination have been filed with EEO and in the courts. Win-Dixie has no Black directors or executives that we know of. They say they have approximately 70 Black managers out of 1,262. We have not located them." Lowery went on to criticize Winn Dixie for doing very little business with black-owned companies. Lowery requested support from SCLC members in picketing and distributing information outside

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<sup>96</sup> Herbert Denmark, "South African Fruit Cause of Boycott by SCLC," *The Atlanta Daily Voice*, October 5<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>, 1985, Southern Christian Leadership Conference Papers, #1083, box 221, folder 22, Emory University Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Library and box 279, folder 25, Emory University Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Library.

<sup>97</sup> Southern Christian Leadership Conference Papers, #1083, Box 279, folder 25, Emory University Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Library.

selected Winn Dixie locations. The goals that Lowery outlined for the boycott focused on eliminating American corporate support for the South African apartheid government and at the same time expanding career opportunities for African Americans. These goals were characteristic of the SCLC's focus and tactics of connecting domestic racism and inequality with international issues.<sup>98</sup>

The boycott grew quickly. From its start at a few Atlanta-area stores, the demonstrations spread to Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Kentucky and Virginia. Support soon spread beyond the initial SCLC constituency. On October 23<sup>rd</sup>, SCLC representatives met with local labor leaders to educate them about the action against Winn Dixie. As a result of the meeting, the Georgia State AFL-CIO and the Atlanta Labor Council pledged their support and a labor-sponsored press conference was planned for November 22<sup>nd</sup> outside the Monroe Drive Winn Dixie. At the ensuing press conference, Herb Mabry, president of the Georgia AFL-CIO stated, "The very nature of our organization dictates that if any of our brothers and sisters have a problem with any group or organization like Winn Dixie that refuses to rid their stores of products being manufactured and processed in a country that denies civil rights...then we have no alternative than to join with SCLC and ask the people of this nation to boycott Win Dixie until they take these products off the shelves." Al Keher, Associate Civil Rights Director for the AFL-CIO also spoke. Keher emphasized the common histories of the labor and civil rights movements and the value of coming together for a common cause. The SCLC's Albert Love led the effort to increase the role of the labor movement in the boycott, and in a November 11<sup>th</sup> memo Love urged union members to participate in picketing and to wear

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<sup>98</sup> Southern Christian Leadership Conference Papers, #1083, box 221, folder 22, Emory University Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Library.

caps and jackets with their union names and logos. By this point the boycott's goals had been expanded to a demand that Winn Dixie begin to recognize unions.<sup>99</sup>

The boycott also gained support from other organizations, including the Concerned Black Clergy of Atlanta. In addition to pledging his support for the SCLC-sponsored boycott, Reverend Cornelius Henderson, leader of this organization, made up of seventy-five Atlanta-area churches from thirteen different denominations, stated, "We further call upon the Black community to continue patronizing Black Minority businesses, particularly, those in plazas where Winn Dixie stores are being boycotted. We will not, we cannot be bought!!!" The Concerned Black Clergy was officially established in 1983 to organize black ministers to confront issues of homelessness in Atlanta. The roots of the group originate with meetings between ministers trying to provide leadership during the missing and murdered children crisis in Atlanta from 1979-1981.<sup>100</sup>

In addition to the Concerned Black Clergy and the labor groups mentioned above, boycott leaflets also cited support from numerous other church groups and pastors, as well as from the Atlanta University Center Coalition Against Apartheid, State Representative Robert Holmes, and Mayor Andrew Young. The Charleston Chronicle out of South Carolina published a photograph of Mayor Young marching in front of a Winn Dixie, holding a poster that read "Winn Dixie Sells South African Products – Don't Shop Here." Supporting the anti-apartheid cause provided Mayor Young with an opportunity to deflect criticism of his conservative agenda as Mayor. State Representatives Mable Thomas, Georganna Sinkfield, Jim Martin, Billy McKinney, Douglas

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<sup>99</sup> Southern Christian Leadership Conference Papers, #1083, Box 279, folder 25 ("memorandum to metro atl labor leaders, 11/11/1985), and box 221, folder 22 ("AFL-CIO joins SCLC's Winn Dixie Boycott"), Emory University Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Library.

<sup>100</sup> "Black Clergy Join SCLC Boycott vs. Winn Dixie," *Atlanta Voice*, November 16<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>, 1985, box 279, folder 25; Harvey Newman, "Black Clergy and Urban Regimes: The Role of Atlanta's Concerned Black Clergy," *Journal of Urban Affairs* (V16:No1, 1994), pgs 23-33; For more information on the race and the Atlanta child murders see Bernard Headley *The Atlanta Youth Murders and the Politics of Race* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999) and Maurice Hobson, *The Dawning of the Black New South: A Geo-Political, Social and Cultural History of Black Atlanta, Georgia 1966-1996*.

Dean, Julian Bond, and Tyrone Brooks participated as well. District of Columbia Congressman, SCLC member, and well-known leader of the Congressional Black Caucus, Walter Fauntroy also lent his support.<sup>101</sup>

From its origins during the Civil Rights movement, SCLC leaders often “relied on being arrested in order to draw attention and support to a particular cause.” The direct action campaigns during the anti-apartheid efforts were no exception to this tradition. In November demonstrators began to be arrested during the Winn Dixie protests. One of the first such arrests occurred in Greenville, North Carolina, indicating the geographic reach of the boycott. On November 14<sup>th</sup>, Joseph Lowery was among nine protestors cited for trespassing at the Greenville Winn Dixie. At that point demonstrations had been occurring at this location for six weeks. On November 27<sup>th</sup>, the day before Thanksgiving, arrests took place in Atlanta. Lowery and nineteen other demonstrators, including elected officials, students, and religious leaders spent Thanksgiving Day fasting in the Dekalb County jail. Less than a month later, on Friday December 20<sup>th</sup>, Fulton county police arrested four protestors outside the College Park Winn Dixie location. The four men arrested were all clergymen and were four of about thirty demonstrators picketing this Winn Dixie location. Most of the picketers left when being ordered to do so by Fulton County police, but the Reverends Lawrence Carter, Joseph Roberts, Clinton Marsh and James Milner refused and were charged with criminal trespass. Finally, on Tuesday January 7<sup>th</sup>, 1986 ten protestors were arrested at the Winn Dixie location on Martin Luther King Jr Drive. These ten picketers were among thirty people demonstrating outside the store that evening. The ten individuals arrested by City of Atlanta Police included three children of Martin

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<sup>101</sup> “Legislators Join SCLC Boycott of Winn Dixie,” *Atlanta Voice*, October 26<sup>th</sup>-November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1985 - Southern Christian Leadership Conference Papers, #1083, Box 221, folder 22 Emory University Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Library; flyer from box 221 folder 22 (“Don’t Shop at Winn Dixie Supermarkets”); Elain Tomlin, photograph from *Charleston Chronicle*, November 9, 1985, Section B; photo of Walter Fauntroy by Elain Tomlin, box 221 folder 22.

Luther King, as well as State Senator and civil rights leader, Julian Bond. Angela Farris, niece of Martin Luther King was also arrested and later gave a statement to the press emphasizing her confidence in the efficacy of non-violent protest and stating her disappointment in the Reagan administration's refusal to impose strict sanctions against South Africa. As of October 1985, the Martin Luther King Drive Winn Dixie store was not a target for the demonstrations. This location was one of the few Winn Dixie stores with a black manager, and the SCLC "did not want to make the Black manager look bad." It is not clear at what point the demonstrations spread to this location.<sup>102</sup>

Very quickly upon its beginning, reports began to surface that the boycott was having an impact. By late October the *Atlanta Voice* newspaper reported that "at the Moreland Avenue Winn Dixie store, the number of cars in parking lots on heavy shopping days has dropped, as have sales on meat." The paper followed up in early November by stating that "Winn Dixie has gone to the extreme of beefing up their ad campaign and even giving items away for free." In January, the *Atlanta Daily World* quoted an SCLC spokeswoman as saying, "we've had people in Atlanta tell us that where there have been five cashiers during peak hours, there is just one or two now." On the other hand, also in January, a Winn Dixie spokesperson painted a different story: "Overall there's not been enough of an effect to even give a percentage... It's not a measurable amount at all." Either way, by mid January the boycott had met with some success and was officially called off by SCLC. Winn Dixie paid over \$2,000 to print an ad in the *Atlanta*

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<sup>102</sup> "Lowery 1 of 9 Cited in Protest of Winn-Dixie's S. Africa Link," *The Charlotte Observer*, November 15, 1985, Southern Christian Leadership Conference Papers, #1083, Box 279, folder 25 Emory University Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Library; SCLC press release: "Georgia State Senator and Anti-Klan Leader Among those Arrested in SCLC Demonstration Against Winn Dixie," Southern Christian Leadership Conference Papers, #1083, Box 279, folder 25 Emory University Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Library; Connie Green, "Four Arrested in Anti-Apartheid Protest at College Park Supermarket," *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, December 21, 1985, A25 (accessed online); Billy Mallard, "Three Children of King Arrested at Store Protest," *Atlanta Journal*, January 8, 1986, B8 (accessed online); Herbert Denmark, "South African Fruit Cause of Boycott by SCLC," *Atlanta Voice*, October 5-11, 1985 – box 221, folder 22; Carl Walton, "The Southern Christian Leadership Conference."

*Constitution* emphasizing that the store no longer sold South African products: “In May 1985, Winn Dixie took voluntary action to discontinue the purchase of merchandise produced in the Republic of South Africa, and South African products have been liquidated from all Winn-Dixie stores. No South African products are offered for sale in any Winn-Dixie store.” Two days later the SCLC called off the boycott despite the fact that it does not seem that the other complaints against Winn Dixie in regards to domestic racism were addressed. The SCLC’s willingness to call off the boycott indicates that in this instance the organization prioritized a focus on contributing to the international anti-apartheid movement, rather than its historical focus on promoting racial justice within the United States.<sup>103</sup>

As mentioned previously, Reverend Lowery’s name recognition meant that national and transnational anti-apartheid groups sought his support. The African American lobbying group for African and Caribbean issues, the Congressional Black Caucus’s TransAfrica took the leading role in escalating the anti-apartheid efforts of Americans in the mid 1980s. TransAfrica used its Washington-insider status to oppose the Reagan administration’s apartheid-friendly policies. Ultimately in late 1984 TransAfrica changed tactics, introducing civil disobedience as a way to make a strong statement against the apartheid regime. On the day before Thanksgiving 1984, three activists refused to leave a meeting at the South African Embassy in Washington DC. Randall Robison, the leader of TransAfrica explained to the South African Ambassador, Bernardus Fourie, that the group would not leave his office until the South African government released all political prisoners and publically committed to quickly dismantle the apartheid

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<sup>103</sup> “King Children Arrested,” *Atlanta Daily World*, January 10, 1986 (accessed online); “Legislators Join SCLC Boycott of Winn Dixie,” *Atlanta Daily Voice*, October 26<sup>th</sup>-November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1985, Southern Christian Leadership Conference Papers, #1083, Box 221, folder 22 Emory University Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Library; “Black Clergy Join SCLC Boycott Vs. Winn Dixie,” *Atlanta Voice*, November 16<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>, 1985, Southern Christian Leadership Conference Papers, #1083, Box 279, folder 25 Emory University Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Library; Constance Malko, “Winn Dixie Ad Brings End to SCLC Boycott,” (no paper title listed) - Southern Christian Leadership Conference Papers, #1083, Box 279, folder 25 Emory University Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Library.

government. The three activists were promptly removed from the building and arrested on charges of “unlawful entry of an embassy.”<sup>104</sup>

The sit-in was planned for the day before Thanksgiving because the holiday would mean a slow day for political news, and TransAfrica hoped that media coverage of the protest would be substantial. When major news outlets released coverage of the events, their focus centered on the arrest of District of Columbia Congressman and SCLC member, Walter Fauntroy. Over the weekend, Fauntroy announced the formation of the Free South Africa Movement, which was necessary, he explained due to the failure to convince Congress to impose Sanctions on South Africa. Robinson made it clear that the abolishment of Reagan’s constructive engagement policy towards South Africa was a significant goal of the Free South Africa Movement. Robinson warned that demonstrations would be held at the embassy in Washington as well as at South African consulates around the United States until these demands were met.<sup>105</sup>

The next arrests occurred on the Monday after Thanksgiving. Joseph Lowery joined Illinois Representative, Charles Hayes in protesting at the South African Embassy in DC. According to Free South African Movement Steering Committee member, Sylvia Hill, Lowery and others who participated in that first week of protests “were people we knew and could call on quickly.” Lowery and Hayes were denied their request for a meeting with Ambassador Fourie but refused to leave the building. They were arrested by Secret Service officials and taken into custody. Upon his release from jail, Lowery stated that protestors “are prepared to have people arrested every day to raise national consciousness about this problem.”<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, pg 125; Sylvia Hill, “The Free South Africa Movement,” presentation given in Durban, South Africa, revised, October 27, 2004, accessed online on March 11, 2013 - [senc.ukzn.ac.za/doc/AAMwebsite/AAMCONFpapers/Hill,Sylvia.doc](http://senc.ukzn.ac.za/doc/AAMwebsite/AAMCONFpapers/Hill,Sylvia.doc).

<sup>105</sup> Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 125.

<sup>106</sup> Sylvia Hill, “The Free South Africa Movement;” 2004; Michel Marriot, “South Africa Protest Continues, Congressman, SCLC Leader Arrested at Embassy,” *The Washington Post*, November 27, 1984, B1.



The following month Lowery wrote an editorial in the *Atlanta Constitution* titled, “Morality Demands Change in South Africa.” In this essay, Lowery explained to readers the “ugly truth about racist oppression in Southern Africa overall and the Republic of South Africa in particular.” After describing apartheid laws, citing examples of brutal violence from the South African government, and lamenting the possibility of race war in South Africa, Lowery goes on to urge Americans to “refuse to become partners in apartheid” and to “use our moral and economic authority to minimize the loss of human life.” His particular focus in this editorial is to emphasize the role of U.S. corporate activity in South Africa. He argues that “corporations must demand that the South African government enter negotiations with South African black leaders...to write a new constitution. A timetable must be adopted and a deadline must be set for a long mutual agreement. Failure by the South African government to cooperate with the deadline would automatically initiate divestment procedures.”<sup>107</sup>

Also during December the SCLC sponsored boycotts at the South African consulates in both Mobile, Alabama and New Orleans. Joseph Lowery and Walter Fauntroy traveled to New Orleans to lead the efforts. From the consulate in New Orleans the protest moved to the Southern Coin Exchange in an attempt to get the store to stop selling Kruggerands, gold coins from South Africa. Local SCLC official, Reverend James Livingston believed that presence of the SCLC’s national leadership in New Orleans greatly increased enthusiasm for anti-apartheid efforts in New Orleans: “There was an interest in organizing protests against South Africa but not much was happening...Now various groups have been meeting around the city to escalate the protests.”

As has been demonstrated in this chapter, in some instances Reverend Lowery and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference did not shy away from controversial politics and took

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<sup>107</sup> Joseph Lowery, “Morality Demands Change in South Africa,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, December 16, 1984.

bold actions to promote justice. However, by the 1980s, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference could be seen as a part of Atlanta's political establishment. Some more radical anti-apartheid activists were suspicious of Lowery and the SCLC. Georgia State University student activist, Dwayne Redding said:

They went from issue to issue, whatever was hot at that time. Whatever was in the news, that's what they were involved with...But they weren't gonna put anything on the line that would challenge their position at that time or at the future to really fight these... battles. And Joe Lowery...he didn't fight this battle. I can't point to any tangible victories he ever produced...These people are hungry for the media.<sup>108</sup>

As will be discussed shortly, Lowery's unwillingness to challenge the Coca Cola Company during the second half of the 1980s compromised the SCLC's ability to claim a prime leadership role in the anti-apartheid movement as this period of American activism reached its climax.

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<sup>108</sup> Interview with Dwayne Redding, March 9, 2014.

CHAPTER 3: THANDI GCABASHE AND THE AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE  
COMMITTEE: BUILDING A GRASSROOTS ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT IN  
ATLANTA

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) led the way in creating an active and influential anti-apartheid movement within the city of Atlanta. The leadership and dedication of South African exile Thandi Gcabashe is a primary reason for the AFSC's position in the forefront of Atlanta's anti-apartheid scene, but this Quaker organization took an interest in promoting racial justice in South Africa before Gcabashe's involvement began. This chapter uses archival materials from the American Friends Service Committee's national headquarters in Philadelphia, newspaper articles, and oral history interviews with Gcabashe, SERO director Elizabeth Enloe, as well as other Atlanta activists to analyze the AFSC's tremendous role in creating an anti-apartheid movement in Atlanta and the southeast.

David Hostetter's *Movement Matters: American Antiapartheid Activism and the Rise of Multicultural Politics* features a section analyzing the history of AFSC involvement in South Africa, which explains the forces that shaped AFSC's action regarding South Africa and provides a great background for understanding the decisions that the Atlanta leaders confronted during the 1980s. The American Friends Service Committee is a Quaker organization established during World War One to provide pacifist Quakers and other conscientious objectors opportunities to serve through relief work. The organization continued to work for peace and social justice after the end of the First World War and through World War Two, earning a Nobel Peace Prize in 1947. As the American Civil Rights movement escalated in the South over the next two decades, the AFSC became vocal in its support for racial justice. In 1963, the organization published and promoted Martin Luther King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail."

Radicalized by experiences during the Vietnam War, many AFSC staffers became increasingly critical of U.S. Cold War interventions and support for corrupt anti-communist regimes around the world. By the 1970s AFSC was calling for economic sanctions against and divestment from South Africa and focusing on educating the American public on the horrors of the apartheid system. As the AFSC became increasingly vocal about these issues, the organization faced accusations that it was too sympathetic to left-wing governments and liberation movements, and that it had strayed from its initial emphasis on relief work and reconciliation and had abandoned its commitment to nonviolence.<sup>109</sup>

Critics included right-wing journalists and politicians, but questions also arose within the ranks of the AFSC. Some Quakers called for the AFSC to resume its traditional role of a neutral broker urging reconciliation. These critics questioned AFSC's support for revolutionary liberation movements that resorted to violence against their oppressors. Hostetter acknowledges that "AFSC's search for the means to show support for the aspirations of liberation movements while maintaining its commitment to nonviolence proved arduous." The AFSC's national leadership, including Bill Sutherland, Stephen Cary, Michael Simmons and Jim Bristol took such accusations seriously, but ultimately believed that a commitment to nonviolence did not preclude providing active support for anti-apartheid groups within South Africa and argued that the situation in South Africa necessitated taking sides.<sup>110</sup>

The AFSC's South Africa Program came to exemplify the concept of liberation pacifism by combining nonviolent action with support for African based groups fighting for an end to apartheid. Bristol, director of the AFSC's Southern African Program articulated these ideas in a 1972 article titled "Non-Violence Not First for Export." Emphasizing the influence of Gandhi

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<sup>109</sup> David L Hostetter, *Movement Matters: American Antiapartheid Activism and the Rise of Multicultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 44, 57.

<sup>110</sup> Hostetter, *Movement Matters*, 49.

and Martin Luther King's teachings and lives of non-violent direct action, Bristol goes on to explain the ANC's reasons for establishing an armed liberation wing and states: "We cannot prescribe for people in a situation totally different from our own, no matter how sincerely we may believe that we can see a better way for waging a revolutionary struggle than the one they have chosen...Certainly we dare not judge the morality of their choice." Bristol urges white Americans to acknowledge and accept that they themselves are part of the white status quo and that their actions come from a position of privilege. He called on Americans to focus their efforts on lobbying the U.S. government to end their support for the apartheid regime.<sup>111</sup>

Significant, if not overt, racial tensions also existed within the AFSC and among Quakers. In 1978 the AFSC launched a program called South Africa Summer which focused on educating the public about South African apartheid through workshops, films and demonstrations. The program involved student volunteers who worked with the staffs at the various regional offices. Some Quakers voiced criticism about the militancy of some of the volunteers, many of whom were African American. In Chicago the volunteers were not welcomed to eat at the Quaker meeting house. Deliberate affirmative action in AFSC hiring practices led to increasing numbers of non-white non Quaker staff, a demographic shift which likely contributed to accusations that the group had lost sight of its original purpose. In 1980 AFSC representatives undertook a trip to South Africa. The trip was controversial from the beginning because African American participants would have to take on "honorary white" status to travel with the group in South Africa, and because many AFSC representatives felt like they needed to join the international boycott on travel to South Africa. Indeed during the trip, one African American participant lamented that "they (white South African Quakers) would be

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<sup>111</sup> Hostetter, *Movement Matters*, 45, 50.

receiving me as a guest in their home yet speak or act in a racially insensitive way toward their black hired laborers or servants.”<sup>112</sup>

Tensions between the AFSC and South African Quakers had already emerged before the 1980 trip. The South African Friends saw divestment and boycotts as “institutional violence aimed at destroying the South African economy and thereby the power of the white regime without any accompanying efforts to provide for constructive measures for the future.” While the South African Quakers remained skeptical of the ANC, the AFSC commented that these white Quakers “do not see themselves as part of the problem.” South Africa Program Director, Michael Simmons articulated the divide: “How many Quakers in South Africa refused the privileges of their race? Can we distinguish the lifestyle and character of South African Quakers from other whites in South Africa... Why does AFSC continue to focus on the messenger, rather than the messages? Are Friends concerns coming from a Quaker context or a white context? Why would some view the two as synonymous?”<sup>113</sup>

Within the United States, the AFSC played a leading role in increasing public awareness of apartheid and the mounting crisis in South Africa as well as in promoting divestment and general economic withdrawal from South Africa. In 1965, after many conversations with Chase Bank regarding the bank’s loans to South Africa, AFSC became one of the first organizations to withdraw its balance from the offending bank. Two conversations with Archbishop Desmond Tutu during the late 1970s reaffirmed the AFSC commitment to advocating for economic sanctions. During the 1980s the AFSC coordinated communication between the various anti-apartheid groups to organize collaborations avoid overlapping efforts. As a long established and well known organization in social justice circles, the AFSC was able to supply the “resources,

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<sup>112</sup> Hostetter, *Movement Matters*, 46, 54-55, 60.

<sup>113</sup> Hostetter, *Movement Matters*, 54, 60.

staff and expertise essential for a foreign policy dissent movement to function and flourish.” The AFSC in general, and the South African staff in particular demonstrated that it was indeed possible for advocates of nonviolence to create solidarity with armed liberation groups without compromising their principles.<sup>114</sup>

Hostetter’s piece provides an excellent background for understanding AFSC anti-apartheid policies on a national level. However, he neglects to analyze the activities of the Southeast Regional Office in Atlanta. The wealth of archival materials at the Philadelphia AFSC headquarters demonstrates that the Southern Africa Peace Education Project in Atlanta, led by Gcabashe and supported by SERO director, Elizabeth Enloe, was incredibly active and influential in promoting education and activism throughout the Southeast. As Hostetter emphasizes, the AFSC provided education and support in regions of the United States that were underserved by other anti-apartheid groups. This chapter will confirm that assertion by tracing the history of the AFSC’s South African peace education division in Atlanta.

As mentioned previously, the role of Thandi Gcabashe in building an anti-apartheid movement in Atlanta cannot be overstated. Gcabashe did much of this organizing work through her position as Director of the SERO’s Southern African Peace Education Program. Gcabashe arrived in Atlanta in 1970, a political exile from South Africa. Gcabashe was born in 1934 in Groutville, South Africa, a town located in an area set aside as a reservation for black South Africans under the 1913 Native Land Act which reserved 87% of South Africa’s land for whites. Both of Gcabashe’s parents worked at Adam’s College, one of the oldest schools for black South Africans, established in 1853. Gcabashe attended an all-girls boarding school, and received the best education possible for a black child under South Africa’s segregated education system. Gcabashe’s father, Chief Albert Luthuli became Chief of Groutville in 1936 and President of the

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<sup>114</sup> Hostetter, *Movement Matters*, 45, 47, 61, 64.

ANC in 1952. In 1960, Luthuli was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his contributions to the nonviolent struggle against racial injustice in South Africa.<sup>115</sup>

Like her late father, Gcabashe engaged in anti-apartheid activities within South Africa through the ANC, earning her the antipathy of the South African government. During the 1950s and '60s, she was arrested numerous times for participating in anti-apartheid demonstrations. Gcabashe made the decision to flee South Africa after working underground within the country for ten years. She made her decision both because she worried about her childrens' safety and education within South Africa, and because she believed that she could be more effective working outside the country. A friend of her father's worked for the American consul and was able to obtain passports for Gcabashe's family by claiming they were his domestic workers and would be traveling on holiday with his family.<sup>116</sup>

After researching several cities in the United States, the Gcabashe family – Thandi, her husband Thulani and four children – decided to settle in Atlanta. They were drawn to the city by the majority black population, the presence of the King Center, and the city's history in the Civil Rights Movement. Gcabashe – a nurse and a midwife by training – was quickly able to find work in Atlanta, both practicing nursing as well as educating future nurses. However, she continued to have a desire to work for change within South Africa. Gcabashe saw a sign calling for volunteers to help with the American Friends Service Department's welfare program, working on local domestic issues. She became a regular volunteer with the AFSC. At the beginning of the 1980s,

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<sup>115</sup> <http://www.luthulimuseum.org.za/index.php/luthulis-life-/biography> (accessed May 20, 1013); Malkia M'Buzi Moore and Thandi Gcabashe, "Amandla! Reflections on the Struggle for South African Liberation," pgs 129-132 in Alice Lovelace, et al eds, *Crux: A Conversation in Words and Images, South Africa to South USA* (Atlanta: Fulton Country Arts Council), 2007.

<sup>116</sup> Interview with Thandi Gcabashe by the author, February 20, 2013; For more information about the life and contributions of Chief Albert Luthuli, see Logan Naidoo, *In the Shadow of Chief Albert Luthuli: Reflections of Goolam Suleman* (Groutville: Luthuli Museum, 2010); Mary Benson, *Chief Albert Luthuli of South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), and Lewis Baldwin, *Toward the Beloved Community: Martin Luther King and South Africa* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1995); Thomas Keith, "Atlanta's Rebel With a Cause: From Downtown Office, Tandi Gcabashe Fights South African Apartheid," *The Atlanta Constitution*, October 24, 1985, C1.



the Southeast Regional Director told her about the AFSC's South Africa Program based in Philadelphia. He asked her if she would like to direct such a program in Atlanta. She agreed and was hired on as an AFSC employee.<sup>117</sup>

Shortly thereafter, in the Fall of 1981, Gcabashe placed an advertisement in local newspapers, calling for a meeting of people who were interested in issues regarding Southern Africa and the United States' role in that region. The meeting was held at the First Congregationalist Church in downtown Atlanta, a denomination that was at the forefront of anti-apartheid activism nationally. The meeting was attended by at least twenty individuals, and Gcabashe was thrilled with the response. Gcabashe said that the core group of attendees were people from the Atlanta University Center, including Mack Jones and Earl Picard. Gloria Gaines was also present at this first gathering, and she and Mack Jones were elected co-chairs of the new Southern Africa Support Committee. Later the group was renamed and became The Georgia Coalition for Divestment in Southern Africa. The Coalition's purpose was to support and enhance the work of the American Friends Service Committee's Southern Africa program by advocating for Atlanta-based companies to fully withdraw from South Africa.<sup>118</sup>

One of the Georgia Coalition's first targets was Atlanta-based M&M products, a black-owned hair-care company and fourth largest black owned company in the United States. During the early 1980s, M&M expanded its market into Southern Africa. While the company claimed that their Southern Africa business was located solely in Swaziland and Botswana, Gcabashe responded that "they are trying to circumvent the divestment issue – they do very little business in Botswana and Swaziland." According to Earl Picard, active member of the Georgia Coalition

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<sup>117</sup> Interview with Thandi Gcabashe by the author, February 20, 2013.

<sup>118</sup> Interview with Thandi Gcabashe by the author, February 20, 2013; Interview with Gloria Gaines by the author, November 9, 2012; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, "Program Description – Southern Africa Peace Education Program;" American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania .

and a PhD student at Atlanta University's Political Science Department (at that time), prominent local African American leaders including Coretta Scott King and Joe Beasley were actively involved in the discussion with and regarding M&M Products. M&M Products contracted with a Swaziland-based company called Vivid Distributors to market the products throughout Southern Africa. Finally, during the summer of 1985, M&M Products announced "its decision to sever all ties with Vivid U.S. Distributors...M&M has taken the step of terminating this distributor in order to end the perception that M&M's relationship is inconsistent with its stand against the reprehensible system of apartheid in South Africa." Gcabashe praised this decision and confirmed the company's withdrawal as legitimate and suggested that M&M Products be asked to be a part of a boycott against Coca Cola that was just in its fledgling stages. Activist, Earl Picard confirmed that "The Atlanta black leadership also endorsed M&M for its actions."<sup>119</sup>

In 1985 the Georgia Coalition sponsored demonstrations against Holiday Inn, Westin Hotel Company, General Motors and IBM. All of the demonstrations intended to bring attention to the fact that these U.S.-based corporations sustained the South African apartheid government with their investments and thus "continued to "profit off racist tyranny." For example, Holiday Inn licensed with Rennies Consolidated to open twenty-two hotels within South Africa which would, of course, carry out South Africa's segregationist policies. General Motors was allegedly the second largest U.S. employer in South Africa. It was particularly offensive to anti-apartheid activists because the company sold vehicles directly to the South African police and military "allowing those used to transport prisoners to jail." Further, according to a Georgia Coalition

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<sup>119</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, "Southern Africa Program Committee First Monthly Meeting," October 21, 1985; American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, "Joint News Conference Statement: M&M Products," American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, "Georgia Coalition for Divestment from South Africa, Monthly Staff Meeting," June 20, 1985, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Interview with Earl Picard by the author, April 30, 2012; Interview with Gloria Gaines, November 9, 2012.

flyer, “GM has admitted that because of the strategic importance of their facilities to the apartheid economy, GM plants could be converted to wartime use if the government so ordered.” Anti-apartheid activist and union organizer, Dianne Mathiowetz, commented, “By that time I was working at GM, on the assembly line...I would be outside passing out flyers to my coworkers that said, ‘What Every Worker Should Know About South Africa.’”<sup>120</sup>

At an April 1985 protest outside an IBM stockholders meeting, Gcabashe was arrested for trespassing, along with State Representative Tyrone Brooks, then City Councilman John Lewis, Georgia Coalition Chair Mack Jones and five other demonstrators. The *Atlanta Constitution* article that covered the demonstration and arrest explained, “literature from the protesters claims that IBM is the largest computer supplier in South Africa, with annual sales estimated at about \$215 million.” A *Business Week* article from March of the following year confirmed this estimate, citing IBM’s annual sales in South Africa a value of \$200 million. Ironically, despite IBM’s willingness to continue trading with the apartheid regime, the computer giant began to lose business in South Africa, as South African companies shifted their computer purchases to Japanese brands in anticipation of sanctions laws from the U.S. government. While Japan banned direct investment in South Africa as early as the late 1960s, companies such as Hitachi got around the laws by sending their computers to South Africa via West Germany. By the end of 1986, IBM was one of many U.S. companies who claimed to have withdrawn from South Africa immediately following the passage of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act over President Reagan’s veto. However, IBM products continued to be available in South Africa

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<sup>120</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “General Motors Out of South Africa,” American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “U.S. Corporations Out of South Africa!” American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “Holiday Inn Out of Racist South Africa!” American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Interview with Dianne Mathiowetz by the author, January 11, 2012.

through new local marketers. While IBM proudly announced that it had turned over its South Africa operations “to a new company created for the benefit of employees,” anti-apartheid critics considered this type of divestment to be a sham, allowing IBM to retain access to the South African markets and profits.<sup>121</sup>

As early as 1978 the AFSC had called for a boycott of the popular South African gold coins, called Krugerrands. A 1978 flyer emphasized that “every ounce of gold that South Africa can sell abroad enriches the white regime. It adds up to more arms, more repress, more poverty, more deaths for hundreds of thousands of black Africans.” The flyer called for Americans to urge local retailers to stop selling the Krugerrand. By 1985 this protest had reached Atlanta. On May 22 a demonstration was held at Georgia Stamp and Coin in downtown Atlanta. A flyer advertising the demonstration informed Atlantans that “Black miners dig the gold that makes South Africa rich... However, black miners are not receiving the benefits. Black miners are prevented by law from occupying highly-skilled and highly-paid jobs.” The flyer also makes the connection that the Krugerrand is named after Paul Kruger, a nineteenth century white South African leader who called for the black South African “to be taught that he came second and that he belongs to the inferior class that must obey.”<sup>122</sup>

In 1986, the Georgia Coalition and the AFSC joined the NAACP, AFL-CIO, United Mineworkers and leaders of the Washington DC-based Free South Africa Movement (FSAM), in boycotting Shell Oil Company. Shell was chosen as a target because of the “parent company’s

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<sup>121</sup> Gayle White, “Lawmakers Lewis, Brooks Arrested at Demonstration,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 30, 1985; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “Japan is Ready to Fill IBM’s Shoes,” *Business Week*, March 3, 1986, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, Alan Cowell, “The Ambiguity of South African Divestment,” *New York Times*, December 31, 1986, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

<sup>122</sup> “South Africa’s Krugerrand: The Gift of Blood,” [http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document\\_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-17FD](http://africanactivist.msu.edu/document_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-17FD), accessed May 23, 2013; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “Stop the Sale of Krugerrands!!” American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

heavy involvement in the South African economy,” in regards to its petroleum and mining operations. With this boycott, the demonstrators emphasized the connections between apartheid in South Africa and labor conditions in the United States. The flyers pointed out that by taking advantage of cheap labor in South Africa, Shell could export inexpensive products to the United States and other nations, undercutting American workers. While most of the AFSC and Georgia Coalition boycotts took place in downtown Atlanta, the Shell Retail Training Center was located in Smyrna, and the demonstrators met downtown to travel together to the west-side suburb. Randall Robinson, FSAM co-chairman stated: “Shell is the first company on our list...it is not the last.” He warned that demonstrations against Shell would take place throughout the United States “with the same efficiency and consistency that we’ve seen for over a year at the South African Embassy. As did the leaders of other multinational corporations, a Shell spokesman argued, “By being there we are doing the right thing, helping bring about change through our social and employment policies, and by speaking out against the apartheid system.” Anti-apartheid activists, of course were not convinced, and Shell did not provide details regarding its alleged history of “speaking out against the apartheid system.”<sup>123</sup>

Ken Martin of the AFSC Philadelphia headquarters wrote a 1987 essay titled, “Economic Non-Cooperation: Some Thoughts on Boycotting,” which addressed criticisms over the types of activity described above. Martin emphasizes the long history of economic sanctions as a tool of government diplomacy, but makes a clear distinction between the morally driven call for sanctions against South Africa, which “emerges from a grassroots determination not to contribute the continuation of that regime” in contrast with historical U.S. government usages of sanctions to “coerce other nations to conform to the foreign policy objectives of the strong.”

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<sup>123</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “Boycott Shell,” American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Robin Toner, “Shell Oil Boycott Urged: Pretoria Policy at Issue,” *New York Times*, A7, January 10, 1986 (accessed May 22, 2013).

Martin suggests that the efforts to discredit sanctions may emerge from the fact that divestment is at the expense of powerful multi-national corporations. Further, Martin argues against those who believe that U.S. corporations can use their influence in South Africa to advocate for social change, and emphasizes that a stronger statement would be “a refusal to supply South Africa’s economy with further means to afford to make warfare upon its own citizens and the peoples of surrounding countries.” Finally Martin responds to those Quaker critics who worry whether economic disengagement is a legitimately nonviolent strategy, as opponents argued that a weakened South African economy would hurt the black masses. Martin believes this type of reasoning is not valid. By the late 1700s Quakers were encouraged to “manage their money in ways that did not bear the seeds of war.” A 1986 AFSC memo with the subject line, “Definitions and Talking points on Corporate Withdrawal from South Africa,” further elaborates on the intentions of the AFSC-supported divestment movement:

AFSC’s purpose in divesting and in promoting disinvestment and corporate disengagement is to cease profiting from apartheid, to withdraw its economic support from apartheid, and to exert moral and political pressure in support of apartheid’s abolition. The efforts are not intended to threaten South Africa’s government or people or cripple their economy. They are motivated by a desire to communicate support to those who, at great risk, are resisting apartheid and seeking to build a just society.<sup>124</sup>

Also during 1986 the Georgia Coalition for Divestment in Southern Africa began taking steps to become “legally independent from AFSC.” The proposed breakup was an amicable one, and SERO director Elizabeth Enloe helped Georgia Coalition co-chair, Gloria Gaines, through the process as the group sought to incorporate as a nonprofit, establish bylaws and a new organizational structure, and fill out the necessary paperwork to gain federal tax exemption.

Throughout this process, the AFSC continued to provide the Georgia Coalition with financial

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<sup>124</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, Ken Martin, “Economic Non-Cooperation: Some Thoughts on Boycotting,” May 28, 1987, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

and institutional support. It appears that the motivation for the Georgia Coalition's independence was so that this group could take on full leadership of the Coke Boycott. Gaines wrote, "We have formed a committee which is moving fairly rapidly on the major issues required to become legally independent from AFSC and, therefore, to implement the agreement reached between AFSC and the Coalition some time ago regarding the administration of the Coke Campaign." The Coke boycott will be discussed in depth in a later chapter. It is not clear if the Georgia Coalition ever did establish complete independence from the AFSC.<sup>125</sup>

As its name suggests, one of the primary goals of the AFSC's Southern Africa Peace Education Program was "educating Americans on Southern Africa issues and the U.S. role in supporting apartheid...making oppressed people in the U.S. aware of oppression in South Africa and U.S. business involvement in that oppression." To this end, much of Gcabashe's time was spent traveling around Atlanta, the Southeast and beyond, speaking to groups about the crisis in South Africa. From the beginning of her employment with the AFSC – and perhaps before – Gcabashe gave frequent talks to "civic, cultural and educational institutions" on apartheid. During October and November of 1982, Gcabashe spoke at Spelman and Emory Universities in Atlanta as well as traveled to Florida State University, University of North Carolina, Duke University and Davidson College.<sup>126</sup>

Again in the Fall of 1984, Gcabashe had a particularly busy schedule of speaking engagements. During September, she traveled with an eighteen member tour to Midwestern states, including Minnesota, South Dakota and Wisconsin. The following month, after coordinating a Student Divestment Conference at Atlanta's Interdenominational Theological

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<sup>125</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, "Letter from Gloria Gaines to Elizabeth Enloe," May 1986, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

<sup>126</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, Thandi Gcabashe, "Resume," American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, "Thandi Gcabashe, Trip Report," 1982, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

Center, Gcabashe and thirteen other activists divided into four teams and traveled to a total of twenty-six cities across nine states. The tour involved “speaking, showing films and slides and doing TV and radio shows” for student, community, church and labor groups. On October 16, 1984 Archbishop Desmond Tutu was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his work promoting racial justice in South Africa. This award increased American public awareness of the crisis in South Africa, and according to Gcabashe, “media interest was stimulated by Bishop Tutu winning the Nobel Peace prize plus the increased resistance to apartheid by the masses inside South Africa.” During this same month, Gcabashe accepted invitations to speak at several Protestant churches. Perhaps American Christians began taking a greater interest in events in South Africa in the wake of Bishop Tutu’s Nobel Prize. Gcabashe was later invited to speak to the Atlanta Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women as well. By the end of the month, Gcabashe had also done appearances at Georgia State, Spelman and Morehouse. Finally, she also spoke at Harper and Wheeler High Schools, both located in Metro Atlanta.<sup>127</sup>

These visits to local high schools in 1984 were a precursor to a more concerted effort to reach younger students by 1987. An AFSC Southeastern Regional Office memo lamented, “It has been found, through our speaking engagements, that elementary and high school teachers are often as uninformed as the students.” Gcabashe planned a teacher training seminar to be held at the Georgia Association of Educators Headquarters. The one day seminar would address the concepts of disinvestment and economic disengagement, U.S. foreign policy towards Southern Africa, current divestment legislation, and the history of churches and religious groups in the

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<sup>127</sup>Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, Thandi Gcabashe, “Southern Africa Program Report,” November 28, 1985, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “Letter to Tandi Gcabashe from Deirdre Holler,” September 2, 1986, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.



anti-apartheid movement. The AFSC representatives were confident that “By empowering the educators it will be possible to reach a vast student population.”<sup>128</sup>

Beginning in December of 1980 the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution calling for entertainers to protest South Africa’s apartheid government by refusing to perform in that country. The AFSC and Georgia Coalition for Divestment took a leading role in promoting the cultural boycott locally. In October of 1983 the UN released a list of 211 singers and groups who had violated this boycott. This statement from the UN included particular condemnation of Frank Sinatra: “While some of the collaborators may have visited South Africa out of ignorance of the situation or lure of exorbitant fees, others have shown deliberate insensitivity or hostility to the legitimate aspirations of the oppressed people of South Africa.” Sinatra visited South Africa twice in the early 1980s despite the appeals and protests of anti-apartheid groups. His actions were particularly offensive because on his second visit he played in Bophuthatswana, one of the areas designated as a Black Homeland in South Africa in an effort by the apartheid regime to maintain the large majority of valuable South African land for whites and to promote the government’s goals of “separate development.” Sinatra accepted an award from the “president” of Bophuthatswana, and his press spokesman stated about the trip, “We...were entirely satisfied with the conditions of civil rights, integration and the like.” Before Sinatra came to Atlanta to perform at the Fox Theatre in 1984 he received a letter from Bill Withers, Chair of the Cultural Boycott Subcommittee of the Georgia Coalition for Divestment in Southern Africa. The letter was printed on AFSC letterhead. In the letter, Withers urged Sinatra to denounce the apartheid regime and to apologize for having performed in South Africa. Withers explained that “Bophuthatswana is not an independent nation; it is the result of a racist

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<sup>128</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “Untitled AFSC memo,” American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

and genocidal policy of the white minority regime in South Africa to forcibly remove black South Africans into controlled areas called ‘homelands.’” Withers warned Sinatra that if he did not respond to this letter, and make a public apology, the group would proceed with plans to picket outside of the Fox Theatre during his performance. Sinatra did not respond, and the demonstration did occur, though it was not covered by the Atlanta press<sup>129</sup>.

When singer Helen Reddy came to Atlanta to perform at Chastain Amphitheatre, Gcabashe issued a press release stating that because Reddy had performed in South Africa during November of 1982 in violation of the United Nations sanctions, the event would be protested by the Georgia Coalition. In the release Gcabashe explained, “By performing in South Africa artists give support and credibility to the racist system of apartheid.” According to the press release, the planned picketing was “intended to show Helen Reddy and others that enlightened public opinion will not tolerate their indifference to the struggling people of South Africa.” By 1985 the cultural boycott had achieved some success locally. Minutes from the Georgia Coalition’s monthly staff meeting revealed that radio station “WRFG has agreed to discontinue playing music by entertainers who have performed in South Africa.” The group planned to lobby other stations to make a similar declaration.<sup>130</sup>

During November of 1985 Gcabashe coordinated a visit from Leah Tutu, wife of Archbishop Tutu and Director of the Domestic Workers and Employers Project in Johannesburg. The trip was funded by the American Friends Service Committee. During her time in Atlanta, Tutu gave a talk at Morehouse College, during which her message emphasized one particular

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<sup>129</sup> “Entertainment Boycott: Sinatra and the Beach Boys Criticized for South African Dates,” *Spokane Chronicle* via the Associated Press; October 26, 1983.

<sup>130</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “Thandi Gcabashe, Press Release,” American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “Georgia Coalition for Divestment From South Africa, Monthly Staff Meeting,” June 20, 1985, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

point, “Apartheid is evil; please help us destroy it.” Attendees at the event included most of the city’s African American leaders and anti-apartheid activists including, John Lewis, Julian Bond, Andrew Young, Coretta Scott King and Joseph Lowery. At the event, Mayor Young declared November 7 Leah Tutu Day in Atlanta. Before the public address, Tutu attended a fundraising reception which supported the AFSC’s Southern Africa Peace Education Fund. On the following day Tutu met with a group of invited activists and students at the King Center to discuss the anti-apartheid work being done in Atlanta.<sup>131</sup>

The *Atlanta Journal Constitution* covered the Leah Tutu visit with surprising detail given that publication’s frequent neglect of anti-apartheid demonstrations around the city. In addition to the speech at Morehouse discussed above, Tutu also participated in a press conference at Atlanta’s City Hall. Her comments during this event are described in a November 6 article with the headline, “Mrs. Tutu: Soviet Help is Acceptable, South African Leader Refuses to Deny Possibility of Black Communist Rule.” Despite the alarmist title, the content summarizes Tutu’s statements in a fairly neutral tone and includes lengthy quotes in which Tutu explains that she believes that it is unlikely that Black South Africans would choose to create a communist government once the apartheid system was abolished. The article also quotes Tutu’s concerns regarding South Africa’s ban on photo coverage of violence as an attempt to prevent the outside world from learning the true brutality of apartheid South Africa. On November 8, the paper printed coverage of Tutu’s appearance at Morehouse. As mentioned above, Tutu’s speech emphasized that apartheid is an evil system. According the *Atlanta Journal*, Tutu, “assailed Western government leaders who refuse to repudiate, protest and place sanctions on the ‘evil’ minority rule of whites over blacks in South Africa.” Tutu also met privately with AJC editors

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<sup>131</sup> “Leah Tutu Visits Atlanta, To Speak on South Africa,” *Atlanta Inquirer*, November 9, 1985, pg 1; David Stokes, “Mrs. Leah Tutu Spoke Before a Crowded Auditorium,” *Atlanta Inquirer*, November 16, 1985, pg 1.

where she discussed her work with domestic workers in Johannesburg and stressed the growing anger that she has witnessed brewing among Black South Africans as violence and unrest have increased throughout the country. Finally, Tutu addressed the alleged concerns of American business interests who have argued that it is the black workers who would be hurt most by sanctions and divestment from South Africa: “Blacks are being hurt now and hurt very badly. We don’t care for people’s concern for our future miseries when they don’t care for our present miseries.”<sup>132</sup>

Ironically, Leah Tutu’s time in Atlanta coincided with a visit from Chester Crocker, architect of Reagan’s failed Constructive Engagement policy towards South Africa. Crocker, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs traveled to Atlanta as a guest of the Southern Center for International Studies. Despite the escalating turmoil in South Africa, as of 1985, Crocker continued to attempt (unsuccessfully) to keep focus on the positive changes coming from the apartheid government, claiming that “Pretoria has made more reforms in the last four years than in all the previous forty.” The AJC ran an editorial by staff writer, Tom Teepen which criticized Crocker’s stance and Reagan’s intransigence, pointing out that even if Crocker’s statement was true, “it is a very small brag, when offered of a country where almost no reforms were made in forty years.” Teepen attributes “all the dithering by the Reagan administration” to a “pathological fear of even titular communism” and the fact that “America’s South Africa policy has always been uniquely caught up in our own racial psychodrama.” Teepen closes by connecting Crocker’s presence in Atlanta to Tutu’s. Tutu spoke about the daily funerals of young black men killed in South Africa and buried by the forsaken wives, while Crocker and Reagan

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<sup>132</sup> Hayes, Katheryn, “Mrs. Tutu: Soviet Help is Acceptable – South African Leader Refuses to Deny Possibility of Black Communist Rule,” *Atlanta Journal*, November 6, 1985, A1; Connie Green, “Mrs. Tutu Assails Western Support for South African Government,” *Atlanta Journal*, November 8, 1985, C3; Kevin Sack and Katheryn Hayes, “Blacks’ Anger ‘is very strong,’ Won’t Go Away, Tutu’s Wife Says in Atlanta,” *Atlanta Constitution*, November 7, 1985, A7.

continued to urge Americans to understand how difficult change is for white South Africans. “No doubt,” Teepen writes, “But, more difficult than it is for the young widows of black South Africa?”<sup>133</sup>

The volume of archival sources and newspaper articles on anti-apartheid activism seems to peak around 1985 or 1986 and then decline in the latter years of the 1980s. I believe this decline can be attributed to the fact that the U.S. Government passed sanctions against South Africa in 1985 and 1986, so perhaps some activists felt that their work was complete, or more likely, they did not know where to focus their concerns following their successes with Congress. Certainly, the horrors of the apartheid system lived on in South Africa until the 1990s, and some groups within the United States continued to work to raise awareness. The Coke boycott was a huge part of the AFSC’s work in the latter half of the 1980s, and this campaign will be discussed in depth in a latter chapter.

Throughout the late 1980s, AFSC continued to host events designed to raise awareness of the struggles of South Africans. These events included a March 1987 tree planting in honor of Nelson Mandela in front of the Atlanta University Center’s Woodruff Library. The event coincided with the publication of *Nelson Mandela: The Struggle Is My Life* as well as the United Nations-declared “International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.” This date, March 21 also commemorated the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre in South Africa. In addition to the tree planting, a press conference and book reception were held as well. Several months later, on June 4, AFSC again sponsored similar event, honoring Mandela and calling for his freedom. This event was held downtown in Woodruff Park, and included a speech from Gcabashe and the presentation of a sculpture to Mayor Andrew Young. Also in 1987 AFSC sponsored a “South

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<sup>133</sup> Tom Teepen, “Empty Boasts About South Africa,” *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, A14, November 9, 1985.

African Awareness Week,” in February. The week featured events everyday, including a play, a rally, speeches and films.<sup>134</sup>

David Hostetter argues that the AFSC’s relationship with liberation groups in Africa and beyond was strained. He emphasizes the tension between the AFSC’s role as a pacifist organization and the armed liberation movements such as the ANC. Gcabashe’s life and work indicates that this relationship did not necessarily have to be difficult. A lifelong ANC member, Gcabashe began to work towards starting a local chapter in Atlanta in 1981, the same year she was hired by AFSC. The chapter sought to overcome apathy among local South Africans and focused on educating new members regarding the history of the ANC and the organization’s struggles against the apartheid system. In July of 1982, Atlanta hosted the ANC Annual Conference, which was declared a success. Gcabashe addressed the relationship between the AFSC and the ANC in a February 2013 interview:

It was really a delicate balance as you can imagine. Within the AFSC there was a long discussion about whether they should even have this Southern Africa program with South Africa on it because they could not support any people who were at war within their own country, with the authorities in that country. But it helped, I think that at the same time, the World Council of Churches, as well as the South African Council of Churches, they were beginning to discuss the issue of what means can justify the ends. They were discussing the role of armed struggle in South Africa and...Some of them were saying...Jesus, in his preaching he stood for the oppressed, for the poor, for the down trodden, and sometimes he was very forceful in the way he went about doing that...So some of those arguments helped eventually to soften the position of the Church as a whole from South Africa to the World Council and to other churches as well...And the other argument from the ANC side, which I really pushed with the AFSC was, look at the history of the ANC. We did not just wake up one day and say, hey this

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<sup>134</sup>Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “Letter from AFSC, Arts Festival of Atlanta, Itinerary for June 4, 1987” American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “A Tribute to Nelson Mandela and Commemoration of the Sharpeville Massacre,” American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

oppression is painful, it's hard, it's difficult, we need to pick up arms and fight. We had a long history of non violent struggle.<sup>135</sup>

Gcabashe's former boss, Elizabeth Enloe, Director of the AFSC's Southeast Regional Office took Gcabashe's position a step further, she emphasized that the AFSC's long history and commitment to nonviolence combined with Gcabashe's unique personal history "allowed people to continue to discuss what nonviolence meant in terms of revolution, in terms of oppression and in terms of its counterpart in the violent struggle."<sup>136</sup>

The AFSC's Southern Africa program experienced nationwide struggles in the late 1980s. A June 1987 letter from Southern Africa Staff around the country to the AFSC's Philadelphia leadership expressed "deep concern about the status of AFSC Southern Africa Programs nationwide." Writers of the letter were outraged that "several (4) Southern Africa programs had been placed at risk, due to budget shortages and regional prioritization decisions." The letter's authors believed that the AFSC's stated affirmative action goals were not being fulfilled and that "substantial Third World program termination point to deficiencies in the processes of evaluation, oversight, and accountability on the local, regional and national levels." These accusations point to the types of tensions described in Hostetter's analysis of the AFSC's Southern Africa programs.<sup>137</sup>

The Atlanta office was not immune from these challenges. Gcabashe's Quarterly Report for the Fall of 1988 stated several concerns. Malkia M'buzi had been a part-time AFSC employee working within the Southern Africa program, but by the late Fall 1988 was "no longer

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<sup>135</sup> Tandi Gcabashe, Interview, February 13, 2013.

<sup>136</sup> Interview with Elizabeth Enloe by the author, May 15, 2013; Interview with Thandi Gcabashe by the author, February 20, 2013; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, "Southern Africa Monthly Activities Report," May-September 1982, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, "Annual Report on ANC – Atlanta Chapter," American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

<sup>137</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, "Letter June 3, 1987," American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

available because we were unable to raise the funds necessary for her continued employment.” M’buzi was particularly involved with the Coke boycott, and Gcabashe reported that volunteers were being recruited to fill the gap left by M’Buzi’s departure. Further, Gcabashe reported that in regards to the Georgia Coalition for Divestment, “membership of this group has greatly reduced overtime.” Despite these difficulties, Gcabashe herself was quite active throughout the Fall of 1988, traveling to Nashville, Boston and North Carolina for various events and speaking engagements. She also spoke at Atlanta area high schools, churches, the King Center, Georgia State University, and the Carter Center during October and November.<sup>138</sup>

As has been demonstrated in this chapter, within Atlanta, the American Friends Service Committee took a leading role in creating an antiapartheid movement that gained a visible presence in the city. Gcabashe herself can take a significant portion of the credit for the level of influence and visibility that this movement achieved in Atlanta. As Elizabeth Enloe emphasized,

The role that AFSC was able to play because of Thandi, because of who she was, her credibility, her really remarkable ability to work with all people across the political spectrum, and to be understanding and respected for who she was and what she represented was really extraordinary. And that made it possible for an organization, in this case the AFSC to remain at the nexus of a great deal of the organizing... It was Thandi still being able to sit with people and understand what they were thinking, but talk with them about other perspectives in order to move the bigger picture forward. So it’s an individual capacity; not all people have it, but she certainly had it in quantity.

The AFSC’s influence, as well as that of the Georgia Coalition for Divestment, will become even more evident in future chapters on the campaign for a divestment bill in the Georgia State legislature and the nationwide Coca-Cola boycott.

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<sup>138</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “Southern Africa Peace Education Program Quarterly Report,” Fall 1988, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.



## CHAPTER 4: WHAT THEY CALL POLITICS: ATLANTA'S POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT AND SOUTH AFRICA

After Reagan's election as president in 1980, anti-apartheid activists in the United States realized the immense challenge they would face in getting the Republican-controlled Federal Government to take action against apartheid South Africa. In response to the changed political situation, activists began to focus on local and state governments. This chapter puts efforts to promote city and state level divestment in Atlanta and Georgia into a broader context of city and state divestment campaigns nationwide. Atlanta Mayor, Andrew Young was a key figure in mediating the connection between Atlanta and South Africa. Because of his personal connections to the civil rights movement and his subsequent rise to international political prominence as Ambassador to the United Nations under the Carter administration, Young characterized the combination of possibilities and limitations of the anti-apartheid movement in Atlanta. On the other hand, the experiences and contributions of Tyrone Brooks, also a civil rights veteran, former Southern Christian Leadership Conference organizer and elected official, offer an alternative vision of how an African American political leader from Georgia could influence the anti-apartheid movement. Brooks' more activist approach to divestment legislation, however, did not yield success in a resistant State House of Representatives.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s anti-apartheid organizations in the United States increasingly worked together to build coalitions to unite diverse constituencies and to educate the public about the ways that corporate and government action continued to support apartheid. More and more Americans learned about the presence of foreign capital in South Africa through these campaigns and through improved media coverage. After the Soweto uprising of 1976, European enterprises began to take the initiative to pull out of South Africa, in contrast to the

decision of American corporations to increase their presence in South Africa. In order to achieve their goals of influencing corporations to withdraw from South Africa, activists made use of both assimilative and confrontational approaches. This chapter examines both assimilative, or “inside” approaches, which include lobbying, election campaigns and petitions, and the complementary confrontational, or “outside,” activities, which include demonstrations and civil disobedience.<sup>139</sup>

By the end of 1980, the AFSC, American Council on Africa (ACOA), TransAfrica, and the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR), among other groups had come together to create the Campaign Against Investment in South Africa. One of the key players behind this coalition was the Connecticut Anti-apartheid Committee, (CAAC) a group established in 1978. The CAAC was largely responsible for, Connecticut leading the way in state-level action. In June 1982, Connecticut’s governor signed into a law a bill that “required that the state divest all companies that were not in the top two Sullivan categories; all companies that made strategic sales...and all companies that refused to recognize the right of South African employees to organize and strike.” Although the law was not as stringent as the one CAAC had initially proposed, its passage was still significant. By the end of the year three cities and three states had approved divestment bills, and similar legislation had been filed in twenty-three other states.<sup>140</sup>

In the months leading up to the passage of the Connecticut bill, the governor appointed a task force to research the impact that divestment would have on the state economically. After consulting several sources, the task force determined that shifting funds into a portfolio that did not include countries operating in South Africa might actually result in higher returns. In the

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<sup>139</sup> Donald Culverson, *Contesting Apartheid: U.S. Activism, 1960-1987* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999) 77, 82, 101.

<sup>140</sup> Robert Massie, *Loosing the Bonds: The United States and South Africa in the Apartheid Years* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 479, 530, 534-536.

early 1980s, smaller corporations were growing more rapidly than the huge multinational companies that were likely to have a presence in South Africa. This data gave activists a new advantage in their efforts to force state pension funds to divest. Pension funds were a favorite target because of the huge sums of money they contained – often billions of dollars. The Massachusetts state legislature was the first to approve a full divestment of state pension funds. As in Connecticut, this legislation was made possible by a small group of committed activists. In 1979, activist and state representative Mel King filed divestment legislation in the Massachusetts General Assembly. King and his allies realized the need to raise awareness of the situation in South Africa and to create an umbrella organization to unite potential supporters. The resulting MassDivest coalition launched a public education campaign in 1981 and achieved success in early 1983 when the state legislature overrode the governor's veto, and passed a full divestment bill into law.<sup>141</sup>

Later that year, New York City led the way in municipal level divestment as attention shifted to city pension funds. By 1984 New York was pursuing selective divestment and attempting to avoid purchasing products from businesses still maintaining their South African ties. These efforts had an immediate impact – both Kodak and Motorola responded first by ceasing sales to the South African military and police and then by selling their South African subsidiaries so as to maintain their profitable relationship with New York City. Other cities throughout the United States observed the effects that New York's divestment had on Motorola and Kodak and sought to pass their own divestment legislation.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> The Massachusetts divestment bill was vetoed by lame duck conservative governor, Edward King, who had just lost his reelection bid to Democrat and supporter of divestment legislation, Michael Dukakis. Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 534, 536, 540; William Minter, Gail Hovey and Charles Cobb, eds. *No Easy Victories: African Liberation and American Activists Over Half a Century, 1950-2000* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2008), 154 .

<sup>142</sup> Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 545.

During the 1980s, Atlanta's city government was led by Mayor Young. On the surface Young seemed like a prime candidate to lead a city to take an activist approach on international issues in general and against apartheid in particular, as he had gained much personal experience in Africa and beyond during his tenure as United States Ambassador to the United Nations from 1977-1979. President Jimmy Carter, a fellow Georgia Democrat, chose Young because of his history of civil rights work and close personal friendship with Martin Luther King Jr. Carter wanted his administration to create a foreign policy with an emphasis on human rights and believed that Young's connection to King's legacy and philosophy made him the right person to represent the United States at the UN. Young's appointment was initially a source of hope for black South Africans. According to Mark Mathbane, author of the popular memoir, *Kaffir Boy*, Carter's "appointment of Andrew Young as UN ambassador brought tremendous joy and hope to blacks and infuriated and frightened the government and its supporters."<sup>143</sup>

What Mathbane and other black South Africans probably didn't know, however was that back in Atlanta, Young had already come into direct conflict with a younger generation of anti-apartheid activists. Immediately after the Soweto uprisings in South Africa, Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger traveled to West Germany for a preplanned, friendly meeting with South African Prime Minister BJ Vorster – despite demands from anti-apartheid activists to cancel the meeting in the wake of the violence. A group of Atlanta University students led by Earl Picard and Adolph Reed organized a demonstration at the Federal Reserve Bank Building in Atlanta to protest Kissinger's continued diplomatic ties with the South Africans. In contrast, Young, who at the time was serving in Congress as the Fifth District US Representative, supported the meetings between Kissinger and Vorster. Demonstrators told the *Atlanta Constitution* that they were

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<sup>143</sup> Andrew DeRoche, *Andrew Young: Civil Rights Ambassador* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc, 2003), 74-75; Mark Mathbane, *Kaffir Boy: The True Story of a Black Youth's Coming of Age in Apartheid South Africa* (New York: Plume Books, 1987), 340.

“dissatisfied and gravely concerned” with Young’s statements in support of Kissinger: “We call on Congressman Young to denounce the meetings between Kissinger and Vorster as residents of the Fifth Congressional District.”<sup>144</sup>

Reed explained that Young had refused a meeting with this group of activists before the demonstration, but

After Andy was blasted in the *Constitution*, he found time to meet with us....He met with about thirty of us in Sage Hall in a room on the AU campus. Andy comes in; goes around the room, glad handing and doing what they call politics. We hadn’t talked about it a whole lot, but we were all determined to be on our best political behavior - no slogans. And it got frustrating because Andy kept insisting that we were all on the same side as the children of light, and Kissinger and the National Security Council...their problem wasn’t really racism; it was that they didn’t understand the black mind, and that’s why we needed to have more black presence in the State Department. So we kept going around and around and he was as slippery as an eel... Still though, nobody’s talking about imperialism, but we’re sort of peppering him (about the relationship between South Africa and Israel), and then Andy says, finally, ‘Look, you can’t expect me to be part of a worldwide struggle against imperialism.’ This is like a direct quote. He was the first person in the room to use the word. And then he says, ‘Because for one thing I’m too much a part of the imperialist system myself.’ You could have heard a pin drop, we’re all just looking around at each other, like did he just fucking say that... Well that kind of ended it. I said, ‘Well thanks for making that clear. So I’ll know now when Gabriel blows his horn, I’ll just look to see which way you’re going, and I’ll go the other way.’<sup>145</sup>

When Young made his statement about the need for a stronger black presence in the State Department, he likely already knew that he would receive an appointment in Carter’s administration, if Carter won the election the following Fall. According to Reed, Young prepared for the appointment by trying to “invent himself as an African specialist.” Although Young, as the youngest ever US Ambassador to the UN, did not have any formal diplomatic experience prior to his appointment, he had previously traveled to over thirty countries around the world, and had established friendships and contacts in many African governments. Young

<sup>144</sup> Bill King, “South African Talks Protested Here,” *Atlanta Constitution*, June 24, 1976, 17A; Interview with Adolph Reed, March 22, 2014.

<sup>145</sup> Interview with Adolph Reed, March 22, 2014.

and Carter made improving U.S. relations with Africa a major focus. Establishing a strong diplomatic connection with Nigeria was one of Young's main accomplishments as Ambassador, and he made several trips to West African nations. However, much of Young's energy and attention were given to issues in Southern Africa. Young worked to negotiate peace and majority rule in Rhodesia and independence for Namibia. While he didn't see success in either of these arenas during his tenure as Ambassador, Young's efforts were steps in the right direction.<sup>146</sup>

Several main themes emerge when Young's statements on South African apartheid over the years are examined together. None of the three is surprising given some knowledge of Young's background and political philosophies. First, as an ardent champion of capitalism, Young believed that business interests in South Africa could have a positive influence on race relations in the country and that the free market would assist in stimulating political reform. Second, Young consistently compared and connected the South African fight for liberation to the American civil rights movement in which Young himself had actively participated in the 1950s and '60s. Finally, Young's statements and views on divestment and economic sanctions were either inconsistent or evolving over the ten plus years that his opinions on South Africa remain in the spotlight.

In connection with his concern for Namibian independence, Young began more clearly and vocally to articulate his position on the apartheid government of South Africa. Despite the fact that the UN had approved Namibian independence in 1966, South Africa had refused to withdraw from the country, which it had occupied since World War One. In April 1977, Young traveled to South Africa for meetings on how to end apartheid. At this point, Young opposed comprehensive economic sanctions and divestment by U.S. businesses, a different position than that taken by most black South Africans as well as the overwhelming majority of American anti-

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<sup>146</sup> DeRoche, *Andrew Young*.

apartheid activists. Young believed that the United States should continue its diplomatic relations with the South African apartheid government.<sup>147</sup>

During his time in South Africa, Young frequently compared the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa to the American fight for civil rights. He believed that black and white South Africans could negotiate an end to apartheid and create a multiracial democracy. These comparisons alienated both the white South African government and the black masses; both groups interpreted his statements as an indication that Young was naïve and did not fully understand the unique situation in South Africa. While the South African government continued to view Young with suspicion, Steve Biko, popular leader of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa shunned Young by refusing to meet with him. Biko argued that Young was simply a capitalist whose race shielded him from criticism: ““Carter uses Andrew Young’s color as a passport to the Third World, but Young has no program except the furtherance of the American system.”” Young was indeed a capitalist sympathizer, as would become evident during his tenure as Atlanta’s mayor. He believed that business leaders could and should play a leading role in ending apartheid. During his visit to South Africa, he emphasized that incorporating black South Africans into the world economy was in the financial interest of the white elite. Workers are less likely to engage in armed rebellion when they have something significant to lose.<sup>148</sup>

Young did speak out strongly against the apartheid system. He characterized the South African government as “illegitimate” and said, “I hate anything to do with that government.” In August 1977, Young attended an anti-apartheid conference in Nigeria. The conference was jointly sponsored by the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity in cooperation

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<sup>147</sup> DeRoche, *Andrew Young*, 82.

<sup>148</sup> Donald Woods, *Biko*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1987), pg 121; DeRoche, *Andrew Young*, pg 82-83; Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 421.

with the ANC and the PAC (Pan African Congress). There, Young delivered an address to the attendees, which included representatives from over 100 nations. Young began his speech by addressing criticism of U.S. policy that he had heard from other conference speakers. He pointed out “the fact that we are probably much more condemned by the government of South Africa than we have been by this conference.” Young went on to emphasize that the Carter administration’s stance was not at all pro South African government: “Recent rhetoric coming from Pretoria charges that the United States is trying to pull the rug out from white South Africa; that United States policy in South Africa gives no chance for survival and that the United States is trying to force South Africa to negotiate for its own destruction.” At this conference Young also conceded that while he personally favored nonviolent forms of protest, he would not condemn liberation movements that chose to use force as a method to achieve their goals: “I don’t believe in violence. I fought violence in my own country. I am determined that the United Nations continue as one institution that is devoted to peaceful change. And yet, I have never condemned another man’s right to take up arms in pursuit of his own freedom.”<sup>149</sup>

During the Lagos Conference, Young was certainly aware that the United States was not likely to pass strict sanctions against South Africa, given that the apartheid government was still a Cold War anti-communist ally. Thus, Young countered his call for liberation in South Africa by pointing out: “Many of us share these objectives, but it is inevitable that we will differ on tactics and methods of achieving them. Our unity must depend on our mutual respect for the diversity of our approaches.” He went on to state that “It would not make much sense for us to make agreements here that would be refuted by our congress or repudiated by our people.” These

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<sup>149</sup> Lee Clement, *Andrew Young at the United Nations* (Salisbury: Documentary Publications, 1978), 56-58.



statements foreshadowed a divide that would soon emerge between several Western powers and the members of the Organization of African Unity.<sup>150</sup>

When Steve Biko was killed by South African police a month later in September 1977, violence in South Africa intensified, and forty-nine African nations petitioned the United Nations to pass strict sanctions against South Africa. Following Carter's directive, Young voted against sanctions that would have banned foreign investment, nuclear cooperation and arms production within South Africa. Young's veto was joined by that of representatives from France and Britain. Young did vote in favor of a mandatory arms embargo against South Africa, and with his support, the measure passed. In Young's statement to the UN Security Council, he did not address his reasons for vetoing the stronger sanctions bill. Rather, he emphasized the necessity for and potential impact of the arms embargo:

My government has reluctantly but firmly concluded that the international community must now take steps to ensure that the flow of arms into South Africa does not add to a level of tension which is already endangering international peace... In the interest of encouraging South Africa's leaders to embark on a new course, President Carter now has authorized me to state that the U.S. is prepared to join with the other members of this council in imposing a mandatory arms embargo.

Still, during this October 1977 United Nations meeting Young continued to suggest that South Africans should and would take the lead in ending the oppression of apartheid: "The outside world can help, but the answers to South Africa's problems must be found by South Africans themselves. A dialogue must be started among all the peoples of South Africa with a view towards achieving a more just and stable society."<sup>151</sup>

The following year Young was forced to resign from his position as Ambassador to the United Nations when controversy ensued following a meeting between Young and a

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<sup>150</sup> Clement, *Andrew Young at the United Nations*, 56.

<sup>151</sup> DeRoche, *Andrew Young*, 90; Bartlett C Jones, *Flawed Triumphs: Andy Young at the United Nations* (Lanham: University Press of America, Inc, 1996), 80, 83; Clement *Andrew Young at the United Nations*, 90-93.

representative from the Palestinian Liberation Organization. Overall, the Carter administration was willing to challenge Pretoria over its apartheid policies and to use confrontational rhetoric. This tone marked a departure from previous U.S. presidential administrations which generally turned a blind eye to South Africa's racial policies. President Carter, Vice President Mondale, Ambassador Young, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, and Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Richard Moose all were willing to demand progress from South Africa in the form of ultimatums. However, because this administration was not prepared to support comprehensive economic sanctions or to escalate the pressure on South Africa through other methods, the result was stalemate. By the end of the Carter presidency notable progress had not occurred in South Africa.<sup>152</sup>

Young returned to Atlanta to work as a private consultant for international businesses. Two years later, in the fall of 1981, he was elected mayor. With his election Young succeeded Maynard Jackson, Atlanta's first black mayor who urged Young to run for election, as did Coretta Scott King and other civil rights leaders. During Young's campaign and his early years as mayor he focused on cultivating relationships with Atlanta's white-led business community. He hoped that creating such ties with business leaders would entice corporations from outside of Atlanta to invest in the city. As anti-apartheid activism increased in Atlanta as the decade reached its midpoint, Young was frequently called on to take a stand on this important issue by appearing at demonstrations and speaking at rallies and other events.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Alex Thomson, "The Diplomacy of Impasse: The Carter Administration and Apartheid South Africa," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* (March 2010), accessed online at tandfonline.com. Thomson argues that Carter's stance on South Africa was further weakened by the fact that Carter supported continued American corporate presence in South Africa under the belief that in the long run, international business interests could be a force for positive change in South Africa. Thus, Carter's long term strategy of continued economic engagement with South Africa, undermined his short term demands for political change in Pretoria.

<sup>153</sup> For more information on Young's election as Mayor of Atlanta see Alton Hornsby's "Andrew Jackson Young: Mayor of Atlanta, 1982-1990," in *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol 77, No 3 (Summer 1992); Frederick Allen's *Atlanta Rising: The Invention of an International City, 1946-1996* (Atlanta: Longstreet Press, 1996); Larry

As an official voice of the United States, Young had adopted a tone and style which was viewed by many Americans as too confrontational towards the South African government. On the other hand, back home in Atlanta where a grassroots anti-apartheid movement was building momentum, Young took a position which seemed almost conciliatory. Any leadership he provided the movement was symbolic in nature and not without reservations. Earl Picard, student activist from Atlanta University's Political Science department commented on his interactions with Young:

Even in the civil rights movement, Andrew was always the one to take the path of least resistance, not muddy the waters. So that was pretty much the counsel that he was giving; that we need to negotiate and do these behind the scenes kind of things, and not get out here and be disruptive and cause Coke and these other people to have a black eye. So we had interaction with him, but it was always very frustrating because Andy was Andy. He was Andy and he was never going to be a radical. Even Martin Luther King said, 'Andy you just a capitalist.'<sup>154</sup>

Within Atlanta city government, city council members took on the anti-apartheid cause without significant leadership from Young. This approach characterized the city council's approach to most legislative issues during Young's administration. As then-President of the Atlanta City Council, Marvin Arrington writes, "Andy freely admits that he didn't work well with the city council. He took for granted that everybody in city government was working for the same people and for the same goals. He didn't lobby the city council, and he didn't cut deals with council members. His many absences from the city, even though his travel was vital for our financial success, hurt him on local issues." In June 1985, Councilmen Bill Campbell and John Lewis introduced a resolution that directed the city to "sever ties with local banks that have outstanding loans to the South African government." The *Atlanta Journal* reported on June 13

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Keating's *Atlanta: Race, Class and Urban Expansion* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001); and Maurice Hobson's *The Dawning of the Black New South: A Geopolitical, Social and Cultural History of Black Atlanta, Georgia, 1966-1996*, Dissertation, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 2009.

<sup>154</sup> Interview with Earl Picard, April 30, 2012.

that the measure was unanimously approved by the Finance Committee and would be soon be up for vote from the full council. On the same day, the *Atlanta Daily World* elaborated by explaining that “the legislation is in the form of both a resolution and an ordinance.” At the time of this legislation, the City of Atlanta did not have any investments in South Africa, and Campbell and Lewis explained that ““this legislation is designed to ensure that no future investment be made that in any way support the apartheid policies.”” Campbell and Lewis gave credit to an organization called The Progressive Alliance for drafting the legislation.<sup>155</sup>

The next month, the full council unanimously approved the legislation as a resolution. The Resolution states that “the City of Atlanta should not and does not wish to support the policy of Apartheid by investing or maintaining deposits in enterprises or financial institutions doing business with the Republic of South Africa or Namibia.” Thus, no funds controlled by the City should be “invested in the stocks, securities, or other obligations of any business, corporation, banks, financial institution or other for profit enterprise doing business with the Republic of South Africa or Namibia or their state controlled instrumentalities.” In August, the Council took the July resolution a step further by passing an ordinance that required city pension funds to be invested “in entities without South African interests and to provide for the severing of banking relationships with those banks that have outstanding loans to South Africa.” This Ordinance was approved by the Council with twelve yes votes and two nays.<sup>156</sup>

Councilwoman Myrtle Davis commented, “We, of course were criticized for doing that, that we needed to take care of our own business and stay out of the politics of international

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<sup>155</sup> Marvin Arrington, *Making My Mark* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2008), 147; “Not Invest in Companies that Maintain Apartheid Policies,” *Atlanta Inquirer*, June 22, 1985, 12; Nathan McCall, “Panel Wants Atlanta to Cut Ties with South Africa,” *Atlanta Journal*, June 13, 1985, C14; “Councilmen Campbell and Lewis Oppose Apartheid,” *Atlanta Daily World*, June 13, 1985.

<sup>156</sup> Resolution 1260, Atlanta City Council, Reference #084, Atlanta History Center; Ordinance 1261, Atlanta City Council, Reference #126, Atlanta History Center.

affairs.” Davis’s experiences were not the first or last time that Atlanta city government officials were criticized for having an opinion on apartheid South Africa. Mayor Jackson took a stand against the South African government as early as 1974. Jackson refused to meet Van Niekerk, chief of the South African information agency, and his chief of staff explained that “the mayor’s policy is not to receive visitors from South Africa.” Jackson was immediately ridiculed in an *Atlanta Journal* editorial: “Atlanta...has now entered the heady realm of those few cities who have their own separate foreign policies...Atlanta’s foreign policy at the moment relates only to South Africa, but after all the new city administration has only been in office for a few months and there may well be upcoming foreign policy positions.”<sup>157</sup>

During his two terms as Atlanta’s mayor, Andrew Young frequently received this type of criticism. Young spent much time away from Atlanta during his time in office, traveling extensively throughout the United States and abroad. During the first three months of 1984 for example, Young visited five foreign countries and ten U.S. cities, spending half of his weekdays away from Atlanta. Criticism came from the media, his constituents, and his Republican rivals. Republican Representative Newt Gingrich went on the attack after Young traveled to Angola in 1986: “He ought to be coming up to Washington and lobbying for more money and more jobs for Atlanta and Georgia. But instead of rolling up his sleeves and doing the job a mayor out to do, he’s acting like an associate secretary of state. I’m frankly just disgusted with it.” Young didn’t seem to mind the criticism though, commenting “They joke that we are a city that tries to have its own foreign policy.” In a speech to the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce Young also joked that “All I have to do is go around the world bragging about what we are doing – what you are doing, because I probably am not here long enough to do much of anything.” Young never

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<sup>157</sup> Interview with Myrtle Davis by Lauren Moran, November 6, 2013; Jim Merriner, “Closed Door: Jackson Won’t See South African,” *Atlanta Constitution*, June 14, 1974; “Foreign Policies,” *Atlanta Journal*, June 24, 1974.

had any intentions of responding to his critics by changing his globe-trotting ways. Upon beginning his second term as Mayor in 1986, he commented: “I really don’t think I’ve traveled much at all. Last term I think I traveled too little.”<sup>158</sup>

Much of Young’s travel was intended to bring business to Atlanta and to turn the city into a legitimate international city. He also used his travels and far flung contacts as a way to criticize President Reagan’s Cold War policies in Central America and voice his opinions on South Africa’s apartheid government. Doing so likely helped Young to connect with and gain the trust of African political and business leaders. The trip to Angola that drew the criticism from Gingrich was an opportunity for Young to meet with government officials and learn more about South Africa’s efforts to undermine Angola’s Marxist government. According to Young, South Africa worked to create instability throughout the region in hopes of keeping the Reagan administration convinced that only continued support for South Africa’s apartheid regime could prevent all of Southern Africa from falling into communist hands.<sup>159</sup>

Young ultimately supported the passage of comprehensive economic sanctions against South Africa, and he argued that that banning commercial flights between the U.S. and South Africa would be a particularly useful measure. Young argued that a commercial air ban was appealing because it would have a minimal impact on participating countries and because ““An airline sanction doesn’t destroy property, it doesn’t hurt anybody.”” Young went on to explain that such a ban would shift the balance of power between South Africa and its neighboring countries, as well as “force rich whites in the country ‘to share some of the inconvenience’ of apartheid.” Young spoke about a potential shutdown of airline traffic to South Africa during a

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<sup>158</sup> Andrew DeRoche, *Andrew Young: Civil Rights Ambassador* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc, 2003), 127, 128 136; Andrew Alexander, “Home Again, Young Rips South Africa,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, August 13, 1986, D4.

<sup>159</sup> Alexander, “Home Again, Young Rips South Africa,” August 13, 1986.

1987 visit to neighboring Zimbabwe. Young's trip to Zimbabwe followed a 1983 visit from that country's controversial leader, Robert Mugabe. Young was criticized for receiving Mugabe in Atlanta, as Mugabe was viewed as a leftist and had a poor human rights record. Young countered his critics by saying, "I don't defend the human rights practices of Zimbabwe. I just think that Robert Mugabe is the best hope we have."<sup>160</sup>

Young's focus on restricting airline travel was interesting because he counted the expansion of Atlanta's Hartsfield International Airport as one of the great successes of his time in office. Throughout the 1980s, Atlanta vied with Chicago for the title of busiest airport, and cited new direct flights to Atlanta from Switzerland, Italy and Japan as indicators of international business that he had generated for the city. Young believed that increasing international business and investment was crucial for Atlanta's continuous economic growth. Young called his approach to economic development, "public purpose capitalism," meaning that private business projects would serve the interest of the public. Although Young criticized Reagan's foreign policy, his belief that the benefits of economic growth would trickle down from the business elite to the African American masses had much in common with Reagan's neoliberal economic policies.<sup>161</sup>

In May 1985, Young testified before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee regarding U.S. policy towards South Africa. In his testimony, Young recalled the arms embargo that he approved during his tenure at the United Nations:

Sanctions do work, and I would say that the sanctions against South Africa, specifically the arms embargo, brought a phenomenal change not only in the

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<sup>160</sup> Jim Douglas, "Young for Airport Limit on South Africa," *Atlanta Inquirer*, August 2-9, 1986, pg 1; Jim Galloway, "Young: End Flights to South Africa," *Atlanta Journal Constitution*; January 19, 1987, A17; DeRoche, *Andrew Young*, 126.

<sup>161</sup> DeRoche, *Andrew Young*; Alton Hornsby Jr, "Andrew Jackson Young: Mayor of Atlanta: 1982-1990," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol 77, No 3, Summer 1992, 159-160; Frederick Allen, *Atlanta Rising: The Invention of an International City: 1946-1996* (Atlanta: Longstreet Press, 1996), 220.

South African Government's behavior but in total relationships in southern Africa. It was on the heels of the tragic death of Steve Biko that shows sanctions and the arms embargo sent a message from the U.S. Government that the U.S. Government did not tolerate that kind of behavior.

Young did not acknowledge the fact that in 1977, when he voted to approve the arms embargo against South Africa, he had at the same time, vetoed sanctions that would have banned foreign investment in South Africa. By this point, Young's views on the efficacy of sanctions had changed from those he voiced during 1977.<sup>162</sup>

During his testimony Young portrayed the South African business community as more progressive on racial issues than were South African government leaders. Young claimed that the Afrikaner Chamber of Commerce was calling for an end to the apartheid system, and that "even within the context of South African white society there is some question about whether or not the majority, if given the freedom to choose, would now choose the system of apartheid that requires the rigid military backing of the Government in order to maintain its enforcement." Thus, Young believed that the passage of comprehensive economic sanctions by the United States would send a strong message from the U.S. government and that progressive elements within South Africa "could use this as a means of doing things that they know they have to do." Again, Young drew on his experience from the civil rights movement in the South, reminiscing about Southern politicians who knew that if they supported school desegregation they would be voted out of office and were actually relieved when the courts stepped in to enforce bussing and other measures: "In difficult matters of social change, some outside authority is needed. I think the

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<sup>162</sup> "U.S. Policy towards South Africa" a hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, May 1985, Testimony of Andrew Young; accessed via ProQuest.



U.S. Senate in this case becomes that kind of authority...to say to the people of South Africa that they must change and they must change quickly in order to avoid chaos and bloodshed.”<sup>163</sup>

Later that summer Young elaborated on the statements he made to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in a lengthy interview with the *Atlanta Journal Constitution's* Steve Harvey. Here Young emphasized that the sanctions being considered by Congress would stand as a “complete repudiation of Reagan’s constructive engagement policy.” By this point, most Americans acknowledged that Constructive Engagement had failed. As Young explained, “Constructive engagement was interpreted by the South Africans as meaning you can do anything you want, we’re with you.” Young also pointed out that even when the Carter administration spoke out against apartheid, the U.S. Congress had stayed silent. Passing comprehensive sanctions would be an excellent way for Congress to make a major statement against South Africa’s apartheid government.<sup>164</sup>

As he did in his testimony before the Senate, Young stressed the importance of the 1977 UN arms embargo. He argued that “The government killings stopped for the remainder of the Carter administration following the embargo...But the first year Reagan was in office I think there were eleven (deaths related to the unrest), then about thirty in 1982 and a total of about 300 by 1984. There have been about 1,000 to date.” Again Young connected the racial situation in South Africa to that in the Deep South during the 1950s and ‘60s. He believed that the United Nations and the U.S. needed to become a moral authority for South Africa, the way that the courts acted to force desegregation in the South several decades earlier. Young again argued that the business community in South Africa could be a positive force for change, as were business leaders in Birmingham who responded to demands for integrated lunch counters. Elsewhere

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<sup>163</sup>“U.S. Policy towards South Africa” a hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, May 1985, Testimony of Andrew Young; accessed via ProQuest.

<sup>164</sup> Steve Harvey, (no headline), *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, July 21, 1985, C1.

Young used the phrase, “enlightened self interest” to explain how the market economy could create change in South Africa.<sup>165</sup>

Young did express two opinions that differed from those held by most anti-apartheid leaders. First, when asked if he supported disinvestment, Young replied, “I have to be in favor of it because that’s the only way to get business to be in any way socially responsible. But I don’t actually expect anybody to pick up and go. My position has always been selective disinvestment, in the sense that I don’t believe you can ever make a general boycott work. But I think you can be selective. You can pick a specific company.” Young’s remarks here were confusing. As a consistent friend of capitalism, he had stated many times that he believed that businesses could serve the public good, but did that mean only if consumers force them to be socially responsible? Also, why did he not “expect anybody to pick up and go?” Many Americans absolutely expected for U.S. based corporations to leave South Africa. At times Young himself called for economic sanctions. Perhaps in this case Young was aligning himself with the Sullivan Principles, suggesting that American businesses could be a force for change by continuing to operate in South Africa rather than by pulling out. By supporting selective disinvestment, Young may be affiliating himself with those activists who called for companies whose products directly supported South Africa’s police state to withdraw, while allowing more companies who provided more benign products to stay. For example, IBM should no longer provide computers to the South African military, but Coca Cola could continue to provide sugary beverages to the masses. Many would argue that this logic was flawed because even those companies whose products did not directly contribute to the oppression of the South African masses, were indeed profiting from the apartheid system as long as they stayed in South Africa.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Steve Harvey, (no headline), *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, July 21, 1985, C1; Jones, *Flawed Triumphs*, 81.

<sup>166</sup> Steve Harvey, (no headline), *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, July 21, 1985, C1.

Tyrone Brooks gave Young the benefit of the doubt when analyzing why the Mayor may have been hesitant to fully support full disinvestment: “I think he had mixed feelings about the impact on Africans who lived in South Africa. I think he was concerned about the harm that could be done. But we always said, ‘there may be some temporary harm for the greater good.’ Just like here in America, we had to boycott and sometimes it would impact our people in a negative way - short term, but we were looking at the long term goal of ending an oppressive system.” Before his untimely death at the hands of the South African police force, Biko expressed a similar opinion about Young more emphatically. When discussing whether South African liberation groups should be accepting Soviet assistance, Biko said,

Look, I’m not starry eyed about the Russians, and I reject their basic ideology – it’s just that their brand of intervention has been more beneficial in Africa. Of course it is to suit their own cynical ends – but it is of more practical assistance than the oratory of an Andrew Young. The Andy Youngs are nice enough guys, but their approach is doing us no damn good. If we are to have a peaceful solution here, the Andy Youngs must stop talking and really get tough...sanctions, blockades if necessary, the lot. We blacks reject the theory that sanctions will harm us more. It’s always whites who say that. If people want to be our friends, they must act as friends, with deeds.<sup>167</sup>

Further, Young, who had just recently filmed a debate with South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha for ABC’s “Nightline,” emphasized the need to facilitate communication with white South African leaders: “I’ve always figured that anytime a South African, black or white, wants to come into my office and see how a multiracial society works, I am open to them. To maintain a dialogue doesn’t support apartheid, it supports change.” This stance differed from that of many Americans, including former Atlanta Mayor Maynard Jackson who had refused to meet with a representative from South Africa. Most socially conscious Americans argued that

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<sup>167</sup> Interview with Tyrone Brooks, January 21, 2014; Woods, *Biko*, 140.

there was nothing to discuss with South African leaders so long as political dissidents such as Nelson Mandela remained in prison.<sup>168</sup>

During his time as mayor of Atlanta, Young's most significant contribution to the anti-apartheid movement was most likely his frequent presence at rallies and other anti-apartheid events around the city. Young often spoke at such events, and the support of a respected elected official probably provided these events with increased legitimacy among Atlanta's mainstream political community. At the same time, speaking at an anti-apartheid rally allowed Young to retain the support of his African American constituency, without which he could not win reelection in 1985. Brooks explained Young's pragmatism: "I don't think he wanted to be a leader... But he understood that this was a larger movement that he or I could impact, but were not going to stop it. It was just a movement whose time had come. Even though he was not a leader of it; he was not a proponent of it, but he understood that it was something that he either had to support or get out of the way because the movement was going to continue. He wasn't going to stop it."<sup>169</sup>

As anti-apartheid efforts increased in frequency in 1985, Young appeared at a March 22<sup>nd</sup> rally called Bi-partisans Against Apartheid, held in Atlanta's Central Park. At the rally Young spoke to the crowd of about 100, as did Brooks, SCLC President Joseph Lowery and Georgia Republican Chairman Bob Bell. The rally was held to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre in which sixty black protestors were killed in South Africa. Young exclaimed to the crowd, "The government of South Africa must recognize the citizenship of Blacks in that country." When Bell spoke, he emphasized the history of the Republican Party's contribution to civil rights and the need for a bipartisan movement to confront apartheid in South

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<sup>168</sup> Steve Harvey, (no headline), *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, July 21, 1985, C1.

<sup>169</sup> Interview with Tyrone Brooks, January 21, 2014.

Africa. The event was covered in the *Atlanta Daily World*, an African American owned and operated newspaper with a conservative bent.<sup>170</sup>

In August of that year the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity held their annual national convention in Atlanta. More than 1,000 fraternity members participated in a march to the King Center for Nonviolent Social Change. Young, a member of that fraternity, led the marchers after offering a speech to kick off the rally. As was his typical approach, Young compared apartheid in South Africa to segregation in the Jim Crow South. Coretta Scott King also spoke at the gathering, connecting Martin Luther King's legacy to the anti-apartheid cause. Jackson urged the fraternity members to voice their opinions to President Reagan and the U.S. Congress. Jackson's call was timely given that the same day, activists of the Free South Africa Movement in Washington DC, demanded that President Reagan end all diplomatic and economic relations with the South African government.<sup>171</sup>

Several weeks later on August 27<sup>th</sup>, 2,000 Atlanta University students gathered to hear several notable speakers address the crisis in South Africa. In addition to Tandi Gcabashe and Young, students heard from Bernice King, daughter of Martin Luther King Jr and Mpho Tutu, daughter of Bishop Desmond Tutu. Much of the focus of the gathering was repudiating the recent remarks from conservative evangelist Jerry Falwell. Upon returning from a visit to South Africa, Falwell praised that country's apartheid government and encouraged American companies to continue to invest in South Africa. Young took great offense to the fact that Falwell, a fellow Christian and preacher would "take sides against Moses and in favor of Pharaoh." Young argued that American companies would be best served to invest elsewhere as

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<sup>170</sup> Wayne G. Hill, "Rally in Central Park Addresses Apartheid," *Atlanta Daily World*, March 24, 1985.

<sup>171</sup> Howard Pousner, "Hundreds in Fraternity Rally Against Apartheid," *The Atlanta Journal*, August 12, 1985, A6; Howard Pousner, "1,000 Fraternity Members Rally Here Against Apartheid," *The Atlanta Constitution*, August 12, 1986, A1.

South Africa's economy was likely to become increasingly unstable: "Even if you don't believe in morality, and you don't believe in sanctions, but you love your money, you ought to tell Jerry Falwell to go to hell." These statements fit with Young's concept of "enlightened self interest."<sup>172</sup>

By 1986 Young's call for divestment and disinvestment had become stronger. Young held his strong line in favor of divestment at a January 1986 MLK day rally to protest apartheid. This gathering was part of an NAACP sponsored march which began in Los Angeles seven months earlier. In Atlanta, a group of seventy people joined the twenty-five participants who had already walked across the country. Together the group walked from Martin Luther King's grave site to city hall where they were greeted by Mayor Young. There Young called for U.S. corporations to set a specific time table for their withdrawal from South Africa. When Spelman College held an assembly in April of 1986 to determine whether the school should divest (as discussed in chapter one), Young attended the gathering and spoke to Spelman trustees, administration, faculty and students. Young urged Spelman trustees to shift investments from companies operating in South Africa to more benevolent institutions such as the African Development Bank: "You have a choice in divesting in oppression and investing in feeding the hungry and clothing the naked." However, he also continued to emphasize the positive potential that business leaders have to create social change by connecting the present situation in apartheid South Africa to the historical context in the U.S. South: "It wasn't politicians that turned around the South. It was the business community...In Birmingham, 100 businessmen decided they were going to desegregate because they weren't making any money."<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Renee Turner, "2,000 Join Vigil Aimed at South Africa," *The Atlanta Journal*, August 28, 1985, A2

<sup>173</sup> Howard Pousner, "Divestment Issue Debated at Spelman," *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, April 26, 1986, B1; Nathan McCall, "Seventy Participate in Atlanta's Part of Apartheid March," *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, June 14, 1986, B2.

Meanwhile, Tyrone Brooks was also sought after as a speaker at various anti-apartheid events around Atlanta. Former student activist Earl Picard commented on Brooks' contributions: "At least he continued his activism once he got elected. He was an activist that went into politics, as opposed to a politician that became an activist." Brooks did indeed have a long history of challenging U.S. support for South African apartheid. In 1976, in the wake of the Soweto uprising, Brooks traveled to Washington DC, along with fellow then-SCLC president Ralph Abernathy, Atlanta civil rights veteran, Hosea Williams and political activist and comedian, Dick Gregory. Brooks credits Gregory with the idea for the demonstration. According to Brooks, Gregory said, "Why don't we go to Washington on Thanksgiving Day; and why don't we protest at the Whitehouse, demanding that the Whitehouse and the administration intervene and do something? And after that, why don't we go around to the South African Embassy and protest and demand an end to apartheid and the release of Nelson Mandela?" The group traveled to DC, "picketed the White House." Brooks describes the scene, "We were out there on Pennsylvania Avenue for hours, and then we went down to the South African Embassy and we picketed there for a while. And all of a sudden, Dick Gregory said, 'Why don't we block the driveway, so nobody can leave or come in?' So we did, and once we blocked the driveway, we were arrested and taken to the District of Columbia jail and held for several hours and then released." Brooks believes that he and his comrades were the first Americans to be arrested for protesting South African Apartheid and that years later Randall Robinson's inspiration for the daily demonstrations at the South African Embassy came from the event on Thanksgiving Day 1976.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Interview with Earl Picard, April 30, 2012; Interview with Tyrone Brooks, January 21, 2014.

Brooks attended the Bi-Partisans against Apartheid gathering described above and was arrested at a demonstration outside an IBM stockholders meeting at the Atlanta Civic Center in April of 1985. Others arrested included Gcabashe and Atlanta University professor Mack Jones, as well as then-City Councilman Lewis. The group explained to the *Atlanta Constitution* that IBM was the main computer supplier to South Africa, and that the demonstration was intended to persuade the company to stop doing business with South Africa. Brooks commented that the IBM protest was the only time that he and fellow veteran civil rights organizer, Lewis were ever arrested together. Brooks also spoke at a November 1986 rally at the state capitol organized by the Student Coalition Against Apartheid and Racism (described in chapter one). The rally's focus was on protesting the Georgia Board of Regents' relationship with companies doing business in South Africa. At this event, student leader, Dwayne Redding announced that Brooks planned to introduce a divestment bill to the Georgia General Assembly.<sup>175</sup>

On January 15, 1987 Brooks did indeed introduce House Bill 84 which stated that “no funds of the State of Georgia shall be invested or deposited in any financial institution which directly or through its subsidiaries has outstanding loans to the Republic of South Africa.” Brooks had been elected to the Georgia House of Representatives in 1980 around the same time that he met Gcabashe and began working with her extensively. Brooks reminisced, “When I was elected here in 1980, Tandi Lutuli Gcabashe and I teamed up and we began to travel America. We went to the UN Security commission in 81. We went to Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts and did seminars and activities all around campuses, and we began to do a lot of work in New York.” Brooks explained the inspiration for his 1987 divestment bill: “Tandi and I

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<sup>175</sup> Gayle White, “Lawmakers Lewis, Brooks Arrested at Demonstration,” *Atlanta Constitution*, April 30, 1985, A12; Wayne G Hill, “Rally in Central Park Addresses Apartheid,” *Atlanta Daily World*, March 24, 1985; “Rally at State Capitol; SCARR Wants Divestment,” *Atlanta Daily World*, November 25, 1986, pg 3; Interview with Tyrone Brooks, January 21, 2014.



were communicating with Mel King in Massachusetts who was in the legislature. And Mel King and Governor MichaleL Dukakis had passed the first divestment legislation in the country, and we took that and used it as a model. It really was the Massachusetts legislation that started all of this.”<sup>176</sup>

Brooks knew that in Georgia he faced an uphill battle to educate his colleagues in the legislature as well as the general public about the need for divestment legislation. He explained,

Most people didn’t understand the global impact of apartheid...didn’t understand the connections between their country and South Africa, the global economy, the sale of the Krugerrand, all of the things that impact our economy. They were kind of like, ‘help me understand why we should do this.’ And once we began to articulate the violence and the fact that this small minority was oppressing this large majority; we pointed out example after example after example. The violence and the fact that children were murdered; families being torn apart, the tremendous brutality against those who opposed this brutal system, black and white...So it took some time; a lot of people live in their own world and they don’t want to venture outside of that, but you have to educate them. Once you educate them, they will move. So that was a challenge, really educating people about why they should be a part of that movement.<sup>177</sup>

One method that Brooks used to educate his colleagues about the realities of apartheid was by creating passbooks that replicated the passbooks that black South Africans were forced to carry at all times. He and Gcabashe together created the passbooks with the help of New York-based American Committee on Africa. Brooks remembered, “I put them on the desks of my colleagues, and I said, ‘I want everybody in here to keep this on you because if you don’t have this on you, you could be arrested and detained. Just think about that, if you were South African, and you were black, if you were Indian, if you were a person of color, and you were stopped, you could go to jail. I want you to keep this in your pocket as a reminder of what life is like for black

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<sup>176</sup> Interview with Tyrone Brooks, January 21, 2014.

<sup>177</sup> Interview with Tyrone Brooks, January 21, 2014.

folks and minorities in South Africa.”” According the Brooks, these efforts began to have some impact.<sup>178</sup>

House Bill 84 was referred to the Rules Committee. The Committee created a “substitute,” which expanded the initial wording and intent of the bill. The substitute bill stated that,

No funds of the State of Georgia shall be invested or deposited in any financial institution which directly or through its subsidiaries makes loans to the Republic of South Africa; to provide that no such funds shall be invested in the stocks, securities, or other obligations of any company doing business in or with the Republic of South Africa; to provide that no such funds shall be used for the purchase of any goods, materials, or services from certain business having certain relationships with the Republic of South Africa.

The bill called for state funds to be “reinvested in some other manner” by January 1, 1988. While this substitute became part of the bill as it was ultimately voted on by the General Assembly, another substitute was proposed by Democratic Representative Terry Lawler and rejected. Lawler’s substitute would have required that the limits on investment not just apply to South Africa, but also to the Soviet Union, China, Vietnam, Cambodia, North Korea, Nicaragua, Libya, Iran and others. The Committee on Rules recommended that the House approve HB 84. However, when the bill went to the floor, it received eighty-one votes in favor and thirty-nine votes against. But since the Georgia House has 180 representatives, the bill fell ten votes short of passage. It is likely that many representatives abstained from voting because they did not want to be on record either as supporting or rejecting this controversial measure.<sup>179</sup>

Upon the defeat of HB 84, Brooks declared that would reintroduce divestment legislation for the State of Georgia “at the proper time.” Brooks did have significant support for such legislation from the public. The Bishop Tutu Task Force on South Africa circulated a letter

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<sup>178</sup> Interview with Tyrone Brooks, January 21, 2014.

<sup>179</sup> *Georgia House Journal*, 1987, 50, 1045, 1158-1161, 1407, 1408.

urging Georgians to contact their Representatives in support of the legislation, and the AFSC held a public hearing on the “damage and destruction done to the interests of the lives and civil rights of the South African majority by the continuation of the hated system of apartheid” with goal of the hearing being to “mobilize further support within the Georgia Legislature for the divestment legislation.”<sup>180</sup>

Brooks continued to introduce similar bills every year until Nelson Mandela’s release in 1990, but the Georgia General Assembly never did pass divestment legislation. Brooks lamented the failure of the Legislature to take a bold stance against apartheid and compared the commitment to anti-apartheid activism and divestment legislation in Georgia to what he observed in other states: “Traveling around the country I just felt like when I went into Massachusetts, it was more support, New York, more support.” Despite his disappointment in Georgia’s elected officials, Brooks does not discount the unique opportunity that the city of Atlanta had to influence the anti-apartheid movement. He reflects,

I think the greatest asset we had was that this was the base of Martin Luther King Junior’s movement, his hometown. And the fact that we had Chief Albert Luthuli’s daughter Tandi Gcabashe here to provide the energy and the insight. I think that some of us activists that happened to live in Atlanta, that had been trained early in our lives by the SCLC, the NAACP or the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, those of us who had that history of activism, I just think we felt a responsibility and an obligation to be a part of this movement, and we were determined to bring the community along with us whether they wanted to go or not. They might have been reluctant, but we were determined to bring our political positions and our colleagues in these political positions into this movement. We were determined to do it, just like we were determined to end Jim Crow segregation in the South. We knew it was an uphill battle, but we were not going to stop... We just knew that this was something that was connected to our movement here in America in so many ways, and we had a moral obligation to be involved.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> *Georgia House Journal*, 1987, pg 1161; “Letter from Letetia Daniels,” AFSC Archives, Philadelphia; AFSC Press release, “Public Hearing Set to Urge Divestment of Georgia Funds from South African Operations,” AFSC Archives, Philadelphia.

<sup>181</sup> Interview with Tyrone Brooks, January 21, 2014.

Brooks' thoughts reflected the unique quality of the anti-apartheid movement in Atlanta when compared to anti-apartheid work in New York, Boston or the San Francisco Bay area where the movement took on a more confrontational tone. In 1980s Atlanta, the key members of the African American leadership class were political insiders. In this respect, the cohort of potential anti-apartheid leaders was constrained as they sought to manage the anti-apartheid issue in a political way. In some sense, the black political regime in Atlanta tamed the anti-apartheid issue because they had so much to lose. On the other hand, African Americans in positions of political leadership were in a unique position to educate their more conservative colleagues on the issues surrounding South Africa, as well as to take advantage of their access to the media. Andrew Young is a particularly interesting case study, as his political career spanned local, national and international scales. Comparing Young's position on South African issues with those of Tyrone Brooks illustrates the different trajectories that two civil rights veterans and elected political officials took within the anti-apartheid movement.

## CHAPTER 6: “COKE SWEETENS APARTHEID”

Following the Soweto uprisings of 1976, the debate regarding the role of multinational corporations in South Africa intensified. While a minority of observers continued to argue that American businesses could be a force for positive change in South Africa, most socially conscious Americans began to call for corporations to withdraw from South Africa. Anti-apartheid activists first targeted companies that made products that directly aided the South African government, police force and military. IBM provided computers to South African security forces; General Motors produced police vehicles, and Kodak sold cameras that were used to implement the hated “pass system” in which black South Africans had to carry identity cards at all times. Eventually, companies that produced more benign products came under fire as well. This chapter will discuss the presence of the Coca-Cola Company in South Africa and the boycott of Coca-Cola products led by Tandi Gcabashe, the Georgia Coalition for Divestment and the American Friends Service Committee.

Coca-Cola was invented in Atlanta in 1886. Under the leadership of Asa Griggs Candler during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries Coca-Cola became a popular beverage across the United States, and the Coca-Cola Company began to see great financial success. Candler incorporated the Coca-Cola Company in 1896, and Coca-Cola’s rapid growth can be attributed to Candler’s aggressive marketing of the product, an approach which continued into the modern era of the Coca-Cola Company. Candler also began the long history of Coca-Cola executives making large philanthropic donations, as he contributed huge sums of money that allowed Emory University to move from Oxford, Georgia to its current campus in Atlanta. Thus, several of the characteristics of the Coca-Cola Company during the anti-apartheid era, including the company’s

desire to create an image of being a good corporate citizen, emerged very early in the company's history.<sup>182</sup>

The role of the Coca-Cola Company in Atlanta politics and culture cannot be overstated. During the 1940s and 1950s, Coca-Cola President Robert Woodruff was the most powerful figure in Atlanta politics, despite never holding an elected position. In *Atlanta: Race, Class and Urban Expansion*, Larry Keating argues that an emphasis on marketing and public relations has shaped Atlanta's business-dominated government. Keating connects this characteristic of city government to the fact that "Atlanta's major corporate citizen is Coca-Cola." According to Keating, "Much of Coke's worldwide success has come from marketing, and the core of the company is a public-relations operation. It is hardly surprising that city leaders have been heavily influenced by Coke's highly image-conscious corporate culture."<sup>183</sup>

During the civil rights movement, Coca-Cola worked hard to avoid alienating either their white or black consumers. As Coca-Cola hired their first black executives and introduced African Americans actors into their mainstream advertisements, profits and the bottom line always remained at the forefront. The 1963 advertising shift was a response to a threatened boycott from the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE). That same year Atlanta-based Operation Breadbasket demanded that Coca-Cola hire more black production line workers. Upon being again threatened with a boycott, Coca-Cola responded to the demands. By the following year, the pragmatic Coca-Cola president, Robert Woodruff, had become a voice for racial moderation. When Martin Luther King Jr won the Nobel Peace Prize, Atlanta's Mayor Ivan Allen planned to

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<sup>182</sup> Mark Pendergrast, *For God Country and Coca Cola: The Definitive History of the Great American Soft Drink and the Company that Makes it*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (New York: Basic Books, 2000); Michael Blanding, *The Coke Machine: the Dirty Truth Behind the World's Favorite Soft Drink* (New York: Penguin Group, 2010); J. Kirby Spivey, "Coke vs Pepsi: The Cola Wars in South Africa During the Anti-Apartheid Era," Georgia State University, MA Thesis, 2009, [http://digitalarchives.gsu.edu/history\\_theses/35](http://digitalarchives.gsu.edu/history_theses/35).

<sup>183</sup> Larry Keating, *Atlanta: Race, Class and Urban Expansion* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 202.

host a biracial banquet in King's honor. At first, the city's white elite balked at attending such an event. However, when Woodruff pledged his support, the rest of Atlanta's business community followed suit. By the 1980s, Coca-Cola was a significant financial contributor to various mainstream civil rights organizations and community groups including the NAACP and all of the local black colleges. In 1981 Rev. Jesse Jackson's and his organization, People United to Save Humanity (PUSH) called for Coke to do more in support of the continuing African American struggle for equality in the United States. As Coca-Cola historian Mark Pendergrast writes, "Jackson chose Coke not so much because of any glaring corporate abuse, but because the firm was so temptingly vulnerable due to its cherished image." Jackson called for a boycott and claimed that Atlanta's black ministers were prepared to announce this action in Sunday services. To avoid a potential public relations nightmare, Coca-Cola's Chief Operating Officer Don Keough appeared alongside Jackson at a press conference to announce a new "moral covenant" and pledge thirty-four million dollars to African American causes. Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young was among those applauding in the audience.<sup>184</sup>

By 1980, the Coca-Cola Company earned 65 percent of its profits from outside of the United States. Coca-Cola first appeared in South Africa during the 1930s. South Africa became a profitable market for Coca-Cola because it combined cheap black labor and a white population with disposable income. A key aspect of Coca-Cola's marketing strategy in South Africa was to sponsor events that would link the company to the South African community, which made local consumers view Coca-Cola as their own. While white South Africans were arguably Coca-Cola's primary target audience in that country, black South Africans, who made up 80 percent of the population, could not be ignored as potential consumers. Coca-Cola advertised in black communities throughout South Africa. By the end of the 1960s, Coca-Cola had thirty-seven

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<sup>184</sup> Pendergrast, *For God, Country and Coca Cola*, 279-282, 338.

bottling plants in South Africa and used these operations as a base for expanding the beverage's presence throughout the continent.<sup>185</sup>

In 1977, in the wake of the Soweto uprising, Rev. Leon Sullivan, an African American civil rights activist and a member of the board of directors of General Motors, created a list of principles to guide corporate behavior in South Africa. These principles called for multinational corporations operating in South Africa to pledge a commitment to provide racially integrated working facilities and equal employment practices. By 1983, 146 companies had endorsed the Sullivan Principles – about half of the total number of American-based companies operating in South Africa. Coca-Cola signed the Sullivan Principles in 1980. From the outset, Sullivan's Principles had critics who became more vocal during the early 1980s, as the push for disinvestment, economic disengagement and comprehensive sanctions intensified. They were quick to point out that the Principles lacked an effective compliance and failed to address the fundamental structure of apartheid which denied political rights to black South Africans. Critics argued that the corporations had used the Sullivan Principles as a way to deflect criticism without losing their profitable foothold in South Africa, and that by the early 1980s the Principles themselves had become part of the problem in South Africa.<sup>186</sup>

This stance was embodied by the Georgia Coalition for Divestment in South Africa. The Georgia Coalition was founded around 1982. AFSC's Tandi Gcabashe placed an ad in a local newspaper announcing a public meeting to discuss apartheid in South Africa. The meeting was held in the First Congregational Church on Courtland Street in downtown Atlanta. This church

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<sup>185</sup> Pendergrast, *For God, Country and Coca Cola*, pg 184, 335; Spivey, "The Cola Wars," 15-16, 18.

<sup>186</sup> Robert Massie, *Loosing the Bonds: The United States and South Africa in the Apartheid Years* (New York: Doubleday, 1997) 478; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, "South Africa: Questions and Answers on Divestment," The Africa Fund, New York, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, "The Presence of American Corporations in South Africa is Not Constructive," American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia; for more information about the Sullivan Principles see the Introduction.



was an ironic venue for such a gathering. While the Congregationalists had taken a leading role in anti-apartheid work nationwide, in Atlanta “First Church” had a unique place in history. The church’s pastor, African American Rev. Henry Proctor, was a racial accommodationist who acted as a broker between the black community and the white power structure in the years following Atlanta’s 1906 race riot. Reverend Proctor’s approaches foreshadowed the workings of Atlanta’s governing regime of the second half of the twentieth century in which middle class African American leaders allied with the white business elite, in a partnership that successfully maintained racial calm but persistently failed to address Atlanta’s severe structural inequality.<sup>187</sup>

Gcabashe was thrilled when approximately thirty people showed up. Among those in attendance were Gloria Gaines and Mack Jones, who would become co-chairs of the newly formed Georgia Coalition for Divestment in South Africa. Gaines became first became politicized as a student at Albany State University, and moved to Atlanta to work for John Lewis in the early 1970s. After earning a graduate degree in Public Planning at Georgia State, Gaines had the opportunity to move to Nigeria for two years. Gaines reflected,

It was there that I began to understand what was happening in Southern Africa...I learned so much about what was going on there because the entire continent was involved. So when I was preparing to leave to come back in '81, they made me promise that I would connect with the anti-apartheid movement when I got back here. And the opportunity came in '82 when I saw a little article...about Tandi Gcabashe and the American friends Service Committee. They were having a meeting at the first Congregationalist Church...This was I believe in October of '82, and I went to the first organizing meeting...of the American Friends Service Committee and other activists, that was the first effort to organize a response for Atlanta. And it was at that meeting that I met Tandi Gcabashe and Mack Jones.<sup>188</sup>

Mack Jones was a Professor of Political Science at Atlanta University. Jones came to Atlanta in the late 1960s and immediately became active in domestic and international human rights

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<sup>187</sup> Interview with Gloria Gaines, November 9, 2012; David Fort Godshalk, *Veiled Visions: The 1906 Race Riot and the Reshaping of American Race Relations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

<sup>188</sup> Interview with Gloria Gaines, November 9, 2012.

movements. The contributions of his Political Science Department to the anti-apartheid movement are discussed in Chapter One.<sup>189</sup>

Gaines and Jones began to work closely with Gcabashe to build an anti-apartheid movement in Atlanta. As Gcabashe was in charge of the AFSC's Southern Regional South Africa Peace Education Program, the Coalition inherently had close ties with the AFSC. AFSC documents describe the Georgia Coalition as "a quasi project of the AFSC's Southern Africa Program" and mention that "there has been overlap in membership of the Coalition and the AFSC's Southern Africa Program Committee." The same document concludes that "there has been a mutually supportive relationship." When the Georgia Coalition launched the Coke Campaign, Georgia Coalition entertained the idea of separating from the AFSC and incorporating itself as a nonprofit. It is not clear that this step ever occurred.<sup>190</sup>

In 1984, the Georgia Coalition decided to focus on corporate disinvestment as their primary method for fighting apartheid. Disinvestment refers to an action by a corporation withdrawing its operations in South Africa through sale or abandonment. Coca-Cola was one of several companies that the Georgia Coalition named as an important target, and over the next year demonstrations were held at Coca-Cola headquarters, as well as at IBM, Holiday Inn, Ford, General Motors and Westin International. In early 1985, the Coalition began to look into the viability of launching a national campaign against Coca-Cola. Building on the victory it had secured through negotiations with M&M Products. M&M Products was an Atlanta based, African American owned, black hair care company that sold its products throughout Southern

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<sup>189</sup> Interview with Mack Jones, April 25, 2012.

<sup>190</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, "Letter from Elizabeth Enloe to Gloria Gaines: Emergence of the Georgia Coalition From the AFSC Umbrella and the Relationship to the Coke Campaign," May 12, 1986, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, "Letter from Gloria Gaines to Elizabeth Enloe: Incorporation, etc – Georgia Coalition," American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Interview with Tandi Gcabashe, February 20, 2013; Interview with Gloria Gaines, November 9, 2012; Interview with Mack Jones, April 25, 2012.

Africa. M&M Products agreed to end its relationship with its distributor in South Africa following pressure from the Georgia Coalition. This success likely boosted the confidence of the Coalition members as they considered taking on Coca-Cola.<sup>191</sup>

In September 1985 after much discussion and planning, the Georgia Coalition and the American Friends Service Committee officially launched a national boycott of Coca-Cola: “The Georgia Coalition for Divestment in South Africa has deliberated for over two years, weighing both the pros and cons of such a campaign (particularly coming out of Atlanta – a Coke stronghold).” The Boycott Committee members agreed that a national (rather than a local campaign) was necessary because of the “power and influence of Coke.” Committee members worried that, at least in Atlanta, the Coca-Cola Company “could block media coverage and stifle our ability to get the word out to build the campaign.” In a funding proposal to AFSC board members, the Georgia Coalition explained, “Currently, the GCDSA (Georgia Coalition for Divestment in South Africa) supports the withdrawal of the more than 300 U.S. companies in South Africa, thereby ending their complicity in the oppression and murder of the South African people. Because of practical limitations, we cannot as a group address all U.S. corporations doing business in South Africa; therefore we have chosen Coca-Cola as our focus for a consumer action.” At the time of the boycott launch, Coca-Cola’s assets in South Africa were estimated at over \$60 million with total annual sales over \$260. Each year, the Coca-Cola Company paid approximately 40 percent of its South African profits in corporate taxes to the apartheid regime, thus contributing financially to the continued repression of South Africa’s black majority.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “Chronological History of the Coke Campaign,” American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “Southern Africa Program Committee, First Monthly Meeting,” October 21, 1985, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

<sup>192</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “Coke Boycott Committee Meeting with Earl Shinholster,” November 1, 1985, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “AFSC Proposal Regarding The Presence of Coca Cola

As Tandi Gcaashe pointed out in a 2013 interview, corporate disinvestment was also important because multinational corporations in South Africa actively worked as collaborators with the government to enforce the apartheid laws. According to Gcabashe, Coca-Cola and other companies, helped to “enforce apartheid laws because you have to check, you are the policemen who will check the pass book of your workers and whether it was properly adhered to; then to fill out when you started work, whether it was time for you to go back to the homelands; did you come into the city legally or illegally? So they were like the policemen for the apartheid system. So it was taxes and moneys, but very important also they were active collaborationists with apartheid.” The full complicity of multinational corporations with the security and surveillance apparatus of the South African regime explains why that many anti-apartheid activists dismissed the usefulness of the Sullivan Principles.<sup>193</sup>

The Coalition chose to target Coca-Cola because Coca-Cola “is one of the most visible consumer products in the world, making it possible for people from all walks of life, nationally and internationally, to relate to the campaign.” Perhaps even more importantly, the Coalition emphasized that “the boycott will need to take on the Coke image,” as Coca-Cola promoted itself as “pro-people,” and “supports and contributes to humanitarian and educational causes in the U.S.” The Coca-Cola Company’s obsession with its squeaky clean public image, made the corporation an attractive target for a disinvestment campaign. The Coalition believed that if Coca-Cola was to withdraw completely from South Africa such an action “would be a dramatic challenge to other corporations and would thereby impact U.S. foreign policy.”<sup>194</sup>

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in South Africa,” AFSC Archives, Philadelphia, PA; “Georgia Coalition for Divestment in South Africa, Coke Divestment Campaign Funding Proposal,” 1986, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

<sup>193</sup> Interview with Tandi Gcabashe, February 20, 2013.

<sup>194</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “Coke Boycott Committee Meeting with Earl Shinholster,” November 1, 1985, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “AFSC Proposal Regarding The Presence of Coca Cola in South Africa,” American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace

The specific objectives of the campaign, as stated in the official AFSC proposal were four-fold. The first goal was to carry out a public education program to educate Americans about divestment and disinvestment. Second, the campaign would “examine and challenge the role of U.S. corporations in providing economic support for apartheid. Third the campaign aimed “to pressure Coca-Cola to totally disinvest in South Africa” Finally, by doing so, the base of support for the anti-apartheid movement overall would be expanded and strengthened. The proponents of the boycott believed that “the deepening cycle of violence in South Africa strongly indicates the need for the intensification of our efforts in the U.S. in two areas: public education and the promoting of the divestment/disinvestment campaign/movement. There is a great need for American citizens to challenge corporate support for the South African government.” The specific objectives of the Coke Campaign were in line with these broader goals.<sup>195</sup>

The methods that the Coalition and the AFSC planned to use to accomplish these stated goals included producing and distributing educational materials, as well as conducting forums, seminars, conferences and teach-ins. The participants hoped to engage in negotiations with Coca-Cola representatives as well as hold a public debate with Coca-Cola officials on the company’s role in South Africa. A sticker campaign with slogans such as “Coke Sweetens Apartheid,” was also planned. While the campaign would be national in scope, the Committee recognized the strategic importance of its home city: “The Atlanta base will serve as a clearinghouse for all activities, as well as provide information and organizing/mobilizing strategies for the various aspects of the educational work and the consumer action.” Finally, the committee emphasized

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Education Southern Africa Program, “Georgia Coalition for Divestment in South Africa, Coke Divestment Campaign Funding Proposal,” 1986, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

<sup>195</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “Coke Boycott Committee Meeting with Earl Shinholster,” November 1, 1985, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “AFSC Proposal Regarding The Presence of Coca Cola in South Africa,” American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “Georgia Coalition for Divestment in South Africa, Coke Divestment Campaign Funding Proposal,” 1986, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

the need to include and work with diverse groups on this campaign. The organizers believed that the campaign must build a base of support among “grass-roots people” as well as “big names,” as the “grassroots people...will be less vulnerable to attack or being bought off by Coke.”<sup>196</sup>

Coca-Cola’s point man on the South Africa issue was an African American executive named Carl Ware. Ware was a prominent and powerful Atlantan not just because of his position as a Coca-Cola vice president, but also because he was a former president of the Atlanta City Council and served as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees at Clark College. In later years, Ware would become the President of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, President of Coca-Cola’s Africa Group, and a member of the board of directors at Chevron and Georgia Power. While Ware did remain in frequent communication with Tandi Gcabashe and others in AFSC leadership positions, he was not above using covert action to respond to the campaign. The experiences of Georgia Coalition co-chairs Mack Jones and Gloria Gaines indicate the power that Ware and Coca-Cola attempted to wield to silence such criticism. Gaines recalled,

The Georgia Coalition was treading some really thin waters...I was working for MARTA, and the deputy general manager got a call from Carl Ware, and I got called in and asked what I was doing because they didn’t know. The deputy was a black guy and he half way knew that I was something of a rebel. He knew that there were two sides to me. I have a professional side but I also have an unquenchable desire for change...but this guy got the call, the deputy general manager and calls me to his office, and like I said, he was black, and he used to be in SNCC so in the end he said, ‘The only thing I can say to you is be careful.’ And that was it. He just kind of turned his head and let it happen. That’s indicative of the kind of, I guess the power that Coke had. And how they had woven themselves into the black leadership in Atlanta. But they weren’t able to stop this because we really had some young people who didn’t care.

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<sup>196</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “Position Paper on a Proposed Coke Campaign for the Georgia Coalition for Divestment in South Africa,” February 21, 1985, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia. Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “Coke Boycott Committee Meeting with Earl Shinholster,” November 1, 1985, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “AFSC Proposal Regarding The Presence of Coca Cola in South Africa,” American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “Georgia Coalition for Divestment in South Africa, Coke Divestment Campaign Funding Proposal,” 1986, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

Jones, a Political Science Professor at Atlanta University had a similar experience:

We had also gone down to the Coke headquarters and he (Carl Ware) had met with us, and I guess he thought he had placated us, but we really were not taking any of it. And I remember that because he had called the president of the university and sort of leaned on the president to discipline us, and the president called me and told me what had happened and that he was not bothered by it at all, but I'm sure Carl thought that his phone call to the president would get us to back off. That I remember.<sup>197</sup>

According to Gaines the divestment campaign was able to resist corporate pressure because of the autonomy of the AFSC. Not only did AFSC not have a financial relationship with Coca-Cola, but it also had a policy of refusing all corporate money so as to maintain its independence and integrity. This financial independence allowed the AFSC to take a bolder stance than was possible for the various community organizations that depended on Coca-Cola's financial support. Gaines and Jones were also fortunate in having employers who refused to bow to pressure from Coca-Cola. Allegedly, Coca-Cola was also placing calls to various religious leaders in Atlanta instructing them to dissuade their congregations from supporting the boycott. For instance, SCLC president Rev. Joseph Lowery forbade his staffers from participating in a 1985 demonstration outside of Coca-Cola's headquarters. At this demonstration, Mack Jones spoke, thanking the one hundred protestors for their support despite "the fact that Coca-Cola did everything it could to prevent people from coming. This shows that no one person or group can control anybody. When the people speak, people with money tremble." At the rally AFSC member Sababa Akili addressed the ties that bound Coca-Cola to many African American community organizations in Atlanta and beyond: "We will continue to demonstrate against Coca-Cola, even though they are giving money to institutions. We must let Coca-Cola know that

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<sup>197</sup> Interview with Gloria Gaines, November 9, 2012; Interview with Mack Jones, April 25, 2012; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, "Notes on Discussion of Coke Campaign by SERO Regional Executive Committee," June 6, 1987, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

blood money is not something that we relish.” Finally, Jones pointed out that Coca-Cola’s effort to establish a black-owned distributorship outside of Johannesburg had been thwarted by the apartheid regime: “No matter what Coke wants to do, they have to listen to the South African government.” Jones told the crowd that disinvestment was the only remaining moral option for multinational companies.<sup>198</sup>

In September 1986, the Coca-Cola Company announced that it would make a statement against the apartheid regime by selling its bottling operations in South Africa. Coca-Cola President and Chief Operating Officer, Donald Keough told *The Atlanta Constitution*: “Our decision to complete the process of disinvestment is a statement of our opposition to apartheid and of our support for the economic aspirations of black South Africans.” Atlantans from Mayor Andrew Young to the mainstream media lauded Coca-Cola’s decision. *The Atlanta Constitution* called the move “shrewd and farsighted” and praised Coca-Cola for being the “first mega-corporation to declare explicitly its contempt for South Africa’s policy of apartheid.” Although many other companies had announced divestment decisions, most of them cited financial reasons rather than abhorrence for racial inequality. SCLC president Lowery also praised Coca-Cola’s disinvestment and took partial credit, mentioning to the *Atlanta Constitution* that he had been in negotiations with Coca-Cola executives to convince the company to pull out of South Africa. Lowery admitted that the SCLC was under pressure from other anti-apartheid groups to boycott Coca-Cola, but he attributed his organization’s reluctance to take action to Coca-Cola’s “‘history of social sensitivity’ toward the black community.” Lowery held frequent meetings with Carl Ware who assured him that Coca-Cola was progressing towards divestment. Coca-Cola

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<sup>198</sup> Interview with Gloria Gaines, November 9, 2012; Herbert Denmark Jr, “Anti-Apartheid Rally at Coca Cola Headquarters,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 6-12, 1986, pgs 1-2; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “Notes on Discussion of Coke Campaign by SERO Regional Executive Committee,” June 6, 1987, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia.



spokesmen, however did not attribute credit to either the SCLC negotiations or the Georgia Coalition-led boycott. Rather, Coca-Cola representative, Randy Donaldson emphasized that the decision to leave South Africa was one reached internally: “I don’t think it would be fair to say we felt any pressure. We did what was the right move for Coke.” In a 1991 interview with Mark Pendergrast, the author of *For God, Country and Coca-Cola*, Carl Ware was a bit more candid in giving credit to anti-apartheid organizers: “I think that the pressure that brought about sanctions in this country worked. I think that strategy worked extremely well. We wouldn’t have had the U.S. government and the 1986 Anti-Apartheid Act had it not been for that pressure. And we probably would not have disinvested.”<sup>199</sup>

Coca-Cola spokesmen informed the public that the company would sell its bottling interests in South Africa to a multi racial consortium of business executives, a move intended to expand the South Africa’s miniscule black middle class: “We will disinvest in a way that creates significant, multiracial equity participation in the South African soft drink industry...Our goal is to structure the transactions in a way that improves the prospects of black South Africans and increases their ability to invest in their country’s economy.” Andrew Young, who had built a successful career brokering business deals in the name of black entrepreneurship, commented that a great benefit of Coca-Cola’s strategy was that it would increase the stake black South Africans had in capitalism, thus lessening their willingness to support a Communist takeover. The *Atlanta Inquirer*, representing the progressive wing of Atlanta’s African American press heaped praise upon Coca-Cola’s announcement: “So in one stroke, Coca-Cola pulls out, yet

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<sup>199</sup> Connie Green, “Coke to Sell its Assets in South Africa,” *Atlanta Constitution*, September 18, 1986, A1; Cynthia Tucker, “Coke Divestment Shrewd, Farsighted,” *Atlanta Constitution*, September 19, 1986, A18; “Coca Cola to Sell off South Africa Holdings,” *Atlanta Daily World*, September 19, 1986, pg 1; Connie Green, “Lowery: Refusal to Boycott Coke Right Approach,” *Atlanta Journal*, September 18, 1986, A5; Transcript of Carl Ware interview with Mark Pendergrast, May 7, 1991; Box 9, folder 49, Mark Pendergrast Research Files; Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Library, Emory University.

leaves value and goodwill behind for the Black majority. U.S. corporations can use Coca-Cola's example a model for orderly, enlightened withdrawal."<sup>200</sup>

The U.S. State Department, under the Reagan administration, condemned the Coca-Cola pull out, which ran counter to Assistant Secretary of State Chester Crocker's Constructive Engagement policy. This condemnation in itself may have helped Coca-Cola win favor among opponents of Reagan and Constructive Engagement. Cynthia Tucker, the *Atlanta Journal Constitution's* liberal African American columnist, whose views closely lined up with those of the entrepreneurial mayor and the accommodationist SCLC president, lavished praise on the Coca-Cola Company while condemning U.S. Government policy: "Coke's move is not just protest for protest's sake. It is a genuinely helpful response to a grave and complex set of circumstances – and certainly deserved better than to be officially regretted by the U.S. State Department. The Real Thing did the right thing." Although *The Atlanta Constitution* was the city's "liberal" daily, in Atlanta that term has often meant a shameless support of pro-business policies, particularly in regards to the city's flagship corporation, Coca-Cola. For Tucker, the opportunity to applaud Coca-Cola, for ostensibly making a human-rights-motivated decision in South Africa was a win-win.<sup>201</sup>

Other observers were not immediately impressed by Coca-Cola's actions. While not speaking specifically about Coca-Cola, State Representative Tyrone Brooks commented shortly after Coca-Cola's divestment announcement, "some of these divestments are only public relations games...Some are literally selling out and packing up, but some are not legitimate...I

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<sup>200</sup> John E Jacob, "South African Strategies," *Atlanta Inquirer*, October 4, 1986, pg 4; Connie Green, "Coke to Sell its Assets in South Africa," *Atlanta Constitution*, September 18, 1986, A1; "Coca Cola to Sell off South Africa Holdings," *Atlanta Daily World*, September 19, 1986, 1; Connie Green, "Lowery: Refusal to Boycott Coke Right Approach," *Atlanta Journal*, September 18, 1986, A5.

<sup>201</sup> Connie Green, "Coke to Sell its Assets in South Africa," *Atlanta Constitution*, September 18, 1986, A1; Cynthia Tucker, "Coke Divestment Shrewd, Farsighted," *Atlanta Constitution*, September 19, 1986, A18; "Coca Cola to Sell off South Africa Holdings," *Atlanta Daily World*, September 19, 1986, 1.

don't think we should jump and cheer every time somebody says they are pulling out." Coca-Cola made clear from its initial announcement that it would continue to sell its syrup to the newly owned South African bottling plants. Thus, Coca-Cola would likely retain its 75 percent share of the soft drink market in South Africa. This fact gave pause to some anti-apartheid leaders.<sup>202</sup>

AFSC and Georgia Coalition leaders were quite surprised by Coca-Cola's divestment announcement. During their frequent communication with Coca-Cola executives, Gcabashe, Gaines and others were given the impression that Coca-Cola had no intention to change its South African policy. Thus they were at first not sure how to respond to Coca-Cola's divestment news: "Coca-Cola's sudden and unexpected announcement of its disinvestment action from South Africa has taken most of us by surprise and, consequently we find ourselves, at least as a group, unprepared as to what is a proper response." Perhaps Coca-Cola's motivations for keeping local anti-apartheid leaders in the dark about the company's divestment plans were to prevent these leaders from taking credit for the policy change. Speaking at a national meeting for the AFSC's Women's Program, Gcabashe commented, "Coca-Cola announced...that they had disinvested. This was a surprise to us because we had been negotiating with them, and they were saying that they would never pull out of South Africa." During the ensuing search for a proper response to Coca-Cola's actions, at least one AFSC board member – Rob Vitale – cautiously suggested that AFSC should consider withdrawing the boycott campaign: "I think it is absolutely essential that we contact trusted black resistance leaders in South Africa as soon as possible to understand how Coke's disinvestment action is interpreted from their perspective." Vitale went on to write,

Although with further information we may find Coke's disinvestment deficient or less than satisfactory on some points...it seems to me that we should withdraw

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<sup>202</sup> David Secrest, "Blacks Tout Success as Firms Cut South Africa Ties," *Atlanta Journal*, December 8, 1986, A1; Cynthia Tucker, "Coke Divestment Shrewd, Farsighted," *Atlanta Constitution*, September 19, 1986, A18.

our boycott campaign. The company was a much better than average citizen to begin with and it will in fact disinvest as we have asked it to do...If we should want to press further in this direction, I believe their (sic) are many other companies that should take priority in our efforts to seek change.

In his memo, Vitale pointed out that complete economic collapse was neither the goal of divestment, nor compatible with Quaker values of peace and nonviolence. Rather, the goal of the divestment campaign was to increase pressure to the point where the South African government decided that continuing to deny political, economic and human rights to the majority of the population was no longer tenable.<sup>203</sup>

The Georgia Coalition arranged to have a “distinguished team of independent fact finders” meet with Coca-Cola representatives Ware and Brant Davis to learn more about Coca-Cola’s disinvestment actions. During the meeting, Ware and Davis argued that the method of their disinvestment contributed to black economic empowerment and emphasized the contributions of the newly formed Equal Opportunity Fund on which South African anti-apartheid leaders Desmond Tutu and Allan Boesek served as board members. The Equal Opportunity Fund pledged ten million dollars to support education and other causes for South Africa’s black population. Tutu and Boesek agreed to serve on the board of the Fund under the condition that they retain their right to continue to call for full economic disinvestment by multinational corporations and economic sanctions enforced by the United Nations. Carl Ware continually emphasized the independence of the foundation. However, members of the fact finding team expressed concern that the Fund could never be truly independent because it would be bound by the limitations of the apartheid state. At one point Bill Howard, former President of the National Council of Churches, demanded that Coca-Cola “Stop trying to make people believe

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<sup>203</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, Robert J Vitale, “Some Considerations As to What is a Proper Response to Coca Cola’s Disinvestment Actions,” September 20, 1986, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

the support for your disinvestment plan and the (Equal Opportunity) Fund are not connected” – an accusation to which Ware did not respond.<sup>204</sup>

One of the members of the fact finding team participating in this meeting was Quaker Friend and local businessman, Britt Pendergrast. Pendergrast reflected on Coca-Cola’s actions and how the Coalition and the AFSC. Pendergrast began his remarks by outlining the four options that Coke faced in South Africa, which ranged from maintaining the status quo to initiating full economic disengagement:

Coca-Cola believes that it has chosen the one that is in the best interest of South African Blacks. By relocating the manufacture of concentrate to Swaziland, it will deny the South African government a tax base that has existed previously. By putting its bottling, canning and distribution facilities to Black ownership, it believes that it is helping in the creation of a Black middle class and developing the executive and managerial skills that will be needed in the future when Blacks have the opportunity to run or participate in running the government.<sup>205</sup>

Pendergrast recommended that the Georgia Coalition and the AFSC maintain cordial relations with Coca-Cola while continuing to explore future joint actions with the Coke leadership. Pendergrast argued that total economic disengagement from South Africa by Coca-Cola would only be useful if Coca-Cola could work out an agreement with its competitors to

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<sup>204</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “Notes of Meeting with Coca Cola,” December 15, 1986, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “The Coca Cola Company and South Africa: Disinvestment as a Means to Black Empowerment,” American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, Britt Pendergrast, “Remarks on the Meeting at the Coca Cola Company,” December 15, 1986, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “Coca Cola’s ‘Divestment’ – Was it the Real Thing? No!” American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

<sup>205</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, Britt Pendergrast, “Remarks on the Meeting at the Coca Cola Company,” December 15, 1986, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “Coca Cola’s ‘Divestment’ – Was it the Real Thing? No!” American Friends Service Committee Philadelphia.

remove all soft drinks from South Africa, “then and only then would the soft drink portion of the tax base be reduced and the government weakened.”<sup>206</sup>

Other participants of the fact finding team, such as William Booth, interpreted the meeting differently. William Booth was a representative from American Committee on Africa, an organization founded in 1953 to provide support for African liberation struggles. Booth reflected, “It is my opinion that the meeting with Coke made clear that their so-called disinvestment is not, as they would have us believe, ‘a blow against apartheid.’” Bill Howard concurred, “It is very difficult for me to accept Coca-Cola has withdrawn or is withdrawing from South Africa in any meaningful sense...My impression is that Coke has gone on the offensive and very cleverly designed an approach to the issue of disinvestment which makes Coke a difficult target.”<sup>207</sup>

Ultimately, the Georgia Coalition and AFSC’s response aligned more closely with the opinions of Howard and Booth than those of Vitale or Pendergrast. The AFSC continued to call for corporate disengagement, defined as “an action by a corporation severing all business relationships with South Africa. The term encompasses withdrawal from in-country marketing and distribution, licensing or franchising arrangements, trade relationships – including third party arrangements.” An AFSC internal memo titled “Definitions and Talking Points on Corporate Withdrawal From South Africa,” explains that divestment and disinvestment must be seen as steps toward complete corporate disengagement. The AFSC justified this stance by emphasizing that “The South African economy is that of a major industrialized nation. If South Africa finds

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<sup>206</sup> Britt Pendergrast is the father of Mark Pendergrast, author of *For God, Country and Coca Cola*, cited in this chapter. Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, Britt Pendergrast, “Remarks on the Meeting at the Coca Cola Company,” December 15, 1986, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

<sup>207</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “Coca Cola’s ‘Divestment’ – Was it the Real Thing? No!” AFSC Archives, Philadelphia, PA; letter from Bill Howard to Malkia M’Buzi, January 30, 1987, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

that disinvestment or disengagement deprives it of needed products, the government can make choices and redirect its internal resources to compensate for the loss. To do so in any substantial way would require reallocation of resources now devoted to military spending and the...destructive policies of apartheid.” Thus, the AFSC aim was not total economic collapse in South Africa, as Vitale feared, but rather that intensifying world wide economic pressure against the apartheid laws.<sup>208</sup>

Gcabashe, Gaines and other supporters took to the media to educate the public regarding on what they viewed as Coca-Cola’s sham divestment. Gcabashe held a press conference announcing that the AFSC would continue the Coke boycott, expose the limitations of Coca-Cola’s “divestment,” and meet “the new challenge to reveal this ploy to the general public who truly want no part in bolstering apartheid.” A month later, the *Atlanta Inquirer* quoted Gcabashe as saying, “Our own scrutiny prevents us from believing that the Coca-Cola Company disinvested from South Africa.” Gcabashe and other supporters expressed concern that selling the bottling plants to multiracial investment groups would create an extremely small class of elite black South Africans who would be invested in the maintenance of the apartheid system: “It must be remembered that the object of the disinvestment campaign is not to change the color of people who finance apartheid whether black or multiracial.” Gcabashe recognized that black entrepreneurship within the apartheid state would only exacerbate class differences. Unlike much of Atlanta’s “liberal” political establishment, Gcabashe did not view capitalism, entrepreneurship, and the free market as an instrument of liberation.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, Warren Witte, “Definitions and Talking Points of Corporate Withdrawal from South Africa,” October 16, 1986, American Friend Service Committee, Philadelphia.

<sup>209</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “Press Release,” American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA; Ron Sellers, “South African Refugee on Coca Cola Disinvestment: Incomplete; Protests Continue,” *Atlanta Inquirer*, October 18, 1986.

Gcabashe emphasized that apartheid was not something that could be reformed, but rather the system was an evil that called for complete destruction. The Georgia Coalition produced flyers and leaflets calling for mass participation in the Coke boycott and emphasizing that Coca-Cola was still available for sale in South Africa. While Coca-Cola's supporters hoped that the company's method of divestment might become a model for other multinational corporations in South Africa, its critics feared that this model would create a new obstacle in the path of the anti-apartheid struggle. Atlanta activist and longtime member of the Marxist-Leninist Workers World Party, Dianne Mathiowetz wrote in 1989, "Under increasing pressure from the anti-apartheid movement to disinvest from South Africa, Coke was a leader in developing the phony divestment schemes now being employed by many U.S. multinationals – to sell off their plants and facilities to South Africa allies who continue to produce profits for them."<sup>210</sup>

Speaking to the *Atlanta Inquirer*, Gcabashe expressed surprise and confusion by SCLC President Reverend Lowery's praise for Coca-Cola and his characterization of the announcement as "an unconditional victory." While Lowery was Gcabashe's minister at the United Methodist Church at that time, and while the two remain friends to this day, she reflected:

It's a complicated issue. You know when you are engaged in a coalition of any kind, and you work with people coming from diverse backgrounds, diverse political organizations and beliefs, you will find that sometimes you may agree on the principle – to eliminate apartheid and some aspects of how you go about it – but not everything. And I had to accept that... So it is true that SCLC, Mrs. King (and others), did not support the Coca-Cola boycott, but you have to understand that is where they get their funding for their organizations. And also understand that I'm sure Coca-Cola was talking to them at the same time: 'You dare not', in a nice way, but still saying, 'You dare not.' So that was really a drawback for us... The mandate from the ANC was not just sanctions...but also boycotts whenever you can. So it was sanctions and boycotts, so we were quite in line with

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<sup>210</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, Dianne Mathiowetz, "Coke's Sham Divestment," *Workers World*, October 2, 1986; American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, Dianne Mathiowetz, "How Coca Cola Sweetens Apartheid," *Workers World*, September 28, 1989, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Mark Pendergrast Research Files; Box 37, folder 1; Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Library, Emory University.



the mandate. But then some people, - you don't force people to do what is against their beliefs or their interests at the time, and that is why we are still friends today.<sup>211</sup>

Gcabashe and Ware disagreed over whether Coca-Cola was still paying taxes to the apartheid government, and both used their stance as evidence of whether or not Coca-Cola had truly disinvested from South Africa. Coca-Cola's official statement made clear that by moving its concentrate plant to Swaziland and selling its shares in the remaining South African bottling plant, Coca-Cola would no longer be required to pay corporate taxes to the South African government: "We no longer have assets or employees in South Africa, and we pay no taxes to the South African government." Critics of the move, however, argued that since Coca-Cola was still sold throughout South Africa, and each eighty cent can of Coca-Cola was taxed ten cents, Coca-Cola's operations would continue to finance the repression of South Africa's black majority. Coca-Cola did not have any plans to cease marketing its products in South Africa. In his 1991 interview with Mark Pendergrast, Ware stated clearly, "We don't view the protest about disinvestment or that debate to be relevant anymore."<sup>212</sup>

The AFSC took the opportunity to explain more clearly what full disinvestment and economic disengagement should mean. An AFSC press release stated, "Total disinvestment by Coca-Cola or any other foreign company must mean the cessation of all economic operations and connections, including license, trademarks, factories, suppliers and distributors." Movement leaders feared that Coca-Cola's current actions would serve as a screen for other American based

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<sup>211</sup> Interview with Thandi Gcabashe, February 20, 2013; Ron Sellers, "South African Refugee: Coca Cola Disinvestment Incomplete; Protests Continue," *The Atlanta Inquirer*, October 18, 1986, 1.

<sup>212</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, "The Coca-Cola Company and South Africa: Disinvestment as a Means to Black Empowerment," American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, "Document: Coke," American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

corporations feeling the heat from anti-apartheid activists and the general public regarding their operations in South Africa:

As a major U.S. firm with very high name-recognition and as a firm which has distinguished itself through its highly visible public consciousness, (Coke) is uniquely situated to showing leadership to the business community of this country and of the world. Conversely, its failure to respond or its responses which tend more to protect its profits than to withdraw its economic support, also provide models for other corporations, as the similarity of response from IBM and General Motors demonstrates.<sup>213</sup>

As this passage makes clear, the Georgia Coalition continued to see Coca-Cola as an ideal target for a continued boycott. Since the beginning of the struggle, the AFSC national board focused its energies on Coca-Cola because of the company's worldwide visibility. It continued to hold Coca-Cola's leaders accountable for "reconciling their support for humanitarian and educational causes at home with their support of apartheid in South Africa." The Georgia Coalition and the AFSC recognized that continuation of the Coke campaign in the aftermath of Coca-Cola's divestment announcement would require a renewed emphasis on public education, as many individuals and organizations initially took Coca-Cola's announcement at face value.<sup>214</sup>

In 1987 the Coke Campaign was again in full swing. In February campaign organizers launched a nationally distributed monthly newsletter titled *Corporate Watch: Eye on Coke*, which focused on a wide range of multi-national investment in South Africa while paying particular attention to the Coca-Cola Company. In June, a rally took place in which boycotters marched to the Coca-Cola corporate headquarters. The event was scheduled for June 16 to commemorate the eleventh anniversary of the 1976 Soweto uprisings in which about six hundred black South African youths were killed during protests over apartheid education policy.

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<sup>213</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, "Press Release," American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.; "Coca Cola's 'Divestment' – Was it the Real Thing? No!" American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

<sup>214</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, "Coca Cola Disinvestment Campaign Update and Funding Proposal," November 4, 1986, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

Protestors in Atlanta wore shirts and carried signs that said “Coke Sweetens Apartheid.” About sixty-five individuals participated in the event, which was co-sponsored by a coalition of about forty organizations. Campaign organizers noted the significance of the Atlanta Journal Constitution covering the event, “in light of the lack of coverage of boycott activities in the past.” The news article acknowledged that while Coca-Cola did sell its bottling operations in South Africa, the company continued to ship its syrup to South Africa. The following month, over 1,500 people came together in Philadelphia at the Call to Conscience March and Rally. The event protested U.S. and South African racism as well as U.S. foreign policy, and the Coke boycott “was very visible at the march and rally.” Finally, in 1987 the Coke Campaign also gained support from the American Federation of State and Municipal Employees. This group was one of the leading labor unions in Atlanta and under the guidance of James McKinney, the AFSCME distributed fact sheets on the Coke Campaign to thousands of members.<sup>215</sup>

The relationship between renowned South African anti-apartheid leaders Tutu and Boesak on the one hand, and the Coca-Cola Company on the other, continued to be a source of confusion and concern for Americans. When Tutu and Boesak agreed to become trustees for Coca-Cola’s Equal Opportunity Fund, they stated in writing that “The establishment of the proposed trust cannot be divorced from the divestment debate and we would desire that it be abundantly clear that we are not lending support to any effort aimed at relieving pressure for change on the South African government.” In 1989 Tutu reiterated that he and his colleagues “agreed to serve as Trustees of this Fun only if we retained our right to continue to call on United States corporations, including Coca-Cola to divest. We entered into a written agreement guaranteeing our right to do so.” However, Coca-Cola emphasized the support of Tutu and

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<sup>215</sup> Michelle Hiskey, “Coke Urged to Divest in South Africa: Rally Marks Anniversary of Uprising in Soweto,” *Atlanta Journal*, C6, June 17, 1987; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, “Update Coke Boycott Campaign,” December 15, 1987, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

Boesek as a way to convince the American public that Coke's divestment was indeed legitimate and that company was actively contributing to the elimination of apartheid in South Africa. For example, a Coca-Cola Company newsletter quoted Boesek speaking about the Equal Opportunity Fund in 1989: "Control and responsibility are totally in the hands of the black community. We have direct decision-making ability in terms of the real needs of the community and funding for programs essential to the process of empowerment." While the Coke Campaign praised Coca-Cola's contributions to worthy causes in the United States and acknowledged its ten million dollar Equal Opportunity Fund in South Africa as a step in the right direction, it emphasized that the impact of this fund on the lives of most South Africans would be miniscule. These contradictions indicate why the Coke Campaign felt the need to focus most of its efforts to public education as a way of minimizing the potential damage caused by the willingness of black leaders in Atlanta and South Africa to collaborate with Coca-Cola.<sup>216</sup>

The Atlanta-based Coke Campaign was unable to build upon the gains of 1987. According to a Fall 1988 AFSC quarterly report, the membership and participation in the Georgia Coalition for Divestment in South Africa "has greatly reduced over time." The newsletter described this decline as a "serious concern, in that, the Coke Campaign is a project of the Georgia Coalition." The decline in participation in the Georgia Coalition was symptomatic of a general decline in American commitment to ending South African apartheid during the last third of the 1980s. After the passage of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986, many Americans believed their work was done. The Free South Africa Movement and other national campaigns of the early and middle years of the decade had focused primarily on calling for the

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<sup>216</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, "Why is Coca-Cola Sold in South Africa?" Coca Cola Company publication, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, "Response to Archbishop Tutu's Letter Dated April 1989," Coke Boycott Campaign, September 15, 1989, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

U.S. government to pass economic sanctions against South Africa. Once that goal had been achieved, the movement lost its initial focus. Many activists merely became observers as they waited to see what effects the Sanctions laws would have on the apartheid regime. But these shifts at the national level should not cause us to underestimate the critical role played by certain segments of black leadership in Atlanta and South Africa. Certainly the Coca Cola Company's skillful efforts to recruit renowned civil rights leaders like Lowery and Young, and anti-apartheid figures like Tutu and Boesak were a factor in the campaign's failure to grow<sup>217</sup>

Gcabashe worked tirelessly to keep the boycott going and to call attention to Coca-Cola's continued presence in South Africa. The boycott and education campaign achieved two small successes far from Atlanta. In Los Angeles, the city government refused to contract with Coca-Cola, IBM and General Motors, which was significant because these corporations had announced their official withdrawal from South Africa. However, according to city of Los Angeles legal counsel, Mark Fabiani, "None of the actions taken by IBM, GM or Coca-Cola would satisfy our contracting policy, which defines 'doing business' as selling or licensing products, as well as producing them in South Africa. All three of those companies are still doing business and doing significant business in South Africa. Even if they've sold off assets, they're continuing to sell products there."<sup>218</sup>

A second victory came in Boston, where high school and college students voted in early 1989 to have Coke machines removed from their campuses in protest of apartheid policy. In January Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School hosted a debate between Gcabashe and Ware. While Ware argued that "The lack of a Coca-Cola product is not going to change apartheid,"

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<sup>217</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, "Southern Africa Peace Education Program, Quarterly Report," Fall 1988, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

<sup>218</sup> Tamar Lewin, "Did 2 American Companies Meet Divestment Test?" *New York Times*, October 26, 1986; John Kirby Spivey, "Coke vs Pepsi: The Cola Wars in South Africa during The Anti-Apartheid Era," 36.

Gcabashe criticized him for failing to consult with the ANC to find out what the participants in the South African liberation movement thought was best. *Boston Globe* reporter Derrick Jackson noted the significance that Coke “took Rindge and Latin so seriously that it sent a vice president from Atlanta to its debate.” No such public debate ever occurred in Atlanta. The student vote followed shortly after the debate, and 70 percent of students called for Coke machines to be removed from campus. Nearby Mount Holyoke College students became the first to vote Coca-Cola off a college campus. Student Reehanna Raza commented, “We don’t expect to put Coke out of business or really stop them in South Africa. But we wanted to take symbolic action to get other colleges involved.”<sup>219</sup>

In early 1990, following a twenty-eight year imprisonment and an international campaign for his freedom, Nelson Mandela was released from prison. The events that followed Mandela’s release – to be discussed in detail in a subsequent chapter – further complicated the public’s understanding of the role of Coca-Cola in South Africa, and thus put the Coke Boycott Campaign on increasingly shaky footing. In 1992, Gcabashe issued a statement urging the continued boycott of Coca-Cola products and condemning the Bush administration for “the premature lifting of sanctions.” While negotiations for democracy in South Africa had begun, progress was slow and most of the apartheid laws remained in place. Gcabashe quoted Mandela calling for continued the continued economic isolation of South Africa: “We would like sanctions to be reimposed.” But a year later, in July 1993, the AFSC officially ended its support for the campaign, and in September of that year Mandela began to urge multinational

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<sup>219</sup> Derrick Jackson, “Saying No to Coke: The Cola That Is, Students Protest Firm’s Dealings in South Africa,” *Boston Globe*, April 16, 1989, pg 79; Kirby Spivey, “Coke vs Pepsi: The Cola Wars in South Africa during The Anti-Apartheid Era,” 37.

corporations to reinvest in South Africa as the country moved towards its first democratic elections.<sup>220</sup>

In conclusion, the Coke boycott campaign was somewhat successful in creating a broad based movement with nationwide support. The visibility of Coca-Cola as a consumer product made the beverage an ideal target because refusal to purchase or consume Coca-Cola was an act in which anyone could participate and thereby express solidarity with the South African anti-apartheid struggle. The relentless efforts of Gcabashe to promote the boycott and educate the American public on South African issues were certainly a significant factor in the support that the Coke Campaign achieved. However, while the initial pressure on Coca-Cola likely influenced the company's 1986 "divestment" actions, the continued boycott in the second half of the decade was not able to pressure the Coca-Cola Company to into further curtailing its involvement in South Africa. This failure was likely due to the company's skillful presentation of their self proclaimed noble actions in South Africa. The Coca-Cola Company was able to use their world class marketing to convince much of the public that their creation of the Equal Opportunity Fund and the program's support from Tutu and Boesek indicated that the company stood on the side of South Africa's black anti-apartheid leadership. Gaining support from Atlanta's black political leadership, including Young, as well as the mainstream media also shielded Coca-Cola from criticism. Further, Coca-Cola's history of philanthropic donations and support for community programs in the U.S., as well as the Coca-Cola Company's powerful status within metro Atlanta made many groups, even some progressive ones, like the SCLC, reluctant to condemn the Coca-Cola Company. Finally, Coca-Cola's continued willingness to

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<sup>220</sup> Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, "Dear Colleague - Letter from Tandi Gcabashe," July 17, 1992, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia; Regional Files, Atlanta Office, Peace Education Southern Africa Program, "Memorandum: Two Issues Requiring Board Decisions," Ken Martin, July 13, 1993, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia.

refuse to complete their divestment in the face of public criticism and boycott is somewhat surprising given the company's obsession with their corporate image and the resulting capitulations to public pressure during threatened boycotts from the 1960s through the early 1980s.



## CONCLUSION

In February 1990, after twenty-seven years in prison for actions, activism and armed struggle against the apartheid government of South Africa as a leader of the African National Congress, Nelson Mandela gained his freedom and reentered the world. For black South Africans and thousands of impassioned observers around the world, it seemed to indicate the end of an era and the beginning of a promising future of continued change. The world-wide “Free Mandela” campaign had been one of the largest humanitarian movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The termination of Mandela’s prison sentence indicated that the movement had met with success, though much of South Africa’s future remained uncertain.

Shortly after his release, Mandela embarked on a whirlwind tour of the United States to mobilize popular support and urge the American government to continue to enforce economic sanctions against South Africa until the apartheid system was fully dismantled. This trip was part of a forty-five day journey through twenty-one diverse countries. During his eleven days in the US, Mandela visited eight cities, one of which was Atlanta. Here I use Southern Christian Leadership Conference papers and five different news publications to recount the events of Mandela’s time in Atlanta. I will explain why he chose to include Atlanta on his itinerary and analyze the media coverage of and public response to his visit. The controversies surrounding Mandela’s time in Atlanta have much in common with the debates that shaped anti-apartheid activism and politics in the city during the 1980s. Thus, examining Mandela’s presence in Atlanta serves as a useful conclusion for this project.

As the 1980s drew to a close South Africa teetered on the brink of civil war as violence escalated throughout the country. At the same time, as the Soviet Union collapsed, the apartheid government’s claim to be protecting South Africa from a communist onslaught lost credibility.

The New National Party leader and South African President FW de Klerk realized that change was inevitable. On February 2, 1990 de Klerk lifted the ban on the ANC and other opposition groups. Just over a week later, Mandela was released from prison. By this point, Mandela was viewed as godlike by his South African supporters, a perspective shared by untold numbers of black Americans. By June 20<sup>th</sup> Nelson Mandela was in New York City where 750,000 New Yorkers lined the streets to greet him.<sup>221</sup>

Mandela's visit to the United States was coordinated by TransAfrica, the Washington DC based lobbying group that took a major leadership role in the anti-apartheid movement in the US, as well as a newly formed organization called the "Mandela Welcome committee."

TransAfrica's Randall Robinson and Roger Wilkins teamed up with local representatives in each of the city's on the tour to finalize the itinerary and plan Mandela's appearances.<sup>222</sup>

Some cities like New York and Washington seemed obvious choices for destinations during Mandela's US Tour. Mandela visited the United Nations while in New York, met with President Bush at the White House, and spoke before a joint session of Congress. Furthermore, these East Coast cities had been the center of the American anti-apartheid movement from campus divestment efforts to the Free South Africa movement and the call for economic sanctions from the US government.

The main reason that Mandela chose to include Atlanta on his first tour of the United States was not because of this city's international business community or because Atlanta had a black mayor – though certainly Mayor Young's ceaseless promotion of Atlanta internationally may have played a role. Primarily though, Mandela chose Atlanta because this was *the* place to link the struggles of Africans and black Americans. It was *the* place to forge a living link to the

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<sup>221</sup> John Kifner, "The Mandela Visit; Mandela Gets an Emotional New York City Welcome," *New York Times*, June 21, 1990.

<sup>222</sup> Alexis Moor, "Much in Demand: Nelson Mandela's Eight City Tour," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 9, 1990.

legacy of Martin Luther King. This link too, was continuously promoted by Mayor Young who never tired of reminding people of his roots as a close colleague of King's during the civil rights movement. The new mayor, Maynard Jackson, in office for only six months at the time of Mandela's visit, was also no stranger to using the rhetoric of the civil rights movement and Atlanta's special place within that history to promote the city and his career.

King's widow and President of the King Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Coretta Scott King issued a statement that made the connections between King and Mandela explicit: "Martin Luther King Jr's views on what to do about apartheid were identical to Mandela's positions today. An early and ardent proponent of global economic sanctions against the apartheid regime, King called Mandela a 'great leader' in a 1964 speech in London." During his visit to Atlanta, Nelson Mandela ceremoniously laid a wreath on Martin Luther King's grave in a symbolic effort to link Mandela, the ANC and South Africans with MLK and the US civil rights movement. Historian Jennifer Bratyanski has argued that efforts – particularly by the American media – to connect the South African anti-apartheid movement with African Americans' historic struggles for racial justice resulted in a romanticizing and sanitizing of both movements. John Saul, author of "Liberation Support and Anti-Apartheid Work as Seeds of Global Consciousness: The Birth of Solidarity with Southern African Struggles," takes Bratyanski's critique a bit further by lamenting the failure of American anti-apartheid activists to launch critiques of capitalism and imperialism: "In the long run, for all its importance and all its accomplishments, 'antiapartheid' tended to muffle a necessary understanding of global realities, rather than serve as a step towards it."<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Atlanta Voice – special Mandela issue, July 1990; John S. Saul, "Liberation Support and Anti-Apartheid Work as Seeds of Global Consciousness: The Birth of Solidarity with Southern African Struggles" in ed. Karen Dubinsky, et al, *New World Coming: The Sixties and the Shaping of Global Consciousness* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2009),

As Mandela's arrival in Atlanta approached there was a flurry of media attention in all of the city's news outlets. The *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, the city's mainstream daily newspaper, published an article comparing the strategies and ideologies of Mandela to those of Dr. King, emphasizing both men's reverence for the teachings of Gandhi and acknowledging the different circumstances that led Mandela to condone armed struggle in South Africa. Even among several black-owned newspapers, the diversity in type and tone of press coverage given to Mandela's time in Atlanta demonstrates that a tremendous range of opinions could be found within the local black press. At the *Atlanta Voice*, a religiously inspired black newspaper founded in 1963 to support the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement, the response to Mandela's visit can only be described as euphoric. The weekly newspaper published an entire special edition to celebrate Mandela and his presence in Atlanta, and to inform readers of the history and current situation in South Africa. The issue, titled "Our Struggle is One," included welcome statements from the city of Atlanta, Fulton County, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Atlanta Branch of the NAACP, and the Martin Luther King Jr Center for Nonviolent Social Change, as well as reprints of speeches from Malcolm X and Paul Robeson speaking about racial injustice in South Africa. The editors of *The Atlanta Voice* also included a letter urging Mandela to observe that conditions in the black community in the United States may not be so different from those in South Africa. *The Atlanta Voice* continued unyielding support for Mandela when he faced criticism from Miami's Cuban population for declaring solidarity with Fidel Castro. The author lamented that this pettiness and misplaced focus indicated that Mandela's visit to the US will not result in real and permanent social change.<sup>224</sup>

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130, 140; Jennifer Bratyanski, *Mainstreaming Movements: The U.S. Anti-Apartheid Movement and Civil Rights Memory* (PhD Dissertation: University of North Carolina, Greensboro, 2012), 18.

<sup>224</sup> Steve Harvey, "The Mandela Crusade: Old Ties to Atlanta, Struggle Recalls King's, but Strategies Differ," *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, June 17, 1990, D2.

The *Atlanta Daily World* is the longest running continually published black newspaper in Atlanta. From the time that CA Scott took over the publication in 1934, *The Daily World* represented a more conservative and consistently Republican position often at odds with the perspective of most of Atlanta's African American community. While the paper published the requisite articles on Mandela's plans for his time in Atlanta, *The Daily World* also included an editorial that continued to question the efficacy of economic sanctions, despite the fact that Mandela and other black South African leaders called for them. The *Daily World's* argument echoed that of the Reagan administration and American corporate leaders who suggested that American businesses should use their leverage to foster change from within South Africa and that black workers bore the brunt of the effects of sanctions.

A third African American newspaper, *The Atlanta Inquirer*, also established during the Civil Rights era and originally published by Atlanta University Center activists, broke the news that Mandela's stop in Atlanta was almost canceled at the last minute. According to *The Atlanta Inquirer's* Hal Lamar: "Inside sources say that for over eight hours Coretta King, Joe Lowery, Harry Belafonte and others sat around attempting to convince the organizers not to cancel." The author suggests that a Coca-Cola controversy was to blame for the potential cancellation. The Coca-Cola Company offered Mandela the use of a corporate jet for this tour. Mandela and the ANC rejected the offer because the company continued to sell its soft drink concentrate in South Africa despite claiming to have fully disinvested from the South African economy. As discussed in Chapter five, Tandi Gcabashe continued to argue, "This company is still profiting from apartheid and hence we cannot have any relationship with it, even if it's on humanitarian grounds." Although Coca-Cola divested its bottling plants in South Africa in 1986, it continued to ship its concentrate to South Africa and enjoy a large share of the South African soft drink

market. An ANC representative worried that Coca-Cola's involvement might taint Mandela's reputation. However, despite ANC wishes Coca-Cola still profited from Mandela's tour, as the company owned the soft-drink concession at several stadiums hosting Mandela appearances, including the Grant Field Stadium at Georgia Tech.

*The Atlanta Journal Constitution* published an editorial condemning the ANC's rejection of Coca-Cola, calling the decision "emotional" and "irrational." The author calls Coca-Cola a "corporate ally in the fight against apartheid," emphasizing Coca-Cola's divestment as well as the establishment of the endowed equal opportunity foundation which provided scholarships for South African youth. This article marked the first time that the AJC had acknowledged that controversy still existed regarding Coca-Cola's involvement in South Africa since before the company's alleged divestment five years earlier. In all the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* published thirteen articles about Mandela's 1990 visit to Atlanta, most of them supporting the ANC leader's mission and relishing his presence in the city.

On several scales, competition emerged for attention during Mandela's visit. On the national level, the city of Chicago felt slighted that Mandela did not include a stop in the nation's third largest city. Observers alleged that the rejection of Chicago's invitation was due to Mayor Daley's lack of support for economic sanctions against apartheid South Africa. Within Atlanta, white city council members were angered when initially only black representatives were provided invitations for preferred seating at the Grant Field Mandela Rally. Although the slight was corrected, some council members were still upset that they did not have more significant access to Mandela.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Alma Hill, "Some Atlanta Officials Annoyed at Not Being in the Thick of Things," *The Atlanta Constitution*, June 29, 1990, A8; Cynthia Durcanin, "Commercialism Building Before Mandela Trip to U.S.," *The Atlanta Journal constitution*, June 3, 1990, A1.

The mass rally at Georgia Tech was the highlight of Mandela's time in Atlanta. A sold out crowd of 50,000 plus people turned out to honor Mandela and hear him speak. Again he made the connection between US civil rights struggles and South Africa's, this time by quoting King's "I have a dream" speech. Many of those who had the opportunity to see and hear Mandela in person were overcome with emotion: "I can't even describe the feeling," said Wendy Truitt... "It's tears and joy and excitement all at the same time." African Americans across the United States felt proud and inspired by Mandela's presence. A pastor from Detroit stated, "Whatever the Pope means to Catholics, that's what Mandela means to us." Atlantian, Dorothy Clements hoped that Mandela's visit would "bring black Americans together." As many observers reflected that the energy surrounding Mandela's visit was reminiscent of the civil rights movement, some hoped that Mandela might "put younger blacks in touch with their heritage."<sup>226</sup>

Atlanta's civil rights vanguard echoed these sentiments. Corretta Scott King stated, "Now we have the physical manifestations as we can touch and feel the people who have been involved in the struggle and they can feel us... For the children that will be here and who will get a chance to just get a glimpse of this man, maybe, and who will hear some of his words, it's very important." Reverend Lowery emphasized the importance of exposing Americans to a positive image of an African man: "The only examples of African manhood known to most Americans are Idi Amin and Tarzan."<sup>227</sup>

Emory Sociology student and activist, Randy Blazak shared in these observer's enthusiasm, "it was very exciting; I sat way up in the top and screamed and yelled. It was incredible because we didn't think it would happen. You know, when he was released it was just

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<sup>226</sup> John Kifner, "Preparations are Hectic for Mandela's U.S. Tour," *New York Times*, June 18, 1990.

<sup>227</sup> John Kifner, "Preparations are Hectic for Mandela's U.S. Tour," *New York Times*, June 18, 1990.

one of those snapshot memories...It was very emotional.” On the other hand, as Blazak reflected on his memories of that day, he also commented:

The one feeling I had was, there was a large African American turnout to see him, and I thought, where were these people when we were protesting? I think people of color of course knew about South Africa for a long time. In the 60s people were protesting in the United States against apartheid. But I just remember thinking, you know, I wish they would have come out (to protests) instead of these goofy white kids from the university.”<sup>228</sup>

Others remained outside the stadium in protest. A small group of Ku Klux Klan members convened with plans to burn an ANC flag until they were threatened with arrest. Civil rights veteran Rev Hosea Williams led a protest against the five dollar ticket fee until he and several others were arrested trying to force their way into the stadium. Williams connected his opposition to the ticket fee to a larger issue developing several miles away, downtown. Homeless people had occupied the abandoned Imperial Hotel, demanding that the city provide affordable housing. Although not originally involved with this protest, Williams attempted to recruit the homeless demonstrators for a march to the Georgia Tech campus. Williams was generally critical of Mandela’s entire experience in Atlanta, accusing Joseph Lowery and Coretta Scott King of using Mandela to enhance their own public image: “I almost expect corporate America to exploit Mandela; it’s these so called black leaders that I don’t understand. The same things they’re advocating for South Africa, they’re not doing right here in Vine City and Cabbagetown.” Williams had recently run against Jackson in the 1989 mayoral race, and would likely have argued that Mayors Young and Jackson also used Mandela’s presence as an opportunity to promote their own careers.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Interview with Randy Blazak, September 30, 2012.

<sup>229</sup> Charles Steffen, “(Dis)Empowering Homeless People: The Battle for Atlanta’s Imperial Hotel, 1990-1991,” *Journal of Urban History* (38:4, April 2012), 760; Cynthia Durcanin, “Commercialism Building Before Mandela Trip to U.S.,” *The Atlanta Journal constitution*, June 3, 1990, A1.



Sidewalk vendors were another group positioned outside the stadium. Despite official requests that “merchandising aspect of this visit...express the importance and dignity of Mr Mandela’s visit,” and the urging to “do everything possible to assure good taste and high quality in officially authorized merchandise,” unauthorized sellers hawked t-shirts, mugs, bumper stickers and posters. “Right now Mandela is real hot,” said Bayyinah Shaheed who operated a souvenir stand near Underground Atlanta. It’s unlikely that t-shirts featuring a brown-skinned, green and red clad Bart Simpson, proclaiming “Mandela, the dude’s my hero!” were what Mandela’s handlers had in mind when they urged good taste in souvenirs. His time in Atlanta declared a success, Mandela flew on to Miami, Los Angeles and Oakland before returning to South Africa.<sup>230</sup>

Three years later Mandela returned to Atlanta. Again on a US tour, Mandela’s goals in 1993 were quite different than they had been in 1990. While Mandela focused on rousing public support on his first tour, in 1993 on the eve of South Africa’s first democratic elections, Mandela sought corporate and other financial support for the ANC to aid in the transition from the group’s history as a protest movement to its future as a viable political party. While in Atlanta Mandela attended a special ceremony in which he was granted an honorary degree from Clark Atlanta University, and he gave interviews for CNN and the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*. This time though, he also spent time with Coca-Cola executives, and in fact his trip was sponsored by the company that he had snubbed on his first trip to Atlanta, famously drinking Pepsi on camera and requesting that Coke machines be removed from the floor of his hotel. Now, Mandela flew on a Coca-Cola plane and shared meals with the Coca-Cola Company’s top management.

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<sup>230</sup> Southern Christian Leadership Conference Papers #1083, box 107 folder 4, letter from Cecile Blakely of “Nelson Mandela Tour, A Project of Democracy for South Africa,” Emory University, Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library.

What had changed? Mark Pendergrast, author of the self proclaimed definitive history of the Coca Cola Company argues that African American Coke executive Carl Ware befriended Mandela and persuaded the ANC to call off the Coke boycott. Meanwhile the company worked behind the scenes to ease the transition to democracy. Carl Ware, head of the board of trustees at Clark University, stood on stage while Mandela received his honorary degree. Mandela gave a public thank you to Ware for his “commitment to the problems that bear on our country.”<sup>231</sup> Clearly, many of the trends and parties that shaped the Atlanta’s anti-apartheid movement continued their presence during Mandela’s short time in the city. Mandela’s visit in 1990 galvanized public support and left many African Americans with high hopes that the enthusiasm generated from his presence might result in tangible progress for the black community in Atlanta, which continued to struggle against the legacy of southern racism.

This dissertation has examined Atlanta as a place where local, national, and transnational organizations and tactics intersected and interacted in the context of the international anti-apartheid movement. I have argued that due to the historical, political and social dynamics of Atlanta, the anti-apartheid movement of the 1980s took on different characteristics in this city than it did in elsewhere. During the 1980s Atlanta was a city with a local political regime in which African American politicians eagerly partnered with corporate interests. Yet, the city still hosted a grassroots anti-apartheid movement. My project contributes to the literature on movement building by emphasizing the need to acknowledge both local dynamics as well as international or national forces to construct an accurate understanding of how a social movement manifests in given locality.

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<sup>231</sup> Pendergrast, *For God, Country and Coca-Cola*, 394.

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