Expanding the Horizons of the U.S. Anti-Apartheid Movement

PREXY NESBITT

Prexy Nesbitt has devoted much of his adult life to African solidarity work. The former Program Director of the World Council of Churches' Program to Combat Racism, headquartered in Switzerland, he currently is an organizer for District 65-UAW and Chair Emeritus of the Coalition for Illinois Divestment from South Africa, a Resist grant recipient. The following article is reprinted from The Black Scholar, November/December 1985.

In one short year, the U.S. anti-apartheid movement has achieved many victories. For the first time, the U.S. Congress passed a sanctions bill against South Africa; President Reagan was forced to sign an Executive Order imposing sanctions, albeit with toothless provisions; the divestment movement has grown tremendously resulting in over $2 billion removed from companies and banks involved in South Africa; and the issue of apartheid and U.S. complicity with Pretoria has been placed on the front burner of America’s political agenda.

At the same time, the U.S. arm of the anti-apartheid movement also has every reason to congratulate themselves.

Under the impetus of the divestment movement, the Free South Africa Movement and countless demonstrations, rallies, and marches, there has been created a new ambiance in the U.S. First, the word “apartheid” now has political recognition, and second, an atmosphere now prevails where to be connected to apartheid in any way has become a very onerous fact in and of itself.

Even though the concrete successes and the change in public opinion can be traced to the tremendous amount of political energy that has been mobilized against the apartheid system in the U.S., those who want to see the racist regime brought to its knees cannot afford to be complacent. Even while U.S. policy makers have been forced to make some cosmetic alterations in their overt relations with South Africa, they are moving on other fronts to prop up the Botha government.

Nowhere is this more evident than in recent moves by Washington to finance South African-backed counterrevolutionaries in Angola and Mozambique and the attempt to paint the leading liberation movement in South Africa — the African National Congress (ANC) — as a bunch of terrorists under the sway of the Soviet Union.

In this political context, the U.S. anti-apartheid movement must take up new challenges in the period ahead. Primarily, this will necessitate expand-

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ing both the political and the geographic horizons of our movement. In terms of a concrete program, this will entail solidifying the linkages and connections that keep the apartheid regime afloat. To be specific, this means expanding the purview of the anti-apartheid movement to include the struggle to remove South Africa’s illegal occupation of Namibia and to take up the defense of the Frontline States which provide a critical rear base for the liberation movements in Southern Africa.

The Namibian Question

We must begin to give much more attention to the Namibian Question. The struggle of the people of South Africa against apartheid and the independence struggle of the Namibian people led by the South West Africa Peoples Organization (SWAPO) are inextricably linked. Despite world opinion, and in violation of U.N. Resolution #435, Pretoria continues to illegally occupy Namibia and carries out daily atrocities against the population.

Successive U.S. administrations have aided and abetted this process. Reagan, for his part, introduced the infamous “linkage,” asserting that the resolution of the Namibian question should be balanced off by the removal of Cuban troops from Angola. This is a view that we must be more forthright in condemning. Cuban troops entered Angola at the invitation of a sovereign nation to stave off an invasion involving South Africa, the U.S. and puppet troops in UNITA and the FNLA.

When you boil it all down, Reagan’s linkage is nothing less than a rationalization to support South Africa’s illegal occupation of Namibia. If the Cuban troops were not present, Angola would find it even more difficult to defend itself against the incursions of the South African army. This eventually would weaken the struggle against apartheid and our movement in the U.S. cannot tolerate such a possibility.

The Frontline States, particularly Angola, form the backbone for the liberation movements. They have provided supplies; they are the source of a rear base for the ANC and SWAPO; they are the sites where victims of apartheid’s repression can be brought. For this reason, South Africa and their friends in Washington, have done

Church and Social Justice

To the Editors:
Re Jeanne Gallo’s article on the Latin American Church: If there isn’t a contradiction between Catholicism and revolution, women are in big trouble! How can a movement for social equality not conflict with a hierarchically organized church in which only males have power? How can a movement dedicated to dignity and health for all not conflict with the Catholic ban on abortion and all methods of family planning that work? In Nicaragua, abortion is illegal. Whom do Nicaraguan women have to thank for that, the bad old feudalistic church, or the new pro-revolution one?
I’m curious to know how Jeanne Gallo reconciles the Church’s commitment to social justice with its denial of social justice to women.

Sincerely yours,
Katha Pollitt

Gallo responds

To the Editors:
Re Katha Pollitt’s response to my article on the Latin American Church: It would seem that Ms. Pollitt wants to write off and disregard history. The point of my article was to give some background to the events of the last decade as seen in the rise of liberation movements — especially in Central America — movements which have committed Christians engaged in them. My final comments had to do with what the role of U.S. citizens can be in changing U.S. policy vis-a-vis Third World nations, especially those nations who are pushing for self-determination.

Lest Ms. Pollitt think that I do not agree with her comments about the Roman Catholic Church and its relation to women, I want to go on record as saying that I do. However, my understanding of change is that it will emerge because of such contradictions as do exist. For too long, many women accepted their role as defined by males — this was true of all sectors and institutions. When women have become conscious of their oppression, then the struggle for change has emerged. I do not reconcile the Church’s commitment to social justice with its denial of social justice to women. The point is not to reconcile, but to change the reality of women — not just in the Roman Catholic Church, but everywhere! Again, the Latin American reality and the base community movement can point the way — change has to be grounded in an option for the poor and oppressed. Women are the poor and oppressed of our world. Struggling in solidarity with liberation movements around the world by working here to change U.S. foreign policy is taking part in the movement for women’s liberation. That liberation includes not only women’s reproductive rights, but also liberation from hunger, disease, illiteracy, exploitative working conditions.

Finally, the people of Nicaragua shout “BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND REVOLUTION... THERE IS NO CONTRADICTION!” They do not say between Roman Catholicism and Revolution — they know better. And so, their struggle includes that of liberating Roman Catholicism as well as other institutions, that all structures, all institutions, will respond and serve the needs of the majority — that means the majority poor!

Sincerely yours,
Jeanne Gallo

Resist Newsletter

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everything in their power to destabilize and overthrow the Frontline States.

South Africa, with the implicit cooperation of the U.S., had supplied and given military assistance to counterrevolutionary forces operating within the borders of Angola and Mozambique. UNITA in Angola and the MNR in Mozambique are nothing but puppets operating as bandits to destroy the infrastructure of these countries. Their short term objective is to make it too costly for Angola and Mozambique to continue to aid the liberation movements in South Africa and Namibia and to keep these bordering states in a constant state of crisis.

A more long term strategy, however, is to overthrow Luanda and Maputo and institute governments that would be little more than bantustans. There is little doubt that since November 11, 1975, when Angola gained its independence, a covert agenda item of the U.S. has been to work against the People's Republic of Angola, principally through its ties with Pretoria.

Aid for Bandits

That agenda item has now come out into the open. In recent weeks a proposal to grant $27 million to UNITA and $10 million to the MNR is currently making its way through the machinery of Congress.

The seriousness of the problem is further underscored by reports that the CIA and the Pentagon have asked Reagan for an additional $300 million in covert aid to bolster Savimbi's UNITA. The U.S. anti-apartheid movement must be unceasing in its work to see that these bills are defeated. The basis for the proposal of these bills was the lifting of the Clark Amendment which forbade the U.S. to provide military or financial assistance to counterrevolutionary forces operating in Angola. The anti-apartheid movement should have been more active when the Clark Amendment was challenged, but our movement didn't see the handwriting on the wall.

Now it is clear for all to read. The U.S. is trying to prop up UNITA in Angola and the MNR in Mozambique as a means of alleviating the pressure on South Africa. The economy of South Africa is in desperate shape right now, spending $2 million a day on the war in Namibia, the war against blacks in South Africa and the war against its neighboring states. The granting of this money to UNITA would mean that some $327 million of Pretoria's budget would now be devoted instead to the purchase of more tanks, armored cars and bullets for use against the children in the streets of Soweto.

Opening Floodgates

No less important, if this legislation passes, it would open the floodgates to every right wing mercenary in the country. All the private, corporate and ultra right forces that are extra-governmental, could begin to pour in aid to support UNITA and the MNR, presumably with the sanction of Congress.

Nor can one ignore the fact that passage of this legislation would bolster Pretoria's contention that they are legitimately combatting so-called communism in Southern Africa. The Reagan administration has already changed the terms of respectable international behavior with its overt aid to the contras in Nicaragua. Lending aid to UNITA and the MNR would further this process, giving a green light to overt attempts to overthrow legitimate governments simply because they displease Washington.

Support for the Frontline States and the Namibian struggle for independence thus has a number of political implications for the anti-apartheid movement. Implicit in this perspective is also the need to expand our political horizons to include explicit support for the organizations that are leading the fight against Pretoria, i.e., the ANC in South Africa and the SWAPO in Namibia.

At this stage our movement has been organized on simply an anti-apartheid basis which is insufficient for our tasks in the coming period. We must go from being merely anti-apartheid to being supportive of the specific national liberation movements in their quests for the total destruction of apartheid and in their creation of new societies in Southern Africa.

This will involve lending political support to the programs and tactics of these organizations, including the defense of armed struggle as a legitimate tactic in the struggle for freedom. After all, the independence of our own nation only came about as a result of a revolutionary war against Great Britain.

As equally important, this support must begin to take the form of direct material aid. SWAPO has 80,000 refugees to care for in southern Angola. The ANC, for its part, runs hospitals, clinics, schools, and farms for many of the thousands of South Africa refugees who have fled to neighboring countries. The ANC also runs an incredible college in Tanzania — the Solomon Mahlangu College — a unique institution of higher learning that is every bit as important to the struggle as is the armed unit, Umkonto We Sizwe.

We in the U.S. have yet to create the circumstances where institutions and non-governmental organizations — churches, unions, campuses, civic groups — are sending hundreds of thousands of dollars in humanitarian assistance to the ANC and SWAPO. The Scandinavian countries already provide this kind of assistance. Taking up this task will not mean giving up on the divestment or the legislative fights, but transferring capital from being on the side of the oppressor to the side of the oppressed.

It was said by Paul Robeson in 1946 that it was particularly incumbent upon the Afro-American community to view things in an anti-imperialist perspective and to defend Africa. The moment has never been more crucial to see the mobilization of the Afro-American community and progressive peoples of all hues across the country to not only do more divestment work, but to also affirmatively and clearly move to assist the ANC and SWAPO in the tasks they have. Those tasks, simply stated, involve the complete eradication of apartheid and the freeing up of Southern Africa which would mean the freeing up of the African Continent.

In making more of a contribution to that task, the U.S. anti-apartheid movement will also make more of a contribution to the freeing up of our own country from the shackles of racism and Reaganism.
Resist Grants 1985

The following list of 154 organizations is comprised of Resist grants (143), loans (5), and donor-directed grants (6). The total amount of Resist grants for 1985 was $49,665.00, up from $36,407.00 in 1984. We attribute our increased funds to a consistent direct mail campaign, our new tax-exempt status, and most of all, to the generosity and political commitment of you, our contributors.

In 1986 we will continue to do outreach to movement groups across the country, especially to groups in the South and rural areas, and groups working on Native American, lesbian and gay, pro-choice, and anti-racist issues. We will also continue to ask contributors to direct hardworking, effective movement groups to come our way.

Thanks for your support. We couldn’t do it without you.

Central America Solidarity
Central American Teachers Tour (Cambridge, MA) $600
Central American Refugee Center (Westbury, NY) $300
Sanctuary Education Committee (Cambridge, MA) $250
Central America Resource Center (Austin, TX) $500
National Network in Solidarity with the People of Nicaragua (Wash., DC) $600
Emergency Response Network (Cambridge, MA) $400
Nicaraguan Medical/Material Aid Campaign (NY, NY) $200
Religious Task Force on Central America (Wash., DC) $600
S.E. Regional CISPES (New Orleans, LA) $600
Seattle Committee of Teachers in Solidarity with ANDES (WA) $400
CASA Central America Week Task Force (Cambridge, MA) $600
XChange TV (NY, NY) $200
J.P. Central America Coalition (J.P., MA) $600
Refugee Alert, (Cambridge, MA) $100 (emergency grant)
Central American Refugee Center (L.A., CA) $600
National CISPES and NISGUA (Wash., DC) $500
Emergency Response Network (S.F., CA) $500

Florida Coalition for Peace and Justice (Orlando, FL)
Central America Refugee Defense Fund (Boston, MA) $300
NICA (Cambridge, MA) $300
Midwest Regional CISPES (Chicago, IL) $600
Joint Legal Task Force on C.A. Refugees (Seattle, WA) $400
Portland Central America Solidarity Committee (OR) $400
Luis Aguilar School (Wash., DC) $400
VECINO (Dorchester, MA) $300
Tucson Committee for Human Rights in Latin America (AZ) $400
AMES (S.F., CA) $600
N.W. Regional CISPES (Oakland, CA) $600
Bay Area Construction Brigade to Nicaragua (Berkeley, CA) $500
Central American Labor Leaders East Coast Tour (Cambridge, MA) $450
Network in Solidarity with the Salvadoran/Guatemalan Caravan for Peace and Justice in C.A. (Cambridge, MA) $400
Nicaragua Appropriate Technology Project (Bellingham, WA) $400
Casa Nicaragua (NY, NY) $200
Mass. Labor Committee on Central America (Cambridge, MA) $100 (emergency grant)
Oakland/Berkeley CISPES (CA) $400
CUSLAR (Ithaca, NY) $300
Centro Presente (Cambridge, MA) $400
Knoxville Committee on Central America (TN) $400
USOCA (Dallas, TX) $100 (emergency grant)
Entre Jovenes (Berkeley, CA) $450
Fresh View Youth Tour (J.P., MA) $200
Aroostook Network Affinity Group (Houlton, ME) $240
SHARE Foundation (Wash., DC) $400

Peace/Anti-Draft/Human Rights/Anti-Nuke
Florida Coalition for Peace and Justice (Orlando) $495
Downwinders (Salt Lake City, Utah) $500
Seacoast Clamshell (Concord, NH) $300
Maine War Tax Resistance Resource Center (Orono) $225
South Orange County Draft Counseling (San Clemente, CA) $600
Boston Jobs with Peace (MA) $100
La Pena (Berkeley, CA) celebrates its 10th anniversary.

The Resist Pledge System
The most important source of Resist’s income is monthly pledges. Pledges help us plan ahead by guaranteeing us a minimum monthly income. In turn, pledges receive a monthly reminder letter (in addition to the newsletter) which contains news of recent grants and other Resist activities. So take the plunge and become a Resist pledge!

Yes, I would like to pledge $__________ monthly to the work of Resist.

Name ____________________________
Address __________________________
City ______ State _______ Zip _______
1986 Grants

Members of CAPA (Cambridge, MA) delivering materials to Salvadoran teachers in Nicaragua.

Vermont Rainbow Coalition (Montpelier, VT) $400
Black and Proud Elementary Liberation School (Jackson, MS) $250
Madrona Community Center (Seattle, WA) $300
Black Vets for Social Justice (Brooklyn, NY) $400

Third World Support
Washington Office on Haiti (Wash., DC) $600
Philippine Labor Alert (Honolulu, HI) $420
Informe Columbiano (NY, NY) $600
Philippine Resource Center (Berkeley, CA) $150
Philadelphia Philippines Working Group (PA) $165
Philippine Workers Support Committee (Boston, MA) $610
Casa Chile (Berkeley, CA) $300
Puerto Rican Committee Against Repression (NY, NY) $100 (emergency grant)
Coalition for Illinois Divestment from South Africa (Chicago) $200
Columbia Coalition for a Free South Africa (NY, NY) $100 (emergency grant)

Cultural
Green Valley Film and Art Center (VT) $100
Bread and Puppet Theater (Glover, VT) $600
Vietnam Veteran Artists (Boston, MA) $280
La Pea (Berkeley, CA) $450
Placa (S.F., CA) $500
Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center (Chicago, IL) $200

Lesbian/Gay/Women
Equity Institute (Amherst, MA) $600
Gay Community News (Boston, MA) $500
Boston R2N2 (MA) $500
NY Women Against Rape (NY, NY) $600
N.H. Women’s Peace Network (Concord) $250

Thousands of people are working hard for disarmament and social justice and against domestic oppression and US military intervention in Central America.

Keep in touch with news of the nonviolent social change movements in the six-state New England region. Subscribe to Peacework, the Peace and Social Justice Newsletter published monthly since 1972 by the regional office of the American Friends Service Committee.

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Send to Peacework, 2161 Mass. Ave., Cambridge, MA 02140.

Southern Rural Women’s Network (Jackson, MS)
GUIDE TO COMMUNITY MEDIA

Lively, evaluative descriptions of 50 films, videotapes and slideshows on local concerns like housing, displacement, race relations and victories in community organizing. Send $2.50 to Media Network, 208 West 13th St., New York NY 10011. Call (212) 620-0877 for bulk orders or for help in finding the films you need.

Thomas Merton Center (Pittsburgh, PA)

Alliance Against Women’s Oppression (J.P., MA) $300
Committee on the Rights of Undocumented Women (NY, NY) $400
Grassroots Group of Second Class Citizens (Champaign, IL) $200
Feminist Writers Guild (Chicago, IL) $200
Somos Hermanas (S.F., CA) $400
Lesbians in Prison Radio Project (Yellow Springs, OH) $100

Native American
American Indian Environmental Council (Albuq., NM) $100
International Indian Treaty Council (S.F., CA) $600
Arco Iris (Ponca, AK) $250

Other
Incest Survivors Information Exchange (New Haven, CT) $200
Progressive Student Network (Iowa City, IA) $200
North Cambridge Toxic Alert Coalition (MA) $100 (emergency grant)
Center for Constitutional Rights (NY, NY) $400
East Bay/NAPA Solana Asbestos Victims (CA) $150
International Oil Working Group (NY, NY) $300
Wisconsin Farm Unity Alliance (Glenwood City) $420
Gray Panthers (Chicago, IL) $100
North Carolina Prison and Jail Project (Durham) $300

Bienville House (Baton Rouge, LA)

Farm Labor Organizing Committee (Toledo, OH) $100 (emergency grant)
Unemployment Law Project (Seattle, WA) $400
Labor and Farm Party (Madison, WI) $100 (emergency grant)
ADAPT (Denver, CO) $300
Gray Panthers of Greater Boston (Boston, MA) $500
Cambridge FACT (MA) $100 (emergency grant)
MASSCOSH (Boston, MA) $400
N. California Friends of Margaret Randall (Berkeley) $100
(emergency grant)
Indiana Black Prisoners Organization (Pendleton, IN) $100
Veterans Education Project (Williamstown, MA) $300
Coalition for a Cooperative Society (Portland, OR) $300

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JOB LISTING -- STAFF PERSON FOR RESIST

Strong interest and/or experience in direct-mail fundraising and bookkeeping required. Add'l responsibilities include assisting with newsletter and grants program. Min. 2 year commitment starting 4/21/86. Experience with grassroots organizations, good communication, writing and office skills needed. Commitment to anti-racist, feminist and anti-militarist politics. People of color, gays and lesbians esp. encouraged to apply. Salary approx. $11,800 plus benefits and annual raise for 4/5 time. Resume, cover letter and writing sample (fundraising sample if available) by March 14 to Resist, 38 Union Square, Somerville, MA 02143.

1986 Grants
Continued from page Seven

Donor-Directed Grants
American Indian Environmental Council (Albuquerque, NM) $500
NY Area Faculty Committee for Non-Intervention in Central America (NY, NY) $500
Michigan Coalition for Human Rights (Detroit) $400
Southern Rural Women's Network (Jackson, MS) $500
Alliance Against Women's Oppression (S.F., CA) $500
Bishop Tutu Refugee Fund (Hartford, CT) $250

Loans
CISPES Alert (NY, NY) $1,000
April Actions for Jobs, Peace and Justice (Cambridge, MA) $1,000
Militarism Resource Project (Philadelphia, PA) $750
Walk for Peace (Cambridge, MA) $450
Dollars and Sense (Somerville, MA) $1,000

Resist Grants
Donor Directed Grants
Loans
$49,665.00
$2,650.00
$4,200.00

PLACA (S.F., CA)