Report on National Student Anti-Apartheid Strategy Conference


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REPORT ON

REPORT ON
NATIONAL STUDENT ANTI-APARTHEID
STRATEGY CONFERENCE
(Held October 3-4, 1981 at Hunter College NYC)
Joshua Nessen Student Coordinator American Committee on Africa 198
Broadway (Room 402) New York NY 10038 #212-962-1210

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2) Mr. Kenneth Zinn (Washington Office on Africa)
3) Mr. Dumisani Kumalo (American Committee on Africa)
4) Mr. Howard Hawkins (Upper Valley Comm for a free Southern Africa)

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Introduction
On October 3-4 a National Student Anti-Apartheid Conference was held at Hunter Coil. The event was organized by the American Committee on Africa and received the support of the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid. The two-day event was a great success and drew nearly 200 student activists representing 50 schools from 20 states (California, Oregon, Kentucky, Illinois, Kansas, Maine etc).

The South West People's Organization of Namibia (SWAPO), the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress were actively involved in the event which ended with the unanimous acceptance of a proposal made by ACOA for "Two Weeks of National Anti-Apartheid Action in Support of Southern African Liberation Movements". The weeks will run from March 21 (Anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre) till April 4, 1982 (Anniversary of the Assassination of Martin Luther King). The same proposal was accepted a week later at a National Solidarity Conference on Southern Africa held October 9-11 in NYC which attracted nearly 1000 delegates from all sectors of the anti-apartheid movement. Acceptance of the proposal by both conferences means that the March 21-April 4 mobilization will unite MAAIr forces active in African liberation support work.

At the National Student Conference regional coordinators were selected to mobilize for the Two Weeks of Action, and meetings are already planned for this fall. Though local groups will choose their own particular focuses, the Weeks of Action call for a general stress on four main political areas:

1) Support for the liberation Movements of Southern Africa, in particular a call for the immediate independence of Namibia. Linked to this support for the Front-line states which are bearing the brunt of South African Aggression--notably Angola.

2) Call for an end to U.S. economic, cultural, and sporting links to South Africa and support of UN sanctions, disinvestment of all funds linked to South Africa and support of UN sanctions.

3) Opposition to the Reagan Administration's increasing collaboration with South Africa and the current efforts to repeal the Clark Amendment (banning U.S. covert operations in Angola). Making links between Reagan's policy in southern Africa and support of dictatorships elsewhere in the Third World, notably El Salvador.

4) Make link between support for the liberation struggles of southern Africa and struggles against racism in this country. Since the Two Weeks of Action run to April 4 (the Anniversary of Martin Luther King's assassination) groups are encouraged to plan events that link commemoration of Dr. King with support of African liberation. The October 3-4 conference was successful both in terms of laying the basis for the upcoming Weeks of Action as well as for the program itself and other proposals that emerged from the workshops.
The report on the following pages will review the work of the conference and also include the names and addresses of participants (and other key contacts) and a resource list. Here is a reminder of the major regional meetings taking place this fall in relation to the Weeks of Action:

1) California: Nov 9-10 in LA. Contact Bud Day at 213-628-8313 Home: 8&2-8610
2) New England: Sat Nov 21 at Univ of Mass in Amherst MA (llam-6pm) at the Ctr for Racial Studies (Moore Hall) Contact ACOA: 212-962-1210
3) NY/NJ/Phil: Sat Dec 5 at ACOA 198 Bway Rm 402 (llam-5pm)

Wash DC (near Fulton Str & Bway) Contact ACOA

Additional Regional Coordinators
(A second set of regional meetings including South, Midwest and Northwest will likely occur in South: Black collegian Magazine (N. Orl.)
February in conjunction with 504-821-5694 (James Borders)
Black History month) Corbin Seavers 606-986-9341 x380)

Berea College, Berea, Kentucky
Northwest: Roger Walke (503-687-9331) Eugene, Oregon
Wash DC: Brady Tyson (202-686-2838)
Chris Root (202-667-3875)
(Amer Univ & VC. OAK CAMP)

I) GREETINGS AND PATWEL DISCUSSION

I) Greetings
Judge William Booth, president of the American Committee on Africa welcomed conference participants along with Mr. Apos of the Nigerian delegation to the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid, South African Duma Ndlovu head of the Hunter College Student Govt, and Dr. Peter Molotsi representing the Pan Africanist Congress.

Duma Ndlovu pointed out that this was the first time that the Hunter Student Government had hosted an explicitly political event which indicated the vital nature of the situation in Southern Africa and the need for U.S. students to support the liberation struggle.

2) Keynote Panel
The panel was moderated by Joshua Nessen, student coordinator of ACOA, and laid out the major strategic focuses of the conference: 1)Liberation Struggle in southern Africa 2)Countering U.S. Foreign Policy in the region; 3) Divestment and campus liberation support work; 4) Linking Anti-Apartheid Work to other struggles.

1) Yr. Theo Ber Gurirab, UN Representative of SWAPO, presented an overview of the situation in southern Africa and stressed the strategic necessity of building direct support for the liberation struggle on campuses. This was felt to be the key to combatting more directly Reagan's policy of alliance.
with South Africa and the anti-communism used to vilify the liberation movements and Angola. As Mr. Gurirb expressed it: "It is true that in Namibia we are up against the most powerful military and industrial power in Africa. If SWAPO were just a small group of "terrorists" as your administration claims, how is it that we have held off that power? Why is it that our struggle for liberation continues to grow despite South African aggression against our people & against Angola and our other front-line allies. We will liberate ourselves, but we need your support as well. The U.S. student movement must not only campaign to break U.S. links with South Africa, but must also increase direct support for the liberation movements. This is the only way you will be able to combat the anti-communist hysteria your Administration uses to justify its alliance with S. Africa."

2) Mr. Kenneth Zinn of the Washington Office on Africa then called upon student activists to organize for retention of the Clark Amendment which prohibits U.S. covert activity in Angola. He also pointed to the general need for a more explicit focus on US government policy in southern Africa (particularly nuclear links) in conjunction with campaigns for divestment.

Keynote Panel (cont.)

3) Mr. Dumisani Kumalo, founder of the Union of Black Journalists in South Africa and currently on ACOA staff, was the next speaker. He reaffirmed the importance of divestment as a weapon against South Africa and urged students to intensify their educational and agitational work around university shareholding. He also pointed to the difficulties that organizers will confront under a Reagan Administration that is solidly backed by the mass media in its anti-communist crusade: "You must meet the anti-communism argument straight on and expose its hollowness. The problem in southern Africa is the apartheid regime not the Cubans and Russians in Angola. Hell, if South Africa invaded Brooklyn they would find ten Russians and one of them fixes my shoes."

4) The final panelist was Howard Hawkins of the Upper Valley Committee for a Free Southern Africa who talked on the importance of linking anti-apartheid work to other struggles. Mr. Hawkins referred to the failure of single-issue approaches and the successful coalitions at Dartmouth College that have tied liberation support work in with anti-racist, anti-nuclear and anti-sexist struggles at Dartmouth College. Close coordination between campus and community groups has also been vital in sustaining the Dartmouth-area movement for the past several years. In fact several Community residents have
made surprise appearances at Dartmouth Trustee meetings to call for divestment of the college's South Africa-linked stocks. The issue of reinvestment of public and semi-public money in community projects has been linked to calls for divestment of South Africa, military and nuclear-linked stocks.

Mention was made of the 1979 Wall Street Action on the 50th Anniversary of the Stock Crash which successfully linked up the anti-nuclear and anti-apartheid issues, as well as generally highlighting the way corporate profit is placed ahead of human needs in this society.

After the panel workshops were held that expanded on the themes presented by the panelists. What follows is a summary analysis of the workshops along with the specific proposals that emerged from them:

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i) Workshop on U.S. Foreign Policy in southern Africa
This workshop was moderated by Chris Root (of the DC Ban Campaign and American University), Bill Johnston (of Episcopal Churchmen for a Free Southern Africa) and Ken Zinn (of the Washington Office on Africa).

Much discussion focused on the need for more direct student focus on the actions of the U.S. government in southern Africa* On most other international issues such as Vietnam War and El Salvador the student movement has been more inclined to directly focus on government policy.

Perhaps the fact that there is a natural immediate target - the school's South Africa-linked shareholding - has made students less inclined to deal directly with U.S. foreign policy. However, it should be noted that many schools have had forums dealing with U.S. foreign policy in southern Africa, and specifically done organizing in support of the Clark Amendment.

In addition, the indirect effect of campaigning for divestment has been to delegitimize U.S. presence in South Africa, thus decreasing the prospects of direct U.S. intervention on the side of apartheid when the liberation struggle enters its decisive stage. This indirect effect and the spurring on of other sectors of the movement will likely be the major contribution of student organizing.

Nonetheless, especially under Reagan, there needs to be more work on U.S. government policy particularly around retention of the Clark Amendment (prohibiting U.S. covert action in Angola).

In the interest of sharpening this focus you should invite speakers from:

1) Episcopal Churchmen for a Free Southern Africa
Rm 1005 853 Bway NYC 10003 212-477-0066 (Mr. Johnston)
2) Washington Office on Africa  
110 Maryland Ave Wash DC 20002 202-546-7961  
3) Transafrica  
1325 18 Str (Suite 202) Wash DC 20036 202-223-6666  
You should immediately write your Congessional representative and organize letter-writing on campus urging him or her to vote with the majority of the House Foreign Affairs Committee (vote was 19-5) to retain the Clark Amendment (banning US covert actions in Angola). Write to: House of Representatives, Washington DC 20515  
The full Senate voted on Sept 30 for repeal 66-29 which means we must stop it in the House. If the entire Congress votes to repeal, it will facilitate US collaboration with South African regional aggression. We do not know exactly when the House vote will occur or even if it will take place this year. There are reports that the House may not pass a 1982 foreign aid bill at all, forcing the Administration to operate on a "continuing resolution". In this event, the Clark Amendment would of course remain on the books. But the next foreign aid bill for fiscal year 1983 will begin its way through The House in early 1972, so we must act now.

ij) linking Anti-Apartheid Work To Other Struggles  
This workshop was co-chaired by activists from Dartmouth and Williams College, where the link between anti-apartheid and antiracist work on campus has been particularly strong. Discussion underscored the point that African liberation support work must relate to other international and domestic issues if it is to have maximum effectiveness. Underlying this strategic conception is the political principle that we are not just organizing to support the struggle in southern Africa, but to change our own society as well. In fact we will greatly aid the struggle in Africa and other parts of the Third World by pushing the USA in a progressive direction. Given the immediacy of racism on campus, anti-racist work should be an integral component of anti-apartheid organizing and not just an afterthought. Failing to focus on campus/domestic racism can isolate anti-apartheid committees (particularly from Black students) making them seem solely concerned with "far-away" events and "popular" issues. On a general level it is important not just to say to other campus groups "support us" but to also to take the initiative in supporting their particular focuses. Here is the proposal that emerged from this workshop: In order to build formidable bridges between progressive/activist organizations and to foster a sense of solidarity within the "people's movement", we propose that the following steps be taken by African liberation support groups based on college campuses: 1) Attempt to form coalitions with other organizations that are sympathetic to the African Liberation movement. 2) Show support for other progressive organizations by a) Mobilizing for and attending rallies, forums and meetings sponsored by these organizations. b) Inviting speakers from those organizations to a meeting to discuss the "common grounds" between you and the bases for
programmatic unity.
c) Addressing their issues at your rallies and demonstrations.
d) Taking positions on those issues if it will not compromise or conflict with the goals of the African liberation support group. 3) Identify speakers who can make the connections between various struggles and bring them to campus.
4) Utilize innovative and creative ways to get across the message about South Africa, such as employing cultural events instead of just speakers/lectures.
5) Expose oases of police repression in the United States (e.g. against SART members organizing against the Rugby Tour in Albany) and relate/compare it to state repression in South Africa.

III) Divestment and Campus liberation Support Work Generally
This workshop was co-chaired by students from Berea College (a small school in Kentucky) and Western Michigan University.
Discussion was of two general sorts:
1) Discussion of divestment campaigns strategically. Specifically the relation of divestment organizing to the basic goal of supporting the liberation movements.
2) Concrete discussion of what campus committees have been doing with attention paid to specific problems and arguments groups encounter.

1) General Strategic Discussion of Divestment
There was a significant difference in opinion about divestment between Berea College activists and all the other students in attendance. All present agreed that the basic aim of our organizing is to support the liberation movements of southern Africa. In this perspective the participants agreed that organizing for divestment is only a means (one tactic among many) of supporting the liberation struggle.

However, based on their remarks about other activists' efforts, the Berea College students did not share the view that divestment is a useful tactic. This viewpoint has been influenced by the nature of organizing efforts at Berea. Students United Against Apartheid has been consistently successful in raising consciousness and material support for the liberation struggle at Berea College and even gotten a required course on apartheid into the curriculum.
Despite corporate stocks linked to South Africa, divestment has never been an organizing focus. This choice was made after one meeting on divestment failed to attract many students. It was suggested that one meeting is not a sufficient test for the potential of divestment organizing.

Students from other schools—notably Western Michigan University site of a sit-in and arrests in 1979--have focused on divestment and gave reasons why they thought it a useful tactic. These schools
among them Dartmouth, Williams, Mt. Holyoke, Occidental in Calif) all stressed that they do not rely exclusively on divestment work, and employ a variety of means to support the liberation struggle. The general feeling was that divestment is a useful focus and indeed will rightly remain the cutting-edge demand of the student movement for several reasons:

1) First of all divestment organizing is seen by the liberation movements as an important way to support their struggle, Understandably then, the South African Government (through its U.S.-based offices and glossy propaganda) has tried to counteract the U.S. movement. Most importantly, within South Africa it is a possible capital crime to call for the withdrawal of foreign capital--and thus divestment of institutional funds designed to build pressure for such withdrawal. Thus both sides of the conflict in South Africa treat divestment as a very serious matter.

Divestment and Campus Liberation Support Work (cont--2)

2) Divestment is an effective demand on campus because it directly brings home the role of the University in supporting apartheid. Since such a demand brings students into direct conflict with the Administration, divestment campaigns have very often infused liberation support work with militancy that would otherwise be lacking. The use of militant tactics (pickets, sit-ins etc) even if not forcing the Administration to divest has heightened the general political impact of the student movement. This Impact can be generally described as follows:

a) Divestment has never been important as an economic end in itself. What has been crucial is that the publicity achieved by militant campaigns and actual divestments has had the political effect of:

- Bringing the Issue of apartheid to millions of Americans.
- Delegitimizing U.S. corporate presence in South Africa. Thus making future U.S. intervention on the side of South Africa more difficult to justify.

b) Divestment campaigns have the potential (in part already felt) to also have a significant economic impact, closely related to the political effect described above:

- The actual divestment of stock (and threat to) has hurt the public image of corporations whose profits are dependant on continued investor confidence. Corporations are particularly concerned with the possible snowball effect of institutional divestments--in which universities have taken a lead under pressure from student organizing (over 30 schools have divested part or all of their funds linked to South Africa).

3) Divestment is a particularly good tactic because it graphically illustrates to students the way the University is linked to the U.S. corporate structure. Not only stock portfolios but also
the presence of corporate force is on Boards of Trustees exposes (and symbolizes) the Ideological and material support the University gives to the System. In this respect divestment organizing has helped radicalize students and given them a commitment to basic societal change that extends beyond graduation. In sum, organizing for divestment was felt by most students present to be the key tactic within multi-faceted campaigns to support the liberation movements. Though Beresa College activists largely dismissed divestment as a tactic, their clear-cut position that all tactics must be seen as means to support struggles for self-determination helped sharpen the political context within which divestment must be understood. (See next page for discussion of specific organizing tips... 

Divestment & Campus Liberation Support Work (cont --)
2) Specific Organizing Strategies
a) Initiating campaigns
b) Partial Divestment
Basic education about apartheid and the struggle in southern Africa is the starting point for liberation support activity. In terms of initiating mobilization on divestment it was pointed out that: 1) One should demand a listing of your school's stockholdings. If the Administration (usually the Treasurer) stalls on handing over this information, then organize around their refusal to do so.
2) A good starting point for mobilizing the campus is a petitioning drive calling for divestment. Set up tables at key spots and go dorm by dorm. Use the amount of signatures to bring pressure on the Administration (for open meetings with Trustees, etc) perhaps present the signatures as part of a campus march.
3) Remember that the key in divestment organizing is to mobilize students (with involvement of the surrounding community as well). Though endorsement of divestment by the Student Government, the faculty and other groups can help the struggle it should not be the primary concern.
Also remember that the objective is not to "convince" the Trustees to divest (though pressure might occasionally do so) but to generate a militant campaign in support of African liberation. Thus, avoid focusing energies on Investor Responsibility Committees that detract from mass campus mobilization.
Though the call for total divestment should always be the demand, a focus on particularly obnoxious corporations or banks is often tactically helpful. At schools such as Williams, Colby, Swarthmore and Harvard partial divestment has generated a great deal of publicity helping maintain momentum on these campuses and in the movement as a whole (very often the divestment of Citibank stock or Newmont Mining holdings, to mention two prominent cases, at one school has led to its sale at another). Most importantly the achievement of partial divestment at these schools has led organizers to ensure rather than abandon the demand for total divestment. (More on Organizing strategies on next page)

2) Specific Organizing Strategies (cont --4)
   c) Alternative Investments
   (Resources)
   d) Direct Support of Liberation Yvts
   e) Leadership and Continuity

Many groups have encountered the claim by Trustees that divestment will hurt the school financially. One can counter that:

a) South Africa is the equivalent of Nazi Germany -- in fact the current apartheid leadership allied with the Nazis in WW2. Would the Board of Trustees favor corporate investments linked to Nazi Germany? Morality is vital for institutions.

b) There is ample economic evidence that divestment has not harmed and in some cases even helped the financial situations of schools (notably at two of the largest divestors, Michigan State Univ $87.2 million, and Univ of Wisconsin $10 million).

- The American Committee on Africa has available an 8-page report on all schools that have divested with evidence that they have not suffered economically. This report includes a detailed case-study of the Michigan State University divestment. Write ACOA 198 Bway NY 036212-962-1210

- For information on alternative investments write:
  John Harrington
  3490 quail Ctr Napa CA 94558 707-226-1296

Since all our organizing has the objective of supporting the liberation struggle, it is important to:

a) Invite Liberation Movement speakers to campus

b) Initiate campaigns for material support of the liberation struggle
(i.e. for Namibian refugees in Angola, write ACOA for info).
Hold events outlining history of liberation struggle, as well as cultural fund-raisers.
The key role of leadership in campus campaigns and the difficulties raised by student turnover were discussed. To ensure continuity it was suggested that:
-A consistent effort be made to give younger students responsibilities even if more experienced students can "do it better".

(SEE NEXT PAGE FOR WORKSHOP PROPOSAL)

PROPOSAL FROM DIVESTMENT AND CAMPUS LIBERATION SUPPORT WORKSHOP
Proposal was introduced by Students United Against Apartheid (of Berea College) and adopted unanimously at the Final Plenary Session:
1) We hereby recognize the fundamental principle that underlies the USA student'anti-apartheid movement' & a being solidarity with the Southern African peoples in their just struggle for self-determination. Based on this premise, it follows that political education, material aid, and divestment are among the many possible tactics to implement this principle.
2) We hereby recognize that individual student antiapartheid organizations, by defining themselves exclusively in terms of one of the available tactics of the overall anti-apartheid struggle, risk failing to maximize their limited energies and resources. We submit that the effectiveness of individual groups depends upon their adherence to the fundamental principle underlying the U.S. student anti-apartheid movement.
3) We hereby recognize the need to consider the Southern African issue in the broader historical context of other economic, political and military-conflicts of a transnational character in order to acquire a more complete understanding of the forces underlying the oppressive system of apartheid.

iv) Workshop on Community Organizing
This workshop was moderated by Walter Knox of the New York Black United Front and Alan Zaslavski of the Boston Committee for the Liberation of Southern Africa.
1) Attention was generally paid to the need in community organizing to link anti-apartheid work to the daily struggles of communities.
a) The connection between redlining (refusal to invest/make loans in Third World communities) by banks on the one hand, and their
loans to South Africa on the other Is one specific area that
ties in people's daily oppression with U.S. support of apartheid.
b) This question is related to the campaigns (many in the legislative arena) calling
for investment of public funds (on a city and state level) in local communities
rather than in
countries such as South Africa. In this field there has
been increasing national coordination that culminated in a
major legislative conference in June 1981 coordLye4by ACOA,
and which will be continued in regional meetings in the
upcoming months.
c) On a local level those anti-apartheid organizations that
have made community issues an integral part of their organizing
have enjoyed the greatest success. For example, the DC Bank
campaign has built a wider base of support for its anti-loan activities by direct
involvement in local housing struggles.
2) The importance of cultural activities in community work was stressed.
Such events are often the best way of reaching new people on the
issue of apartheid and the liberation struggle. Plays, music and
poetry can both attract people to events as well as present our
message in a more accessible manner. Such events are particularly
good meeting places for student and community activists.
3) Considerable attention was paid to the organizing done against the
Springbok Rugby Tour by SART (Stop the Apartheid Rugby Tour)
a) All present agreed that the organizing effort had successfully
raised the issue of apartheid to millions of Americans and
generated bad publicity for South Africa. The fact that games were cancelled in
most cities was testimony to the strength of
opposition.
b) In the course of discussion comparison between anti-tour
coalitions in New York and Chicago were discussed:
- In Chicago the coalition was disinfied in part by confusion
over goals--some groups arguing for a broader focus--and
the need to accommodate every sectarian viewpoint at every rally. Another problem
was the general split in the city
between Black and white groups.
- On the other hand, in New York there was a great deal of
unity among a broad spectrum of groups from every community.
Reasons given for this included
1) Clarity on goals--NY SART was explicit that its
basis for unity was opposition to the
tour and 2) The cohesion of the steering committee.
The proposal that emerged from this workshop (on next page) encompassed the
other points raised, in the session--particularly relation between student groups
and community organizations:

Community Organizing (cont.)
Proposal from Community Workshop
1) Whenever possible, students should join in with broader coalitions involving other sectors such as labor, churches, tenant organizations, and other community groups (tenants etc.). In order for these coalitions to work, they must have a definite goal, clear principle of unity and leadership that in respected. Some of the coalitions that have succeeded in this regard are: Stop the Apartheid Rugby Tour (SART), legislative divestment campaign, national bank campaign, and material aid drives in numerous localities. (One particularly successful event organized in only three weeks was a fundraiser for the Patriotic Front just several weeks before the historic 1980 elections).

2) Rather than competing with groups working on other issues, anti-apartheid groups should join with them in sponsoring multi-issue events and demonstrations. Subh joint sponsorship helps reach people not familiar with South Africa. For example activists can do events linking U.S. policy in southern Africa and El Salvador with the drastic program of domestic cutbacks.

3) Students should form ongoing networks with other anti-apartheid forces in the community to foster cooperation on major events. One major organizing meeting is necessary to establish initial contact, but it is generally not productive to have a top-heavy structure emphasizing organizational meetings. Along with "political" meetings more informal gatherings-cultural events, pot-lucks etc-are vital to fostering ongoing cooperation.

4) National groups working on southern Africa (ACOA, Transafrica, Washington Office on Africa, etc) can help local anti-apartheid work through:
   a) providing Information useful for local efforts (local groups should to avoid needless duplication of efforts, first inquire about what information is available from these national groups) b) helping to spread reports on local organizing through their grass-root contacts. Thus making the connection between otherwise isolated groups.
   c) meeting with other national groups and the liberation movements to decide when it is appropriate to put out a call for national action in a specific crisis situation (such as the Rugby tour and the invasion of Angola). Such a call would help coordination between regions and at the local level in these crisis situations as well as in ongoing work.

   - In a crisis all available tactics (demonstrations, lobbying, letter-writing etc) should be used.

V) Proposal Dealing with the Fall 1981 South African Rugby Tour
Whereas-Whereas-Whereas-Whereas-
The Springbok Rugby Tour was an attempt by the South African and U.S. Governments to legitimize the racist apartheid system in the eyes of the American people.
9 people were arrested in Albany while organizing to stop the Springbok Rugby Tour.
4 of those arrested were held in preventivt detention for approximately 72 hours without bail.
This was an attempt to sabotage the opposition to the rugby tour and to give aid and comfort to South Africa.
Therefore be it resolved that we take up the defense of the Albany 9 in the context of the struggle against apartheid and U.S. collaboration with South Africa.

CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS AND KEY CONTACTS
Massachusetts,..................15 New England and No Jerseyo,..16 New Jersey & New York City,..17 NdwYork and Philadelphia ....18
Washington DC & Non-East Coast...19

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