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December 7, 1990

Christine Root
& David Wiley
729 Sunset Lane
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Dear Friends:

A rising tide of expectations is sweeping across South Africa, borne by the reforms wrested from the apartheid government and sustained by the promise of freedoms yet to come for the country's black majority.

We are sure that you share our joy in the images and events of the past few months: Mandela's release from prison and his triumphal tour of the West; the emergence of anti-apartheid political parties after years of banned, underground existence; the negotiations between the African National Congress and the ruling National Party on ending apartheid and freeing political prisoners.

We hope that as a supporter of the Southern Africa Project, you also share our pride in its accomplishments in South Africa for the past 25 years that helped set the stage for the changes that have occurred and those still to come.

But the realization of our joyful expectations of justice, equality, democracy and domestic tranquility in South Africa is a long way down the road -- a road filled with danger. Perhaps the most dangerous pitfall of all is the notion that the struggle for these ideals is virtually over; that the war has been won and the

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mopping up is merely routine. We see evidence that this dangerous sense of unreality is afflicting parts of the anti-apartheid movement already. We have been told that major funders worldwide are closing up shop; that large individual contributors are moving on to other causes.

We cannot let the victories of the past few months, paid for in the blood and sacrifice of generations of black South Africans, be thrown away at this critical hour because we fail to understand the realities that lie ahead of us:

Yes, Nelson Mandela has been greeted by the heads of government everywhere, has been showered with honors, and has negotiated with the de Klerk government for anti-apartheid reforms.

But the reality is that Nelson Mandela, along with millions of black South Africans, does not have the right to vote.

And yes, the government is claiming that it is releasing political prisoners, and that it will no longer jail political dissidents formerly advocating the end of apartheid. That's the talk. But so far that's what it mostly is -- just talk. The reality is that the government's intimidating array of security legislation is still being used to harass, detain and torture political opponents.

And yes, while the government's program of anti-apartheid reform gives us reason to hope, the reality is that the basic structures of apartheid remain unchanged. Apartheid laws still deny blacks the right to live where they choose, or to get an adequate education or even basic health care. The lives of black South Africans are still dominated by repression, poverty and powerlessness.

In short, the struggle against apartheid is not over. It is just beginning. For Americans, there is a vivid parallel to these new beginnings. The civil rights struggle in our own country did not end when the Supreme Court declared "separate but equal" a false doctrine. It did not end when Rosa Parks refused to take a back seat on the bus or when Martin Luther King led the Montgomery bus boycott that followed. Although these stirring victories were built on the unsung heroism of generations of black Americans, they signalled the beginning of a movement whose end is not yet in sight.

Now, more than ever, in this time of transition, the work of the Southern Africa Project needs your support both to continue its traditional programs of supplying legal assistance to individuals and groups who are victimized by discrimination and oppression -- people like:

- the Mogopas, to whom we helped restore ancestral lands after six years of litigation and legal negotiation;
- the Crossroads squatters for whom we won compensation after their homes and possessions were destroyed by vigilantes;
- the Soweto township residents we enabled to continue living in their homes, with electricity and water for just a little longer;
- the anti-apartheid activists whom we helped free from solitary confinement and torture.

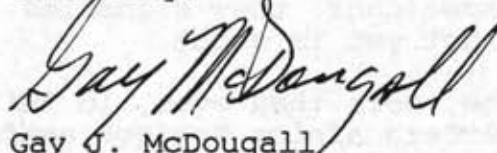
Now, more than ever, in this time of transition, the Southern Africa Project needs your support in implementing new initiatives to meet the changing political climate in southern Africa. We need to employ the techniques developed in the past 25 years that proved successful in putting apartheid on trial in the courts, opposing forced resettlement and fighting for and monitoring Namibia's passage to independence.

Now we must apply this past experience to new tasks: to bring strategic pressure on the South African government when it deviates from its commitment to change; to disseminate reports that monitor the transition; to facilitate a true national debate on constitutional options for an independent South Africa; and to assist future policymakers in solving the critical issues of democratic governance. And we must do all this while continuing to provide legal assistance for those who are just beginning the long and arduous journey to freedom, equality and justice.

Nelson Mandela was addressing all Americans when he told the joint Congressional session: "Let us keep our arms locked together so that we form a solid phalanx against racism, to insure that liberation comes now...then shall we all be entitled to acknowledge the salute...'blessed are the peacemakers.'"

We hope you will want to link arms with that "solid phalanx" by renewing -- and if at all possible by increasing -- your gift to the Southern Africa Project today.

Sincerely,



Gay J. McDougall
Director
Southern Africa Project