
FROM THE FIELD



SUMOSSA — in the Struggle to Eliminate Apartheid

by Patricia Kyle

SUMOSSA (South Indiana United Methodists and others in Support of Southern Africans) was organized in 1981 by a group of South Indiana United Methodists. They felt a conviction that the *apartheid* system is contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ and they believed that Christians around the world must demonstrate the unity of the church in their rejection of *apartheid*. SUMOSSA is related to the Division of Church and Society, South Indiana

Conference, The United Methodist Church.

Members of SUMOSSA are committed to supporting South Africans and Namibians in their struggle to eliminate this unjust and evil system. Persons who become members of SUMOSSA are expected to become involved in one or more of these actions:

- Organizing direct assistance to meet the needs of people in Southern Africa.

- Monitoring US policy in Southern Africa and lobbying senators and representatives in relation to this policy.

- Organizing for US institutional disassociation from South Africa's *apartheid* system (campaign against bank loans to South Africa, campaign for corporate disinvestment, etc.).

- Educating people in South Indiana about the South Africa *apartheid* system and providing up-to-date news on current issues, especially those related to the role of the church in combating *apartheid*.

The Panty Project

SUMOSSA's principal material assistance project has been the Panty Project, an effort to provide panties for

Cuban troops from Angola as a pre-condition for Namibian independence. And HR 189/ 91 condemns the massacres of innocent civilians by RENAMO, the group fighting against Mozambique. It also reiterates the official US position of support for the government of Mozambique.

All of the proposed legislation will not be considered by the Congress before the session ends. Some bills will not survive the committee process; others will simply not be scheduled for consideration. Therefore, it is vital that members of Congress be notified of the opinions of their constituents.

You can call or write your Congressional representatives to express your feelings on any or all of the proposals directed at ending *apartheid*; or you can select one or two proposals that seem to hold promise. The Comprehensive Sanctions Bill could be high on your priority list since it completes the intent of the Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986. Passage of HR 1580/S 556 would send a strong message to Pretoria. It would also

send signals to international partners who oppose *apartheid*. International economic pressure is viewed as the most desirable step toward a peaceful transition in South Africa.

Finally, you can join with others around the United States in the June 16 National Anti-Apartheid Lobby Day. Call The Washington Office on Africa (202/546-7961) for more information and the Africa Hotline (202/546-0408) for up-to-date information on anti-*apartheid* legislation. ■

Grassroots Pressure Needed on Sanctions

The Reagan Administration has undermined the current sanctions law with weak regulations and loose interpretation of the letter of the law. Since the Administration is not willing to enforce even the limited sanctions presently in effect, it is up to the Con-

gress to enact stronger, truly comprehensive sanctions against the *apartheid* government. Black South African organizations such as the National Union of Mineworkers, COSATU, NACTU, and leaders such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, South African Council of Churches President, the Rev. Frank Chikane, and the Rev. Beyers Naude continue to call for comprehensive mandatory sanctions against Pretoria. As Americans, the very least we can do is to heed their call for international pressure against *apartheid*. Together the churches, trade unions, anti-*apartheid*, civil rights and other organizations of this country can mobilize the kind of grassroots pressure needed to force Congress to pass strong, comprehensive sanctions against the *apartheid* regime.

—From a February 23, 1988 letter from Congressman Ronald V. Dellums (D-CA) inviting participation in a national strategy meeting on HR 1580/S 566, the comprehensive sanctions bill before both houses of Congress. ■

women in Namibian refugee camps in Angola. This project was chosen after contacting the SWAPO office in New York and the American Committee on Africa to determine needs.

Publicity about the project was sent to approximately 600 churches in South Indiana through notices in the conference mailing and in the newsletter of the United Methodist Women. Posters, displays, books and various materials about Namibia have been used at district and conference meetings.

After hearing of the Panty Project, the Northern Illinois Conference United Methodist Women also have been participating.

Persons inquiring about the project were sent a background article on Namibia written by Congressman Lee Hamilton, a United Methodist and member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the US House of Representatives; articles provided by the Africa Fund; and information about SUMOSSA. Articles about Namibia, which have appeared in various church publications, also have been recommended for reading.

Local churches have participated in various ways. Some have sent financial contributions. Some have asked members to purchase panties during special church seasons such as Lent and Advent. One woman gave a dinner and made every person bring a pair of panties in order to eat.

A member of the Aurora United Methodist Women wrote this statement, which has been copied and used by a number of churches: "We encircle the waists of our sisters in Southern Africa with the elastic of our love and the fabric of our hearts, laced with understanding."

Approximately 5,000 pairs have been contributed to date, and SUMOSSA is embarking on a second phase of the drive.

Investments Task Force

To deal with systemic issues an Investments Task Force was appointed. In October, 1982, the task force held a meeting with the South Indiana Conference Board of Pensions. A representative of the General Board of

Pensions also attended this meeting and discussed the principles and procedures which guide pension investments.

The Investments Task Force asked the conference board to form a study group or to join the SUMOSSA Task Force in investigating current investment patterns and in promoting positive alternatives. The task force also encouraged board members to study the statement on divestment made by the Lutheran Church in America, to become familiar with the concerns of black Methodists and other Christians in South Africa, and to seek new investment ventures in the core-cities of the United States. The South Indiana Conference Board of Pensions has been very sympathetic to these concerns.

SUMOSSA, in cooperation with the Methodist Federation for Social Action, has been confronting the United Methodist General Board of Pensions over its investment policies. Individuals have written letters to members of the General Board urging divestment from corporations doing business in South Africa. SUMOSSA members have participated in demonstrations at the General Board of Pensions' headquarters in Evanston, Illinois, and at General Board meetings. They also have been involved in discussion with members of the General Board. They have been encouraged by recent shifts in General Board policy.

Due in large part to the encouragement of members of SUMOSSA, the South Indiana Conference has divested from corporations doing business in South Africa, and it continues to monitor investments.

Other Activities

In addition to women's underwear, SUMOSSA has collected diapers, toys, soap and school supplies for Namibian refugees. One Junior High UMYF collected toys during one Advent season, and school supplies during the next.

SUMOSSA initiated, and has been a principal supporter of, an annual statewide consultation on Southern Africa sponsored by the Indiana Inter-religious Commission on Human Equality.

A Molly Blackburn Fund has been established to enable black South African Methodists to come to the South Indiana Conference so that South Indiana United Methodists can maintain direct contact with South African Methodists. The fund is named in honor of a South African Methodist white woman who served in the Cape Provincial Council (state legislature) and was widely loved in the black townships around Port Elizabeth. She died in December 1985.

SUMOSSA sponsors a luncheon each year at annual conference. It provides speakers for both church and secular organizations, teachers for Schools of Christian Mission, and leaders for mission saturation events. It provided leadership for a workshop on South Africa at the 1987 School of the Prophets, a week-long school for United Methodist ministers of the Indiana area.

Promotion of Advance Specials for South Africa and for Mozambique is an important activity. Lists of six or seven priority projects, chosen by persons from those countries have been circulated through conference mailings and distributed by SUMOSSA members at every opportunity. In addition, a large number of audio-visuals about Southern Africa have been added to our conference library.

Each SUMOSSA meeting is ended with the *Agape*, the service of Christian fellowship used by the Christian Institute of South Africa before it was banned. The benediction pronounced on February 29 of this year, as South African Christians in Cape Town started on their march from St. George's Cathedral to Parliament, speaks of that which motivates and sustains those of us engaged in the journey to end the terrible scourge of *apartheid*:

"Go now in the spirit of Christ. Into a land of hatred, take His Spirit of Love. Into this city of division, take His spirit of unity. Into these streets of violence, take His spirit of Peace. Go now with God." ■

Patricia Kyle is Minister of Community Ministries at North United Methodist Church in Indianapolis, Indiana.