

UNITY IN ACTION

Towards a Program to End Collaboration With the Apartheid Regime in South Africa

28 October 1985

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Representatives of Unity in Action, the African National Congress, and the artistic community have secured a signed statement from comedian Shelley Berman which denounces South African apartheid and pledges support to the Cultural Boycott.

This agreement represents yet another breakthrough for anti-apartheid forces committed to enforcing United Nations sanctions barring collaboration with the internationally condemned regime.

The statement from Mr. Berman is the result of discussions among and between the entertainer, Ron Wilkins (Unity in Action/Patrice Lumumba Coalition), Zakhele Cenge (ANC), and Robert Hooks (Actor/Producer).

Unity in Action clearly supports Shelley Berman's sober and candid acknowledgement that it was futile to hope for apartheid's abolition by way of "a patient and persuasive approach." Mr. Berman never accepted apartheid as evidenced by his references to the issue even while on stage in South Africa. Therefore, we are grateful to him not only for the written statement, but also for his level of sensitivity to the suffering brought about by the evil system and for sharing with us his evolving views on apartheid.

While Unity in Action often pickets offending artists, our ultimate objective is to secure pledges of support to the Cultural Boycott. We are pleased that the name Shelley Berman is another which can be removed from the list of violators of the Boycott. Unity in Action will immediately forward copies of Mr. Berman's statement to the United Nations and key anti-apartheid forces. The more these combined efforts result in shortening the list of violators, the greater becomes the pressure on the "holdouts" to pledge their support to the campaign. Unity in Action has picketted artists including Frank Sinatra, Millie Jackson, Danniebelle Hall, Linda Rondstadt, Ray Charles, and others, while at the same time drawing attention to the horrendous condition of Black South Africans. Locally the effort has resulted in the cancellation of one concert and pledges from the Temptations, Mighty Clouds of Joy, Tina Turner, Barry Manilow, and now Shelley Berman, all of whom now honor the Cultural Boycott.

SHELLEY BERMAN

October 8, 1985

Ron Wilkins
Unity in Action
P.O. Box 77515
Los Angeles, CA 90007

Re: Recent events in South Africa, and my conversations with Zakhele Cenge, Robert Hooks, and Taskforce Chairman, Ron Wilkins.

Dear Mr. Wilkins and all concerned parties:

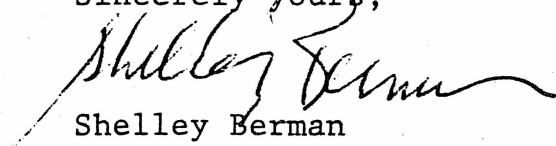
The recent "state of emergency", and its horrors, in a nation practicing apartheid have shocked the world. I, who had hoped for a patient and persuasive approach to the abolishment of apartheid, am convinced now of the futility of such hope.

Let me make myself absolutely clear: There has never been a time in my life when I have been indifferent to the existence and the evils of apartheid; when I have not found the very idea loathsome and utterly unacceptable; when I have not compared the plight of those living under the yoke of apartheid with the fearful history of my own Jewish forebears. Yet, I did fear (and, I confess, some of that fear lingers) that a cultural isolation of a nation practicing apartheid might result in a prolongation of this deplorable practice rather than put an end to it, or at least put the abolishment wheels in motion.

Today, it seems no amount of patience or persuasive effort can have any effect at all in obtaining some promise for the future that millions of people will at last enjoy merely the fundamental right of choice.

As a performer I refuse, and will continue to refuse, to appear in a nation which practices apartheid.

Sincerely yours,


Shelley Berman