

NNWN SBONOMDVE)

Proposal for a Conference for South African Students  
in the U.S.A. and Canada on

"Our Education for Building a Non-Racial and Democratic South Africa"

The African National Congress (ANC) National Youth Committee, through its Representative in North America, based in New York, proposes to convene a national conference of South African university students (undergraduate and graduate) in August 1990 in cooperation with Michigan State University (MSU). The conference would bring together 250-300 students for approximately four days primarily to discuss the needs and conditions of the South Africa to which they will return and how to better utilize the U.S. educational experience to prepare for life at home.

In the United States, there has been no previous conference of South African students of all races, political persuasions, and varying sponsors; therefore, this will be a hallmark meeting for as many South African students of all races as can be funded. This conference is planned for a crucial time in this new era of movement toward greater African participation in the governance of the country.

During the last several years, a large number of S.A. students of all races have come to U.S. university campuses with a wide variety of sponsorships, including the U.S. AID funded programs of Institute for International Education, Aurora Associates, and African American Institute; the Bishop Tutu Scholarship Program; the Phelps-Stokes Fund programs; the U.N. Education and Training Program for South Africans; and a variety of undergraduate and graduate fellowship programs of individual colleges and universities, churches, political parties such as the ANC, and various of the U.N. agencies (UNETPSA, FAO, ILO, WHO, UNDP, etc.). The preponderance of the students are undergraduates, brought directly to U.S. colleges and universities from South Africa, where they only recently had completed secondary school, usually under the Bantu education system. They are young, with only indirect experience of the South African job market. They have quite limited exposure to social, economic, and political realities of South Africa by the biases of the press and of the educational system. In the U.S., they are in universities which have few courses and library holdings on Africa, much less South Africa, taught by faculty who have little knowledge of South African society and labor markets.

In these U.S. colleges and universities, the students find few courses or faculty teaching about South Africa. These students have little and sporadic access to information on current events in South Africa. Furthermore, as undergraduates, they frequently do not master the techniques for gaining access to materials on South Africa "hidden" to the casual inquirer in the complex graduate-education collections in research libraries; thus, their papers and independent study frequently are uninformed by the materials that actually are available. Some are even unaware of news publications concerning South Africa readily available in the U.S. such as SASPOST, ANC News Briefs, and Africa News.

Thus a conference is badly needed to help refocus and educate these students on South Africa, to provide a forum for discussion of the issues with fellow South Africans, and to assist them to better utilize the data and library resources of their U.S. campuses, as well as those in larger African centers nationally.

Some Problems to be addressed in the Conference

Problem A:

S.A. students have little education or knowlegge concerning South Africa. Most South African students in the United States are undergraduates. They come to the U.S. after having completed the South African matriculation requirement at the end of secondary school. Regardless of race, these students have received an education with little social studies of South African society. In their schooling, they have received the government's largely raeialistic theories of South African history, economics, and politics. As a result, these students have few resources to understand the complexities of South African economics, society, and politics and little context for locating the continuing stream of news from S.A. Even if such education were available, comprehending the past, present, and future of this nation in upheaval and rapid change would be daunting. Now, changes in S.A. are further modified by the emerging multipolar global system. In addition, the S.A. students who are products of the Bantu educational system have the double hindrance created by the low quality of their introduction to the wider world in secondary school. This conference would seek to remediate some of that missing knowledge and educate the students to the resources available in the United States for learning more and keeping abreast of current events.

Problem 8: S.A. students have little knowlegge of the job market in S.A. Faced with the necessity of making crucial choices of major fields and elective courses in U.S. institutions, many South African students have little information about the occupational opportunities which are available (or unavailable) inside South Africa. Many refugee students have not been in S.A. for a decade or more. Even if they have a field of interest, their knowledge of the key problems and issues in that field is weak at best. Therefore, they are relatively uninformed about how to mold their U.S. higher education to both the needs and realities of the South African economy and to the jobs that actually are available.

In a study of the first returnnees of U.S. AID fellowship programs, researchers encountered some unemployed Black South Africans, even some with M.A./M.S. degrees. This lack of employment reflects the absence of good placement services, the inexorable racial discrimination of S.A., and the lack of adequately targeted education and training. There is a danger that young South Africans receive a U.S. general education oriented to U.S. problems and opportunities not attuned to the employment realities and needs of S.A., even when that economy has shortages of personnel with particular administrative, educational, and technical skills.

Lacking an understanding of the job market in S.A., receiving an education relevant to the U.S., and faced with stories of unemployed graduates at home, there is a danger young South Africans may opt for seeking to stay in the U.S. for a long-term or permanent basis, adding to the African brain drain that has grown in recent years.

Problem C: Students have little experience from S.A. or the U.S. to deal with cross-racial experience in a post-apartheid South Africa. Black and white students from S.A. have much experience of racial conflict, prejudice, and discrimination; however, they have little experience of cross-racial cooperation, dispute settlement, and problem solving. In U.S. institutions, they still will encounter racialism, usually subtly expressed through separate tables in the dining halls and racially homogeneous friendship patterns as well as some cross-racial friendships and cooperation.

In spite of its uniqueness, the racial conflict and cooperation in the U.S. and its many programs of equal opportunity and affirmative action offer a unique learning experience for young South Africans. The American struggles to deal with race in educational, commercial, governmental, and community structures usually is invisible to students on campus. While the experience of racial prejudice and discrimination is an important part of the experience of S.A. students, they also need to understand more of the history of U.S. race relations, the political and legal structures which are an attempt to ensure equality of opportunity, and the various programs in schools, communities, and institutions to remedy discrimination and reduce prejudice.

It will be a tragedy of lost opportunity if South Africans being educated in the U.S. do not learn about the many programs of equal educational opportunity on their own campuses - or of affirmative action, busing, Headstart, open housing covenants, and legal efforts found in virtually every U.S. community. The successes and failures in these arenas are a testimony to the durability of U.S. racial problems and to some genuine creativity in legislation and action to move American society slowly away from a two century national tragedy in racial discrimination and conflict. South Africa and the United States have not had the same history and are not fully comparable; however, both have a strong and unique history of black/white racial problems. These U.S. problems and the programs to remediate them are not directly applicable to S.A., but they provide an important model of how one democratic republic has attempted to deal with race.

Who are the S.A. students in the U.S. and Canada?

These students are the cream of the South African system who have obtained their fellowships through personal educational achievement and entrepreneurial pursuit of opportunity. Undoubtedly, regardless of their racial classification, many eventually will assume leadership roles there in industry, education, and, even, government. Their education and experience in the U.S. will give them an important cross-cultural advantage in achievement and mobility in South Africa. They will be important leaders for another generation, beyond the de Klerk and Mandela

\_ u \_

cohort, determining the form of society, polity, and economy in South Africa and the shape of cooperation and conflict with other states in the Southern African constellation. For these reasons, we believe increasing the quality of their U.S. experience in these areas is of high priority. MSU is an ideal locus for such a conference with the largest African Studies Center faculty in the nation, the third largest Africana Library collection, and a long history of exchange and programs with Africa.

#### Proposed Plan for a Conference to Address these Problem Areas

The ANC and MSU propose to hold a two-day ANC Conversation and a two-day conference on "Education for a Non-Racial and Democratic South Africa" at MSU on August 10-13, 1990. The conference will be open to all South African students of all racial classifications, parties, and graduate/undergraduate student status.

Every effort will be made to bring a broad cross-section of students studying in the U.S. and Canada. This conference immediately follows the conclusion of the orientation program for new South African students under sponsorship by the Institute of International Education (IIE) and Aurora Associates at Denison University (Ohio). Those students would be invited to come by bus to MSU for this conference. In addition, all South African students studying in the U.S. and Canada will be invited to attend. First priority for financial assistance will be given to students who have not attended previous national conferences/seminars such as those of IIE/Aurora and students with inadequate or uncertain funding of their educational programs. We plan distributing a questionnaire to all known S.A. students in North America to ascertain who should be given financial assistance to attend. The various sponsors of students will be asked to provide full lists of known S.A. students to be invited. Party and race will not be used in the award of financial aid.

The ANC Youth Section invites all students attending to join it for a two-day discussion of contemporary South African politics on August 10-11, immediately preceding the ANC/MSU conference August 12-13.

The two-day conversation and the conference will consist of a series of lectures, workshops, and nucleus discussion groups, divided into distinct segments addressing the three problem areas. The Nucleus Groups will be the primary locus of small group discussion throughout the conversation and conference, consisting of 15 students and a senior South African. The senior South Africans and four speakers from S.A. will be drawn from a cross-section of experts on the S.A. labor force, visiting scholars, Fulbright-Hays fellows, and graduate students in the U.S. MSU is offering to host the conference at an absolutely minimal cost to ensure the widest possible participation of students - approximately \$28 per day per student for room, three meals, and access to MSU recreational activities.

During this conference, the famed Michigan Festival is offered on the campus, nine days of programs of American folk crafts and folklife, including weaving and painting and especially music, from gospel and jazz to popular mainstage performers and rock music. The South African students are welcome to attend all events possible for one fee of \$7.00

\_i

\_ 5 -

Tentative Drift Program of the Conference:

Education in Building a Non-Racial and Democratic South Africa

Friday 1 August 10

ANC Convention: The Future of South Africa

Morning: Students arrive, settle in rooms, register

Opening Session: Welcomes, Opening Addresses

Adoption of Rules, Procedures, Announcement of Officers

Plenary Session: "Negotiations and the Alternative Democratic

Constitution" - followed by discussion

Afternoon:

Lecture: "The South African Economy and Democratisation in Southern Africa"

Discussion

Lecture: "Education and Cultural Development in a Democratic South Africa"

Evening:

Workshops and Discussions

Discussion

Evening:

Lecture: "Ethnicity and Nation-Building in a New South Africa"

Discussion and Workshops

Saturday, August 11

Morning: ANC Conversations. "The Future of South Africa," continued

Lecture: "The Role of Religion in Building a New South Africa"

Report and Discussion: Politics in the New South Africa

Report and Discussion: The South African Economy

Report and Discussion: Cultural Workshop

Afternoon:

Lecture: "What Have We Learned from the Independence of Zimbabwe for Creating a Non-Racial and Democratic South Africa?"

Discussion

Lecture: "Religion and Community Organizations in National Reconciliation and Rebuilding in a New South Africa"

Evening: Films and WorkshOps

Lecture: "The Role of Youth and Students in Heightening Anti-Apartheid Activity in the U.S. and Supporting the Democratic Process in South Africa"

Closing ANC Plenary Session

Sunday, August 12

Morning:

Ecumenical or Denominational Religious Services: (optional)

Conference: "Education for Work in a Non-Racial and Democratic South Africa"

Lecture: "Preparing at an American College or University for Life and Work in South Africa"

Lecture: "Understanding Socio-Political Change in the Complex Racial and Ethnic Environment of S.A."

Discussion and Workshops

Afternoon:

Lecture: "Why has Equal Opportunity Regardless of Race, Ethnicity, and Gender Been So Problematic in the U.S.A.?: Lessons for South Africa."

Lecture: "What Can We Learn from the Programs of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action in the U.S. for Change in South Africa."

Film/Video: On problems of race and change in the U.S.

Discussion and Workshops

Evening:

Film: On South African society

Concert: The Michigan Festival at MSU

Mandy, Aguat 13

Morning:

Lecture: "How to Use American Research Libraries for Your Personal and Academic Needs."

Exercise: Finding South African Reference, Bibliographical, Serials, Map, and Research Materials in the MSU Library

Afternoon:

Lecture: "What Jobs Will Be Available in a Post-Apartheid South Africa: A Portrait of Current and Likely Future Skill Needs"

Workshops: "What Are the Needs and Specific Skills of the Future" by occupational area, led by specialists in that area:

1. Natural Science

- Industry: Engineers and Labor
- The Private Sector: Opportunities for Entrepreneurship
- Mining and Metals Manufacture
- Agriculture and Allied Industries
- Health Services

2. Social and Economic Science

- The Private Sector: Opportunities for Entrepreneurship
- Government and the Civil Service
- Management and Labor Relations
- Social and Community Services

3. Education: Teachers and Administrators

H. Services, Transportation, and Communication

5. Religion

6. Others (to be determined)

Lecture: "How To Shape An Educational Program to Prepare for a Productive Future in South Africa"

Evening:

Plenary Meeting for Summary Comments and Resolutions

End of Conference

Experience: "The Michigan Festival: American Folk Life" - Attending concerts of a variety of 0.8. folk, ethnic, and concert musical groups at the Michigan Festival