



Howard University Connections to the South African Liberation Movement

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- 1930: Jans Smut, SA Prime Minister (pro apartheid), visited Howard University during a U.S. tour and met with a group of Black intellectuals after Smuts' incendiary comments about black South Africans ("the Negro has the patience of an ass"); his remarks and the "Howard meeting galvanized African American opposition to white rule in South Africa and built upon a previous, yet increasing, interest in African issues over both the short and long terms, arguing that this little-considered incident played a significant role in directing African American attention toward South Africa."
- 1936: Ralph Bunche (HU Prof) traveled to SA for the purpose of studying colonial policy and the position of non-European peoples in South Africa; his research was open-ended and he focused on a wide range of issues such as race relations, black living conditions in the reserves, mines, townships, African political and labor leaders and organizations, education, health and mental care, journalism, sports and culture, social life, business, religion and the legal system. His primary focus was the impact of segregation on black life, so he concentrated most of his attention on the Indian, Coloured and African communities

- 1943: Alpheus Hunton (HU '24), HU Asst. Professor became Ex Director of Council on African Affairs (whose members included Paul and Isilda Robeson, W.E.B. Du Bois, and HU professor E. Franklin Frazier); he was also editor of its publication, which was integral in supplying U.N. with current information on plight of black South African under apartheid
- 1951: Andrew Young graduates; would go on to become U.S. Ambassador to the UN in the Carter administration
- December 1952: Bunche named to the United Nations Commission of Good Offices established to study the question of racial policies in South Africa; The new U.N. Commission" submitted a report highly critical of South Africa's racial policies to the Eighth Session of the General Assembly on October 3, 1953; described apartheid as "injurious to human dignity," and "likely to impair the general welfare or friendly relations among the nations; and concluded that apartheid violated international law, citing several provisions of the U.N. Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and several U.N. resolutions
- 1953: Howard's African Studies and Research Program was established and was the first to grant doctoral degrees in African Studies in the United States.
- 1957: Goler Butcher graduates HUSL; she would go on to become HUSL professor), was staff director and consultant to the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, working along side anti-apartheid advocate Rep. Charles Diggs; in this role, "she was key to ensuring that questions addressed to administration witnesses and criticisms of administration policy were solidly based on detailed data."
- 1962: Mary Frances Berry graduates from HU; she would become Co-founder, Free South Africa Movement; one of 1984 Thanksgiving eve activists who sat-in at the South African Embassy; former Chair, U.S. Civil Rights Commission
- December 6, 1967: Howard Professor Dr. Flemmie Kittrell (first African American to gain a PhD in nutrition, and the first African-American woman PhD from Cornell University) was part of a private group of American citizens turned back by South African authorities in an attempt to enter South West Africa by plane from Zambia. This group, organized as a committee for the Development of an Independent South West Africa, had a two-fold purpose: 1. It wished to support and dramatize the United Nations Resolutions which terminated the mandate status of South West Africa and declared that

South West Africa would hence forth be the direct responsibility of the United Nations. Thus the group refused to acknowledge the jurisdiction of South Africa by applying for visas for South West Africa; and 2. Including specialists in agriculture, cooperatives, medicine, and nutrition, the group wished to study how nongovernmental organizations could contribute to the development of South West Africa.

- Howard University Students Against Apartheid – student organization established
- 1970s” Howard’s Organization of African Students (OAS) was established in the 1970s; OAS championed South African liberation and led early campus actions in the 1970s.
- May 25-26, 1972, the Congressional Black Caucus held the “African American National Conference on Africa” at Howard University on U.S. policy in Africa and the Caribbean; speakers included Rep. Charles Diggs
- Adowa Dunn Mouton, director of Howard’s African Studies and Research Program transformed the program into a think tank and published reports and essays on liberation in Africa, African history, and African American and African solidarity; hosted seminars such as “The Cutting Edges of South Africa Issues,” hosted the Black People’s Convention (BPC) and SASO activist Ranwedzi Nengwekhulu and editor of *The World* newspaper Percy Qoboza; convened South African activists who connected the struggle against apartheid to ones against domestic racism in the United States; sponsored conferences including “Afro-American Interrelationships with Southern Africa,” which attracted students, professors, and D.C. community members to discuss African and Afro-American solidarity. SASO activist in exile Nyameko (Barney) Pityana outlined the extent to which Black Power activists Kwame Turé and Malcolm X “shook the very roots of complacency in the hearts and mind of the Black student sitting in a tribal ‘bush’ college in S.A.” Pityana’s presentation situated “Afro-Americanism” in a “global perspective” and argued that theirs was the “common plight of our brothers in some other continents.” Their contemporaneous and interrelated efforts to win self-determination, develop an internationalist identity, and revive repressed African cultures underscored how “the struggle [was] one.”
- In 1974, Howard hosted the ALSC conference, themed “Which Way Forward in Building the Pan-African United Front,” was scheduled just a few months before the Sixth Pan-African Conference in Dar Es Salaam.

- June 1976: Only days after the 1976 Soweto Uprising, editors of the Howard University student newspaper *The Hilltop* interrupted the summer recess with a public announcement: “Riots Erupt in Azania: Nationalists Sing God Bless Africa (Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika).”
- June 1976: HU hosted thirty concerned local groups and formed the June 16th Coalition, announcing a protest at the South African Embassy on June 26, 1976
- At June 26th rally, conservative Howard University President James Cheek spoke and surprisingly urged a swift change in U.S. foreign policy in light of the police killings.
- The news director for Howard’s radio station WHUR-FM was Sandra Rattley, member of Southern African News Services who ensured SASP programming reached Howard students
- On October 15, 1976, HUSA organized a city demonstration against U.S. foreign policy in South Africa. Hundreds of Black students from D.C.-area universities including Howard, Federal City College, American University, and the University of Maryland swamped the State Department building. Students dropped off position papers and a wreath of red flowers for government officials “to give credit where credit is due,” said HUSA President Luther Brown. The flowers symbolized African blood.
- In 1976, HUSA and OAS students, following the leadership of a South African student activist named Jeff Baqwa, indicted government officials for the death and turmoil that U.S. policies perpetuated in South Africa.
- In the spring of 1977, Howard hosted the National Black Political Assembly and the Commission for Racial Justice in the United Church of Christ national conference on the struggles in southern Africa and the Black American response.
- 1977: At Howard’s Homecoming, Georgia Senator Andrew Young “drew cheers from the audience when he spoke of the fight for majority rule in South Africa and how it affects quality of life for Black people here.”
- 1977: Assistant Secretary of Education and HU grad Mary Frances Berry urged Howard students to “take up the struggle for human rights whether the violations occurred in Soweto or Wilmington, NC.”
- 1977: Cecelie Counts graduates; would become one of the organizers of the Southern African Support Project – key anti-apartheid group that organized daily protests at the SA Embassy (including Stevie Wonder’s and Rosa Parks’s arrests)

- 1977: Howard *Hilltop* writer Regina Lightfoot exposed Howard's apartheid connection through these corporate gifts. As of 1977, 24.2% of Howard's annual income came from corporate donations, 90% of which came from sixteen companies with South African subsidiaries. In other words, these companies were responsible for one out of five dollars that flowed through the Howard University system. Lightfoot lamented that divestment was an issue of morals over survival.^f
- 1978: The HU Board of Trustees announced new guidelines for its South African investments and adopted the Sullivan Principles, to great outcry from students.
- 1978: Students and *Hilltop* staff demanded that Howard Must Do More" and that administrators forego profits from the "denial of human rights to all people, whether they be in the United States, Caribbean or Iran." To students, the university was a "sell-out," having betrayed political traditions that previously made Howard "an international school and symbol for the world's people who seek justice and an end to oppression."
- October 1978: Howard students used the visit of Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith to protest U.S. foreign policy in Africa. HUSA and TransAfrica, an African American foreign policy lobby led by Randall Robinson, set the tone for a national anti-Smith demonstration. Hundreds of students marched through the city to register their outrage at the Prime Minister's visit to the Capitol. Student turnout amplified TransAfrica and the Southern Africa News Collective organizers who felt that the Carter Administration was duplicitous for dealing with Smith, an "international criminal."
- In 1977, Howard Committee Against Racism (H-CAR) extended the efforts of the OAS and transformed disparate campus talks, demonstrations, and events into a coordinated campaign against Howard's Sullivan Principles, led campaigns that targeted apartheid through boycotts of McGraw Hill books, demonstrations at banks, and anti-Krugerrand campaigns, and demanded that Howard sell investments in Chase, Gulf Oil, Singer, General Motors and dozen other companies, conceptualizing them as neo-imperial foreign agents akin to state-sponsored US-interventions.
- October 1977: Andrew Young (HU '51), U.S. Ambassador to the UN, publicly stated his support of sanctions against the South African government at the U.N
- 1982: Kamala Harris enters HU; during freshman year, she joins anti-apartheid movement

- 1983: Freshman student Kamala Harris (future V-POTUS) joins anti-apartheid movement, including staging a protest with other HU students and sit-in at the Howard University Administration “A” building against the school’s investments in South Africa
- Ron Walters, HU Professor of Department of Political Science (1971-1996 – chair for part of time), was an advisor to TransAfrica; part of the official U.S. delegation that monitored South Africa’s 1st free and democratic elections in 1994
- In 1983, Howard, Georgetown Students Formed DC SCAR - The D.C. Student Coalition Against Apartheid and Racism, formed in 1983, was made up of student organizers from Howard University, Georgetown University, George Washington University, Johns Hopkins University, and the University of Maryland at College Park. The group successfully pushed for universities to divest in corporations that were in business with South Africa.
- 1984: HU grad Mary Frances Berry helped coordinate and participated in the Thanksgiving eve sit-in at the South African embassy that resulted in the arrests of Rev. Walter Fauntroy (DC Delegate to the U.S. House of Rep.), Randall Robinson (TransAfrica), Eleanor Holmes Norton and Berry and the formation of the Free South Africa Movement
- Howard students demonstrated in the city, demarking their shift to focusing on U.S. investments rather than university ones. They joined the FSAM protests at the South African Embassy, well known for the arrests of high-profile movement leaders and musicians, like Coretta Scott King and Stevie Wonder. ⁷⁹ One Howard student explained the importance of her arrest, “I think as a student it says a little bit more than just any other adult off the street. I think that if enough students show that they are really serious about this, it shows some type of hope for our future.”⁸⁰
- 1985: A cadre of Howard-affiliated Black women activists — Karen Jefferson, Adwoa Dunn-Morton, and Clarissa Anderson — created the Howard Day Demonstration Committee, which organized students and faculty to picket at the South African Embassy.
- 1986: Kamala Harris graduates and would go on to become first female, person of color V-POTUS
- 1990: Debbie Allen Director, “Different World” produced episode on anti-apartheid movement

- October 7, 1994: Mandela gives Special Convocation address and invites Howard University to assist South Africa in the transformation to a democracy
- 1996: Howard University Board of Trustees organizes delegation visit to South Africa
- 1996: Howard University Board of Trustees establishes the Howard University Republic of South Africa Project (HURSAP) as a faculty committee
- 1997: HURSAP Residency Program (HURSAR) established in South Africa
- 1998: Professor Joseph Harris receives “Southern Africa Research and Archival Project” (SARAP) grant from the Mellon Foundation
- 2000: South Africa President Thabo Mbeki awarded Honorary Degree; HURSAP organizes plaque that was presented to Howard University by President Thabo Mbeki “On behalf of the people of South Africa in honor of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in the United States of America,” 23 May 2020. Plaque is displayed in the Grand Foyer of Founder’s Library
- 2012: HURSAP is designated the Secretariat for the USA-ANC Centenary Celebration
- 2012: HURSAP coordinates USA delegation to the USA-ANC Centenary Celebration in Blomfontein, South Africa
- 2012: HURSAP hosts the HBCU-HDI conference in collaboration with the South Africa Department of Basic Education
- HU summer program in South Africa (HUZISA, HUSL)
- 2012-2016: Hugh Masekela Artist in Residency at Howard University
- 2016: Howard University Division of Fine Arts produces “Sarafina” in collaboration with HURSAP
- 2019: National African American Drug Policy Coalition (NAADPC), in partnership with HURSAP, awarded cooperative agreement on the U.S. Role in the Anti-Apartheid Movement from the U.S. Embassy Pretoria
- 2023: America’s Voices Against Apartheid (AVAA) exhibition opens at the Apartheid Museum in South Africa (May 2023) and the John F. Kennedy Center in the United States (September 2023)

Sources include:

- “Black Students and the U.S. Anti-Apartheid Movements on Campus, 1976-1985,” by Amanda Joyce Hall, Ph.D. (*Postdoctoral Fellow, Northwestern University*) found at:

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