

The Power of Solidarity: Anti-Apartheid Activism on US Campuses and at UNC-Chapel Hill

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ABSTRACT

This article explores solidarity as an important political praxis with diverse ways of participation through a case study of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's student anti-apartheid movement. Research heavily draws upon primary resources from the Southern Historical Collection at the Wilson Library. Secondary resources are utilized to contextualize the history of apartheid, internal resistance, and anti-apartheid solidarity within the global community. The focus is placed primarily on the Anti-Apartheid Support Group (AASG) due to limited archival materials. This article explores the AASG's organizational structure, influences, collaborating organizations, strategies and tactics employed, challenges, and gains to argue that student solidarity efforts made an impact on the national anti-apartheid movement by influencing public awareness and policies that eventually aided the fall of the apartheid regime in South Africa. While the AASG was a prominent student organization, it does not represent the entire UNC-Chapel Hill student movement nor paint a picture of the exact way the movement occurred, as there were various students who participated outside of university-recognized organizational bodies. Additionally, there were other student organizations such as the Black Student Movement and Action Against Apartheid, the participation of which is not fully accounted for due to the lack of an archival collection.

Keywords: apartheid, divestment (divestiture), disinvestment, UNC-Chapel Hill Board of Trustees, campaign

Introduction

The acts of coalition building and solidarity can amplify the concerns of multiple groups working toward a similar goal. The modern system of apartheid began when the Afrikaner National Party came into power in the Republic of South Africa in 1948. Their campaign promises capitalized on the white population's interest in their own preservation by legally codifying and exacerbating already existing segregationist practices. Apartheid, referring to the systematic separation of races, developed as a method of racial control to ensure that the minority white population continued its legal and social dominance over the majority non-white population. Global opposition against the apartheid regime's reign of terror, both within the South African state and in the greater southern African region, led to the formation of various international coalitions and solidarity movements, including student-led efforts on college campuses across the United States. This article analyzes the impact of solidarity efforts from US colleges, based on their influence on policy and public awareness, through a case study of a student-led anti-apartheid organization at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-Chapel Hill).

Organized anti-apartheid solidarity in the US began in the early twentieth century with black activist organizations like the Council on African Affairs (CAA) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The CAA and NAACP promoted pan-African philosophies and saw apartheid as an injustice to all black people. These two organizations helped launch the first international campaign for sanctions against South Africa at the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 (Nesbitt 2004, 7). The CAA had a strong relationship with the African National Congress (ANC), an organization of South Africans committed to multiracial rule and most commonly associated with Nelson Mandela. The CAA engaged in mass educational efforts to connect the plight of South Africans to black Americans in the Jim Crow era (Ransby 2013, 152). Early gains in this period included the nonbinding UN Resolution 1761 of 1962, calling on all members to end economic and military ties with South Africa. Despite this, US leaders were reluctant to strongly condemn or embargo South Africa. US militarism was fueled by natural resources produced in South Africa, and both nations had an interest in quelling the perceived threat of communism (Nesbitt 2004, 5–7). Thus, direct American corporate investment in South Africa continued to rise, from \$50 million in 1943 to \$490 million by 1966 (Jackson 1989, 27–29), and South Africa's defense and military budget more than quadrupled in the 1960s alone (Jackson 1989, 23–24). With the lack of formal pressure from the US government, small local radical organizations and civil rights organizations were the engines that sustained American efforts against South Africa's regional imperialism and its effects on bordering states, as well as internal anti-black terrorism. Eventually, college students joined the anti-apartheid movement as a way to directly influence the contributions their institutions made to the South African economy. The student divestment movement occurred in three waves, each categorized by its organizational structure, major influencing organizations, types of resources, and tactics employed. The case study undertaken in this research is the movement at UNC-Chapel Hill during the third wave; however, the argument that student solidarity efforts had an impact on the anti-apartheid movement through influence on public awareness and policy is a culmination of all three waves.

The First Wave: 1965–1970

The first wave began on March 19, 1965 with a demonstration of five hundred students at Chase Manhattan Bank in New York City, opposing the renewal of bank loans to South Africa's government (Jackson 1989, 21–22). The demonstration was followed by a sit-in where forty-nine people were arrested. Organizations involved in the demonstration included Students for a Democratic Society, the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). These organizations, particularly the black civil rights organizations, increasingly began linking the destinies of black people in the United States to that of those on the African continent. They recognized that America's exploitative economic and racial system was deeply married to the continued existence of imperialism and colonialism abroad.

The SNCC and CORE, alongside religious organizations and churches, were the main organizers of demonstrations. The anti-apartheid movement at this stage had no single centralized national leadership. The American Committee on Africa (ACOA), founded in 1953, was a major organization within the anti-apartheid movement that played a consulting role for student activists who were developing demands and divestment petitions for their respective universities. Other tactics utilized by students were marches, sit-ins/building occupations, and rallies (Jackson 1989, 23). Several universities such as Cornell and Princeton sold their stocks from companies with ties to South Africa due to student pressure, but most institutions refused to

capitulate to student demands (Jackson 1989, 25). The first wave of the student divestment movement was able to wield influence that led to the termination of over \$40 million dollars in bank loans (Jackson 1989, 26). As the immediate goals to shut down such bank loans and institutional investments in South Africa were partially met, perceived success led to a decline in movement participation (Jackson 1989, 28–39). Other factors that led to the decline of the first wave were the instability of college students' four-year academic schedules and the urgency of domestic issues like the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement (Jackson 1989, 30–33). The first wave succeeded in drawing awareness to the power that college institutions had due to their investments in the form of bonds, shares, and loans, and also created a blueprint that would be revived and reconstructed during the second wave.

The Second Wave: 1977–1980

The second wave of the student-led anti-apartheid movement in the US was triggered by internal resistance in South Africa and was characterized by more developed organizations focusing on apartheid. The Soweto uprising of 1976 and the killing of South African activist Steve Biko while in police custody sparked international outrage. During the Soweto massacre, over five hundred peaceful youth demonstrators were killed (Jackson 1989, 40). Images from the massacre and the resulting uprisings in over one hundred cities inspired a new wave of solidarity movements that spread internationally. Representatives from six national organizations including the Washington Office on Africa and ACOA mobilized to form the National Coalition for the Liberation of South Africa (NCLSA) (Chapman Papers, Folder 69). The NCLSA planned national conferences beginning in 1978, and student participants from over forty-eight colleges helped to organize national days of protest and the distribution of educational newsletters. Other regional conferences were held for the midwest at Northwestern University and the southeast at Duke University in 1978. Regional student coalitions within the NCLSA worked closely with ACOA's National Student Coordinator to manage student divestment efforts within national divestment campaigns and to advocate for tactics such as student referendums and proposals for investment advisory committees (Jackson 1989, 38).

The second wave was mostly characterized by institutionalization and selective or partial divestment gains (Jackson 1989, 40–50). Universities, aiming to quell student activists, established investment advisory committees tasked with reviewing investment policies, taking into account shareholder resolutions and grievances regarding the companies they held shares in. As the student anti-apartheid movement became more institutionalized, universities were able to control the demands of the movement through negotiation and minimal reform. One reform method of note was the Sullivan Principles, created in 1977 by respected black activist Reverend Leon Sullivan as a guide to achieving better corporate ethics practices in South Africa. Among other objectives, the principles called for the equal treatment of employees regardless of race as a condition for doing business (“Anti-Apartheid Support Group Report to Board of Trustees” n.d.). Most student activists in the US only achieved partial or selective divestment; however, by 1978, about forty colleges had adopted the Sullivan principles and/or established investment advisory committees to make ethical recommendations. Although mainly minimal reform was achieved, more institutionalized methods of activism allowed awareness initiatives to reach vast audiences. Through student polls, lectures by exiled South African activists, referendums, film screenings, fundraisers, and newsletters on and from South Africa, popular support against apartheid increased and made way for the third wave of student activism.

The Third Wave: 1984–1987

During the third wave of student activism, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill developed a sustained anti-apartheid movement as a result of characteristics distinct to the new national campaign. After student pressure and like many other institutions, the university adopted the Sullivan principles in 1982 (“Report to the Trustees of the Endowment Board” n.d.). The third wave was triggered in 1983 by the creation of a tri-cameral South African Parliament that still excluded black South Africans from participation. On November 21, 1984, a pan-Africanist organization named TransAfrica launched a sit-in at the South Africa Embassy to protest US complacency toward the South African government (Nesbitt 1989, 51). TransAfrica leader Randall Robinson was arrested alongside Congressional Black Caucus member Walter E. Fauntroy and Congresswoman Mary Frances Berry. This sit-in launched a series of demonstrations at embassies across the nation that resulted in the arrests of several hundred people, including Yolanda King, daughter of Martin Luther King Jr., and Jesse Jackson, effectively creating the Free South Africa Movement (FSAM) and the third wave of student activism.

Spearheaded by national anti-apartheid organizations, the FSAM catalyzed the third wave of student activism by creating accessible points of entry to mass protest. TransAfrica coordinated the naming of March 21 to April 6 of 1985 as the “Week of National Anti-Apartheid Action” and April 4 as the “National Protest Day for South African Divestment” (Nesbitt 1989, 60–77). Hundreds of colleges across the nation reintroduced disruptive tactics by holding demonstrations during the week of action. The third wave of activism was aimed at employing diverse tactics in an effort to avoid the minimal or “progressive” reform seen in the second wave.

At UNC-Chapel Hill, the Anti-Apartheid Support Group (AASG) emerged as a leading front for student activism. The AASG was officially recognized as a student organization on October 16, 1985 (“Office of Vice Chancellor and Provost” 1985). The group’s constitution proclaimed racism to be “the heaviest burden carried on the shoulders of humankind” and South African apartheid to be a curse (“UNC Anti-Apartheid Support Group Constitution” n.d.). Despite the adoption of “ethical business” policies through the Sullivan Principles, UNC investments in companies operating in South Africa increased (“Report to the Trustees of the Endowment Board” n.d.), convincing the AASG that a movement for full divestiture was the only way forward. Its stated goal was to achieve the “abolition of racism, particularly South African apartheid, and the establishment of majority non-racist rule in South Africa” (“UNC Anti-Apartheid Support Group Constitution” n.d.). The organization’s membership was open to all so long as there was a desire to fight apartheid. Although the acting president of the AASG was Herman Bennett, the organization aimed to have a non-hierarchical leadership model by rotating the position of chairperson for the committee as a whole between members, based on majority vote, at each meeting. The AASG forged three committees to accomplish its missions: Education, Coordinating, and Program. Its membership base grew from thirty to over one hundred members within the first few months, and the organization thrived in its mission by constantly appealing to mass members of the campus and the local community.

Coalitions – Students and National Organizations

As exhibited in the case of UNC-Chapel Hill, the third wave of student activism greatly utilized diverse coalitions comprised of local and national organizations, students, public representatives, religious institutions, and the faculty and staff of universities. The student anti-apartheid

movement and the AASG heavily relied on the support provided by national organizations for resources including propaganda, contacts, action items, and guidelines. The Africa Fund, a non-profit organization founded in 1966 in association with the American Committee on Africa, was a pivotal directory for consistent and reliable updates. The Africa Fund published scholarly articles in the Literature List that acted as directories of information related to the anti-apartheid movement for easy access and redistribution (“Literature List” n.d.). The Africa Fund also produced a magazine called *Southern Africa Perspectives* that featured direct eyewitness reports from South Africans describing the grave living conditions, displacement, and other injustices (“Southern Africa Perspectives” n.d.). The magazine included columns that debunked objections to divestment and gave other movement-related updates. Another magazine that aided students was the *United States Anti-Apartheid Newsletter*, published by the American Friends Service Committee. The Washington Office on Africa produced single pieces of literature as needed called “Action Alerts” (“Washington Office on Africa Action Alerts” n.d.). These alerts contained information on legislation related to southern Africa and on immediate steps for individuals to take by referencing which congressional representatives to target. National organizations also communicated to student activists directly through national calls and emails. The “Call to Conscience” emergency response network was another system for rapid dissemination of information and action items within the movement. In August 1986, the Anti-Apartheid Support Group published the first issue of its own newsletter titled *UNC/Soweto* (AASG collection), which largely mirrored and referenced the magazines produced by national anti-apartheid organizations.

Coalitions – Students and Local Entities

Almost immediately after its inception, the Anti-Apartheid Support Group began building coalitions with groups in the UNC-Chapel Hill area. Most of these partnerships, based on the records collected, were tied to the university institution. The faculty council chaired by George A. Kennedy created the “Faculty Resolution of 1985” on November 15 to reflect their official position on apartheid. The resolution proclaimed the moral problems within the system of apartheid to be incompatible with “principles of intellectual freedom and human dignity” (“Faculty Resolution of 1985”), and proposed that all funds associated with companies operating in or with South Africa’s government be eliminated from the university’s portfolio and the State Retirement Fund portfolio. The faculty council understood the importance of solidarity with students’ efforts. In their November 15 meeting, they discussed student activists’ actions on November 14, stating that the “student body presented a similar resolution to the Investment Committee of the Board of Trustees (BOT),” which was turned down (“Faculty Meeting Notes, Section V” 1985). The council hoped that by adopting the resolution, “[students and faculty] can do together what could not be done alone” (“Faculty Meeting Notes, Section V” 1985). Chancellor Christopher Fordham expressed his support of the students and faculty resolutions, but had little power to take any action without support from the BOT. Students, however, capitalized on the presence of progressive faculty and made attempts to network. In the spring of 1986, the AASG sent a mailout to professors, admitting, “Students alone cannot affect the desired policy changes” (“UNC Anti-Apartheid Support Group Letter to Professors” n.d.). Professors and departments responded by supporting the AASG through educational events, posting flyers created by the group, and donating to and/or dispersing information on the group’s fundraising efforts for *UNC/Soweto* and other campaigns (AASG Collection). The AASG partnered with the African and Afro-American Studies department to co-host a talk with exiled

South African Don Ngeubeni, called *Living Under Apartheid*, on March 19, 1986 (“Living Under Apartheid Flyer” n.d.). Later that year, on December 12, the faculty council adopted another resolution calling for the establishment of an investment review board comprised of faculty and students. The Board of Trustees voted six to five against a divestment resolution that same day; however, it was the “closest the university [had] ever come to full divestment” (“Jerry Jones” n.d.). Although the AASG had previously made the same request for a review board, faculty cooperation helped amplify the AASG’s efforts to move closer to divestment.

The AASG collaborated with student organizations to address the issues of sustaining visible support and building on-campus involvement. As advertised in an issue of *UNC/Soweto* published on October 29, 1986, the AASG and the Carolina Committee on Central America hosted a three-day conference called “Students Organizing Students (SOS)” from October 3 to 6 that was based on skill sharing and building progressive consciousness. The schedule included educational programs on South Africa, group strategy sessions, and workshops on civil disobedience, recruitment, lobbying, and organizing (“Students Organizing Students Agenda, *UNC/Soweto*” 1986). Over one hundred people attended the conference keynote given by chief US representative of the ANC Neo Mnumzana (*The News and Observer*, October 4, 1986). The AASG also had a positive relationship with the Black Student Movement (BSM) and used their mailing list for contacts (“BSM Mailing List” n.d.). Beyond the BSM and the Carolina Committee on Central America, the extent of collaboration with other campus organizations is unclear through the available archived documents. However, the AASG also joined a Triangle Area¹ coalition made up of the Committee for Peace with Justice in South Africa (Durham), the North Carolinians Against Apartheid (Raleigh) group, and other concerned individuals and medical personnel, to launch the Southern Africa Medical Aid project in the fall of 1986. They were able to raise over \$16,000 for the project by April 1987 (“Students Organizing Students Agenda, *UNC/Soweto*” 1986). The AASG’s ability to build support networks of community members, faculty, and staff greatly contributed to their success.²

The New Divestment Campaign

New divestment campaigns focused on total, rather than partial, divestment as the primary goal that would bring about disinvestment – the process of eliminating private corporations’ ownership of physical assets (Lowenberg et al. 1987, 459). In 1985, at least one hundred organizations focused on divestment and/or disinvestment were created on college campuses across the nation. New and existing organizations conducted reviews of their own university’s investment policies and demanded that endowment boards abandon the Sullivan Principles for being ineffective. In a letter to the UNC-Chapel Hill Board of Trustees on November 14, 1985, the AASG wrote: “The codes cannot and do not attempt to address themselves to the basic structures of apartheid such as the homelands, migratory labor, cheap labor, pass laws and the

¹ The Research Triangle of North Carolina is comprised of Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill. See <https://www.researchtriangle.org/>.

² The extent to which the AASG collaborated or was influenced by local entities is not represented in this article due to limited archival materials. Much of the AASG collection focuses on the group’s interactions with national organizations, and mostly leaves out the pivotal role of local entities and more radical organizations in sustaining the anti-apartheid movement.

complex legal restrictions on regime opponents...the University should abandon its support for the Sullivan Principles and adopt a total divestment strategy” (“Letter to the UNC-Chapel Hill Board of Trustees” 1985). AASG demands included a timeline for when the university system should sell all assets connected to South Africa, an immediate end to any purchases with corporations doing business in South Africa, and the establishment of a committee comprised of representatives from the AASG, Faculty Council, Black Faculty Caucus, Graduate and Professional Students Organization, Student Government, and the Board of Trustees to re-evaluate the university’s investment policies.

The AASG’s demands were ignored, and five months later it released the *Report to the Trustees of the Endowment Board* on April 4, 1986. This report showed that under the university’s current policy, which made use of the Sullivan Principles, stock holdings had grown from \$5.7 million to \$8.8 million between November 1985 and March 1986. The detailed report provided a list of all the companies the university was engaged in with ties to South Africa and argued for the importance of divestment before restating the policy demands the AASG had previously introduced.

Simultaneous efforts to pass divestment legislation were both fueled by and benefited student divestment movements. The Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), an organization of black congressional members founded in 1971, was a pivotal vehicle for legislative sanctions against South Africa (Nesbitt 2004, 130). The CBC fiercely opposed President Reagan’s complacency around South African apartheid, called “constructive engagement,” and drew on connections between apartheid and America’s own system of racial hierarchy (Nesbitt 2004, 130). The CBC made passing a sanction bill a chief priority and mobilized to gain the support of both Democrats and Republicans, who increasingly wanted to dissociate from apartheid. On October 2, their efforts came to fruition and the *Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act* of 1986 was passed, overriding Reagan’s veto (Nesbitt 2004, 130–40). This moderate version of the act, which was first proposed in 1972, prohibited new investments in South Africa, made restrictions on government and commercial ties, and prohibited the importation of some products (Nesbitt 2004, 143–44). The *News and Observer* reported that, in his keynote at the SOS conference at UNC-Chapel Hill, ANC member Neo Mnumzana praised the sanction bill as a step in the right direction that “may encourage other countries...to oppose apartheid more actively” (October 4, 1986). Students played a role by writing letters, calling, and lobbying to congressional representatives. Mass demonstrations that attracted negative international attention to the US also considerably influenced the increase in public and congressional support for economic consequences for South Africa in light of its apartheid system.

In January 1987, new guidelines for divestment were issued by five national organizations involved in the Free South Africa Movement. The Africa Fund produced a “Unified List of United States Companies with Investments or Loans in South Africa and Namibia” from June 1985 to March 1987, to be used as a resource for students to create investment reports and divestment proposals based on the new guidelines issued by the five prominent organizations.

Tactics

The third wave of student activism saw the employment of diverse tactics with educational, direct action, and artistic components. These tactics, some already discussed above, included lists of demands, referendums, investment reviews and policy recommendations, newsletters, lecture series, film screenings, sit-ins, and marches. Upon its inception, the first event the AASG held was a rally on October 1, 1985 (“Educate Yourself! AASG Rally Flyers” n.d.). In February of

1986, the UNC-Chapel Hill Endowment Board refused to abide by the wishes of seventy percent of students, who had voted in campus elections for divestment. As a result, the AASG erected shanty towns on the Quad (“UNC Divestment History” n.d.). The shanty homes were built with metal scraps and other makeshift materials to represent the deprived conditions that black South Africans lived in. AASG members aimed to amplify awareness and draw attention to the divestment solutions proposed to the BOT. The erection of shanty towns on campuses as a means of peaceful protest first occurred at Cornell University in 1985, but this tactic soon spread to a number of other universities, including Johns Hopkin, Georgetown, and George Mason. The AASG utilized quantitative research and referendum results in their November 1985 *Report to the Trustees of the Endowment Board* to illustrate a convincing argument to the BOT before escalating to build shanty towns in March 1986. The AASG’s policy advocacy, as well as direct-action demonstrations, sustained a diversity of tactics meant to pressure the Board of Endowment to approve a full divestment.

Challenges

Like other student organizations within the movement, the AASG experienced both in-group and outside challenges around tactics and ideologies. For instance, College Republicans (CR) and Students for America (SA) came out in opposition to the shanty towns one month after the demonstrations began. In a letter sent to Chancellor Fordham on March 27, 1986, the CR and SA claimed that the shanties were defacing the university and demanded that they be removed by noon on April 1 (“Letter to Chancellor Fordham” 1986). The CR and SA threatened to erect a Berlin-type wall to “protest the oppression by the Soviet Union...and the left’s hypocrisy for addressing only one case of human rights violations,” if the shanties were not removed (“Letter to Chancellor Fordham” 1986). The April 1 deadline was not met, and the CR attempted to erect a wall made of wood, chicken wire, and sheets, but it was quickly vandalized and abandoned (“Students Demand that Hypocrisy End” n.d.). Chancellor Fordham set an April 7 deadline for students in the shanties to disperse. Five students were arrested for trespassing after refusing to leave their shanties when crews came to tear them down. All charges against demonstrators were later dropped, and no serious violent acts occurred on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus.

AASG members frequently engaged in heated exchanges with individuals who did not believe that divestment was the right strategy to help advance the anti-apartheid struggle. Despite support from Chancellor Fordham and the newly-elected student body president Bryan Hassel, the Endowment Board of the Board of Trustees was the primary obstacle. The board objected to divestment on the grounds that it went against their responsibility to uphold the financial interest of the university. The board estimated that they would lose “approximately one million dollars a year” with divestment, with some members promoting the congressional *Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act* as the best course of action (“UNC Divestment History” n.d.).

Student organizers also understood the difficulty of sustaining a student movement to influence the BOT: “students come and go but Trustees have all the time they want” (“Donnie Trevathan” n.d.). The creation of a new organization called the South Africa Scholarship Fund (SASF) by Richard Hoile and Francesca Varcoe became a point of contestation about different strategies. The SASF was established to sponsor the education of a black South African at a predominantly white, higher education institution in South Africa. The group then formed an agreement with the Endowment Board, which pledged to match each dollar raised. AASG member Donnie Trevathan noted in an open letter that divestment was never introduced as the “be all end all” solution or as the only way to perform solidarity (“Cindy Hahamovitch:

Counterpoint” n.d.). The AASG emphasized that it endorsed a diversity of tactics to amplify the anti-apartheid struggle; so, while the efforts of the BOT in supporting the SASF were good, it did not mean that full divestment should not continue to be pursued.

Furthermore, the AASG faced criticism from individuals who felt that while divestment was the right path, the AASG was not radical enough in its direct-action tactics. In an op-ed to the March 20, 1986 edition of *The Daily Tar Heel*, one student criticized the shanty towns erected on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus for not “replicating in great detail” the degree of gruesomeness in South Africa, writing that “the three shanties...project an image not of oppression and institutionalized racism, but of poverty” (*The Daily Tar Heel* 1986). The author also critiqued the AASG for negotiating with Chancellor Fordham about when to remove the shanties, arguing that it was a form of “constructive engagement.” Disagreement within the AASG membership resulted in the formation of a new group called Action Against Apartheid. In “An Open Letter to UNC Anti-Apartheid Support Group,” this new faction cited ideology and tactics as the reason for separation, stating that “Action Against Apartheid will be built around the philosophy of action through education and education through direct action” (AASG collection). No further archival documents were located indicating the group’s presence on campus beyond this introductory letter.

Small Gains to Large Triumphs

Despite the challenges of student organizing in general, the third wave of the student anti-apartheid movement in US colleges accomplished significant gains. On October 1, 1987, organizers declared a win when the UNC-Chapel Hill Endowment Board agreed to divest all funds from South African companies (*The Daily Tar Heel* n.d.). On a national scale, between 1985 and 1987, seventy-five universities committed to either full or partial divestment of their South African stock; by 1988, a total of 155 colleges had divested their portfolio, with more institutions committing to full divestment than in any other wave (Jackson 1989, 64–67). Between 1986 and 1987 alone, ninety-six US firms withdrew from South Africa and the total amount from state and local actions surpassed \$18 billion dollars. Duke University was the first to adopt a full divestment timetable in 1986 in the Raleigh–Durham Triangle area, serving as local inspiration for the AASG’s own persistence (*The News and Observer*, October 4, 1986). By 1989, the US was among twenty-two countries around the world with economic penalties against South Africa’s apartheid regime. South Africa experienced massive capital flight as businesses and investors left, causing its national currency to become devalued and inflated (Gethard 2008). As a result, Prime Minister Frederik W de Klerk began to undo components of apartheid beginning in 1990, until its eventual demise in 1992 with the Apartheid Referendum.

Conclusion

Along with influencing investment policies, student activists were able to raise and sustain public awareness on the conditions of apartheid through literature, lectures, rallies, and other direct-action tactics. The gains made by student activists were actualized through crucial partnerships with other students, community members, local and national organizations, South Africans, and the faculty and staff of their institutions. The momentum of the divestment movement at both local and national levels gained international attention, amplifying the moral and political threat of South Africa. After its win for full divestment, the AASG dwindled both in purpose and presence on campus, and there are few archival sources to help formulate an explanation of their

whereabouts post 1987. Nevertheless, the Anti-Apartheid Support Group at UNC-Chapel Hill provides a valuable case study of the methods, challenges, and accomplishments of the student anti-apartheid movement in the United States, and what it was able to achieve through acts of solidarity with those oppressed under the South African regime.

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