

# The anti-apartheid movement in Japan : an overview

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**The Anti-Apartheid Movement in  
Japan: An Overview**

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**Abstract**

Anti-apartheid movements outside South Africa have been recently becoming a popular research topic as an indispensable part of the history of the liberation struggle against apartheid, as well as from the “global civil society” point of view, i.e. anti-apartheid movements as one of the earliest examples of transnational social movements with the aim of realization of global justice. The Japanese movement, however, has attracted little attention so far, despite its history of nearly half century. The Japanese movement’s characteristic foci and style, reflecting the unique position of Japan as a non-white nation with strong trade relations with white-dominated South Africa, certainly deserves detailed study. This paper is an attempt to fill the gap by outlining the history of the anti-apartheid movement in Japan.

**Keywords:** anti-apartheid movement, civil society, South Africa, Japan

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## Introduction

Anti-apartheid movements outside South Africa have been recently becoming a popular research topic as an indispensable part of the history of the liberation struggle against apartheid, as well as from the “global civil society” point of view, i.e. anti-apartheid movements as one of the earliest examples of transnational social movements with the aim of realization of global justice (Thorn 2006; 2009). The Japanese movement, however, has attracted little attention so far, despite its history of nearly half century. Although its scale and influence did not match anti-apartheid movements in some other countries such as UK and Sweden, the Japanese movement’s characteristic foci and style, reflecting the unique position of Japan as a non-white nation with strong trade relations with white-dominated South Africa, certainly deserves detailed study. Lack of a public archive of movement materials, as well as the scantiness of texts written in English in the first place, has probably contributed to this surprising absence of literature. This paper is an attempt to fill the gap, at least partly, by outlining the history of the anti-apartheid movement in Japan<sup>1</sup>.

The description of the movement up to 1987 largely depends on Noma (1969) and Morikawa (1988: ch.7). The rest of the description is mainly based on the author’s interviews as well as newsletters issued by various movement organizations. I would like to express gratitude to those who agreed to be interviewed, and/or let me use movement materials in their personal possession.

### 1. Kanjiro Noma and the launch of an anti-apartheid movement in Japan

An anti-apartheid movement in Japan was started in 1963 by journalist Kanjiro Noma. What led to the launch of the movement was Noma’s encounter with South African representatives at the third Asia-Africa Peoples’ Solidarity Conference, which was held in Moshi (then Tanganyika) in February 1963. Noma recalls how he received criticism at the occasion on Japanese relations with apartheid South Africa; according to him, the South African representatives questioned him as follows:

The white government of South Africa is imposing a harsh, oppressive policy, ignoring the human rights of non-white people. What do you think about the fact that Japan, despite being a non-white country, has foreign relations with South Africa, and is strengthening trade ties with it, against the UN call for member countries to cut ties

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<sup>1</sup> Most of the contents in this paper are based on my previous paper written in Japanese (Makino 2011).

with and impose economic sanctions on South Africa? (Noma 1969: 381)

From its very beginning, the issue of Japan being a non-white nation but at the same time on the side of white South Africa was at the core of the Japanese anti-apartheid movement. This is a unique characteristic of the Japanese movement in comparison to other movements in (dominantly white) Western countries. The most symbolic issue was that of “honorary white,” a status Japanese people were granted by the white South African government because of the importance of economic ties between the two countries. Calling for Japanese citizens to reject this “unhonorable” status was one of the major activities of the Japanese movement.

One month after the Solidarity Conference, Muziwadi Philiso<sup>2</sup>, one of the South African representatives at the conference, visited Japan to attend the World Conference against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs. This was the first opportunity for South African freedom fighters to visit Japan. In Japan, Philiso called on Japanese citizens to stand up against apartheid (Noma 1969: 383; Kusuhara 1981: 69). Responding to this call, Noma took the initiative to establish a Japanese anti-apartheid movement, which led to the birth of the Working Committee against Racial Discrimination in South Africa (南ア人種差別反対実行委員会). The committee was built inside the structure of the Japan Asia Africa Latin America Solidarity Committee (JAALA), which has informal but close relations with Japan Communist Party. However, the Working Committee was soon divided along the different political ideology lines among leftist political organizations (the background of which was deteriorating China-Soviet relations), and it became defunct. In such a situation, Noma decided to restart the anti-apartheid movement as a citizens' movement (*shimin undo*) together with a small number of friends. The new group was named the “Discussion Group on South African Issues” (南アフリカ問題懇話会)(Morikawa 1988: 203-204).

In addition to activities inside Japan, such as issuing mimeographed newsletters and having regular meetings (Noma 1969: 384), Noma visited UK, France and Tanzania in 1967 to ensure a foundation of international solidarity against apartheid. Noma had excellent foreign language and social skills; as a result he made friends with South African exiles and European leaders of anti-apartheid movements during his trip.

After coming back to Japan, Noma started writing a book, *Origin of Discrimination and Defiance: Apartheid Country* (差別と叛逆の原点——アパルトヘイトの国), which was a critical milestone in the history of the Japanese anti-apartheid movement. The motivation for writing this book is explained by Noma as follows:

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<sup>2</sup> The name's original spelling is uncertain because it was translated from Japanese text.

Why can we not find ordinary Japanese people naturally getting interested in the situation of South Africa, where the defiance is now escalating into armed struggle? This must be due to lack of knowledge about what is happening in South Africa under apartheid (Noma 1969: 390).

The publisher, Riron-sha, issued Noma's book. Riron-sha mainly published quality children books, but its founder Ryohei Komiyama had a strong interest in Africa, and published Japanese translation of books written by Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta, which did not bring profit to his company at all. Riron-sha also published a journal titled "*a: Journal for African Studies*", which was launched in 1970 and lasted for a few years. Since most Japanese people only read Japanese, translating books and articles written in foreign language into Japanese and publishing them were important tools for the movement to raise awareness among the Japanese public about the situation in South Africa.

## 2. Activities of Japan Anti-Apartheid Committee in 1970s-80s

When Noma passed away in 1975 because of illness, students and citizens who were regular participants in his study meetings decided to continue anti-apartheid activities. There were already citizens' anti-apartheid movement organizations in two major cities in Japan. One was the Africa Action Committee (アフリカ行動委員会), which was formed in Tokyo in May 1969, and the other was Comrade Africa Committee (こむらどアフリカ委員会), established in Osaka at the year end of 1970. These two groups led the anti-apartheid movement in Japan after Noma.

A prominent leader of the Africa Action Committee was Akira Kusuhara, who was then a student at the University of Tokyo and would later become professor of pedagogy at Kokugakuin University. Kusuhara's principle for his engagement in the anti-apartheid movement was heavily influenced by historian Senroku Uehara, who told Kusuhara in 1964 that "the matter of freedom and liberation of South African black people is at the same time a matter of freedom and liberation of Japanese people" (Kusuhara 1988: 191). Reflecting this perspective, AAC's activities tended to emphasize Japanese responsibility for maintaining the apartheid regime and oppressing black people in South Africa. Japan was responsible for apartheid, it was argued, because Japan was helping prolonging its regime through trade relations with South Africa, in return for which Japanese people were granted the unhonorable status of "honorary white". In this way, Japan was not a non-party to the matter, but had structural responsibility for

the oppression of black South Africans. Participants in the movement were expected to ask themselves constantly about their standpoint, and to accept apartheid *as their own problem*.

The Africa Action Committee was, officially, one of the local groups affiliated to Japan Anti-apartheid Committee (JAAC) but internationally it acted as the *de facto* representative of the entire JAAC. It played the central role in building up an international network, and in organizing various events with international guests. The Africa Action Committee was initially a group of volunteers without office or staff, but it opened an office at the end of 1983 and a paid staffer (Yoji Kanbayashi, a former student of Akira Kusuhara) started working there in 1986.

In Osaka, Comrade Africa Committee was started as a small book-reading group by Keiji Shimogaki, a local public servant, who was keen to study African history and contacted Riron-sha after he read the journal “a”. What was unique to the anti-apartheid movement in Osaka was its link to local human rights and anti-discrimination causes such as *buraku* liberation<sup>3</sup> and discriminatory fingerprinting enforcement against local *zainichi* Korean residents (who had their roots in Korea under Japanese colonial rule). Since it was perceived that the issue of apartheid and issues of local human rights issues are linked to each other, the anti-apartheid movement in Osaka tackled these problems at the same time, and built a cooperative network with other social movements. The Buraku Liberation League, the leading organization for *buraku* liberation was committed to the anti-apartheid movement from an early stage. The anti-nuclear movement also had a link with the anti-apartheid movement, as the latter protested against Kansai Electric Power Co., the company which provides electricity in Kansai area including Osaka, for its importing uranium which allegedly originated from apartheid Namibia. Christian church leaders also got involved in the anti-apartheid movement in 1987 when it was planned to invite Rev. Allan Boesak to Osaka. Although the plan did not materialize eventually (Boesak came to Japan but only visited Tokyo), the Anti-apartheid Kansai Contact Group (反アパルトヘイト関西連絡会) was established with Bishop Ichiro Kikawada of the Anglican Church as its chairperson. A similar contact group was established in the Tokyo area, but the Kansai group’s activities were more substantial and, most notably, it still continues with activities such as publishing newsletters and hosting events related to Southern Africa, after

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<sup>3</sup> According to the Buraku Liberation League, “buraku” is explained as follows. “Buraku is a Japanese word referring to a village or hamlet. The word began to acquire a new connotation after the administration in Meiji era (1868 -1912) started to use ‘Tokushu Buraku’ (special hamlet) in reference to former outcaste communities. The intention was to negatively distinguish former outcaste communities from other areas. At present the word ‘Buraku’ usually refers to communities where discriminated-against Buraku people reside. On the other hand, the term ‘Tokushu Buraku’ has been figuratively used from time to time in distinguishing a different society from a so-called ordinary society as well as in describing Buraku areas, resulting in fostering discrimination against Buraku people.” (<http://www.bll.gr.jp/eng.html>, accessed 21 October 2013)

renaming itself Kansai Southern African Network (KASAN).

There were other anti-apartheid groups in various areas in Japan too. These include the Shizuoka Group to Study Africa (静岡アフリカに学ぶ会 established in 1977), and the Research Group on Southern African Affairs (南部アフリカ問題研究会), which was established in 1981 by a group of university students in Kyoto. When the anti-apartheid movement was at its peak in the late 1980s, there were anti-apartheid groups in Sapporo, Matsudo, Chiba, Nagoya, Kobe, Hiroshima, and Kumamoto as well. In Osaka, the Japan Anti-apartheid Women's Committee, established in 1986, engaged in various activities to disseminate information about situations under which South African women were living. These various groups constituted the network of JAAC. According to Kusuhara (2010), the main activities of JAAC were as follows.

- (1) Activities for the purpose of raising awareness about apartheid among the Japanese public, through research, publications, and showing movies,
- (2) Denouncing the Japanese government and private companies for being complicit in apartheid,
- (3) Organizing protests and demonstrations against the South African Consulate, Embassy of Portugal, Keidanren (Japan Business Federation), complicit companies, Japan-South Africa Parliamentary Friendship Committee, Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Japan, and so on,
- (4) Building cooperation with other anti-apartheid groups, liberation movements, and civil society groups inside and outside South Africa,
- (5) Calling for a boycott of South African products,
- (6) Coordinating and networking anti-apartheid activities by various organizations and individuals all over Japan,
- (7) Inviting anti-apartheid activists from abroad and organizing public lecture events featuring these guests, and
- (8) Hosting "Anti-apartheid Asia Oceania Workshop" in 1988.

The background of participants varied; in terms of occupation, there were business persons, teachers, students, public servants, journalists, and housewives. Some had previous experience of other social movements, but others did not. In ideological terms, one could say most participants were left-leaning to a greater or lesser extent, but there were some participants with right-wing nationalist identities, who felt the label "honorary white" was unacceptably derogatory to the Japanese nation. JAAC deliberately avoided special relations with any political parties or political organizations, and acknowledged themselves to be a *shimin undou* (citizens' movement). During my interviews with people who participated in JAAC, many interviewees described their activities as "*shimin undou*", which can be considered to be an



important part of the identity of this stream of anti-apartheid movement which started from Noma's discussion group and then developed into the JAAC network. The expression "*shimin undou*" was used generally to distinguish themselves from social movements which were led by or closely associated with political parties or trade union movements, and also to emphasize its character as a voluntary organization where participants were free to come and go, and differences in opinions and ideologies among the participants were tolerated. It also implied their "anti-power" or "anti-establishment" stance.

Notably, the ANC was not an exception in terms of JAAC's tendency to avoid special relations with any particular political parties or political forces. In fact, some of the JAAC leaders had more empathy with the Black Consciousness Movement and Pan-Africanism than the ANC<sup>4</sup>. Although Nelson Mandela was, like anywhere else, the most well-known and respected among liberation movement leaders, Steven Biko was almost equally popular in Japan.

The ANC opened its office in Tokyo in 1988, with Jerry Matjila as its representative. JAAC and Matjila did many activities jointly, for instance organizing seminars with Matjila as guest speaker. However, relations between JAAC and Matjila were not always amicable. One example was the Asia Oceania Workshop organized by JAAC and held in 1988. For this significant event, JAAC invited not only ANC but also PAC representatives, which provoked dissatisfaction on Matjila's side. In turn, the speech Matjila made at the workshop made JAAC members unhappy, since Matjila argued that apartheid should be given the top priority among various discrimination issues (JAAC 1989: 179). This was problematic because, from JAAC's point of view, the foundation of international solidarity between Japanese and South African people was their common experience of human rights and discrimination problems, and therefore JAAC's presentation at the workshop dealt with issues of discrimination against *buraku* and *zainichi* people. In addition, as the crisis of the apartheid regime became clearer and the prospect of ANC seizing state power became stronger, their relations became more uncomfortable because of JAAC's natural dislike of power (Matsumoto 1995).

From what has been stated above, it could be said that the main focus of JAAC's activities was to change Japanese society which was complicit in apartheid. There were, however, some activities which directly gave assistance to liberation movements. Particularly, some JAAC members established an association to assist Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFCO) in 1984. SOMAFCO was a school located in Morogoro, Tanzania, for children of

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<sup>4</sup> Relating to this point, some interviewees suggested to me that there was a certain orientation among JAAC members to regard the liberation of South Africa as the final stage in liberating Africa. This orientation is exemplified by the fact that, in parallel to activism against apartheid South Africa, JAAC members also tackled the issue of Namibian independence.

ANC exiles. The association members raised money and donated goods such as electronic appliances, books, and sanitary pads to SOMAFSCO. The donation was made twice, but by then some members started to question whether this type of support (donation of goods) was really desirable. Eventually, after lengthy debates, they shifted their activities from donation of goods to mutual understanding and exchange (JAAC Tokyo 1988: 109-110). This episode shows the difficulty they faced in reconciling, on the one hand, the JAAC standpoint to denounce Japanese prosperity as being built on the suffering of black people in South Africa, and on the other hand, the idea of “giving aid” in which rich people (“we”) were assumed to have responsibility to help poor people (“them”). This tension was to be repeated once again when the political transition took place and the Japanese government announced its intention to give multi-billion-yen aid to South Africa - JAAC did not become a partner with the Japanese government in assisting new South Africa, but decided to go their own way and continue being a “watch dog” to monitor the Japanese government and corporations.

### 3. Mass mobilization against apartheid: Beyond the JAAC

JAAC was not the sole actor engaged in anti-apartheid activities. In fact, JAAC members were not so many; the number of members of each JAAC affiliate organization was between 5 and 25 even at their peak. However, there were local networks built between JAAC affiliate organizations and other civil society organizations, such as religious organizations, anti-discrimination/human rights organizations, anti-nuclear movements, and trade unions (Kusuhara 2010). Such networks were instrumental in organizing events, especially when the scale of events was relatively big.

Besides JAAC’s organizational activities, there were journalists and academics who publicly raised their voices against apartheid and actively wrote and published anti-apartheid articles and books in their capacity as individuals; such individuals include Masataka Ito (Asahi Newspaper), Makoto Katsumata (Professor at Meiji Gakuin University), Yoko Kitazawa (PARC / former staff member at Organization for Solidarity for the peoples of Asia and African (OSPAA) office in Cairo), Jin’ichi Matsumoto (Asahi Newspaper), Jun Morikawa (Professor at Rakuno Gakuen University), and Ruiko Yoshida (photojournalist). Katsumata named his private house “Mandela House” and made it a kind of salon for those who were involved in the anti-apartheid movement.

JAALA, which was home to the first anti-apartheid organization but became less active after Noma parted ways, once again rebuilt its anti-apartheid activities from the mid-1980s.

Particularly, JAALA was instrumental in assisting ANC to open its office in Tokyo in 1988 (JAALA raised money for this purpose, and prepared a small office for the incoming ANC representative Jerry Matjila). JAALA also invited Amandla, the musical theatre company under ANC, to Japan in 1990. Amandla gave public performances in 27 cities, and the number of audiences mobilized for their performance was as many as 70,000 (JAALA 2004: 3).

The ANC office in Tokyo also received assistance from trade union movements. Trade unions gave financial assistance to ANC for paying rent and employing Naoko Tsuyama as a local staffer. Tsuyama became the “hub” of various networks of anti-apartheid groups in Japan (not limited to JAAC) and linked them to each other and also to South African people<sup>5</sup>. In addition, the ANC Office eventually moved to Sohyo-kaikan, a building owned by a major labour federation in Japan, in 1990. Trade unions also became a sponsor to the Japanese Committee for Welcoming Mandela by letting the Committee use a room in Sohyo-kaikan as its secretariat office and by paying for staff<sup>6</sup>. Trade unions thus played an important role in offering a foundation upon which the anti-apartheid movement in Japan at its peak could organize various activities.

In terms of mass mobilization, public exhibitions and public movie showings held in many parts of Japan were very important. Besides its role to raise awareness of those who came to the events, the preparation process was also important, as the network of people who became engaged in the movement broadened through the process of making plans and preparing for the events. Among other events, the “Apartheid Non! International Art Exhibition” mobilized as many as 380,000 people as audience members during the period of 500 days from 1988 to 1990 (Apartheid Non! International Art Exhibition Working Committee 1988; Maeda 2010). This exhibition was part of a UNESCO initiative for contemporary art exhibitions with an anti-apartheid message. The art works came to Japan after exhibitions in Europe and the Americas, and inside Japan they were carried to local exhibition sites all over Japan, which numbered 194 in total, by a large trailer called “Yuria Penperu”. This was the largest mass mobilization in the history of the anti-apartheid movement in Japan, and at the same time it was quite exceptional as a contemporary art exhibition to attract such a large audience. At the centre of organizing this exhibition was Rei Maeda, who was a member of JAAC. As she could not get

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<sup>5</sup> Tsuyama would later live in South Africa for more than 10 years as representative of the South Africa Office of Japan International Volunteer Centre (JVC) and, while leading JVC projects in townships and former homelands, she became a gateway to South African society for Japanese visitors (journalists, academics, students, volunteers, and to lesser extent business people as well) to South Africa, including myself.

<sup>6</sup> Yoji Kanbayashi, who was a staff member of JAAC Tokyo, worked for the office for a few months up to Mandela’s visit to Japan in October 1990. He would later join Jichiro (a trade union mainly for municipal workers), one of the major trade unions in Japan.

JAAC's support of as an organization for organizing this event, she turned to Furamu Kitagawa for help. Kitagawa was an art director and also ran a publishing house Gendai Kikaku-shitsu, from which several books related to South Africa had been published (including a translation of Steven Biko's book, *I Write What I Like*, to which Maeda contributed as one of the translators).

#### 4. Nelson Mandela's visit to Japan in 1990

Anti-apartheid mobilization culminated in public gatherings to welcome Nelson Mandela in October 1990. After being released in February 1990, Mandela toured around the world, and visited Japan as part of his trip to Asia. It was an official visit, as he had been invited by the Japanese government, but citizens who had been engaged in anti-apartheid activities organized the Japanese Committee for Welcoming Mandela, and prepared to have public gatherings in Osaka and in Tokyo. The Welcoming Committee had two secretariat offices, one in Osaka and the other in Tokyo. In Osaka, Shimogaki, the founder of the Comrade Africa Committee, served as the secretariat, while in Tokyo, Masao Yoshida, then a researcher at the Institute of Developing Economies, became the secretariat office head and Yoji Kanbayashi from JAAC worked under him. The head of the Committee was Ichiro Kikawada (Anglican bishop, chairperson of the Anti-apartheid Kansai Contact Group), and the Committee members included members of JAAC (Yasuo Ushijima from Tokyo, Akira Jinno from Kansai area), and representatives from cooperating organizations such as the International Movement against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR), Japan Trade Union Confederation (JTUC / *Rengo*), and National Christian Council in Japan (NCC).

The cooperative relations and networks which had been built during the late 1980s enabled the Committee to embrace such a wide range of people, and to mobilize large numbers of people to public gatherings. In Osaka, as many as 28,000 people attended the public gathering to welcome Mandela. Although there had been few occasions for JAAC (and its associates) and JAALA to work together previously, the Osaka Welcoming Committee managed to have the Amandla theatre company, which was invited by JAALA and was touring Japan, on stage. In Tokyo, two public gatherings, which featured concerts by famous musicians like Bakufu Slump, Kiyoshiro Imawano, and Sadao Watanabe, attracted 7,000 people in total (Japan Committee to Welcome Mandela ed. 1992). Shimogaki recalls the number of participants exceeded his expectations because "anti-apartheid gatherings had normally attracted less than 100 people, and having several hundred people would be an incredible success (Shimogaki 2010: 312).

Mandela's visit to Japan was the climax of the Japanese anti-apartheid movement. However,

Mandela's speeches at the public gatherings were perceived as somewhat baffling, if not disappointing, by the organizers of the gatherings, because his message had a strong emphasis on his request for financial support for the ANC. Mandela addressed the Osaka public gathering, which was just after his arrival in Japan, as follows:

We are currently visiting Asian countries to raise funds for our struggle. In the three Asian countries we visited so far, we have received a wonderful response... The government of India initially gave us financial aid of 20 million rupees, and US\$5.8 million as additional aid. We next visited Indonesia, and we received US\$10 million, just the same amount we requested. Then we visited Australia, which gave us US\$15 million... We are now in the richest country in the area. We are going to meet the Japanese government and business sector to request financial aid. We believe the the Japanese government and the people in Japan would respond to our request just as the other countries we visited did. (Nelson Mandela's speech at the public gathering in Osaka, 28 October 1990, Japan Committee to Welcome Mandela 1992: 252-253)<sup>7</sup>.

However, Mandela was to be disappointed by the response from the Japanese government. By the time Mandela visited Japan, the Japanese government had already started to assist the black community in South Africa from the mid-1980s, in the form of a bursary scheme for South African black students, as well as through cooperation with the UN and EC (e.g. The Japanese government financially supported the Kagiso Trust together with other donors through an EC project). However, it was reluctant to give assistance of a political nature, and refused to give financial assistance to the ANC as requested by Mandela. In addition, just before Mandela's visit, Seiroku Kajiyama, a controversial politician who was the Minister of Justice at the time, made a racist remark about the black population in the USA but remained in his job nonetheless. Mandela's reflection on his first visit to Japan is described by Anthony Sampson as follows:

He was offended by his experience of Japan, where just before his arrival the Minister of Justice had been quoted as making a racist remark about America, where "neighborhoods go to dogs when blacks move in." Mandela was shocked that the Minister had survived, which "showed just how lukewarm Japan remained about fighting racism." He was given a standing ovation in the Japanese Parliament, but was disappointed when the Prime Minister turned down a request for \$25 million for the ANC. "The contribution made by the Japanese government," he said afterward, "is absolutely insignificant." (Sampson 1999: 413).

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<sup>7</sup> Translation from Japanese text, not the exact phrases Mandela used.

It should be noted, however, that Japan did give assistance to South African people in different forms. The Japanese government, following Mandela's visit, decided to accept trainees from South Africa and to give small grant aid (MOFA 1991), and to strengthen cooperation through international organizations, most notably UNHCR<sup>8</sup> (MOFA 1992). While Mandela could not get direct assistance from the Japanese government, the Committee to Welcome Mandela made a lot of effort to mobilize support from the Japanese public, and raised 43 million yen for the fund that were set up particularly for Mandela's visit. It also collected 1.4 million people's signatures for a petition calling for apartheid's abolishment, which was handed to the chairpersons of both Diet Houses (Committee for Welcoming Mandela, 1992: 241). Mandela expressed his gratitude at the final civil society public gathering which was held in Tokyo as follows:

The warm welcome we received from the Japanese people has given me the impression that our struggle against racial discrimination had been already won a wonderful victory... We received something more than the 25 million dollars we requested from the Japanese government. We were welcomed and given many gifts by the leaders of all political parties and the two major labor federations. We also met many religious leaders. Wherever we went, we were welcomed beyond our expectations. Therefore we can go home filled with hope, which is much stronger than when we arrived in this country. (Mandela's speech at the public gathering in Tokyo, 31 Oct 1990. Committee for Welcoming Mandela, 1992: 265).<sup>9</sup>

## 5. The end of the anti-apartheid movement and entrance into a new era

Mandela's visit to Japan in 1990 was the peak of the Japanese anti-apartheid movement, and thereafter it became less active.

This was partly because of what Prof Kusuhara labeled the "Mandela shock". Kusuhara reflects:

We felt a strong sense of discomfort about the style of the ANC, which was now promised state power in the near future. We called that feeling the "Mandela shock."  
(Kusuhara 2006)

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<sup>8</sup> At that time Japanese female academic and diplomat Sadako Ogata was the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

<sup>9</sup> Translation from Japanese text, not the exact phrases Mandela used.

According to journalist Jin'ichi Matsumoto, there were some members who left the movement in disappointment at the fact that Mandela met the representatives of the business federation Keidanren before he finally met the citizens who had long supported the anti-apartheid struggle. (Matsumoto 1995)

The decline in the level of activism might have been also partly due to the changing public perception about apartheid: the negotiation process for democratization was under way, and F.W. de Klerk, then president, announced in 1991 that all apartheid laws would be repealed, which gave the (rather mistaken) impression to the Japanese public that the problem of apartheid was over.

In fact, apartheid was still continuing (black South Africans did not have voting rights yet, and there were still homelands separated from “white” South Africa), and an anti-apartheid movement was still needed. The activities which were organized in this critical period include a series of photo exhibitions of works of South African photographer Victor Matom, which were held in various parts of Japan. In addition, quite a few people who had been active in the anti-apartheid movement traveled to South Africa for the first time in the early 1990s (previously people with anti-apartheid activity records could not get a South African visa). Their reports back in Japan, both in the form of public seminars and publications, brought new stimuli to anti-apartheid activities in this period.

Anti-apartheid activities in Japan continued until the political transition took place in South Africa. The transition in South Africa inevitably made anti-apartheid campaigners rethink the focus of their activities, which way they would go. A civil society symposium organized by the Africa Japan Forum<sup>10</sup> in October 1994 gave a unique opportunity for them to do that publicly. In response to the organizer's call for participation in the symposium “to think about how the Japanese government, business, and civil society can cooperate for the reconstruction of South Africa” (AJF 1994: 1), JAAC Tokyo members discussed their standpoint and reached the following conclusion:

Our conclusion is that we should keep our stance unchanged. As we have tried to connect

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<sup>10</sup> Africa Japan Forum (AJF) is an NGO established in 1994 following the first Tokyo International Conference on African Development. Since the first TICAD excluded civil society from its process, a group precedent to AJF held a workshop at the same time as TICAD I with guests from African civil society in an attempt to make sure the voice of civil society (in both Africa and Japan) would be reflected in Japanese development assistance towards Africa. Ever since, AJF has engaged in civil society participation in TICAD processes and facilitated dialogue among African and Japanese civil societies and the Japanese government. It also does research and advocacy particularly in the field of agriculture/ food security and global health.

and forge solidarity with grassroots people who were suffering under apartheid, our challenge is whether we could build a movement which can connect with people who continue to suffer, whose lives Japanese ODA could trample upon. Therefore we would like to keep our role as a watchdog of the Japanese government/MOFA and business corporations as the bottom line of our movement. We have seen how US\$1.3 billion “development assistance” [from the Japanese government] displaced many people’s lives in Asia. We are worried that the same thing could happen in South Africa. We are also doubtful about how Japanese corporations, which have made huge profits while supporting the apartheid regime, would transform themselves and now respect workers’ rights and so on.... We can never cooperate with the Japanese business community which has defended the apartheid regime, and has no words of regret or apology for that. (Ushijima 1994: 2-3)

The political transition in South Africa did not accompany any change on the side of the Japanese government, business community, and society in general in terms of their attitude towards and nature of relations with South Africa. Therefore JAAC could not jump onto the idea of “cooperation” with the Japanese government and business community in assisting new South Africa, and rather assumed the role of watchdog of their activities.

There was also an issue in the style of the movement, which has had the issue of Japanese complicity in apartheid as its core concern:

We have been active in the belief that resistance to discrimination and contradictions in the society where we live would constitute the first step to connecting with South African people. This way of thinking never led to the idea that we wanted to “give aid”. Our concern has been rather how we could avoid being complicit in apartheid and harming South African people. (Ushijima 1994: 2-3)

While it was decided to continue their activities in their own way, JAAC Tokyo as an organization did not last long after the demise of apartheid. It became cash-strapped because of a membership decline. Eventually it announced that it would cease publication of its newsletter due to financial reasons caused by a decrease in subscribers. This was in effect disbandment of JAAC Tokyo.

At that time, in the early 1990s, Japan was at the dawn of an “NGO era”; many new NGOs with a focus on international development were established, and the government just started to financially assist NGOs’ activities overseas. Some NGOs, including AJF that organized the



symposium about new South Africa, welcomed the government's intention of assisting NGOs, but other NGOs were more cautious due to their concern that receiving money from the government might compromise their independence and ability to criticize the government if necessary. Debates regarding the shift from being anti-apartheid to new ways of civil society engagement with South Africa were likely to have been influenced by this divided situation (Mine 1994: 218-220; Morikawa 1997: 228-232). With regards to the government-civil society relations in assisting South Africa, it should be also noted that the Japanese situation was different from the European situation, where the governments and civil society already had experience of working together since the 1980s in giving assistance to the black population in South Africa.

In short, the anti-apartheid movement in Japan had to face at the same time two transitions in the nature of government-civil society relations, one at home and the other in South Africa, which turned out to be quite difficult to deal with. However, some groups under the JAAC network managed to transform themselves to adapt to the new situation. One example is Kansai Southern African Network (KASAN), which was briefly mentioned in previous sections. The Anti-apartheid Kansai Contact Group was renamed as KASAN in 1994, and it has been continuing activities such as hosting cultural events with South African artists, holding public seminars about the history and current situation in South Africa, arranging study tours to Africa, and so on. When KASAN was established, it declared its aim and principles as follows:

We would like to continue exploring the ways in which we can live together with people who are making an effort to build a new South Africa while still suffering from the negative legacy of apartheid, keeping in mind the fact that Japan was complicit in apartheid, and the fact that we could not stop the situation... In Japan, unfortunately, there is still strong prejudice and discrimination against Africa and its people. Therefore we would like to tackle the issue of racism in Japan as our own problem from the harmonious coexistence point of view (KASAN 1994).

In addition, many new grassroots initiatives to assist people in South Africa in transition were started in the early 1990s. Of such initiatives, many ceased to exist within a few years, but there were several groups which continued their activities beyond the transition period. Such organizations which have an activities record of more than 20 years include People's Education Support Fund (PESF), Together with Asia and Africa (TAAA), and Japan International Volunteer Center (JVC). While JVC was already a relatively large NGO with a long history of activities in developing countries (mostly in Asia), PESF and TAAA started from scratch as purely grassroots groups consisting of volunteers. What was common among PESF, TAAA and

JVC was that the founders of the projects had previous engagement in anti-apartheid activism and had links with the ANC office in Tokyo. The emphasis on assisting with the education of black children was another common feature of the three initiatives, which reflected the ANC's priority at that time.

The formation of PESF in 1990 by school teachers who were supporters of ANC's activities in Japan was a direct response to a request made by the ANC to set up a scholarship scheme for black students in South Africa, which was mediated by Naoko Tsuyama, who was a staffer at the ANC office at that time. Tsuyama later joined JVC in 1992 to become the representative of the JVC Johannesburg office, and started to work with various local CBOs in their effort to improve people's lives using local resources. TAAA, founded by volunteers at the ANC Office in Tokyo, started to send English books they collected in Japan to South Africa, following their meeting with Younis Komane<sup>11</sup> who was visiting Japan in 1992, and told them about her literacy project she was running in Kimberly, which was in need of more English textbooks.

Although JAAC as an organization distinguished itself from developmental NGOs and did not set out its own projects, a number of former JAAC members became the first and long-term supporters of these new initiatives on a personal basis. PESF decided to stop their activities recently, but JVC and TAAA are still in operation in South Africa, with an expanded scope of activities including about the issues of HIV/AIDS and agriculture/ food security.

## Conclusion

This Paper has outlined the history of the anti-apartheid movement in Japan from the 1960s to 1990s.

The paper described the stream of the anti-apartheid movement as beginning from Noma's discussion group to develop into the JAAC network, which had a strong identity as a "*shimin undou*" that kept its distance from any particular political party or organization. Although JAAC had cooperative relationships with the ANC and other liberation movements, it focused more on transforming Japanese society which was complicit in apartheid, by organizing protests and raising awareness among the Japanese public through publications, seminars, movie shows, and so on.

JAAC was different from JAALA, whose focus was to directly assist the ANC. JAALA's

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<sup>11</sup> The name's original spelling is uncertain because it was translated from Japanese text.

assistance was critical for the ANC to open and maintain its Tokyo office in the late 1980s, which was acknowledged officially by the post-apartheid ANC government in 2012 in the form of awarding the Order of the Companions of O.R. Tambo to Toshio Akiniwa, long-standing member and Executive Director of JAALA. JAAC's activities have been less known in South Africa, however. Although it is far from being a comprehensive description of the entire movement, this paper is an attempt to fill the gap in information.

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