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The Struggle In South Africa

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By Kenneth D. Kaunda

The United States is founded on lofty ideals. Your founding fathers declared in their wisdom that certain truths were self-evident; that all men were created equal; and that they were endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which were life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Very pointedly, they made the important observation that to ensure that these rights were not violated, "Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

These are lofty ideals indeed. But ideals have been seen to be easier to declare than to put into practice. No sooner had these ideals been declared than racists began to twist the meaning of these ideals to serve their prejudiced and privileged positions. Thus, as Abraham Lincoln observed, the issue of equality of all men was qualified by the racists to mean, in practice, that all men (were) created equal except Negroes.

The fight for equality, freedom and liberty will always be there until justice for all prevails.

While discrimination on the basis of color is becoming a thing of the past in the United States, it is becoming more viciously entrenched in South Africa. The ideology and practice of apartheid by the racist regime of South Africa is aimed at denying the Black man his fundamental rights in the country of his birth for no reason other than that he is Black.

In fighting for liberty, equality and other basic human rights, the Black people of South Africa are being met with intensified repression and brutal violence. The killings and mass arrests of protestors against apartheid, even children, occur almost daily in South Africa. Black people are denied freedom of movement. They cannot legally exercise their



political rights. They suffer discrimination in employment and cannot live in places of their own choice.

The apartheid regime of South Africa is morally bankrupt in its philosophy and practices. It certainly does not derive its power from the majority of the governed. Meanwhile, the untold atrocities being committed against the Black people are being concealed from the international community by the imposition of a draconian state of emergency and suffocating press censorship.

In the face of such a situation, therefore, the international community should not stand by and watch without showing a deep sense of moral outrage and taking positive action to end the politically and morally obnoxious apartheid system.

What is happening in South Africa is not only evil but also a crime against humanity. Given political will, the United States, as the strongest power in the Western world, can do much to force the apartheid regime to abandon its racist policies and practices.

The United States, Great Britain, West Germany and France have huge investments in South Africa. The wealth which these investments have created is the economic backbone which bolsters the

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racist apartheid regime. These powerful countries have thus very strong political, economic, and moral leverage which can be used to force South Africa to abandon apartheid.

The most effective way of using this leverage is to withdraw the economic support they give to the racist regime through the application of comprehensive and mandatory economic sanctions against South Africa. The argument that the application of comprehensive and mandatory economic sanctions will hurt Black people is neither true nor convincing, because the Black people in South Africa are already suffering in the extreme.

No price is too high to pay for freedom. In this regard, the Black people of South Africa are prepared to suffer any consequences, including death, to rid themselves of the scourge of apartheid. Lest it be forgotten, protagonists of slavery in the United States, in answering abolitionists, advanced the argument that emancipation would hurt the slaves.

The Black people of South Africa have been patient, but their patience is fast running out. The consequence of this will be bloody mass violence which will engulf the whole of the southern African region. Indeed, a civil war in South Africa will, I am afraid, seriously affect international relations between Africa and the Western world.

The United States has vast influence and power. It must have the courage to

give moral leadership by doing what is right about apartheid. As Martin Luther King, Jr., said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Indeed, injustice in South Africa is a definite threat to peace not only in southern Africa, but also in the world as a whole.

Howard University can play its part in helping get rid of apartheid in South Africa. It has long experience in the fight against prejudice and racism. Indeed, a practical search for freedom and equality has been part of Howard's experience over the 120 years of its existence.

Big multinational corporations and even some American universities have invested heavily in South Africa. These investors can help end apartheid by disinvesting from that country. In this regard, Howard can do much in using its influence to persuade other universities to disinvest.

Some universities and some corporations have already disinvested, or, are in the process of doing so. This is a very welcome contribution to the solution of the South African problem.

Howard is an educational institution. Therefore, one of its important missions on the international scene must be to tirelessly educate the American public on the reality of the African situation.

Indeed, Howard's long established African studies program which, *inter alia*, provides courses in a number of African languages, clearly shows the seriousness Howard attaches to the aspirations and culture of Africa. Its professors and scholars are, thus, well placed to show to the American people the true nature of the African continent.

This is important. We are often dismayed by the misreporting and outright distortion of African affairs by some journalists and scholars from the United States. This is a very serious state of affairs, especially in that decisions by policy makers on Africa are often based on these distorted views. But if scholars and

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journalists are to write dispassionately, and with a proper sympathetic understanding, it is important that visiting professorship and other exchange programs with African universities be encouraged.

If this is done on a large scale, the possibility is that political relations will be less frequently based on lack of knowledge and confidence. Howard University is not new to Zambia. In fact, a good number of its graduates are serving our country in key positions. This is a clear indication of the contribution of Howard to our development effort, for which Zambia is most appreciative. As chancellor of my country's two universities, I wish to urge the establishment of an effective exchange program of students between our respective universities.

Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Howard for conferring on me the degree of doctor of laws honoris causa. It is an honor I shall always treasure because I take this to be an honor not only to me but, more importantly, to the people of Zambia.

I also would like to share this honor with the peoples of Africa whose organization, the Organization of African Unity, I am currently privileged to lead for the second time. □

The above was excerpted from Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda's address at a special convocation at Howard University last October.