

“Very Fertile Ground”
U.S. Anti-Apartheid Activism and Civil Rights Memory

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On Saturday, May 26, 1973, over eighty thousand people gathered in cities across the United States in observance of the second annual African Liberation Day (ALD).¹ Demonstrators gathered to celebrate the “bonds of unity” with their African brothers and sisters in their anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggles. The crowds that gathered for this transnational event in 1973 reflected an ongoing commitment to black grassroots organizing against institutional racism years after the legislative victories of the civil rights movement.² According to one organizer in Oakland, the day’s events were successful not because of the nearly twelve thousand who turned out in just Oakland, but because of the “tremendous number of people who organized and publicized it.”³ Despite the impressive attendance numbers, ALD organizers wondered how to continue connecting the liberation struggles in Africa with the ongoing domestic struggles of black Americans. The post-segregation gains for black Americans had receded as national economic woes worsened throughout the 1970s and funding for community programs in urban areas evaporated. The gains in black electoral power faltered as competing interests from other

¹ For of the development of African Liberation Day see William W. Sales, Jr. *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation: Malcolm X and the Organization of Afro-America Unity*, (Cambridge: South End Press, 1999); Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting ‘Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2007).

² An additional twenty thousand gathered in cities in Canada and the Caribbean. The day’s theme was entitled “There is No Peace With Honor ---African People Are At War.”

³ Gregg Simms, “African Liberation Day Is a Success,” *Jet*, June 1973

minority groups, throughout the 1970s, caused black political capital to decline. In Atlanta, ALD organizer Rukudzo Mrapa was adamant that the liberation struggles within Africa were connected to the continued struggle for black American economic, political, and cultural power. Mrapa claimed, “Our struggle is one. We cannot afford to see *this* struggle fail. We must not allow this struggle to end on a stage of romanticism.”⁴

The 1973 African Liberation Day should have been the culmination of nearly four decades of liberation and anti-apartheid consciousness-raising in the United States. Hard-won domestic civil rights battles secured the passage of the Civil Rights legislation in the 1960s and exposed institutional racism as illegitimate. But U.S. anti-apartheid activists failed to muster popular support despite decades of similar mobilizing efforts against American foreign and economic policies toward South Africa. Coalitions of trade unionists, churches, and other civic groups organized conferences, economic and cultural boycotts, and raised funds for South African activists and their families. National groups like the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) advocated on behalf U.S. divestment, which meant the complete withdrawal of all financial investments from companies doing business within South Africa. U.S. based anti-apartheid activism persisted for nearly four decades with no substantive change in American foreign or economic policy toward South Africa.

Prior to the 1980s, the lack of popular support toward U.S. based anti-apartheid movement was a result of ongoing media misrepresentation of black liberation ideologies in the United States. Popular media coverage, especially throughout the 1970s, featured internal conflicts within liberation groups that framed the organizations as a dangerous radical fringe within the United States. Popular opinion did not shift in favor of U.S. based anti-apartheid activism until the mid-1980s when activists curtailed their radical liberation rhetoric and instead

⁴ “Over 100,000 Observe African Liberation Day,” *Chicago Metro News*, June 9, 1973.

exploited selective popular memories of the domestic black freedom struggle for public consumption. A national amnesia regarding a romanticized civil rights movement soon developed which rejected the contributions of the more radical streams within the domestic black freedom struggle. My presentation examines the role the U.S. anti-apartheid movement and popular media played in the development of a sanitized national civil rights memory.

The greatest challenge that confronted later waves of U.S. based anti-apartheid campaigns was avoiding the media backlash that befell the beleaguered domestic protestors of the late 1960s. Anti-war activists and black radicals became increasingly identified with a fanatical fringe or deigned ineffectual throughout much of the 1970s. Organizing mass demonstrations in the 1970s required finesse or be dismissed as threat to American security. Connecting the liberation struggle within South Africa to the domestic civil rights past was imperative in gaining national support to effect U.S. policy changes. Sanitizing the image of the black freedom struggle meant downplaying radical economic ideologies that dominated earlier liberation discourse and turning the focus on a morally unambiguous message of anti-racism. Symbolic protests romanticized the civil rights movement and reinforced an emerging national amnesia concerning the radical streams that existed within the civil rights movement; those same radical streams that advanced black economic development, cultural pride, and electoral power in black communities across the United States throughout the late 1960s and 1970s. Supporting U.S. based anti-apartheid activists was the emergence of new advances in broadcast news coverage and film distribution which increased the occasions for American audiences to encounter the movement's "moral appeal," concerning black South Africans.

The African Liberation Day Celebrations were among the largest black-led mass demonstrations in the post-civil rights era. By 1977, the organizing body of the African

Liberation Day had changed its name to the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC). The event drew tens of thousands of demonstrators that poured into the streets of D.C. and denounced “imperialist superpowers” and their control over the African continent. On the same day, a cadre of coalition supporters converged on Lafayette Park to participate in ALD activities and support black majority rule in Africa. Unfortunately, previous internal conflicts over ideological control of the ALSC resulted in splinter groups. On this particular day the ALSC was in conflict with All Africa’s People Revolutionary Party (AAPRP), led by activist Kwame Touré (Stokely Carmichael). Toure was a polarizing figure within the popular media as a result of conservative attacks against his radical Black Nationalist ideologies. Media coverage of the events indicated that ALSC organizers were wary of Touré’s group and encouraged passersby to attend that ALSC march. They depicted Touré’s group as more concerned about “sending blacks back to Africa” rather than the black struggles in both Africa and the United States. One article acknowledged that all groups at the event were “outgrowths of the 1960s civil rights movement,” but still the reporting focused on the internal tensions between the groups rather than on the broader message of liberation for the world-wide black community.

Spokesmen for the groups present at the day’s events argued that “black left-winged organization[s]” like the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Black Panthers (both groups that Touré once helmed), and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) were relics of the past and “better forgotten in the late ‘70s.”⁵ While this statement was meant to highlight a new direction of liberation activism, the article omitted any background concerning the liberation struggles occurring in Africa or the connections that these activists were making to the ongoing struggle within American black

⁵ Cynthia Gorney and Juan Williams, “A Great Day for Rallies: D.C. Parks, Streets Alive with Marchers, Banners, *The Washington Post*, May 29, 1977.

communities. The article implied that the various movements that converged that day were a cacophony of song, drug use, and entertainment. Participant Lydia Green of southeast Washington, D.C. stated that while she was interested in politics, she was more inclined to enjoy the music at the day's event and noted, "I'm here for fun." The article suggested that those participating in the African Liberation Day should not be taken seriously and that included the organizers.⁶

The sentiment on network broadcasts toward liberation demonstrations revealed a subtle denouncement of the demonstrators, including those engaged in the Soweto uprising of 1976. A new generation of black South African students, raised on the activist struggles within South Africa, defied an older generation of leaders and took to the streets in mass demonstrations against the forced usage of Afrikaans language within their schools. Police in Soweto attacked student protestors with teargas bullets and when this tactic failed to disperse the crowd, they opened fire. After nearly a month of protests the official report noted fifty eights dead and nearly eight hundred wounded; but the residents of Soweto argued the numbers were grossly underestimated. *NBC Nightly News* stated youths were "on a rampage" throughout the township and featured footage of black youths throwing stones, bricks, and bottles at the police. The media offered additional footage of black South Africans vandalizing schools, beer halls, and community centers, without placing them in context. Protestors targeted these locations as sites of apartheid's social and economic repression. One particular wide shot of Soweto during the same *NBC Nightly News* broadcast featured the township on fire. The footage was twenty five

⁶ Ibid. While few national papers covered ALD events *The Washington Post* provided minimal coverage even when ALD events in Washington, D.C. routinely drew tens of thousands of people. The black press remained committed and alerted folks to the campaigns the ALD organizers developed as well as ways to get involved. See "African Liberation Committee Seek Aid," *Wichita Times*, May 3, 1973; Milton Coleman, "New Thrust Aims to Halt Imports to Rhodesia," *Chicago Metro News*, July 28, 1973; Carl Turpin, "Which Way for the Liberation Struggle?" *Wichita Times*, May 29, 1975.

seconds of billowing clouds of black smoke without narration, an extraordinary length of time for a twenty five minute broadcast. This broadcast focused on the scale of destruction the “youths on a rampage” caused rather than the conditions that drove these young people into action.⁷

On June 22, 1976, Howard K. Smith, co-anchor on *ABC's World News*, offered a scathing commentary regarding “black rioters” in Soweto. Smith attempted to sympathize with the white minority of South Africa and denounced the “dangerous communist involvement” around Soweto that had obviously influenced the actions of the “black rioters.” He challenged black South Africans that demanded back the land the Afrikaners had settled a century earlier. After all, Smith continued, the land in dispute was not taken from anybody since much of the land that the Afrikaner descendants settled was “empty.” Black South Africans, according to Smith, disrespected the “highly successful economy” of the white minority in favor of an economy under an unproven “black rule.” He concluded his one minute and forty second commentary by cautioning against the potential of black rule as it was “apt to be vengeful and destructive.”⁸ Smith and other reporters repeatedly referred to the demonstrations and protests within South Africa as “riots” and in one instance stated the residents of Soweto were engaged in “massive anti-white rioting.”⁹ Smith’s assessment was appropriate, considering that the media’s coverage of the U.S. “race riots” were routinely mediated around images of destruction and violence rather than the underlying causes for protest against the symbols of institutional racism in urban centers.¹⁰

⁷ *NBC Nightly News*, June 18, 1976. (Vanderbilt Television News Archive) (Accessed 12 March 2009).

⁸ *ABC World News*, June 22, 1976. (Vanderbilt University Television News Archive) (Accessed 12 March 2009).

⁹ *NBC Nightly News*, June 17, 1976. (Vanderbilt University Television News Archive) (Accessed 12 March 2009).

¹⁰ For additional examples network broadcasts that used the phrase “black rioting” see: *ABC World News Tonight*, June 18, 1976; *NBC Nightly News*, June 16, 1976; *CBS Evening News*, June 21, 1976 (Vanderbilt

Conservative William F. Buckley, Jr. used his forum, *The National Review*, to criticize the lack of media attention concerning the “black-on-black” violence that resulted from the Soweto riots. While papers around the world featured Sam Nzima’s photograph of Hector Pieterse, a twelve-year-old dying in the arms of his classmate, Buckley wondered where were the images or stories of the black woman who had wielded a stick to ward off rioters accusing Soweto residents of supporting whites. Buckley openly criticized the United Nations’ denouncement of South Africa’s use of force to end the rioting in Soweto. The Watts rioters were ultimately suppressed, Buckley continued, through a use of force. But as he suggested, to criticize the South African government for using “force” to break up lawless rioters was ridiculous.¹¹ Despite the television networks’ framing of violence and death in Soweto as the result of “black rage,” the uprising reinvigorated campus and U.S. based anti-apartheid groups and inspired new coalitions. On June 26, 1976 almost two weeks after the students began their demonstrations in Soweto, *ABC World News* showed twenty seconds of footage of black anti-apartheid activists demonstrating in front of the South African Embassy located in Washington, D.C. They carried picket signs and raised their fist in defiance of the racialized violence and apartheid system.¹² No other networks featured those Embassy protestors or their demonstration.

The network broadcasts of the black South African struggle were limited in the early days due to technological limitations. Film shot in remote locations on fragile film stock required facilities for processing. Film stock, once processed was shipped to a studio for editing then broadcast. International events quickly became out of date as was a problem with footage shot

University Television News Archive)(Accessed 12 March 2009).; See also “Black Rage,” *Newsweek*, August 23, 1976; Richard Steele with Peter Youngusband, “Death to the White,” *Newsweek* August 23, 1976.

¹¹ William F. Buckley, Jr., “A Lesson From South Africa,” *The National Review*, July 23, 1976, 28 Issue 27: 802-803.

¹² *ABC World News*, June 26, 1976. (Vanderbilt University Television News Archive.) (Accessed 12 March 2009).

during the Vietnam War. This time consuming process did not change until the advent of videotape and the use of satellite technology in the 1970s. First-hand accounts of daily life from South Africa were nearly non-existent because none of the “Big Three” networks ABC, CBS nor NBC had correspondents in South Africa prior to 1976. Between October 1968 and December 1975 there were 119 network segments on South Africa.¹³ The largest percentage of coverage centered on the white minority’s control over the government of South Africa despite the liberation struggles raging in Angola and Rhodesia. One startling omission was the absence of any coverage of U.S. anti-apartheid led activism which suggested that the movement was not large enough to garner national network coverage despite evidence to the contrary. Network coverage of South African affairs increased after the Soweto Uprising. Six months after the Soweto Uprising in June 1976 there were 171 network segments on “South Africa;” a dramatic increase from the 38 times 1975.¹⁴ In 1977, “South Africa” was mentioned 277 times in national nightly news broadcast segments of ten seconds or longer; by 1982, “South Africa” was only mentioned twenty five times.¹⁵ Economic protests and symbolic gestures of solidarity by U.S. based anti-apartheid activists throughout the 1970s followed similar direct action models of the civil rights movement but what jeopardized their momentum during the 1970s were news stories regarding acts of sabotage “terrorism” coming out of South Africa.

¹³ Individual segments regarding South Africa on the network nightly news programs are available at the Vanderbilt Television News Archives. The archive’s complete coverage of ever network nightly news broadcasts begins in October 1968. Vanderbilt University.

¹⁴ Search of network broadcasts regarding “South Africa” yielded 290 segments in 1977 (Vanderbilt Television News Archive) (Accessed March 11, 2009).

¹⁵ Content analysis data compiled at the Vanderbilt Television News Archive. (Access 11 March 2009).

The growing conservative tenor of the United States during the late 1970s rendered the civil disobedience strategies used by U.S. based anti-apartheid activists as ineffectual.¹⁶ Cold War conservatism viewed the antics of liberation groups in support of majority rule as radicalism beyond the scope of serious reflection. Earlier economic campaigns against U.S. investment in South Africa had not brought about full sanctions toward South Africa or forced their government to concede that the end of apartheid was imminent. The U.S. government continued to oblige the South African government's requests for military equipment, scientific and technological information, and heavy equipment for manufacturing. Of greater concern to the new Reagan administration of the early 1980s were the Communist Cuban troops in Angola. "Constructive Engagement," according to President Reagan, was necessary for moderating apartheid through diplomacy and securing assistance from South Africa regarding regional conflicts.¹⁷ Despite localized coverage of U.S. based anti-apartheid demonstrations and television news coverage of the increased violence within South Africa, the movement was still unable to effect policy changes. However, by the mid-1980s, one campaign would take the U.S. based anti-apartheid movement from a local to national story.

On Wednesday, November 21, 1984, activists departed from the offices of the foreign policy lobbying organization TransAfrica in Washington, D.C., and headed over to the South African Embassy for an appointment with that country's Ambassador. The four activists, Congressman Walter Fauntroy (D-DC), Georgetown law professor Eleanor Holmes Norton, U.S. Civil Rights Commissioner Mary Frances Berry, and Executive Director of TransAfrica Randall Robinson were arrested later that day for trespassing at the embassy. They refused to leave the

¹⁶ For additional insights into how the media and activists contribute to the framing of individuals and movement identities see Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*, (Berkeley: University of California Press. 2003).

¹⁷ Pach, 83-84.

Ambassador's offices after demanding the release of recently imprisoned trade unionists in South Africa and the end of apartheid. The four activists had intended to be arrested, having alerted the media to their plans prior to their arrival at the Embassy. When the police removed the four from the premises, the media were stationed outside to document the event. The arrests made headlines and led nightly news broadcasts during an otherwise slow news period as a result of the Thanksgiving holiday. Following the arrests, the phones at the TransAfrica offices rang nonstop. Hundreds of volunteers, inspired by the activists, called TransAfrica to lend their support. These events marked the birth of the Free South Africa Movement (FSAM) and resulted in a yearlong demonstration in front of the South African Embassy.

The press took notice when celebrities participated in the demonstration outside of the Embassy, but even more so when a distinguished figure such as seventy-one-year-old Rosa Parks appeared in the picket line on a cold December morning.¹⁸ Parks arrived at the South African Embassy to lend her considerable historical weight to the FSAM campaign and stated, "I am grateful to be here today lending my support."¹⁹ Her presence was coordinated to "shame U.S. policy makers as well as the nation" into action against the apartheid government of South Africa. According to FSAM members, it was the "path of celebrity arrests" that gave regular people the courage to risk arrest as well.²⁰ The appearance of Parks along with the thousands of activists that participated in the year-long demonstration outside the Embassy conjured up imagery reminiscent of the civil rights past and helped connect the two movements in the public

¹⁸ On December 6, 1984 *NBC Nightly News* reported on the arrests of Mrs. Jesse Jackson, Senator Gary Hart, Douglass and Rory Kennedy (children of the late Robert Kennedy). February 12th, 1985 *The Washington Post* reported on the arrest of famed musician Stevie Wonder; January 9, 1986 *USA Today* reported that famed folk singers Peter, Paul, and Mary had been arrested.

¹⁹ Karlyn Barker, "Rosa Parks, New Groups Join Protest," *The Washington Post*, December 11 1984.

²⁰ FSAM coordinators manned phones for weeks scheduling protestors who agreed to be arrested. Celebrity activists who also agreed to demonstrate and get arrested included Arthur Ashe, Harry Belafonte, Paul Newman, Tony Randall, and Amy Carter (daughter of former President Jimmy Carter.). *Have Your Heard From Johannesburg. Apartheid and the Club of the West*, directed by Connie Fields, (2006: Berkeley, CA: California Newsreel, 2006), DVD.

eye. Newspapers and news weeklies quickly spread the story of FSAM activism under headlines such as “1960s Tactics Were Revived for Embassy Sit-Ins.”²¹ According to the *New York Times*, the FSAM campaign was the heir apparent to the civil rights movement as “Apartheid Protest Takes Page from 60s’ History.”²² *Newsweek* was more cautious with their article “A Movement Reborn?” Unfortunately, in making these comments the press and some prominent activists who participated in the anti-apartheid demonstration discounted nearly four decades of previous consciousness-raising and direct action campaigns in which U.S. based anti-apartheid organizations and individual activists had engaged in. This oversight was evident when Coretta Scott King, widow of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., remarked, “My feeling is that there are many people who feel the need to do something about the conditions in South Africa, but there has been no organized efforts on a large scale. I think this is the beginning of that organization.”²³

Scholars of U.S. based anti-apartheid activism agree that the FSAM Embassy demonstrations reinvigorated the movement and encouraged new activism across the country. However what is omitted from the current literature concerning the Embassy demonstration is why *this* particular act of civil disobedience at the South African Embassy captured national attention. This Embassy demonstration was far from the first civil disobedience campaign, nor was it the largest. Over four decades of anti-apartheid marches, sit-ins, teach-ins, picket-lines, demonstrations, and boycotts had occurred around the nation. And successful divestments from universities and corporations were gaining momentum. But unlike previous campaigns, the FSAM was created with the intent to resurrect the symbolism of the civil rights movement, a movement revered for its unambiguous morality and charismatic leadership. The FSAM

²¹ Karlyn Barker and Michel Marriot, “1960s Tactics Revived for Embassy Sit-In,” *The Washington Post*, November 29, 1984; Barbara Gamarekian, “Apartheid Protest Takes Page from 60s History,” *The New York Times*, November 30, 1984; “The Civil Rights Movement’s Children,” United Press International, December 31, 1984.

²² “Apartheid Protest Takes Page from 60s History,” *The New York Times*, November 30, 1984.

²³ “A Movement Reborn?” *The Washington Post*, December 1984.

campaign harkened back to the days when the black church inspired grassroots activism and religious leaders led a moral crusade against racial injustice. Ironically, the FSAM was not organized by ministers, nor was it headquartered in a church. The FSAM was created in the offices of TransAfrica, a “foreign policy advocacy organization” with the mission of educating both the public and policy-makers about the prevailing social, economic, and political injustices throughout Africa and the Caribbean.

Organizers at TransAfrica decided to turn toward a series of symbolic acts of civil disobedience to garner public support. Symbolic arrests were carefully orchestrated to keep the media spotlight on the “power of moral appeal”; the FSAM wanted the public to link their anti-apartheid activism with that of the historic civil rights movement. After years of “looking for lightning to strike,” as the *Washington Post* described it, “the right issue at the right time to revive the moribund civil rights movement” had finally hit.²⁴ The shift away from “lobbying and shaping legislation” toward direct action was necessary, as Robison explained, “the circumstances in South Africa and the support of this country have demonstrated that a direct action is necessary,” and that it was up to activists to “cultivate an American understanding and sympathy for those who suffer much in South Africa.” Robison continued by stating that black leadership at the time had “reached a point where it is willing to return to those measures that produced results in the past.”²⁵ Robison and FSAM members targeted the popular memory of the civil rights movement and the results that the previous direct action campaigns produced. Protestors peacefully picketed the Embassy, engaged in sit-ins, and marched together as they sang freedom songs that captured the nostalgia of the civil rights movement.

²⁴ Juan Williams, “Black Leaders Find a Hot New Issue: ‘Free South Africa’ Protests Revive a Moribund Movement,” *The Washington Post*, December 12, 1984.

²⁵ Courtland Milloy, “Black Form ‘Free S. Africa Movement,’” *The Washington Post*, November 24, 1984.

The presence of civil rights celebrities like Coretta Scott King and Rosa Parks, who joined the ranks of protestors in front of the South African Embassy in Washington, D.C., imparted a historic legitimacy to the FSAM and helped inspire everyday citizens to get arrested.²⁶ Though four thousand demonstrators were arrested in Washington, D.C., there was not a single incident of police harassment or brutality reported. Instead, “the police were helping the hundreds of demonstrators orchestrate their sit in...,” and eventually all charges were dropped.²⁷ This was light years away from the conditions that faced civil rights protestors in places like Birmingham, Augusta, and Jackson in the early 1960s or in Washington D.C. in 1968 after Dr. King’s assassination. Upholding a conservative interpretation of the domestic black freedom struggle reinforced a popular memory concerning the civil rights movement that delegitimized the achievements and tactics of the radical liberation philosophies that also inspired the activists within the civil rights movement.

Two years after the FSAM took to the sidewalks, policy changes occurred on Capitol Hill. The U.S. Congress successfully overturned, for the first time, a Reagan veto concerning a Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, which implemented full sanctions against South Africa. Sustained activism had finally secured enough national support to demand significant policy change. After this victory, anti-apartheid networks turned their sites on the symbol of resistance, the charismatic leader, Nelson Mandela. His freedom, it was perceived, would be the end of apartheid. Staging “Free Mandela” and anti-apartheid demonstrations around the anniversaries of U.S. civil rights victories further linked these two movements together. The U.S. anti-apartheid movement, through their symbolic protest tactics, reinforced a national civil rights narrative based upon a conservative anti-racist, morally unambiguous message. These activist assisted in

²⁶ Interview with Cecelie Counts in *Have You Heard From Johannesburg. Episode: Apartheid and the Club of the West.*

²⁷ Ibid.

the creation of a popular civil rights memory devoid of a radical rhetoric that had once inspired civil rights and liberation advocates alike, including figures like Randall Robinson of TransAfrica and Nelson Mandela. Nor was the popular memory of the civil rights movement encouraged to question the inherent economic structural problems that remained after the symbolic victories had been achieved.

Network television coverage on South Africa began to wane in the years after the passage of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986. Network coverage on South African issues in 1987 was reduced to half that of 1986 and much of the coverage centered on the internal sabotage campaign and often describing the acts as “terrorism.” Public access television was able to step in with special programming to combat the decline of network coverage. The award winning *Frontline* series dedicated five hour long episodes to the issue of apartheid in December 1987. Perhaps the most ambitious broadcast spotlighting issues in South Africa for U.S. audiences was the development of *South Africa Now*. The short lived program ran from 1988-1991 and was dedicated to keeping attention on South Africa in the wake of decreased network coverage after 1986. Millions of Americans acknowledged the immorality of investing in the apartheid state but failed to comprehend the internal struggle that continued in South Africa in the late 1980s. The show, according to producer Danny Schechter, became “as much about TV news and what it doesn’t cover as the struggle for freedom in South Africa.”²⁸ In the end, public access became the last front for the front-line states’ television coverage in the United States. The fact that *South Africa Now* was canceled in 1991, after Nelson Mandela was released from prison, reflected a popular lack of understanding or attention to the ongoing struggle within South Africa. The years 1990 through 1994 were among the most violent in South African

²⁸ Danny Schechter. *The More You Watch the Less You Know. News Wars [sub] Merged Hopes Media Adventures*. Forwards by Jackson Browne and Robert W. McChesney. New York: Seven Stories Press. 1999, 238-243.

history. Unfortunately comprehensive coverage regarding South Africa ended suggesting, for American audiences at least, that the movement was over.

By 1994, the year of the first democratic elections in South Africa, television had brought the South African struggle for freedom into living rooms across America for over twenty-five years. Nine apartheid-era films had been released theatrically between 1987 and 1995, which equated to roughly one film per year. A politically-charged protest album raised a little over one million dollars for educational initiatives in South Africa. The Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 had passed, which finally resulted in U.S. economic sanctions against South Africa. And Mandela's release from prison meant the return of a heroic figure to the people of South Africa. Unfortunately, movement fatigued moved in at the same time politically motivated killings increased in South Africa and revered movement figures, like Winnie Mandela, were being accused of despicable crimes. Broadcast coverage of South Africa continued to decline as black on black violence in South Africa was replaced with the mediated images of U.S. domestic racial conflict. The social and economic decline in America's black communities in the years that followed the zenith of the civil rights movement, also known as the "Second Reconstruction," revealed the entrenched institutional barriers that prevented black economic advancement. The popular legacies of the civil rights movement, which had inspired thousands of activists (old and new) to protest on behalf of sanctions and embargos against South Africa, had more to impart to the anti-apartheid movement than just a legacy of triumphalism.