

ADOPTED September 25, 1976

THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN MANIFESTO ON SOUTHERN AFRICA

There comes a moment in the affairs of humankind when honor requires an unequivocal affirmation of a people's right to freedom with dignity and peace with justice.

This is such a moment. The intransigence of white settlers in Zimbabwe and Namibia and the bloody repression of Blacks in South Africa have created explosive environments which threaten world peace and raise the spectre of an internationalized anti-colonial war which could have an ominous impact on race relations in America and abroad.

Inaction in face of such a threat is betrayal of our future -- betrayal of humanity, betrayal of the long line of black men and women who have given their lives in the struggle for freedom.

Conscious of our duty to speak, and recognizing our responsibilities to humanity and to the revolutionary ideals of our forebears, we, the descendants of Africa, meeting in Washington, D.C., on this 200th anniversary of the first modern war for independence, proclaim our unswerving commitment to immediate self-determination and majority rule in Southern Africa.

We do this because we are African-Americans, and because we know that the destiny of Blacks in America and Blacks in Africa is inextricably intertwined, since racism and other forms of oppression respect no territories or boundaries.

We do this because we are African-Americans and because we have a mandate from our revolutionary predecessors: from Crispus Attucks to W.E.B. Du Bois, from Dinizulu to Amilcar Cabral, from Martin Luther King to Malcolm X, from Nkrumah to Lumumba, from Nat Turner to Whitney Young,

from Sojourner Truth to Mary McLeod Bethune, to proclaim the truth of the Revolution of 1776, which is also the truth of the Revolution of 1976 in Southern Africa.

In this spirit and with this understanding, we contend that it is mandatory for all Americans, and especially Americans of African descent, to understand the root causes of strife in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa.

The first root causes are despotism and racism that serve to polarize the white government and the African majority.

Nevertheless, African leaders clearly stated in the Lusaka Manifesto of 1969:

We are not hostile to the administrations of these minority ruled states because they are manned and controlled by white people. We are hostile to them because they are systems of minority control which exist as a result of, and in pursuance of, doctrines of human inequality.

Europeans, who are interlopers on the African continent, can no longer, as a minority group in Southern Africa, arrogate to themselves with impunity the right to:

- Deny universal franchise and African majority rule.
- Decide who shall control the nations' arable land and productive resources.
- Deprive Africans of fundamental civil rights and civil liberties, such as: freedom of assembly, freedom of political and family association, freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of education, freedom to petition the government for redress of grievances, freedom against unreasonable searches and seizures, and the right to bear arms.
- Arbitrarily kill and imprison Africans and their allies who peacefully protest the condition of oppression.

The second root cause is the continuing violence by the Europeans to sustain institutions of racism and exploitation.

The people of Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa, and the independent African states acting in their behalf, have tried for more than half a century through petitions, representations, negotiations, peaceful demonstrations, appearances before the United Nations and through appeals to international tribunals to achieve self-determination through majority rule. The 1969 Lusaka Manifesto spelled out the preference for peaceful change in unambiguous terms.

We have always preferred, and we still prefer, to achieve it [liberation] without physical violence. We would prefer to negotiate rather than destroy, to talk rather than kill. We do not advocate violence. We advocate an end to the violence against human dignity which is now being perpetrated by the oppressors of Africa... But while peaceful progress is blocked by actions of those at present in power in the states of Southern Africa, we have no choice but to give the peoples of those territories all the support of which we are capable in their struggle against their oppressors.

It is with a sense of historical justice that Americans should recall their own revolution against tyranny and the passage of the Declaration of Independence which states:

But when a long train of abuses and usurpations pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them [the governed] under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty to throw off such government and to provide new guards for their future security.

It is a matter of fact and history that these peaceful efforts have never received the full support of western powers. Multinational corporations and industrialized nations, headed by the United States

and including Great Britain, France, Germany, Israel and Japan, which collectively account for over 60% of all trade with South Africa, reinforced the white minority ruled regimes through expanded investments, violation of economic sanctions and arms embargoes, and by sales of military related equipment and nuclear technology to South Africa. It was only after the failure of these peaceful initiatives and the breakdown of the Ian Smith-Joshua Nkomo negotiations in Zimbabwe last March, that African leaders decided they had no other recourse but to escalate the armed struggle.

In return for their forbearance, Africans have been forcibly removed from their land, subjected to constant harrassment and arbitrary arrest through the system of pass laws prohibiting free movement within their own country, cut down in "hot pursuit" raids launched from South Africa and Rhodesia, tortured and murdered by a brutal white police and security establishment and forced to endure a slow death through deprivation.

We express solidarity with Africans protesting racism and oppression in the streets of Soweto, Port Elizabeth, Capetown, Johannesburg and elsewhere. Our experience in the United States has indicated that progress is possible only when whites begin to share the suffering. We are proud that we have exported black consciousness and revolutionary ideals, for we know that Blacks in America cannot overcome until all African people are free in Soweto and in Sydney, in Salisbury and in Sao Paulo, in Windhoek as in Paris, Ottawa and Nottingham are free.

The third root cause is economic exploitation. White racist minorities in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa have expropriated the best land, control all productive resources and access to employment, pay less to Africans who work more, and enjoy one of the world's highest standards of living because of their exploitation of African labor. South Africa, like the south in America, has been built through the sweat and blood of Blacks.

The African continent's vast mineral wealth includes all of the 53 critical raw materials required for industrial expansion in the West, such as copper, manganese, uranium, vanadinite, bauxite, and iron ore. Nigeria is a principal supplier of oil to the United States, and United States trade with Africa is increasing faster than it is with other parts of the world. In addition, African nations are rapidly becoming important areas of American private investment.

However, African and other peoples and nations of color will no longer tolerate the seizure and control of their wealth and labor by Europeans. They have demanded permanent sovereignty over their natural resources, promulgated a Charter on the Economic Rights and Duties of States, and called for a just New International Economic Order.

For these principal reasons, we reaffirm our commitment to the twin goals of the Pan African movement since its creation in 1900 by Africans from the Continent and the New World: self-determination and freedom of all African peoples.

Nationalism, not communism, is the African response to these three root causes. A people's quest for freedom is a driving, unyielding force. Freedom and self-determination are objectives that have always been obtained by whatever means necessary. To suggest that nationalists are motivated by communism, or that those who achieve independence through the assistance of socialist countries will perforce become communist satellite states, is to ignore African political history. African nationalists have not and will not give up colonial domination for communist domination. The issue is not the choice between democracy and communism, but rather the authority and the power to decide for oneself a preferred system of government.

We recognize from our own civil rights experience in this country that western societies often find it expedient to blame protest against failures in their political systems on communist infiltration. But to do so in the Southern African context is to confuse the issue and to align the United States once again with the racist forces of reaction and totalitarianism against the advocates of self-determination and progressive change.

Tyranny, whether of the left, or of the right, is anti-democratic and must be opposed. Apartheid and racism are the most pernicious forms of totalitarianism because they are selective in their repressive impact on the citizens of a state for no reasons other than the color or one's skin.

It is false to portray the incumbent South African and Rhodesian governments as bulwarks against communism, for it is their very

existence that forces Africans to struggle to end their oppression, and in face of racist intransigence, to seek allies from responsive governments without regard to ideological persuasion.

The escalating conflict in Southern Africa, and the real possibility that this situation could lead to a wider war if appropriate action is not taken, makes a Black American consensus on U.S. policy toward Africa all the more urgent.

The history of our common struggle and recognition that our cause is just have brought us this day to proclaim that:

- (1) We believe South Africa is the main barrier against majority rule in Southern Africa because of its continued illegal occupation of Namibia, its refusal to implement economic sanctions against Rhodesia and its unwillingness to share political and economic power with Blacks within its own borders. Specifically, if present negotiations fail or are unacceptable to African liberation leaders and the African people of Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa, the President of the United States should:

-- Support a finding in the Security Council that South Africa's continued illegal occupation of Namibia is an act of aggression and a threat to the peace, calling for action under Chapter 7 of the United Nations Charter.

- Provide assistance, both humanitarian and military, to the liberation movements through the Organization of African Unity.
- Impose a mandatory arms embargo against South Africa and a stoppage of shipments of equipment to be used by the military, including all technology and nuclear material.

(2) We totally support the liberation of Southern Africa from white minority rule by means of armed struggle, where necessary, and affirm the right of the African liberation movements to seek necessary assistance from whatever sources available to achieve self-determination and majority rule. We firmly reject the notion that such assistance implies external domination within a Cold War context. However, we are unalterably opposed to external intervention from whatever quarter designed to thwart the inevitable extension of African freedom to the southern tip of Africa.

(3) Negotiations can achieve a genuine peace only when they occur between the contending forces. High level diplomatic involvement by the U.S. and other powerful, concerned states can be of positive assistance but they can be considered "successful" only when they achieve the full liberation of the suppressed people. In light of this principle, we



look to the representatives of the Front Line States and the organized fighting forces of the suppressed populations for the standard by which to judge the success of good will negotiations involving third parties. Transitional arrangements to majority rule must include an opportunity for the organized fighting forces to participate in the drafting of constitutional arrangements and the free public discussion and voting which is required for their ratification. Therefore, we support the Five Front Line Presidents in their call on the United States to support the Freedom Fighters if Prime Minister Vorster and Mr. Smith obfuscate the fundamental changes which the struggle in Zimbabwe is on the verge of accomplishing. Similarly, we oppose United States support for any settlement in Zimbabwe and Namibia that compromises the freedom of Blacks in South Africa. And in this connection, we urge the Administration to call upon South Africa to release its political prisoners and to begin negotiating with them and other black leaders toward the establishment of a real democracy which guarantees majority rule and human rights for all.

- (4) We strongly condemn the Pretoria Government for crimes against humanity through its wanton killing of hundreds of African youthful demonstrators and its wholesale detention without legal redress of Africans and their allies. We urge that the U.S. provide special political refugee status similar to that accorded to the Cubans to Africans forced to emigrate from Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa because of political repression.
- (5) We, in support of the Organization of African Unity, oppose any U.S. Government recognition of the Transkei and United States corporate investment in that "Bantustan" whose independence will deny Africans their birthright to full economic and political participation in the entire Republic of South Africa.
- (6) We reject any U.S. policy that stresses "Minority Rights" rather than "Human Rights" in Southern Africa, since minority rights in that context implies the preservation of European privilege. Therefore, we question any large-scale financial subsidy of "Minority Rights" for Rhodesian Whites, which would serve to reward the villains at the expense of the victims. Moreover, we denounce

those pronouncements by Administration officials that repeatedly speak of the need for "moderate leadership" or "responsible government" and any policy which interferes with the right of the people to decide for themselves their system of government. Neither the United States nor any other power has the right to impose any government on the people of Namibia, Zimbabwe or South Africa. Self-government is the most unalienable of all rights.

- (7) We believe that independence in Namibia -- including Walvis Bay, the principal port presently considered part of South Africa -- must be achieved according to the guidelines set forth in Security Council Resolution 335 of January 30, 1976, which demands that South Africa withdraw and end its illegal administration of Namibia, and transfer power to the people of Namibia with the assistance of the United Nations, that it release all political prisoners, hold free elections under United Nations supervision and control and "abolish all racially discriminatory and politically repressive laws and practices, particularly bantustans and homelands". SWAPO must have a principal role in any negotiations. The Turnhalle Conference should have no standing whatsoever since it excluded SWAPO participation and is the creation of South Africa.

- (3) We urge proper recognition of the expanded potential of the United Nations as a fully representative body. The people and government of the United States must accept the changing perspective of U.S. interests among the family of nations, and work within the United Nations and its affiliated institutions to deal with the emerging North-South issues which are the principal sources of tension and potential conflict in global affairs. Majority ruled African nations now constitute nearly one-third of United Nations membership, and consequently, are a pivotal group in that body. We urge the U.S. to join the Council on Namibia, contribute to the U.N. Trust Fund, and we condemn the use of the veto by our government in the Security Council to protect South Africa.
- (9) We urge our government to recognize the People's Republic of Angola and support its admission to the United Nations. The PRA has joined the other Front Line States in efforts to obtain an appropriate settlement in Southern Africa. U.S. alignment on the same losing side with South Africa during the Angolan conflict demonstrated the bankruptcy of the government's Africa policy.

This error should not be perpetuated. A normalization of relations with the Angolan Government will facilitate any U.S. involvement in bringing about a just peace in the region.

- (10) We condemn the role played by United States and other foreign corporations and banks, which by their presence and activities collectively have participated in the oppression of Blacks and have undergirded the repressive white minority governments of Southern Africa. No longer must Mr. Vorster be able to exact U.S. political support as ransom for America's hostage private corporations. Multinational corporations must recognize that the South African economy is not sound, and that the investment climate there is no longer favorable. The government should institute a program of tax disincentives to U.S. corporations operating in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia. And should those corporations remain unprepared to use their leverage to bring about concrete steps towards economic and political justice in South Africa, and to operate there, in Namibia and Zimbabwe on the basis of fair and non-discriminatory employment practices, humane working

conditions and just compensation for the exploitation of African resources, they should withdraw.

- (11) We challenge the Judeo-Christian community, the labor movement, the media and the political, business, and civic leadership in this country to see that our government upholds its values and its historical commitment to self-determination, freedom and justice, and to understand that the appeasement of South Africa can only invite an escalated war that will exacerbate racial tensions in the United States.

Finally, in turn, we commit ourselves to mobilizing Black Americans and others of good will to formulate and support a progressive U.S. policy toward Africa. And we state our opposition to those Blacks who will work directly or indirectly to support white minority regimes in Southern African.

The policies we have recommended are not only morally just, they are in America's best interests. Africa's economic and strategic importance to the United States in an increasingly interdependent world must be fully recognized.