

OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY OUT OF SOUTH AFRICA!

(A Letter to Dr. Robert MacVicar, President of O.S.U.)

African Students' Association
Oregon State University

Corvallis, Oregon 97331

July 14, 1981

Dr. Robert MacVicar, President
Oregon State University
Corvallis, OR 97331

Dear President MacVicar:

We have learned with great dismay that the Oregon State University wrestling team will be touring and wrestling in South Africa from August 24th to October 4th with Dale Thomas, the wrestling coach, and Ben Purvis, the campus media center director.

We strongly oppose that visit which is in direct violation of the United Nations sports boycott of South Africa. Certainly the visit by representatives of Oregon State University to South Africa will be of great propaganda value to the apartheid regime. It is the only country in the world under an international sports boycott and it is desperately seeking contact with athletes that will ignore it. Can you imagine how delighted the apartheid regime will be to find a wrestling team in the United States that will not recognize the boycott? At the same time, can you imagine the surprise and shock that will be registered with all the international and national sporting bodies that have honored it? We cannot imagine that you will approve of the image that Oregon State University will develop as a friend of racist South Africa.

Nor can we imagine that the Oregon State University students who have been recruited by Dale Thomas are aware of the intolerable conditions which the African majority experience daily in South Africa. Are they to be permitted to go simply because they are curious and naive? Are they aware of the possible consequences of their visit for their future in sports? Are they aware of the possible results for their team and the Oregon State University athletic program?

You will certainly remember that Dale Thomas has previously ignored that boycott. In September 1980 he was host to 17 white

South African wrestling "coaches" who were, according to the Corvallis Gazette-Times, taking the skills he taught back to the police, army, and private wrestling clubs of South Africa. We voiced our deepfelt opposition to OSU being cast in the role of training those who will aid the South African police and army. We cannot forget that Steve Biko died in the hands of those very police. The South African army is daily brutalizing our brothers and sisters in South Africa and Namibia. Are we to be accomplices? Certainly not! That is why we sponsored the many educational programs about Southern Africa during the Fall Term, 1980, on our campus.

You will recall that we invited you to be guest-of-honor at our annual Africa Day dinner in May 1981. You welcomed more than 400 members of the local community to this event. We all listened to the keynote speaker, Mr. A. R. Mohamed Babu, former Minister of Development and Industries, United Republic of Tanzania, who told of the oppressive conditions within South Africa today. He advised that we should boycott the apartheid regime. The Corvallis community received him warmly and supported him strongly. We were pleased and we hope you were too.

Additionally, we feel certain you are aware of the growing groundswell of sentiment in Oregon and elsewhere over the issue of disassociation from investment or business dealings with South Africa. We have been told by Corvallis church groups and by persons who identify themselves as Oregon taxpayers that they plan strong representations to the Governor and legislature to be certain that no public funds are involved in sending the OSU team to South Africa.

We would like to convey to you some more reasons that we are deeply opposed to the visit to South Africa by the OSU wrestling team. First, Oregon State University is being cast in a unique role as a result of these repeated violations of the United Nations boycott of South Africa. We doubt there are any other institutions of higher education in this country with such strong and visible sporting ties with South Africa. We are ashamed that such a shadow is being cast over Oregon State University. We can only say that it borders on a national collegiate sports scandal.

Second, the United Nations Centre Against Apartheid published its first "Register of Sports Contacts with South Africa" on May 15th. The blacklist of athletes, coaches, and institutions will be updated periodically. If the visit to South Africa by the OSU wrestling team takes place then, we believe, we must be prepared to be the first university in this country to appear on that blacklist. It is likely that the students will appear on it too. Must they and this institution suffer such an ignominious fate because of Dale Thomas' ties with apartheid South

Africa?

Third, it is our opinion that another consequence of the visit will be strong action taken within the PAC-10 universities against OSU this coming year. The visit will certainly receive broad publicity within those institutions and we would not be surprised to see boycotts of OSU teams.

Fourth, if the visit takes place we are inclined to think that it will have a very negative impact on the future recruitment of athletes to this institution. What intelligent prospective athlete--especially those of African ancestry--would want to attend an institution where the athletic program has such strong ties with racist South Africa and is so oblivious to the sports boycott observed by so many international sports federations, national sporting bodies, and prominent individuals such as John McEnroe?

We certainly hope that you are aware of these issues by now, for the question of Oregon State University's ties with "pariah" nations like South Africa has been publicly debated on campus for almost one year. Yet, we would like to supply you with more up-to-date information about the sports boycott of South Africa so that you might see why this institution should honor it. We include the following material:

- 1) Letter from Dr. Richard Lapchick, son of late Hall of Fame basketball coach, Joe Lapchick, and National Chairperson of the American Coordinating Committee for Equality in Sports and Society (ACCESS). Attached to it are materials including the UN Centre Against Apartheid "Register of Sports Contacts with South Africa" or blacklist dated May 15, 1981.
- 2) The "International Declaration Against Apartheid in Sports" adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1977.
- 3) The most recent resolution on "Apartheid in Sports" adopted by the United Nations General Assembly during the first part of its 35th Session (16 September to 17 December 1980).
- 4) The publication "Racial Discrimination in South African Sport" by S. Ramsamy, Chairman, South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee, published by the UN Centre Against Apartheid.

After you have had the opportunity to read these materials, and after you have had the opportunity to acquaint yourself with the details of the visit, we would like to request an audience with

you to explore this issue further. Of course we would assume this would take place in good time before the scheduled departure date of the wrestling team on August 24th. We are most anxious to know more about two particular issues. First, in what way, if any, is OSU contributing financially to that visit? Second, will OSU move to stop the visit in the interest of the university? Third, does the wrestling team plan to visit independent African countries outside of South Africa? If so, they should know that they are violating the general policy for sports laid down by the Supreme Council for Sports in Africa which says that teams participating in apartheid South Africa cannot participate in independent Africa.

We should also inform you that we are posting copies of this letter to a very broad representation of individuals and organizations whom we believe will want to know about OSU's developing relationship with apartheid South Africa. Recipients include individuals in Corvallis; state officials; organizations and individuals within the PAC-10 universities; US national sporting bodies; sporting bodies in Europe and Africa (including the Supreme Council for Sports in Africa); national bodies in this country which oppose apartheid; and UN Missions of the African countries with whom OSU has or proposes academic or "aid" relations (because relations with independent Africa are inconsistent with relations with apartheid South Africa).

We look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

(signed)

Winnie Tay, President