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Sun City and the Sounds of Liberation: Cultural Resistance for Social Justice
in Apartheid South Africa

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts
in Afro-American Studies

by

Jonathan Richard Freeman

2014

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Sun City and the Sounds of Liberation: Cultural Resistance for Social Justice in Apartheid South Africa

by

Jonathan Richard Freeman

Master of Arts in Afro-American Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2014

Professor Robin D.G. Kelley, Chair

This thesis examines Sun City, a Las Vegas-style resort with glamorous hotels, gambling casinos, showrooms and spas surrounded by the vast poverty of Bophuthatswana, one of apartheid South Africa's so-called "homeland" regions. The apartheid regime used Sun City as a foil in the face of a world-wide boycott by offering vast sums of money to entertainers to perform there. This project specifically uses Sun City as a case study for exploring the impact the cultural boycott had on African American musicians. The post civil rights movement created a controversial rift in the black artistic community. Although Black artists were free to create and release music, the debate revolved around Black artists and fans to do the right thing, pressuring many artists not to perform in Sun City, although some did.

The thesis of Jonathan Richard Freeman is approved.

Scot Brown

Darnell Hunt

Robin D.G. Kelley, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2014

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If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.

—Frederick Douglass¹

I hope there will be a confrontation between apartheid and the anti-apartheid forces of the world. If this does not come, we are doomed to defeat.

—Dennis Brutus²

¹ Frederick Douglass, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*. New York: International Publishers, 1950.

² Dennis Brutus, “Apartheid in South Africa,” July 1967, audiocassette, Julie Fredrikse Collection, UWC-Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, University of the Western Cape, Belleville, South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Music had been an important component of the struggle for freedom in South Africa since its inception. Freedom Songs- “the melodies, harmonies, chants and cries” – were a vital force in South Africa’s liberation struggle and its fight for a new democracy. Music lifted and encouraged the spirits of those who fought apartheid, and have been widely known and appreciated by the masses of oppressed South Africans³.

The power of music also influenced anti-apartheid sentiment outside of South Africa, serving as a basis for solidarity and movement building. In 1985, Artists United Against Apartheid (AUAA) was a protest group founded by two Americans, activist and performer Steven Van Zandt and record producer Arthur Baker, to protest apartheid in South Africa. The group produced the song “Sun City” and the album *Sun City* that year. Taking up the plight of South Africa and protesting against apartheid and racism, this album features a massive assembly of soul, funk, hip hop, jazz, reggae, and rock artists. Musically, *Sun City* is firmly rooted in funk with strong, heavily percussive beats and a combination of P-Funk and African rhythms, with some seventies fusion jazz thrown in.

The founding of AUAA was in part a response to American musicians who performed regularly in South Africa during the 1970s, including prominent African American recording artists such as Brooks Benton, Clarence Carter, Billy Preston, the Commodores, Curtis Mayfield, Millie Jackson, and Tina Turner. Owners of *Sun City* were careful to choose performers with no obvious history of political activity, and to instruct them to avoid controversial statements or contacts while in the country. For its part, the government proclaimed these visitors Honorary

³ “South African Freedom Songs.” *World Music from cdRoots*. FNI Multimedia, 2010.
<http://www.cdroots.com/st-freedomsongs.html>.

Whites, allowing them the use of hotels, restaurants, and other facilities normally off limits to blacks.⁴

The 1980s was a particularly contradictory time in South African history. In one sense, the 1980s was one of the most repressive decades of the 20th century, with numerous ‘states of emergency’ declared by the apartheid government. In another sense, however, we can see in retrospect that the apartheid government’s immense repression was illustrative of the anxiety of a dying regime. Local and international pressure reached an all time peak in the 1980s, and ultimately Nationalist Party president F.W. De Klerk was forced to ‘negotiate’ a settlement with Nelson Mandela in the early 1990s.⁵

The cultural boycott of South Africa was an effort supported by various groups attempting to create a democratic state in that country, in the belief that visits by popular musicians legitimized apartheid and oppression. One of the most powerful weapons of the cultural boycott was its tough, no-exceptions stance. U.N. resolutions called for the total isolation of South Africa – economically, diplomatically and culturally. And that created a powerful fear of South Africa throughout the entertainment industry. American performers who have worked or even visited in South Africa – no matter what the circumstances – have later found doors closed to them in much of the world. And, back at home, they have faced plenty of bad publicity. Every foreign performer who appeared in South Africa ended up on an international sanctions list monitored by the African National Congress (ANC) and the U.N. Special Committee Against Apartheid. For example, the Commodores, a Black American singing group, quietly signed a contract to play at Sun City, the casino- resort whose name has

⁴ Charles Hamm, *Afro-American Music, South Africa, and Apartheid*. Brooklyn, NY: Institute for Studies in American Music, Conservatory of Music, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, 1988.

⁵ Carol Ann Muller. *Focus: Music of South Africa*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

been synonymous with the cultural boycott. But entertainers pulled out under pressure from anti-apartheid groups when the news leaked back home.⁶ Ray Charles, another Black artist who performed in South Africa refused to make a public apology for the trip. Mfanafuthi Johnstone (“Johnny”) Makatini, African National Congress Observer to the United Nations, compared black artists going to South Africa with Jews entering Hitler’s Nazi troops during the Holocaust.⁷ Other performers who, according to the Patrice Lumumba Coalition (PLC) have visited and entertained in South Africa include: Isaac Hayes, Millie Jackson, Tina Turner, Curtis Mayfield, Eartha Kitt, The Supremes, etc.⁸ Artists such as Lena Horne, Barry White, Roberta Flack and Phyllis Hyman were lauded for their efforts in heeding the call not to entertain in South Africa. Miss Horne and her associates turned down offers that ranged from \$100,000 to \$2 million in their refusal to entertain in South Africa, particularly in the bogus, Indian-reserve-like “republic” of Bophuthatswana and its Sun City complex.⁹

In this study I offer a critical exploration of the discourse about African American¹⁰ musicians who performed in Sun City during the anti apartheid movement. African American musicians were in a unique position. Many Black artists grew up and came out of social and political struggles in the United States. The goal is to explore the linkage of history, culture, and politics of the freedom struggle in South Africa because it has deep intellectual roots in African American social protest. I will investigate the diasporic solidarity enacted by top musicians against South African apartheid in the late twentieth century. I am interested in the ways in which musicians emerging from 1960s and 70s began to articulate a global critique of racism.

⁶Scott Kraft. "COLUMN ONE A Cultural Boycott in Evolution Foreign Artists Now can Get the Blessing of Anti-Apartheid Groups to Perform in South Africa. Some Chafe at having to 'consult.' Transgressions of Others are Not Forgotten." *Los Angeles Times (pre-1997 Full text)*: Apr 18 1991.

⁷ "Apartheid Boycott Gets Big Support." *New York Amsterdam News (1962-1993)*: Oct 30 1982.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Simon Anekwe Amsterdam, News Staff. "Seek End to Artists Apartheid Connection." *New York Amsterdam News (1962-1993)*, Oct 23 1982.

¹⁰ African American and Black will be used interchangeably.

The focus on South Africa became apparent in part because of the visible drama of apartheid repression evoking images of the U.S. civil rights struggle, with the Soweto uprising, Steve Biko's death, and related events receiving unprecedented coverage on U.S. television.¹¹ My assertion, then, is that in a time of intensified racial oppression, African American music became an effective weapon against apartheid, which had repercussions that influenced its ultimate demise. African American music lifted and encouraged the spirits of those who fought apartheid, and have been widely known and appreciated by the masses of oppressed Africans during their years fighting for freedom. Therefore, music played a vital role in helping to win South Africa's new democracy.¹² I will be concerned with the following questions: What affect did the boycott have on African American musicians? Why did certain artists decide not to go to Sun City and perform? Why pay Black artists to come to South Africa and Sun City?

SUN CITY'S INCEPTION

Sun City is an internationally famous Las Vegas style resort featuring luxurious casinos, colossal water parks, upscale restaurants, hotel amenities, showrooms and spas, and a world class golf course. In 1977, the black homeland of Bophuthatswana, which consisted of seven enclaves for the Tswana-speaking people of what was then Northern Transvaal, was granted independence, creating a legal loophole which attracted the attention of the hotel magnate Sol Kerzner. In reality, living conditions were bleak for blacks who were forcibly relocated to Bophuthatswana, and independence from apartheid and South Africa was merely an illusion.¹³

¹¹ *The Soweto uprising (1976)*: People in Soweto riot and demonstrate against discrimination and instruction in Afrikaans, the language of whites descended from the Dutch. The police react with gunfire. More than 600 people are killed and thousands are injured and arrested. Steven Biko is beaten and left in jail to die from his injuries. Protesters against apartheid link arms in a show of resistance.

¹² "South African Freedom Songs." *World Music from cdRoots*. cdRoots and FNI Multimedia, 2010. Web. 30 Nov 2011.

¹³ Frank Partridge. "Kicking off the Celebrations: South Africa's Sun City Turns 30." *The Independent* [London, England] 12 Dec. 2009.

December 1979 marked the opening of Sun City to an anticipative and a deeply disapproving world. Sun City served as a tourist attraction which catered to white South Africans and a few wealthy blacks who traveled from urban centers to indulge in gambling and other forms of recreation such as concerts. In efforts to legitimize the area, Sun City offered vast sums to entertainers to perform there. Although executives at the resort frequently tried to downplay the realities of apartheid, the Sun City complex became a symbol of the opulence that whites enjoyed at the expense of the country's black natives.¹⁴

The resort's early success came from its location in the nominally independent 'homeland' - or 'Bantustan' of Bophuthatswana. The Bantustan policy was deeply controversial, creating a series of enclaves (there were 20 in all, in South Africa and what is now Namibia) where the country's displaced black population was relocated and concentrated. Under this system, Sun City stood outside the borders of South Africa, allowing it to circumvent the regime's conservative social policies. By the mid-1980s Sun City was an instant hit making waves on the international scene. From July 24-August 2, 1981 Frank Sinatra sang in the Sun City Hotel Casino and Country Club, performing in front of 6,000 performers including Rob Stewart and Tina Turner. Entrepreneurs from Sun City were careful to choose performers with no obvious history of political activity, and to instruct them to avoid controversial statements or contacts while in the country. For its part the government proclaimed these visitors Honorary Whites, allowing them the use of hotels, restaurants, and other facilities normally off limits to blacks.¹⁵ They defended their lucrative appearances by maintaining that Bophuthatswana bore no connection to South Africa. Sun City does not represent the authentic South Africa – which

¹⁴ "100 Best Albums of the Eighties, Artists United Against Apartheid, Sun City" *Rolling Stone*, accessed March 21, 2014, <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/lists/100-best-albums-of-the-eighties-20110418/artists-united-against-apartheid-sun-city-20110330>.

¹⁵ Hamm, Charles. *Afro-American Music, South Africa, and Apartheid*. Brooklyn, NY: Institute for Studies in American Music, Conservatory of Music, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, 1988.

was one of the bugbears held by Artists United Against Apartheid in 1985.¹⁶

SOUTH AFRICA'S APARTHEID POLICIES

According to George Fredrickson in *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study of American and South African History* (1981), the phrase “white supremacy” refers to the attitudes associated with the rise of blatant forms of white or European dominance over “nonwhite” populations.¹⁷ White racism was certainly not confined to South Africa. However, this nation—which is nestled between the Atlantic Ocean to the west and the Indian Ocean to the east—has an unforgettably grim past in this respect. For forty-five years of the past century, there existed one of the world’s most volatile forms of institutionalized racial segregation called apartheid. The laws associated with apartheid gave privileges to Afrikaners (members of white community tracing its roots to the seventeenth-century Dutch settlers often with German, French, or other European forebears) and maintained an oppressive power structure imposed upon the black majority.

Before apartheid came into existence, European intruders colonized what today is one of Africa’s most diverse countries and an emerging strong economy. During the nineteenth century the “Scramble for Africa” became a period known for territorial conquest and black enslavement. As whites aggressively expanded throughout continental Africa, they took on the title as the elite and superior race, while categorizing native blacks as being the least intelligent and most barbaric race. South African colonization not only emphasized racial subordination, but classified and separated people on the basis of race. Although apartheid was abolished by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa in 1993, these blatant forms of discrimination still

¹⁶ Chris Lawrence. “Does the Sun Shine? Stepping into Sun City, South Africa’s Mega-hotel of Dark Memories.” *Mail Online*. Associated Newspapers, 14, June 2012.

¹⁷ George M. Fredrickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study of American and South African History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.

prevail in South Africa. More specifically, apartheid illuminates the modern history of South Africa.

Apartheid, which literally means “apartness” or “separateness” in the Afrikaans language, was developed among the White, Khoisan, and Bantu populations of the Cape Colony to maintain separate development of government-demarcated racial groups. White supremacy and racial segregation were traditionally accepted in South Africa prior to 1948.¹⁸ Various segregation laws were passed before the Nationalist Party (founded in 1914) took complete power in 1948. Probably the most significant were the Native Land Act, No. 27 of 1913 and the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923. The former made it illegal for blacks to purchase or lease land from whites except in reserves; this restricted black occupancy to less than eight percent of South Africa’s land. The latter laid the foundations for residential segregation in urban areas.

Pass laws were designed to control the movement of Africans under apartheid. These laws evolved from regulations imposed by the Dutch and British in the 18th and 19th century slave economy of the Cape Colony. In the 19th century, new pass laws were enacted for the purpose of ensuring a reliable supply of cheap, docile African labor for the gold and diamond mines. In 1952, the government enacted an even more rigid law that required all African males over the age of 16 to carry a “reference book” (replacing the previous passbook) containing personal information and employment history.

Africans often were compelled to violate the pass laws to find work to support their families, so harassment, fines, and arrests under the pass laws were a constant threat to many urban Africans. Protest against these humiliating laws fueled the anti-apartheid struggle – from the Defiance Campaign (1952-54), the massive women’s protest in Pretoria (1956), to burning of

¹⁸ Nancy L. Clark and William H. Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*. Harlow: Pearson, 2004.

passes at the police station in Sharpeville where 69 protesters were massacred (1960). In the 1970s and 1980s, many Africans found in violation of pass laws were stripped of citizenship and deported to poverty-stricken rural “homelands.” By the time the increasingly expensive and ineffective pass laws were repealed in 1986, they had led to more than 17 million arrests.¹⁹

Racism was made the organizing principle in South African life. The state assigned each individual to a racial category – European, Indian, Colored, or African – and then saw to it that each group was separated from each other as much as possible. Eight to ten years later, reservations were set aside, so-called Bantu Homelands, where each African “nation” was to develop its own society, eventually attaining independence. Additionally, Bantustans are ethnically defined areas for Africans created on the basis of the “Native Reserves” (Land Act, 1913). Under the apartheid system of 'separate development' nine Bantu groups were assigned their own Bantustan and 3.5 million Africans were forcibly removed to these ‘homelands,’ which constituted only 13 percent of South African territory. Widespread poverty in these areas helped employers secure a supply of cheap black labor. Movement outside of these homelands was strictly regulated. In the late 1980s several of the Bantustans were given 'independence'. When apartheid finally fell in the 1990s, the Bantustans were reincorporated into South Africa. The rest, eighty percent of South Africa – including all major cities, ports, industrial areas, and prime farmland – became the homeland for Europeans, who accounted for 20 percent of the population.²⁰

DIVESTMENT

Opponents began organizing as soon as apartheid was implemented in 1948. By 1951, the

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Peter Ackerman and Jack Duvall. *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict*. New York: St. Martin's, 2000.

N.A.A.C.P. president Walter White was working to oppose World Bank loans to South Africa. There were protests against the shipment of South African goods and bank loans to South Africa. In 1970 African-American workers at Polaroid protested the company's involvement with the apartheid pass system. The June 16 1976 uprising in Soweto was the catalyst for new energy and sustained mobilization and protest. The uprising that began in Soweto and spread countrywide profoundly changed the socio-political landscape in South Africa. Events that triggered the uprising can be traced back to policies of the apartheid government that resulted in the introduction of the Bantu Education Act in 1953. Local coalitions, candlelight vigils, picket lines, organizational caucuses against apartheid multiplied drastically. Most campuses saw heightened activity after Soweto. College students took over buildings and walked out of class in solidarity with their South African counterparts.²¹

In Los Angeles, former mayor Tom Bradley proposed that his city completely sever ties with companies that do business in South Africa because of South Africa's racist policy toward its Black citizens. Bradley's plan called for a phase-out of investment of city pension money into companies doing business in South Africa. Then about \$700 million of the city's \$9 billion in pension money was tied up in stocks and bonds with companies tied to South Africa. Bradley also wanted the city to stop depositing money into banks that loaned to that nation or sold South African gold coins called Krugerrands.²² The Soweto uprising and the continuation of protests in South Africa for more than a year, culminating with the murder of Steve Biko, banning of 18 organizations, and detention of 50 key activists, was the catalyst for new energy and sustained mobilization and protest in the US anti-apartheid movement. Students demonstrated at more than 100 universities and colleges around the country and won the first decisions by university

²¹ Cecelie Counts, "Just One Weapon in Battle Against Apartheid." *The New York Times*. 27 Jan. 2013.

²² Johnson, John H., and Robert E. Johnson. "Should Famous Blacks Entertain in South Africa?" *Jet*. Johnson Publishing Company 27 May 1985.

administrations to divest funds from companies involved in South Africa. Church shareholder resolutions increased and turned from demanding information and reforms to demanding withdrawal from South Africa. Trade union activists in the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and in a growing number of local and national unions became involved, with actions including a focus on investments by their own pension funds. The number of local coalitions and national organizational caucuses against apartheid multiplied dramatically. This is the period, in short, in which the movement first made the transition from a cause pursued by a relatively small number of dedicated activists to a mass anti-apartheid movement.²³

SOWETO UPRISING

On June 16 South African police fired into a peaceful demonstration by protesting students in Soweto, the totally segregated Black area 14 miles outside Johannesburg. During the following weeks violent confrontations shook many of the ghettos in the Witwatersrand triangle, which encloses the largest single concentration of industries and coal and gold mining in South Africa. Violence flared also in distant country areas, involving students in at least three widely separated Bantustans. The official death toll was 170, two white, 168 black. Africans on the scene reported 1,000 killed and many more wounded, beaten and arrested.

Hector Pieterse, a 13-year-old student at a higher primary school in White City and the symbol of the Soweto Uprising, was among the first students to be shot dead by the police at the gate of Orlando West High School. From official records, the para-military police who had arrived in Soweto during the day were given orders to shoot to kill; law and order was to be maintained 'at any cost'. The police shot dead 11 people that day. Ninety-three more people

²³ On student protest see Hauck et al., *Two Decades of Debate* and Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*. See also Action News and Notes' section of *Southern Africa*. Also Knight, 'Documenting the US Solidarity Movement'; and www.africanactivist.msu.edu. Knight's Africa Activist project focuses on preserving archives related to this history. Relevant material will also be found in Minter et al., *No Easy Victories: African Liberation and American Activists over a Half Century, 1950-2000*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2008.

were shot dead by police over the next two days. The weekend before the march, a meeting was held between students to finalize strategy. The student action committee plan was to stage a peaceful march – with students from all over Soweto congregating at Orlando Stadium and the proceeding to the regional offices of the Department of Bantu Education to deliver a memorandum reflecting student grievances. Student leader Murphy Morobe reminisces: “Our original plan was just to get to Orlando West [Junior Secondary School], pledge our solidarity, sing our song and then we thought that was it, we have made our point and we go home ... Neither did we expect the kind of reaction that we got from the police that day.”²⁴

Post Soweto coverage was made possible by the efforts of individual organizations and networks were also facilitated by media ventures from within the movement. The monthly *Southern Africa* magazine expanded its operations during this period. Tami Hultman and Reed Kramer, turning from research on US companies after their return from Africa, founded Africa News Service, based in Durham, North Carolina, which began with a service for radio stations in 1973 that expanded to include a regular print publication, beginning in 1976. The *Africa News* newsletter grew from a few hundred subscribers to more than 3,000 by the end of the decade, while Africa News radio news feeds went to over 100 subscribing radio stations. Community and listener-sponsored radio stations such as the Pacifica network stations and university stations such as Howard University’s provided opportunities for talk shows, fundraising campaigns, and news on the struggles in southern Africa. It was also in this period following Soweto that the political debate in Washington on southern Africa first began to make serious inroads into Congress. The African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC), a black activist organization that supported Pan Africanism, was organized at a conference in September 1972 in Detroit,

²⁴ *The Road to Democracy in South Africa: Volume 2 (1970-1980)*. Vol. 2. Pretoria: UNISA, University of South Africa, 2008.

Michigan. ALSC grew out of the first African Liberation Day (ALD) on May 27, 1972 that drew some 60,000 demonstrators in cities across the U.S. and Canada. The first ALD grew out of a trip of a group of black activists to Mozambique's liberated areas in the summer of 1971. One of the activists on that trip was Owusu Sadaukai who, upon his return, convened a meeting in Greensboro, North Carolina that led to the first ALD demonstration, which was designed to show support for African liberation struggles.²⁵ The African solidarity movement as well as right-wing forces supporting white-minority regimes and paid lobbyists for South Africa and Rhodesia stepped up their efforts to influence members of Congress and to use Congressional support to legislate or otherwise influence administration policies.

As important as divestment was in ending apartheid, that campaign came after and during a very broad and well engaged struggle on a variety of fronts. There were years of workshops, film showings, picket lines, candlelight vigils, material aid campaigns and consumer boycotts that laid the foundation for divestment measures by raising awareness of the role U.S. corporations played in southern Africa. Popular pressure led institutional investors to challenge the morality of profits obtained from collaboration with the repressive apartheid regime. The U.S. government collaborated with England and France as well as other Western European nations as part of the cold war struggle, and supported white minority rule in Southern Africa. It rejected economic sanctions and calls for an arms embargo against South Africa.²⁶ During the Cold War, South Africa was of strategic importance financially, because the country provided the West with important commodities, such as gold and coal, and provided an important market for Western products.²⁷

²⁵ "African Liberation Support Committee." Michigan State University, <http://africanactivist.msu.edu/>

²⁶ Ibid. Counts.

²⁷ "South Africa's Foreign Relations during Apartheid, 1948."
<http://www.sahistory.org.za/20th-century-south-africa/south-africas-foreign-relations-during-apartheid-1948>.

As anti-apartheid mobilization grew in the period 1984–1986, the student divestment movement and divestment efforts in the churches grew apace. The apartheid regime in South Africa faced the greatest black insurgency in a quarter century. Black protest against white minority rule and the new “reform” constitution was met with repression which was brutal even by South African standards, culminating in March 1985 with a police massacre of unarmed demonstrators near Sharpeville. In response to these events and stimulated by extensive TV and press coverage of them, a solidarity movement took root in the United States, centered in black churches and civil rights organizations. This movement demanded that the Reagan administration enact sanctions against South Africa. But the administration, clinging to its “constructive engagement” policy, vigorously opposed sanctions. The solidarity movement escalated its protests through a dramatic civil disobedience campaign, orchestrating sit-ins at which demonstrators, including prominent political leaders, were arrested at the South African embassy. The anti-apartheid protests in both the United States and South Africa captured the imagination of American undergraduates in spring 1985, sparking the largest student protests since the 1960s.²⁸

Activists began mobilizing local communities around issues like rent increases, fees for basic services like water, and forced relocations. By putting pressure on authorities through demonstrations, refusal to pay rent, picketing, and boycotts, activists made small, tangible gains.²⁹ Class boycotts, sit-ins and building takeovers, construction of shantytowns, and demonstrations proliferated around the country. Church assemblies addressed by United Democratic Front (UDF) leader Allan Boesak, Nobel Prize winner Desmond Tutu, and others moved to more unequivocal support of divestment. The UDF, founded by Mkhuseleli Jack in

²⁸ Nesses, J. "Student Struggle: Agenda for Change," *Guardian Supplement*, Spring, 1986.

²⁹ *Ibid.* Ackerman, 345-6.

1983, took the lead in organizing the anti-apartheid movement in the 1980s.³⁰ This decentralized coalition of over 500 anti-apartheid organizations sprang up in response to limited government reforms that attempted to weaken the position of anti-apartheid activists. After the regime's 1986 crackdown, the black Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) also played a large role in leading the anti-apartheid movement through strikes. Also intensifying in the 1980s was the cultural boycott of South Africa, which had been adopted by Americans as well as other international groups of artists and performers in the 1960s. At the beginning of the 1980s, the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid began compiling lists of performers who boycotted apartheid and those who performed in South Africa.¹³⁵ In New York, groups including the Coalition to End Cultural Collaboration with South Africa and the Patrice Lumumba Coalition organized protests against artists who performed in South Africa. In 1983, Arthur Ashe and Harry Belafonte joined with Ruby Dee, Ossie Davis, Tony Randall, Gregory Hines, and others to announce the formation of Artists and Athletes against Apartheid. Belafonte called for awakening world consciousness to 'the horror of apartheid in South Africa.'³¹ The impetus for increased organizing was that performers such as Millie Jackson and Frank Sinatra ostentatiously defied the ban, as South Africa paid large fees to attract performers. In 1981, for example, Frank Sinatra performed nine concerts at Sun City in the Bophuthatswana homeland, for a payment of \$1.79m. The campaign gained strong momentum, however, with contrary examples such as Roberta Flack, who turned down an offer of GB£2m to perform in South Africa. In 1985, Little Steven Van Zandt organized a recording called Sun City, calling for support of the boycott and denouncing apartheid, with the participation of performers including Miles Davis, Run-DMC, Joey Ramone, Jimmy Cliff, Bonnie Raitt, Afrika Bambaataa, Ruben Blades, Linton Kwesi

³⁰ Eric P. Louw. *The Rise, Fall, and Legacy of Apartheid*. Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2004.

³¹ Bella English, 'Athletes and Actors Serve Notice on South Africa; *New York Daily News*, 15 April 1983. See also Michael C. Beaubien, 'The Cultural Boycott of South Africa; *Africa Today* (1982).

Jackson, Bob Dylan, and Bono. Proceeds from the project went to political prisoners in South Africa and to anti-apartheid groups through the Africa Fund in New York.³²

The apartheid regime's brutality reached a new level in 1984, and one response came when the Free South Africa Movement engaged people from all walks of life in daily demonstrations and in civil disobedience for more than a year. Shantytowns sprung up on college campuses that had not yet divested and, an international campaign against Royal Dutch Shell was launched in 1986. The groundswell of opposition to apartheid led Congress to override President Reagan's veto of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986.

FREE SOUTH AFRICA MOVEMENT

On November 21, 1984, four Americans of African descent, Randall Robinson, Executive Director of TransAfrica, U.S. Civil Rights Commissioner Mary Frances Berry, Eleanor Holmes Norton a law professor of a prestigious law school (Georgetown), and Congressman (D-DC) Walter Fauntroy visited the South African Embassy to discuss the growing crises in South Africa. As the people of South Africa expressed their opposition to an increasingly brutal and repressive regime, they feared that the Botha regime would commit political genocide against the leadership of labor, youth and township activists. During that entire year of 1984 there had been a large number of labor strikes and youth protests with brutally repressive actions by corporations and government forces. In addition, a number of reports revealed the extent to which the apartheid regime had a devastating impact on the lives of rural South Africans and townships. Protests in various townships because of rent hikes, poor education, housing, and apartheid policies were escalating and the regime was responding with brute force. The South African regime had stepped up its regional effort to stabilize its power.

³² Danny Schechter and Dave Marsh, *Sun CO by Artists United against Apartheid: The Struggle for Freedom in South Africa, the Making of the Record*. New York: Penguin Books, 1985.

The Botha regime had also created a bogus constitution that denied black South Africans the right to participate in the newly constituted parliament, while permitting Indians and so-called coloreds to have a limited representation. As South Africans protested this newly constituted parliament as an effort for the regime to pretend it was making fundamental changes in the apartheid system, Americans watched with horror as police and security forces repressed political dissent with customary brutality.³³

The Free South Africa Movement (FSAM), sparked by an act of civil disobedience at the South African Embassy on 21 November, 1984, grew from a convergence of several factors: the escalation of protest and repression in South Africa, frustration at the prospect of four more years of a Reagan presidency, and new energy among African-American progressive forces and their allies, stimulated by the 1984 presidential campaign of Jesse Jackson.³⁴ The capacity for grassroots organizing that it revealed was built on years of previous work by local groups around the country and, in Washington in particular, by the Southern Africa Support Project (SASP).

The primary focus of their work was in local African American community institutions, including churches, educational institutions, the media, and unions. Like other organizations, SASP organized community events that featured Oliver Tambo, Sam Nujoma, Johnny Makitini and many others. It recognized the complementary role of other organizations focused on Africa, and developed particularly close ties with TransAfrica, both as a national organization and with its local chapter. TransAfrica concentrated most of its work among the national black leadership, progressive cultural workers and entertainers, African-American media personalities and

³³ Sylvia Hill. "Free South African Movement." Paper presented at Conference on International Anti-Apartheid Movements in South Africa's Freedom Struggle: Lessons for Today. United Nations, International Convention Centre, Durban, South Africa, October 10-13, 2004.

³⁴ William, Minter. *No easy victories: African liberation and American activists over a half century, 1950-2000*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2008.

businesses, as well as black organizations with membership constituencies. It had chapters in cities throughout the nation, and its executive director, a gifted orator and an outstanding debater, was a prominent media personality identified with the cause of the people of South Africa. This systematic work built a social infrastructure of ties to institutions and sectors in the city, and indeed nationwide, that laid the base for the FSAM mobilization in 1984–1985.³⁵

SECTION II

ORIGINS OF THE HISTORY OF THE CULTURAL BOYCOTT AND ARTISTS UNITED AGAINST APARTHEID *SUN CITY*

During the 1980's the cultural boycott intensified in South Africa, which had been adopted by America as well as other international groups of artists and performers in the 1960s. At the beginning of the 1980s, the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid began compiling a list of performers who boycotted apartheid and those who performed in South Africa. In New York, groups including the Coalition to End Cultural Collaboration with South Africa and the Patrice Lumumba Coalition organized protests against artists who performed in South Africa.³⁶ The Patrice Lumumba Coalition (PLC) was founded in 1975 by Elombe Brath. It was an outgrowth of the Liberation Support Committee and supported the Angolan's right to self-determination. PLC, an African American organization, took its name from the first Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo who was assassinated in 1961. The organization was especially active in supporting African liberation movements including the African National Congress (South Africa), SWAPO (Namibia), MPLA (Angola), FRELIMO (Mozambique) and ZANU (Zimbabwe).³⁷

Many South Africans of all races had to pay a penalty for living in apartheid-ruled South Africa. In addition to the implementation of fierce economic sanctions against the country, strong sporting and cultural boycotts were also put into operation. South African playwrights, actors, and musicians had to

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Greg Houston and South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET) *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*. 2nd ed. Vol. 3. Pretoria: Unisa, 2010, International Solidarity.

³⁷ Patrice Lumumba Coalition, African Activist Archive 1975-Present, Michigan State University.

struggle to get their work performed in countries outside the Republic. Many of the world's leading performers refused to perform in South Africa. Some actors and directors, such as Woody Allen, would not allow their films to be screened in the country. Some authors refused to let their books to be sold there. Some of the world's best television programs never aired in the Republic. Paul Simon was rebuked by the African National Congress for coming to South Africa to look for material for his *Graceland* record. Nevertheless, the black groups Ladysmith Black Mambazo and Stimela became famous as a result of their participation in the Simon record³⁸.

However, in the field of South African sports, blacks and whites suffered the most. In the 1960's the pressure to isolate South African sport was growing. The boycott was intensified in 1968 when Prime Minister John Vorster refused to allow England's cricket team to tour the country because they had included in their team an ex-South African colored cricketer, Basil d' Olivera. By the 1970's the boycott movement against South African players had grown very powerful. Long excluded from the Olympic Games, South Africans now experienced isolation in many other sports events. This led to such great pressure among South Africa to eliminate apartheid in sport that many sports administrators embarked on a policy of rapid integration³⁹.

The United Nations called for a cultural and sports boycott of all of South Africa including Sun City and the boycott was monitored by the Special Committee Against Apartheid. Those who detested apartheid and chose to honor the U.N. call knew that Sun City was built to get around the boycott, as a way to win back international favor and break South Africa's isolation.

In spite of the moral nuisances, the success of Sun City significantly benefitted the apartheid government financially and politically. Ultimately, these material benefits were deemed so valuable that the annoyance of morally objectionable behavior was worth tolerating. Analyzing the tourism market of the day, South African political scientists Jonathan Crush and Paul Wellings detailed the business relationship between the independent homelands like

³⁸ Jonathan Paton, *The Land and People of South Africa*. New York: Lippincott, 1990.

³⁹ Ibid.

Bophuthatswana and Pretoria, the governmental capitol of South Africa:

Tourism capital has the powerful back of Pretoria, the state controlled media, and South African financiers in its Homelands operations... There has been total complicity on the part of the South African state in the internalization of vice, and its marketing as a legitimate tourist attraction, in marked contrast to earlier stances. Even the normally vitriolic Dutch Reformed Church has muted its opposition and emits only occasional protests.⁴⁰

The establishment of designated areas for the pursuit of proscribed behavior went hand-in-hand with the legitimization of Bophuthatswanan independence. Financially, Bophuthatswana shared in the profits created by Sun City.⁴¹ The tourism market became one of the most reliable means that Pretoria had of recouping its investment in the homelands and ensuring the longevity of its political agenda.

Sun City played a significant role in breaking out of its political isolation and won back foreign favor by camouflaging the reality of a system whose intent is not desegregation but the creation of an all-white South Africa. In 1978, Connie Mulder, the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, said of the removal of blacks to homelands like Bophuthatswana, "if our policy is taken to its logical conclusion as far as the Black people are concerned, there will not be one black with South African citizenship... Every Black man in South Africa will eventually be accommodated in some independent new state in this honorable way and there will no longer be a moral obligation on this parliament to accommodate these people politically." But the removal of Blacks to barren, poverty stricken homelands, stripping away all their rights to economic and political participation in South Africa, is an injustice that is

⁴⁰ Jonathan Crush and Paul Wellings, "The South African Pleasure Periphery, 1966-83," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 21, no. 4 Dec., 1983.

⁴¹ One South African columnist references "an estimated R50-million annual profit from the country's half-share of the group's tourist revenue." See Doug Gordon, "And now – the pin-up stamp!" *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), November 23, 1980.

an integral part of the disgrace of apartheid.⁴²

From 1979-1984 Sol Kerzner invested millions of rand in the development of his entertainment empire. He hired singers, dancers, designers, and choreographers from around the world in order to create the Sun City Extravaganzas and convinced dozens of international music celebrities to give concerts at the Sun City Superbowl. While the U.N. sanctions of South Africa loomed large and gathered political strength throughout the 1980s, the international anti-apartheid movement could not dissuade this notable collection of artists and performers from participating in Sun City's mounting success. Many of these celebrities held fast to the principle that entertainment, regardless of its particular form, transcends political context.

Black performers garnered the most attention and criticism for their apparent collaboration with the apartheid state. Political organizations in the U.S. and U.K. targeted black performers in particular as if to shame them for their lack of solidarity with their black brothers and sisters in the West. Anti-apartheid groups in the West proposed a transcontinental solidarity and rested their argument on the grounds that struggles for racial equality were universal. This sentiment would feature prominently in the efforts of later anti-apartheid groups, including Van Zandt's AUAA in 1985.

FORMATION OF ARTISTS UNITED AGAINST APARTHEID

Nearly three decades ago, international pop star Little Steven Van Zandt formed a multi-racial organization of musical artists called Artists United Against Apartheid. This protest group was founded by Van Zandt and record producer Arthur Baker to protest apartheid in South Africa. In 1985, the group produced the song "Sun City" and the album *Sun City* in 1985 in an effort to inform Americans about apartheid and to support the cultural boycott of South Africa.

⁴² Dave Marsh, *Sun City by Artists United Against Apartheid, the Struggle for Freedom in South Africa: The Making of the Record*. New York, NY: Penguin, 1985.

Unlike “We Are The World,” the “Sun City” album and documentary spin-off carried a clear political message, which was discomfiting to some American radio and television stations. The intent was not just to tap the rhythms, but to share the people’s passion for freedom, to capture the way the black people of South Africa used music to energize their struggle.⁴³

The commitment here was substantially different from that of the Ethiopian relief singles; performers gained a lot of publicity when they sang for Ethiopia, but performers on Sun City were announcing their refusal to support racism, even when it pays well. It’s an urban, black-sounding record, which makes the protest that much more poignant. For once, the video may even have communicated the message more effectively than the record.⁴⁴

Steve Van Zandt considered using artists from various genres to sing one verse each, hoping to break down musical separatism in the United States as well as apartheid in South Africa. The idea took on a life of its own, and more than fifty-four musicians eventually wound up contributing their talents, including Bruce Springsteen, Jackson Browne, Gil Scot-Heron, Grandmaster Melle Mel, Bonnie Raitt, Lou Reed, David Ruffin, Run-D.M.C., Ringo Starr, Pete Townshend and Bobby Womack.⁴⁵ Together, these musicians recorded an album against apartheid focusing on support for the cultural boycott of South Africa and zeroing in on the well-known Sun City resort in the Bophuthatswana “homeland.” The song’s avowed mission was consciousness-raising first, fund-raising second. The lyric not only vowed “I ain’t gonna play Sun City,” but took a whack at forced relocation to Bantustans (“phony homelands”) and the policy of constructive engagement, blasting President Reagan by name.⁴⁶ Not only is the title song a powerful groove and a good chorus, it makes a logical, level-headed case for boycotting

⁴³Danny Schechter. “Artists United Against Apartheid.” *Africa Report* 32.4 (1987).

⁴⁴ Liam Lacey. “INSIDE THE SLEEVE POP Sun City Artists United Against Apartheid Sun City Stages Powerful Protest.” *The Globe and Mail*: Nov 21 1985.

⁴⁵ “Artists United Against Apartheid, ‘Sun City’ 100 Best Albums of the Eighties.” *Rolling Stone* . 18 Apr. 2011.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

South Africa's pleasure centre, Sun City, in the homeland of Bophuthatswana. In August, 1985 President Ronald Reagan compared the South African system of apartheid with earlier “racial segregation” policies in the United States. He suggested that apartheid, like legislated segregation in our country, had been “eliminated.”⁴⁷

In addition to the jazz number and the "Sun City" single, Miles Davis also appeared on several of the album's tracks, including the galvanizing rap collage "Let Me See Your I.D." A stark, harrowing glimpse of South Africa's totalitarian regime that, restricts free movement and forces blacks to carry identification papers, the song is centered on improvised lyrics by Scott-Heron and also features rapper Grandmaster Melle Mel; the Malopoets, a South African vocal group, and Peter Garrett, lead singer of Midnight Oil.⁴⁸

Early in October 1985, Manhattan Records released a 12-inch disk called "Sun City," with performers' royalties earmarked for the Africa Fund, administered by the American Committee for Africa. The song focuses on Sun City, the sports and entertainment complex in the so-called homeland of Bophuthatswana; its chorus is "I ain't gonna play Sun City." Under the apartheid system, Bophuthatswana has been set up as a nominally independent country for blacks, who then lose their South African citizenship. The United Nations General Assembly passed numerous resolutions encouraging a cultural boycott of South Africa; beginning in 1983, the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid published a blacklist of entertainers who performed in South Africa, including Sun City.⁴⁹

Fortunately, the lack of radio airplay didn't stop "Sun City" from reaching the public. Thanks to a spectacular video clip, directed by Godley and Creme, Jonathan Demme and Hart Perry, the anti-apartheid message was heard and seen around the world. More a mini

⁴⁷ African Media Program Collection, 1985 Karl Lorimar Home Video Inc., The African Activist Archive, Michigan State University.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ "Musicians Plan Anti-Apartheid Disk." *New York Times*, Late Edition (East Coast) Sep. 06 1985.

documentary than a music video, the visually inventive clip featured all the performers on the anthem and also crosscut recent footage of South African unrest with scenes of the sixties' civil-rights struggle in America. Vigorously championed by MTV and other cable outlets, the video raised both consciousnesses and record sales. Several months later, Van Zandt, Baker and others involved with *Sun City* were able to donate more than a half million dollars to causes supporting the anti-apartheid struggle. Perhaps more important than the money earned, the album threw an effective political punch: Not only did it discourage musicians from playing the South African resort city, but it also helped spread the word about new sounds like rap. "The Sun City project is about informing and motivating people," said a *Rolling Stone* review of the album in 1985.⁵⁰

In my observation of the video I also analyze how AUAA implemented a variety of visual and aural strategies to portray the anti-apartheid protesters in the U.S. and South Africa as racially integrated and politically unified in their opposition to apartheid. These strategies led to a conflation of national resistance movements (the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and the South African anti-apartheid movement) that obscured internal domestic divisions and promoted the faulty impression to U.S. audiences that the racial dynamics within South Africa were analogous to those within their own country.

"The idea is not to offend people, but to raise some consciousness," Van Zandt said. "It's just to start the discussion about an issue that needs attention. There's a lot that America does and is responsible for beyond its borders that people should be informed about."

Richard Knight, director of corporate research for the Africa Fund, said, "Some performers have justified their appearing at Sun City on the grounds that it was part of an "independent country." But no country besides South Africa, including the United States,

⁵⁰ Ibid.

recognizes Bophuthatswana as an independent country, nor does South Africa's black majority. Many people have refused to go, but Sun City offers very large sums of money."

"Sun City" was released as a seven-inch single and as a four-song EP, the latter including the song, an instrumental version, a rap version and a track that features recorded speeches by jailed South African activist Nelson Mandela and Nobel Peace Prize winner Bishop Desmond M. Tutu. It included Zulu chants performed by the Malopoets, a South African rock band from Soweto. A video clip of "Sun City" was also made.⁵¹

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, another staunch opponent of apartheid, visited the United States during a three week tour in December 1984 to garner pledges of moral support to abolish apartheid. While receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, Tutu had described President Reagan's South African policy as "immoral, evil and totally un-Christian." Later, speaking to a packed gathering at the Washington National Cathedral, Tutu exhorted the audience to "make a moral climate in this land that will make it impossible for any administration to co-operate with a system as vicious as South Africa's official policy of racial separateness." Tutu's U.S. visit elicited considerable criticism from apartheid apologist. While Tutu petitioned for U.S. backed sanctions against South Africa, critics in his homeland urged that he be charged with treason and that he be barred from all political activities, including public appearances and that he should be forbidden to travel abroad again.⁵² But African American entertainments came to his aid. For example superstar Sidney Poitier said that Tutu's mission was to create awareness among the American public of just how bad the situation in South Africa had become. Another Black superstar Diana Ross said: "I think people have been content to think that peace will eventually come to South

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid. Greg Houston. South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET) *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*. 2nd ed. Vol. 3. Pretoria: Unisa, 2010. International Solidarity.

Africa, but nothing is going to change in that country unless pressure is applied. If we're more aware of the urgency of the problem, we can act to do something about it." American songwriter Phyllis Hyman was also an outspoken critic on South Africa's institutionalized racism. Before it was in vogue, Hyman said she refused to go to South Africa. "I didn't go to South Africa before it was popular not to go to South Africa. My reasons for not going to South Africa stem from my deep political convictions. I knew enough about South Africa to know that it was a country infested with apartheid, infested with poverty and a lot of hatred against oppressed people – my people."⁵³ The core of Arthur Ashe's opposition to apartheid was undoubtedly his memory of growing up under segregation in Virginia. On January 11, 1985, Ashe and other civil rights leaders and famous entertainers were arrested outside the South African embassy in Washington, D.C. After his arrest he explained his opposition to apartheid to the *Washington Post*: "I speak with a great deal of personal experience I went through a segregated school system and a segregated society." By 1985, Ashe was at last satisfied that the anti-apartheid movement, once exotic, was blossoming in America. Behind the national effort was the Free South Africa Movement, coordinated by Randall Robinson.⁵⁴

Measured in terms of its ability to generate political activism and popular support, "Sun City" was an undeniable success. Artists United Against Apartheid in the U.S. and the British Anti-Apartheid Movement, in particular, spawned numerous related organizations that specifically targeted South Africa and made apartheid a cause du jour. The record, in spite of its overtly political message, cracked Billboard's Top 40.

The two prime movers behind "Sun City" were an unlikely combo. Little Steven Van Zandt, a songwriter and guitarist who cracked the rock and roll "fame barrier" as Bruce

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Arthur Ashe and Ronald Rampersad, *Days of Grace: A Memoir*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993.

Springsteen's sidekick and producer, wrote songs the way the journalists do stories – through on-the-scene investigations. He toured South Africa “to see for himself.” During the trip, he visited Sun City and found it a perfect symbol of apartheid because of its opulence amid the misery of Bantustan and its use as a magnet for foreign entertainers who were paid large sums of money to attract tourists and in the process legitimize the apartheid system. Arthur Baker, a streetwise record producer who owned a studio that he donated to the record's production became Van Zandt's partner and co-producer.

The lyrics on the album, openly denounce United States' policies toward South Africa and that African countries' system of racial segregation. When Frank Sinatra, Linda Ronstadt and other stars accepted multimillion-dollar paydays as part of the resort's drive to burnish its international image, the "I ain't gonna play Sun City" movement was born. The song's chorus says, “I ain't gonna play Sun City,” referring to the entertainment complex in South Africa's tribal homeland.⁵⁵ It also refers to the number of performers who have accepted bookings at the resort.

COLLABORATION OF MUSICIANS ON *SUN CITY*

We're rockers and rappers united and strong (Run-DMC)

We're here to talk about South Africa, we don't like what's going on (Melle Mel & Duke Bootee)

It's time for some justice, it's time for the truth (Afrika Bambaataa & Kurtis Blow)

We've realized there's only one thing we can do (Big Youth & all rappers)

I ain't gonna play Sun City

Relocation to phony homelands (David Ruffin)

Separation of families I can't understand (Pat Benatar)

23 million can't vote because they're black (Eddie Kendricks)

We're stabbing our brothers and sisters in the back (Bruce Springsteen)

I ain't gonna play Sun City

⁵⁵ Payton, Randolph. "I Ain't Gonna Play Sun City." *Afro-American (1893-1988)*, Dec 28, 1985.

Our government tells us we're doing all we can (George Clinton)
Constructive engagement is Ronald Reagan's plan (Joey Ramone)
Meanwhile people are dying and giving up hope (Jimmy Cliff & Daryl Hall)
This quiet diplomacy ain't nothing but a joke (Darlene Love)

I ain't gonna play Sun City

It's time to accept our responsibility (Bonnie Raitt)
Freedom is a privilege, nobody rides for free (Ruben Blades & John Oates)
Look around the world baby it can't be denied (Lou Reed)
Why are we always on the wrong side (Bobby Womack)

I ain't gonna play Sun City

Bophuthatswana is far away (Run-DMC)
But we know it's in South Africa no matter what they say (Kurtis Blow & Afrika Bambaataa)
You can't buy me, I don't care what you pay (Duke Bootee, Melle Mel & Afrika Bambaataa)
Don't ask me Sun City because I ain't gonna play (Linton Kwesi Johnson & all rappers)

I ain't gonna play Sun City

Relocation to phony homelands (Jackson Browne & Bob Dylan)
Separation of families I can't understand (Peter Garrett)
23 million can't vote because they're black (Nona Hendryx & Kashif)
We're stabbing our brothers and sisters in the back (Bono)

Baker, who was not as politically active as Van Zandt, had expressed his hostility toward apartheid. When Van Zandt told Baker about his plans to produce a song, Baker offered to help. At the time, neither knew that a single song would blossom into an album, documentary, then a video, and ultimately a book. What began as a couple of hours of recording transformed into months of studio work.⁵⁶

Van Zandt wrote and conceived Sun City after two visits to South Africa last year. The song, and the resulting video, focus on Sun City as well as the rioting sparked by racial injustices and features a host of top rock artists making it abundantly clear they aren't going to play Sun City. Produced by studio whiz Arthur Baker, the song features over 50 top stars gathered

⁵⁶ Danny Schechter. "Artists United Against Apartheid." *Africa Report* 32.4 (1987).

together under the group name Artists United Against Apartheid. Some of the bigger names involved include Springsteen, Bob Dylan, Miles Davis, Pat Benatar, Jackson Browne, Daryl Hall, John Oates, Herbie Hancock, Bonnie Raitt, Lou Reed, Ringo Starr, Pete Townshend, Bono, Peter Gabriel, Peter Wolf and the Band Aid man himself, Bob Geldof. The 45-minute video features footage from recording sessions in New York, Boston, Los Angeles and London, a behind-the-scenes look at the making of the rock video, a documentary look at some of the artists involved and the complete 7 1/2-minute version of the song Sun City.⁵⁷

“We were originally looking for eight or ten other people,” Van Zandt told Dave Marsh who chronicled the Making of Sun City of Penguin paperback about the project. “I honestly didn’t expect that many people to be committed to the project. It was very exciting because like most musicians, I spend most of my time doing things alone.” The urgency of the crisis inside South Africa prompted him to go ahead with the song as a single. One by one, other artists joined in and soon the song became a unity statement by the music industry, not just of one rock and roller.⁵⁸

Unlike the famine-relief record "We Are the World," "Sun City" takes an angry, partisan stance. One verse of the song, which was written by the former guitarist for Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band, Steve Van Zandt (also known as Little Steven), includes these lines:

"Constructive engagement is Ronald Reagan's plan/Meanwhile people are dying and giving up hope/This quiet diplomacy ain't nothing but a joke." Van Zandt explained the artists' strong stance as follows: "For artists to get involved with this," he said, "they had to want to make a statement. This is no time to be vague. Also, I've got a feeling that this is one area where Reagan

⁵⁷ Provick, Bill. "Sun City Video Beams Aid to Anti-Apartheid Movement." *The Ottawa Citizen*: 0. Jan. 10, 1986.

⁵⁸ Ibid. Marsh, Dave. *Sun City by Artists United Against Apartheid, the Struggle for Freedom in South Africa: The Making of the Record*. New York, NY: Penguin, 1985.

is very out-of-step with his own constituency." The song's chorus says, "I ain't gonna play Sun City," referring to the entertainment complex in the South African tribal homeland of Bophuthatswana. The white-minority government of South Africa has created Bophuthatswana as a nominally independent country for blacks, who then lose their South African citizenship. A video clip directed by Jonathan Demme (known for the Talking Heads film "Stop Making Sense") and edited by Kevin Godley and Lol Creme, who have made many innovative rock video clips, will promote the single.

"The beat is the first line of communication," Van Zandt said. "All around the world, everybody dances. We wanted the record to communicate at that level and let everybody absorb lyrics at their own pace. "Besides making it plain to musicians and sports people and actors that going to Sun City has serious consequences," he continued, "we wanted to send a signal to South African blacks, who haven't gotten anything but negativity from our government. I also wanted to refocus on racism in general, and show some of the parallels from South Africa to right here at home. They have black neighborhoods and we have black neighborhoods; they don't educate poor people, and neither do we. The Civil Rights Act 20 years ago did not cure everything."

The "Sun City" album shows how much flexibility modern recording technology allows. Unlike "We Are the World," for which all the singers performed at a single recording session, parts of "Sun City" were recorded at 15 recording studios – in New York, Los Angeles, Boston, Dublin and London – and assembled by Mr. Van Zandt and Mr. Baker. Along with two versions of the song "Sun City," the album also included "Let Me See Your I.D.," a group rap based on the single's rhythm track; "No More Apartheid," a free-form vocal by the British rocker Peter Gabriel, and "The Struggle Continues," in which a trumpet solo recorded by Miles Davis and a guitar solo by Stanley Jordan were given a new accompaniment by Herbie Hancock on keyboards, Ron Carter on bass and Tony Williams on drums. "Revolutionary Situation" is a

collage of rhythm tracks and spoken words from, among others, the South African activist Nelson Mandela, Bishop Desmond Tutu and President Reagan.

SECTION III IMPACT ON ARTISTS

I don't believe in going any place where you are not really wanted. Some people may do it for money, but as many times as I've been asked, I have refused.

- Joe Williams⁵⁹

The worldwide cultural boycott, one of the most effective sanctions ever imposed on South Africans, entered a difficult new phase that confused many international artists and angered some prominent local ones. For more than a decade, it had been a blanket boycott and offenders were easy to spot. Every foreign performer who performed in South Africa ended up on an international sanctions list monitored by the African National Congress (ANC) and the U.N. Special Committee Against Apartheid. American performers who have worked or even visited in South Africa – no matter what the circumstances – have later found doors closed to them in much of the world. And, back at home, they have faced plenty of bad publicity. The cultural boycott in some ways turned out to be a messy situation for some black artists.

Internationally, the apartheid movement drew criticism, and cultural bans and economic sanctions were imposed on South Africa. Help was given by neighboring countries to the anti-apartheid liberation movements, which showed that support for white rule in Africa was declining. When apartheid leaders in South Africa attempted to reduce international criticisms and sanctions, the liberation movements became more influential. Solidarity of the anti-apartheid movement was furthered by purely “beat-around-the-bush” reforms that apartheid government officials claimed actually gave more equality (less inequality) to blacks, but they were merely just that — claims. These reforms did not give much power, if any, to black South Africans, and

⁵⁹ Ibid.

were even opposed by blacks because the policies were obviously not intended to promote the livelihood of blacks. Important gains were made in the fight against apartheid only after pressures from abroad began to weaken the resolve of the South African government.⁶⁰

Constant appeals have been to African American artists in the fight against apartheid in South Africa. In particular, South African singer Sathima Ibrahim who recalled that Duke Ellington had told her and her husband Abdullah about repeated offers to play in South Africa, all of which he turned down. She stated: “I want to make a special appeal to all artists in the international community, and in particular to our Black American brothers and sisters.” Ibrahim urged them to support the struggle against racism in South Africa and not succumb to the lure of fat purses the regime and its backers offer. Musician Hugh Masekela said: “It is inconceivable to think that given the conditions and circumstances that exist in South Africa today and self-respecting artists would agree to go down and perform there without feeling any kind of remorse or shame.”⁶¹ Fortunately, there were a number of artists who honored the cultural boycott such as Phyllis Hyman, Roberta Flack, Gladys Knight, Joe Williams, and The Jacksons who all turned down offers to perform in Sun City.

South Africans had tried to lure top names in Black entertainment with tempting contracts, but artists such as Nancy Wilson, Sammy Davis Jr., Joe Williams and Natalie Cole, have refused to let dollar signs come before basic principles. Ms. Wilson explained, “I have never performed in South Africa, and I don’t plan to. What is happening there is wrong and my conscience and my heart will not allow me to be a part of it.”⁶²

⁶⁰ “Reigniting the Struggle – The 1970s through the Release of Nelson Mandela.” *South Africa: Overcoming Apartheid*. Michigan State University African Studies Center. 17 April. 2014.

⁶¹ Elombe Brath. “Black Artists and South African Liberation.” *New York Amsterdam News (1962-1993)*: 15. Oct 23, 1982.

⁶² Ibid.

ARTISTS WHO PERFORMED IN SUN CITY

At a time I was naive about the politics in South Africa. However, in recent months, I have turned down several lucrative offers to perform in that country and the Republic of Bophuthatswana. I will continue to reject such offers while the present circumstances prevail.
- Tina Turner⁶³

We have been there to witness the humiliating and dehumanizing effects of the apartheid system...We know we have lots of fans in South Africa and we want them to know we are not boycotting them. We are merely deferring performing in South Africa until this evil government is removed between us. And that, we hope, will be soon.
- The O'Jays

The 1970s was truly a decade of turbulent transitions torn by strife and plagued with crime, corruption, demonstrations, drugs, the draft, hate, political unrest, racism, riots, and war. The early 1970s was the pivotal point of protest, drawing attention to the U.S. government and the fighting in Vietnam. The turbulence of this period inspired and was reflected in the philosophical messages of much popular Black music. Indeed, Cleveland's own Edwin Starr's hit song, "War" topped the music charts in 1970, asking the question, "War what it is good for?" That same year, The Temptations sang "A ball of confusion, that's what the world is today."⁶⁴

Black artists were making more money in the 70s than ever before. To counter its increasing cultural isolation, the South African entertainment industry offered astronomical fees, to Black artists, according to press reports and interviews with agents and other entertainment industry sources. For example, those who have performed in South Africa or its integrated gambling resort, Sun City, included The Commodores, a popular black American singing group. The group quietly signed a contract to play Sun City, only to pull out under pressure from anti-

⁶³ John H. Johnson and Robert E. Johnson. "Should Famous Blacks Entertain in South Africa?" *Jet*, May 27, 1985.

⁶⁴ Bob Ferguson. "Back in the Day: The Memorable Music Messages of the 1970s." *Call & Post*, Jun, 2005.

apartheid groups when the news leaked back home. Instead, the Commodores performed for mostly white South African audiences in Botswana and Lesotho-sparsely populated countries whose capitals are only a 10-minute drive from South Africa.⁶⁵ Other black artists who went to perform in Sun City – such as the O’Jays, Curtis Mayfield, and Tina Turner – were unaware of the boycott and the unjust political system ravaging South Africa. Turner admitted after performing in South Africa in 1979 that she was naïve at the time about politics in South Africa.⁶⁶ Those who have turned down the lucrative offers include Stevie Wonder (\$2 million for one weekend), Ben Vereen (a little over half a million for a weekend) and Ella Fitzgerald for a similar figure.

The United Nations and South African organizations that support racial equality repeatedly had asked foreign artists not to play in South Africa until apartheid was uprooted. In fact, the UN passed a resolution in December, 1968, requesting "all states and organizations to suspend cultural, educational, sporting and other exchanges with the racist regime and with other organizations or institutions in South Africa which practice apartheid." Groups in the United States, Jamaica and Canada responded to the call for a boycott of artists who had ignored the UN's appeal.⁶⁷

In September 1983, Atty. Randall Robinson, executive director of TransAfrica, a lobbying group that focuses on issues involving Africa and the Third World, formed Artists and Athletes Against Apartheid. With veteran entertainer Harry Belafonte and ex-tennis pro Arthur Ashe serving as co-chairmen, the group was designed to solicit support from their colleagues and

⁶⁵ Scott Kraft. "COLUMN ONE Boycott Sounds a Sour Note Economic Sanctions may have More Teeth, but for Middle-Class South Africans the Cultural Curbs have More Bite." *Los Angeles Times (Pre-1997 Full text)*, Feb 24, 1990.

⁶⁶ John H. Johnson and Robert E. Johnson. "Should Famous Blacks Entertain in South Africa?" *Jet*, May 27, 1985.

⁶⁷ Norman Richmond. "The Apartheid Aftertaste South Africa can Haunt those Who Perform there." *The Globe and Mail*: 0. Mar 26 1983.

let the world know its members would not go to South Africa until apartheid was abolished.

Robinson told *JET*, “As long ago as 1968 the United Nations asked member states to join in the economic and cultural isolation of South Africa. They offer large sums of money and want major world entertainers to come there because they confer respectability on South Africa.” Belafonte, who was particularly outspoken in urging Blacks not to go to South Africa, said, “If you go to Johannesburg or Sun City and play to audiences, extracting inordinate amounts of money for your services and leaving little behind, by your presence, you are encouraging apartheid.”⁶⁸

The organization was quick to remind Black artists tempted by big bucks to perform in Sun City that South Africa upheld apartheid – institutionalized White – on – Black brutality. The white minority government denied the Black majority the right to vote, the right to own land, the right of free movement and 87 percent of South Africa was by law off limits to Blacks there; Black South Africans were required to carry their “passbooks” with them at all times for inspection by government officials; and lastly South African officials stripped nearly half of its 22 million Blacks of their citizenship.

When the National Party assumed power in 1948, they instituted the repressive apartheid system of severe racial inequality and enforced racial separateness. Many African American musicians opposed this system through their music and support of anti-apartheid political cause. Black artists that participated in the making of the album make specific political statements. One verse denounces the Reagan Administration's policy of "constructive engagement." Another reads: Relocation to phony homelands Separation of families I can't understand Twenty-three million can't vote because they're black.

⁶⁸John H. Johnson and Robert E. Johnson. “Should Famous Blacks Entertain in South Africa?” *Jet*. May 27, 1985.

CONCLUSION

South Africa was an example of a country where oppression, denial of civil and human rights, and discrimination in every walk of life based on color was legally enshrined in the Constitution and the law. The South African policy of apartheid was attacked by nearly every nation in the world, and in almost every session of the United Nations since 1946, with – until its repeal – no response from the South African Government except defiance, and steady increases in repressive, authoritarian measures.⁶⁹

As I mentioned earlier in this case study, specifically uses Sun City as a case study for exploring the impact the cultural boycott had on African American musicians. I propose that the political consciousness and personal convictions of black artists expanded the discourse on the immorality of the apartheid state in South Africa throughout the diaspora. Specifically, I attempt to point out the significance of the cultural boycott and its impact on Black musicians who participated in South Africa's quest for freedom against the apartheid state.

⁶⁹ American Committee on Africa New York, New York, Late 1965 or 1966, We say No to apartheid - A Declaration of American Artists. George M. Houser (Africa collection), Michigan State University Libraries Special Collections.

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