

Opinion

Apartheid protests transcend resumes

Not since the days of draft-card burning and anti-Vietnam protests have American college students rallied behind a cause as they are doing now in their crusade to shed all ties with racist South Africa.



Michelle Powe

Students across the nation, repulsed by South Africa's abhorrent apartheid policy, are pushing their schools to divest their South African-related stocks, and urging American companies to disinvest. But they are fighting an uphill battle. Only 42 colleges have fully divested or vowed to fully divest and 42 have partially divested. In 1985, 28 U.S. companies pulled out of South Africa.

American businessmen and college regents are reluctant to pull out of South Africa saying that such an attempt to punish the South African economy would have only limited effect, and that the impact would fall disproportionately upon blacks. The righteous thing for American companies to do, these proponents of investment say, is to try to promote desegregation, better pay and better working conditions for blacks in South Africa.

But since U.S. corporations employ only 1.2 percent of the South African work force, making an impact on the South African economy is difficult.

American corporations hold only 4 percent of South Africa's total investment, and American universities hold only a small fraction of those stocks. Some say such minimal investments make divesting meaningless. But that doesn't justify supporting a system of racism.

Even if U.S. corporations could help promote economic growth in South Africa, a healthy economy won't help the black majority. The money still will go to the white minority; the blacks will continue to be oppressed. U.S. corporations cannot solve South Africa's problem; South Africa has to do that for itself.

But South Africa can and will continue to ignore the problem of apartheid as long as foreign businesses invest in it. And that's where the campus movement comes in. By keeping the apartheid issue in the public's eye and on the public's conscience, students are making apartheid difficult to ignore and keeping the pressure on the backward South African government.

The white government in South Africa announced Wednesday that it will do away with restrictive pass laws. Blacks no longer will be required to carry identity passes, and will have more freedom to move from one city to another seeking work. Blacks still are not allowed to live in white residential areas — only in authorized black residential areas. More importantly, they still cannot vote.

The end of the pass laws could be the beginning of governmental reforms. It is evidence that outside pressures can bring about improvements.

The South African problem is a diplomatic issue which can be influenced by ordinary citizens — people who feel morally obligated to prevent their money from supporting racism and genocide.

For once the people, and not the government, can use the power of financial persuasion — by withdrawing and withholding money as punishment for morally reprehensible actions.

Divestment by colleges and universities is one way. Disinvestment — or pulling out — by U.S. companies in South Africa is another.

Boycotting companies which still invest in South Africa — such as Johnson & Johnson, Coca-Cola, Kellogg, Xerox and Revlon — may influence some of these foot-draggers to get out.

Whatever the method of breaking financial chains with South Africa, apathy is an even greater crime than supporting those acts of oppression committed against blacks in South Africa.

Students in this country are making a united effort to help South African blacks throw off the shackles of racism. Students in this country have demonstrated at long last that they care about something deeper than their resumes.

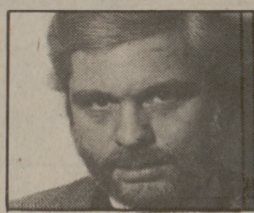
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United Feature Syndicate
MARGULIES
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Airline security measures effective terrorist deterrent

The El Al flight from Nairobi to Tel Aviv leaves at 4:20 a.m. On the nights of the flight, units of the Kenya Army guard the airport. Inside the terminal, soldiers are everywhere. They black berets and carry automatic weapons, but passenger security is left to Israelis. On the night I took this flight, there were about six Israeli security agents and maybe a company of Kenya soldiers present. We passengers were vastly outnumbered: There were only six of us.



Richard Cohen

That night in Kenya comes back to me because now the United States may have to follow Israel's example to ensure the safety of its own citizens and those of any country who choose to fly U.S. airlines. It may have to insist, as the Israelis do, that you arrive at the airport two hours before departure and that security agents go methodically through your luggage, questioning you as they go along. In Kenya, there seemed to be one agent for each passenger. One of them looked up from my luggage and said, "You know why we do this?"

"Yes," I said. "And take your time."

There are many ways to measure the success of a policy and all of them can be disputed. When it comes to terrorism, though, one gauge has to be the airline you choose to fly. Given a choice, I would pick El Al — and not for its cui-

sine. It's because I know that every one of my fellow passengers has been searched down to the toe nails. And I know, too, that the job has been done by security agents who have been trained for the job — not rent-a-cops who were guarding a warehouse the week before.

And I know something else. I know that some of my fellow travelers are armed security agents. Since I know that, I presume terrorists know it, too, and will choose another airline if they have the itch to do something violent. And finally, I know that El Al is the airline of a nation that will — no doubt about it — retaliate for a terrorist attack. I feel comforted by that. Maybe it's a comfort that has no basis in logic, but it does have a basis in experience. It has been 18 years since there has been a successful terrorist operation against El Al.

It is for all these reasons that the passenger in me — the guy who goes abroad — approves of the U.S. bombing raid on Libya. I know, as do most other Americans, that it will not instantly put an end to terrorism — in fact, it may inflame it. Terrorism, after all, is a manifestation of a larger political problem — the instability of the Middle East and the agony of the Palestinians.

But it's hard to see how the death of an American GI in a Berlin disco improves the plight of a Palestinian anywhere in their diaspora. It's even harder to justify the murder of TWA passengers over Greece. The fruits of terrorism are not political accommodation, but hatred and a stiffening of resolve. Certainly, that has been the case with Israel and Lebanon and Northern Ireland. In short order, vendettas replace political goals.

Bloodshed moots policy questions. Does it matter anymore that the Gulf of Sidra operation was a provocation — and everyone knew it? Does it matter that Libyan leader Moammar Khadafi has been bolstered, that the president has led us step by step to the point where it no longer is material to do how we got here — just what to do now that we are here.

With evidence of state-sponsored terrorism in hand, the genesis of the fight no longer mattered. What counted then was the government's obligation to ensure the safety of its citizens. The Israelis have proved you deal with force in several ways. One of them is to respond with force. There's an awful logic to it.

Now, though, we are in for an ugly fight. More lives will be lost. The innocent will die. Ultimately, the fight against terrorism can not be conducted by fighter planes from the air but by dreary, routine work on the ground. It will mean arriving at the airport two hours before departure, having your baggage methodically searched, having to answer seemingly silly questions posed by a perfect stranger — and sometimes having to go through the procedure twice.

All this will take time and money and maybe some lives, but the day has to come when passengers such as myself will fly U.S. airlines with the confidence I now fly El Al. Unfortunately, now seems to be the only way to run an airline.

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The Battalion

(USPS 045 360)

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Contest's 'clear winner' announced

EDITOR:

The long contest between comrades Karl Pallmeyer and Loren Steffy to write the most ridiculous, tasteless, anti-Christian column is over. Steffy's April 15 piece on Pat Robertson is a clear winner.

The premise that warfare against terrorism is somehow un-Christian is plainly silly, and I will waste no time refuting it here. What disturbs me most is the obvious lack of familiarity on Steffy's part with his subject. Pat Robertson is not only a dedicated Christian, but has proved himself a capable educator and administrator. He deserves better than the sophomoric jabs of a left-wing journalism student pushing a deadline. I, for one, will be happy to vote for him if he does the United States the favor of running for president in 1988.

If the Class of 1987 has not decided on its gift to Texas A&M, I recommend and will contribute to a fund to provide Steffy transportation to a country whose politics, leaders and values he will find more congenial. His incessant sniping at all things American and Christian has become pointless in its repetition.

Lanny R. Martindale '85

A farewell to tyranny

EDITOR:

Though I'm not a member of the NRA, I hardly feel I am a "loser" in the outcome of the recent gun control legislation despite The Battalion's assertion to the contrary.

As a history major, I know that man has usually lived under tyranny, his rulers exploiting him for their own glory and wealth. The axiom "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely" has been demonstrated to be true more often than not.

Most men holding great power (like Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos) sooner or later give in to the temptation to use it for their own benefit.

To prevent this by limiting the power wielded by any one individual, the framers of our Constitution developed a system of checks and balances. Since few of us living in America today have ever lived under tyranny, we tend to take this liberty for granted. But in light of history, we are a privileged people.

Abuse has occurred in our system as power has been increasingly concentrated at the federal level, yet it is held in check by the fact that American citizens are still armed. Consequently, government must ultimately answer to them. Taking firearms from the hands of responsible citizens is to remove this check and to invite tyranny.

Though the Battalion Editorial Board may feel that our Bill of Rights and democratic system are sufficient safeguards of our liberty, we should not be so naive. Liberty cannot be maintained by fine words on paper alone, just as our liberty was not gained by the writing of those words. Such words are meaningless if we lack the means to ensure that they are respected.

Therefore, I prefer to risk being at the mercy of a "collector's item" than to experience the certainty of tyranny by civil government over an unarmed populace.

Brian Arthur Frederick '87

Give terrorism policy a chance

EDITOR:

Michelle Powe's Friday column entitled "The Price of Tough Guy Image" is her attempt to blast President Reagan and his new terrorist policy before it has had a chance to get off the ground. Moreover, the column serves to display the scant amount of research she has done on the subject.

Mail Call

It is sad that a 15-month-old baby had to die in the attack, but can we really help the fact that Khadafy had his family housed on a military base and thus should bear most of the responsibility for his family's welfare? True, we possess "smart bombs," but they are ineffective in distinguishing civilian from soldier. Powe seems disturbed by our policy of striking back at terrorists only when we know we can win. I can't name too many armies which get into armed conflict with the objective of losing.

Powe accurately called Khadafy a madman and a threat to world security. In the same breath, she then terms Libya as the "little guys." This only proves that one need not be aligned with a superpower to carry out terrorist activities. Powe also incorrectly places Iran in the Soviet sphere of influence. The Moslem fundamentalists in Iran have no love for Moscow's atheistic doctrine.

Powe proposes that we have a consistent and unvarying retaliation policy. Why? What is the merit of having a tit-for-tat autopilot policy which only serves to take away the power of discretion and individual consideration from the president? Powe then twists the chronology a bit by criticizing Reagan for not retaliating in Lebanon in 1983 and East Germany in 1985. Retaliation was not our policy then. It is now.

So Ronald Reagan is trigger happy in Powe's eyes. I guess it is inconceivable that the president and many others are sick of seeing American civilians, all as innocent as the civilians in Tripoli, getting mowed down in ticket lines, in discos, on luxury liners and in the air, all in the name of Khadafy's prejudiced and inflated hate of the United States and the West.

Aaron P. Kiker

Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the address and telephone number of the writer.