

Opinion

Civil rights in U.S. took time, so will South African equality

Apartheid is the controversial institution of racial segregation practiced by the Republic of South Africa. These sets of rules recently have produced a new rash of demonstrations across the United States against restrictions applying to South Africa's non-white population. Blacks, Coloureds and Indians account for roughly 83 percent of the nation's populace. This vast majority is restricted not only in residence, but also in opportunity for education and health care. They also make up the majority of the blue collar labor force, which is low-paid.



Mark Ude

Apartheid is immoral, and the government of South Africa should reform these policies as rapidly as possible. There is no excuse for limiting the amount of income, health care or education, regardless of race, color, sex or religion.

Yet it would be foolish to expect South Africa to abolish apartheid overnight. Even if they did, such legislation would be ineffective for some time. Our own Emancipation Proclamation, imposed during the Civil War, didn't amount to a

hill of beans until Union troops finished the war and occupied the South. We all know that, while equality was passed over a hundred years ago, U.S. citizens still are experiencing racial discrimination. It is sad to attempt to force a foreign state to immediately resolve this crisis considering the time it took the United States to accomplish the same task.

Above all, it is absurd to advocate disinvestment from the South African economy merely for the sake of protest. If we demand such an action, we should ask ourselves what we would be doing.

In any country, investment produces the availability of capital, employment and new industry. As of now, in spite of present oppression, the non-whites enjoy one of the highest standards of living on the African continent. This is a result of a developed economy, which includes American companies.

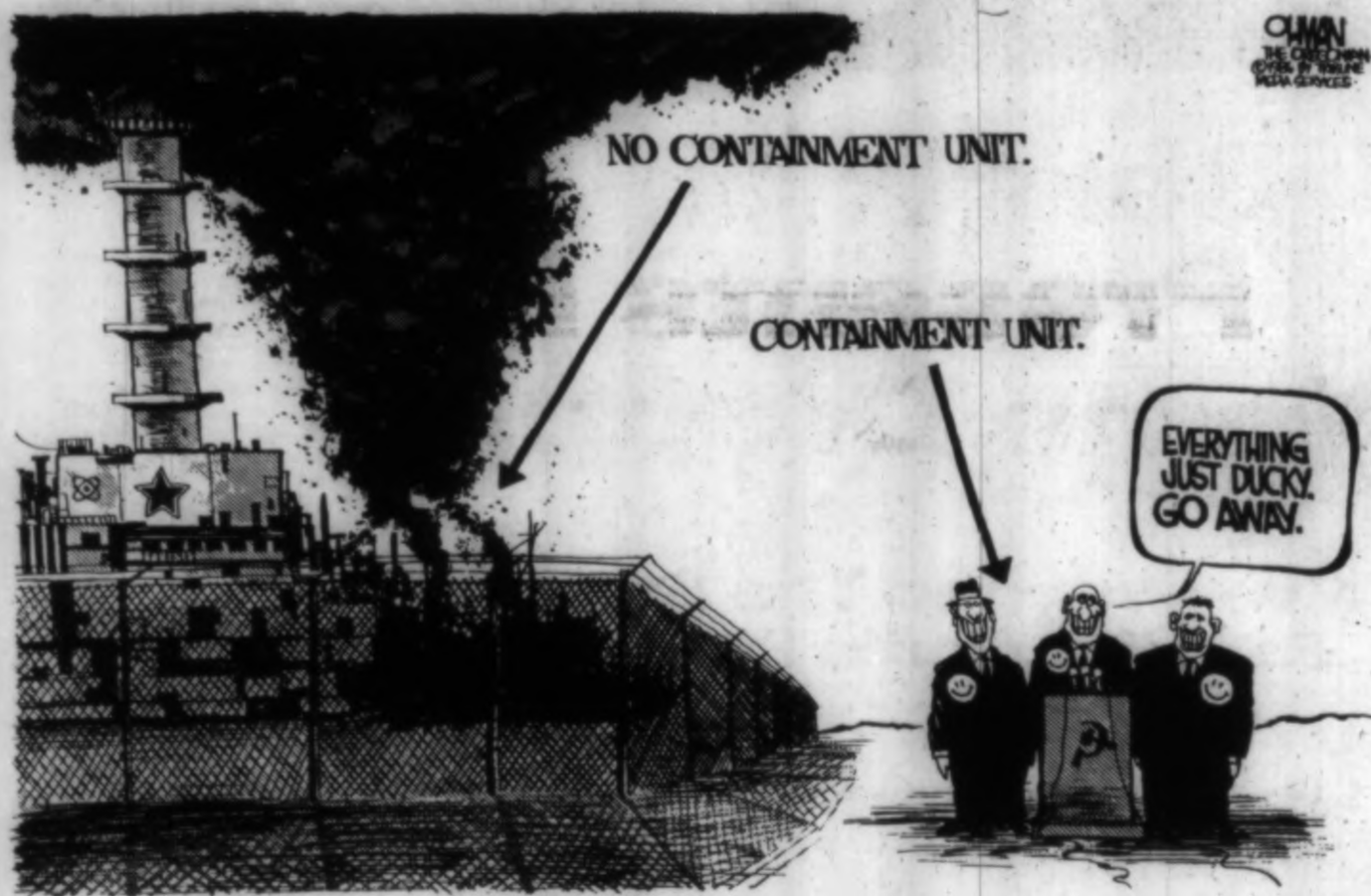
As companies pull out of South Africa, the whites are not the first to be laid off as a result of a worsening economy. To try to boycott companies like Coca-Cola, merely for staying in South Africa and trying to advocate social reform, is pure hypocrisy. Other companies — such as Pepsi — withdrew from South Africa, to the delight of many, yet they promptly doubled their investment with the Soviet Union. Without economic growth, which allows the blue collar

force to expand into higher paying jobs and companies to influence the government of South Africa directly, the problem will not only remain but worsen.

Regardless of our attempt to treat South Africa as our 51st state and subject to the United State's Constitution, we should be aware that the government of South Africa has had a complete change of direction in the past 30 years. The attitude toward non-whites has improved dramatically. Racism has continued because neither side has agreed to a compromise. Just as white South Africans do not wish for the country to become another Rhodesia, neither do blacks desire to remain members of the poor working class of South African society.

But with parliamentary representation for Indians and Coloureds, American companies advocating for change, the establishment of trade unions and the repeal of the pass laws, positive steps have been taken to provide equality. There is much more to be desired, especially political rights — all in good time. How long did Americans wait for women's suffrage?

Mark Ude is a senior geography major and a columnist for The Battalion.



Race quotas mean exclusion

Thanks to Morris Abram, we at last know what the meritocracy is. Abram is the vice chairman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, a longtime foe of both affirmative action and quotas and, therefore, a champion of earning your way by merit. He got two of his son's friends jobs on the civil rights commission.



Richard Cohen

This is the way you and I always knew the meritocracy works. It explains why the sons of alumni become, after four short years, alumni themselves or, if you prefer, how a bunch of rich men in California, with a trip here and some advice there, made Ronald Reagan into yet another rich man in California. In the meritocracy as in the garment business, one hand washes the other.

In Abram's case, he recommended two of his son's friends for jobs with the civil rights commission. In nine months, one of the son's friends zoomed through four salary grades and in 13 months the other went up five grades. Abram denied having anything to do with the promotions and, indeed, there is no evidence that he did. No one has even suggested that the two employees, friends of the boss' son though they might be, are not qualified for their jobs.

And that, of course, is the nub of the argument both for and against affirmative action. While its critics blast it as un-American, discriminatory or (as Abram described set-asides) blatant tokenism,

most of the world realized long ago that its proclaimed alternative, the meritocracy, is a mere ideal. You almost never see the real thing.

Take the case of the two civil-rights commission staff aides. Probably, they are qualified for their jobs. Probably, they are bright, industrious and an example of the meritocracy at its best. But they also know the boss' son. And it was the boss's recommendation that secured them the jobs. There is a chance, just a chance, that if Abram were at, say, the Commerce Department, the two men would now be working there. And if Abram were in ladies' garments (wholesale, of course), who knows: The two men might even now have the Western sales territory.

Blacks and other minority groups usually don't have such connections. Having been excluded from the upper reaches of both government and commerce for years, they are in fact excluded from jobs at the upper reaches of both government and commerce. They do not know Abram. They do not know his son. They do not, by and large, go to Columbia University. And some of those who do, do so because of affirmative action programs of one sort or another. When they say that meritocracy is yet another name for racial barriers, you can see what they are talking about: They're talking about Abram, his son and his friends.

Years ago I wrote a column about Allan Bakke, the medical student whose suit struck down an affirmative action program based on quotas at the University of California at Davis. It was one of the hardest columns I ever had to write. I

was, as the jargon goes, conflicted — torn between a desire to recognize the special needs of minorities and the plight of Bakke himself. After all, there was no getting around the fact that he would have been the innocent victim of racial discrimination, excluded from medical school because he was one white too many.

Since then, the issue has become no easier. Always, preferential treatment of any kind — goals, quotas, call it what you want — means that someone gets excluded. Bakke originally was rejected from medical school because he is white, but people are rejected or selected all the time because they are Northerners or Southerners, athletes or actors, foreign or American and, often, the child of an alumnus or big money giver. If all things being (more or less) equal, the child of an alumnus gets the nod, then why is it so wrong to take race into account? After all, there is merit in attempting to overcome the effects of racial discrimination.

Life is a vast game of musical chairs in which winning and losing should be decided only by merit. Often it is not. Sometimes you win because you're fast on your feet. Sometimes you win because someone holds a chair for you. Abram himself, the son of an immigrant Russian Jew who settled in Fitzgerald, Ga., is an example of both. He made it on his own. But having made it, he most certainly helped his son and, now, his son's friends.

Meritocracy is like anything else. If you want to make it work, you need connections.

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Mail Call

Communism versus capitalism

EDITOR:

I can't believe that members of this conservative University have fallen for the divestment scam. The real issue in South Africa is not human rights. The real issue is communism versus capitalism. The most powerful groups in South Africa that are preaching overthrow of the white government aren't interested in black rights. They murder their own people daily.

They are Soviet backed and include officers of the KGB. Members of the African National Congress and the United Democratic Front were seen carrying communist banners in the recent May Day demonstrations. How much more proof do we need? That fact that they chose May Day for a demonstration should be enough!

The anti-apartheid groups on this campus and across the country support the ANC and UDF and are themselves the product of leftist activists, past and present.

The real reason for pushing divestment becomes painfully obvious. These groups don't care if pressure is put on the South African government to give blacks equal rights. They want a total destruction of the South African capitalist system.

We cannot afford to allow the Soviets to control South Africa, as they do Zimbabwe, Angola, Mozambique and Zaire. South Africa means too much to the United States in terms of stic minerals and control of the Arabian oil route around the tip of the CPE OF Good Hope.

It may take time, but South Africa will eventually settle its racial problems. Until then, my support goes out to those who, like our Board of Regents, will stand up to the communist gangsters who would have us destroy South Africa.

Brian Petruskie '83

Different directions

EDITOR:

In his article on Monday, Mark Schulz claims the Americans for Biblical Government wish for the United States to return to "Biblical-based law," which they seem to think dictates right-wing policies.

I am a Christian, and my study of the Bible leads me in quite a different direction politically.

For instance, the ABG supports Reagan in his request for \$100 million to aid the Contra rebels in their fight against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua, and they cite instances of murder and torture as being of special concern. (ABG handout for their April 14 meeting.) The Sandinistas are undoubtedly guilty of these actions. However, is supporting the Contras, who also murder and torture civilians, the Biblical response?

As a Christian, I could not commit those acts, nor should I pay for someone else to.

Jesus calls us to "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you." (see Luke 6:27-31).

Also, Schulz complains of our "welfare system that encourages laziness..." While our current welfare system has many faults, I believe a nation based on Biblical truths would have a much more extensive welfare system. Acts 2 describes the community of the early Christians as having "everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need." (Acts 2:44-45).

Jesus calls the poor "blessed," but says "woe to the rich." (see Luke 6:20-26.) Perhaps, as a rich nation, we should be more concerned about the oppression of the poor and weak.

I'd like to conclude by saying that a Biblical government would be concerned with such sins as materialism, nuclear arms buildup, the exploitation of the poor and the oppression of blacks, women, etc., as well as sins like abortion and pornography. I suggest the ABG members read their Bibles again and attempt to take Jesus more seriously in their formation of "Biblical-based laws."

John R. Alexandar

New former student's gift

EDITOR:

An open letter to the Association of Former Students. As a graduating senior, I have received your letter asking me to turn over my housing and/or property deposit to you as a donation.

I am sorry, but I had already filed for a refund and didn't want to confuse the fiscal department by sending your form in also.

However, I have decided to donate all money I have given the University Police for parking fines. That comes to a pretty good chunk and I haven't filed for a refund, so they still have it. Just ask them.

I release this money to you free of restriction on how you use it. But I do suggest that you donate the money to the University to build more parking space or repair what's in place.

Rest assured I shall send you more money next year, after I have settled into my new job. Please contact me if the police need my signature to release this money to you.

Ken Skaggs

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