

Excerpt from “State of the U.S. Anti-Apartheid Movement: An Interview with Randall Robinson” by Clarence Lusane (October 17, 1985)

We started the campaign with three major objectives to be pursued in sequence. The first objective was to more broadly educate the American people on South Africa, and to do that through civil disobedience and broad demonstrations that would provoke the kind of press coverage that the issue has gotten in the United States over the last eleven months.

The second objective growing out of that was to begin a dramatic change in American policy toward South Africa. As a result, the Congress and the administration found themselves in a posture of having to account to a newly informed and invigorated American public. The Congress responded with legislation and President Reagan with an inadequate Executive Order that nonetheless repudiated his own policy of constructive engagement, but does little else in moving us significantly towards the kind of sanctions that the situation in South Africa warrants.

The third objective—yet to be realized, and that’s what we have to work on—is that when American policy changes as substantially as it ought to, it begins to influence policy in other Western countries. Then we will have South Africa in a position to do nothing but respond to Western pressure and to negotiate with the real leadership in South Africa. Now, progress toward that objective has been made inasmuch as the unrest in South Africa, coupled with heightening pressure and concern around the world, has produced a hemorrhage of money leaving South Africa both in investment and in back commitments, and that has caused the South African government an unprecedented kind of concern about the traditional commitment of the West to support the regime...

It’s hard to put a timetable on social change as a general rule since it’s difficult to forecast with any accuracy..... I’m confident...that we will see change in the foreseeable future. We are closer to it now than we have ever been.

SOURCE: Clarence Lusane, “State of the U.S. Anti-Apartheid Movement: An Interview with Randall Robinson,” October 17, 1985. In *Let Nobody Turn Us Around: Voices of Resistance, Reform, and Renewal; An African American Anthology*, edited by Manning Marable and Leith Mullings, 554-556. New York: Bowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000.