



POSITION PAPER ON THE CULTURAL AND ACADEMIC BOYCOTT

*Adopted by the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress
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- 1.1. The cultural and academic boycott were conceived as important aspects of the ANC's strategy for the total isolation of the racist minority regime. After intensive campaigns, conducted by our movement and people, with the support of the world's anti-apartheid forces, the UN and other international agencies, cultural, sporting, academic and other contacts between the international community and apartheid South Africa are today reduced to a bare minimum. These campaigns have already resulted in the exclusion of official South African sports teams from every world sport body; the virtual exclusion of South Africa from international entertainment circuits; the cutting off from international academic networks of South African academicians and scholars; and the stigmatisation of artists, cultural workers, sportspersons and academics who continue to foster links with apartheid South Africa.
- 1.2. The multi-pronged offensive of the democratic forces, inspired by the ANC, has resulted in the transfer of the initiative from the oppressor regime to the people. An important and dynamic dimension of this democratic offensive against the structures and institutions of apartheid colonialism is the sphere of culture — embracing the arts, other intellectual pursuits and sports. Cultural activity has won and already occupies an important position as an integral part of our overall strategy for national liberation and democracy.

Cultural workers, activists and artists have increasingly begun to assume their rightful role in the struggle for freedom and are actively assisting to mould, through their work, the values, ethos and mores of an emergent non-racial and democratic South Africa.

The application of the boycott has to take account of these new developments.

- 1.3. The culture of apartheid and colonialism is almost universally regarded as a tool of oppression, intended to maintain the oppressive status quo to imbue the oppressed with a sense of powerlessness and resignation, rather than the will to resist and assert their humanity.

In the process of struggle, the people of South Africa have evolved a democratic culture of liberation, which expresses their social and political aspirations. This culture, though distinctly South African, is infused with an internationalist, humanist spirit that draws upon the best of the cultural heritage of all the population groups of our country and that of the rest of humanity. It encompasses the artistic, intellectual and material aspects of culture.

In order to grow and develop this emergent culture of liberation needs to interact with, and be exposed to, the progressive intellectual and cultural currents in the rest of the world.

- 1.4. The poor educational, training, performing and other facilities which are uniformly imposed on all Black communities are a direct expression of the oppressive character of the apartheid regime. This inequitable access of the various communities to adequate facilities has led to actual inequalities of performance between Black and White.

As a consequence of this established pattern of White privilege maintained at the expense of Black disadvantage, all the major means of cultural production and reproduction are owned and controlled by a tiny élite, drawn exclusively from the White community. This includes printing presses, publishing houses, film, video and sound studios, art galleries, sports facilities and other outlets for cultural expression.

Black artists in particular have as a result been victims of the most extreme forms of cultural exploitation and degradation, including the vulgarisation and debasement of authentic indigenous art and cultural forms.

- 1.5. The apartheid regime has for decades sought to impose the most stringent and repressive controls on the print and electronic media in South Africa. The minority regime's statute books are replete with a plethora of laws empowering the regime to suppress and proscribe the dissemination of accurate information in and about South Africa.

Beginning with the so-called 'Hostility Clause' in the Native Administration Act of 1927, the regime has employed its wide-ranging powers to suppress several newspapers, journals, magazines and other publications. In terms of the Undesirable Publications Act it has also restricted and controlled the inflow of information and cultural artefacts from outside South Africa.

The suppression and circumscription of the press and other media is an important weapon in the arsenal of the oppressor regime which it wields to consolidate its power vis-à-vis the oppressed and exploited majority.

- 1.6. Inspired by the example of the other organised formations of our people, the various artistic disciplines have begun to organise themselves into collectives in order to fight, together with other sectors of our society, to secure their economic, political and other aspirations as cultural workers.

The pioneers in this field have been the writers and musicians, whose organised bodies already play a not insignificant role in the Mass Democratic Movement.

This trend towards organisation must be strengthened and built upon as the cultural workers' first line of defence against potential and actual exploiters and as a means of enhancing the artists' contribution to the national democratic struggle.

- 2.1. The Cultural and Academic Boycott of Apartheid South Africa (i.e. those bodies, institutions, cultural workers and their product that promote, defend and give aid and comfort to the system of White minority domination) must consistently and continuously be strengthened as part of our overall strategy

for the isolation of the Apartheid regime.

No cultural workers, artists, sportspersons or academics should be permitted to travel to South Africa to perform or to impart their services and expertise, save and except in those instances where such travel is clearly in furtherance of the national democratic struggle or any of its objectives.

- 2.2. Democratic and anti-racist South African artists, cultural workers, sportspersons and academics — individually or collectively — who seek to perform, work or participate in activities outside South Africa should be permitted to do so without fear of ostracism or boycott.

It would greatly facilitate matters if the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) created credible structures for consultation inside South Africa to vet such travel. The National Liberation and Democratic Movement should also be timeously informed of such plans so as to enable it to offer advice and assistance where necessary.

- 2.3. The current effort to create broad non-racial governing bodies in every major sports discipline has become an important new arena of struggle of the forces of national liberation and democracy. It deserves the support and assistance of the international community if it is to realise its potential.
- 2.4. It is the task of the forces of national liberation to promote and project the liberatory cultural values evolved by our people in and through their struggle. The national liberation movement should foster these democratic values and assist the exponents of this democratic culture to establish contact with democratic cultural workers in other parts of the world.
- 2.5. The National Liberation Movement (NLM) and the MDM must internationalise the campaign to defend the democratic media and journalists in South Africa. The flow of regular and accurate information about events in South Africa is a weighty factor in mobilising international opinion against apartheid and in support of our struggle.

The NLM and all other democratic forces have a duty to assist the fledgling alternative media inside the country by ensuring that the international solidarity movement, NGOs and international agencies offer financial, technical and other forms of assistance.

- 2.6. The suppression and circumscription of the inflow of information, cultural products and artefacts from outside South Africa is an important weapon in the arsenal of the oppressor regime, which it wields to consolidate its power vis-à-vis the oppressed and exploited majority. The NLM and the MDM support the inflow of progressive cultural products, artefacts and ideas into our country so that these become readily accessible to the widest sections of our people. We support and encourage the dissemination of all cultural products, artefacts and ideas that enhance the struggle for democracy and promote democratic, humanist values as opposed to the oppressive, retrograde values and misanthropic ideals. This applies to books, newspapers, journals, magazines, video, film and sound recordings manufactured and produced outside South Africa.
- 2.7. The organisation and mobilisation, on a continuing basis, of the various artistic disciplines, sports codes and academics into the fold of the Mass Democratic Movement and into a co-operative relationship with the National Liberation Movement remains a priority task.