Sudden change will hurt S. Africa

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blacks, but I tried to compare it to the blacks' treatment in the American South in the early twentieth century.

Xan Smiley questioned this comparison. "In fact, there are no similarities between the plight of the black American, and that of the blacks in South Africa," he wrote in his article "Misunderstanding Africa." Unlike the situation in America, the black in Africa does not necessarily want money, education, or any of the necessary things for blacks to be treated as whites.

In Africa, nations is confused with equality. Though most of the blacks throughout Africa are fundamentally equal to whites, they do not have the same desires. Because of this, their primary aim is not necessarily to be treated as whites. The South African black's goals are to be colorless and equal.

President Nkomo is the only state-sanctioned racist policy practice that is a "democratic" state. Once I had learned more about South Africa's policies and compared them to America's, I realized how much this situation was being remade. So, we could practice such policies in our community. After my visit, however, I understood that under these racist policies, the nation would never have progressed into a rich progressive, cultural and economic continent. I believe that change must be slow and impossible to ignore.

Before my trip, I believed fervently that the blacks should be granted total equality immediately. I thought that the American government needed to pressure the South African regime toward democratic, economic, social, and political changes. In the twenty-first century, the blacks might have to change "overnight," but not at the same rate as in the different black population. I did not realize the complexity of the situation.

While the government could make blacks equal citizens and take over the reins of government to black leaders tomorrow, could the country function properly without enough trained, educated, and experienced leaders? I used to think that the answer was "yes." By the end of my trip, however, I realized how mistakes are not reduced. The American has about South Africa. My answer to this same question is now a definite "no." An immediate change in the color of the regime would provide the blacks with immediate satisfaction, but it would not solve any long-term problems.

Certainly, reforms should be introduced. Black leaders should definitely be integrated into the national government, and practices such as segregated buses, trains, and restaurants should be gradually done away with. Efforts should be made to provide a more diverse and equal education system. Black activist that is what is to be done. Black activist that is what is to be done. As the government should be changed, the "one man, one vote" concept should be changed. I believed that the blacks obtain power they will not practice the same system of apartheid as is now practiced by the whites! Who can demand that the South Africans wish that they would have worked at for years, economicall, scientifically, and intellectually, face possible ruin if they were to lose control of the country?

Although I was horrified by many of the policies of segregation practiced by the government and individual citizens, I do not think that the blacks are really treated "badly." Their wages, though not as high as those of whites, are the highest of any country in Africa. The infant mortality rate, the literacy rate, and the standard of living among the South African blacks are better than in any black nation on the continent. I would like to see the system change "overnight," but not at the expense of stability. My experience in South Africa demonstrated to me that change must come in South Africa, as I truly believe and believe it will, but this change cannot be forced; it can only be slowly nurtured.

feedback

Class gift should make a statement

To the Editor:

In the coming weeks, the class of '87 will be deciding on a senior class gift to the Institute. As a class member and future alumna, it is important that I raise my concerns regarding this topic with my classmates and the entire MIT community. I propose that the senior class gift be donated in full to the MIT Endowment For Divestiture (EFD).

The purpose of this letter, rather than continuing to campaign for my proposal, is to encourage people to think about this issue in certain ways. The idea of giving the gift to EFD has two main facets that must be given thought. First, is it appropriate to donate the "non-material" gift such as the one I propose? Second, is it appropriate to address political issues in doing so?

The first question, that of donating a gift other than a material object, is one that could and should be considered. In essence, it is a choice between a gift that people will see and perhaps use, as opposed to a gift which will be a unique exercise in thoughtfulness by this class, directly involving our ideals and values. Both kinds of gifts can be valuable as ways of being remembered, and of reflecting a class spirit. I encourage people to ponder on what relation the spirit of the class of '87 might have to changing now, believing in the "outside world," the same world we will enter in June.

In regard to the second question, that of such a gift having political concerns, I point out that 60 percent of the senior graduates who participated in last year's UA referendum voted for divestiture. Bringing in a political issue with our senior class gift would mean making a commitment toward values that are greater and more lasting than simply checking of a box on a voting ballot. Thus, an important question is: just how committed were we to the values expressed in the referendum? This senior class gift will make that decisively clear.

As a way of promoting meaningful thought, persistent discussion, and reaffirmation of our values, I believe that donating to EFD is a right thing to do. EFD is a trust fund formed by the faculty, staff and students (including a student senator) to put pressure on MIT to sell all of its stocks in companies doing business in South Africa. If by 1994 MIT has not divested from companies, the EFD will give all of its funds to be equally divided between the United Negro Fund and Amnesty International. Beyond doubt, these two charitable organizations would, by themselves, be worthy recipients of our class gift.

I therefore encourage all seniors to consider this matter further and express their opinions on the two main issues I have raised here. It is interesting to note that the Harvard senior class has chosen for the past three years to make one of its gifts to encourage Harvard University to divest. As every political action can gain more significance when seen as part of a greater political movement, I hope that MIT students will also see this step as part of an ultimate goal of bringing to an end MIT's participation in apartheid.

Mauricio D. Taveron '87

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