

We helped S. Africa flourish, expert says

By Lori Gill
special writer

South Africa is an out-of-control child of the United States, one that in the 1960s and '70s, through the leadership of this country, has flourished and grown, Dr. David Wiley, director of South African Studies at Michigan State University, said Oct. 16.

Wiley, along with Christine Root of Michigan's House Democratic research staff, spoke to an audience of 200 at Oakland University as part of a public symposium on the "Crisis in South Africa: The American Response."

"For the Congress in both houses to vote by an overwhelming majority for sanctions against a country which the President says we are constructively engaged, and for General Motors to be sponsoring a number of seminars with black leaders to talk about how they're staying in South Africa is good for the South Africans, all suggest how serious an issue for Americans this has become," said Wiley.

He talked about the "racial repression system," suggesting the government of that country has put on a public relations campaign for the United States in an attempt to influence important decision makers.

In the campaign, said Wiley, they are running runners that reform is taking place, while in fact the racial structure

has not changed, but remains intact and aggressive.

THE SYMPOSIUM, sponsored by the African and Afro-American Studies Program at OU, was held to help gain an understanding of the situation in South Africa as it exists today.

Wiley is among the directors of two international organizations, the Association of African Studies Programs and the Association of Concerned African Scholars, that have done extensive research and are foremost authorities on apartheid.

He told the mixed audience of young, old, black and white people, that now is the time for Americans to be concerned. The urgency of the situation, he said, is reflected in a recent report from the University of Capetown that said that as many as 100 people a day are being arrested and thousands are being routinely tortured, many of them youths.

"In my own judgment, in South Africa today, unless there is a radical change in U.S. policy, we will be re-emphasizing to those who kept that government in power for a longer period of time because we thought it was best for our own economic interests," Wiley said.

In the second part of the symposium, Root discussed the content and implications of divestment legislation under

consideration in Lansing.

For 10 years Root has worked with the Center on International Policy and the Washington Office on Africa. She has also done extensive research on the problems that face South Africa and how to remedy them.

ROOT EXPLAINED the bill, introduced by Rep. Virgil Smith of Detroit and co-sponsored by 32 other members of the House, which calls for the two largest public employee pension funds in the state to divest.

"These pension funds of the state employees and the public school teachers have about \$2.8 billion invested in American companies that operate in South Africa," Root pointed out.

She said the \$2.8 billion worth of securities would be sold over a five-year period and reinvested in American companies that are not involved in any way with South Africa.

There are currently 300 American corporations operating in that country. Fortune 500 companies like General Motors, Ford, IBM, Dow Chemical, Upjohn and Burroughs, many of which are Michigan based, have been central in bringing technology and industrialization into South Africa.

It will be a hard-fought battle in Lansing, but one worth fighting for, because after years of researching the problem and cries of protests the government has not listened to, divestment

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— David Wiley,
MSU director,
South Africa Studies



David Wiley
understanding South Africa

is the best solution to apartheid, Root said.

Nine states have laws for divestment. Although Michigan has not yet passed the new legislation pending, it was one of the first in the country to put economic pressure on South Africa.

IN 1980 a law was passed in Lansing stating that any excess funds from the state would not be deposited in any banks that made loans to the South African government.

"That was the first bill in the country to put some concrete economic pressure on South Africa. That was a very important beginning of momentum that has built, very significantly, into a national movement," Root said.

Crafts will be on display

The handwork of Providence Hospital employees will be on display and for sale during Arts and Crafts sale on Friday and Saturday, Nov. 8 and 9, in the Southfield Hospital's Fisher Center auditorium. Hours are 3-8 p.m. Friday and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday.

In addition to the arts and crafts, homebaked goods and desserts will be offered and a variety of handmade prizes will be given away in several raffle drawings. Tickets will be 50 cents each or three for a dollar. There

is no admission charge.

A concessions stand will be stocked with hot dogs, chips, pretzels and beverages.

A few of the items include needle work of all kinds, ceramics, stuffed toys, Christmas ornaments, stenciled items, wreaths, silk and dried flower arrangements, tooth fairy pillows, knitted and crocheted clothing and more.

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