

## To Remain Firmly Opposed to Apartheid's Madness

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To The Editor:

"In South Africa, Black Leninism" (Op-Ed, Oct. 9) by John Silber, president of Boston University, which attacks the African National Congress, is a contribution to the next effort by the pro-Pretoria apologists in the United States to derail the growing antiapartheid movement worldwide. The stance Mr. Silber has taken is indeed crude, considering that he is president of a prestigious university.

Should his red baiting appeal to your readers, it would not be the first time this desperate and simplistic characterization has been used to confuse the people of our country about the motivation of struggles against racist oppression.

As a son of the South, I witnessed firsthand how this smear tactic was used against the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., whose name has, ironically, been invoked by Mr. Silber to give credence to his argument. The last-minute speeches by Senator Jesse Helms and others to prevent the establishment of a national holiday in honor of Dr. King read much like Mr. Silber's warning about the A.N.C.

It is the worst kind of demagoguery to drag Dr. King into this dishonor-able charade, especially since he supported the African National Congress in his lifetime. In 1962, Dr. King stood together with the A.N.C. leader Albert J. Luthuli, winner of the 1960 Nobel Peace Prize, in calling for comprehensive sanctions against the Pretoria regime.

Dr. King knew well the strong African National Congress tradition of nonviolent resistance, and while he may have differed from a personal, philosophical view with the A.N.C.'s resort to armed struggle, he would be the first to understand the racist brutality and the frustration out of which the armed defense of the A.N.C. grew.

Either Mr. Silber is ignorant of this history or he is deliberately seeking to mislead us. Whatever the reason, it clearly compromises his leadership of an academic institution that has distinguished itself for free and accurate research. After all, the African National Congress is not a monolithic political party, but an exiled united front that is bound together, not by ideological uniformity but by a common abhorrence of, and determination to overthrow, apartheid.

The one unifying symbol of this diverse movement is undoubtedly Nelson Mandela - held in prison for more than 20 years by the racists in Pretoria. So if Mr. Silber wanted to offer a representative quotation from the African National Congress, I suspect he knew that should have rightly come from Nelson Mandela himself.

Mr. Mandela reaffirmed for a recent meeting of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group what he said in 1955: "From my reading of Marxist literature and from conversations with Marxists, I have gained the impression that Communists regard the parliamentary system of the West as undemocratic and reactionary. But, on the contrary, I am an admirer of such a system."

The people of South Africa are near victory in their fight against institutionalized racism. United States citizens have taken a strong stand in support of their fight.

We must not let Mr. Silber's voice and those of the others who are sure to follow deter us in our determination to rid the world of apartheid's madness.

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