

From Sitting In to Camping Out:
Student Protest, Shanties, and the Struggle Against Apartheid South Africa

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*And remember the unquenchable will for freedom
Remember the dead
and be glad*

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Chapter One: Introduction, Research Question, Methods

In the early morning hours of May 11, 1985, public safety officers at Cornell University drove a bulldozer to the front of the main campus administration building to demolish fifteen wooden shanties built by student anti-apartheid activists. The cardboard, plastic, and plywood structures symbolized the impoverished living conditions of black South Africans who were suffering—and dying—under apartheid. Unwilling to allow the officers to destroy the shanties, the Cornell students wired their bodies to the structures, and waited. The officers arrived and cut the wires with bolt cutters and forcibly disentangled the students so that the demolition could continue. However, the students, who were fiercely committed to the cause of divestment, fashioned a human chain around the shanties and resisted the bulldozer's advances. The public safety officers conceded for the day, and the shanties remained standing. With each day that the shanties stood, students organized, strategized, held public forums, and even slept within the provisional walls (Martin, 2011).

This thesis will explore how the construction of the shanty—and the fight to keep them standing—became a symbol of anti-apartheid resistance on forty-six American university campuses in the late 1980s. The shanty tactic pressured university administrations to consider the moral implications of economic relations with apartheid, specifically university endowment investments in companies and banks operating in South Africa. Before exploring the significance of the anti-apartheid shanties within the greater *durée* of American student activism and construction protests, a historical overview of apartheid is provided for context.

A Historical Introduction to Apartheid

In 1948, the white National Party of South Africa instituted a legal system of racial segregation and discrimination known as *apartheid*, named after the Afrikaans word meaning “separateness” or the condition of South Africa’s races “dwelling apart” (Hosey, 2000). This system of governance preserved white supremacy for nearly five decades in South Africa through a series of laws that excluded the black majority from political participation while maintaining a consistent supply of cheap, black labor for its capitalist economy. Deborah Posel (2011) clarifies,

Apartheid, therefore, was never an exterminationist project—unlike other systemically racialized regimes such as the Nazi state. On the contrary, one of the abiding imperatives of apartheid was to keep (most) black people alive, albeit under conditions of perpetual servitude and submission, so as to keep the structures of white supremacy intact. . . . At the nub of the apartheid project, then, was a particular politics of population: a project of social and economic engineering preoccupied with trying to reconfigure spatial ratios of blacks to white and regulate the conditions of their association. (p. 322)

Legacies of colonialism, white nationalism, and an intensification of interventionist and “high modernist” states created the conditions that made the apartheid project possible.

In the first decade of apartheid, “soft” laws aimed to preserve racial purity and to control the movement of black and non-white populations. To do so, the government outlawed marriage and sex between whites and blacks, designated residential areas by race, and controlled black urban travel with pass laws (e.g. the Immorality Act of 1949, the Mixed Marriages Act of 1950, and the Group Areas Act of 1950). During these initial years, apartheid’s architects acted pragmatically. They needed blacks in white urban areas to serve the state’s economic needs. Therefore, the apartheid government conceded residential rights to the existing urbanized black population but only in certain urban townships or “group areas.” Outside the cities, the government forced rural

Africans into the “reserves,” or white-owned farms, to be reservoirs of cheap, unskilled migrant labor (Posel, 2011).

From the beginning of apartheid, black South Africans resisted the pass laws—the internal passport system designed to confine their movement. On March 21, 1960, they gathered peacefully to protest the pass laws in the Sharpeville township. When the crowd neared the police station, the police opened fire, killing 69 black South Africans and wounding 180 other peaceful protestors. Due to the following unrest, the government declared a state of emergency and banned the two main African nationalist resistance groups, the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). The ANC and PAC then went underground and formed militarized factions to shift their strategy away from non-violent civil disobedience to armed resistance. Two years later, the state (allegedly with the assistance of the American Central Intelligence Agency) captured and imprisoned Nelson Mandela, the anti-apartheid revolutionary. The Sharpeville Massacre, as it became known, attracted international attention as the struggle for South African liberation intensified (Mager & Mulaudzi, 2011).

Following the events at Sharpeville, the white regime implemented a second, more aggressive phase of apartheid that promoted the “separate development” of South Africa’s races. To do this, the state passed the Bantu Laws Amendment Act and the Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act, which forcibly removed portions of the urban black population to live in the native *Bantustan* “homelands” outside the white urban core (Posel, 2011). The Bantustans were (supposedly) self-governing, quasi-independent states. The apartheid policies then forced black populations to become legal citizens of these homelands, thereby stripping them of their legal South African citizenship so that South Africa could fully become a white state (Mager & Malaudzi, 2011).

By the mid-1970s, white South African leaders faced intensifying criticism from the international community. In October 1974, the United Nations General Assembly deliberated dismissing South Africa as a member state because of South Africa's "total violation" and "flagrant contradiction" of the U.N. Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (The United Nations, 1974). Meanwhile, black liberation movements in Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, and Rhodesia threatened white colonial regimes throughout southern Africa (Lelyveld, 1983; Taylor, 1967; Shamyurura, 1977). South Africa was also vulnerable to these black resistance movements. On June 16, 1976, nearly 20,000 students in the Soweto township marched to protest the poor quality of the Bantu education system and the use of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction (Shafer, 1979). In reaction, South African security forces opened fire into the crowd, killing approximately 176 students. In the weeks and months that followed, protest erupted across the country. By October, an estimated 160 townships and Bantustans across South Africa openly revolted against apartheid rule (Pohlandt-McCormick, 2000).

In response to both the condemnation from abroad and the Soweto Uprising, South Africa's Minister of Defense, Pieter Willem (P.W.) Botha, announced that the government was considering reforms to alter the country's power sharing arrangements. In 1983, the state officially enacted a new constitution that implemented a tricameral parliament system with white, Indian, and mixed-race chambers. The constitution did not extend political representation to the black majority, who comprised 72 percent of South Africa's population (Burns, 1977; Shafer, 1979). Consequently, the new constitution was a "racially distorted version" of democracy that denied the majority's inclusion (Posel, 2011, p. 346).

Even after the new constitution, the apartheid state continued to enforce racist laws that controlled nearly every aspect of the black population's life. Deborah Posel (2011) writes,

For an African person, all the minutiae of everyday life—where and with whom they lived, worked, had sex, travelled, shopped, walked or sat down, what they owned and consumed—were governed. . . so encounters with police, charged with enforcing the racial boundaries that animated these regimes of surveillance, were inevitable . . . And the collisions with police were ignited by force—to the extent that gratuitous violence became a feature of apartheid policing, with mounting numbers of reports of torture. (p. 347)

Black unrest escalated in the 1970s and 1980s as the apartheid government continued to brutalize the black population under the facade of reform. Black resistance movements mobilized in great force to end this unrelenting oppression. Several umbrella groups, such as the United Democratic Front and the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), worked to organize township residents, students, workers, and informal settlement dwellers into a disciplined opposition movement (Hovey, 1983). The state's violent response to the black resistance movements nearly caused a civil war, which is the historical moment that this research explores as it relates to student anti-apartheid activism in the United States.

Early Student Anti-Apartheid Activism

After the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960, an international anti-apartheid movement organized to protest apartheid's blatant violation of human rights and the failure of the international community to respond with political and economic sanctions. A student anti-apartheid movement formed as a subset of this broader movement after American students learned about the large sums of university investments in companies and banks operating in South Africa. To the students, American universities were complicit partners in apartheid while financial ties with South Africa remained intact. Consequently, the student movement's main objective was to pressure American universities to divest, or sell all their South Africa-related assets. Over the next

three decades, student divestment groups organized on over 100 American campuses. The student protest occurred in three “waves,” each made distinct by the period in which the wave occurred and the tactics that students used to express their divestment message (Jackson, 1989).

The First Wave: 1965 to 1970

On the fifth anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre, nearly 600 students and community activists picketed the headquarters of Chase Manhattan Bank in New York City to protest the bank’s investment activity in South Africa. Previously, Chase Manhattan Bank, the First National City Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank had provided a \$150 million loan to the South African government to revive state-controlled industries after international capital fled South Africa. Students for a Democratic Society and other civil rights and peace groups organized the protest—marking the beginning of the first wave of student anti-apartheid activism in the United States (Jackson, 1989).

Students continued the anti-apartheid campaign by targeting other American banks and multi-national corporations that held investments in South Africa, such as the United Shoe Company, Chrysler, and General Electric (American Campaign against Apartheid Gets under Way, 1965). Phillip Randolph, the co-chair of the American Committee on Africa, stated in a 1966 letter,

The campaign on the banks will be only a beginning. Essentially, what we wish to accomplish is to make clear to ourselves, to our fellow countrymen, and to our government, that Americans must disengage economically from the injustices of the apartheid regime in South Africa. (Jackson, 1989, p. 27)

Randolph’s prediction held true. In 1968, students began targeting university endowment boards after they discovered that numerous universities had investments in banks and companies operating in South Africa. The first divestment protest occurred at Princeton University when 250

students demanded that the university sell its 100 million U.S. dollars' worth of South Africa-related holdings (Jackson, 1989). Soon after, fellow Ivy League students at Cornell University (whose President at the time sat on the board of Chase Manhattan Bank) picketed the schools' holdings valued at 3.7 million U.S. dollars in the five major banks operating in South Africa (Agree & Pizzigati, 1968).

In the throes of the 1960s, a decade known for its civil rights and Vietnam War activism, students of the first wave borrowed protest tactics common to the era. Students marched, rallied, picketed, and held sit-ins for divestment. By the end of the decade, student divestment protests spread to Columbia University, the University of Wisconsin, Amherst College, and Spellman College. In comparison to later waves, student pressure during the first wave was only marginally successful. From 1965 to 1970, a small number of universities, churches, and corporations divested a total of 23 million U.S. dollars from the New York banks that provided the controversial loan to South Africa in 1965. Chase Manhattan yielded to the controversy in 1969 by terminating a \$40 million loan to South Africa (Jackson, 1989).

Yet, few university administrations complied with the divestment pressure. Endowment boards claimed a fiduciary responsibility to manage investments to meet the universities' financial interests, and argued divestment would cost the universities millions in losses. In most cases, students failed to secure divestment, and the first wave of the student anti-apartheid movement fell into dormancy until key events in South Africa would revive the movement in 1977 (Jackson, 1989).

The Second Wave: 1977 to 1981

A second wave of the anti-apartheid student movement emerged in 1977 following an escalation of violence in South Africa. Specifically, on June 16, 1976, South African security

forces killed 176 students after firing into a peaceful demonstration of 20,000 students in the Soweto township. In the following weeks and months, the black population rebelled against apartheid rule. A year later, on September 12, 1977, police brutally tortured and killed Steve Biko, the leader of the Black Consciousness Movement and a prominent anti-apartheid figure, leading to further outcry by the black community (Shafer, 1979; Pohlandt-McCormick, 2000). Meanwhile, American investments in South Africa ballooned in the 1970s. By 1977, American corporations and banks held over \$1.67 billion and \$2.2 billion in direct investments and outstanding loans to South Africa (Wicker, 1977). The United States government was also an intermediary actor in securing 460 million dollars' worth of IMF loans to South Africa (Culverson, 1996).

The escalation of racial violence in South Africa and the United States' unapologetic economic ties with apartheid led American students to mobilize again in a second wave of divestment protest in 1977. However, unlike the first wave, student activists organized nationally and regionally by hosting conferences, coordinating days of protest, and circulating newsletters amongst the universities. The second wave of activism also introduced "divestment locals," which were campus-based pressure groups fully committed to divestment activism. In addition to planning direct action events on their campuses, these locals attended strategy conferences and networked with other student activists (Culverson, 1996; Jackson, 1989).

In contrast to the first wave (when students utilized protest tactics typical of the 1960s such as sit-ins, marches, and rallies), the second wave of student activism pursued institutionalized tactics, such as student referendums and proposals to investment advisory committees. However, the universities often deflected these diplomatic tactics by arguing that investments could be a "progressive force" for change in South Africa by creating jobs and raising the incomes of black South Africans. To reassure students, universities frequently adopted the Sullivan Principles,

which were an ethical code of conduct for corporate business operations to encourage racial integration and the protection of black employees.

By 1979, 40 universities had adopted some form of a socially responsible investment policy, like the Sullivan Principles, or had established an ethics committee to oversee investments. Meanwhile, 34 universities selectively or partially divested a portion of their South Africa-related holdings. Hampshire College became the first university to fully divest in 1977, followed by Ohio University, the University of Wisconsin, and Antioch College. However, institutionalized protest tactics and minimal reform characterized the second wave (Jackson, 1989).

The Third Wave Emergence

By the early 1980s, the third and final wave of student anti-apartheid activism in the United States began after another escalation of unrest and state repression in South Africa, as Chapter Three will discuss. To the students, the fight against apartheid was based on moral principles, and they rejected any further attempts by the U.S. government and universities to ignore it. In the beginning of the third wave, students used tired tactics from their existing tactical repertoires, including sit-ins, teach-ins, marches, rallies, and petitions to investment advisory committees. However, these tactics were unsuccessful in generating a significant response, creating a need for students to disrupt the status quo. Consequently, in April 1985, students at Cornell University escalated the tactics of previous eras by building fifteen shanties to symbolize the living conditions of black South Africans under apartheid. Unbeknownst to them at the time, this tactical innovation would spread across the United States and would come to embody the spirit of the student anti-apartheid movement.

Research Questions and Methods

For the scope of this thesis, I explore the significance of the shanty as a protest tactic during the third wave of the student anti-apartheid movement. I researched the following questions to demonstrate how the shanty became an important symbol of resistance against apartheid and universities' investment policies.

1. How did the anti-apartheid shanties fit into a broader lineage of student activism in the United States? Over time, what issues have students protested, and what tactics have they used?
2. Were there other social movements in the United States that constructed shanties as a component of their protest? How were the anti-apartheid shanties similar or different?
3. Why did the first anti-apartheid shanty emerge in April 1985? What events in South Africa and the United States inspired the students' decision to build the shanties as their tactical innovation?
4. Lastly, I explore the shanties in depth, asking:
 - a. Which student subpopulations (race and socioeconomic status) built the anti-apartheid shanties, and which universities were the most likely sites of shanty protests? What does this show about trends in student activism?
 - b. How did the aesthetics and location placement of the shanties contribute to their impact?
 - c. How did other students and campus administrations react to the shanties, and did their reactions reveal anything significant about the debates surrounding apartheid and divestment?

The methods to explore these questions included a review of existing literature; an examination of primary documents from the period, including newspapers, reports, flyers, and newsletters; and an analysis of student activist interviews collected by the United Nations and other scholars.

Overview of Chapters

The previous section provided the context of apartheid in South Africa and the student anti-apartheid movement in the United States. Chapter Two begins by tracing student activism throughout American history to demonstrate how students' tactics and concerns have changed over time. The chapter then introduces two social movements that constructed shanty encampments, the Bonus Army of 1932 and the Poor People's Campaign of 1968, as points of comparison to the anti-apartheid shanties. Overall, these histories open the field to the student and construction protests before the shanties, which reveals two critical patterns. First, students in the United States have protested social concerns for centuries, however, rarely about international issues that did not directly threaten them or other Americans (like apartheid) until the 1960s and 1980s. Secondly, although construction protest tactics existed in a broader repertoire (as demonstrated by the Bonus Army and Poor People's Campaign), students mostly used established tactics, such as sit-ins, marches, pickets, petitions, and boycotts. Thus, the anti-apartheid shanty was a new, distinct tactic to student activism.

Chapter Three explores why the anti-apartheid shanty developed in this historical moment. By 1985, conventional tactics during the first and second waves of the student anti-apartheid movement had failed to change universities' investment policies. Meanwhile, escalating racial violence after the 1983 constitutional reforms in South Africa, coupled with the political pressure that the Free South Africa Movement exercised against President Ronald Reagan's conservative foreign policies, provided students with a moral rationale and a political opportunity to innovate with a new aggressive tactic—the shanty.

Finally, Chapter Four delves into the shanty tactic itself, asking who built the shanties, what the shanties' functional purpose was, and what the reactions to the shanties revealed about

the opposition's opinions regarding campus politics and divestment. This research finds that white student activists who attended prestigious Ivy League schools in the Northeast most often built the shanties. (Although several universities that were not traditionally known for activism, including large public schools in the Southeast, Midwest and West participated in the shanty movement, too.) Students built the shanties on visible campus spaces, which transformed these areas into democratic, public forums to debate important moral issues surrounding apartheid and economics. Furthermore, the shanties' implicit declaration of leftward politics agitated other members of campus, who sometimes violently attacked the shanties. Anti-apartheid activists used these attacks to parallel their experience with the oppression of black South Africans under apartheid, which revealed their naivety about the lived experience of institutionalized oppression. In conclusion, this research explores the emergence and significance of a radical protest tactic—the shanty—and its contribution to the *durée* of student activism and construction protest.

Chapter Two: Student and Construction Protests

This chapter historically contextualizes the two fundamental elements of the student anti-apartheid shanty: 1) students as activists and 2) construction as a tool for social change.

To begin, Chapter Two explores student activism throughout American history to trace the local, national, and international issues that have mobilized students to protest using a diverse tactical repertoire. The second half of this chapter examines two social movements that constructed shanty encampments in the United States—the Bonus Army of 1932 and the Poor People’s Campaign of 1968. These movements serve as a point of comparison to the anti-apartheid shanties with regards to the shanties’ aesthetics, usages of space, and functional purposes.

The findings of this chapter demonstrate that American students have actively protested American social, political, and economic concerns for three centuries. However, students rarely protested an issue occurring in another country that did not directly threaten their own well-being, like the anti-apartheid movement. This chapter also reveals that shanty building was not necessarily an original protest tactic to the anti-apartheid movement, since the Bonus Army and Poor People’s Campaign had built shanty encampments. However, this chapter’s analysis will introduce how the shanties of the apartheid movement were different from these earlier moments.

Student Activism: An American Tradition

Student collective action was an American tradition even before apple pie or baseball. In 1638—140 years before the Declaration of Independence declared the thirteen colonies independent from Britain—the inaugural class of Harvard University protested the unfair discipline practices of the head master and the inadequacies of his wife’s cooking (Ellsworth & Burns, 1970). In the centuries to follow, the issues that triggered student activism included broader

national and international concerns such as British tyranny, slavery, the World Wars, the Vietnam War, civil rights, and apartheid. The students' chosen protest tactics varied, as well. Students marched, rallied, gave speeches, organized petitions, planned teach-ins, and held sit-ins. In certain moments, they used violence. The following section will trace student activism chronologically to examine the ways in which contentious issues and protest tactics have evolved over time.

The American Revolution: 1760 to 1783

Student activists of colonial America opposed domineering governing systems with a similar perspicacity of students who protested oppressive apartheid rule in the 1980s. The British government's excessive taxation without fair political representation angered young American colonists. Small numbers of students (most of whom were training to become clergymen) protested Britain's tyranny with boycotts, symbolic demonstrations, and destruction of property at the nine colonial universities. As examples, students boycotted British-spun fabric by wearing suits only made in America. In 1773 when Britain passed the Tea Act, Princeton University students burned an effigy of the British governor of Massachusetts; they hung a canister of tea around the figurine's neck to further emphasize their point. Later, a mob of forty students ravaged the houses of two British sympathizers and burned their tea stocks (Rudy, 1996).

As relations between the colonies and the crown deteriorated, King George III sent military troops to quell colonial dissent. In response, students at Harvard, Yale, and the College of Rhode Island (Brown University) formed campus militias and trained on university grounds. One Yale student wrote, "[The] college yard constantly sounds with, *poise your firelock, cock your firelock*, etc. These warlike noises are continually in College" (Rudy, 1996, p. 19). These campus militias were not organized for protest demonstrations but rather for armed resistance.

During the American Revolution, colonial students—like their counterparts in the 1980s anti-apartheid movement—engaged in broader international conflicts by using protest tactics, such as economic boycotts and symbolic acts. However, in contrast to the anti-apartheid activists who were not directly impacted by apartheid’s institutionalized racism, students of the colonial era were directly affected by British tyrannical rule. This distinction between students who protest causes that personally affect them (like war drafts and civil rights discrimination) versus students of the 1980s who advocated against a system of governance that they never experienced, will be a reoccurring and important observation throughout this chapter.

Between Revolution and the Civil War: 1780 to 1830s

After the American Revolution ended and the intensity of war faded, American universities returned to normal life. From the 1780s to the 1830s, campus activism shifted away from international issues that dominated the Revolutionary period (and later the anti-apartheid movement) to trivial internal university grievances. Students felt controlled by petty rules that regulated nearly every aspect of campus life—including attendance in classes and prayers, free time, dress, dancing, drinking, and fighting. Students from the Southern planter aristocracy complained that such rules were “fit only for slaves” (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997, p. 53). In addition to students’ discontentment over paternalistic college rules, students protested the poor quality of food served in their university’s cafeterias—in one instance rioting over bad butter (Lipset, 1971).

To protest university rules and bad food, students chose violent tactics, such as breaking furniture and windows, graffitiing walls, firing pistols, and discharging “crackers” (hollow logs filled with pounds of gunpowder). In some instances, students physically beat professors, tutors, firemen, bartenders, and one another, which resulted in numerous deaths and permanent physical

damages, such as the loss of eyesight and use of limbs (Ellsworth & Burns, 1970). Andrew Dickson White, a student at Harvard and Yale during the 1850s wrote,

I had, during my college life, known sundry college tutors seriously injured while thus doing police duty; I have seen a professor driven out of a room, through the panel of a door, with books, boots, and bootjacks hurled at his head; and even the respected president of a college, a doctor of divinity, while patrolling buildings with the janitors subjected to outrageous indignity. (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997, p. 54)

The unruly, unorganized violence by students during the pre-Civil War era was not typical of the anti-apartheid movement in the 1980s. (Although Chapter Four will explain how a handful of student groups from the campus right used arson, property destruction, and homemade bombs to attack the anti-apartheid shanties.) However, the violence used by students in the late 1960s was similar to the pre-Civil War era in this regard. John Brubacher and Willis Rudy contribute students' use of violence to the social fabric of America during these eras. Simply put, in the pre-Civil War times, heavy drinking and brutal fighting were commonplace, and thus, it was not surprising that students mirrored this behavior (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997). Likewise, the societal unrest of the 1960s—the war in Vietnam, the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and President John F. Kennedy, and the violence against African Americans—made the 1960s one of the most violent decades in the twentieth century, which arguably manifested in student violence (Lindop, 2009).

Overall, student protest in the pre-Civil War era and in the 1980s anti-apartheid movement contrasted the other significantly. Students in the pre-Civil War era used violence to protest internal university grievances, such as paternalistic rules, while the anti-apartheid activists of the 1980s strategically used a symbolic, non-violent tactic—the shanty—to protest international human rights abuses, American foreign policy, and university endowment policies.

The Civil War Period: 1830 to 1865

Slavery increasingly became a contested issue in the United States and across the world in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Small pockets of Northern white students engaged in this issue by organizing anti-slavery societies—an early example of white students advocating for racial justice like the anti-apartheid movement. For example, students at the University of Michigan formed a secret organization dedicated to aiding run-away slaves. At Amherst College, the membership of an abolitionist society impressively included one third of the student body. Frequently, university administrations suppressed anti-slavery efforts by expelling students for “disruptive” activities (Lipset, 1971). Although students’ anti-slavery efforts in these initial years did not take the form of protests, their efforts reflected students’ concern for moral domestic issues rather than the internal university grievances of earlier decades.

As tensions intensified over slavery and states’ rights, student activism escalated into protest. For example, when the U.S. government passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 (giving these states the self-determination to allow slavery), students and academics at Northern universities held rallies, passed student resolutions, and wrote blistering oppositional newspaper articles against slavery. On the other side of the debate, southern students at Princeton University organized a rally to protest John Brown’s raid on Harper’s Ferry. These protest tactics were similar to those of the Revolutionary War era and modern times.

When the Civil War began in 1861, university enrollments dwindled as students joined the Union and Confederate armies. For the students that remained, pro-Confederacy and pro-Union protest took the form of meetings, rallies, speeches, and the burning of effigies. In one instance, pro-Union students even held a symbolic funeral for Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederacy. Student activism during the Civil War mirrored student efforts during the

Revolutionary War. Students of these eras—like those during the anti-apartheid movement—took a stance on debates occurring nationally (e.g. British tyranny, states' rights, slavery, and apartheid) and then used similar protest tactics such as rallies, marches, and symbolic actions to express their views (Rudy, 1996). Although Civil War activism focused mostly on domestic slavery, this era (like the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, as well) paralleled the anti-apartheid movement's denunciation of racism, both at home and abroad.

Reconstruction Period: 1865 to 1914

In the post-Civil War era, campus activism remained subdued as the nation worked to rebuild itself politically, socially, and economically. A devastating amount of young men had died in the war, and many university campuses in the South were damaged. During this time, universities underwent a series of administrative reforms. Specifically, universities shifted the curriculum's focus away from theological teaching to include more technical and vocational curriculums. Universities also abandoned paternalistic rules and organized athletic teams and fraternities, which gave students greater freedom and pastimes to expend their energy. Lastly, schools began hiring police forces to monitor the campus rather than requiring tutors to discipline students. In effect, the reforms kept campus activism quiet until the threat of another war would reenergize student activism in the first decades of the twentieth century (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997).

World War I: 1914 to 1918

In the early twentieth century, student sentiment split over whether the United States should intervene on behalf of the Allied Powers in World War I. On one side, an anti-intervention movement protested American involvement by opposing campus military-training camps, raising money to send to the Red Cross, holding anti-war rallies, and inviting prominent speakers to campuses. (Their efforts could have been a scene taken from the 1960s—demonstrating again how

students in modern periods often use long-existing tactical repertoires.) Meanwhile, a pro-intervention movement organized, too. Occasionally, the anti-intervention and pro-intervention students quarreled physically—heckling one another, blockading entrances to buildings so that the other could not enter, and expelling individuals of the opposition from campus spaces (Rudy, 1996). Chapter Four will note how the oppositional sides of the anti-apartheid student movement also violently clashed.

Peace Activism: 1918 to 1939

The United States eventually joined World War I after declaring war against the Central Powers in 1917. A year later, when an armistice was called, millions of people—both soldiers and civilians—had died in trench warfare and by collateral damage. Although the United States was only involved in the war effort for a short period of time, many Americans, students included, felt disillusioned by the state of world affairs. Then when the Great Depression struck in 1929, students were further disheartened at what seemed like a degeneration of social order (Ellsworth & Burns, 1970). In response, some students took up political radicalism by joining liberal clubs and communist parties to propose alternative solutions to the world's economic and political systems. These groups invited controversial speakers to campus to speak about socialism and the ills of industrialism (Lipset, 1971).

Meanwhile, other students took up peace activism. They signed the Oxford Pledge, a promise to never “support the United States government in any war it may conduct” (Vellela, 1988). In 1935, a total of 175,000 peace activists held a “Strike for Peace” on campuses across the United States, waving flags that read “Abolish ROTC,” “Scholarship, not Battleships,” and “Fight Imperialist War” (Rudy, 1996, p. 124). In 1936, the peace demonstration grew to 500,000 students, which was the largest peace strike of the decade. Students across the country formed creative

groups named the “Veterans of Future Wars” to protest their conscription. One such group at Drew University requested that the administration set aside part of the campus grounds to establish a cemetery “for the war dead of the future” and that a campus monument be erected to the “unborn, unknown soldier” (Rudy, 1996, p. 125). Like the anti-apartheid movement, the peace activists generated an impressive amount of support among students. They used strikes, petitions, and creative alternatives to draw attention to their cause, and in many regards, the peace activists from the 1930s could be viewed as the original radical, anti-war hippies (Lipset, 1971).

World War II: 1939 to 1945

Americans’ fears of another world war were realized when Germany invaded Poland in 1939. Similar to World War I, students’ opinions split about whether or not the United States should intervene. One anti-intervention student pleaded with his peers, “It is you and I who are going to fight—it is you and I who are going to die, or if we live through the hell that we would bring upon ourselves, we can but emerge as the living dead” (Rudy, 1996, p. 130). In contrast, pro-war students condemned fascism and wanted to fight Hitler’s Nazism, while the rest of the students remained unaffiliated. For both sides of the issue, students picketed, organized rallies, circulated petitions, and gave speeches. One anti-war group even constructed a six-foot tall cardboard military tank that they sent to the White House with the message, “Dear President Roosevelt—Keep America Out of War” (Ellsworth & Burns, 1970; Rudy, 1996). The cardboard tank tactic never diffused across the anti-intervention movement like the shanty; however, the tank demonstrated that students also built symbolic protest structures during World War II.

When Japanese forces attacked the American naval base at Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the campus and the nation were stunned. Many students, even those who previously supported peace efforts, did an about-face and rallied around the protection of the United States.

Throughout World War II—like the American Revolution and Civil War—campus activism quieted as students entered the war effort (Rudy, 1996).

The Silent Generation: the 1950s

After World War II ended in 1945, the United States entered an era of conservatism, patriotism, and materialism. Donald Light, Jr. and John Spiegel (1977) described the feeling of the era, “World War II brought new insecurities to replace economic ones—separation and death. Small wonder then, that after the war, people wanted financial security and a good, peaceful life” (p. 5). Given this general national atmosphere, activism on campus remained subdued. Small pockets of students opposed the decade’s consumerism, nuclear build-up, and racial discrimination against African American populations; however, most students remained quiet, either in allegiance to the United States or to avoid being called a communist in the age of McCarthyism. Consequently, the students of the 1950s became known as the “Silent Generation” (Lipset, 1971; Rudy, 1996).

The New Left: the 1960s

Unlike the “Silent Generation,” students of the 1960s were famously politically active. They abandoned the complacency, materialism, and conservatism of the post-World War II era and rejected the notion that the United States government was the harbinger of moral good when deep-seeded racial discrimination remained at home and the U.S. government made iniquitous foreign policy decisions abroad. Students of this generation found their collective place in the New Left—a broad movement of liberal counterculture activists who fought for civil rights, women’s rights, gay liberation, a decline in nuclear arms, and an end to the U.S. involvement in Vietnam. They were also the first generation of activists to protest apartheid in South Africa (Lipset, 1971).

Donald Light, Jr. and John Spiegel (1977) explain why the New Left was attractive to students in the 1960s, writing,

The New Left struck responsive chords in thousands of college students because its values seemed venerable and its style attractively unpretentious. While rejecting ideological treatises, the New Left had a loose core of values close to Judeo-Christian beliefs and the cultures of American democracy—values which despised earthy oppressors and which celebrated individual autonomy and equality. (p. 5)

The values of fighting earthly oppressors and upholding equality led students to organize fervidly around the domestic issue of Civil Rights and the international conflicts of the Vietnam War and apartheid South Africa.

Student involvement in the Civil Rights Movement accelerated in 1960 after four African American students peacefully refused to leave a Greensboro, North Carolina lunch counter. The actions of the “Greensboro Four” prompted the sit-in movement across the nation, which became an iconic non-violent tactic (and one that led to the first anti-apartheid shanty, somewhat by happenstance, as Chapter Four will explain). As the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum, African American students boycotted businesses that would not hire them, picketed segregated movie theaters, joined peaceful marches, and organized clubs dedicated to civil rights activism. In the summer of 1964, nearly one thousand white students joined the movement by travelling to Mississippi to register black voters. Under the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., non-violent civil disobedience became the stalwart strategy of the movement (Turner, 2010).

Meanwhile, as Lyndon B. Johnson escalated the war effort in Southeast Asia in 1965, students (especially white students) shifted a portion of their focus from disenfranchised people in the United States to people in Vietnam. Students organized anti-war marches, sit-ins, and collections of medical supplies for the Vietcong. Anti-war academics at the University of Michigan

also created the teach-in, which was a tactical innovation of the Vietnam War Movement, like the sit-in of the Civil Rights Movement and the shanty of the anti-apartheid movement. At the first teach-in, more than 300 faculty members and 2,000 students participated. The method then spread across the country as many activists saw the teach-ins as dignified, public forums to intellectually express their dissatisfaction with America's foreign policy decisions (Rudy, 1996).

As the Vietnam War escalated, anti-Vietnam protests became more aggressive. Students burned draft cards, harassed CIA recruiters, destroyed campus property, seized and occupied buildings known to conduct military research, rioted in city areas, and even set off bombs in campus spaces. One student even held a representative of Dow Chemical (the producer of napalm) captive for nine hours while another burned a Bank of America branch office. (Recall that this violence was akin to the student protest of the pre-Civil War era, although the students of the 1960s were protesting American foreign policy issues rather than trivial, paternalistic university rules.) When U.S. President Richard Nixon announced the invasion of Cambodia in 1970, 60 percent of the total college enrollment went on strike, forcing universities to shut down (Rudy, 1996). In May 1970, student protestors at Kent State University burned the university's ROTC building and violently rioted on the campus. The Ohio National Guard responded, and a unit shot into a crowd of demonstrators, killing four students, and injuring eight others. The shootings became a national outrage and reflected just how violent student protests had become by 1970 (Rudy, 1996).

Stagnation: the 1970s

By the mid-1970s, student protest and violence waned for a variety of reasons. Primarily, the United States withdrew from Vietnam in 1973. With the war's end, students began turning "inward" to focus on how they would enter an uncertain job market due to the stagflation and economic recession in the 1970s. Secondly, students began studying professional and science

fields in higher numbers (due to these fields' optimistic job prospects), which are academic fields that did not typically produce activists. Thirdly, the student militarism and violence of the late 1960s alienated moderate students, who often turned to conservatism or "middle of the road" politics instead. Lastly, the American political environment returned to conservatism beginning with the election of President Richard Nixon in 1968. While the issues of the 1960s remained, this decade institutionalized the progress made in the 1960s. Rather than pursuing bold public protests, activists created women's centers, black student unions, student associations, and protected spaces for the gay and lesbian rights movement (Vellela, 1988). Recall from Chapter One that the second wave of the student anti-apartheid movement reflected this institutionalized period of activism, too.

To note, I do not focus heavily on the first and second wave of the student anti-apartheid movement in this chapter because civil rights, the Vietnam War, women's rights, and gay rights are the central issues in contention during this decade.

The 1980s

The 1980s experienced tremors of student activism, predominantly over U.S. foreign policy with clear moral content (Vellela, 1988). As Chapters Three and Four will discuss in detail, President Ronald Reagan's foreign policies with apartheid in South Africa and the contras in Nicaragua became two key student issues. Meanwhile, certain domestic concerns also captured students' energies, such as the HIV/AIDS crisis, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) recruitment on campus, and campus racism. The prestigious liberal universities in the Northeast saw high levels of student activism in the 1960s and were frequently the same schools that generated protest in the 1980s. (Although the anti-apartheid movement impelled less-prestigious schools in the Southeast, Midwest, and West to student activism, as Chapter Four will discuss.)

Considering the long *durée* of student activism, students of the 1980s had a deep tactical repertoire from which to choose, as noted in the table below.

| Tactical Category | Specific Action |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Public Gatherings | <i>Rallies, marches, pickets, and speeches</i> |
| Educational Efforts | <i>Teach-ins, forums, flyering, chalking, film and speaker series</i> |
| Economic Defiance | <i>Boycotts, strikes, forming labor unions, calls for sanctions</i> |
| (Non-violent) Civil Disobedience | <i>Sit-ins, planned peaceful arrests</i> |
| Institutionalized Efforts | <i>Petitions, student referendums, role on advisory committees</i> |
| Violent Actions | <i>Rioting, looting, arson, building occupation, destruction of property, the taking of hostages</i> |

Figure 1. Student Tactics.

The mainstay tactics of student activism during the 1980s were (typically) the non-violent tactics noted in the first five rows of the table above, akin to the early phase of the 1960s.

Students also used unique, in-your-face tactics to capture the public’s attention. For example, students at the University of Minnesota rigged a lighting bar to unfold a Nazi Flag in the middle of a speech by Jeane Kirkpatrick, the United Nations Ambassador who supported right-wing dictators in Central America. At Cornell University, students created a bar graph using over 150 feet of colored cloth to represent the size of the U.S. military budget compared to other expenditures. At Berkeley, feminist groups marked locations of campus rape with large red paper “X”s to raise awareness about sexual assault. Activists of the HIV/ AIDS movement held “die-ins” by drawing police-style chalk body outlines or laying on the ground to symbolize the number of people who died from the epidemic (Vellela, 1988).

Student Activism from the Revolution to the 1980s

The exploration of student activism from the American Revolution to the 1980s reveals several patterns. First, modern periods of student activism have developed to oppose conservatism in the United States, for example, pushing back against the complacency of the 1950s America and the Reagan doctrine in the 1980s. This contention reflects American politics in these eras—left versus right, liberal versus conservative, Democrat versus Republican—which will be addressed later in this thesis as it relates to the violent attacks against the shanties of the anti-apartheid movement in the 1980s.

Secondly, periods of student activism frequently followed an escalation of public debate about unfair or unrepresentative governing systems, including British tyranny during the American Revolution, President Abraham Lincoln's anti-slavery platform (that Southern states believed infringed upon state sovereignty), and apartheid South Africa.

Thirdly, student activism emerged in periods of escalating international conflicts and wars that split student opinion about whether the United States should intervene politically, economically, and/or militarily. This includes World War I, World War II, the Vietnam War (and by extension the Cold War), and the possibility of a racial civil war in South Africa, as Chapter Three will explain.

Furthermore, American students typically protested issues that placed them at *personal risk* (e.g. military conscription in WWI, WWII, and the Vietnam War) or issues that Americans and the American government had a *direct hand* to be blamed (e.g. slavery, Jim Crow laws, and misconducts against the Vietnamese). Anti-apartheid movement diverges from this pattern. The anti-apartheid activists were neither at risk of direct harm from the conflict in South Africa nor were Americans directly inflicting apartheid's abuses. Consequently, anti-apartheid activism

represented an early moment of student advocacy for an *international* cause that did not threaten the students' own lives but burdened them with being complicit in harm against black South Africans through American economic ties.

Lastly, students' tactical repertoire has remained relatively consistent. Beginning with the American Revolution, students boycotted, gave rally speeches, and committed symbolic property destruction. Over the years, students added other tactics, including marches, petition drives, and strikes. Students have pursued creative avenues when conventional methods failed to enact change or when they sought to dramatize their discontentment—recall the effigies of British governors, the symbolic funeral for a Confederate leader, an empty cemetery for future war casualties, and the cardboard tank with peace messages decorating its side. In the 1960s and 1980s, several of these innovative techniques became established protest tactics that later epitomized the respective movement—the Civil Rights sit-in, the Vietnam War teach-in, and the anti-apartheid shanty. Thus, the anti-apartheid movement and the shanty are a testament to both the legacy of student activism and the resourcefulness of students that can lead to a tactical innovation.

A Lineage of Construction Protests

The anti-apartheid movement in the 1980s was not the first American protest movement to build symbolic, semi-permanent structures to symbolize impoverished living conditions. The Bonus Army of 1932 and the Poor People's Campaign of 1968 are two previous movements that built shanty encampments to pressure the U.S. government to provide poverty assistance programs for veterans and minority groups. The shanty encampments of these two movements provide relevant points of comparison for the anti-apartheid shanties.

The Bonus Army of 1932

In the spring of 1932, an estimated 20,000 World War I veterans and their families from across the nation—the Bonus Army as they became popularly known—traveled to Washington D.C. to demand that President Herbert Hoover release their veteran cash bonuses. It was the midst of the Great Depression, and many men were out of work and their families were starving. The Bonus Army committed to staying in Washington D.C. until the government met their demands. In the beginning, many of the veterans slept in empty and partially demolished buildings around the city. However, as their protest grew larger, the overflow began camping out on the Anacostia Flats where they built a “motley community” known as Camp Marks, referring to the police captain of the neighboring district who was friendly with the protestors (Daniels, 1971, p. 101). (The Bonus Army’s overflow, which became Camp Marks, loosely mirrors the overflow from a sit-in that inspired the anti-apartheid shanty, as Chapter Four will detail.) Originally, a sympathetic city official designed plans to erect lumber and tarpaper shelters for the veterans; however, the city commissioners vetoed this idea, requiring that the men build their own shelters from salvaged materials if they planned to stay (Daniels, 1971).

If they could stay in Washington D.C., the frustrated veterans accepted the responsibility to build their own shelters. Resourceful like anti-apartheid activists of the 1980s, the veterans salvaged materials from a hill adjacent to Camp Marks where the Anacostia residents dumped their garbage. They found an array of materials, including cardboard, egg crates, oil canvases, wooden boxes, lumber scraps, bed springs, fence posts, and wrecked cars (which handily provided old seats for beds and scrap metal to form roofs). Some vets forwent building a shanty and dugout the sides of the hill to form burrows instead. Others slept outside in the open. For its duration, Camp Marks

housed more than 15,000 people while twenty-three smaller camps housed the rest of the Bonus Army on the outskirts of Washington (Dickson & Allen, 2004).

The camps, especially Camp Marks, were sites of progressive racial communities, considering the status quo of 1932. (The Poor People's Campaign of 1968 was also a racially progressive encampment, as this chapter will later discuss.) Roy Wilkins, a reporter for the *Crisis*, a magazine of the NAACP, wrote,

There I found black toes and white toes sticking out side by side from a ramshackle town of pup tents, packing crates, and tar-paper shacks. Black men and white men, veterans of the segregated army that had fought in World War I, lined up equally . . . For years the U.S. Army had argued that General Jim Crow was its proper commander, but the Bonus Marchers gave lie to the notion that black and white soldiers—ex-soldiers in their case—couldn't live together. (Dickson & Allen, 2004, p. 118)

The camp's racial integration only elevated the camps' peculiarity. As Camp Marks grew, it became a public attraction that local Washingtonians came to see with their families on the weekends. Shows entertained visitors, a library provided reading materials, and a barbershop groomed veterans' and visitors' hair. The Salvation Army set up "The Hut" where people played cards; wrote letters; and shared tobacco, magazines, and clothes. A field hospital near the camp treated minor ailments for fear that disease would easily spread in the camp. In many regards, the Bonus Army camp was a second city within Washington D.C. (Dickson & Allen, 2004).

In June 1932, the House of Representatives passed a bill that would have released the veterans' bonuses early; however, the Senate defeated the bill. Government officials assumed that the veterans and their families would give up their protest and return home. Some veterans, however, began considering legal ways to build a "semi-permanent" colony on a thirty-acre plot of land outside D.C. (Daniels, 1971, p. 126). When the veterans did not leave, government officials

and the Army Chief of Staff, Douglas MacArthur, issued an eviction notice for July 22. MacArthur readied the army, including cavalry units, infantry, and several tanks. On July 28, Hoover ordered the army troops to clear the protestors from Washington, D.C. The army liberally used sabers, bayonets, tear gas, and even grenades to clear camps in the downtown area. Most of the veterans and their families fled, but some stayed and threw bricks at the army forces (Daniels, 1971).

The army then regrouped and moved to evict Camp Marks. When the army arrived, the troops began setting empty shanties on fire. Elbridge Purdy recalled the scene, “There were continuous flames . . . Veterans were packing and rushing about. Tear gas . . . made it difficult to see. . . It was like riding through the steam of a teakettle” (Dickson & Allen, 2004, p. 181). The eviction efforts caused three fatalities—two veterans and a baby boy who died from tear gas exposure (Dickson & Allen, 2004). John Henry Bartlett, a former governor, later described the eviction as “the most powerful government in the world shooting its starving veterans out of worthless huts” (Hosey, 1984, p. 146).

The Poor People’s Campaign of 1968

In May 1968, thirty years after the federal army expelled the Bonus Army from Washington, D.C., a second poor people’s movement—this time comprised of roughly 5,000 members of minority groups—marched to the nation’s capital to make a statement about the issues of hunger, homelessness, joblessness, and inadequate health care that people of color disproportionately faced. The Poor People’s Campaign (PPC), as it was named, was organized by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The movement’s main objectives were to pressure Congress for improved federal anti-poverty programs and a racial redistribution of wealth in the United States. The protest song of Frederick Douglass Kirkpatrick captures the emotional impetus of the movement. He wrote, “Went to

Washington feeling mighty sad, thinking about an income that I never had. Everybody's got a right to live. Everybody's got a right to live" (Wright, 2007, p. 3).

The movement, however, struggled to gain footing in 1968. The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. in April, compounded with the nationwide unrest from the war in Vietnam, left SCLC leaders worried about the movement's launch. To gather additional support, SCLC leaders attempted to recruit white liberal college students to participate (like the Freedom Summer voter registration drive of 1964). They offered Work-Study seminars and positions in a Summer Task Force for volunteers to organize projects, recruit other participants, and possibly protest on campuses. Despite the recruitment attempts, grassroots leaders and poor minorities were ultimately the most active participants in the protest.

The SCLC also appointed committees to organize the distribution of food, transportation, sanitation systems, and the layout and building of the temporary city. The SCLC's goal, like the Bonus Army, was to build a fully functioning, self-run city of the poor and "the resurrection of the living concept of community" (Wright, 2007, p. 350). The SCLC committee carefully designed Resurrection City, complete with self-constructed living quarters; dining halls; basic services such as water lines, phone booths, mail distribution, and latrines; social services such as child and health care; entertainment venues; and even a Poor People's University. Unlike the constructions of the Bonus Army and the anti-apartheid movement, planners carefully designed the shanties of Resurrection City. The requirements for the shanty construction included:

(1) shelter and service for the residents soon after their arrival; (2) severe economy of materials; (3) full use of all labor resources; (4) durability; and (5) protection from the weather. This suggested that shelter structures should be made of components prefabricated by volunteers and assembled by residents. (Wright, 2007, p. 358)

The Procurement Committee acquired the materials for the prefabricated shanties. This included lumber, canvas, plastic sheet rolls, rope, clothes lines, electrical goods, plumbing fixtures, doors, basic furniture, and bedding (Wright, 2007).

SCLC organizers designed the shanty city for the 15 acres of the National Mall between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial [“one of the best pieces of real estate available at the time”] (Wright, 2007, p. 361). This location contrasted the poverty displayed by Resurrection City with the affluence of the Mall and Washington’s marble. On May 12, 1968, volunteers and PPC participants began building small, wooden, A-frame houses with the prefabricated components. Everyone pitched in with the construction—forming floor-and-frame teams, skylight teams, and door teams that quickly assembled the structures. Reverend Ralph Abernathy wrote, “Washingtonians were surprised (and probably shocked) to see about six city blocks of raw plywood structures covering the green lawn of the Mall. We had moved in” (Wright, 2007, p. 366). The PPC participants were excited to be there since many of them had never traveled to Washington D.C. (or anywhere far from their hometown). Bertha Burres Johnson reflects, “It was exciting. That was the first time I’d even seen shanties made out of plywood. That’s why they called them shanties instead of tents” (Wright, 2007, 368).

As a multi-racial movement, Resurrection City was home to African Americans, Mexican Americans, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, and members from white Appalachia—similar to the way in which the Bonus Army encouraged the collaboration of white and black veterans. The diversity of the participants was apparent in the slogans painted on their shanties, which included “Soul Power,” “Indian Power,” “Chicano Power,” “Peace Brothers,” and “Black is Good.” One observer stated, “Passers-by would stop here to read the walls of several shelters that had been covered with enough slogans to turn them into billboards. Then, quite naturally, they would fall

into conversation with residents standing within the fence” (Wright, 2007, p. 389). The slogans painted across the PPC shanties, like those of the anti-apartheid movement, were statements of the PPC’s identities and objective to unite minorities of color to protest the federal government’s lack of social safety nets. (Likewise, during the anti-apartheid movement, the slogans painted on the shanties called for divestment and the end of apartheid.)

The SCLC leaders agreed to limit the duration of Resurrection City to thirty-six days from May 11 to June 16 with a limited occupancy of 3,000 people. However, by June, there were nearly 7,000 people living in the shanty town. The booming population, along with heavy rains in May and June, meant that Resurrection City became a chaotic, muddy area, which only reinforced the stereotypes of poverty in the United States. In late June, the permit ended and the police ordered the camp cleared, to which most residents peacefully obliged. In the removal, the police fired tear gas canisters into the camp to speed up the evacuation. In a separate incidence, an unknown person threw a Molotov cocktail at a shanty—similar violence occurred against the Bonus Army and anti-apartheid shanties (Wright, 2007).

The Shanties in Comparison

A comparison of the shanties of the Bonus Army, the Poor People’s Campaign, and the anti-apartheid movement reveals the ways in which the anti-apartheid shanties mirrored or differed from earlier construction protests to meet the anti-apartheid movement’s specific objectives. The complete analysis of the anti-apartheid shanties will continue in Chapter Four.

The aesthetics of the shanties of the Bonus Army, the Poor People’s Campaign, and the anti-apartheid movement were relatively similar. The protestors built the shanties from recycled and cheap materials to symbolize the poverty experienced by specific people groups—the veterans

of World War I, racial minorities in the 1960s, and black South Africans in the 1980s. However, the three movements used the shanties' facades differently. The Poor People's Campaign and the anti-apartheid movement covered their shanties with brightly painted protest slogans to state the movements' objectives and the activists' identities. Meanwhile, the Bonus Army left their shanties undecorated, possibly because the veterans viewed the shanties as their temporary homes or because the shanties were located on the outskirts of Washington D.C. and few Washingtonians would care to read the slogans.

Meanwhile, the location of the shanties reflected which authority figures that the activists were targeting. Protesters of the Bonus Army and the Poor People's Campaign built encampments in Washington, D.C. at the heart of American democracy and federal policymaking. Later, students of the anti-apartheid movement would build the shanties in the center of university campuses to pressure endowment boards.

Lastly, the shanties of each movement served different functional purposes. The Bonus Army and the Poor People's Campaign created a fully functioning community, complete with homes, hospitals, soup kitchens, and entertainment venues. In contrast, as Chapter Four will detail, the anti-apartheid shantytowns were not designed for daily living activities but rather to advance the protest movement. Meaning, the anti-apartheid shanties' main functions were to organize activists, educate recruits, occupy space, and hold democratic forums. Although anti-apartheid groups would sleep in the shanties occasionally, few students lived in them full time. Instead, students cycled through schedules that allowed them to attend class and return to their dorms to rest, shower, and do homework.

The difference in the anti-apartheid shanties' functionality reveals an essential distinction between the anti-apartheid activists and the protesters of earlier movements. The Bonus Army

marchers and the Poor People's Campaign participants personally experienced the poverty that the shanties conveyed. They were also the main recipients if their protests affected change (e.g. the awarding of veterans' bonuses or federal poverty programs). In contrast, the American students of the 1980s were neither the victims of discriminatory apartheid policies nor the direct beneficiaries if apartheid rule were to end. (Black and other non-white South Africans held this position.) This echoes the earlier discussion about how anti-apartheid activists were distinct from the Vietnam War protestors, African American civil rights activists, and abolitionists during the Civil War, who either held a direct physical stake (e.g. the war draft or continued discrimination from white Americans) or shared American guilt in the issue (e.g. race relations in the United States). Ultimately, the anti-apartheid activists' lack of direct experience with the poverty that the shanties conveyed reveals the position of privilege that the students held.

Chapter Three: Why this Historical Moment?

In the following chapter, I will explore possible reasons *why* the third wave of the student anti-apartheid movement and the shanty tactic emerged in 1985. As you may recall from Chapter One's discussion of the three protest waves, the second wave on college campuses had waned by the early 1980s. Over the next several years, small numbers of student activists remained committed to divestment, yet were unable to attract substantive student support. However, after Cornell students constructed the first shanty in 1985, the shanty tactic rapidly spread across the nation's campuses, confirming that a third wave of student anti-apartheid activism had begun. This raises the question about what occurred, both in South Africa and the United States, in the interlude from 1980 to 1985 that motivated American students to call again for divestment. Specifically, what events, images, policies, or political opportunities angered, shocked, or inspired students' decision to organize in the third (and final) wave, using the shanty as their main tactic?

I argue that the escalation of events in South Africa in the early 1980s—the violent uprisings, the state of emergency in 1985, and the repeated human rights violations, which the American media circulated—reinforced American students' conviction that apartheid was immoral. Consequently, students rejected any further attempts by the U.S. government or their universities to tolerate apartheid. Meanwhile, members of the American Left denounced President Ronald Reagan's relationship with South Africa by creating the Free South Africa Movement, which pressured for federal anti-apartheid legislation. These actions by community activists, celebrities, and legislators provided the political opportunity, or leverage, for students to pressure universities, too. This combination of forces led American students to reengage with the issue of apartheid in the third (and final) wave of the student anti-apartheid movement.

In the beginning of the third wave, students used a combination of protest tactics from the first and second waves—including sit-ins, rallies, marches, educational meetings, and petitions to investment advisory committees. However, these tactics were met with limited success as endowment boards continued to deflect divestment pressure. A new and radical tactic was needed to jolt the movement, leading students at Cornell University to build the first “unsightly” shanty, as Chapter Four will analyze in depth (Martin, 2007). Consequently, the third anti-apartheid wave was a product of students’ moral framing of South African events and the political opportunity in the United States in the early 1980s; the shanty itself developed from a need for a tactical escalation.

South Africa and the Moral Framing

The following section explores the developments in South Africa in the early 1980s, a period defined by political turbulence and mass resistance to the proposed constitutional reforms. The apartheid government’s violent repression of black resistance during this period made it clear to American students that apartheid was an immoral governing system that must end. At certain moments in this analysis, the events of the 1980s are contextualized for a deeper understanding of the continuance in which apartheid policies existed.

Apartheid’s Road to Reform

In the mid-1970s, white South African leaders faced intensifying criticism from the international community concerning apartheid’s racial policies. In October 1974, the United Nations General Assembly debated whether South Africa should be dismissed as a member state because of South Africa’s “total violation” and “flagrant contradiction” of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the initial proceedings, the Somalian

representative argued, “Objective consideration of the facts would show that South Africa’s continued presence as a Member State made a mockery of international law and morality” (The United Nations, 1974, p. 192). The United Nations suspended South Africa for a single session in November 1974. However, the members of the Security Council—specifically the United States, Britain, and France—vetoed the General Assembly’s draft resolution for South Africa’s permanent expulsion. Nevertheless, the international criticism made white South African leaders aware of the vulnerability in which their power rested (Sulzberger, 1974).

Meanwhile, white colonial regimes in southern Africa faced intensifying black liberation movements throughout Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, and Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). As violent clashes ensued, white powers and African leaders engaged in broader ideological disputes—such as capitalism versus African socialism, imperialism versus African nationalism, and white superiority versus black emancipation. South Africa, which was the largest economy and the stronghold for white rule in the region, stood at the epicenter of these debates. As white regimes began falling in the region, the apartheid government clung to its power by forcefully repressing internal black opposition movements, such as the African National Congress, the Pan Africanist Congress, and the South African Communist Party (SACP) (Lelyveld, 1983; Taylor, 1967; Shamyurura, 1977).

On June 16, 1976, the Soweto Uprising confirmed the apartheid regime’s fear of black liberation movements. On that day, nearly 20,000 students in the Soweto township marched to protest the poor quality of the Bantu education system and the use of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction (Shafer, 1979). In reaction, South African security forces opened fire into the crowd, killing an estimated 176 students. In the weeks and months that followed, protest erupted across the country. By October, an estimated 160 townships and Bantustans across South Africa

publically protested apartheid rule and the police brutality against black South Africans. In the unrest, 95 black schools were damaged or burnt, and the police killed an estimated 700 to 1200 additional people. South Africa's population was openly rebelling against apartheid rule, which confirmed apartheid's governing vulnerabilities and exposed the injustice of the whole system (Pohlandt-McCormick, 2000).

Constitutional Reforms as “Apartheid’s New Clothes”

Following the condemnation from abroad and the surge in black resistance, South Africa's political and military leaders proposed that the apartheid state broaden its “base of support” to allay domestic and international criticism. Meaning, these leaders suggested that the state expand government representation to other racial groups, at least in appearance (Lelyveld, 1983). In response, the Minister of Defense, Pieter Willem (P.W.) Botha, announced in 1977 a “total strategy” to review the government's existing structure and to consider alternative power sharing arrangements (Shafer, 1979). The recommendation from this review was the creation of a new constitution that implemented a tricameral parliament system with white, Indian, and mixed-race chambers. The proposed constitution did not extend political representation to the black majority, who comprised 72 percent of South Africa's population, under the premise that blacks were citizens of the Bantustans (Burns, 1977).

Black South Africans were outraged at these so called “reforms.” Like before, they were denied equal rights and representation in a supposedly democratic nation. The parliamentary commission, who now controlled the reform process, worried that black resistance would disrupt the adoption of the new constitution. To quell dissent, the commission announced that the black majority would have an “advisory role” in the constitution's creation to “ease” the country into power sharing arrangements (Burns, 1980). Meanwhile, a staunch conservative faction of the white

National Party opposed the idea of any non-white participation in governance. This group, comprised mostly of Afrikaners, split with the National Party to form the Conservative Party. P.W. Botha satiated the Conservative Party's demands by scheduling a white referendum to approve the final constitution, which gave the Conservative Party an opportunity to block the reforms. Yet, P.W. Botha never offered a referendum to Indian, mixed-race, or black populations because of the high likelihood that these groups would reject any constitution that excluded the black majority from political participation (Lelyveld, 1983).

On May 5, 1983, the commission submitted a final version of the constitution to parliament. P.W. Botha, once again, assured white voters that the black population would be given no power provisions. In doing so, Joseph Lelyveld (1983), a special reporter to the New York Times, retorted, "[P.W. Botha] seemed to be telling the world that, despite the fanfare, the constitutional face lift added up to nothing much" (p. 1). Six months later in November, the white populace voted in the referendum to decide officially to enact the constitution. The referendum passed with the approval of 66 percent of white voters—a larger margin of success than anticipated. In a news conference, P.W. Botha stated, "It is a decisive majority in favor of the attempt to secure security, peace, stability and prosperity for South Africa . . . The Government now feels strengthened to go ahead with proper and evolutionary reform" (Cowell, 1983, p. 1).

The approved constitution transferred small pockets of political power to Indian and mixed-race South Africans for the first time under apartheid rule. The tricameral parliament consisted of a mixed-race House of Representatives with 85 members, an Indian House of Deputies with 45 members, and a white House of Assembly with 178 members. However, as reflected by the number of representatives allocated to each chamber and the absence of the black majority from representation all together, the white minority retained the bulk of political power (The New

York Times, 1983). Many observers in South Africa and abroad called the regime's bluff. The constitution was merely "apartheid's new clothes" (Hovey, 1983, p. 1).

Labor Reforms: Wiehahn and the Industrial Reconciliation Act

As a complement to the constitutional reforms, the government reviewed its policies regarding labor unions. P.W. Botha appointed Professor Nicholas Wiehahn and thirteen others to develop a new labor strategy with the specific instructions to "adjust" the "existing system" (Shafer, 1979). This implied that the Wiehahn committee was only allowed to modify—not overhaul or drastically correct—the labor system, no matter how it exploited the black workforce. The committee's final recommendation was that black South Africans should have access to legally recognized unions and full participation in the bargaining and dispute settlement process. Furthermore, the recommended the integration of segregated work facilities and the elimination of statutory job reservations of skilled jobs for whites and unskilled jobs for blacks.

Based on these recommendations, the South African government passed the Industrial Conciliation Amendment Act into law in 1979. This law purportedly gave registered black unions the same negotiating and striking rights as the white unions. This was not the reality. The requirements to register as a black union were ill-defined, which gave the industrial registrar arbitrary powers to deny the registration of a black union without justifiable cause. Further amplifying the discrimination, there was no legal recourse to challenge the registrar's decision (Shafer, 1979).

The law also restricted which non-white individuals could be in a union. For instance, unions of multiple races were illegal because the state feared blacks, mixed-race, and Indian populations would organize to overthrow white control. The law also only permitted union membership for those who had permanent residency rights and fixed contract employment in white

areas. Therefore, miners, domestic workers, and agricultural workers—thereby most black workers—had no legal right to unionize. To the small numbers of black individuals who were allowed to unionize, the law forbade them from organizing around other aims, such as living conditions or political representation. Michael Shafer (1979) wrote, “By denying black unions the right to deal with such broader interests, the requirements for registration effectively leash[ed] one of the most potent forces for change in South Africa” (p. 12). Ultimately, the labor union reforms were a facade of change that excluded the black majority from legitimate avenues for labor protection while further entrenching apartheid control (Shafer, 1979).

The Mobilization of Organized Resistance

From 1983 to 1985, black resistance mobilized to protest the undemocratic constitutional and labor reforms. Several umbrella groups, such as the United Democratic Front, the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) and the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA), organized township residents, students, workers, and informal settlement dwellers into a disciplined opposition movement. The state responded by violently suppressing oppositional efforts with its militarized security forces—leading to bloody confrontations that eventually led the government to declare a state of emergency in 1985.

The United Democratic Front

After the state announced the constitutional reforms, Reverend Allan Boesak called for the formation of a popularly organized front to oppose the government reforms in January 1983. After a series of organizing conferences in Natal, the Transvaal and the Cape, the United Democratic Front (UDF) officially launched in August 1983. At the height of its influence, the UDF united over 600 civic, political, religious, women, and student groups who shared the common goal of

obtaining substantive political rights for black and other non-white South Africans. After the constitution was passed in November, the UDF began to organize around urban and day-to-day issues affecting life in the townships, which resulted in a series of bus boycotts, rent boycotts, squatter revolts, labor strikes, and school protests. Mark Swilling (1987) wrote,

They [the organizations of the UDF] managed to ride a wave of anger and protest that transformed political relations in the communities so rapidly that the UDF's local, regional, and national leaders found themselves unable to build organizational structures to keep pace with these levels of mobilization and politicization. (p. 11)

The UDF's challenge then was to transform the black community's "reactive" energy into a durable, disciplined movement. To accomplish this, the UDF created "alternative organs of peoples' power" through street and area committees in the townships (Swilling, 1987, p. 13). These committees devoted concentrated efforts to bring militant youths (who were engaging security forces in street battles) under control to counter the state's efforts to detain activists. The committees' other directive was to organize further consumer boycotts, rent boycotts, and demands for the withdraw of troops from the townships. These efforts were meant to "make all the structures of apartheid unworkable" and demonstrate to the state "that the people will accept nothing less than majority rule" (Swilling, 1987, p. 15).

Uprisings in The Black Townships

The urban townships were historically the heart of black resistance. Historian Jacob Dlamini wrote, "The revolutionary movement . . . never really moved out of its urban base" (Sapire, 2013, p. 168). In the summer of 1984, white local authorities announced rent increases in the townships in the Vaal Triangle—the industrial and mining area 60 kilometers south of Johannesburg that was comprised of Vereeniging, Vanderbijlpark, Sasolburg, Meyerton, Sharpeville, and other townships. Outraged township residents rallied, boycotted, and held labor

strikes to dispute the rent increases, as well as, their continued exclusion from the political decision-making process (Cowell, 1985; Sapire, 2013).

At first, the protests in the Vaal Triangle began peacefully; however, violence erupted quickly and explosively. Ground security forces used automatic rifles to shoot “at anything black” while air forces sprayed tear gas from above (Parker & Mokhesi-Parker, 1998, p. 12). To fight back, protestors hurled rocks and handmade gasoline bombs at the security forces. By the day’s end, homes and municipal offices were ablaze; fourteen residents were dead and thirty-two were injured (Allen, 2006; Cowell, 1984). The fighting in the Vaal—now a full-fledged uprising—continued for months. Patrick Noonan described his experience in his diary, writing,

The Vaal Triangle is burning. Black smoke curling skywards dots the townships’ landscape . . . [The Vaal] boiled and simmered and boiled over again . . . It was a time of terror, mass arrests, burning tires, arson, political funerals, the destruction of state property, and of meeting. (Allen, 2006, p. 208)

By September’s end, police had killed 90 people. By November, the number of fatalities reached 160. For those who the police did not shoot, the police rounded up in mass arrests (Cowell, 1984; Allen, 2006; Parker & Mokhesi-Parker, 1998).

The township uprisings spread to the Eastern Cape, the Orange Free State, and the Natal. Between 1985 and 1986, the police murdered over 2,000 people in the political violence while detaining tens of thousands of activists. One of the more shocking incidents occurred when unprovoked security forces shot and killed 20 unarmed mourners at a funeral possession hosted to honor the 25th anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre. The same year, the ANC called for a “people’s war” to “render South Africa ungovernable” (Sapire, 2013, p. 172). As a component of this war, the ANC called for black resistance to overthrow the white township governance (and

any of its black contributors) and establish street committees to regulate the disorder following the uprisings and the collapse of township administrations (Sapire, 2013).

Student Resistance

As the township unrest boiled over, students were critical to the fight to make apartheid ungovernable. South African students had historically been a fundamental part of black resistance. For example, in 1954, over 10,000 black students boycotted their schools to demand for democratic representation, the end of corporal punishment, and accountability for the sexual abuse committed by teachers against students. In the 1960s, the Black Consciousness Movement empowered students with models of black pride and self-reliance. Then, in June 1976, 15,000 to 20,000 students peacefully gathered in Soweto to protest the injustice of the Bantu education system (Bot, 1985). In 1980, students formed the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) with a platform centered on student and civic grievances. Students understood that the struggle went beyond the issues of education to include the structure of racial and socio-economic oppression in South Africa as a whole. Consequently, their platform included the demand for the creation of democratically elected student councils, the release of detained students, the withdrawal of the security forces from the townships, the end to despotic local governance, and the control of surging rent and housing prices (Bot, 1985; Rueedi, 2015).

In 1984, when the township uprising surged across South Africa, over 30,000 students joined a nation-wide school boycott. By October, over 220,000 students refused to go to school, and many schools in Soweto, Pretoria, the East Rand, and the Vaal were left empty (Bot, 1985). Meanwhile, student youth joined the militaristic arms of the ANC (Umkhonto we Sizwe) or created their own militant youth organizations. The youth dug trenches and built road blockades in the streets with burning tires to prevent armored vehicles from moving in the townships. They threw

rocks and petrol bombs at security forces, government buildings, and vehicles. As armed units of the ANC moved throughout the townships, some youth acquired rifles and hand grenades. This upsurge in student militancy was described as *siyayinyova*, meaning “we are defiantly fighting” or “we will destroy.” *Siyayinyova* became a rallying cry for black South African youth as they sought to overthrow apartheid rule (Rueedi, 2015).

Labor Unrest

Similar to students, black South African workers were also key actors in black resistance. In the 1970s, South Africa, like the United States, suffered from an economic crisis fueled by the rise in world oil prices. Meanwhile, South Africa’s economy shifted to manufacturing and industry, which resulted in a greater need for black, semi-skilled industrial workers since the white labor force could not meet this demand. However, the expanding black workforce suffered from stagnant low wages as the cost of living increased during the economic downturn. This impelled many black workers to join unions to bargain for higher wages and increased worker protections (Friedman, 2011).

With the growth in union membership, several umbrella groups formed to educate and organize workers, including the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) and the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA). These organizations were critical in organizing the struggle against the Wiehahn labor reforms (Friedman, 2011). In the early 1980s, black workers held strikes to pressure for wage increases and the legal recognition of their unions. In 1982 alone, over 141,500 black workers participated in an estimated 390 strikes. This was the largest number of strikes that South Africa had seen in 20 years, and the state considered all 390 strikes illegal. To repress labor protests, security forces fired rubber bullets and tear-gas into striking crowds. The state also frequently fired striking workers, deported them to the Bantustans, or detained them for

indefinite periods of time without trial (Boyer, 1983). Other descriptions of the inhumane treatment of labor union organizers circulated throughout the international media. A report from the Africa Fund described several cases of torture,

From December 1981 to January 1982, Thozamile Gqweta, president of the South African Allied Workers Union, was stripped naked, chained to the bars on a jail window, and was swung and beaten. His mother and uncle were burned to death in their home whose doors had been wired shut. Gqweta suffered a psychiatric breakdown and went into hiding in 1983. (Boyer, 1983, p. 7)

Another case detailed,

In February 1982, Neil Aggett, the white organizer for the black African Food and Canning Workers Union, was found hanged in his jail cell, driven to suicide, apparently, by the security police's brutal interrogation methods, including electro-shock, beatings, and 62 hours of questioning. (Boyer, 1983, p. 7)

While black labor union representation was never the only focal point of student anti-apartheid protests in the United States, the news about union repression coming from South Africa reflected, more generally, apartheid's continued disregard of the human rights of South Africa's black population.

Outside the Townships: Informal Settlement Life

Beyond the formal townships, informal settlement dwellers also challenged apartheid's control by disobeying housing and movement policies. The state created the townships to segregate urban black workers' living quarters from the white centers. However, the townships were often crowded, so many migrants who sought work in the urban areas were forced to build their own housing in informal settlements outside the formally designated living areas. The informal settlements were sites of great poverty, as described by international reporters who explained the individual homes as "small shacks" made from plastic sheeting, garbage bags, tin sheets, and

packing crates (Lelyveld, 1983; Cowell, 1984; Bernstein, 1985). At moments, the reporters' descriptions were histrionic. A New York Times reporter wrote,

Armed with a little ingenuity, a person who wishes to live here, albeit unlawfully, in a slum called Crossroads, can construct a home of wooden planks, fiberboard, and green or black plastic sheeting in about three hours. (Cowell, 1984).

Crossroads was one of the largest informal settlements, encompassing a 140-acre area with over 3,600 shacks and 26,000 people. The informal settlement became a symbol of black resistance against apartheid—the same regime that exploited black labor and then denied these workers the right to live in stable housing. In 1977, the government began bulldozing Crossroads; however, the informal settlement remained standing as individuals rebuilt their homes after the police destroyed them (The New York Times, 1977).

Across South Africa, these informal settlements formed outside and inside the townships, as people constructed their shanties in the backyards of township home owners (Bernstein, 1985). The descriptions of the living conditions in these informal settlements were the aesthetic inspiration for the shanties built on American university campuses in the 1980s.

The State of Emergency

On July 21, 1985, South Africa declared a partial state of emergency in 36 magisterial districts around Johannesburg and the Eastern Cape following the surge in organized black resistance after the tricameral constitutional reforms. This was the first state of emergency in twenty-five years; the last one occurred in 1960 after the Sharpeville Massacre. The emergency declaration gave security forces unrestricted policing power, banned political gatherings in any form (targeting the United Democratic Front), and forbid the press from publishing subversive statements about the apartheid government (The New York Times, 1985; Castillejo-Cuellar,

2006). The state even banned funerals for victims of the violence, nearly all of whom were black, because these had become occasions for mass rallies (Cowell, 1985).

In the weeks and months after the state of emergency, mass demonstrations and riots continued. Security forces—now given unrestricted power—scattered crowds with whips and tear gas. They also fired rubber bullets and shotguns at protestors, killing many. A New York Times reporter, Alan Cowell, mournfully commented, “Many of those who have died of bullet wounds were armed only with stones, sometimes not even that” (1985). Other reports recounted how police shot black children as they played in their front yards. As the unrest persisted, additional ground units, cavalry troops, armored cars, and helicopter air-support were sent into the townships, which only perpetuated deadly clashes between security forces and black South Africans (Cowell, 1985).

The general attitude across South Africa was that the country was on the brink of a civil war between the white and black populations (Cowell, 1985). The international community also feared civil war. A handful of Western nations retracted their ambassadors from South Africa to signify their dissatisfaction with the state of South African affairs (The New York Times, 1985). The U.S. State Department chastised the apartheid government but offered no additional support to black South Africans. Despite the foreign pressure (however weak it may have been), the South African government later extended the partial state of emergency to a full national emergency on June 12, 1986. The violence continued. In total, the partial and national state of emergencies left over 1,000 people dead, 20,000 injured, and 14,000 detained (Lapierre, 2009).

American Students’ Moral Framing

The information about the South African events in the late 1970s and early 1980s were publically available to students. Local campus divestment organizations and national

organizations, such as the Africa Fund, the Southern Africa Liberation Committee, and the American Committee on Africa, distributed newsletters and flyers that included details of the constitutional reforms and the efforts of black resistance movements. Furthermore, American newspapers, such as the New York Times, provided consistent sources of information about South Africa to American audiences, especially as violence escalated.

In interviews, student activists discussed possible reasons why campus activism “exploded” surrounding the issue of apartheid by 1985. Students’ statements indicated that they were responding, in part, to the intensification of violence in South Africa and the “horrors of apartheid.” Joshua Nessen, a student at Hampshire College, explained:

First of all, things in South Africa really escalated. By the fall of 1984, there had been several killings, there was a two-day general strike, things were beginning to get going. . . People were conscious of a need to break out of a certain bind. . . With South Africa, I initially reacted to the horrors of apartheid. (Vellela, 1988, p. 33)

Dale Robertson, from the University of Texas at Austin, echoed Nessen’s statement and credited the awareness among students about the events in South Africa to improved information streams. He stated (1986),

The past semester, spring 1986, revealed a heightened sense of awareness amongst the student body at the University of Texas at Austin. Eyes opened wide and minds jerked from textbook memorization . . . South Africa's despicable system of apartheid, which rules inequality and holds one man superior to another on the basis of the color of his skin, turned an apathetic or unawakened majority into a minority at the University of Texas. (p. 38)

Robertson went on to explain how the daily news about South Africa’s struggle in the American press and the work of campus divestment groups that disseminate additional information brought about the “heightened sense of awareness” of American campuses.

Thus, the news of the violence and repression by the South African government allowed students to articulate a moral argument for divestment by defining the apartheid government as a “murderous,” “despicable,” “pernicious system” and the “most brutally barbaric regime since Hitler’s Nazi Germany” (Jennings, 1986; Rana, 1986; Robertson, 1986). Keith Jennings (1986) from Atlanta University summarized the students’ moral argument against apartheid by stating,

Apartheid to us is not something to be intellectually debated. We are very clear that apartheid constitutes colonialist and racist oppression in its crudest and most disgusting form. It is a system where a white minority, by controlling the means of production, ruthlessly exploit the African majority and denies them any form of human dignity . . . Moreover, we ask who is it that murders children, tortures political activists, bans democratic organizations, dispatches assassination squads or launches unprovoked military attacks on the neighboring sovereign nations . . . Obviously the answer to all the questions is apartheid South Africa. We are forced to conclude that the real terrorist is apartheid South Africa.

He continued,

We would like to say by way of conclusion . . . our cause is a moral one. It is a political one as well. But more than anything else it is a historical one. We are certain that the victorious upheavals of the poor and the oppressed against the unjust systems of oppression and exploitation will undoubtedly be the written history of the twentieth century (p. 29).

By articulating the events in South Africa in moral terms, students believed that university investments in South Africa were “tools of the white oppressors” (Lind, 1986, p. 30). Consequently, they built the shanties to pressure for divestment so that universities would not be complicit in an immoral system.

The United States: The Political Opportunity

Beginning with Richard Nixon's 1968 election win, the American political pendulum began falling to the side of conservatism. The social unrest of the 1960s, coupled with the economic uncertainties of the 1970s and the Cold War, pushed the country to embrace the ideology of less government regulation, a stronger military presence, and a return to traditional values (Altbach & Cohen, 1990). In 1980, the Republicans won control of the Senate for the first time since 1954, and Ronald Reagan, the former governor of California, won the presidency. President Reagan—the defender of free market economic principles, an avid denouncer of communism, and a “citizen politician”—became the face of a new era of conservatism (Cannon, 2009). However, his foreign policies in Central America and South Africa were controversial. Specifically, American activists decried Reagan as being “in bed” with apartheid (Tsongas, 1984). In response, activists formed the Free South Africa Movement, which generated pressure at the federal level and provided the political opportunity for American students to rally around the same cause at their universities despite the conservatism on campuses during this era.

Conservatism and the University

The American atmosphere that gave rise to Reagan's conservatism also affected university life. Although students were still comparatively liberal with respect to their politics and lifestyle choices, they began focusing “inward” during the 1970s and 1980s. The “gloomy” economic environment in the 1970s caused by stagflation, multiple oil shocks, and high levels of unemployment left students anxious about how they would enter an uncertain economy. As a result, they increasingly embraced a “me mentality” by focusing their attention on achieving high marks in academic fields that promised the most career security. In turn, campus organizations directed large amount of their energy to ensure the quality of student services and campus life.

This did not mean students entirely abandoned social or political concerns. Rather, students of the 1980s were more likely to mobilize on issues that directly affected student interests instead of the ideological concerns of the students of the 1960s (Altbach & Cohen, 1990). For this reason, the anti-apartheid protests delineated a significant moment where the students of the 1980s were engaging with ideological, international concerns.

Ronald Reagan's Foreign Policies

President Reagan aggressively fought against communism during the Cold War, which was on the forefront of many Americans' fears. To him and many Western leaders, the Cold War was a battle of good versus evil—the West versus any communist state. Reagan feared that the Soviet Union was rapidly expanding its influence in Asia, Latin America, and southern Africa. In turn, he expanded and modernized the U.S. military, engaged in an ideological counteroffensive to vilify the Soviet Union's linkages, and strengthened America's alliances, all to contain communist influence. Later known as the "Reagan Doctrine," Reagan funded covert operations in Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Angola, and Cambodia to aid resistance forces or "freedom fighters" that could deter alleged Soviet advances (Busch, 1997). Reagan stated in his State of the Union address,

We cannot play innocents abroad in a world that's not innocent; nor can we be passive when freedom is under siege . . . we must not break faith with those who are risking their lives—on every continent, from Afghanistan to Nicaragua—to defy Soviet-supported aggression and secure rights which have been ours from birth . . . Support for freedom fighters is self-defense. (1985)

President Reagan believed apartheid South Africa was an important ally for American interests. Specifically, South Africa provided important mineral stores to the United States and behaved as a "democratic" stronghold against communist influences in the region. Although Reagan publicly

criticized apartheid' racial policies, he sought to maintain a "full and friendly" relationship with P.W. Botha and the apartheid government (Lelyveld, 1981).

Constructive Engagement

When Reagan entered office in 1981, he appointed Chester Crocker as the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. Assistant Secretary Crocker introduced a policy of "Constructive Engagement" with South Africa. In explaining this policy, Crocker stated,

Our task, together with our key allies, is . . . to pursue our growing interests throughout the region. Only if we engage constructively in southern Africa as a whole can we play our proper role in the search for negotiated solutions, peaceful change and expanding economic progress. . . it is not our task to choose between black and white. . . important Western economic, strategic, moral, and political interests are at stake. . . the Reagan Administration has no intention of destabilizing South Africa in order to curry favor elsewhere. . . neither will we align ourselves with apartheid policies that are abhorrent to our own multiracial democracy (Gwertzman, 1981).

The goals of Constructive Engagement were to strengthen the United States' influence in southern Africa, protect the region from communist influences, and support white controlled change in South Africa through "friendly persuasion" and "quiet diplomacy" (Ohaegbulam, 1993; Thomson, 2008). Reagan avoided punitive measures, such as full economic sanctions against South Africa. Instead he relaxed the American arms embargo, encouraged continued economic relationships between South Africa and the U.S., and offered diplomatic support to P.W. Botha and the National Party (Thomson, 2008).

The Free South Africa Movement

President Reagan's Constructive Engagement policy frustrated American activists, especially following the uprisings and repression in South Africa. On November 21, 1984, a group of African American activists met with the South African Ambassador to the United States,

Bernardus Fourie, in Washington, D.C. These activists included Randall Robinson (Executive Director of TransAfrica), Mary Frances Berry (U.S. Civil Rights Commissioner), Eleanor Holmes Norton (a Georgetown University law professor), and Congressman Walter Fauntroy. They demanded that South Africa immediately release its political prisoners (especially Nelson Mandela) and bring an end to apartheid. After making their demands, the group of four staged a sit-in and were arrested when they refused to leave. Outside of the meeting, protestors picketed and chanted “South Africa will be free, Mandela will be free!” (Nakhoda, Global Nonviolent Action Database, 2010).

The media dubbed the protest the Free South Africa Movement (FSAM). Demonstrations continued every day for an entire year at South African embassies and consulates across the United States, which lived up to Randall Robinson’s statement that they were “in for the long haul” (Gamarekian, 1984). The movement eventually spread to 26 American cities. Several important figures became involved, including numerous congressional representatives, city mayors, Yolanda King (the daughter of Martin Luther King, Jr), Rosa Parks (who was arrested at a South African embassy on the 29th anniversary of her arrest in Montgomery), Gloria Steinem, and Nobel Prize Winner Bishop Desmond Tutu. Public arrests became a well-rehearsed activity as protestors peacefully crossed the 500-foot boundary, where police arrested them and took them to jail for a brief period (Nakhoda, Global Nonviolent Action Database, 2010). In total, more than 4,000 people were arrested during the embassy protests, including 23 members of Congress (Jackson, 1989).

Anti-Apartheid Legislation

Alongside the Free South Africa Movement, African American U.S. Congressional leaders, along with a contingent of white liberals, contested the Reagan administration’s

Constructive Engagement strategy (Metz, 1986). In a September 1984 hearing of the Subcommittee of African Affairs, Massachusetts Senator Paul Tsongas predicted that history would harshly judge the previous four years of American policy towards apartheid. Senator Tsongas (1984) also stated that there was a “moral dilemma of how [the United States], a nation which has made such serious strides in promoting racial harmony, can really in essence justify being, de facto, in bed with apartheid” (p. 2). Fellow Massachusetts Senator Ted Kennedy (1984) described the South African violence after the new constitution as “a harbinger, not of dawn, but of twilight to be followed by a bitter night” (p. 3). These U.S. senators pressured the Reagan administration to enact economic sanctions similar to the 1977 U.N. arms embargo against South Africa and to reinstate export controls on equipment and supplies to South Africa’s military and police, which Reagan lifted earlier that year (U.S. States Senate, 1984).

Chester Crocker, who was present at the same hearing, refused to change the Reagan administration’s position. Crocker (1984) rejected the idea of sanctions or divestment, stating, “We fail to see how waging economic warfare against the government and people of South Africa can advance our goals or serve the interests of either the American people or the citizens of all races in that country” (p. 12). The following month, the United States abstained from voting on a UN Security Council resolution that condemned South Africa’s apartheid policies (Culverson, 1996).

While President Reagan and Assistant Secretary Crocker refused to change course, Congressional leaders from the House Subcommittee on Africa and the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), organized to create federal anti-apartheid legislation. In June 1985, they introduced the Anti-Apartheid Act to the House of Representatives, which banned new loans to businesses in South Africa or to the government, prohibited the importation of Krugerrands, and prohibited the sale of computers to the South African government. The bill passed 295 to 127 and had strong

chances of passing the Senate in September. President Reagan then faced the likelihood of vetoing the Anti-Apartheid Act if the Senate passed it (The New York Times, 1985).

To pacify the demands for sanctions and to quiet domestic critics of Constructive Engagement, President Reagan issued Executive Order 12532 on September 9, 1985 (Orkin, 1989). The Executive Order adopted some of the terms of the sanctions bill by prohibiting: (1) the sale of computers to South African security forces and government agencies, (2) the provision of new bank loans to the South African government, (3) the transfer of nuclear goods to South Africa, (4) the import of South Africa produced military resources (Thomson, 2008). When introducing the order, Reagan stated, “America’s view of apartheid is simple and straightforward: We believe it’s wrong. We condemn it. And we are united in hoping for the day when apartheid will be no more” (1986). Only hours after Reagan’s statement, the Republican-controlled Senate voted to delay voting on the Anti-Apartheid Act, and the bill died by filibuster (Weinraub, 1985).

The pro-sanctions contingency of the Senate and House of Representatives then vowed to pass an even tougher sanctions bill. In May 1986, they introduced the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act—the strictest anti-apartheid bill proposed to date—to the House of Representatives. The proposal banned all new U.S. investment in private businesses in South Africa, which was the first proposed sanctions measure to affect South Africa’s private sector. The bill also banned the purchase of stock in South African companies; the imports of South African coal, uranium, and steel; and the landing of South African planes at American airports. Lastly, if in a year’s time, the apartheid government had not begun negotiations to end apartheid and free its political prisoners (Nelson Mandela in particular), the bill required a second round of sanctions that would withdraw American computer companies from South Africa (Times Daily, 1986; Fuerbringer, 1986).

At this time in South Africa, the apartheid government declared a full state of emergency on June 12, 1986. This state of emergency gave South African authorities unprecedented power to censor the press. It prohibited the publishing of any subversive statement against the government and forbid any television, radio, and photographic coverage of black South African protests or the security measures to stop them. Under the decree, the state gave security forces authority to remove South African and international reporters from any area. A New York Times reporter wrote, "From a literal interpretation of the decrees, that means people could be shot for failing to obey the orders of policemen, soldiers, or security personnel" (1986).

Once again, South African voices decried Western nations who had not enacted economic sanctions against the apartheid regime. On June 16, Desmond Tutu (1986), now a Nobel Prize winner, wrote a piece for the New York Times stating,

Blacks are saying: "We are suffering already. To end it, we will support sanctions, even if we have to take on additional suffering" . . . I must ask, to whom is the international community willing to listen? To the victims and their spokesmen or to the perpetrators of apartheid and those who benefit from it? . . . I would be more impressed with those who made no bones about the reason they remain in South Africa and said, honestly, "We are concerned for our profits," instead of the baloney that the businesses are there for our benefit. We don't want you there. Please do us a favor: get out and come back when we have a democratic and just South Africa . . .

There has been progress, but we do not want apartheid ameliorated or improved. We do not want apartheid made comfortable. We want it dismantled. . . I am unaware of anything that has changed in South Africa without pressure. . . We hear some say that sanctions will destroy the South Africa economy and leave us with a financial morass. My response is that the ball is surely in the South African government's court . . . I certainly do not want to destroy a land I love passionately. But if the South African government remains intransigent and obstinate, then sanctions or no sanctions, the economy will be destroyed in the wake

of the violence, bloodshed, and chaos that will ensue if a full-scale civil war breaks out.
(p.3)

Six days after the state declared a state of emergency and two days after Desmond Tutu called again for U.S. sanctions, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act. The bill then moved to the Senate where it faced resistance by anti-sanctions conservatives. These conservatives worried about communist influences in the African National Congress if the ANC was to become the leader of a post-apartheid South Africa. To compromise, the pro-sanctions Senate contingency agreed that if, in the future, the apartheid government was prepared to negotiate a transition to democratic rule, then the United States would support democratic negotiations without the ANC, if the ANC was unwilling to end its armed violence (Thomas J. Redden, 1988). The pro-sanctions Senate contingency also comprised on the severity of the sanctions—abandoning a proposal that required U.S. investors to withdraw all their existing investments from South Africa (The New York Times, 1986)

In August, the Senate passed the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act with a vote of 84 to 14. The House of Representatives then passed the bill with a vote of 308 to 77 [of which 90 ‘yes’ votes were Republicans] (Roberts, 1986). President Reagan vetoed the sanctions bill. In his message to Congress, he stated, “Are we truly helping the black people of South Africa, the lifelong victims of apartheid, when we throw them out of work and leave them and their families jobless and hungry in those segregated townships?” (Boyd, 1986). Reagan faced heavy criticism at home and abroad for refusing to pass the legislation. In a statement, Desmond Tutu said that President Reagan “will be judged harshly by history” for his decision (The New York Times, 1986).

The House of Representatives voted 313 to 83 in favor of overriding Reagan’s veto. Three days later, the Senate voted 78 to 21 to pass the bill. President Reagan issued 48 bills by this point

in his presidency; however, Congress had only superseded five of these (Roberts, 1986). Thus, the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 was unprecedented by the way it was passed and the way it affected American foreign policy. The final version of the act banned all new American investments in South African businesses; banned the import of South African coal, steel, textiles, uranium, agricultural products; cancelled the landing rights of South African airlines in the United States; created provisions for how the U.S. would interact with the ANC; and established a timetable of actions to pressure South Africa to eliminate its apartheid laws (Gray, 1986).

The Shanty Emergence

The combination of forces in South Africa and the United States—including the escalation of violence following the constitutional reforms and the state of emergency in South Africa and the pressure by the Free South Africa Movement against Reagan’s conservative foreign policy—provided both a moral rationale and political opportunity for students to respond. Consequently, the student divestment movement “burst forth with a fury” for the third and final time in 1985 (Jackson, 1989, p. 57). However, students needed to disrupt traditional protest methods and, therefore, created a novel protest tactic—the shanty—that would epitomize their movement.

Chapter Four: The Anti-Apartheid Shanties

Chapter Three explored *why* the third wave and shanty tactic emerged in the late 1980s. Chapter Four will now explore the shanties themselves, beginning by exploring the shanty's origins from an overcrowded sit-in at Columbia University. The chapter then explores the first shantytown at Cornell University in the spring of 1985 and the tactic's spread across campuses, analyzing which student subpopulations built the shanties; which university types were the most frequent sites of shanty protests; and how the aesthetics and location placement contributed to reactions by opposition groups.

The Shanties' Genesis

On April 4th, 1985, over 250 Columbia University students gathered to participate in a sit-in at Hamilton Hall (an iconic campus site for student protests) to pressure for university divestment from South Africa. Amidst the students' energy and large numbers, they soon realized that the building was too small to contain the group so the students moved the event to the front steps and refused to leave until the university divested (Soule, 1999). The sit-in then evolved into a "sit-out." One observer described the scene of the steps as:

. . . covered with sitting, sprawling, hunkering students, maybe two hundred of them, debating, laughing, reading, conferring and establishing a presence. Armchairs and sofas dragged out from a near-by dormitory offered some support. Tarpaulins were rigged up to provide shelter; blankets covered some who slept. (Soule, 1999, p. 125)

The sit-out lasted for two weeks. A New York Times article commented that the Columbia students were "conducting the first real sit-in (or sit-out) anyone can remember on the campus since the Vietnam War" (Martin, 2007, p. 336). Following Columbia University's example, students at Princeton University, the University of California at Santa Cruz, the University of Iowa, and

Harvard University hosted their own interpretations of a sit-in, including “camp-outs” on their quads and “sleep-ins” in their libraries (Soule, 1999). Finally, on April 22nd, three weeks after the Columbia sit-out, students at Cornell University applied to build a “symbolic permanent encampment”—a shanty—behind the main administration building (Martin, 2007, p. 339).

This tactical progression from the sit-in to the sit-outs, camp-outs, sleep-ins and finally to the shanty was consequential, as it demonstrated that the students adopted existing protest tactics and refashioned them for their own purposes. Recall from Chapter Two that the Civil Rights Movement used both the sit-in and construction of shanties (e.g. the Poor People’s Campaign of 1968) in the 1960s. Thus, as Todd Gitlin, a former Students for a Democratic Society member, stated, the students’ decision to build shanties in April 1985 “compressed” the “repertory of tactics” from the 1960s and from previous eras into a tactical modernism (Martin, 2007, p. 336). Therefore, although the students who built the shanties did not necessarily reinvent the tactical wheel, they did produce an innovation of significance when they applied a physical, semi-permanent symbol to the classic sit-in (Soule, 1999).

The genesis of the shanty idea can also be credited to the students’ creativity and adaptiveness following the implementation of media restrictions by the South Africa government. Previously, in the first and second protest waves, students relied heavily upon graphic press releases coming from South Africa to communicate their anti-apartheid message with the American public. However, when the apartheid government declared a state of emergency in 1985 and placed restrictions on the international media in South Africa, students compensated the absence of written and pictorial press coverage by building the shanties as a jarring, tactile symbol of the oppressive conditions in which non-white South Africans were forced to live. Thus, the

students “minimized” the failure in press coverage by adapting with the shanty—their “new spectacular tactic” (Jackson, 1989, p. 127).

A Study of the First Shantytown: Cornell University

In April 1985, two dozen committed student activists hauled pieces of cardboard, plastic, and wood behind the university’s main administration building, Day Hall (or “Biko Hall” as the student activists preferred to call it). The students constructed fifteen total shanties, each with a specific purpose or inspiration, including “the Hilton” (designed to hold up to fifteen people), the Inhumanities Library (which distributed educational documents about apartheid), the Karl Marx or Nelson Mandela Hut, and the Amandla Awethu shanty (Martin, 2011). Numerous posters and writings graffitied on the shanties shouted “Smash racism!” and “Not one more step until Cornell divests” (Image 1; Image 2, Image 3). The shantytown served as a communal space where students educated other students, planned their protest objectives, and organized responses to administrative opposition (Martin, 2011).

The shantytown remained legally standing without incident until May 10 when a fire broke out due to a cigarette placed in an ashtray that later tipped over. The fire destroyed one shanty and caused minor burns for one student. The city fire department declared the shanties a fire hazard and a violation of the city’s building codes because students were sleeping in them. The university revoked the original permit and asked the students to pack their belongings and leave. The students, desperate to keep up the two-and-a-half week-old shanties, drafted “Shantytown Fire Regulations” to remove combustible waste, keep water and fire extinguishers present, and store cooking stoves outside the encampment (Martin, 2011).

However, the university rejected the students’ proposed fire hazard solutions and continued

with the removal. At 7:00 a.m. the following morning, groundskeepers and police arrived with a backhoe. Students, unwilling to allow the shanties to be destroyed, chose to physically tie themselves to the shanties with wires. The police officers cut the wires with bolt cutters and proceeded to forcibly remove students. Seven students then formed a human chain surrounding the backhoe, which denied the university's removal efforts for a time (Martin, 2007).

The university later issued a statement, saying, "Cornell University prefers a non-confrontational resolution of the dangerous situation that exists in the shanty town area behind Day Hall . . . because of the potential for injury . . . the removal actions were suspended." The students in turn wrote an "Emergency Memo from Shantytown" describing the morning's events by stating, "They entered with bolt cutters drawn and cut and dragged the residents out of their homes, JUST LIKE SOUTH AFRICA" (Martin, 2011, p. 56). The students built a new shanty to replace the one that had burned down. Throughout continued negotiation, the university encouraged students to find "alternative means of expression. . . without perpetuating a dangerous and unsightly collection of scrap and waste in the center of campus" (Martin, 2011, p. 57). Student protestors refused. They wrote, "We realize that some members of the community may be offended by what they see, and we are sorry if that is so, but, as one of our signs points out, "Apartheid Isn't Pretty Either" (Martin, 2011, p. 58). The university eventually obtained a restraining order to prevent student protestors from further interfering with the demolition. Consequently, on June 23, 1985, nearly three months after the students built the shanties, the university demolished the shantytown (Martin, 2011).

The Shanties: Who, Where, What?

The Cornell case study is telling to the broader shantytown movement. As this next section will detail, white liberal-leaning student activists who attended prestigious Ivy League schools in

the Northeast were the most likely to build shanties. (Yet, students who attended schools not traditionally known for activism, such as large public schools in the Southeast, Midwest and West, participated in the shanty movement, as well.) The students built their shanties in visible campus spaces, and by doing so, transformed the shanty areas into democratic, public forums. Furthermore, the shanties' portrayal of poverty and their implicit call for divestment and denunciation of racism agitated other members of campus, which led to violent attacks against the shanties by the campus right and university administrations.

Diffusion and Student “Collective Identity”

Following the first shantytown at Cornell University, the shanty tactic rapidly proliferated to other campuses. “*With-in* movement” diffusion theory can explain this spread, asserting that groupings within the *same* movement adopt the same tactic by certain indirect channels. Specifically, the shanty movement spread to various campus pressure groups because the students found a “collective identity” with other students who built the shanties. They often shared educational backgrounds (e.g. seeking four-year university degrees at prestigious universities), socio-economic status (e.g. middle to upper class), and racial and gender demographics (e.g. predominantly white and male by the 1980s movement). Thus, even without direct communication, they formed an indirect social linkage—so when one built a shanty, the others believed they could too (Soule, 1997).

This can help explain, in part, why black students did not participate in the third wave of the student divestment movement to the same extent as their white counterparts (a phenomenon which also occurred during student movements of the 1960s). Black students did not necessarily share the same “collective identity” with their mostly white peers who built the shanties (Soule, 1997). The testimony of Lamoin Werlein-Jaen, a student from the University of Wisconsin,

supports this conjecture. He cited “cultural and class differences” to explain why it was unlikely that “political alliances [between white and black students] will be forged when no other contacts exist” (Jackson, 1989, p. 119). Lisa Crooms and Joshua Nessen, two other students who participated in the movement, cite an additional explanation:

. . . primarily white student coalitions turned an insensitively deaf ear to the concerns, suggestions, analyses, and leadership of the students of African descent in order to cultivate and court the support of the white liberal student population (Jackson, 1989, p. 120).

In this sense, white students shut out black students from a shared “collective identity” for the sake of white coalition building. The testimony from Matthew Lyons, a protest participant, corroborates the “obliviousness” and “insensitivity” of white students at times, stating, “Unintended oppressive patterns played themselves out—white students’ assumptions about taking up space and being able to be in charge were sometimes alienating and divisive to black students” (Martin, 2007, p. 338).

Testimony from Joshua Nessen, a student coordinator for the American Committee on Africa reminds us that black students were also less likely to participate in direct action protests, like the shanties, because black students were historically vulnerable within white institutions. Therefore, given legacies of institutionalized racism, black students had to weigh their decision carefully, and many chose not to participate (Nessen, 1986). Certain exceptions existed, such as Columbia University, Purdue University, and the University of Florida, whose anti-apartheid groups featured significant black leadership and collaboration with organizations such as the NAACP and Black Student Unions. However, the testimonies of student participants make it clear that most divestment activists shared a white collective identity (Adamson, 1986; Agrillo, 1986).

Broadly speaking, students were also “biographically available” to participate in building the shanties. Meaning, students could construct and occupy the shanties because most lived within

walking distance to the shanties (especially at four-year residential universities); had flexible school schedules; and did not have spousal, childcare, or full-time work responsibilities (McAdam, 2009).

Diffusion and University Characteristics

The anti-apartheid protest shanty eventually spread to 46 university campuses between 1985 and 1990. Were there similarities between the universities to which the shanty spread? Specifically, did certain structural university characteristics affect the rate of shantytown protests?

Using an econometric analysis, sociologist Sarah Soule found that the shantytown tactic typically spread to universities with similar endowment size, prestige level, and institutional type. Explicitly, the students built the shanties at predominantly prestigious, liberal arts schools with large endowment ties to South Africa (Soule, 1997). Historian John Jackson explored this question as well but broadened the scope by asking where any student anti-apartheid protest event occurred, not just the shanties. He identified 817 protest events from 170 campuses in 37 states and the District of Columbia from 1977 to 1987 (thus his data was constrained to the second and third waves of the student movement). To note, less than seven percent of the protest data occurred before 1984, which indicates that the third wave was considerably more active, with 93 percent of protest events, compared to the second wave. Therefore, it is assumed that there is a correlation between the number of protest events at a university and the likelihood that these students built a shanty. Jackson's conclusions support Soule's findings that anti-apartheid protest—notably the shanty—spread mostly to prestigious, liberal arts schools in the Northeast United States (Jackson, 1989).

Furthermore, Jackson found that schools with larger enrollments were more likely to have anti-apartheid protests. In his data, 48.1 percent of schools with enrollments greater than 30,000 students had some form of protest while only 4.3 percent of schools with enrollments less than

2,500 students experienced divestment protest. Jackson suggested that the “cold and uncaring environments” and complicated bureaucratic systems of larger schools might have contributed to higher levels of student unrest if students felt like unsympathetic administrations ignored their demands. Jackson also suggested that larger schools likely had more pre-existing progressive student organizations to provide resources to divestment activists.

With respect to public versus private universities, Jackson concluded that private universities were more likely to have anti-apartheid protests compared to public universities. To explain why, he argues in support of the “critical mass” theory, which contends that a “critical mass” of protest-prone students influences the rate of activism. These protest-prone students are not any more “social-psychologically predisposed” to activism than other students, but rather, have previously participated in progressive social activism (Jackson, 1989, p. 85). Jackson suggested these intellectual and politically active students were attracted to prestigious, private schools rather than public ones. Although his data did not allow him to study the background of students, he used the mean number of protests per 10,000 students to identify such a “critical mass.” He concludes that prestigious, private institutions with a critical mass of students were over 5 times more likely to experience anti-apartheid protests compared to larger schools without a critical mass, which were more likely to be public schools. Thus, according to Jackson, protest rates are correlated with both school size, public versus private classification, and the protest-caliber of the students (Jackson, 1989).

Lastly, Jackson finds a trend in the distribution of student protest geographically, as shown in the following table:

| Region of the United States | Percentage of Protest Events |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Southwest | 2.6 |
| Southeast | 7.8 |
| Western | 17.5 |
| Midwest | 23.0 |
| Northeast | 48.9 |

Figure 2. Jackson, 1989.

As shown, the Northeast disproportionately experienced student anti-apartheid protest compared with the rest of the country. Jackson also notes that Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Cornell, and Dartmouth were the main protest schools, which further supports Soule's conclusion that the shanty predominantly spread to prestigious, liberal arts schools with large endowment ties to South Africa—the Ivy League schools (Jackson, 1989; Soule, 1997).

However, Sarah Soule and John Lindsey Jackson's analyses overlook the significance of anti-apartheid shanty protests occurring at less prestigious, public universities in the Southeast, Midwest, and the West—those schools not of the liberal Ivy clique. This included schools like the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the University of Florida at Gainesville, Arizona State University, the University of Hawaii, and the University of Kansas. Robert Pharr (1986), a student organizer at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, stated:

The group was able to make some impressive gains. We effectively politicized a campus that is not known for its radicalism. We educated thousands of students, faculty, staff, etc. about divestment and apartheid. And, notably, we challenged the idea that UNC students should not take an active interest in the situation of the world and the administration of their university. (p. 31)

From their experience in anti-apartheid activism, many of the schools, like the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, have continued an activist tradition surrounding university governance and broader national and international issues. Thus, the shanty builds challenged the notion that student activism could only occur in leftist bubbles.

Public Space and a Democratic Forum

Part of the shanty controversy was over where the students built them. Specifically, students appropriated high-traffic, visible spaces to build their “unsightly huts” (Martin, 2007). By doing so, they transformed these spaces into public forums for meeting, organizing, sharing information, and educating others. Bradford Martin (2007) writes,

At their core, the shanties were a form of protest that involved the contestation of public space . . . in which student activists claimed a critical, centrally located spot within the campus . . . and transformed campus space in ways that left them much closer to Habermas’s idealized version of public space as a maximally inclusive and accessible space for wide-ranging discourse. (p 330)

Martin’s argument requires an understanding that space (both public and private) is a social construction as much as it is a legal distinction. In this social construction, space exists on a continuum. On one extreme, space can be private, and thus exclusive with respect to who is allowed to enter and the amount of political discussion permitted. On the other extreme, space can be public and “accessible for expression and symbolic action” (Martin, 2007, p. 331).

Thus, the shanties utilized legally-defined public spaces, typically the outdoor areas of campus quads which were open to all university members. Some students even built shanties outside the U.S. State Department and on state capital lawns (Werlein-Jaen, 1986; Bond, 1986). Students then socially formed the spaces into being even more public (i.e. moving campus space further along the social continuum to the public extreme). The shanties accomplished this by

facilitating ways for sympathetic activists in the local community (i.e. individuals operating outside the campus communities and spaces) to participate in the movement. By doing so, the shanties functioned as a democratic public forum where students and outside activists acting as the “body politic” who voiced their right to hold the space and to comment on the university’s investment policies (Martin, 2007, p. 333).

The Shanties’ Aesthetics and the Revelation of Anxieties

The shanties’ aesthetics, by design, were unattractive. Students constructed them from wood, cardboard, tarpaper, and newspaper that they recycled from nearby trash sites. Most shanties were decorated with anti-apartheid and pro-divestment graffiti that read, “DIVEST”, “What is the World Waiting For?”, and “Apartheid Kills!” (Images 2; Image 4, Image 5). Other shanty graffiti messages were somber, with messages meant to directly connect the aesthetics of poverty with the lived experience of black South Africans. For example, one shanty had written on its side with black and blue letters, “People Live Like This” (Image 6). Another shanty had a poem on its wood walls written by South African exile and poet, Dennis Brutus: “Somehow we survive, and tenderness frustrated does not wither” (Image 3). The shanties, which were designed to convey the living conditions in South Africa, “aesthetically assaulted” the groomed university campuses and traditional buildings surrounding them (Martin, 2007; Soule, 1999).

This jarring contrast between the ramshackle shanties and conventional campus aesthetics provided plenty of fodder for witty opponents. One student newspaper satirically congratulated the shanties for winning the “Frank Lloyd Wright architecture and design award” for their “subtle, yet powerful juxtaposition of cardboard, tin, and plywood into a less than Baroque but more than post-modernist Bauhaus school shanty.” Another article quipped, “How the artists were able to create such an aesthetically pleasing exterior synthesis of plywood, metal, and spray paint, I will never

know.” Other students’ complaints were blunter, calling them “unsightly,” “eyesores,” and “putrid little outhouses” (Martin, 2007, p. 349). However, not all the shanties were so “unsightly.” For example, students at Lawrence University created a shanty resembling a public art installation. On its sides, students painted colorful murals with symbolic images of black South Africans alongside red, green, and yellow peace signs (Image 7).

Nevertheless, two divestment activists at Dartmouth University defended the shanties’ ugliness, stating:

For us the shanties are beautiful. They symbolize a unity with people we will never meet, but whose oppression is as real as the shanties themselves, and infinitely more ugly. The shanties have served a purpose; it is only since their construction that a dialogue had opened between the trustees and the DCD and that divestment has become a daily debated issue. For us the issue of apartheid is much more important than the issue of the beauty of the green. (Martin, 2007, p. 350)

The Dartmouth students’ statement suggests that it was not necessarily the shanties’ ugliness that angered opponents, but rather the shanties’ divestment message. Thus, the debate surrounding university divestiture may have been the source of the opposition’s deeper political and economic anxieties. Politically, the shanties represented a contention over power dynamics within university governance. Do the students or the administration wield the power? Furthermore, they represented a declaration of leftward-leaning politics and an aspiration for a more egalitarian and racially inclusive campus. Economically, the shanties threatened institutional prestige, alumni bequests, and the recruitment of the future student body—all of which were connected to the university’s economic well-being. Consequently, it can be argued that the aesthetic objections to the shanties were a “surrogate” for a more fundamental opposition to the students’ call for divestment (Martin, 2007).

The Response and Parallels to South Africa

In several instances, the campus right expressed their opposition to the shanties using violence. Most commonly, the students knocked down or set the shanties aflame. While no one died, several anti-apartheid activists were injured in these attacks. At Dartmouth University, twelve students from a conservative campus newspaper named themselves the “Dartmouth Committee to Beautify the Green Before Winter Carnival” and demolished the shanties with sledgehammers. In a letter explaining their actions, the students stated, “We are merely picking up trash off the Green, and restoring pride and sparkle to the College we love so much” (Martin, 2007, p. 351). Another instance of violence occurred at John Hopkins University when students poured gasoline onto the shanties while several activists slept inside. The arsonists then set the shanties ablaze and fled. Although no one died, one student went to the hospital with severe burns. The arsonists were caught and charged with attempted murder (Bond, 1986). Similarly, students from the campus right at the University of Utah threw a Molotov cocktail at one shanty and burned down another (Dockstader, 1986). Students at the University of Washington even planted a “timed incendiary device” inside a shanty and university dispatched the police bomb squad to remove it (Goldman, 1986).

In response to this violence by the campus right, student activists paralleled the violent attacks on American campuses with the attacks against the homes of black South Africans. For instance, one student called the campus right attackers “vigilantes” (like they were called in South Africa) to emphasize this parallel between repression in South Africa and repression on campuses (Bond, 1986). However, not all opposition groups used violence against the shanties. For example, the College Republicans at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill choose to build a mock Berlin Wall next to the shanties to shame the anti-apartheid activists for ignoring human rights

abuses elsewhere in the world, particularly the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the extent to which students were willing to go to express their views reflected, more broadly, the nature of oppositional politics on university campuses during this moment. Tensions between conservative versus liberal groups ran high (Pharr, 1986).

Meanwhile, many university administrations evicted anti-apartheid activists from their shanties and removed the structures from campus spaces. To activists, these “forced removals” of the student shanties mirrored the forced removals of South African squatter camps by the apartheid government (Pharr, 1986; Bond, 1986). Students went as far as referring to university administrations as the “Botha regime.” For example, Patrick Bond (1986) from the John Hopkins University stated in his testimony to the United Nations,

Like the Botha regime, the Hopkins administration and trustees had constructed an environment of intolerance and hostility that produced a right-wing firebombing attack . . . Like the Botha regime, they tried to cover-up, by attempting twice the day after the firebombing to remove the burned debris. . . Like the Botha regime, the Hopkins administration tried to blame the victim, by suggesting that our burned-down shanty would incite further violence. Thus, in this divestment struggle at Hopkins, we are better able to comprehend the difficulty in waging a campaign to end apartheid. While thankfully we do not camp at Crossroads, we are now realizing what it means to know the fear of death at the hands of vigilantes. (p. 15)

As noted in Bond’s statements, student activists drew symbolic parallels between their shanty experiences, including the violence by the right-wing “vigilantes” and the “forced removals” by the university administrations, and the conditions of black South Africans under apartheid (Stachel, 1986). While these symbolic connections strengthened students’ resolve to pressure for divestment, they also revealed students’ naivety about the lived experience of apartheid and the

difference between isolated cases of oppositional violence and the violence perpetuated by an institutionalized system of racial discrimination.

The Decline of the Shanties

By 1987, the third wave of the anti-apartheid movement had ended. The shanties, which were the movement's tactical innovation, were either destroyed by opposition groups, removed by university administrations, or dismantled by the activists themselves.

The shanty movement's decline can be attributed to a variety of reasons. First, the media sensation surrounding the shanties' construction and their defense eventually waned as the media shifted to other relevant news. Thus, the once hailed tactic lost its novelty, and students reverted to other, less notable tactics. Secondly, a considerable amount of divestment occurred. From 1977 to 1987, a total of 128 universities divested \$3.94 billion from their South Africa-related holdings. Of this amount, \$3.7 billion were decisions made between April 1985 and February 1987, meaning that the third wave saw the most divestment by a considerable margin (Jackson, 1989). Consequently, students' objectives were met when universities divested, and they dismantled their shanties and joined other social movements. On the other hand, if university administrations forcibly removed the shanties and refused to divest, students occasionally conceded because they saw few positive prospects of achieving divestiture, or were simply tired. In this regard, John Lindsey Jackson argues that the students of the shanty wave failed to structurally link their divestment objective to the larger liberation struggle in South Africa. Jackson (1989) writes,

[Students'] passionate defense of divestment as a viable tactic effectively exalted it to the status of an ultimate goal, such that the main focus of the majority of student anti-apartheid organizing centered on this one narrow objective (p. 188).

Lastly, given the four-year cycle of universities, many of the most involved shanty builders graduated, and younger students failed to fill their ranks.

Despite the wave's eventual decline, the shanties drew vital campus attention to apartheid and American economic connections to it, which troubled students, politicians, and social movement organizations alike. Thus, the shanties contributed to a general atmosphere of discontentment surrounding university investment holdings (and American economic holdings more broadly) that led slowly to divestment or continued conversations about the ethics of endowment holdings.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

In 1898, stone masons at Cornell University etched an inscription at the Eddy Street gate, the original campus entrance. The inscription reads,

*So enter that daily thou mayest become more learned
And thoughtful
So depart that daily thou mayest become more useful
To thy country and to mankind*

These words, aged in the stone, embody the “Cornell Idea,” which suggests that the responsibility of higher education was to foster students’ critical perspectives so that they could then better the human condition (Altschuler & Kramnick, 2014). In 1985, Cornell University students exercised the Cornell Idea by constructing a shantytown in the center of campus to challenge the morality of their university’s investment policy in apartheid South Africa. The Cornell shanties inspired a tactic that spread across American universities in the late 1980s. The shanties successfully intensified pressure against university endowment boards, which contributed to significant divestiture from South Africa during this period. However, despite divestment successes, the student anti-apartheid movement was afflicted by common problems in social movements.

An Overview of the Shanties

For the purposes of concluding this thesis, I will recap briefly what this research has answered about the anti-apartheid shanty tactic.

The shanty wave lasted from 1985 to 1987. The shanty first emerged in 1985 due to a combination of forces in South Africa and the United States that provided both a moral rationale and political opportunity for students to respond. These forces included the intensification of violence in South Africa and the pressure exerted by the Free South Africa Movement in the United

States against President Ronald Reagan's refusal to enact economic sanctions. Furthermore, by 1985, frustrated students chose an aggressive technique after failed attempts to achieve divestiture using traditional tactics such as sit-ins, marches, and rallies.

American university students then constructed unattractive wooden, plastic, and tin structures to symbolize the living conditions of South Africa's black population and to be a space to organize activists, educate recruits, and hold democratic forums. The shanties were an apt symbol for the anti-apartheid movement because they were compatible with the students' perceptions of living conditions in South Africa and evolved easily from the students' existing tactical repertoire. The student participants typically shared a white, middle to upper class collective identity.

The shanties occurred at higher rates at prestigious universities in the Northeast (e.g. the Ivy League schools). Universities with larger enrollment sizes or contingencies of politically active students also saw higher rates of anti-apartheid protests. However, universities not known for activism in the Southeast, Midwest, and Southwest also experienced shanty builds, which challenged the notion that activism could only occur in liberal bubbles. On these campuses, the protest "assaulted" prominent, public places to embarrass university administrations. The shanties also often angered students from the campus right, who disagreed with the leftward-leaning message and felt that the shanties' ugliness threatened university prestige and financial security. These opponents sometimes physically attacked the shanties—an experience that anti-apartheid activists used to parallel with the violence experienced by black South Africans living under apartheid. By 1987, the shanty's prominence eventually waned after failed divestiture attempts (which discouraged students) and after apparent divestment successes (which left tired students unprepared to organize around a broader objective).

The Shanties' Impact

By the end of the third wave, the anti-apartheid movement witnessed a significant amount of university divestiture. From 1977 to 1987, 128 universities partially or completely divested their South Africa-related holdings, totaling \$3.94 billion. Of this sum, university divestment decisions accounted for \$3.7 billion between April 1985 and February 1987, meaning that divestment occurred almost exclusively during the third wave rather than the second wave. In total, American investors, including banks, corporations, churches, and universities, divested nearly \$55 billion from South Africa from 1970 to 1988 (Rustomjee, 1991).

Meanwhile in South Africa, the apartheid government overturned the ban on the ANC and PAC and released the country's political prisoners in 1990. On February 11 of this year, Nelson Mandela walked free, his fist raised in the air, after 27 years in prison. Thousands of South Africans crowded outside the Cape Town City Hall to hear him speak publically for the first time. Mandela addressed the crowd,

My friends, comrades, and fellow South Africans, I greet you all in the name of peace, democracy, and freedom. I stand here before you not as a prophet, but as a humble servant of you the people . . . On this occasion, we thank the world—we thank the world community for their great contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle. . . Today, the majority of South Africans, black and white, recognize that apartheid has no future. . . We have waited too long for our freedom (1990).

Following Nelson Mandela's release, the apartheid government began negotiations with the ANC and the PAC to transition to a non-racial democracy. During the negotiation years, political violence continued throughout the country. Finally, after an extensive negotiation process, South Africa held its first democratic elections in May 1994—electing Mandela, the long-time national hero and face of the anti-apartheid movement.

In later conversations about the end of apartheid, both President Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu credited the efforts of the international sanctions and student divestment movements. Archbishop Tutu reflected specifically on American students' involvement in the shanty builds, acclaiming,

In South Africa, we could not have achieved our freedom and just peace without the help of people around the world, who through the use of non-violent means, such as boycotts and divestment, encouraged their governments and other corporate actors to reverse decades-long support for the Apartheid regime. Students played a leading role in that struggle, and I write these words of encouragement for student divestment efforts cognizant that it was students who played a pioneering role in advocating equality in South Africa and promoting corporate ethical and social responsibility to end complicity in apartheid (2010).

Student participants reflected positively on their experience, as well, crediting the origins of their involvement in activism today to the shanty builds. For instance, Marlene Pray, commented via Twitter, “1986: One of my first acts of social justice activism [was] living in [the] student-built shanty town” (Nam, 2013). Furthermore, modern movements, particularly Occupy Wall Street in 2011, have used (and escalated) the shanty's techniques of “camping out” and occupying space in visible areas to advocate for social and economic equality. Therefore, the anti-apartheid shanty movement has been a lesson for both activists and modern movements.

Despite these positive outcomes, the student anti-apartheid movement had its faults. As this thesis has discussed, white activists of the movement frequently pushed out black students, who were already vulnerable at historically white institutions. The statements of student anti-apartheid activists also revealed students' narrow understanding about the lived experience of apartheid and the difference between isolated cases of oppositional violence versus the violence perpetuated by an institutionalized system of racial discrimination.

The American students' separation from the oppression experienced by South Africans introduces several questions about the role of advocacy. Specifically, how do activists empathetically and appropriately advocate for a suffering that they themselves do not experience directly? How do social movements avoid belittling the realities of the oppressed when taking a stance? How do social movements provide space for the voices of the oppressed in the leadership of the movement? While complete answers are beyond the scope of this thesis, present-day activists, both in the United States and abroad, must evaluate these questions—highlighted by the students' shanties—to improve the effectiveness of social movements.

In conclusion, the student anti-apartheid movement was both innovative and flawed. It contributed a novel tactic—the shanty—to the long *durée* of student protest and embodied a moment of international human rights advocacy with the objective of divestment in an economically integrated world. The movement also contained recurrent flaws to social movements from which future activists can learn. Thus, the student anti-apartheid movement provides a relevant historical example to student activists today.

Appendix



Image 1. Cornell University Shantytown. (1985). Division of Rare and Manuscript Collection at Cornell University Library.



Image 2. Cornell University Shanty. (1986, October). Private Collection of David Lyons.



Image 3. Inhumanities Library. (1985, June). Private Collection of David Lyons.



Image 4. University of Pennsylvania Shanty. (1986, April). Private Collection of Paul Millersville.



Image 5. Capital District Coalition Against Apartheid Shanty. (1986, June 25). Private Collection of Vera Michelson.



Image 6. Hamilton College Shanty. (1986, May 1). Private Collection of Cameron McWhirter.



Image 7. Lawrence University Shanty. (1990, April). Private Collecton of Karen Flint.

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