



# Global Nonviolent Action Database

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## Hampshire College students win divestment from apartheid South Africa, U.S., 1977

- South Africa Apartheid Divestment Movement (1970s-1980s)

March

1977

to: October

1977

**Country:** United States

**Location City/State/Province:** Amherst, Massachusetts

**Location Description:** Hampshire College

### Goals:

In a statement released in April 1977, the Committee for the Liberation of South Africa listed its specific goals as follows:

1. That the college immediately sell its stocks in corporations that have holdings in South Africa - Texaco, Exxon, International Harvester, and Clark Equipment. ?
2. That a press conference be held where the college would take a stand against the South African regime and U.S. corporate involvement in South Africa. The HCCLSA requested to be allowed to make a statement at this press conference.
3. That a general investment policy be set up with moral and political guidelines. These guidelines will be subject to approval by a community referendum. ?
4. That no punitive action be taken against all of the participants of the occupation/demonstration.

## Methods

### Methods in 1st segment:

- 006. Group or mass petitions

### Methods in 2nd segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 162. Sit-in

### Methods in 3rd segment:

- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books

**Methods in 4th segment:**

- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books

**Methods in 5th segment:**

- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books

**Methods in 6th segment:**

- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books

**Additional methods (Timing Unknown):**

- 002. Letters of opposition or support
- 050. Teach-ins

## Classifications

**Classification:**

Change

**Cluster:**

Human Rights

**Group characterization:**

- Hampshire College students

## Leaders, partners, allies, elites

**Leaders:**

Hampshire College Committee for the Liberation of South Africa (HCCLSA), a group founded in 1975, led the student campaign.

**Partners:**

Other student anti-apartheid groups across other universities and colleges. Specific, direct partnership between the HCCLSA and other groups is not clear, but Hampshire College was one among a far-reaching network of solidarity campaigns at academic institutions in the United States at the time, and it can probably be assumed that inter-organizational communication was a feature of this context.

South Africa Catalyst Project— formed in June 1977 by Stanford University activists in California, eventually forming a chapter in the Northeast; traveled to college and university campuses educating groups about the US investment role in South Africa and anti-apartheid actions; also published an organizer’s manual.

**External allies:**

National Council of Churches (NCC); the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP); the United Nations, which issued Resolution 1761 in 1962, calling for economic and other sanctions to be imposed on the South African apartheid government.

**Involvement of social elites:**

Nelson Mandela offered praise of the student action at Hampshire College.

## Joining/exiting order of social groups

**Groups in 1st Segment:**

**Groups in 2nd Segment:**

**Groups in 3rd Segment:**

**Groups in 4th Segment:**

**Groups in 5th Segment:**

**Groups in 6th Segment:**

**Additional notes on joining/exiting order:**

Joining order not known

**Segment Length:** *Approximately 1 month 6 days*

## Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

**Opponents:**

Hampshire College Board of Trustees; the South Africa apartheid system and United States companies that did business in the country.

**Nonviolent responses of opponent:**

Hampshire College President Longworth and a College Trustee, Leonard Marks, published letters in a campus bulletin expressing their opposition to divestiture.

**Campaigner violence:**

None known

**Repressive Violence:**

None known

## Success Outcome

**Success in achieving specific demands/goals:**

6 points out of 6 points

**Survival:**

1 point out of 1 points

**Growth:**

3 points out of 3 points

**Notes on outcomes:**

Ultimately, the college divested its stock holdings from corporations invested in South Africa. Additionally, the college implemented a responsible investment policy in October 1977, another stated goal of the HCCLSA. (Regarding the other goals, there was no mention found of a press conference where the HCCLSA was able to make a statement, however both the student group and the Board of Trustees issued statements before and after divestment.)

The student-led divestment campaign of the HCCLSA survived to see the achievement of its goals, as well as the adoption of a longer-term responsible investment policy by the Hampshire College administration later that year.

Hampshire College was the first college in the United States to successfully disinvest its stock holdings in South Africa. Its success is largely viewed as a catalyst and motivation for other schools across the country to campaign for responsible investment policies.

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There are several noted origins of the South Africa divestment movement in the United States. Students and activists protested the 1948-implemented system of apartheid in South Africa throughout the 1960's and early 70's, but the movement failed to gain much momentum. In 1962, the United Nations issued Resolution 1761 which called for economic and other sanctions on South Africa, but it received very little support from Western governments. Then in 1977, Reverend Leon Sullivan released the Sullivan Principles in the United States, a set of seven guidelines for fair corporate hiring practices for corporations doing business in South Africa. It gained acceptance among some American companies that had a presence in South Africa (as the divestment movement grew, some people would emphasize pressuring more companies to adopt the principles as an alternative to outright divestment). The student-led divestment movement took off in the late 1970's, catalyzing in 1977 when close to 300 Stanford University students were arrested during a sit-in demonstration (see "Stanford Students campaign for divestment from South Africa, U.S., 1977"). They were protesting against the university's investment in companies that did business in South Africa, and the national attention that followed the event illuminated the growing divestiture movement among American college campuses.

Within this context, Hampshire College students who belonged to the Hampshire College Committee for the Liberation of South Africa (HCCLSA) called for their college to withdraw investments from United States corporations in South Africa. The student group carried out a petition on campus that they presented to the Board at their March 1977 meeting, and which showed a majority of the campus community in agreement with their campaign goals. On April 21, 1977, the HCCLSA issued a call for divestment by the college. Initially, the Board of Trustees met their demands by saying that they would withhold action on the issue until their next meeting in June. The HCCLSA returned this response by calling for immediate action, expressing concern that the Board wanted to delay the decision-making until students had left campus for summer vacation. They demanded that the Board make a decision before the end of the semester. Stating that they had exhausted all other possible forms of communication of their objectives to the Board, the HCCLSA staged a sit-in of the Cole Science Center, which housed the college's administrative offices.

In a statement released by the HCCLSA during the sit-in, the group outlined their specific demands: they called for Hampshire College to immediately sell its stock holdings in Texaco, Exxon, International Harvester, and Clark equipment, all corporations with business in South Africa. They asked that the college administration hold a press conference denouncing the South African apartheid regime, and that the HCCLSA be allowed to make a statement. They also called for the college to adopt a morally and ethically responsible general investment policy. Finally, they requested that no disciplinary action be taken against the participants of the sit-in. Responding to the HCCLSA's demands and the student occupation of the administrative offices building, the Trustees decided to sell the shares in their control, including stock holdings in Exxon, Clark, and International Harvester. They also requested the Hampshire College administration to implement a responsible investment policy.

In May 1977, Hampshire College became the first college in the United States to withdraw its holdings completely from South Africa. It removed \$39,000 in stocks in four companies. Soon after, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst also withdrew its complete stock, and other colleges around the United States followed suit. Within the spectrum of universities and colleges that undertook partial or complete divestment, Hampshire College received some criticism because its stock portfolio and endowment was so small – critics claimed that this made it less of a financial gamble to withdraw its stocks entirely. In one letter, Hampshire College president Adele Simmons stated that the Hampshire "model" was untranslatable for other colleges and universities. But the fact remains that college divestiture campaigns gained momentum following Hampshire's move, with nine schools divesting their holdings in South Africa—completely or partially—within a year of Hampshire.

In October 1977, Hampshire College adopted its socially responsible investment policy, recognizing the College's responsibility for, and concern with, the moral and social implications of the school's investments. The policy set forth that future investments would favor companies that were good and conscientious corporate citizens.

## Research Notes

### Sources:

Fisher, Mark. "The Second Coming of Student Activism: Showdown over South Africa." *Change* 11: 1, Feb. 1979. pp. 26—30.

Hampshire College archives; Documentary History, volume 2 (1975-1985); chapter 6. Divestment;  
<http://www.hampshire.edu/library/3406.htm>

Sarah, Soule, A. "The Diffusion of an Unsuccessful Innovation." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* vol. 556, Nov. 1999. pp. 120—131

Simmons, Adele. "The Impact of Divestment: Educating the Business Community on South Africa." *Change* 17: 6, Nov/Dec. 1985. p. 54.

### Additional Notes:

Additional useful sources:

African Activist Archive: <http://africanactivist.msu.edu/archives.php>

Nelson Mandela Foundation Anti-Apartheid Movement Archives: <http://www.nelsonmandela.org/index.php/aama/>

### Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:

Samia Abbass, 19/09/2010

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