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To Whom It May Concern:

Michigan legislators are being asked to divest state pension funds from firms doing business with South Africa.

One of the arguments of those who wish to retain these investments is that Michigan auto companies and some other enterprises have endorsed the Sullivan Principles, which were allegedly conceived to improve the status of Black workers in South Africa.

I worked in Ford Motor Company, Public Relations Staff, during the period that the Sullivan Principles were devised. Through discussions of the matter by Ford P.R. officials and through perusal of the company's confidential strategy and policy manual, it became clear to me, as an Afro-American who had studied the South African situation for several years, that the Sullivan Principles were not designed to lessen apartheid. Rather, the Principles were plainly concocted to deceive public opinion and deflect criticism of the corporations' continued export of capital from the U.S. to South Africa to maintain the super rates of profit made possible by the apartheid semi-slave economy.

The head of Ford's international public relations office, John Roberts, is a South African. He is known, in private conversation, to support apartheid. He and other auto industry executives who endorse the Sullivan Principles do so with full support of, and in complicity with, South African trade, public relations and diplomatic officials stationed in Lansing and Washington.

Every major Black American religious, labor, political, civil rights and educational organization has officially rejected the Sullivan Principles as an instrument to further the brutal, racist apartheid system. South African workers--even those in the plants (few thought they be) covered by the Principles--support divestment of U.S. funds in South Africa, Sullivan Principles or no.

The Sullivan Principles were developed to be, and serve as, a prop of apartheid. They are in no way anti-apartheid, for if they were, they would violate South African law. The brutal oppression of South African trade unionists--including mass jailings and even "mysterious" deaths in jails--has increased during this period following the Sullivan Principles' enactment.

I urge anyone sincerely interested in ending apartheid to examine objectively the impact of the Principles and not to accept at face value the cunning public relations image of those principles that Ford and other auto companies are projecting. All that is necessary, for that matter, is to place yourself in the situation of the Black South African workers and then decide whether you would accept the Sullivan Principles as a meaningful and sincere attempt to alleviate the vicious poverty and brutal denial of all basic human rights that are the roots of the apartheid system.

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