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South Africa Divestment Records 6948369

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Description is written in: English.

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Rare Book and Manuscript Library

Butler Library, 6th Floor
Columbia University, Mail Code 1127
535 W. 114th St.
New York, NY 10027
Business Number: (212) 854-5153
Fax Number: (212) 854-1365
rbml@libraries.cul.columbia.edu
URL: <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/rbml/index.html>

Table of Contents

Summary Information	3
Historical Note	3
Summary	5
Arrangement	5
Administrative Information	5
Related Materials	7
Controlled Access Headings	7
Collection Inventory	8
Series I: Central Administration	8
Series II: Student Protests	9

Summary Information

Repository:	Rare Book and Manuscript Library
Creator:	Columbia University
Title:	South Africa Divestment Records
ID:	6948369
ID:	UA#0295
ID [aspace_uri]:	/repositories/2/resources/6038
Date [inclusive]:	1972-1987
Physical Description:	5 linear feet 4 record cartons
Physical Description:	114 Megabytes
Language of the Material:	English .
Abstract:	Beginning in the late 1970s, Columbia students urged the university to divest from companies doing business in South Africa in protest of South Africa's system of apartheid. After a series of student protests culminating in a month long blockade of Hamilton Hall in 1985, the Trustees voted to begin full divestment. The collection contains the administrative records of this decision making process in the 1970s-1980s.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); South Africa Divestment Records; Box and Folder; University Archives, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Historical Note

In 1977 Columbia students began urging the University to divest (or disinvest) from companies doing business in South Africa in protest of South Africa's system of apartheid. Within the

administration, deliberations began among the president, the Board of Trustees, and the University Senate. The Senate, a body made up of faculty, students, and administrators, was more supportive of divestment, while the Trustees and President remained concerned about the strategy and its implication for Columbia's investments. Presidents William McGill and then Michael Sovern, who took over in 1980, pursued a strategy of corporate responsibility, seeking to develop standards for ethical investment that did not require full divestment.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Historical Note

In 1978 the Trustees issued a statement that they would not divest, but would aim to strategically pursue more ethical investments in South Africa. Presidents McGill and Sovern supported this strategy, signing on to Reverend Leo Sullivan's "Sullivan Principles," which required businesses to agree to equal treatment of their employees regardless of race. They communicated with other school's administrators to share policies and ideas as many American colleges and universities faced these questions in the early 1980s.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Historical Note

In 1983 the University Senate passed a resolution that Columbia should divest fully from South Africa. However, the Trustees rejected that proposal, agreeing to monitor their holdings and selectively divest, which was seen by many as not going far enough.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Historical Note

The Coalition for a Free South Africa, a student group led by Danny Armstrong, responded to Columbia's continued investment with protests in April 1985 that included a two week hunger strike and a blockade of Hamilton Hall. The blockade grew quickly, with hundreds of students participating. Columbia received an injunction to remove the students and brought disciplinary action against about 50-60 students. Soon after, the university created the Ad Hoc Committee Regarding Investments in Companies with Operations in South Africa. The committee proposed

full divestment of \$39 million of stocks, which the Trustees accepted and set a mandate to complete by 1987.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Summary

This collection contains the administrative records of Columbia University's divestment from companies doing business South Africa in protest of apartheid in the 1970s-1980s. Originally part of Columbia's Central Files, these records were kept separately because of their important subject matter. They document the extensive deliberations between the Board of Trustees, the President, the University Senate, students, and alumni through statements, reports, memos, petitions and correspondence. In most instances, materials created by students and alumni or by the University Senate are in support of divestment. The majority of the collection, however, documents the perspective of the Board of Trustees and Presidents McGill and Sovern, who did not support divestment until the 1985 Ad Hoc Committee's recommendation. Their records include background research and communication with other universities and groups debating divestment as well as their own statements and reports. The collection also contains a small amount of material on the 1985 student protests and University response.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Arrangement

Arranged in two series.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Revision Description

File created. xml document instance created by Celeste Brewer. Container list encoded by Rachel Klepper. EAD was imported spring 2019 as part of the ArchivesSpace Phase II migration. 2018-08-22 2018-08-22 2019-05-20

Processing Information

Processed by Rachel Klepper. Finding aid written by Rachel Klepper in August 2018.

Processing Information

The South Africa Divestment Records were retained in the physical order in which they arrived. Most of the collection was placed in new acid-free folders. Folder titles were retained except where they were missing or were not specific enough.

Restrictions on Access

This collection has no restrictions.

Restrictions on Access

This collection is located onsite.

Terms Governing Use and Reproduction

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Accruals

No additions expected.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Related Materials

Selected Related Material at Columbia

[University Protest and Activism Collection, 1958-1999 \[Bulk Dates: 1968-1972\]](#): documents other instances of Columbia University student protests, most notably those of 1968.

Selected Related Material at Columbia

[Historical Subject Files, 1870s-2017 \[Bulk Dates: 1968-1972\]](#) : Additional records related to the student protests in favor of divestment are in Box 127 folders 4-6: "South Africa Divestments, 1980s-1990s."

Selected Related Material at Columbia

[Central Files, 1890-1984 \[Bulk Dates: 1890-1983\]](#): Additional records documenting the administration's decisions about divestment are found in the Central Files, Box 923, folder 25.

Selected Related Material at Columbia

[Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Records, 1939-2006](#): Further records documenting the administration's decisions about divestment are found in Boxes 297, 298, 364, 451, 501, 513, and 619.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Controlled Access Headings

- Disinvestment -- South Africa
- Columbia University -- Administration
- Administrative records
- Clippings (Information Artifacts)
- Correspondence
- Notes (documents)
- Reports
- Columbia University -- Administration
- Columbia University -- Students -- Political activity

Collection Inventory

Series I: Central Administration, 1972-1987

Scope and Contents

The Central Administration Series, which contains the majority of the records in the collection, documents the deliberations over divestment between Presidents McGill and Sovern, the Board of Trustees, the University Senate, students, alumni, and faculty. The series contains the official resolutions and statements by the Trustees and its Finance Committee (led by Anthony Knerr), the Senate, as well as the Ad Hoc Committee on University Investments in Corporations Doing Business in South Africa. Other materials include background research and reports on South Africa and corporate responsibility, meeting notes and memos, and stockholder reports. There is also correspondence with related stakeholders including companies, Columbia students and alumni, and administrators from other universities. Box 3, labeled South Africa I-XI, contains records sent to and from Marion Jemmott, the University Secretary in the early 1980s, who was responsible for supporting the work of the Board of Trustees. The rest of the folders contain materials from the Office of the President.

Title/Description	Instances	
Corporate Responsibility 1979, 1972-1979	box 1	folder 8-9
Trustees Statement on South Africa June 5, 1978, 1973-1979	box 1	folder 7
President McGill Statement, 1973-1978	box 1	folder 15
Correspondence, 1977-1978	box 1	folder 5-6
Memos and Correspondence, 1977-1979	box 4	folder 2-3
Corporate Responsibility Ethical Guidelines, 1978	box 1	folder 14
Statements and Correspondence, 1978	box 2	folder 1
Corporate Responsibility Statements I, 1978-1979	box 1	folder 16
Morgan Guaranty Information South Africa, 1978-1979	box 2	folder 2
Corporate Responsibility, 1978-1979	box 2	folder 3-4
Corporate Responsibility Columbia University Statements II, 1978-1979	box 2	folder 5-6
South Africa: 1980-1981, 1978-1981	box 1	folder 12-13
Sullivan Principles Reports, 1978-1982	box 2	folder 9
Memos and Correspondence, 1978-1987	box 4	folder 4
Corporate Responsibility 1979 II, 1979-1980	box 1	folder 10-11
Time Running Out: The Report of the Study Commission on U.S. Policy Toward Southern Africa, 1981	box 4	folder 16
South Africa I-XI, 1981-1987	box 3	folder 1-18

Scope and Contents

Box 3 contains folders labeled South Africa I-XI, which come from University Secretary Marion Jemmott and contain a variety of materials related to divestment and to the Board of Trustees' role in the process. The original folder order and titles were maintained.

South Africa, 1982	box 2	folder 10
South Africa, 1982-1983	box 2	folder 7-8
Michael Sovern Notes and Resources on Divestment, 1983	box 4	folder 12
Trustees Statement, 1983-1984	box 2	folder 15-16
Trustees Statements, Meeting Notes and Memos, 1983-1984	box 4	folder 1
Columbia University Current Material on South African Investments, 1984	box 2	folder 11
Columbia University South Africa Related Investments: Background Material, 1984	box 2	folder 12
Columbia University Analysis of South Africa Proxy Resolutions, 1984	box 2	folder 13-14
Reports, 1984-1985	box 1	folder 3-4
One Step in the Wrong Direction: An Analysis of the Sullivan Principles as a Strategy for Opposing Apartheid, 1985	box 1	folder 1
United States Congress Anti-Apartheid Act, 1985	box 1	folder 2

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series II: Student Protests, 1981-1985**Scope and Contents**

The Student Protests Series documents the response to the Coalition for a Free South Africa's blockade and hunger strike in April 1985. This small series consists of letters and phone call records from Columbia students, alumni, and students from other colleges voicing support for the protesters. There is also one folder related to disciplinary action against the protesters, which includes President Sovern's statement following the protest and an amicus brief filed by Columbia Law professors arguing against disciplinary action. The Series also contains a video "Adapt or Die: The End of White Politics in South Africa," and a digital file created by Danny Armstrong, a student protest leader, which includes flyers, letters, articles, and other materials related to his experience fighting for divestment. In addition to the records in Series II, a number of folders in Series I contain flyers from student protests in and leading up to 1985. These flyers are mixed in with the materials collected by the President and Trustees. See box 1 folder 5, box 2 folder 10, box 3 folder 9 and box 4 folder 1.

Title/Description	Instances
The South African Divestment Movement: A Personal Perspective, 1981-1985	box Laptop

Scope and Contents

A Microsoft Word file containing images and documents put together by the Coalition for a Free South African chairman Danny Armstrong. A PDF of the resulting book is also found here. These files can be viewed on a laptop in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library's reading room.

ABC Close-Up Adapt or Die, 1983	box 4	folder 17
Phone Calls, 1985	box 4	folder 7
Divestment: A Leadership Publication, 1985	box 4	folder 8
Letters to Michael Sovern, 1985	box 4	folder 9-10
Divestment Protests - Disciplinary Action, 1985	box 4	folder 11
Petitions - Divestment Protests, form Letters in Support, 1985	box 4	folder 13-14
Letters to Michael Sovern from Brown University Students, 1985	box 4	folder 15

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)