

Sullivan.....

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\$6-million building, located near Progress Plaza in the heart of Philadelphia. It provides multiple social, health and human services to residents of the community.

Sullivan: The Shaker

“MY involvement in the struggle against apartheid was predictable. Throughout my adult life I have engaged in attempts to promote the dignity and rights of the oppressed. Accordingly,...when [as the first Black member of the Board of Directors] I advocated that General Motors withdraw from South Africa [on account of that nation's apartheid policies], it was only in the context of years of personal struggle for human liberation.”

Thus, Rev. Leon Sullivan explains the evolution in his thinking and activism that gave birth to the *Sullivan Principles*. After a 24-months lobbying crusade, on March 1, 1977, the initial *Statement of Principles* was signed by 12 major American companies. Today, over 100 companies are signatories to the Principles.

Statement of Principles

1. Nonsegregation of the races in all comfort, locker rooms and work facilities.
2. Equal and fair employment practices for all employees.
3. Equal pay for all employees doing equal or comparable work for the same period of time.
4. Initiation and development of training programs that will prepare Blacks, Coloureds and Asians in substantial numbers for supervisory, administrative, clerical and technical jobs.
5. Increasing the number of Blacks, Coloureds and Asians in management and supervisory positions.
6. Improving the quality of employees' lives outside the work environment in such areas as housing, transportation, schooling, recreation and health facilities.

The Sullivan Principles have been criticized as being too weak or too stringent. Some say Sullivan himself is out of touch with the current situation in South Africa. Sullivan is well aware of these criticisms. He is satisfied neither with the pace nor the breadth of progress. To these critics, he says:

I have attempted to make it clear from the beginning that the principles are not the total solution to the South African problem, and that even if they were implemented to the optimum, the principles alone could not end apartheid. Apartheid is a ruthless, inhumane

system of practices and laws deeply embedded in the world's most racist society, and in order for apartheid to be completely eradicated, it requires the combined efforts of many forces, including governments, companies, churches, unions, the United Nations, those who believe in justice within the country, and world public opinion. But it is my firm opinion that the multinational corporations have a major role to play. In the past, they have been the main beneficiaries of cheap labor and profits from this evil and unjust system and among its main supporters. It should be the responsibility of these companies to help change that system. Otherwise, they have no moral justification for remaining in South Africa and should be compelled to leave the country.

Though limited, progress has been made during the eight years that the Principles have been in force. In 1977, Blacks were not even legally considered “employees” in South Africa. Some significant changes can be noted:

- Throughout South Africa, plants are being desegregated despite the laws.
- Blacks and other non-Whites are being upgraded, for the first time, to administrative and supervisory positions.
- Blacks are supervising Whites for the first time.
- Blacks and non-Whites are being trained for skilled jobs in ever-increasing numbers.
- Black representative registered and unregistered trade unions are now beginning to be recognized.
- Technical schools training Blacks and other non-Whites are being built.
- Black businesses, in increasing numbers, are being initiated.
- Equal pay for equal work is beginning to be instituted.
- Companies are beginning to improve the quality of life for Blacks and other non-Whites outside the workplace: in housing, health care and education.
- For the first time, some company executives are beginning to lobby for an end to all racial discriminatory laws and the apartheid system.

Before November 1984, the Principles concentrated mainly on relatively small-scale social and economic issues. On that date, however, corporate signatories were instructed to “proceed immediately to take action to”:

- Support changes in influx control laws to provide for the right of Black immigrant workers to normal family life;
- Support unrestricted right of Black businesses to locate in urban areas;



OIC IN ACTION



- Influence other companies in South Africa to follow the standards of equal rights principles;
- Support the ending of all apartheid laws.

In a recent interview, Sullivan revealed that he had put Corporate America on notice. He said:

“On May 2nd, I put Corporate America on notice.... If apartheid is not abolished in actuality, all foreign corporations should leave the country. This should be followed by a total ban on all imports and exports. If, however, everyone redoubles his efforts now—governments, churches, unions, and companies—a new country can emerge. I think it's even possible that within five years blacks will hold high positions in the central South African government. Oh, you'll still have much unrest, with many people killed, and large destruction of property, and dissent in the black community, and resistance from right-wing whites, and conflict among white South African liberals. Whatever happens, South Africa's in for a great deal of disorder and upheaval. You can't expect a three-hundred-year condition to change overnight. One of the biggest things to be contended with, I'm afraid, is the whites' fear of the blacks.

We're going to have to develop confidence in everybody that what must be done can be done. If not, there'll be increasing polarization, and armed resistance, and the start of a race war that, as I've said, could

engulf all of Africa and much of the rest of the Western world. I think that the majority of the white community of South Africa would rather see non-violent change than armed struggle. And, believe you me, those are the only alternatives.

A Giant for Our Time

IF it were not for Dr. Leon Sullivan's roaring, yet rhythmic voice of reason among our then-reticent Black leaders, the unusual coalition of well over 80 national Black-led community-building organizations known as the national Assault On Illiteracy Program (AOIP) might never have become a reality with its “affective-oriented” or community-building approach to literacy enhancement.

Thanks to Dr. Sullivan's encouragement, Black Americans have begun working far more earnestly and productively together in new community-building ways for the *uplifting* of our people, our communities and our nation as a whole. Because of this man (and many, many others) “wonderful things and unexpected things” are happening and will continue to happen for us all.

In the Rev. Dr. Leon Howard Sullivan, Black America has truly fashioned a giant for our time. He is indeed a “master builder for all mankind.” □