

# PORTLAND OBSERVER

Volume XVII, Number 14  
February 11, 1987

25¢

## Local Activist Returns From Attending East Coast Conferences

by Jerry Garner

Avel Gordly, a local social and civil rights activist, has just returned from a 17-day stay on the East Coast. During her stay, Gordly attended the Funding Exchange Board meeting and the American Committee on Africa conference in New York City; the National Free South Africa Movement conference and The Call to Conscience National Steering Committee meeting in Washington, D.C.; and visited the national headquarters of the American Friends Service Committee in Philadelphia. Gordly is Director of the Southern Africa Program for the American Friends Service Committee.

Gordly attended the Funding Exchange board meeting as a representative of the McKenzie River Gathering Foundation of Oregon. She is a board member of the Funding Exchange. The Funding Exchange consists of several foundations that fund organizations which work for social changes. Gordly said her interest "is to help board members gain a better understanding of Southern African issues and issues Black people are concerned about." She said another reason for attending the meeting was to make sure the concerns of the McKenzie River Gathering are made known to the board.

Gordly said The Call to Conscience Steering Committee meeting, of which she is co-chair, was held to give anti-apartheid organizations from across the U.S. an opportunity to network and share information. "I told committee participants at the conference about the activities that are occurring in Oregon in regard to divestment. During the conference, everyone is updated about anti-apartheid activities around the country," Gordly said.

The Call to Conscience (CTC) network is a response and action network made up of people in 44 states, along with eleven regional coordinators. Gordly is the Regional Coordinator for the Pacific Northwest. CTC members attempt to change the United States government, its institutions, and its corporations from doing business in South Africa. Acting on moral and religious values, individuals and organizations use non-violent protest to challenge policies that strengthen apartheid.

According to Gordly, the concept of CTC started during a visit to Lesotho, South Africa, in the summer of 1985. "While in South Africa, myself and four others were returning from visiting some youngsters living in a refugee camp. After fleeing from Port Elizabeth, they let us know that they were aware of the role African Americans were playing in the movement there, about divestment, and sanctions. They asked us to come back and work hard to bring about sanctions." Gordly said that later that evening, after leaving the youths, the group discussed ways in which they could help them. The group came up with the concept of Call to Conscience.

Besides being in 44 states, over 200 organizations endorse the CTC. She said one of the things that came out of the CTC meeting was a proposal by a representative of the Philadelphia CTC of their plan for mass action in July during the 200th anniversary of the nation's independence. "They plan to lay down 3000 people in Independence Square to symbolize the number of people who have been killed in South Africa since 1984," Gordly said.

While at the American Committee on Africa conference, Gordly attended a reception honoring Oliver R. Tambo, president of the African National Conference (ANC). The ANC is the major anti-apartheid group in South Africa. It was formed in 1912. Entertainer Harry Belafonte served as host and master of ceremonies of the event. Little Steven Van Gandt, the person who organized the Sun City Album project, was present also.

Gordly said, during the ceremony, Tambo was presented with a \$110,000 check which represented the artists' royalties from the Sun City album. She said, in addition to this, Tambo was given a check for \$16,000 from individuals and organizations as contributions.

She said Tambo was very grateful not only to the American Committee on Africa, but also to the American people for pressing for sanctions. He said, "There is now light at the end of the tunnel." The American Committee on Africa, founded in 1953, grew out of efforts to support the "Defiance of Unjust Laws" campaign waged by people of South Africa under the leadership of the ANC.



Avel Gordly - Social and Civil Rights activist.

Photo by Richard J. Brown

Next, Gordly attended the Free South Africa Movement organizer meeting in Washington, D.C. The meeting took place at the church of Congressman Walter E. Fauntroy. "There were 50 organizers from 19 cities. What we did at that meeting was to go through an agenda that covered several things. We had a political overview, we talked about mobilizing campaigns against South Africa's regional way against frontline states, strategies for ending aid to UNITA rebels who are trying to overthrow the government of Angola, preventing aid to MNRRENAMO in Mozambique, and building support for the liberation of Namibia," said Gordly.

Gordly said one of the strategies is to get companies who divest from South Africa to reinvest here in the United States and in the frontline states of South Africa. She said during the organizing meeting, the group criticized the current sanctions. "Tambo said that, on the one hand, we can call it a victory, given the pressure that was put on the Congress and the Reagan administration by the American people's calling for sanctions. It's still a limited victory," she said. Gordly said the sanctions are weak and that comprehensive and mandatory sanctions are needed.

Gordly visited the national headquarters of the American Friends Service Committee in Philadelphia during her East Coast swing. While in Philadelphia, Gordly addressed the national staff meeting and gave them an update

on the Call to Conscience Steering Committee meeting and an update of the activities that are occurring in Oregon. "I informed them about the upcoming divestment bill that will be introduced to the Oregon Legislature by District 18 Representative Margaret Carter."

Carter has drafted a divestment bill that is modeled after the California legislation, which is the strongest divestment bill in the country. Gordly said some of the language in the bill is from Carter's original bill that was vetoed by former Gov. Vic Atiyeh. She said although she is certain that a divestment bill will be passed during this session of the Legislature, she cautions supporters of the divestment bill. "Although Gov. Goldschmidt says he will sign a divestment bill and there is enthusiasm in both the House and the Senate to pass divestment legislation, we really can't take anything for granted until the bill we want is signed. Until this occurs, the pressure must be kept."

Gordly said it's impressive that Goldschmidt says he will sign a divestment bill. "But on the other hand, he made promises to the Black Leadership Conference and hasn't kept them." She said the question is whether the divestment bill will be the same legislation drafted by Rep. Carter once it's signed.

Gordly praised Rep. Carter's efforts in reintroducing a divestment bill.



At a dinner celebrating the 20th anniversary of the hiring of 50 Black longshoremen, Sandy Harris, calling for unity, warned, "Do not get too comfortable, because Black longshoremen in Oregon are an 'endangered species'. After twenty years, there are only 34 of us left." Other speakers at the dinner were Booker Gibson and Ron Herndon. The dinner was held at the Ramada Inn Sat., Feb. 7. Photo by Richard J. Brown

### United Way Recognizes Volunteer Nick Barnett

Northeast Portland resident Nick Barnett was recognized for his outstanding service as a United Way volunteer at the organization's annual "Night of the Stars" Awards Dinner last week.

Barnett received praise in particular for his leadership of United Way's Admissions and Terminations Committee in 1985-86.

"In his role as chairman of the committee, Nick led a creative decision-making process that allowed more agency admissions than ever before and at a time when United Way had fewer resources," said Jonathan Nicholas, columnist for The Oregonian and presenter of the award.

"United Way thanks Nick Barnett for this and his many other voluntary contributions throughout the years," Nicholas added.

Barnett has also served as a member of United Way's Board of Directors and Executive Committee, as



Nick Barnett (R) receives award for outstanding volunteer service at United Way's recent Awards Dinner. Presenting the award is Jonathan Nicholas, columnist for The Oregonian.

chairman of the Neighborhood Allocations Panel, and in various other volunteer capacities. He works as admissions coordinator at Portland Community College's Cascade Campus.