

African Studies

30--11--59

Rev George M.Houser,  
801 Second Avenue,  
New York 17,N.Y.,  
U.S.A.

Dear George,

Thank you for your letter of November 12,1959 in which you inform me about the establishment by the American Committee on Africa of an African Defense and Aid Fund,"to be a channel of American financial assistance to help meet certain kinds of needs in Africa or to aid Africans in the United States".

This is to let you know that I am entirely in agreement with the objects of the Fund and would willingly serve as an Advisor for the Fund. Those of us who have been connected with the Treason Trial in South Africa know something about the good which a Fund of this kind can do for people who have been thrown out of employment or their normal economic activities as a result of political persecution parading in the guise of arrest in the interest of security. We have seen the need for a Fund of this kind again in recent months in the arrest of hundreds of African women in Natal engaged in peaceful demonstrations against the Pass Laws and other disabilities specially affecting women in the rural areas. Many of these women have been brought before the courts and have been fined heavily or sent to prison. My son, Joseph, who is practising as a lawyer in Durban, has been involved in the defence of many of these women, and the great problem in all these cases is the lack of funds for the proper defence of the people concerned. Where they have had the necessary funds to take their cases on appeal to the Supreme Court, the decisions of the lower courts have been reversed in a number of cases, but where funds are not forthcoming their cases have gone by default.

I do not know what other people you have approached in connection with this matter in South Africa, but I think it would be advisable for you to establish Committees in the countries in which you propose to function so as to channel through such a Committee any appeals for assistance from your Fund. I believe the Bishop of Johannesburg, Rt. Rev Ambrose Reeves, who has been primarily interested in the Treason Trial Defence Fund, has also had under consideration the formation of a Fund with broader aims embracing some such objectives as you have in mind. I take it you will contact him also about the matter.

You may have heard that one of the results of the recent decision of the Union Government to take over the control of the University College of Fort Hare has been the dismissal of a number of the English-speaking members of our staff, and the resignation of others. I am among those who have resigned because I feel that I cannot subscribe to the principles and the basis on which the College will be run in future. This decision has cost me the loss of my pension rights, to say

nothing of my post, but the more I think about it, the more satisfied I am that I have done the right thing. The result of course is that I am now on the lookout for another job. I have had one or two invitations to come to the United States for a brief period, but the problem there would be one of getting the necessary passport facilities from the Union Government with whom I am not persona grata as you know. Anyway I intend to apply for a passport in the New Year, and if I am successful, it may be that we may meet again towards the end of 1960.

In the meantime may I wish you all success in the Fund which you have established.

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

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