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ARCHITECTURE AND RACISM Position Paper No. 1 of The Architects' Resistance

One of the Architectural profession's most prestigious firms, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, is putting its skills, resources, and name behind the brutal racism of South Africa. For the sake of profit, the firm is building for a government which says: "We want South Africa White... Keeping it white can only mean one thing, namely White domination, not leadership, not guidance,

but control, supremacy." (Prime Minister Verwoerd 1963)

Written into the laws of the Republic of South Africa this policy has kept 3 million whites the slave-masters of 11 million black Africans. This is Apartheid and S O M is helping underwrite its furtherance.

THIS IS APARTHEID	WHITE (Europeans)	BLACK (Africans)
Population (millions)	3	11
Per capita income (1959)	\$1,819	\$109
Average wage in mining (1962)	\$3,587	\$216
Ages subject to tax	21-60	18-65
Income exempt from tax	\$840	None
Education expenditure per pupil	\$182	\$18
Infant mortality per 1,000 births	27	200+
Persons in registered trade unions	340,000	None
Persons convicted of pass offenses	None	384,000

On March 21, 1960, in Sharpeville, South African police fired on a crowd of peacefully demonstrating black Africans killing 67 and wounding hundreds more. They were protesting the laws which required them to carry pass books—dog tags which label their bondage.

In the following year South Africa's economy almost collapsed after a flight of capital from the country which resulted from fear that the Sharpeville massacre might lead to bloody revolution; fear that South Africa's expulsion from the British Commonwealth might reduce profits and that the economic boycott by small nations might snowball. But the U.S. corporations rescued the economy by pouring in \$223 million additional investment so that by 1963 South African gold and

foreign exchange reserve had tripled to a record high—and the Apartheid regime was secured. Since then business has boomed and the strength of the white oppressors has multiplied.

And indication of the current state of the economy is the Carlton Center complex designed by S O M. It will occupy a super-block formed by five city blocks, includes the world's tallest concrete building (for offices), a 400-bedroom hotel with 90 additional apartment suites, two department stores and parking for 3,000 cars. There will be gardens, fountains, side-walk cafes and a skating rink. The estimated cost of the project is between \$50 and \$100 Million and is the largest commercial development in Africa.

AND SOMEWHERE AN SOM ARCHITECT IS DRAWING TWO SETS OF BATHROOMS—WHITE AND BLACK.

This project is financed by Anglo-American Corporation of South Africa, whose Director is the infamous New Jersey profiteer and multi-millionaire Charles W. Engelhard. Through various holding companies he is said to control 23 South African firms with total assets of more than \$2.57 billion. Engelhard, along with David Rockefeller's Chase Manhattan Bank, Dillon, Read & Co. and over two hundred other American Companies, have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in industrial development in South Africa.

The Carlton Center has been made possible because U.S. business continues to be attracted to South Africa by a modern, developed, industrial society with 3 million

prosperous white customers and a labour force of 11 million black africans prohibited by law from organizing unions, collective bargaining, striking, moving without permission, and voting. The Apartheid policy keeps the average black miner earning less than \$1 a day, while in 1962 for example, the American companies in South Africa earned \$72 million. This was easily double the 11.8 percent average profit reported by the U.S. Department of Commerce on U.S. investments in all foreign countries.

Skidmore, Owings and Merrill has climbed aboard this gravy train—a train fueled by the blood and misery of 11 million black Africans.

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We, The Architects' Resistance, say that Skidmore, Owings and Merrill's support of Apartheid reveals them for what they, and most of the architectural profession, are: unprincipled practitioners of an art for its own sake and, mainly, for the sake of profit. The pursuit of profit and fame have led SOM and most of the rest of the profession to build their monuments in reflection of their own egos—at the expense of those whose labour builds them and with small regard for those who must live with them.

SOM's other "social" works, such as their involvement in Baltimore's highway program, incriminate them. To present themselves as advocates of black American communities, no matter how up-to-date their techniques, is after South Africa, sheer, unprincipled

hypocrisy. To build for corporations whose profits come from the exploitation of oppressed masses—be they South African Blacks, Peruvian copper miners, or American Blacks; to build for Governments who maintain themselves at the price of brutal oppression and genocide—be it South Africa at Sharpeville or the U.S. in Vietnam; and to build for profiteering middlemen whose only concern with social order and for the masses' use of what is built is the profit that can be wrung: *this* is cynical, evil and dangerous. The urban crisis, the Vietnam war, the violence of a Chicago are all born of the shallow moralism typified by our profession.

We, as architects, must see ourselves as servants of the social order whose environments we form.

TO BUILD FOR OPPRESSIVE INSTITUTIONS IS TO SUPPORT THOSE INSTITUTIONS.

We are socially responsible for our actions.

We ask architects and architectural students who cannot tolerate the role they have been asked to play to join the Architects' Resistance in our efforts to change architecture from irrelevant and oppressive profit-making to an art truly in the service of a society based on fundamental human values.

The architectural profession designs a mere 10% of buildings constructed in this country. This 10% is mostly monuments built for the business world to symbolize its power and wealth and to attract more profit. It is mausoleums to house Government and its oppressive agencies. It is schools where creativity is treated as a discipline problem, and cultural differences as delinquency. It is inhuman housing built for profit, or to house those whose real neighborhoods, have fallen

before highways. It is prisons. And because we continue to see ourselves as an elite group of "artists" we keep ourselves from soiling our hands with the remaining 90% of construction that forms the grey desert out of which our sparkling monuments rise. By the creed of the AIA we must sit in our carpeted offices waiting for those who can pay our fees or who want "art" to come and accept our sculptural vision.

We live in a country where power lies in the hands of the few, and we serve those few—as the Master Builders of history served their kings. The people do not have power over the formation of their environment but must accept whatever is forced on them. We, as architects, are not taught, or even permitted, to go out to the user and apply our skills to put physical form to *his* vision. We serve only to put "aesthetic" form to the avarice and power of rulers—even those who have openly enslaved millions under Apartheid.

THE ARCHITECTS' RESISTANCE

The Architects' Resistance has been formed so that this prostitution of the profession may be stopped and so that we may move towards a society where the power lies with the people, and where architecture is a tool of that power. We wish to find means to assist the rehumanization of society by restructuring the architectural profession to deal with living people on human terms.

Architecture is a tool for mobilizing people, for making them more aware of themselves and their human dignity. Architecture must not be the hand-maiden to the dehumanization of object-oriented capitalism. Architects must not respond to the industrialists, the financiers, the politicians, nor to the acclaim of the professional journals.

Architecture is not an abstract art existing in a social vacuum.

It is an integral part of the totality of forces molding our society; political, economic, social. It cannot continue to operate in a moral void.

The Architects' Resistance hopes to fill that void by bringing ethical and political conscience to the practice of architecture.

TAR is an action group, a communications network, a research organization. We will issue and mobilize behind future position papers on broad topics within the profession—registration, the awarding of commissions, etc. and specific instances of the misuse of our professional skills.

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**AS A PRE-CONDITION TO THE RESPONSIBLE PRACTICE OF ARCHITECTURE WE
DEMAND AN IMMEDIATE END TO THE COLLUSION BETWEEN ARCHITECTURE AND
RACISM. WE DEMAND:**

- that SOM and Paul Weidlinger Assoc. (Engineers) immediately dissociate themselves from the Carlton Project in Johannesburg and remit all profits accrued to Black organizations in South Africa.
- that the AIA publicly and immediately censor SOM and any other firms building in South Africa and that they drop these firms from membership if they refuse to halt their operations in South Africa.
- That the AIA refuse to hold its national convention in Chicago and publicly condemn the police state tactics of Mayor Daley.

WE URGE:

- that all architects of conscience examine closely the nature of the work they and their firms are engaged in and resign immediately from those organizations they can no longer morally support.
 - that all architecture and planning students examine their future associations very critically before entering the brothels.
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