

Billions of Swedish Krona Supported Anti-Apartheid Struggle

Birgitta Karlström Dorph was on a secret mission in South Africa between 1982 and 1988, writes Ida Karlsson.

By [Ida Karlsson](#) in Stockholm

[Inter Press Service](#)



Between 1982 and 1988 Birgitta Karlström Dorph was on a secret mission in South Africa. “Why didn’t they stop us? Probably they were not aware of the scope of the operation. The money was transferred through so many different channels. We were clever,” Karlström Dorph says.

The work was initiated by the Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme and the Swedish government, the details of which were not discussed in public.

Altogether, Sweden’s financial support for the black resistance against apartheid in South Africa between 1972 and 1994 amounted to more than SEK 4 billion (\$443 million) in today’s value and that is an underestimation, according to figures reported by SIDA, the [Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency](#).

“On my first morning in South Africa I went to Burgers Park, in the center of Pretoria. A black worker was cleaning a path in the park. Suddenly I came across a bench and on it was written: ‘Whites only’. And I looked at it. I was appalled. I gathered up my courage and spat on the bench,” Karlström Dorph recalls.

From 1982, a Swedish humanitarian committee, headed by the general director of SIDA, handled a huge aid effort whose secret elements the government perhaps was not fully aware of. Karlström Dorph's work in South Africa was twofold comprising her official diplomatic posting and her secret mission.

"My family didn't know what I was doing."

She followed what was going on in the resistance movement to see if she could find people and organizations who could receive Swedish aid.

"The documents that show what we did to support the underground resistance are still classified," she explains.

Money from Sweden was transferred to leaders within the black resistance in South Africa. Sweden paid for Nelson Mandela's lawyer, including while he was incarcerated on Robben Island. Sweden also provided the priest and anti-apartheid activist Beyers Naudé with funds when he was subjected to a banning order.

The South African government looked at Naudé as an enemy as he played a crucial role in supporting the underground resistance movement.

"I wanted to understand what was going on in the country. Naudé was my key to the whole opposition. He provided me with contacts," Karlström Dorph explains.

Channeling the Money

Funds were channeled from SIDA to organizations and small groups in Sweden and then into accounts of community

organizations in South Africa.

“I provided Swedish organizations with bank account numbers and contact information to organizations in South Africa, for example in Soweto,” she adds.

Karlström Dorph says she drove around and met people every day.

One of the most important objectives was to build a civil society that eventually could negotiate with the government; individuals and organizations that eventually could take over.

“We established a program for scholarships. The Swedish Ecumenical Council, an umbrella organization of churches of all denominations, administered about 500 scholarships. People got money transferred into their accounts directly from Sweden. We tried to find relevant organizations throughout the black community,” she says.

People organized themselves and formed a more united opposition in South Africa. UDF, the United Democratic Front, was an umbrella organization for about 600 member organizations against apartheid. Many of the UDF leaders received money through the scholarships.

“We gave money to those who were arrested and were tortured and interrogated. They needed legal help. A lot of money went to competent lawyers. I also met with wives of those who were imprisoned,” Karlström Dorph explains.

According to Horst Kleinschmidt, a former political activist, Sweden contributed between 60 and 65 percent of the budget of the International Defence and Aid Fund for

Southern Africa, or IDAF, an anti-apartheid organization. Between 1964 and 1991 the organization brought 100 million British Pounds into South Africa for the defense of thousands of political activists and to provide aid for their families while they were in prison.

The defense of political prisoners meant that when the prosecutor demanded capital punishment, the sentence was reduced to life in prison. Between 1960 and 1990 this effort saved tens of thousands of lives, according to the Swedish author Per Wästberg, who was involved in IDAF's work.

Karlström Dorph got in touch with Winnie Mandela and visited her while Nelson Mandela was imprisoned.

"We sat down and talked a lot about her husband and the struggle, and various contacts," Karlström Dorph says.

Before they left, she mentioned that she had a book about Nelson Mandela in the car ?a book that was banned. Winnie Mandela immediately asked for it.

"I said: 'If I give you the book, I am committing a crime,'" Karlström Dorph recalls.

But Winnie Mandela insisted and Karlström Dorph finally went to the car to get it.

"If our activities had been exposed, many of those who were involved in our work would have found themselves in a serious predicament," Karlström Dorph says.

The apartheid regime killed affiliates of the ANC, the African National Congress, within the country and also in Zimbabwe, Botswana and Mozambique. Oftentimes during the

national State of Emergency, the police and army were stationed or brought into the segregated, black urban living areas to rule with their guns. People, some of whom were unarmed, were beaten and shot for protesting against apartheid. Police even tore down the housing areas where black people lived.

They Went in with Bulldozers'

"They went in with bulldozers and people did not have time to collect their belongings but had to flee," Karlström Dorp recalls.

She never visited ANC offices or attended anti-apartheid conferences.

"The ANC was forbidden. Members of ANC were imprisoned or killed," she says making a throat-slitting gesture.

"We never talked about ANC during all these years," she adds.

Her very close association with Naudé would have made Karlström Dorp a prime target.

"I was never scared. You just had to be careful," she says.

There was one time when they had a very strange break-in in their house.

"They had turned the house upside down, but they just took one of my dresses and one of my husband's shirts. They had slept in our beds and left white fingerprints on the hairdryer. My friends said it was typical of the security police. They wanted to show: 'We know who you are. We keep

an eye on you.’”

When they moved to a new apartment, she found a bullet on the floor in the hallway and there was a hole in the window. Someone had shot through it.

“They obviously tried to intimidate us. I took the bullet and threw it in the bin,” she says.

Once they were being followed on the motorway and a car tried to drive them off the road, but they managed to get away.

Many experienced the brutality of the apartheid regime. One of Karlström Dorph’s contacts, a 25-year-old young man in Pretoria, was found dead.

“We transferred some funds to his organization. Someone contacted me and told me that they had thrown him down an old mine shaft in Pretoria,” she says.

‘Palme’s Secret Agent’

In the Swedish documentary “Palme’s secret agent,” Popo Molefe, co-founder of UDF, explains Karlström Dorph’s role.

“Without the support of a strong and committed personality like Birgitta Karlström Dorph I do not think we would have been able to form the United Democratic Front, a coalition of social forces,” he says.

Molefe later became the leader of South Africa’s North Western Province.

Between 1972 and 1994 the exiled ANC received about SEK 1.7 billion, or \$188 million, in today’s value. At the time the

ANC was considered a terrorist organization by the governments in the United Kingdom and the United States. The financial support from Sweden was more or less kept secret until the beginning of the 1990s.

In 1994, South Africans took their first step together into a very new democracy after decades of white supremacist, authoritarian rule in the form of apartheid. Sweden's involvement had been stronger and much more far-reaching than what was ever reported officially.

Ida Karlsson is Stockholm editor for the Inter Press Service news agency.

The Meaning of 'Humanitarian Aid'

A poem by the late Salvadoran radical Roque Dalton helps to clarify what is going on in Venezuela, writes Vijay Prashad.

By **Vijay Prashad**

Tricontinental: Institute
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As the United States and its allies put pressure on Venezuela, a poem by the Salvadoran radical Roque Dalton (1935-1975) clarifies the structure of politics in Latin America.

Dalton came from one of Latin America's smallest countries, El Salvador, which he used to call the little finger (*pulgarcito*). A deeply compassionate poet, Dalton was also a

militant of the People's Revolutionary Army, whose internal struggles claimed his short life. El Salvador, like so many other Latin American states, struggles to carve out its sovereignty from the tentacles of U.S. power. That hideous Monroe Doctrine (1823) seemed to give the U.S. the presumption that it has power over the entire hemisphere; "our backyard" being the colloquial phrase. People like Dalton fought to end that assumption. They wanted their countries to be governed by and for their own people – an elementary part of the idea of democracy. It has been a hard struggle.

Dalton wrote a powerful poem – OAS – named for the Organization of American States (founded in 1948). It is a poem that acidly catalogues how democracy is a farce in Latin America.

*The president of my country
for the time being is Colonel Fidel Sanchez Hernandez
but General Somoza, president of Nicaragua
is also the president of my country.
And General Stroessner, president of Paraguay,
is also kind of the president of my country, though not as
much as the president of Honduras,
General Lopez Arellano, but more so than the president of
Haiti,
Monsieur Duvalier.
And the president of the United States is more the
president of my country
Than is the president of my country,
The one whose name, as I said,*

is Colonel Fidel Sanchez Hernandez, for the time being.

Is the president of Venezuela the president of Venezuela or is the president of the United States the president of Venezuela? There is absurdity here.

Collapsed oil prices, reliance upon oil revenues, an economic war by the United States and complications in raising finances has led to hyperinflation and to an economic crisis in Venezuela. To deny that is to deny reality. But there is a vast difference between an economic crisis and a humanitarian crisis.

Most of the countries on the planet are facing an economic crisis, with public finances in serious trouble and with enormous debt problems plaguing governments in all the continents. This year's meeting of the World Economic Forum at Davos, Switzerland, focused attention on the global debt crisis – from the near-trillion-dollar deficit of the United States to the debt burdens of Italy. The IMF's David Lipton warned that if interest rates were to rise, the problem would escalate. "There are pockets of debt held by companies and countries that really don't have much servicing capacity, and I think that's going to be a problem."

Hyper-inflation is a serious problem, but punitive economic sanctions, seizure of billions of dollars of overseas assets and threats of war are not going to save the undermined *Bolivar*, Venezuela's currency.

Eradication of hunger has to be the basic policy of any government. According to the UN's Food and Agricultural Organization, 11.7 percent of the Venezuelan people are

hungry. Hunger rates in other parts of the world are much higher – 31.4 percent in Eastern Africa. But the world's attention has not been focused on this severe crisis, one that has partly generated the massive migration across the Mediterranean Sea.



The picture above, is from the European Parliament in Strasbourg, where – in 2015 – activists laid out the 17,306 names of people who have died attempting that crossing (the

number is now close to 40,000 drowned). Members of the European parliament had to walk to their session over these names. They are harsh in their attitude to start a war against Venezuela, but cavalier about the serious crises in Africa and Asia that keep the flow of migrants steady.

Venezuela's Anti-Hunger Programs

The government of Venezuela has two programs to tackle the problem of hunger:

1. Comité Local de Abastecimiento y Producción (CLAP). The Local Committees for Supply and Production are made up of local neighborhood groups who grow food and who receive food from agricultural producers. They distribute this food to about 6 million families at very low cost. Currently, the CLAP boxes are being sent to households every 15 days.
2. Plan de Atención a la Vulnerabilidad Nutricional. The most vulnerable of Venezuelans – 620,000 of them – receive assistance. The National Institute of Nutrition has been coordinating the delivery of food to a majority of the country's municipalities.

These are useful, but insufficient. More needs to be done. That is clear. Through CLAP, the Venezuelan government distributes about 50,000 tons of food per month. The “humanitarian aid” that the U.S. has promised amounts to \$20 million – which would purchase a measly 60 tons of food.

On the issue of “humanitarian aid” to Venezuela, the international media has become the stenographers of the U.S. State Department and the CIA. It focuses on the false claims made by the U.S. government that it wants to deliver aid,

which the Venezuelans refuse. The media does not look at the facts, even at this fact – that \$20 million is a humiliating gesture, an amount intended to be used to establish the heartlessness of the government in Venezuela and therefore seek to overthrow it by any means necessary. This is what the U.S. government did in the Dominican Republic in 1965, sending in humanitarian aid accompanied by US marines.

Vijay Prashad responds to U.S. economic squeeze on Venezuela on *Democracy Now*.

The U.S. has used military aircrafts to bring in this modest aid, driven it to a warehouse and then said that the Venezuelans are not prepared to open an unused bridge for it. The entire process is political theatre. U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio went to that bridge – which has never been opened – to say in a threatening way that the aid “is going to get through” to Venezuela one way or another. These are words that threaten the sovereignty of Venezuela and build up the energy for a military attack. There is nothing humanitarian here.

The term “humanitarian” has been shredded of its meaning. It has now come to mean a pretext for the destruction of countries. “Humanitarian intervention” was the term used to destroy Libya; “humanitarian aid” is being used to beat the drum for a war against Venezuela.

Meanwhile, we forget the humanitarian solidarity offered by the Venezuelan government to the poorer nations and to poorer populations. Why is Haiti on fire now? It had

received reduced-price oil from Venezuela by the PetroCaribe scheme (set up in 2005). A decade ago, Venezuela offered the Caribbean islands oil on very favorable terms so that they would not be the quarry of monopoly oil firms and the IMF.

The economic war against Venezuela has meant a decline in PetroCaribe. Now the IMF has returned to demand that oil subsidies end, and monopoly oil firms have returned to demand cash payments before delivery. Haiti's government was forced to vote against Venezuela in the OAS. That is why the country is aflame. If you don't let us breathe, say the Haitian people, we won't let you breathe.

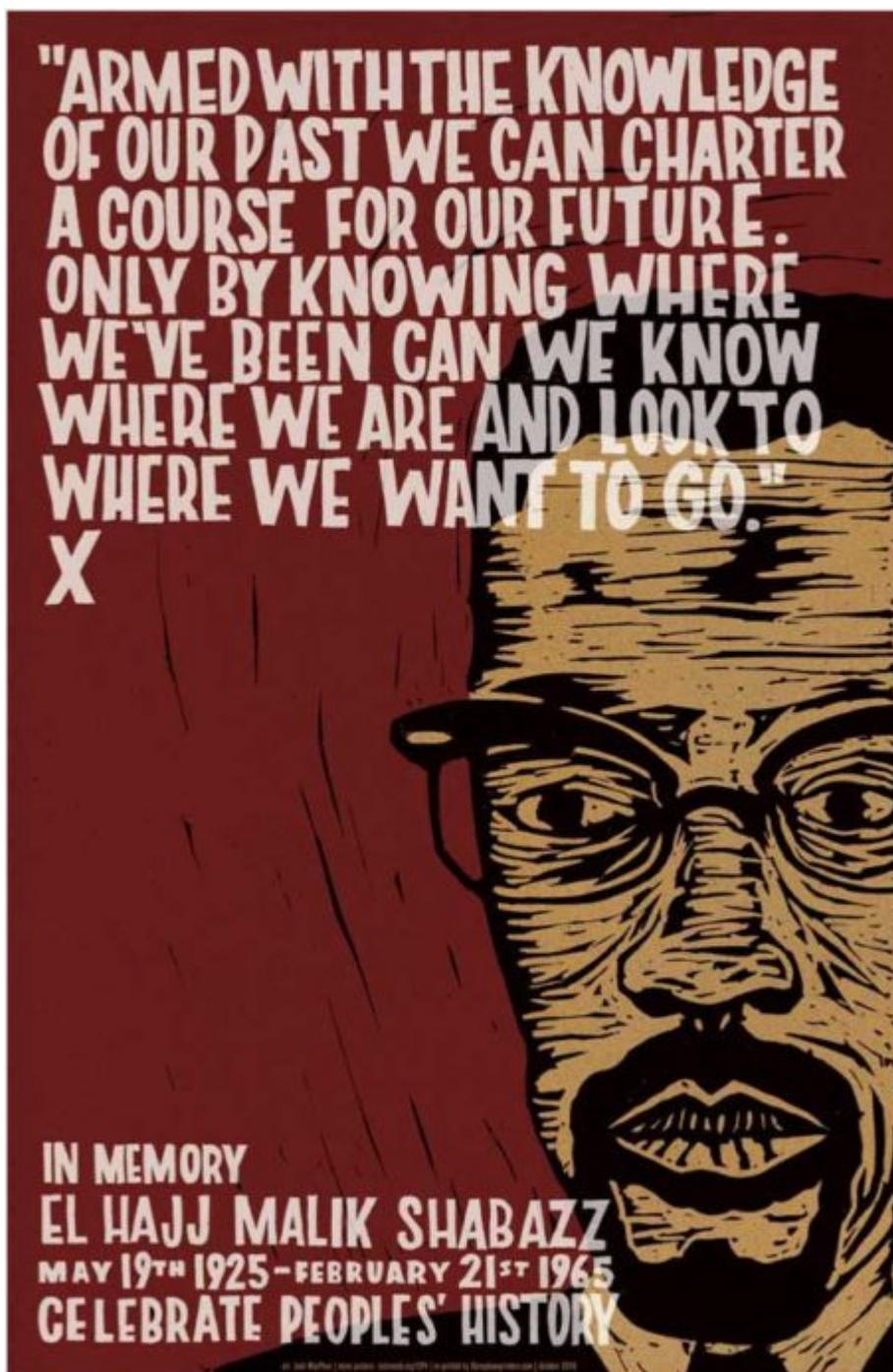
In 2005, the same year as Venezuela set up the PetroCaribe scheme, it created the PetroBronx scheme in New York. Terrible poverty in the South Bronx galvanized community groups such as Rebel Diaz Arts Collective, Green Youth Cooperative, Bronx Arts and Dance, and Mothers on the Move.

They worked with CITGO, the Venezuelan government's U.S. oil subsidiary to develop a cooperative mechanism to get heating oil to the people.

Ana Maldonado, a sociologist who is now with the Frente Francisco de Miranda (Venezuela), was one of the participants in the PetroBronx scheme. She and her friends created the North Star to be a community organization that helped deliver the resources to the very poorest people in the United States. "People had to wear their coats inside their homes during the winter," she told me. That was intolerable. That is why Venezuela provided the poor in the United States with subsidized heating oil.

The South Bronx and Harlem, the privations produced by racism – all this is familiar territory in Latin America.

In 1960, Fidel Castro came to New York to attend the United



Nations General Assembly. He was refused a hotel in the city. Malcolm X, a leader of the African American community, came to his aid, bringing the Cuban delegation to Harlem's Hotel Theresa, whose owner – Love B. Woods – warmly welcomed Fidel and his comrades. Four years later, at a meeting in Harlem, Malcolm X said in connection with his meeting with Fidel, “Don't let somebody else tell us who our enemies should be and who our friends should be.”

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American Terror is Not New

There were hate crimes before Donald Trump ran for president, most of them sanctioned by the state, including anti-black violence, as old as white settlement on this continent, says Margaret Kimberley of Black Agenda Report.

American Terror is Not New

By Margaret Kimberley
Black Agenda Report



The casual, endemic and racist violence that characterizes American behavior at home and abroad cannot be laid at the doorstep of the current buffoon in the White House.

Within the past week very disturbing and violent events took place in quick succession across the country. Two black people were shot to death in a Louisville, Kentucky supermarket. The white shooter made it clear that his goal was to kill black people when he said, "Whites don't shoot whites," as he was apprehended. No sooner had this crime occurred than a Florida man was arrested and charged with sending explosive devices to Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, George Soros, Maxine Waters, and Eric Holder among others. One day later a shooting at a Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania synagogue left 11 people dead.

The unnamed suspect in all of these cases is Donald Trump. The bombing suspect made clear his love for the 45th president. He was described by his attorney as a previously apolitical man who nonetheless "found a father in Donald Trump." The Louisville killing is the latest in a long line carried out by white racists. Anti-black violence is as old as white settlement on this continent.

Analysis of these recent incidents must be made very carefully. Trump differs from his predecessors mostly by tearing away the veneer of humanity and civility from a system which is relentlessly brutal. But the façade keeps many would-be terrorists from carrying out their sick fantasies. There are people who keep their hatred to themselves until they know that they may be given some cover and acceptance. Hatred expressed by a president emboldens people who might not ordinarily act upon their racist impulses.

It is very dangerous for these hidden haters to think they can come out of their closets. At the same time we cannot forget that a racist shooter succeeded in entering a black church in Charleston, South Carolina and killing nine people in 2015 when Barack Obama was president. The most prevalent racially motivated murders are carried out by police across the country when they kill an average of 300 black people every year.

It is a mistake to see Trump as a singular evil in American history. He is also not an anomaly among world leaders. An avowed fascist just won a presidential race in Brazil. White supremacists march openly in European countries like Ukraine where the Obama administration helped to overthrow an elected president and install Nazis among the new leadership. Fascism is carried out daily not only by the police but by the neoliberal state and by the military as it carries out a war of terror all over the world.

The current moment is perilous and requires serious analysis. Trump is the low hanging fruit in any discussion of racism and other forms of bigotry. But the country cannot be given a pass and allowed to behave as if all was well until he was elected. White people cannot play innocent and black people can't relax when the day comes that he is out office.

Trump Given Pass for Raising Nuclear Danger

If Trump can be connected to all of these incidents it should be with the knowledge that the entire country is suffering from a terrible sickness that few want to confront. Americans prefer to think well of themselves and their nation and treat any information contradicting that belief as an inconvenience to be avoided at all costs. There were hate crimes before Donald Trump ran for president and most of them weren't carried out by individuals. Most of them are still sanctioned by the state.

The crazed Trump lover may have tried to send bombs to Obama and Clinton but they sent bombs to Libya and destroyed a nation that still suffers from their terrorist acts. They are quite literally guilty of committing hate crimes, along with other NATO leaders and their predecessors in high places. The fact that they know how to express diplomatic niceties is no reason to see them as being on our side as we fight to defeat fascism at home and around the world.

Their enablers cannot be given a pass either. When we fight to make war and peace a political issue we are derided as purists and spoilers who ought to be quiet and allow imperialism to take place without hindrance. The people who join in the chorus of denunciation should

not be allowed to wring their hands when dead bodies appear within our borders too.

If they want to denounce Trump they had an excellent opportunity recently. Trump announced that the United States was withdrawing unilaterally from the INF missile treaty with Russia. This decision quite literally puts the world closer to nuclear war. But the liberal Trump haters have had very little to say about a policy change which quite literally endangers all life on the planet. The numbers of people who realize the danger and speak against this action is minuscule, unlike the near unanimous condemnation of racist gun men and the would-be mail bomber.

We have always lived in a very dangerous nation. Trump makes it more difficult to be in denial. But we must fight against the crowd which averts its eyes until a racist buffoon enters the White House. There is nothing new about American terrorism. It can be found in high and low places regardless of presidential civility or lack thereof.

This article originally appeared on BlackAgendaReport.com

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Brett Kavanaugh Threatens Racial Justice & Voting Rights

Judge Brett Kavanaugh's disturbing record on racial issues would put the Voting Rights Act in further jeopardy if he were to be confirmed to the Supreme Court, argues Marjorie Cohn.

By Marjorie Cohn



Judge Brett Kavanaugh's record on racial issues and his answers to members of the Senate Judiciary Committee during his confirmation hearings have raised red flags about how he would rule on voting rights if confirmed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

During his hearing, Kavanaugh bragged about hiring people of color as law clerks and said he decried the use of the "n" word. But when Sen. Kamala Harris (D-CA) asked him whether he agreed with President Donald Trump that there was blame on both sides during the Charlottesville neo-Nazi rally, Kavanaugh refused to say "no."

Sen. Mazie Hirono (D-HI) queried Kavanaugh about an amicus brief he co-authored with Robert Bork in a [1999 case](#) in which they argued it was unconstitutional to prevent non-Native Hawaiians from voting for trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, a public agency set up in 1978 to defend the rights of Native Hawaiians..

Hirono said Kavanaugh's views on Native Hawaiians are "factually wrong" and incredibly offensive. Hirono [told the nominee](#): "I think you have a problem here. Your view is that Hawaiians don't deserve protections as Indigenous people under the Constitution and your argument raises a serious question on how you would vote on the constitutionality of programs benefiting Alaska natives. I think that my colleagues from Alaska should be deeply troubled by your views."

[In a Wall Street Journal op-ed](#), Kavanaugh called the program "Hawaii's naked racial spoils system." Harris asked Kavanaugh whether he knew that "racial spoils system" is commonly used by white supremacists. Kavanaugh said he didn't.

Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ) confronted Kavanaugh about another racist expression he had used, this time while working in the George W. Bush administration. Booker queried the nominee about his characterization of an affirmative action program as "a naked racial set-aside." Kavanaugh had used the phrase in an email criticizing an affirmative action program under consideration by the Supreme Court. Like Hirono, Booker risked censure, discipline or removal by releasing this email, which had been marked "committee confidential."

Voting Rights Act in Jeopardy

Kavanaugh has only decided one voting rights case. In 2012, he wrote the opinion for a three-judge panel in [South Carolina v. United States](#), which upheld a voter ID law. The Obama Department of Justice had opposed the law, finding it violated the Voting Rights Act because it could disenfranchise tens of thousands of non-white voters who were less likely than whites to have identification.

The Justice Department presented evidence demonstrating that the South Carolina law disproportionately and materially burdened non-white voters. Expert testimony showed that Black voters were more than twice as likely as white voters not to have the required identification.

But Kavanaugh assigned more weight to elected officials. He bought into the argument that the law would prevent voter fraud, even though the state introduced no evidence to support that claim.

The landmark [1965 Voting Rights Act](#) prohibits any voting practice or procedure that “results in a denial or abridgment of the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color.”

A person who claims that a county, municipal or state law violates the Voting Rights Act need not prove the law was enacted with racist intent. He or she need only prove the law would have the effect of making it more difficult for a person of color to vote.

NAACP President Cornell Brooks called the Voting Rights Act “the crown jewel of civil rights” at Jeff Sessions’s confirmation hearing for attorney general.

In the 2013 case of [Shelby County v. Holder](#), the Supreme Court struck down Section 5 of the Act, which established a formula for pre-clearance of jurisdictions with a history of racial discrimination.

“We’ve seen nothing less than a Machiavellian frenzy of voter disenfranchisement from one end of the country to the other” since Shelby was decided, Brooks said.

In the South Carolina voter ID case, Kavanaugh had declined to join a separate concurrence signed by the other two judges on the panel, reaffirming the “vital function that Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act has played here.”

Voter fraud is used as a pretext to suppress voting rights. A [2014 study reported by The Washington Post](#) found only 31 incidents of voter fraud out of more than 1 billion ballots cast from 2000 to 2014.

“From Ohio to Wisconsin to Georgia, the vestiges of Jim Crow have resurfaced under a new cloak, unchecked and unabated,” said Rep. Cedric Richmond (D-Louisiana), chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, in a statement to the senators at Kavanaugh’s confirmation hearing.

Indeed, since 2010, [23 states have enacted more restrictive voting laws](#), according to the Brennan Center.

Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-Rhode Island) cited two examples – North Carolina and Texas – while questioning Kavanaugh.

In 2016, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit in [*NAACP v. North Carolina*](#) struck down North Carolina's 2013 voting law that established a photo ID requirement and eliminated same-day registration, out-of-precinct voting and preregistration of high school students. After requesting data on voting patterns of different races, North Carolina legislators had written a law that would "target African-Americans with almost surgical precision," the court said.

And in [*Veasey v. Perry*](#), a U.S. District Court held that Texas's voter ID law created an unconstitutional burden on the right to vote, had an impermissibly discriminatory effect on Latinos and African Americans, and was imposed with an unconstitutional discriminatory purpose. The court also found the provision in question constituted an unconstitutional poll tax.

After reciting Texas's dismal history of denying access to the polls, the court noted, "This history describes not only a penchant for discrimination in Texas with respect to voting, but it exhibits a recalcitrance that has persisted over generations despite the repeated intervention of the federal government and its courts on behalf of minority citizens."

Early last year, Attorney General Sessions reversed the Obama Justice Department's policy of challenging voter ID laws. Now the Justice Department intervenes in favor of states that enact measures to restrict equal ballot access.

In light of the proliferation of laws that pose obstacles to voting, the Supreme Court will have the opportunity to further eviscerate the Voting Rights Act.

Conservative organizations continue to cry "voter fraud" as a foil to enact laws that suppress voting rights for people of color. Kavanaugh's entry onto the nine-member Court would make five solidly right-wing justices. The fate of the Voting Rights Act hangs in the balance.

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Protests Force Starbucks to Ditch ADL From Leading Anti-Racism Training

After an outcry over the inclusion of the Anti-Defamation League as a lead member of Starbucks's anti-racism training, the ubiquitous coffee shop backed down, as Marjorie Cohn reports for Consortium News.

By **Marjorie Cohn** *Special to Consortium News*



After a video of the arrest of two African-American men sitting in Starbucks without buying anything went viral, Starbucks scheduled anti-racism training. But their inclusion of the Anti-Defamation League in the training provoked another outcry and Starbucks capitulated.

On April 12, Rashon Nelson and Donte Robinson were arrested for trespassing at a Philadelphia Starbucks. A manager called the police because the men, who had been in the coffee shop for just a few minutes, hadn't bought anything.

Melissa DePino, a Starbucks customer who recorded the video of the arrest that went viral on social media, said, "These guys never raised their voices. They never did anything remotely aggressive . . . I was sitting close to where they were. Very close. They were not doing anything. They weren't."

In an attempt to avert a public relations disaster after the racist incident became public, Starbucks announced it would close most of its 8,000 locations on May 29 for racial bias training.

But, adding insult to injury, Starbucks included the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), with its notorious history of racism, as a primary participant in the anti-racism training.

Community outrage at ADL's central role in the training was swift and strong. Starbucks demoted ADL to a consulting role, and named representatives of three prominent African-American-led civil rights organizations to lead the training.

ADL: "Anti-Muslim, Anti-Palestinian, Anti-Black and Anti-Activist"

After Starbucks had initially announced the composition of its anti-racism trainers, there was a powerful backlash in the civil rights community against ADL's leadership role.

Tamika Mallory, co-chair of the Women's March and Black Lives Matter, called for a boycott of Starbucks. Mallory, a nationally prominent organizer for gun control and women's rights, and against police violence, is the 2018 recipient

of the Coretta Scott King Legacy Award.

Mallory tweeted that Starbucks “is NOT serious about doing right by BLACK people!” because of the prominent role it gave ADL, which “is CONSTANTLY attacking black and brown people.”

Cat Brooks, co-founder of the Anti Police-Terror Project, said she agrees with Mallory. “You can’t be a piece of an anti-bias training when you openly support a racist, oppressive and brutal colonization of Palestine.”

Linda Sarsour, also co-chair of the Women’s March, wrote on Facebook that ADL is “an anti-Arab, anti-Palestinian organization that peddles Islamophobia and attacks America’s prominent Muslim orgs and activists and supports/sponsors US law enforcement agents to travel and get trained by Israeli military.”

Palestinian-American comedian, activist and professor Amer Zahr grew up in Philadelphia. Zahr told this reporter that ADL and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) “were the architects of the anti-Arab and anti-Islamic industry in America for the last 50 to 60 years.”

Zahr said that “welcoming groups like ADL into the family of civil rights organizations . . . is a real slap in the face to Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims who have been the victims of ADL rhetoric for decades.”

Asked to respond to Starbucks’ decision, a spokesman for the ADL who was contacted refused to comment.

Spied on Leftists

ADL was established in 1913 “to defend Jews, and later other minority groups from discrimination,” Robert I. Friedman wrote in 1993. It led the struggle against the Ku Klux Klan and the American Nazi Party, and supported the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. But in the late 1940s, “ADL spied on leftists and Communists, and shared investigative files with the House Committee on Un-American Activities and the FBI. The ADL swung sharply to the right during the Reagan administration, becoming a bastion of neoconservatism.”

In 1993, the San Francisco District Attorney released 700 pages of documents that implicated ADL in an extensive spying operation against US citizens who opposed Israel’s policies in the Occupied West Bank and Gaza, and apartheid in South Africa. ADL then passed the information to Israel’s Mossad and South African intelligence.

The documents revealed that ADL provided information to South African intelligence shortly before Chris Hani was assassinated. Hani was a leader of

the African National Congress, which led the struggle against apartheid, and was considered the successor to Nelson Mandela. Hanı was killed soon after returning from a speaking tour in California, where he had been spied on by ADL.

Fifteen civil rights groups and seven individuals filed a federal lawsuit against ADL in 1993 for violation of their civil and privacy rights by spying on them. Six years later, federal Judge Richard Paez issued an injunction permanently enjoining ADL from illegally spying on Arab-American and other civil rights organizations.

But ADL's hateful activities continue. Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) executive director Rebecca Vilkomerson said in an interview with Consortium News that ADL, which "calls itself a civil rights organization, is in truth playing a really damaging role in a number of communities." She noted that ADL is "promoting and complicit in anti-Muslim, anti-Palestinian, anti-Black and anti-activist campaigns."

Vilkomerson criticized ADL for honoring the St. Louis Police Department one year after their officers killed Michael Brown, an unarmed African-American man in Ferguson.

Arielle Klagsbrun of the St. Louis JVP explained, "The ADL's side is the side of police. As someone whose family members are Holocaust survivors, the lessons I learned from the Holocaust for today are that black lives matter and that we must stand against systemic racism."

Soffiyah Elijah, executive director of Alliance of Families for Justice, said in an interview that if one were crafting a training program against anti-Semitism, you "wouldn't go to the NAACP for sensitivity training," adding, "as a Black person, I found [the inclusion of ADL] further insulting."

Vilkomerson called ADL "one of the biggest purveyors" of exchanges between Israeli and US law enforcement, where American police go to Israel to learn "counter-terrorism" measures to be applied here. That encompasses "racial profiling, spying, mass surveillance and collective punishment."

But "US police don't really need a lesson in racism," Vilkomerson added.

Starbucks Backs Down After Anti-ADL Backlash

JVP circulated a petition against inclusion of ADL, which garnered 11,000 signatures in 72 hours. According to Vilkomerson, the "enormous outpouring" on Twitter of opposition to ADL's initial central role in the training and the "week-long pushback," including JVP's petition, led Starbucks to back down.

Starbucks issued a statement identifying the leaders of the training as: Bryan Stevenson, founder and executive director of Equal Justice Initiative; Sherrilyn Ifill, president and director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund; and Heather McGhee, president of Demos, a civil rights organization.

The three leaders “will provide advice, counsel, connections to other experts, and recommendations to Starbucks for the May 29 training, which will launch the multiphase effort for the company.”

Starbucks said it “will also consult with a diverse array of organizations and civil rights experts – including The Anti-Defamation League, The Leadership on Civil and Human Rights, UnidosUS, Muslim Advocates, and representatives of LGBTQ groups, religious groups, people with disabilities, and others.”

JVP’s deputy director Ari Wohlfeiler stated in a press release:

Starbucks will never say it publicly, but because of the huge public outcry about the ADL’s unyielding pro-Israel position, their refusal to condemn police violence, their incessant Islamophobia, and the convergence of all those retrograde positions in their active facilitation of US/Israeli police exchange programs, Starbucks had no choice but to demote them.

It was an “excellent outcome,” Vilkomerson said.

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