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## **WE WANT YOU!**

**A small sample of selective NYSUT benefits  
and services provided to you by NYSUT:**

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Contact NYSUT Social Services at 1-800-342-9810 ext. 6206

**Looking for general information about NYSUT Retiree Services and current activities?**

Log on to the NYSUT website: [www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org)

**Looking for retiree activities and programs in your region?**

Contact your assigned Retiree Services Consultant

**Have questions about your NYS TRS pension benefit or pension deduction issues?**

Contact David Keefe, your elected NYS TRS representative: 516-741-1241

**Want to get politically involved by attending a rally or volunteering to participate in a campaign?**

Contact your NYSUT Political Action Coordinator through the NYSUT Legislative Dept.: 1-800-342-9810

**Written an article that you think should be published, or at least get some attention?**

Contact the NYSUT Retiree Services Consultant serving your geographic region

**Struggling with Medicare questions or issues?**

Log onto the NYSUT website and click on "Medicare Interactive" or contact the Medicare Counselor Hotline at 1-800-333-4114

**Have questions about a NYSUT Member Benefits Trust endorsed program or insurance policy?**

Contact: the NYSUT Member Benefits Trust: 1-800-626-8101



## Helping Black Trade Unions in South Africa

Joel Freedman

Former Officer of Suffolk Community College Faculty Association

The President of my local union, Ellen Schuler Mauk, helped me deceive the racist South African government, so I could visit their country and assist the black trade unions, several years after I left the faculty of Suffolk County Community College. This was necessary because the AFL-CIO, which had stationed a representative in South Africa to work with those unions, was not permitted to replace him when he returned to the U.S., so Ellen helped me create a cover story about my employment.

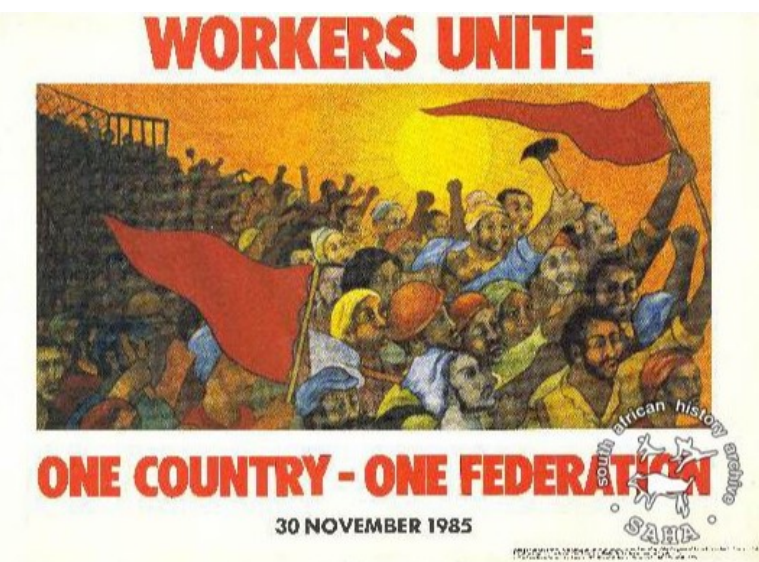
My interest in opposing apartheid, the system of separating the races, then enforced in South Africa, had arisen during my teenage years, when I witnessed such a practice in our own country. I was in Miami Beach, Florida, visiting my grandparents and went to the hotel where my cousins were staying. I was thrilled to see that the Cleveland Browns football team and their star running back Jim Brown were at the hotel. But I was astonished to learn that Brown was required to leave Miami Beach before dark. I was even more dismayed when I tried to take a bus, but when I waved at the bus heading toward my destination it would not stop. A woman behind me laughed and informed me that the bus I sought to travel on was "the colored bus."

Before I left the Suffolk Community College faculty, I had participated in a debate with world leaders about the struggle in South Africa. During my ninth year at the college, at an April 1984 meeting in Denmark, Olaf Palme, the Swedish Prime Minister, referred to a bomb that had gone off in South Africa and using the words of Karl Marx said: "the seeds of their own destruction are in South Africa." I responded that the seeds that could be sowed in a constructive manner were those of the black trade unions, which had chosen their own leadership. History has proven me right. Cyril Ramaphosa is now the President of a democratic South Africa. He came to prominence as the leader of the National Union of Mineworkers. In South Africa, as in Poland, the revolution came from a base among unionized working people, and without a massive bloodbath.

When I arrived in Johannesburg, I first visited the U.S. labor counsellor, and was startled to learn that he did not know the fact that the headquarters of the largest black union federation, COSATU, was one block from his office. I went to the COSATU office immediately after I left him.

At first, I was introduced to a white man who was unresponsive as I told him of my union background with the Bricklayers, the AFT and the Farmworkers. But he jumped into action when I said that I attended the Council meetings of the Socialist International and passed me to a black official who asked me to fly to Durban. There I met with Alec Erwin, a union officer, in a bar structured so that we could see whoever might be following us. Erwin later became South Africa's Minister of Industry and Trade when Nelson Mandela finally was elected to lead the country. I explained my plan to create a training center at

which black instructors could teach black construction workers consistent with the approach of construction unions in the U.S. The purpose was to provide skills for black workers that would permit them to work in jobs from which they were excluded by law, in a system of lifelong learning run by the unions themselves, as is the case for American building trades unions. Because I had already, by then, created a similar program for unions in Central America during a civil war. I had the answers to any practical questions that arose.



In addition to the COSATU construction affiliate, there was a second black construction union associated with NACTU, another black labor federation. I approached them as well. One of their officers tested me by inviting me to eat at his home in Soweto, a black township. I was well aware that Edward Mhahane, who had invited me, was required to leave Joburg for a black area before dark and carried a pass, as did all non-whites, which he would need to show to a white police officer if he were caught when he brought me back after dark. I also knew that it was illegal for me to be in the black township where he lived. My relationship with civil rights leader Bayard Rustin, who had visited South Africa before my trip, prepared me for such risks.

Eventually I met, in the lobby of my hotel in Joburg, where everyone could see us, with Jay Naidoo the leader of COSATU. Naidoo became the Housing Minister of South Africa when Nelson Mandela formed his government. When I later spoke to the Congress of COSATU's construction affiliate I was one of only two outside speakers. The other one was Ahmad Kathrada. "Kathy" had spent years in prison on Robben Island with Nelson Mandela, and helped Mandela write his autobiography: LONG WALK TOWARD FREEDOM. After I established relations with all the relevant parties, we created a training center near Soweto. The white unions and employers refused to participate.

The project could not begin until I could get black bricklayers from the U.S. into South Africa. Dave Williams, who ran a North

Continued on page 3.

## YOUR HEALTH CONNECTION

By Frances S. Hilliard RN, MS

Professor Emerita, Nassau Community College

### Current Screening Guidelines for Colorectal Cancer

The most widely accepted guidelines for cancer screening come from the American Cancer Society ([www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)) and the National Cancer Institute, a division of the U.S. National Institutes of Health ([www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)). Their recommendations arise from a solid basis of evidence, including rigorous medical research. It is important to note that when providing coverage for diagnostic testing, Medicare generally follows these guidelines. Also important is the concept that screening guidelines will differ between individuals with so-called "average" risk and no specific symptoms, versus individuals with known factors which can increase risk above that of the general population. For colorectal cancer, you are considered at higher risk if you have a family history of the disease, have had colorectal polyps, have an inflammatory bowel disease, or have had prior colorectal cancer. Medicare Part B will usually cover different types of colorectal cancer screenings, each with its own eligibility criteria.

Beginning at age 50, the current screening guidelines for colorectal cancer are as follows:

- Fecal Occult Blood Test or Fecal Immunochemical test (FIT) annually
- Fecal DNA Test every three years
- Initial colonoscopy at age 50 (age 45 or younger if high risk); recommended until the age of 85. Once every 10 years if average risk; once every two years if high risk.

- Flexible sigmoidoscopy once every 10 years (after initial baseline colonoscopy) if average risk; every four years if high risk.

These tests often fall under Medicare's Preventive Care Services, and if done for screening purposes would not be subject to deductibles or copays.

- Barium Enema once every four years if average risk; every two years if high risk. (NOTE: Medicare does not consider this test under its Preventive Care, and therefore it would be covered according to the usual Medicare benefit criteria.)

It is important for each individual to know your own risk and take an active role in the early detection of colorectal cancer. Speak with your health care provider about which screening tests are best for you.

*This column is not intended as a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. You are urged to seek the advice of a health care practitioner for any questions about your medical condition or treatment.*

#### References

Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services. [www.Medicare.gov](http://www.Medicare.gov)  
 Medicare Rights Center. [www.medicareinteractive.org](http://www.medicareinteractive.org)  
 Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. [www.mskcc.org](http://www.mskcc.org)

### Forming Black Trade Unions in South Africa

Continued from page 2.

Carolina Bricklayer Union training center, went to South Africa to identify local craftsmen to be instructors, who had the hands-on skills sufficient to show others how to do the job, and the linguistical skills to teach what students would need to know. As the Director of the Center we sent Ernie Grubbs, who had been the elected leader of the Arizona local of the Bricklayers Union, although he and his brother were the only blacks in that local. I was convinced that Ernie could get along with anyone.

The instructors were brought to the U.S. where the various American building trades unions taught instructors for bricklaying, tile setting, cement finishing, electrical,

plumbing, carpentry, plastering, painting and welding. These instructors then taught those nine skills to union members at the new training center.

Vice President Al Gore visited our training center, and met with the leaders of the two black unions, the new Governor of the Province, and those of us from the International Union of Bricklayers. The Governor started by saying: "When these people arrived, we didn't know if they were from the CIA." Bricklayer President Jack Joyce responded by pointing to me and saying: "He lied his way into the country." To that Gore responded: "That was his CIA training." showing a sense of humor rarely seen on television.

I did not mention that the President of a Community College local union had helped me falsify my background.

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