

**The Honorable William Lacy Clay Sr.**  
U.S. Representative of Missouri (1969–2001)

**The Long Struggle for Representation: Oral Histories of African Americans in Congress**

**Protesting Apartheid**

Representative Clay Sr. describes a memorable trip to South Africa to protest apartheid.  
*Interview recorded September 10, 2019*

We got to the airport in Cape Town, and it was empty. I mean, that's a couple of million, that city's a couple of million people. And it was, it had one security guard and one teller in there, and somebody from the ambassador, or state department, or something, just the three of them plus our committee in this big airport telling us that we can't go into town because we had John Conyers in our group and he was leading the fight on the apartheid. I mean, that's the kind of stuff that happened. We ended up in Johannesburg, though, and we met with a lot of people for and against apartheid. Didn't meet with the head of state there while we were there, but that's the kind of stuff that you would run into. And, of course, a lot of us got arrested at the South African embassy, protesting the apartheid.