

**The Honorable Ronald V. Dellums**  
**U.S. Representative of California (1971–1998)**

**Events: Civil Rights**

**Anti-Apartheid Movement in the House**

Representative Dellums recalls the early days of the anti-apartheid movement in the House.  
*Interview recorded June 19, 2012*

Well, it was very interesting. I remember one day, the Congressional Black Caucus was meeting. And the word comes into the meeting that a group of quote “militant Polaroid workers” were in Washington DC, on Capitol Hill, and wanting very much to have an immediate meeting with the Congressional Black Caucus. Caucus had an agenda, and I was considered the young radical guy, so they said, “Send Ron to meet with the Polaroid workers.” Being a freshman, you know, fine. So they said, “Ron, why don’t you go meet with the Polaroid workers, then come back and report to us.” So on the way out the door, John Conyers of Detroit gets up and says, “I will accompany Ron.” So he and I go to this meeting with the Polaroid workers. And if you recall the identity passes that the black South Africans had to have, those pictures were taken by Polaroid. So Polaroid was saying, “Look, in one sense we’re working for a company that is participating, at some level, in this process. And, you know, we want to challenge that.” So out of that conversation, I agree to work with them to fashion the first sanction bill against South Africa. And we did that. And when we first entered—I don’t recall all the features of it—but this was our first, sort of, rudimentary effort at trying to fashion a sanction bill against South Africa. And John Conyers was my only cosponsor then. This was late ’71, early ’72, when there was no, you know, real organized, strong, you know, movement here. I mean, there were people protesting, but didn’t have the kind of movement that ultimately evolved. So that’s how I got started in the process.