

March 1, 2006

Dear Editor,

Vice Chancellor Makgoba (M 17 February) informs your readers that the Committee for Academic Freedom in Africa (CAFA) started an online petition in defence of Ashwin Desai, "from the comforts of their armchairs in some distant corner of New York." He states that CAFA is "unknown but self-appointed" and attacks South African journalists for not exposing this "fact."

Professor Makgoba is mistaken on a number of points. CAFA did not initiate an online petition in defence of Dr. Desai. We wrote directly to Professor Makgoba urging him to reconsider his stand with regard to Dr. Desai's application for a position at the University of KwaZulu Natal-a stand which we unambiguously view as a violation of an important principle of academic freedom that has a universal application. It would be a sad day when African

academicians could not count on the support of their colleagues internationally in the defence of their academic freedom.

CAFA is a North American organization now entering its fifteenth year of existence. The majority of our members are African academics working in North America or North Americans who have worked in Africa. Most important, over the past fifteen years we have benefited from the active support of academics and students throughout Africa.

We believe that CAFA has deserved that support as we have scrupulously consulted with our colleagues as well as students' organizations in our campaigns and research work. CAFA has been involved in many campaigns in support of the right to study and against the repression of academic freedom, whether due to African governments or the World Bank.

A volume of writings from our Newsletter was published in 2000 as A Thousand

Flowers: Struggles Against Structural Adjustment in African Universities and

CAFA has sponsored a volume on university struggles in South Africa, Asinamali, that is forthcoming from Africa World Press later in 2006. Our arguments and analyses are a matter of public record. For more information about CAFA's work write me at caffentz@usm.maine.edu.

Sincerely yours,
George Caffentzis for the CAFA Editorial Board