

# COLUMBIA SPECTATOR

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## **EDITORIAL**

# Spaced-Out

After much fund-raising and organization, it appears that the attempt by the Black Student Organization (BSO) to bring anti-apartheid activist Winnie Mandela to Columbia has been futile. In order to make Mandela's scheduled April 18 visit possible, the BSO needed to raise enough money to cover the expected cost of the lecture—which amounted to \$15,000, according to BSO president Sharod X. Despite a \$10,000 loan from the Union of Student Organizations (USO) and a \$400 allocation from the Barnard Student Government Association, the scheduled lecture will most likely not take place because there is no available campus facility spacious enough to accommodate the sizable audience that is needed to cover the BSO's expenses. Mandela declined an invitation to speak at an off-campus building, saying that she will only visit Columbia if the lecture is held at an on-campus site.

The only sufficiently large campus spaces are Wien Stadium at Baker Field or the Columbia University Levien gym. However, these are not viable alternatives because University policy prohibits non-athletic functions from being held at athletic facilities. While the Columbia College Student Council and the USO have both called for an investigation into the possibility of athletic spaces being used for student-sponsored events, any such action would come too late to make the Mandela visit feasible. It is simply inconsistent that this University policy should prevent the Mandela lecture from occurring, considering that other non-athletic events—such as Class Day speeches and the AIDS Quilt events—were allowed to be held in Levien gym. Is it possible that certain controversial aspects of Winnie Mandela, such as her conviction of kidnapping a 14 year-old boy as well as allegations that she abused her husband Nelson

Mandela were the main reasons for this sudden enforcement of a previously dormant University policy?

With the closing of Ferris Booth Hall and the general lack of large public spaces, the different facets of the University must come together and compromise. Measures must be taken to ensure there is sufficient room for student-sponsored events. The University should carefully consider overturning their policy of not allowing non-athletic events to be held in athletic facilities. Furthermore, the University should decrease the costs of renting out Low Library Retunda or Miller Theater, so that these buildings become more accessible to student groups.

Until the Alfred Lerner Center is built and sufficient space is made available for large group events, the University must make every effort to ensure that worthwhile events will not be prevented by lack of space.