

South Africans seek leader skills at SCSU

Fellowship program helps blacks overcome apartheid, its drain on nation's resources

By Jerry L. Carter
TIMES STAFF WRITER

They helped fight to end apartheid in South Africa, and their statesmen have singled them out to be two of the country's future leaders.

Wednesday, they came to St. Cloud State University to learn the skills they will need to become those leaders and shape the new South African government.

Sithembele Msaseni, 29, from Capetown, and Andile Mbeki, 28, King Williams Town, are the first students chosen to take part in a fellowship program created between the University of Port Elizabeth in South Africa and St. Cloud State.

The program gives South African college graduates who do well academically and have been heavily involved in reshaping South African government a chance to study at St. Cloud State.

St. Cloud State recently was awarded a \$40,000 matching grant from the Bremer Foundation to create four two-year fellowships. The University of Port Elizabeth also is supporting the program, St. Cloud State officials said.

Both students will be working on master's degrees during the next two years. Msaseni wants to be a governmental leader, and Mbeki wants to be an education official in South Africa.

"Studying here should make us dynamic and diverse," said Msaseni. "What we learn in St. Cloud should help us restructure our country."

South Africa has a population of 40 million, and according to the racial classification used by the country's census, 76 percent of the country's population is black, 13 percent is white, 8.5 percent is colored and 2.5 percent are Asian.

From 1948 to 1994, a white-run South African government wouldn't allow black citizens to vote. Few blacks were able to go to school, and those who did were not allowed to take administrative, science, math and management classes.

Since apartheid ended, blacks have flooded universities once reserved for white students, Mbeki said. But years of oppression have left schools without nonwhite professors, and future leaders are lacking in the skills they need to run the government.

"Because of a lack of resources, blacks in our country don't have the qualifications to be put in top instructional educational positions or high management positions," Mbeki said.

In the past few years, officials at St. Cloud State have made a couple of trips to South Africa to try to create educational opportunities, such as the fellowship.

"Just changing the government (in South Africa) isn't enough," said Shahzad Ahmad, director for minority student programs at St. Cloud State.

ABOUT THE SOUTH AFRICANS

SITHEMBELE MSASENI

Age: 29

Born in: Capetown, South Africa

Education: bachelor's degree, University of Port Elizabeth, South Africa, working on master's degree at St. Cloud State University, studying political science and public administrative management.

Organizations and honors: member of South African Student Conference, soccer player, instrumental in bringing political freedom on Port Elizabeth campus. He was first black student in school's student government.

ANDILE MBEKI

Age: 28

Born in: King Williams Town, South Africa

Education: bachelor's degree, University of Port Elizabeth, working on master's degree at St. Cloud State, studying education, curriculum development and faculty development.

Organizations and honors: member of South African Student Conference, soccer player, instrumental in bringing political freedom on the University of Port Elizabeth campus. Started first black Christian Youth Organizations in Port Elizabeth. Active in the arts and drama.

Career: Taught at south African public school for seven years.

Jerry Carter

Learning

"There is still a lot of work that needs to be done there, and I think it is good St. Cloud State is taking a leadership role to help make a difference in this world."

Ahmad was one of several St. Cloud State officials to travel to South Africa to try to build ties.

The two South African students will learn much studying in St. Cloud, said Ahmad, but Mbeki and Msaseni also will be excellent role models for students of color on campus.

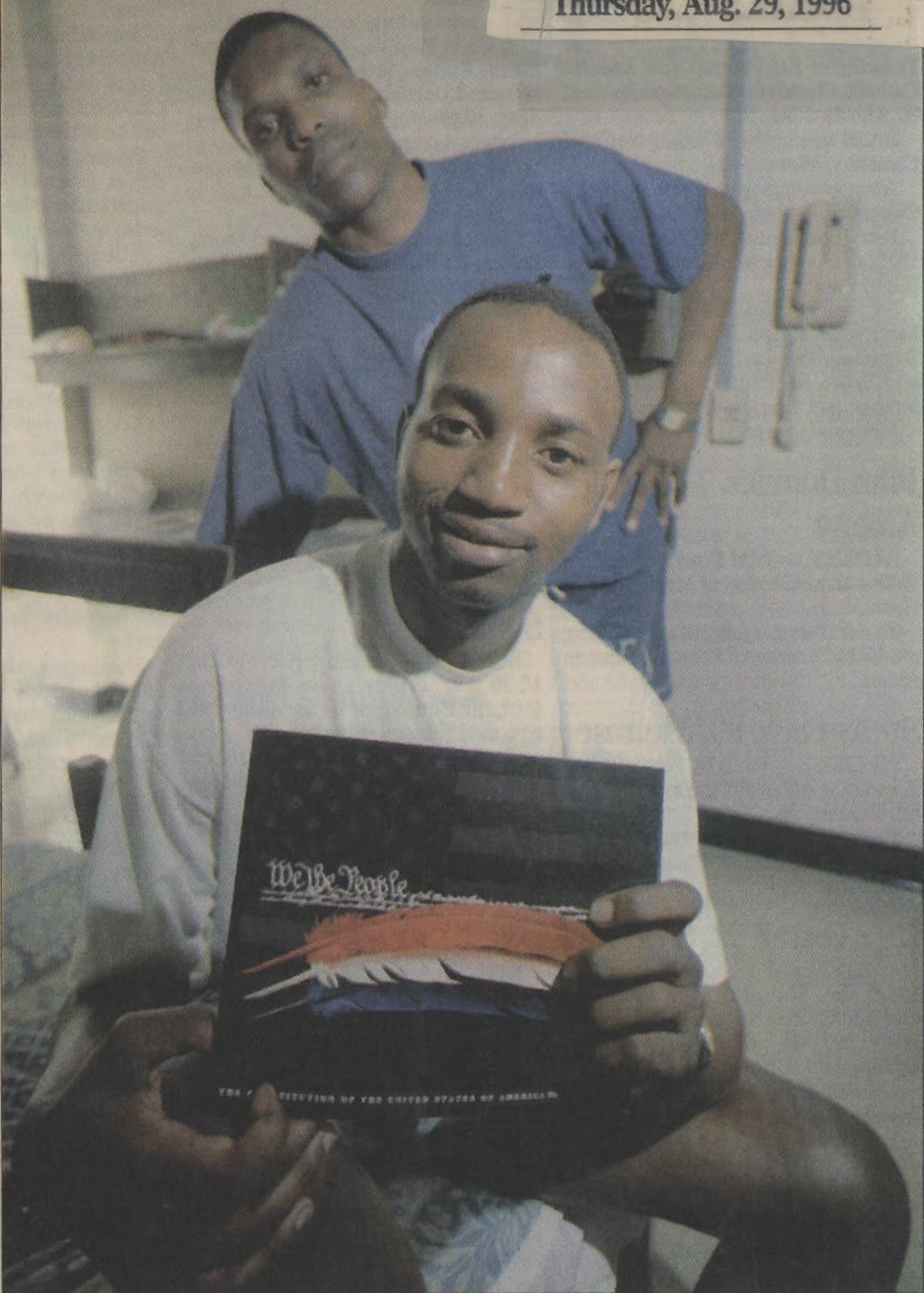
"They have a lot to offer our university community," Ahmad said. "Their determination and what they have been through will show students of color that things can change and improve."

Msaseni and Mbeki were chosen to come to St. Cloud State because of their efforts to bring governmental change at the University of Port Elizabeth, which led to national governmental changes, said Jill Ciliberto, assistance vice president for research and faculty development at St. Cloud State.

From religious, sports and student government organizations, the two joined other citizens to combat oppression, creating a united democratic front, Mbeki said.

Through the organizations, and while attend

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TIMES PHOTO BY KIMM ANDERSON

Andile Milton Mbeki (foreground) and Sithembele Wiseman Msaseni are the first exchange students from South Africa to take part in a fellowship between St. Cloud State University and the University of Port Elizabeth in South Africa. Andile has been studying the U.S. Constitution and comparing it to that of his native South Africa. The two graduate students, who are staying in Sherburne Hall, will spend two years in St. Cloud and plan to return home to teach.

ing the University of Port Elizabeth, Msaseni and Mbeki were influential in bringing a democratic structure to the student government, which led to the school rector's replacement in 1993.

Along with other revolutionary positioning and protests a democratic government was put in power April 27, 1994, after a national ballot, in

which all citizens were able to vote.

Mbeki and Msaseni have spent most of their time in St. Cloud adjusting to the seven-hour time difference, but they plan to get heavily involved in the campus and St. Cloud community as soon as school starts Sept. 5.

"I have to be involved with the community," Mbeki said. "That is just who I am."