

The Alliance For Cultural Democracy

MIDWEST BULLETIN



Date JAN-FEB 1987

Number 1

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

New Year Greetings

As we usher in a New Year and I am greeted by good friends and relatives at parties and through the long-distance wires, I am reminded of how important all the people in what one calls his or her community are to one another. It is the community or communities to which we belong that upholds us and supports us in our personal and political struggles and that gives us the courage to continue our work; the work that we hope will benefit the community thereby giving something back to the people from whom we receive so much. Recently, I have received many greetings from members of ACD all over the country and our new friends from Another Standard in Great Britain. Over the years, I have personally received so much support from fellow ACDers, agreeing to become President is my way of giving back to you all some of the strength you have given to me.

Can ACD Survive

The Alliance, itself, is a national community to which we all belong. I have heard many times from fellow ACD members how important this community is to them and their work. There no longer is the question of whether or not ACD should continue as there was just a couple of years ago at our national convention in Washington, DC. By now it is taken for granted that our community of progressive cultural workers and artists should continue. The new question of concern is whether or not ACD can survive.

In order for a community to survive, the members of the community must have active and democratic participation in the life and activity of the community, and it must have a sound economic base. ACD needs improvement in both of those life-sustaining areas in order for us to continue to grow, carry out our programs and activities, and provide the kind of support for each other that we can no longer take for granted.

Post Conference Mailing

To insure active and democratic participation we must make sure that the communication lines of ACD are kept open. In so saying, I must apologize for the fact that you have not, at this writing, received the packet of information that was compiled after Imagination II conference in Boston (although you hopefully will have received it by the time you are reading this). This mailing will greatly help us communicate with one another in that it contains a membership list, a list of the conference participants, information on the upcoming board meetings, and the schedule for the regional bulletins of which this is the first, etc. Please make use of all of these lists to keep in touch by phone and mail, and through writings and contributions to the regional bulletins. They are one of the main channels we have for sharing our ideas.

CD Goes to Press/Regions Meet

Some good news is that Cultural Democracy, our magazine, that was compiled and edited by Jon Pounds and Olivia Gude is already at the

typesetters and contains news, information, and stories from the conference. You should be receiving it soon, and congratulations must go out to Jon and Olivia for working so hard these last few weeks.

Some of the regions have had their first meetings and are planning activities for the spring. The Northeast region, for example, has decided to hold a series of Pefas (the Chilean word for Coffee House) where people can come and perform, eat, drink, and meet one another, and plan for other activities.

A Call for Proposals

In the interest of carrying out one of the mandates voiced by the membership at Imagination II, which was for ACD to be a more active and action oriented organization, I would like to send out a call for proposals for National ACD Actions that can be carried out on a local level, in addition to the regional activities that are planned. As I see it, these proposals should come from the membership with the Board and NOC (National Organizing Committee) helping to choose which ones best fulfill the ideals of ACD and are best suited to adaptation to the specific needs and resources of a particular region.

4th of July: An Example

An example of such a national action has been proposed by Chuck Segard of Illinois (the person who has been doing a lot of the printing for ACD recently). He suggests having local chapters of the Alliance for Cultural Democracy enter as participants in their communities' 4th of July parades, building their entry around a local cultural issue and using whatever human, material, and artistic resources available to them in designing their float or contingent. Each locality can make use of a national theme proposed by ACD, namely the Bill of Cultural Rights, seeing as we assume that the national theme of the 4th by the government will be the 200th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution.

Although this proposal, or the idea for such proposals in general has not been adopted, I take this opportunity to ask for other ideas to be carried out by members throughout the country around central ACD themes, and through different artistic media. The street demonstration medium needed for the 4th action is specific to that action. I would like to see writing actions, street theatre, music . . . what can you suggest?

Fundraising

In order for any of ACD's projects to be carried out we need money. ACD is in desperate need of financial support and new ideas for fundraising, aside from always counting on grant support (although we need people who are willing to help with grant writing as well). Anyone who has ideas for fundraising or who would like to help, please contact one of the following people: Catherine Jordan (612) 823-6257, Caron Atlas (606) 633-0108, Mark Miller (502) 839-5005, Ricardo Levins Morales (612) 724-6795, or myself, Deborah Langerman (217) 328-3025.

Please Call

Please keep in touch with one another. There is lots of activity brewing this year for ACD. Let's hear from all the members of our community. You can always call me. I look forward to hearing from you and working with you.

--Deborah Langerman
Newly elected president

Jon Pounds '86

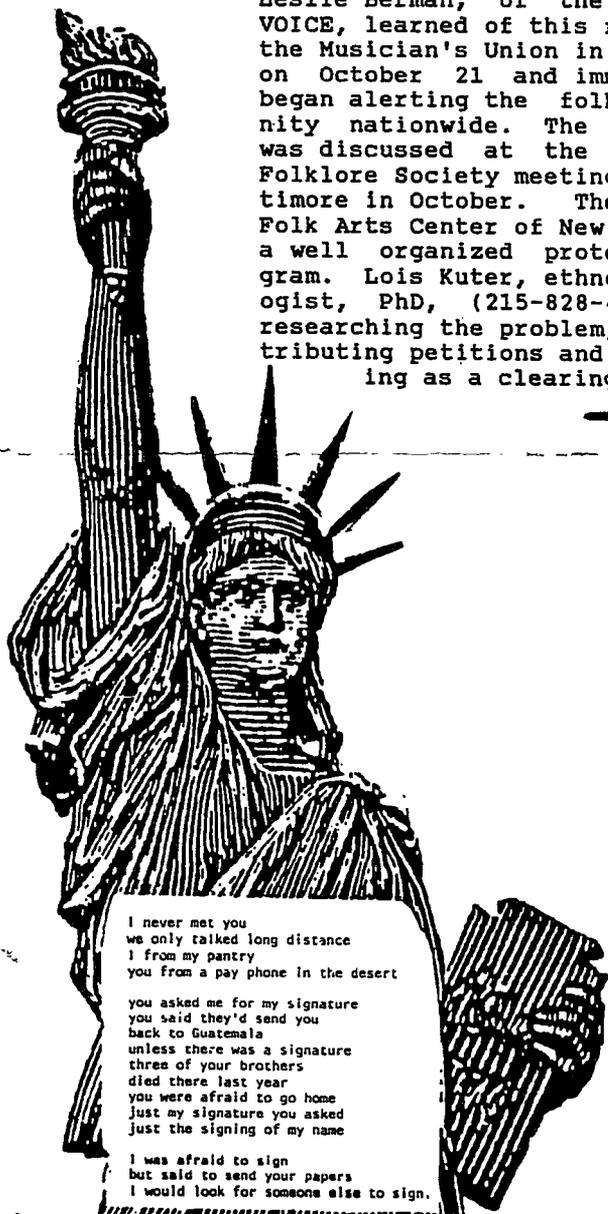
NEW INS RULING TO LIMIT CULTURAL EXCHANGE

I know that many who read this newsletter are involved with folk music events, either as organizers, volunteers or concert-goers. And I'm sure many of you have enjoyed seeing performers from abroad, such as Stan Rogers, Garnet Rogers, Archie Fisher, LoJal, Na Caberfeldh, The Chieftains, Tannahill Weavers, etc. New INS rulings may prevent you from ever being able to hear these groups in our country again. The rulings are also sparking retaliating rulings from other countries toward US performers. I am re-printing here information from the Boston Folklore Society regarding the ruling and what you, at the grassroots level, can do to help:

"In past years, it has become increasingly difficult for performers to obtain H1 visas for concert tours (foreigners can't perform here without one). The Immigration and Naturalization Service's proposed rule, 8 CFR Part 214, which appeared in the Federal Register - Vol. 51 #153 (available in any county library) on August 8, 1986, spells out extremely restrictive visa requirements. The rule is scheduled to take effect in January, 1987. It closes our borders to all artists but those who are "preeminent," determined by such criteria as (1) "stardom" in a major production; (2) receiving a national or international award; (3) national or international acclaim in "major publications;" (4) has and will appear in "distinguished" venues; (5) has performed with "distinguished groups;" (6) has extensive commercial success; (7) received recognition from "experts in the artist's field;" and (8) commands a high salary. It limits visas to one visit of at most 60 days per year. Only non-profit or government organizations could bring such artists in, and only for a cultural event.

Folk clubs, coffeehouses, and most producers could not put on foreign performers since most folk artists would not qualify for visas. Foreign artists are generally brought into the U.S. by private booking agents. These agents would be eliminated. Record companies would not include foreign artists on their label if the artist could not tour our country. Other countries will retaliate against American artists.

Leslie Berman, of the VILLAGE VOICE, learned of this rule from the Musician's Union in New York on October 21 and immediately began alerting the folk community nationwide. The INS Rule was discussed at the American Folklore Society meeting in Baltimore in October. The Ethnic Folk Arts Center of New York has a well organized protest program. Lois Kuter, ethnomusicologist, PhD, (215-828-4115) is researching the problem, is distributing petitions and is serving as a clearing house."



I never met you
we only talked long distance
I from my pantry
you from a pay phone in the desert

you asked me for my signature
you said they'd send you
back to Guatemala
unless there was a signature
three of your brothers
died there last year
you were afraid to go home
just my signature you asked
just the signing of my name

I was afraid to sign
but said to send your papers
I would look for someone else to sign.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: (1) Get a copy of the Federal Register mentioned above from your local library and familiarize yourself with the ruling. Your local coffeehouse may have a copy of this, too. (2) For more information, write to Flora T. Richardson, Immigration Examiner, INS, 425 Eye St., NW, Washington, DC 20536. (3) Write to the US Senate Subcommittee on Immigration and Refugee Policy (chair: Alan K. Simpson, R - Wyoming; ranking minority member: Edward Kennedy, D - Massachusetts) and to the US House of Representatives Subcommittee on Immigration and Refugees and International Law (chair: Romano Mazzoli, D - Kentucky; ranking minority member: Dan Lungren, R - California). (4) Write to your own congresspeople and the President. (5) Sign a petition that is being circulated nationwide. If one isn't in your area, you can call Ms. Kuter and get a copy to circulate yourself.

--Sally Rogers

Community, Art and the State: ~~Storming the Citadel~~

by Owen Kelly

published in 1984 by Comedia Publishing Group, 9 Poland St., London W1V 3DG - distributed in the USA by Marion Boyars and the Scribner Book Companies - 140 pp., \$5.50

This slim volume concerns the dilemma in which the community arts movement in the United Kingdom finds itself. It is written with the British experience squarely in mind, yet it has more to say to ACD members and other cultural democrats in the USA than any book I've come across so far. The review I feel like writing would simply consist of "READ THIS BOOK" repeated fifty or a hundred times. Here's why:

Owen Kelly is a member of Mediumwave, a community arts collective based in south London. His own history in the movement tells the story, because he started out as a hopeful and earnest activist, sitting on the British equivalent of NEA panels, cooperating despite reservations with the institutionalization of the movement. The book, recounts his inevitable disillusionment with this path of expediency, of going for the bucks and letting the principles be damned. Kelly's insightful and sweeping critique of the community arts movement and its co-optation by funders makes up the first of three sections.

Even if the book comprised this critique alone, because of its special relevance to this situation in the United States it would deserve a wide reading here. But each of the remaining sections is also freshly written, full of insight, and capable of stimulating readers in the U.S. to new insights about our own situation.

I do have some quibbles: despite its interest, I wonder whether it was really necessary to place the sweeping analysis of society which makes up part of the second section between the author's critique in Part One and the prescriptions which fill most of the final section. And I wish Kelly had looked into arts funding mechanisms in the US before he offered his remedy for the British "grants addiction" that comes with ongoing revenue funding. He thinks community artists would be kept honest and relatively free from state control if money were disbursed through a series of limited-term project grants instead of one big annual subsidy from the Arts Council of Great Britain or one of the Regional Arts Associations. He might have thought twice if he had seen how much time community artists here spend raising money, and how effectively they are kept quiet and busy by this enterprise.

Community, Art and the State is not just for people who identify themselves as "community artists." Anyone whose work is supported in part by government grants, who's ever sat on an NEA panel, who has even an academic interest in cultural policy would benefit from reading this book. If you can't find it locally (and that appears to be difficult), I urge you to send for a copy today.

--Arlene Goldbard, Ukiah, CA

Dear Friends,

As we agreed at the National ACD Conference, we in Michigan will be hosting the next regional gathering which is tentatively scheduled for June 12-14, 1987. Based on discussion in the regional caucus in Boston and upon subsequent discussion here in Michigan, we are proposing a conference that will focus on linking our artistic work to community struggles. At this stage, our proposal has the following format:

1.) In one or more plenaries, workshops, and discussions we will focus on ACD's relationship with people of color. We encourage you to discuss this on a local level before the regional conference.

2.) In plenaries, workshops, and discussions we will focus on the theme of how artists can relate to the people who are hardest hit by present transformations in the American economy.

3.) We in Southeast Michigan are initiating an interactive project with people who are directly affected by the current wave of plant closings. The particular form and product will be determined in collaboration with the community involved. We hope to present this product as a work in progress at the conference. If there is interest, we will be happy to provide periodic reports on this project as it progresses.

4.) We also encourage those of you receiving this letter to share your work at the conference -- either projects you are currently working on or projects you initiate as a result of this specific suggestion. The changing economy has many aspects (farm foreclosures, homelessness, corporate takeovers, unemployment and the impact on individuals, etc.). We hope for a broad sharing of any and all art related to community struggles.

We need your help as we continue to plan the conference. Please answer the three brief questions below and send us your responses. If you have more ideas, please call or write us!

1. Do you plan to attend the ACD regional gathering in Michigan in June?
2. Would you like to make a presentation? If so, what?
3. Do you have specific suggestions for speakers, workshop topics, performances, etc.?

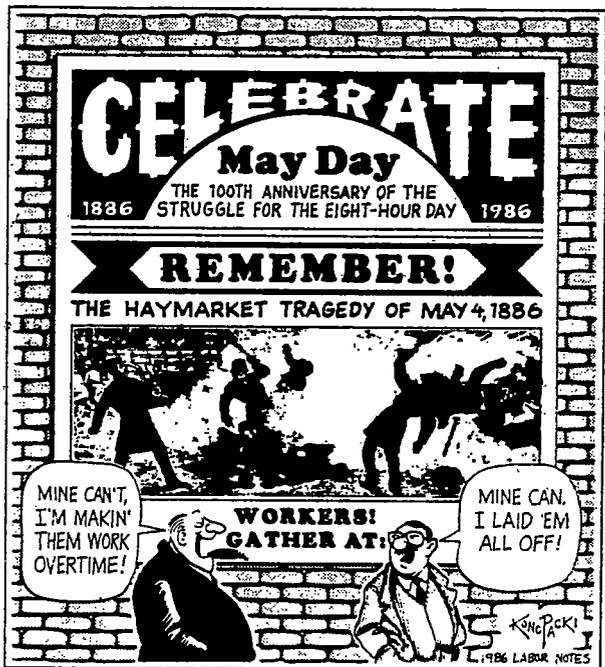
Hope to see you in June!

Buzz Alexander (h) 313-665-5369
 Elise Bryant (w) 313-764-6395
 Kathy Devecka (w) 313-370-2030
 Kay McDuffie (h) 517-371-1369
 (w) 517-484-2216
 Roger Kerson (w) 313-926-5291

Regional Planning Committee
 c/o Buzz Alexander
 1104 Prospect St.
 Ann Arbor, MI 48104

"The important thing is to train yourself in a given direction, and to create a discipline for yourself. But in order to create a discipline, you have to have an ideology. In my opinion it is extremely dangerous to practice in the theatrical arts without knowing what end this practice is supposed to serve."

-- Dario Fo



CHICAGO CELEBRATES THE CENTENNIAL OF HAYMARKET

When the fight for class liberation became the fight for status, the voice of authority became the voice of precision. Ambiguity became devious. Dreams became only a reflection in a stagnant pool.

Without ambiguity, reality cannot be joined to dream, past cannot be joined to present, and the future dangles, modifying nothing. Group and individual seek survival through the destruction of the other.

How would you answer?

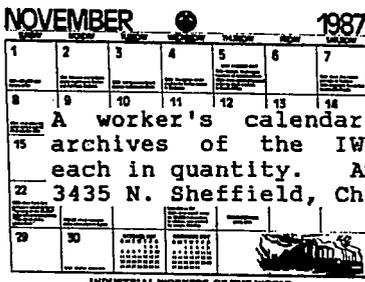
- How many are in your family?
 There are 5.
 We are 5.
- How many are in your city?
 There are 3 million.
 We are 3 million.
- How many are in your country?
 There are 220 million.
 We are 220 million.
- How many are in your class?

Without ambiguity we are a member of nothing. Without symbols, without the arts, there is no ambiguity, there is no idea, no vision, just a horrifying sequence of events, lock-stepped in meaningless juxtaposition, as surely as pagination in history books too thick to read. In the face of the soul-shredding voice of the capitalist culture factory, we tried last May to construct a set of symbols, a language which would enable people to envision. We focussed on the centennial of the Haymarket Affair, an event 100 years ago which was a crippling blow to visionary democratic struggle in the U.S. We programmed a month-long city-wide fest of 90 events (50 public and 40 in the public schools) utilizing the arts, song, story, theater, dance, the symbols, the heroes, the voice of people in struggle.

In this space it would not be possible to describe the intricacies of this project. Those interested in discussing the artistic, political, and organizational lessons of this festival should contact:

Allen Schwartz
 2262 W. 119th Pl.
 Blue Island, IL 60406

We have laid the wide foundations, built it skyward stone by stone



SOLIDARITY FOREVER

EPILOGUE

(From "The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui")

If you could learn to look instead of gawking,
You'd see the horror in the heart of
farce.

If only you would act instead of talking,
You wouldn't always end up on your arse.
This was the thing that had us nearly
mastered!

Don't yet rejoice in his defeat, you men!
For though the world stood up and stopped the
bastard,
The bitch that bore him is in heat again!

--Bertolt Brecht

The Cultural Workers' Alliance

When you've got the blues, one way to deal with it is to get together with other people and try to do something about it. And unless you've been travelling between here and Pluto in the last few years, lord knows there's a lot to have the blues about. Don't get me wrong. The blues doesn't just mean weeping and moaning. You can laugh and stomp and shout--the main point is to get those feelings out and to start working on turning things around. You'll be a lot happier that way. I like to write poetry. My poetry is about the problems I see around me, politics, the economy, and the way those things become intertwined with my personal life, intrude on my experiences and help shape my feelings and opinions. My poetry is a part of my blues. Writing it is a necessary step, but it's only the first step. Especially when you're dealing with a personal blues that can't escape the political circumstances in which we all find ourselves. You want to put that before people, get feedback, get something started to get rid of those blues. You could do it by yourself. But there're a lot of people out there. It helps to work with other people who share similar visions, similar feelings. Often, putting your energy together multiplies the effect you can have. You share the work and if things are working right, you can play off each others ideas, develop new ideas, new directions for your blues, whatever form they take. Together, as a group, you take your various blues, be they music, poetry, stories, dance, theater, to a wider audience. And one more thing. If you really want to get rid of those blues, you invite that wider audience to join in. In principle, it's a jam session that we're aiming for. You get the audience not to be an audience. Everybody knows, somewhere in their heart, that everybody's got some stories, or some music in them. Our hope is that they'll keep playing their blues, keep thinking, and keep acting in every way they know how to change the circumstances of all our lives for the better--from personal attitudes to the criminal actions of the United States government and its collaborators. That, at least in my mind, is what the CWA is all about. As a group, trying not to be sectarian, we wander a bit from time to time, and argue through some confusions about direction and specific approaches to getting our blues out to other people. How successful we'll be ultimately is still hard to predict, but here's what we've done in our first year of existence:

* Helped organize the ACD regional conference that took place in Madison March 1 & 2, 1986.

* Organized 7 showcase/cabarets between March and December, 1986. These cabarets featured a set of performers from the CWA and also provided time for members of the audience to share and participate. Most of the cabarets focused on a central theme. In May, for example, we played music, read poems, and told stories about work and work experiences; in June the program centered on our relationship to the land; the August cabaret was held on Hiroshima day (guess what the focus was); in October we worked with the Border Support Group to sponsor a cabaret with Jonathan Moore, border support worker and poet, as the featured performer; in December we focused on issues of poverty in the "Land of Plenty."

* Put out 10 issues of our monthly 4 page journal, On The Street, which has featured poetry, essays, graphics, photos and collages by CWA members, friends, and many Madison area people who have sent in contributions. An eleventh issue is currently in the works.

* Sponsored a benefit for writer and photographer Margaret Randall who faces deportation because of her political views as expressed in her various books about Cuba and Nicaragua. Margaret spoke about her trial at the benefit, which followed a poetry reading on campus earlier in the evening.

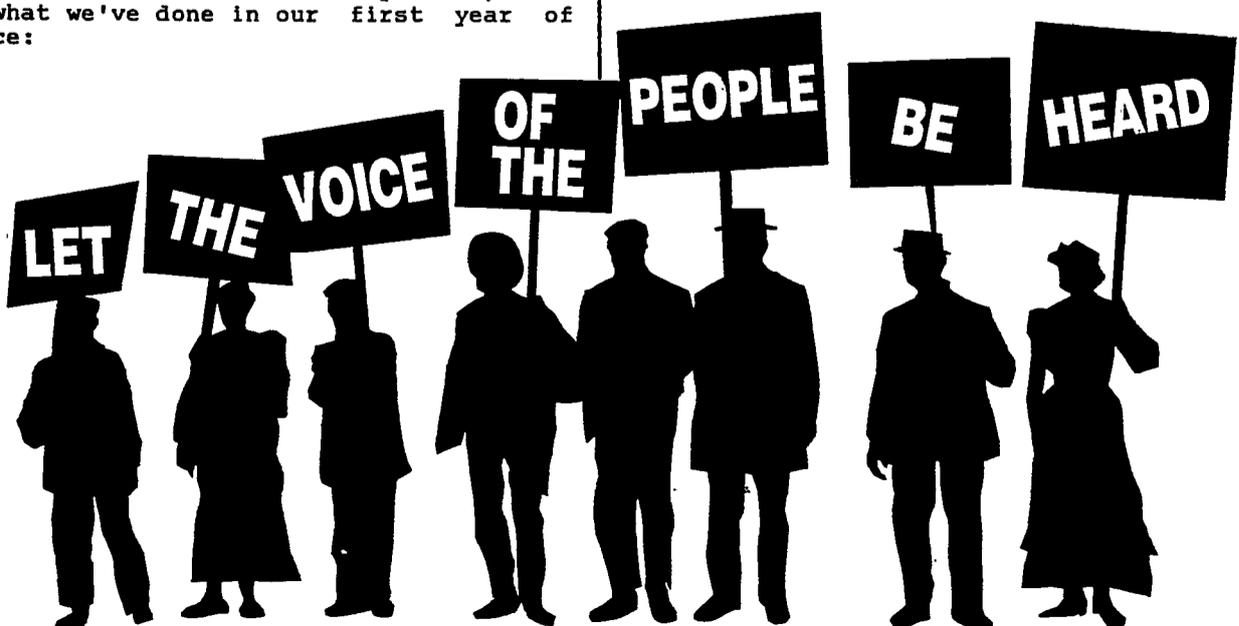
* Organized an sponsored a visit and workshop by the Philippine Educational Theater Association during November, 1986.

* Helped organize an Art Against Apartheid event during the spring of 1986. The event, whose main organizers were several local anti-apartheid activists, included music, poetry, and an art exhibit.

* Sponsored a discussion of the San Francisco Mime Troupe's Mozambique Caper following the play's performance in Madison in October.

This gives you some idea of the kind of things the group has been interested in doing over the past year. Sometimes it has come down to a core of about 6-8 people doing most of the work. We'd obviously like to see more participate on that level. But cabarets and the journals have gotten a good response, and the journal itself is put together by a different CWA member or members each month on something like a rotating basis. So we've got mixed results, and what may turn out to be a slow process of building. But then we've also done a lot, and the blues are something that don't go away over night. We need patience, determination, and lots of creativity.

--Mike Bodden



**A PROVERBIAL EXPLANATION
FOR WHY NO ACTION IS TAKEN**

Because nothing ventured, nothing gained
But better safe than sorry and
When in doubt, don't.
Because we look before we leap
Knowing a stitch in time saves nine, and
We try to make hay while the sun shines,
Because he who hesitates is lost, but
Slow and steady always wins the race.
Because too many cooks spoil the broth,
And God helps those who help themselves
And if you want something done,
Do it yourself,
But two heads are better than one.
Because where there's smoke there's fire
Although all that glitters is not gold
And you can't judge a book by its cover
But clothes make the man.
Because idle hands are the devil's playlot
But we fear burning our candles
At both ends.
Because the only place success comes
Before work is in the dictionary
So we keep our nose to the grindstone
Knowing all work and no play
Makes Jack a dull boy.

--from Big Skin by Lydia Tomkiw.

This poem is available on the audio-cassette collection Big Skin by the poetry/music collaboration Algebra Suicide. The cassette is available from Cause and Effect, P. O. Box 30383, Indianapolis, IN 46230.

THE ART OF RESISTANCE

Trade for Peace is an ongoing project of the Dane County Pledge of Resistance in Madison, WI. In response to the U.S. trade embargo against Nicaragua, Trade for Peace has established a network for the illegal importation of Nicaraguan goods, including art. The economic aggression is part of a U.S. strategy called "low intensity conflict." Trade for Peace is the counter: "low intensity resistance!" This civil disobedience effort is done as one of the highest forms of friendship with the Nicaraguans: stopping the war. The goal of many friendship projects to share a sense of common humanity through activities such as art exchanges. The hope of such a process is to remove the barriers of misunderstanding that lead to war. Art provides an insight into the people against whom the U.S. government is waging war. The art imports include oil paintings, some from the collectives on the island of Solentiname, multicolor tapestries of braided plant material, and uncanceled postage stamps. An effort has just begun to significantly increase the import of Nicaraguan art. Trade for Peace hopes that through art the voice of Nicaragua may be heard in the United States. Further, the civil disobedience contributes to the process of ending the war. For more information, including a price list with black and white reproductions of some of the art, write: Trade for Peace, P. O. Box 9914, Madison, WI 53715.

--Len Cizewski



Litografi: Venturelli

'ARTISTS'/WRITERS' COLONY GOES YEAR-ROUND

Kansas City, MO, January 9, 1987 -- A creative home-away-from-home is now offered year-round to performing and visual artists, writers, and composers by the ACTS Institute, a nonprofit foundation headquartered here.

Located on Horseshoe Bend, Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri, the Institute's artists'/writers' colony, ACT 1 Creativity Center, offers independent residencies for one week to six months. The retreat for creative people expanded its waterfront facility, on-site staff, months of operation and length of residencies after three seasons of summer-only programs, partially supported by the Illinois Arts Council and Missouri Arts Council.

The typical admission charge for a one-week residency, including private room and workspace as well as all meals, is \$100. Some work-scholarships are available based on need. All applicants are screened by a peer review committee prior to being awarded a residency.

For further information, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to ACTS Institute, Inc., attention Ms. Thrush, P. O. Box 10153, Kansas City, MO 64111.

NEWS FROM OMAHA

A group of people interested in the activities of ACD have been meeting in Omaha since July, 1985. In the past few months Connie Conway, a community leaders organizer in Omaha, has taken an increased leadership in organizing the local interest group. Their first major project will be a panel held at the end of January, 1987 on "Multi-cultural Interests and Racism." The group has not yet declared itself an official ACD local - but is still exploring applications of ACD principles to local arts activities. For more information contact:

Connie Conway
3505 Hawthorne Ave.
Omaha, NE 681
402-553-2314

CONGRATULATIONS

to
★ Robin Lewy and David Moraga ★
on their marriage.

February 21, 1987
Managua, Nicaragua Libre

★★★★★ MANDATES FOR 1987-88 ★★★★★

This year's conference was a watershed event for the Alliance in many ways. Growing out of some painfully evident problems, and ongoing frustrations within ACD, yet also as a result of renewed energy and commitment to tackling some of the persistent difficulties and roadblocks in the building of our alliance and its work, a number of "mandates" or areas of concentration were voiced by the membership during Imagination II and should shape our work for the months ahead. In Boston, we made a commitment to work on the following areas of growth for ACD:

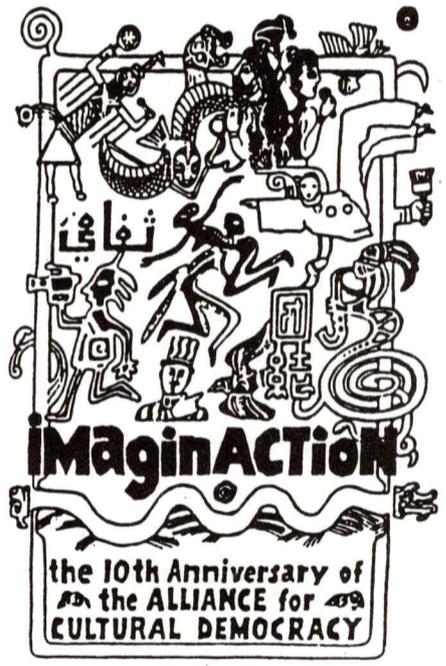
The mandates that we take with us from Boston as viced by the membership and participants in Imagination are the following:

- * the need for ACD to address the issue of multi-cultural, multi-ethnic diversity within the Alliance; the need to begin this task by addressing the questions of racism
- * the need for the Alliance to be more active, to provide more concrete services to members
- * the need for stronger regional organizing and more regional activities
- * the need for a paid staff to handle nuts and bolts
- * the need to form alliances with other organizations



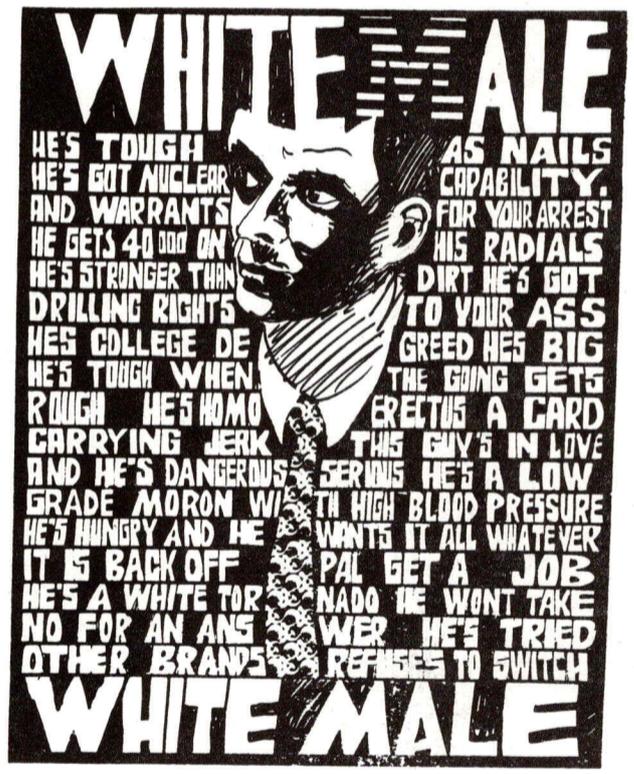
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The People Yes
 ACD
 Box 43054
 Chicago, IL 60643



NEED A T-SHIRT?

IMAGINATION '87 Conference T-shirts are still available. Ask your nearest ACD Board Member or call or write: ACD, P. O. Box 2478, Station A, Champaign, IL 61820.



DUFFY

about ACD . . .



The Alliance for Cultural Democracy is the only nationwide, nonprofit organization for community-based arts programs and activist artists. The Alliance's members are visual artists, theater workers, musicians, writers, media artists, dancers, arts administrators, and others involved in community and cultural work in urban, suburban, and rural settings.

The Alliance's first task is to enable community arts people and other cultural workers to create participatory union among themselves, to overcome their isolation, share their skills and knowledge and to work together on cultural policy. The second task is to create an effective and educated public voice to ensure that cultural contributions of our communities and our diverse peoples are given their due.