

CULTURAL DEMOCRACY

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Self-Determination

by Charles Frederick
and Lucy R. Lippard

O.K. So the membership suggested that a theme for our work this year should be "self-determination."

It seemed to make a succinct and unifying statement of what people in the organization have been about doing—neighborhood arts, Artists Call, Art Against Apartheid, community animation. . . But then we needed to think about what self-determination means, concretely. How do we define it as something other than a political abstraction?

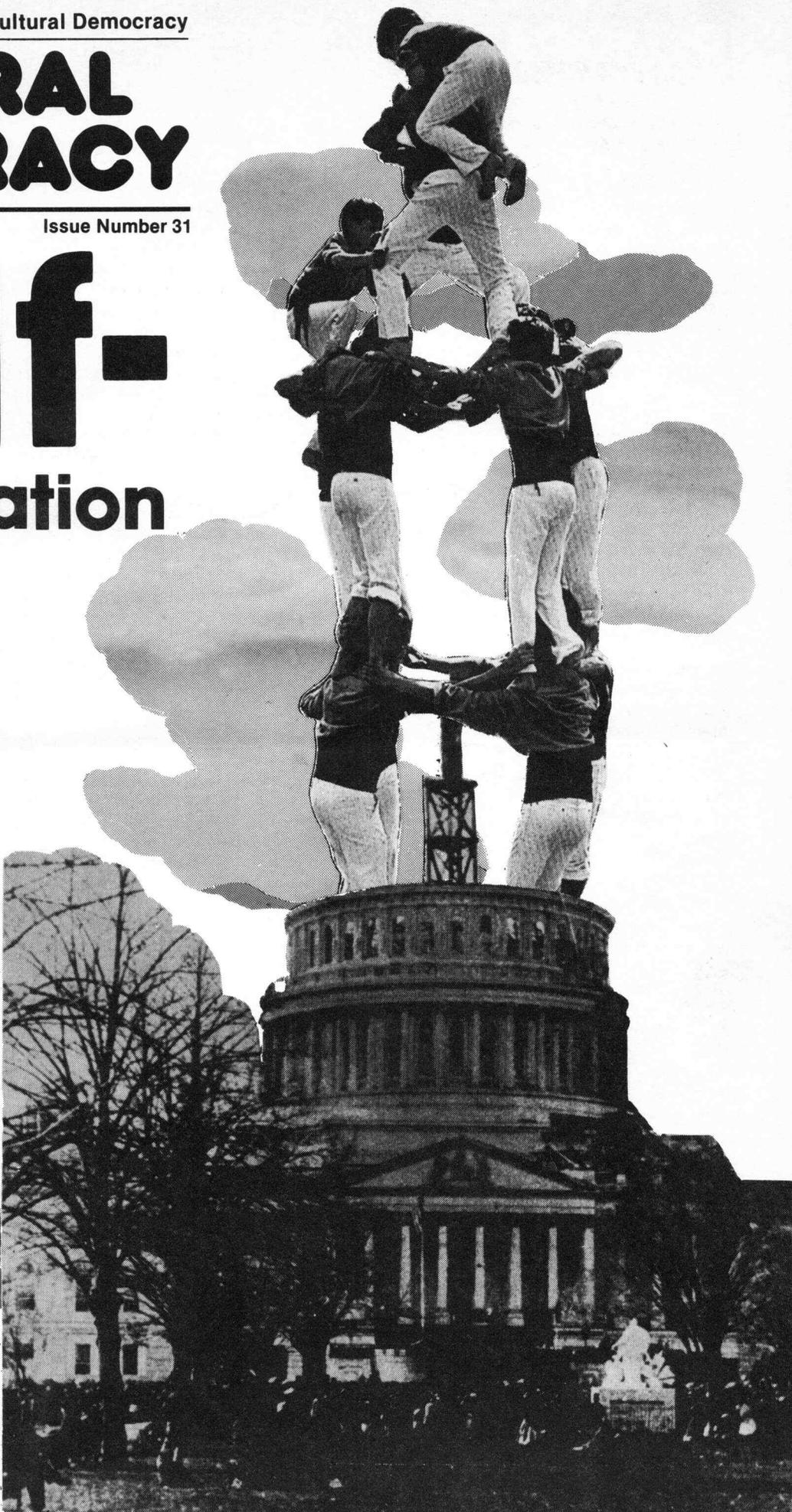
At the February board meeting in Chicago, we asked ourselves what experiences we had had with self-determination in our own work-lives. It's all very well to know how self-determination works in Nicaragua, or Vietnam, but it must be understood as an experience in our own lives. In fact, if we are ever to be able to persuade our own communities of the right of people around the world to self-determination, we must be able to show how important it is for everyone, in their homes. How have they been involved in struggles for self-determination?

To come closer to our own definition, we told stories. Bob Feldman of the United Mime Workers told of how, when they were performing in a high school, the students organized to reform a dress code which had forced them to overdress in sweltering weather. Catherine Jordan remembered her

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CULTURAL DEMOCRACY

CULTURAL DEMOCRACY means that culture is an essential human need and that each person and community has the right to a culture or cultures of their choice; that all communities should have equitable access to the material resources of the commonwealth for their cultural expression; that cultural values and policies should be decided in public debate with the guaranteed participation of all communities; that the government does not have the right to favor one culture over another.

THE ALLIANCE FOR CULTURAL DEMOCRACY supports community cultural participation. We believe in cultural pluralism, and understand the necessity to integrate the struggles for cultural, political, and economic democracy in the United States. The most important initiatives for cultural democracy take place on a grassroots level in communities, neighborhoods, and among activist artists and other progressive cultural workers.

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IMAGINATION

Planning for October 1985 annual conference

by Lucy R. Lippard

During the Chicago meeting, Lina said, "One reason our side is losing now is a lack of imagination." Debra said, "We see culture as dynamic, as representative of people's lives and not as a commodity." Having agreed, we looked for a form for next year's conference that would express that content. While we want to assert the centrality of culture in the process of empowerment, the question is not only how artists see their role in society, but how other people see the role of artists. We hope this conference will attract and help train artists, organizers, and educators to become culturally effective, and to enable communities to envision self determination.

Here's the general form we're working with, though details aren't definite yet.

Friday night: A cabaret of Chicago talent and maybe some imported talent—participants in the conference. (We've found the cabaret form to be an effective intercultural organizing tool, and it's fun too.)

Saturday—Sunday: Two 2-hour plenary sessions each day, each one leading organically into two "wings"—at least two workshops relating to the subject. The sessions will combine: *experience* (a performance or a story or an illustrated account of exactly what one group or person does to empower the community—the hands-on part); *reflection* (analysis and comparison of these methods and strategies); *action* (the skills that can be learned in the workshops; how these things get done).

We have broken down our concerns into four areas, each of which will be the basis of one session: 1) geographical community: rural/urban; 2) situational community: workplaces/labor; 3) constituency community: the elderly, the disabled, artists, gays, women, racial groups, etc.; 4) issue organizing: activism around electoral or

global issues such as ecology, military buildup, housing, anti-nuke, South Africa, Central America, etc.

Each session will include two or more practitioners, including an artist and an organizer (who might also be an artist). Board members will facilitate and keep issues in focus but we will avoid the conventional panel format in favor of discussion and demonstration. We hope each session will be entertaining, edifying, analytical, and inspirational. One session might be a dialogue between an organizer and an artist around a specific problem; how would it be solved by the two working together? Another might be 4 short performances by different "constituencies" and then discussion of how each works in context.

Monday will be the annual meeting. (This is the Columbus Day weekend, so it's a holiday.) Then we end the conference with a bang-up Town Meeting in the afternoon, as a way of applying what we've learned over the weekend. The agenda will be cultural policy and how cultural workers (from the US and Canada) can determine it ourselves. The form is, again, open and participatory. We may invite people from the NEA and Canada Council, and other arts administrators to respond to what they have seen at the conference and flag the policy issues that have arisen. This last session will also provide a kick-off for a cultural policy conference planned for later in the year. And we might end with a pageant that uses the conference itself as material for an artwork.

We will try to raise some funds for "scholarships" to the conference and also invite grassroots organizations to send representatives so that the conference itself will be a connective form, reaching out from ACD's cultural core to the groups with whom we work. ■

Continued from front page

work with teenagers, teaching them about sex and health issues. The kids created performances and art work in various media to teach other kids about their bodies, how they might have the power of decision and strength through a greater knowledge and consciousness of their own bodies.

Lucy Lippard told a 25 year "collage," from work with the American Friends Service Committee in a Mexican village to feminism, through which she learned that real self-determination only happened for the individual when it took place with her community. Olivia Gude recounted how, in her frustration at the barriers in the art world to the inclusion of her kind of socially committed work, she learned to join with other

artists who have been excluded to create alternate systems of distributing and exhibition, gaining control over their own art and in the process bringing it to new audiences.

Maryo Ewell talked about the San Luis Valley in Colorado, an area largely Latino, yet where the economic, political, and institutional power is in white hands. The local arts council had been no exception, but with the advent of a Spanish speaking director sympathetic to the majority (minority) community, the local board was reconstituted representatively. It created a new program based in pride in Latino culture and in the Spanish language. The board mandated a children's theater, an artists-in-residence program, and radio shows—all in Spanish—as well as an arts festival for the

Valley that showed only the work of local artists. To maintain—and make self-sufficient—the work of the traditional weavers, people began to raise their own sheep so they would have guaranteed access to wool at prices they could afford.

From the hollers of Appalachia to inner-city ghettos, people are saying they should control the land they live on. Lina Newhouser told how people fought against the red-lining by banks which was draining the material resources from a neighborhood in Philadelphia. When the economic base of a community shrivels, there is no longer a means of sustenance or identity. People must control that base.

Self-determination is not an abstraction

Continued on back page

A CAPITAL CONFERENCE

DIVERSITYDIVERSITYDIVERSITYDIVERSITYDIVER



This issue of Cultural Democracy reports the proceedings of the Alliance's national conference, which took place in Washington D.C. in the Fall of 1984. We've broken our coverage of the conference into three parts. Diversity summarizes presentations by six Alliance members that opened the conference Friday night. Katharine Pearson and Charles Frederick presented their Visions together on Saturday morning. The rest of Saturday and Sunday were spent on workshops and discussions of Alliance plans, represented here in Hard at Work—The Editors.

Doug Paterson, People's Theatre Emphasis, University of Nebraska at Omaha, (moderator):

The country is in hard times culturally. Someone used the word crisis before. I don't think it's such a negative thing. The Chinese see the world crisis as a dialectical form, with its danger, but also with the opportunity it poses.

There is, of course, work going on in the midst of what we might feel is this surge of forces against people's culture. There's a group in Omaha that has developed what we call "The Diner Theater," a working class dinner theater that takes place in a diner, where for eight bucks you get diner dinner and a show, and the plays are about a person who owns a diner, and the people who come to the diner who are struggling while the town is deteriorating. So the diner which is part of the community becomes also a representation of the community, and an intentional act.

And that's what we are doing, as an organization: finding ways to build through cultural theory and practice new communities, new ways of defining who we are—taking charge of our symbols, our own ways of talking. And that's what this panel is all about—to talk about some of the ways we think and some of the things we're doing—from the theoretical to the practical, and from the national to the provincial and the state, to the level of the community.

*Photos from Teaching Dance to Senior Adults by Liz Lerman
Published by Charles C. Thomas, 2600 South 1st Street,
Springfield, Illinois 62717 © 1984*

Lucy Lippard Writer/Activist

I work with four groups aside from ACD. They all have a common commitment to communication and distribution and empowerment of unheard voices and unseen images. They're all concerned with making art from lived and shared experiences. They're all based in networking and they're all looking for new models for integrating culture and political action. They all belong in ACD because there isn't any place else people like this can get together.

I don't think it's generally realized how much the history of visual arts in the U.S. in the last 20 years has been a history of escape attempts. There's been a growing but often aborted movement to break art out of its isolation in an economic and social ghetto where it's been inaccessible and uninteresting to most people. Sometimes this movement is buried in images that aren't yet even recognized as art.

There are three camps which until recently were working independently toward the same end. One is the avant-garde artist working primarily around the high-art mainstream. Then there are the community artists who shun and are shunned by the mainstream. Lastly—the so-called political artists who often work, schizophrenically, with one foot in the mainstream and the other foot on the left bank.

During the '70s, there began some communication among these three groups. In the late '70s there was some change for the better, and by the early '80s the concept of a real activist art began to emerge—an art that isn't just socially concerned, but socially *involved*. At that point, it was a real revelation for visual arts people to find out that there was also a movement for something called "cultural democracy" underway nationally. It brought home to us the provincialism of the so-called international art world in NYC. The 1982 ACD conference in Omaha brought a lot of things together for us. I was especially moved by hearing what was happening in rural and small-town grassroots cultural groups I'd never heard of before.

I see the Alliance as a sort of macrocosm for the kind of collaborative and collective work we do individually in our own groups: first, seeing how group work enriches life—starting from the viewpoint of the individual artist—then, collective work, then, an umbrella organization like ACD, a further stretching out, an increasing exchange of energy. . . . The idea is that artists are neither above it all nor below it all, neither superior geniuses unwilling to communicate nor inferior clods unable to communicate. Culture should be an arena for mutual respect and stimulation and artists should



learn and gain creative energy through empathetic exchange with audiences who are both like and unlike ourselves.

The influence of Third World cultures on the dominant culture is another well-kept secret. Working interculturally, with Chicano muralists or Asian filmmakers or exiled Salvadoran poets or the Black community can lead an isolated and alienated artist to understand cultural democracy, and help us to see ourselves differently—not just as others see us, but in *relation* to others, as part of a larger whole.

Adrienne Rich talks about the power of art “to create connections denied by the intellect working alone, to transform the unnameable into something palpable, sensuous, visible, audible, to take our unexpressed thoughts and desires and fling them with clarity and coherence onto a wall, a screen, a sheet of paper, or against the long silence of history. This power has long been recognized by women as the key to our deepest political problem. Our deprivation of the right to name. In beginning to create art which claims this right, we begin to create a politics which is a critique of all existing culture and all existing politics.”

Olivia Gude, Chicago Mural Group:

Jon Pounds and I teach a class called “The Artist in a Climate of Change” as part of an interdisciplinary graduate arts program at Columbia College in Chicago. The course was called “The Arts in a Climate of Change,” but Jon and I changed the name as soon as we started teaching it. We wanted to look at *the artist* in relation to the whole world, not just art in relation to the art world.

Grad school for me was a painful experience. It took awhile to understand, but it was basically because I had become an artist with a \$25,000 education trained to make art that could only be understood by other people with \$25,000 educations. Art was either authentic—that is, subtle, sophisticated, and difficult to understand—or it was kitsch and not what you wanted to be thinking about. This was all so limiting; I was delighted at the opportunity to teach aesthetics—to be the one who asked the questions.

The content of the course is a sort of paranoid version of aesthetics, about why the aesthetic truisms of the last 100 years will tell you that your work is no good.

The students are in their early 30's to their 60's and from a wide range of classes and ethnic backgrounds. One thing Jon and I try to do at the very beginning is surrender some of the power we have as

teachers, along the lines of Freire. There are all these life histories that everyone's bringing to the class; it's very important that a lot of questions come from them.

There are questions, too, though, that *we* pose, that students don't always like. The students tend not to be very sophisticated about the politics of the art world, and feel, too, a tremendous pressure to be upwardly mobile, and don't like to question those things. Also, as with a lot of us, there's this idea that art is a really pure thing to do—that it's *good* to be an artist—and it's really painful to deal with the fact that it's *not*, that it's related to all the other stuff out there in the world.

I want to leave you something *good* from aesthetic theory, from Tolstoy's *What Is Art?*, which is probably one of the most useful documents for ACD. The two things that make for good art, he says, are: art which 1) transmits the highest perception about the possibility of unity among people, the most inclusive art; and which 2) transmits the simplest feelings of common life, those things which are accessible to all people. And teaching this to my students, of course, leads to a discussion of ACD.

Tolstoy gives us a theory. I'm glad to be here among the members of ACD, because I think here we see the practice of those thoughts.

Mark Miller, Director of Community Development, Kentucky Arts Council

Working on the arts at the state level is often very mundane, and after I finish this talk about the bureaucratic reality of a state arts agency you'll understand why I come here for inspiration.

Every state arts agency has a board, which is appointed by the governor and turns over all the time, so the governor can use it for political favors. Often these people have little to do with the arts. This is a key area artists need to pay more attention to, as it can have a big impact.

The bureaucracy under the governor also has something to say, of course. So does the legislature, depending on that state, in reviewing the budget and the governor's appointees, and allies there are very important. The NEA is another factor, especially in small, rural states where federal money is a big part of the arts budget.

Perhaps most important are the beneficiaries, the people who get most of the grant money (as opposed to the constituents, who are the people of the state). They're well organized and usually make up any advocacy organization in a state pushing for arts funding, which often come off as really grass roots when they're really not.

All these parts are less than their sum, because most of the time they agree with each other, which I'm sure you understand. What I have to be alert for in my work are those opportunities for building tactical alliances, such as when people fall out with one another, or certain instances when pressure can be brought. What's difficult and discouraging, though, is that there's generally no stated arts policy as such. Sometimes we can really get ahead in areas like animation, but not so much because they're for it as because they're hearing a vocabulary that sounds intriguing and they're curious.

It's a strange contradiction working in that framework—trying to maintain our integrity as artworkers, to get resources for people who are doing vital work, and at the same time garner cash. Sometimes you have to give away half a loaf to get a loaf. And that's the way it is.

Glenn Hilke, Performing Artists for Nuclear Disarmament:

I want to read something from a pamphlet printed this year called “Culture in Quebec: Everybody's Concern,” written and printed by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs in Quebec, which I consider interesting because it reminds me of last year's minutes of the ACD conference:

The key to any people's cultural self-fulfillment lies in the liberty and vitality of its creative artists. The link between a society's past and future is best forged in their minds. We have a duty to make culture and its self more visible to the people. It will have to speak to the regional process already begun to give as many cultural agents as possible the chance to take part in determining our major cultural orientation.

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The people must have a say in forging our cultural future. This is one of our principle concerns, and we intend to consult the various cultural agents to find out whether our major orientations, our wishes, correspond closely enough to people's expectations. Policy definition, solutions to common problems, regionalization, and the role of cultural agents and of representative cultural organizations are some of the questions on which as many people as possible will be asked to express their views in the course of the near future.

This is an amazing spirit of participation and organization by artists in cooperation with the government of Quebec. The arts community, which is very strong in Quebec's capital, Montreal, played a major role in helping the Quebecois come to power and, as a result, you have a major redefinition of cultural and organizational policy, which is still continuing.

After the reorganization of 1976, the heads of all the new ministries decided to embark on a program of regionalization, of decentralization. The province was divided into 11 regions, each having its own administrative structure, with its own cultural council, which are all artist-run or artist-owned.

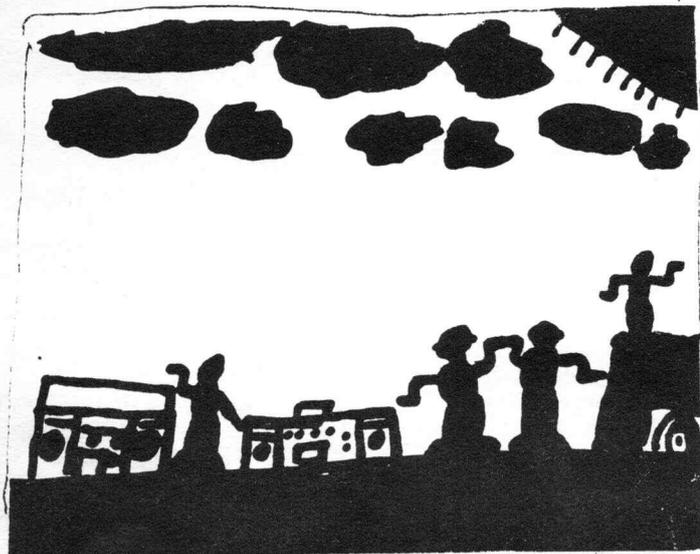
I'm on the theatre table of region 3, along with members from every other theatre in the region. We meet once a month—we develop cultural policy for our region for theater. Organizations which are one-to-two years old submit proposals on a per-project basis; after three years we get general program money. We assemble all our financial needs, the program needs we feel are important for our region. Then the table presidents of all the disciplines meet to present their proposals to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, which negotiates both with the group as a whole and individually with each table in terms of specific allocations.

Quebec isn't perfect. My group has had a big problem with the theatre council. We're in a small village; we don't have a theatre. We need to tour to survive, and the budget we submitted asked for sizeable touring expenses. The committee cut it in half, saying we should play more to our little area. We appealed and we finally got 82% of our request. So even in this period of regionalization, there is still this mentality of centralization.

There's a lot to say about Quebec. I think it offers a breath of fresh air, a little encouragement. I think the basic message is that if you want to have cultural policy, wherever you are, it's going to take artists organizing together en masse—in as much mass as you have.

Stephanie Altomara, *El Centro de Arte*

El Centro de Arte was founded about 8 years ago to promote local expression within the D.C. Latin community. We have a poorly paid director and a volunteer staff and board, and are funded by the NEA and the D.C. Commission on the Arts. We have a resident



By Steve Carlin, 6th grade, from the collection of Herb Perr.



musical group; a theatre group, Teatro Nuestro; a gallery; guitar and photography workshops; and summer youth and oral history programs which are run in conjunction with other organizations.

We try as much as possible to connect our work with work in other communities in the rest of the Americas. The gallery had an exhibit in conjunction with a Latin American gallery in Newark and a show of work by Bolivian miners shown together with paintings by a miner from West Virginia. We also did an exhibit called "No Mas," or "No More" in response to an international call by a gallery in Chile.

The Teatro Nuestro works on this idea as well. The name means "our theater," and the idea behind its formation was to reclaim the theater for our community, which is mostly the Central American component of the city's Latin American community. There are other, more traditional theaters in Washington that serve the more "mainstream" Latin American public; our theater focuses on the other Latin community.

Most of our work is created collectively and is focused on Central America. We did a play based on the experiences of people in our group and in the community about the taking of the Ministry of Labor in El Salvador in 1977, which we performed bilingually. We try as much as possible to have North and Latin American audiences be able to see the play together and to discuss it together afterwards. We recently did a piece by Roque Dalton that we're still working on to make it more bilingual.

We also did some guerrilla street theater actions during lunch hours in city parks with the Rapid Deployment Theatre and Nancy Garruba of CISPES. Two actresses dressed as secretaries would be harassed by actor-soldiers with fake guns and hauled off in a truck. The process was videotaped, along with interviews with people who had seen it. Some people were very receptive and other people absolutely did not want to be confronted. This kind of work has been very effective and is very important, because I think it's absolutely essential to develop quickly effective messages that go out on the street, given the circumstances that we're living in right now.

Teatro Nuestro has been connected with two other Latin American theater organizations, Teatro Nacionale d'Esplan on the West Coast and COLA on the East Coast. We also took part in The New Theatre Workshop in Havana, which was sponsored by UNESCO, and the second conference of Latin American and Third World Theatre Workers in Nicaragua. All these experiments have been very valuable for us in terms of our own development, and in terms of the development, too, of the Latin American Theatre movement. □

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REPORT ON NOVEMBER ILLINOIS REGIONAL MEETING

Bob Feldman sent us a report, which we edited. It's a good idea to send us or the editors of the regional bulletins, news and reports. That's how our network can work for us all. Organizing ideas, cultural projects, thoughts, issues, and discoveries in your area. We need to know more and more about each other and our work—Thanks, Bob.

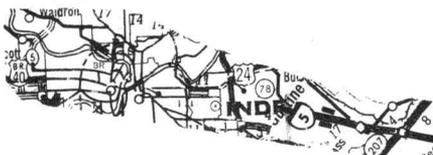
Twenty people gathered at the Pullman Community Organization Building for the 3rd Illinois Regional ACD Meeting. The discussion of the national conference in Washington, combined with everyone's introductions about their work, led to the generation of the following questions we would like to think about and discuss throughout the year:

- (1) What is the role of leadership in cultural animation? How are themes introduced by the animateur while keeping the process democratic?
- (2) What is the role of "high arts" in the democratic culture we want to create?
- (3) How do we balance important collective organizing work like ACD with the importance of producing our own work as artists?
- (4) What do we mean by democracy? Why is what we do as artists important? How does all this relate to cultural democracy?

Deborah Langerman led the group in a surprise-filled workshop of action theater: theater designed for a specific place, time and purpose. Participatory examples augmented descriptions of attempts in the U.S. and abroad. Then Sue Ying, with the help of Jon Pounds, Olivia Gude, John Pitman Weber, and Mary Patton talked about Chicago Artists Call and showed slides of the October 13th Peace March. Finally Noreen Warnock talked about the work of PAND, Performing Artists for Nuclear Disarmament.

Got questions? Write a letter to the people in Illinois. But send it to us. We'll print it. Somebody else may have the same question. Networks get across our differences by establishing our similarities.

Indian Lands And Communities
Map courtesy of Southwest Museum,
Los Angeles, California



When Mark Miller, who is chairing the finance committee of the ACD Board, sent in the application this year to NEA Expansion Arts, he attached this letter to A.B. Spellman to the application. We print it here in full because we think it is a good description of some of the programmatic ambitions of ACD, and because it confronts well and directly issues facing many of the membership in their funding efforts. If you have had experiences with funding and funders that you think might be useful for other members, send us a report.

Dear Mr. Spellman,

I have enclosed an application from the Alliance for Cultural Democracy for a Services to the Field grant. Please note that further material and letters of support will follow under separate cover.

The Alliance is facing a very critical period in its history and mission. At the same time it is poised to make rapid strides as an organization, in services to its members, and as a means to build links between artists and cultural workers at all levels striving to build community based, local culture.

The year 1984 had been a difficult one for the Alliance. The organization struggled to cope with the loss of staff. Its governing board with attendant responsibilities is scattered across the country. Yet the organization did "get across the river." It carried off a successful conference and meeting in Washington, D.C. attended by & people from many parts of the country. It continued to publish and distribute *Cultural Democracy* and newsletters. As documented in Illinois, regional chapters remained active.

Following the last conference a new board of directors was elected which is determined to match the commitment of Alliance members to carry on. The board is composed from local artists and arts organizations of many disciplines, writers of arts criticism, professional staff of community arts groups as well as local and state Arts Councils. It is a board with a broad range of skills and capable of organizing effectively in spite of the tem-

porary loss of staff. The Alliance now has formal standing program and fundraising committees. It has organized several task forces to respectively build membership, foster and support further use and understanding of cultural animation among artists and local people, build coalitions and press forward with the analysis of public arts policies as they relate to the fate of cultural democracy in this country.

This reorganized Alliance is designing an expanded range of services for its members. By 1986 these services will include those outlined in our application to you. Our membership is composed of people who represent the "Expansion Arts" constituency and those who serve that constituency as well as artists committed to work at the local level. You will soon receive a detailed breakdown of the membership.

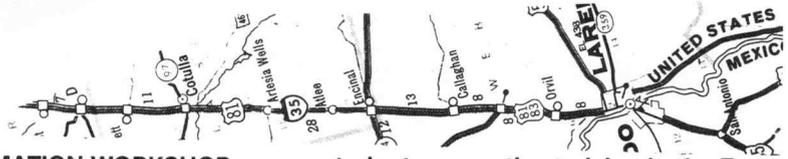
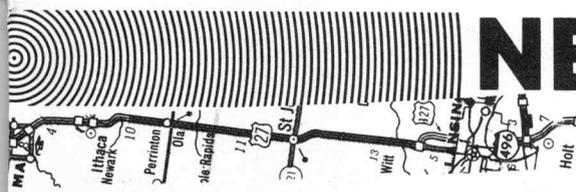
A critical feature of our plans for 1985-1986 includes the re-employment of professional staff. This will enable us to offer expanded technical assistance services to our members including the coordination of resources and knowledge among artists and arts groups. Staff will coordinate cultural animation and cultural policy efforts—both of which will be major thrusts in 1985-86.

Our work in developing a "theory and practice" of cultural animation in America will directly benefit both artists and the local people with whom they work and in whom they find inspiration. It is our most promising means to engage people in cultural exploration and growth in forms of expression that are grounded in their own history and experience.

Our work to analyze public cultural policy and advocate new policies that foster cultural democracy is designed to directly benefit our members and the people with whom they work.

Given the solid organizing work now going in within the Alliance, our plans for 1986 do not appear overly ambitious. We can easily double our membership with an organized drive and our planned services. Our fundraising will be based on a coordinated plan for the first time that will involve the entire board. The requisite skills for conducting a nationwide search for

NEWS



staff and implementing services are in place within the organization. The interim steps for reaching our program goals in 1986 are already underway within our task forces. We plan a preliminary conference on cultural animation during 1985 in cooperation with the Center for Local Arts Development of the University of Minnesota. David O'Fallon, director, has met with members of our board regarding this. Maryo Ewell is a tremendous asset to our policy task force. Her participation and direction will add great credibility to our proposed policy seminar.

Finally, Mr. Spellman, allow me to address the issue of the Alliance and "politics." It arose within the Endowment in the course of evaluating our last proposal. I believe that the proposal we are now submitting is clearly aimed at providing services of direct benefit to constituents you identify as your own. I suggest that it is not "political" work.

The Alliance is composed of many artists and arts organizations as members. These individuals and groups incorporate many directions, philosophies, and ideologies within their work. The Alliance does not presume or attempt to present an overall political direction or mission for its members. Alliance members do communicate with each other—in our newsletters, in Cultural Democracy, and at our conferences and meetings—about matters that concern them. As it happens many political matters do concern them—and should. The Endowment should not be surprised that art often finds its inspiration in the struggles that confront us, even political ones. My point here is that the Alliance is dedicated to serving and preserving many voices. They are political voices. They are ethnic, neighborhood, rural, and regional voices. They are the voices of a healthy, tumultuous democracy.

Our mission as an organization is to ensure the existence of a cultural democracy—through service, research, and advocacy. Service, research, and advocacy on behalf of locally-based artists and groups—if politics—is a sort of politics the Endowment should support.

Sincerely,
Mark Miller

CULTURAL ANIMATION WORKSHOP

Here's something quite concrete going on this summer about cultural animation training. David O'Fallon runs the Split Rock Arts program in Duluth, Minnesota as part of the U. of Minn. summer program. July 7-July 13, Katharine Pearson, of ACD fame, will direct a workshop on cultural animation that she calls, "Acting Locally While Thinking Globally, or, Local Like Aware of Itself." She sent us a description which we edited a bit: The workshop will be based in the notion of participatory cultural democracy—each community has the right to a chosen culture and that choice is open to debate. We will explore individual communities through participatory activities such as cultural mapping—participants describing the influences that form their communities. We will look at successful examples of indigenous cultural development, including Appalshop, in Whitesburg, KY, where I worked. We will seek to determine the applicability of indigenous standards of excellence balanced with the demand for "High-quality" across a range of arts disciplines and the media. We will look at the role of the individual artist in animation work versus his or her role in an artist-in-residence program. We will read some texts in common, and rely a great deal on our own descriptions of our communities and our work.

Sounds great, Katharine. If anybody is interested, you can get information about time, cost, and all other particulars by writing: David O'Fallon, 320 Westbrook Hall, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455. His # is (612) 373-4947. He has some other programs that might be of interest to ACD'ers.

... A THEATRE OF SOCIAL COMMITMENT...

Doug Paterson, ACD Boardmember, directs a People's Theatre program at University of Nebraska at Omaha. This is the only program of its kind in the U.S.. We're running a paragraph on his program to let ACD'ers know about this opportunity to work towards a degree while working at the kind of cultural work nearest and dearest to their hearts (and minds). Here is a quote from Doug's publicity:

"At UNO we are researching the work of socially committed cultural workers in theatre; we are working to network the hundreds of People's Theatre practitioners in the United States and around the world; we are struggling to establish People's Theatre as a legitimate field of graduate study, one which many people, including

students currently studying in the Emphasis, assert to be the single most important theatrical movement of the twentieth century; and we are looking for other socially committed theatre workers or students to join us in the struggles of this important work."

Interested? Write to People's Theatre Emphasis, Department of Dramatic Arts, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Omaha, Nebraska 68182.

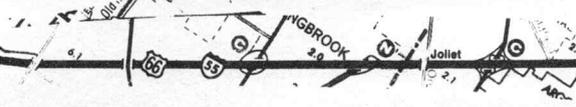
A CALL FOR SLIDES!

As dedicated members know, one of the main difficulties in expanding the Alliance is to give a clear account of what cultural democracy means—in practical experience as well as in theory. I was thinking about the fact that the image of Liz Lerman with the Dancers of the Third Age explains more about the possibilities of cultural democracy than an hour of talk. So I proposed that we put together a slide show with sound on our work in cultural democracy as a tool to introduce ourselves and assist our regional organizing. The Board agreed, so I've taken on the task of beginning to collect slides and to write a script for a CD slide show. I will be contacting members, but I need to have suggestions and slides filling my mailbox. So please take a few minutes and send photos, slides, or information that you think could help this project of representing ourselves.

This is really important. Maybe if enough material gets to Olivia, she can show a preliminary show in Chicago at the national conference. We could then help her with more suggestions. Olivia's mailing address is:

*Olivia Gude
11221 Champlain
Chicago, IL 60628*

... And a call for graphics—while we're on the point of what our work looks like... We have been trying over the past couple of issues to brighten up the look of CD. For this, we need your help. Send us graphics! We'll use them and credit them. People will begin to know each other's work and depictions of their regions and communities. This is another way to participate in your magazine.



Puzzling Riddles

by Katharine Pearson

Oy! The perils of technology. Katharine Pearson's inspirational presentation—Vision I—on Saturday morning was never recorded. Graciously, however, she agreed to give us a taste of the experience and wrote a special piece for this issue of CD.—The Editors

In trying to remember my talk at the annual meeting in October, I am struck with the feeling of it, rather than the words that were spoken. I still have my outline—but it doesn't recreate for me the space between the hills, the energy between the people in the room, or the force of my own beliefs that sometimes sweeps over me when I achieve those rare insights into what I think I am a part of.

All I was trying to say is that the task of building cultural democracy—and the vision of what it can be—starts for me as a kind of personal spiritual journey—of acceptance, a seeking out of an understanding of the pattern. Not to accept other people's values if they are harmful to someone—but to bend and reach and stretch to find the common thread. . . like Cajun music is to zydeco, like art is to politics, like you are to me. The real power to change institutions, people, attitudes comes from the collective power of individual voices and stories and songs.

"Tom Jefferson wrote me a letter, said you can't win once and be done, and just when you think that it's over, you find that it's only begun."

"There just ain't no way to go backwards, there's no music if you keep still and if we don't start singing our own songs you know that somebody else will." (lyrics Kahn/Brody—200 RPM © 1976.)

I think the task of the Alliance is to build a microcosm of what we profess to believe. Let's continue to build our membership to reflect our society, let's make our board reflect this diversity and see if we can get along, and then—who knows what else might happen.

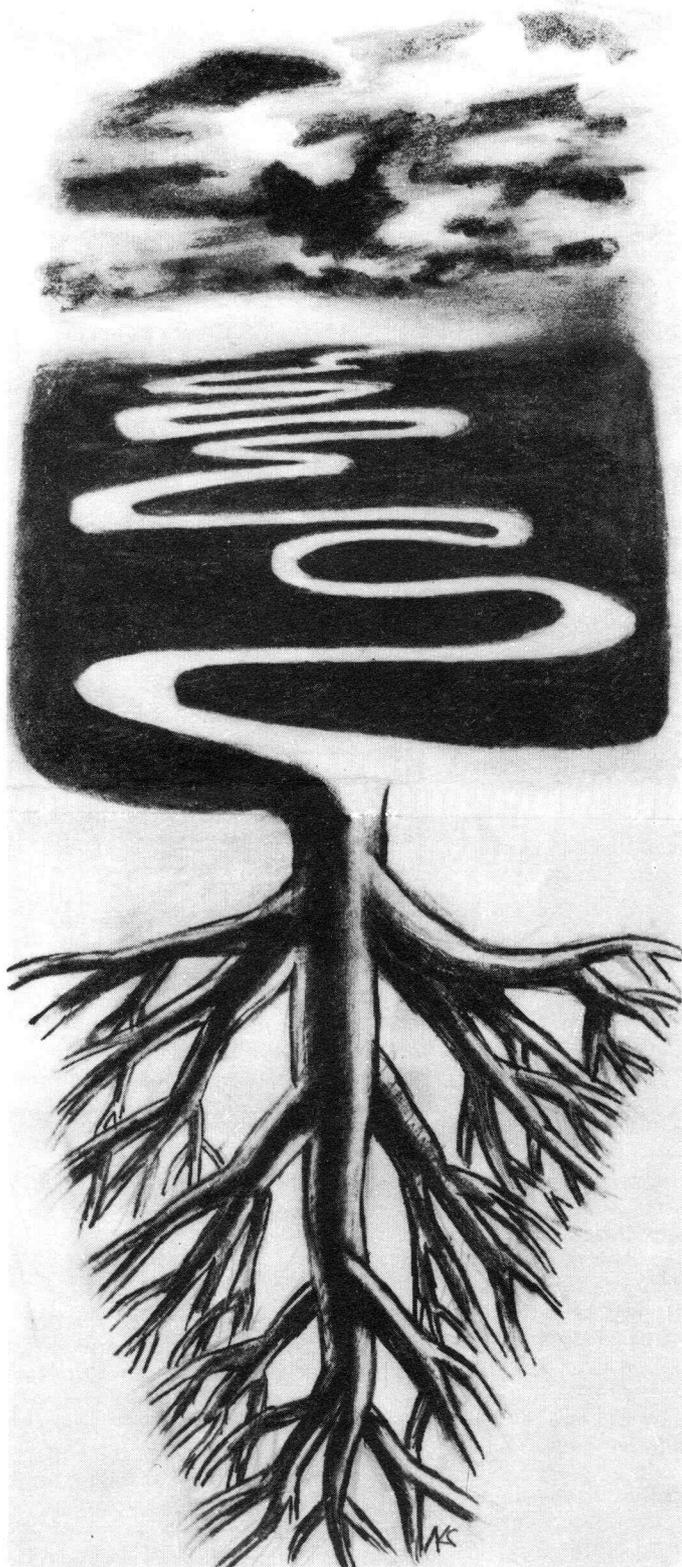
The inspiration that I seek is a positive answer to the question: Is it possible to practice cultural democracy through existing systems without alienation. . . and find tangible means of support for a holistic view of development? . . . This is culture-building in a positive way.

"Tales are like riddles. They have to start off right to end right. Now, the key to puzzling riddles is to find the truth." (Don Baker, Director of Limekiln Arts, Inc., and founder of Roadside Theater)

"A man without eyes saw pears in a tree. He didn't take pears, he didn't leave pears. . . How can that be?"

I spend my summer playing a young boy that I might have been and the Old Woman I might be as a dual role in Don Baker's *Tale of Cymbeline* (formerly a play by William Shakespeare), and that play started with those lines. Now, to me they translate this notion of the "key to puzzling riddles is to find the truth" into "the key to puzzling cultural democracy is to ask the right question."

This path of questions leads me to the conclusion that the right question is, "Have I made a deep-down, personal commitment to the acceptance of other people's values, or do I just want wider acceptance of my own? Further—isn't it true that I want the opportunity to 'see' the way others 'see,' and I want us all to share in some vision. . . of a better society." ■



Keith Christensen

VisionsVisionsVisionsVisionsVisionsVisionsVisionsVisions

I'M NOT ONLY TALKING ABOUT RONALD REAGAN— ALTHOUGH HE'S A CLEAR SIGN OF THE TIMES

by Charles Frederick

I've been thinking about the power of culture and about how we might organize that power in a more cogent way. I rely on the Alliance for a place in which that happens, with so many of us working in so many different ways to help empower the various communities in which we live.

We must, however, restore and renovate our vision of ourselves in the Alliance as an organization, particularly in response to the dark times we find ourselves in. I'm not only talking about the re-election of Ronald Reagan—although he's a clear sign of the times, but of the many other manifestations of what I see to be a culture of inhumanity, hypocrisy, and cruelty. The increased racism, the feminization of poverty, the attack on labor unions, the attacks on Central America and abortion clinics, the foreclosure of farms... In this historical context—*because we can see how culture is being used against us*—it's important to look newly at culture, and at our work in culture and our power in it.

I define culture as the total activity of people, imagining and creating their own reality. It is a distinct expression for every community, unless the power of community expression is wrested from the people. The value and beliefs of a community, how they believe people should live together, what forms they should employ to order their lives, what are the most important meanings and satisfactions for the individual and the group—these values and beliefs are the informing human organization of each community.

Culture is a kind of power. It can be used as a way of keeping people under the control of a commanding group—as with Reaganite ideology, the expressions of the mass media, advertising, Hollywood. Or it can be the expression of culture we work with: a way for people to be self-empowered. It is our responsibility to organize the cultural work of self-empowerment better, to do something more with it, to feel our strength better.

The principles of the Alliance insist on the right of all people to self-expression. I would extend that to say it is also the right of all people to self-determination—which is a kind of expression. Cultural expression isn't only image-making; it also has to do with how people express themselves politically. If the Alliance is to increase its strength, we need to know more about these different political needs and expressions.

What political power you have, your conditions of material possibility, are major definitions of what kind of culture you can create. We know in ACD that without the right (and means) to express yourself with your full dignity as a human being, you don't have your full rights as a human being. But that dignity can't be achieved without political participation and economic satisfaction.

This is also a moral question. I was reminded by the Liberation Theology people when I was in Nicaragua of the meaning of sin. Sin is the diminishment of humanity. A state of grace is perfecting yourself, becoming all that you might. Conditions of impoverishment and oppression take that right from people. If you are being denied the right and/or the material conditions to express your humanity fully, you are being sinned against.

A people's culture, their sense of themselves and what they can be, becomes determined by the economic and political order around them and the constraints inherent in that order. Without breaking those constraints, without achieving that kind of liberation as well, we will not be able to achieve full cultural liberation.

There are two basic parts in the process of people finding their power—which have to come together: identifying themselves, through naming, through imagining; and at the same time acting with that identification. Cultural work is an essential part of this



Seth Tobacman

process, of moving people to begin to make their own history, to make meaning of their own communities.

Our job is to help this process to happen, through a deconstruction of present reality, to show what's there—what's good and what's bad—and at the same time (to borrow Meridel LeSueur's phrase) to begin the process of re-membering, of making the body whole again, in people's history, in people's tradition: to help people to imagine what they might be and to create it in images and relation to their history.

The Alliance needs to achieve a greater sense organizationally of itself and its power. We have to start thinking of ourselves as people who are informed by the principles of cultural democracy. And it's our work to organize other workers, and to use our culture in ways we feel it should be used to effect change around us.

We use the term "cultural work" in the Alliance because this word democratizes, humanizes an occupation that has been seen as asocial, solitary, irresponsible, and mad—even if it's with genius. To call a person a cultural worker makes his or her work equal in significance to all other productive labor in a society, neither more nor less essential. Beyond the limiting conventional occupation of an artist, we include here also other people involved in the productions of human meaning, self-recognition and community expression: cultural animators, community organizers, educators, social and mental therapists, activist artists, intellectuals involved with descriptions of human society and communities, arts administrators and arts organizers, and city planners.

To work as a cultural worker is to work with the deepest cognition of the world and of people around you, as part of the developing activity of the community, in many forms of expression, touching on every part of the human being: conscious, unconscious, emotional, intellectual, spiritual and sensual. And in the Alliance we have recognized that the greatest cultural expression we're all involved in is the project of human freedom itself, wherever it's necessary to work at it.

WORKING IT OUT

by Abigail Norman

The tenor of October's conference was excited and warm, a Friends Meeting House full of people glad to be in each other's presence, whether familiar or new. When Katharine Pearson and Charles Frederick had finished their double presentation (excerpted here as "Puzzling Riddles" and "Sign of the Times"), the room buzzed with appreciation for two people whose words, style, and specific work are so different, and who are so close together in vision and at heart; the thread that showed itself through the fabric of them both is the same thread that runs through the Alliance at large.

In her presentation, Katharine said that tales are like riddles—and if the key to puzzling riddles is to find the truth, then the key to puzzling cultural democracy is to ask the right questions. The conference marked a moment in the tale of the Alliance. At the previous year's conference, the Alliance had to recognize it had lost its staff and began a year of finding its feet, figuring out how to stand up with its new structure of regional coordinators/chapters and task-oriented committees. This October, ACD members found that in the course of the year they had learned from experience both what they wanted from the Alliance and what they could practically give to it.

"We have for several years now had a notion of a lofty program of publications, of conferences, of seminars, of meetings and membership development, of networking." With these words, Katharine Pearson opened the conference's Saturday morning session. "We haven't usually had the money to implement these programs," she went on, "but we want to put forth what they could be—both in the context of the world at large, our other work, and specifically within the context of what the Alliance for Cultural Democracy might define as its program for the coming year."

The discussion about plans took place in three parts. On Saturday, a dozen members each presented proposals for Alliance activities. Then on Sunday, members discussed the proposals, and finally decided how to resolve each of them.

Regions Within a National Whole

Throughout Saturday's proposals and presentations ran a recognition of the need to keep the strength of each region within the national whole of the Alliance.

The Alliance has survived and knit people together in the past two years through *Cultural Democracy*, the annual national conference, board meetings, and informal ties. Lina Newhouser, new ACD president, reiterated that the annual conference should be "connected to the work that people are doing, and grow out of and inform and in-



The Dancing Wall, mural by fifth graders and artist Eva Cockcroft at PS 33, Queens Village, under the aegis of NYFA Artist-in-Residence program and District 29, NYC. Photo by Camille Perrottet.

fluence the work that we'll go back and do in our own communities." What if, she suggested, the Alliance used a theme in the year after each conference to build toward the next one? This year marks the 50th anniversary of the WPA, the New Deal artists' project. The anniversary could serve as this year's theme, culminating in a 1985 conference that "could bring in a much broader group of people than have traditionally been part of this network, including people who could attract national attention." That could turn the annual conference into a newly powerful and visible "organizing tool, to focus more national attention on issues of cultural democracy." Catharine Jordan added, "A national project could build continuity in what we're doing. In Minneapolis we could look at what kinds of projects were going on in Minnesota; we could find artists who participated in the WPA fifty years ago. We could mobilize other groups to work with us, so that ACD becomes a catalyst."

To similarly tie regions together into a national structure, Debra Wise recommended that the Board contain a representative from each region. "This representative could also be a part of a regional membership committee," she proposed, "and this regional group could meet and carry out a description of the region along with a kind of needs assessment: If this is who we are, then what do we need? What makes sense for us to do this year to build this movement for cultural democracy? The national board would then represent all regions, and each region's needs would inform ACD's national direction.

Speaking for *Cultural Democracy*, I acknowledged criticism "that our New York committee has given *CD* 'a New York flavor.'" I outlined an ongoing discussion about whether *CD* should aspire to being a magazine, with long articles, analysis, and national news, or take on the form of a newsletter to provide a forum for conversation between ACD members. On Sunday, mem-

bers decided to split the two functions and resolve the regional/national question at the same time. *CD* will remain a 12-page publication for both Alliance members and the general public, edited out of one central place, and regions will publish a new series of newsletters on a rotating basis, containing news from the region's members and information on cultural politics there.

Networking

"Networking itself," said Susan McCarn, "is a political project, and not just something we do to facilitate another project." Holding the new *Directory of Arts Activism** in her hand, she said, "This is not just a tool; it's the articulation of the idea of cultural democracy." Although not precisely an Alliance project, the *Directory* was aided by many Alliance members and regional coordinators, and "was born out of the necessity we in the Alliance have for making contacts."

"Our task is to build a network that simultaneously builds our movement, the movement for cultural democracy," said Debra Wise, "that defines the movement by expanding and clarifying our definitions of who we are in a dynamic way, increasing our membership, focusing and refocusing."

Bob Feldman offered the model his region has developed for successfully building a regional chapter. "*Culture*," he said, "originally comes from the word *cultivation*, the growth and tending of crops, and as it developed it became the growth and tending of human lives and imagination. A lot of our work is cultivation, and on a regional level this cultivation could happen in many different ways."

ACD members from Illinois, Michigan, and Indiana have begun to get together for afternoon conferences several times a year. "From one to five we talk about cultural

*Available for \$5 from *Cultural Correspondence*, 505 West End Ave., New York, NY 10024

democracy, theory and philosophy, then show work that is happening in communities. The evening session is more of a membership meeting, to brainstorm on what will or could happen in this region and analyze what happened during the day. Then conversation, a party afterwards."

Community Animation

The word *animation* was on many lips, in an excited murmur that ran through the weekend. Descriptions and workshops on Saturday led to Sunday's decision to attempt to organize a conference especially on animation. (See "Network News" for a description of Katharine Pearson's workshop this summer in Minnesota.)

Doug Paterson introduced the conference to the idea of community animation, a practice "very recent to the American scene which comes to us from the Third World." Animation, said Doug, "fundamentally challenges the work of what cultural practice is, what a cultural worker is, and what's the relation of that person to an audience or a community of people." He described storytelling workshops the Dakota Theater Caravan organized in small South Dakota towns. Once people began to talk, old stories began to surface, and the reasons for historical events rose into question. "In Red-

field, South Dakota, population about 1,900, there was a story about a well-known farmer who one day shot an FBI man who came to his house to investigate about bootlegging—and killed him." The FBI shot another farmer in turn. The story raised political questions: "What happened in the '30s? Why did people go broke? How come this wonderful upstanding farmer shot one of the FBI men? By telling these stories, there was a sense of the community coming back on its own terms." Jerrilee Cain Tyson added tales of a series of projects begun in Bushnell, Illinois, when the local cultural center decided to step out of isolation and begin to serve the community. "The process of animation is going to differ wherever it happens and whoever is participating in it," she said.

Doug warned, "In the notion of animation, there is implied perhaps a certain amount of the imperial. You know, we are going to animate people who are not animated. So we ourselves need to be conscious of our own animation, how we are animated, and why it is important at some point in our own lives to have experienced animation." Doug told of his own process of personal animation, meeting other people who had grown up with alcoholic parents and until then had rarely been able to speak of their

experiences. "Basically what we need is just to be able to get it out, since that's what you can't do in an alcoholic household, 99 times out of a hundred. It's so useful to be able to sit down with people who have had the same kind of experience, who simply nod their head," he said. "This, for me, is a process of animation."

Moving Forward

It seems to us, in that case, that ACD provides a process of continuing animation for its members—giving us the spirit that moves us forward in our work and our identity—particularly for those who can manage to attend the annual conferences, organize regionally, and use the Alliance as a forum and a meeting ground.

As Charles Frederick said after the conference, "The Alliance is one of the groups in this country that is trying to create an idea, an organization, and a program which will bring this country under the command of true multi-cultural democratic process. It must be admitted how difficult this is. We are struggling within the powerful constraints of our history and our era. But each year the vision is seen as something more and more practical because it is better and better articulated. We move forward, trying to make reality from our vision." □

WORKSHOPS

Bill Pratt's "Organizational Development" dealt with alternative funding possibilities for small and middle-sized arts organizations. It focused on the idea of creating endowments so that smaller-than-establishment groups can enjoy long-range funding stability instead of having to cliff-hang every year. Bequeathing endowments could replace grants and extend (into eternity!) the commitment of members beyond yearly contributions.

Lina Newhouser's and Bert DeLeeuw's workshop was about the nationwide Halloween project against Reagan: "Halloween, eve of All Saints Day, is a traditional day for exorcism of evil spirits. It is an appropriate day to create a symbolic, non-violent action against the evils of which Ronald Reagan is the figurehead." The organizers called for cultural workers' participation and local development. The Baltimore/D.C. contingent, for instance, incorporated Halloween tradition and peace symbols—circling doves and a circle of salt around the White House and Halloween monster masks of Reagan with a sign imposed on it: "If you're not scared, you ought to be."

Susan Perlstein's and Liz Lerman's workshop on "Elders" took the form of going around the circle, with each participant giv-



Stencil by Eva Cockcroft for Halloween Project.

ing her/his own "pedigree" and talking about an older person who had been an influence on them. Since our own ages varied widely, the session took on the aspect of a brief history lesson on ethnic variety and its meaning in individual lives.

The "Artists Call" workshop began with a

slide show of January 1984 New York events and continued with first-hand accounts of activities in Chicago, Washington, Boston, and Connecticut. Future plans were discussed; a national slide show is also under way. Artists Call Against U.S. Intervention in Central America now has some fifty local representatives and events continuing sporadically across the country. A big demonstration planned for April 20th in Washington D.C. offers the possibility of a nationally coordinated project.

In his workshop on "Theatre and Daily Life," Bob Feldman took a look at familiar phrases, sentences, gestures, and interactions, and found ways to twist, split, recombine, and juxtapose them to create new meaning. During this participatory activity, surprises and insights into language and action happen, as the rug is pulled out from under the taken-for-granted. Group discussion and demonstrations led to the creation of short theatre pieces which were presented at the end of the session.

Doug Paterson, assisted by Robin Levy, led participants through the process of "theatre for development"—a form of community cultural participation used in some Third World countries. A community chooses people to enact a problem they want to address; they continually add, revise, and discuss the problem, the interaction, and possible solutions. People went around in a circle, each stating a concern. A subject was chosen, and four people acted out the situation, with many permutations. □

Continued from page 2

for any of these people, any more than it is for the Nicaraguans. It means that the community, or nation, or people, talk about their needs, their identity, and then work out a program to keep health, prosperity, expression, and well-being in their own hands. They articulate it, execute it, and defend it.

Is there a difference between self-determination and self-empowerment? Maybe it's in the use of the word *determination*. Determination implies will, responsibility, free choice, and decision. Self-determination is helping yourself (though not to others' rights and property). It includes a recognition that the changing political climate of this country requires a more determined position. Perhaps it can show us how the struggles of rural communities in danger of extinction, impoverished people in burnt-out ghettos, long lines of the unemployed, gay people crushed back into the closet by bigots and bashers—how all of us are indeed in concrete solidarity with each other and with Black people in South Africa, with Central Americans, and people all over the world struggling for pride and power in their lives.

What is the connection between self-determination and cultural democracy? Self-determination is a collective mobilization of the human and material resources of a community defined by the history, specific needs, and cultural expression of a group of people. It includes both action and reflection based in experience. Self-determination is an extension of the feminist credo "the personal is political," a declaration of independence from a patronizing "mass culture" without the mass's consent. We know that what makes people special is their identity and the ways that identity blends into or stands out in the broader community. We have to see each other as important parts of the whole, and political literacy is crucial to this goal. As artists find their individual inspiration in the work to empower others, a culturally democratic exchange takes place.

It is our understanding that "to imagine" is the verb in the sentence that ends with the object, "culture." The subject of this sentence is all of us, all of our communities, all of the peoples and nations in the world. It is our position in ACD that human imagination has not reached its full expression unless it is expressed in the conditions of freedom and democracy. It follows, then, that self-determination is cultural democracy in action.

In Washington, we arrived at this theme for our next annual conference. The Board has suggested the title: "ImaginAction." How do these words characterize our work? What is your definition of self-determination? Write to us about what goes on in your work, or where you work. How does your work help people and communities gain control over their own lives? Send us a description of what you do, stories of people animated, motivated, or empowered. Use them to make specific suggestions for workshops. We'll publish your ideas in the conference issue of *Cultural Democracy*.

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