Special Issue: Remapping Our Homeland
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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The Tree of Life Towers Way Above Powder Horn Park
During The 1988 Mayday Parade

Mayday '89:
Celebrating the Future/
Re-Membering the Past

The first Sunday of every May sees the streets of Minneapolis' Southside burst forth from its winter long slumber with an explosion of spring pageantry. The event is In The Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre's annual MayDay Festival; and for the past fourteen years, it has brought over 200 community volunteers together with regional, national, and international artists, as well as the theatre's core company, to develop, build, and perform this celebration of life, the earth, and community.

The celebration of MayDay is, of course, hardly a new idea; and its roots run deep through its rich cultural history. It was the Roman pagans who marked the last days of April and early May with a celebration of renewal and growth in honor of Flora, the goddess of flowers and vegetation. Years later, Druids would adopt this celebration as their own; and the MayDay holiday was born. This holiday eventually assimilated itself into the mainstream of British culture, giving birth to a long tradition of pageantry and celebration throughout the country. Puritan sensibility stifled pagan MayDay activity in the "New World," but celebrations of Spring have always existed among Native Americans. MayDay's designation as International Labor Day is directly related to the 1886 Haymarket events in Chicago which saw wide scale strikes on behalf of the 8-hour day and the martyring of four anarchist labor agitators.

The 1974 Minneapolis thaw found a new home for this ancient celebration. Its rebirth was the vision of the one year old Powderhorn Puppet Theatre. Inspired by an outdoor performance earlier that year, the troupe decided that a MayDay parade would be the perfect gift to awaken the community to the dawning spring. They quickly formed a coalition with a number of household collectives, recruited a variety of performers, and the first annual MayDay Parade was born.

Each year saw the scope and popular-
ity of the MayDay Parade grow, and 1978 saw the Powderhorn Puppet Theatre become In the Heart of the Beast (HOBT). As many as 10,000 people have followed the parade of giant puppets, musicians, and street performers through the streets of the Southside to Powderhorn Park. The people themselves represent life styles, beliefs, and ethnic configurations as diverse as the communities they belong to and the festival in which they are partaking. The parade culminates with a huge ceremony in the park, raising the Tree of Life in honor of the community, the earth, and Life itself. Following the ceremony, the festival engulfs the park with music, dance, theatre, street performers, food, and all-out merry making.

MayDay seems to be the perfect time for this gift to the community. "In this part of the country, it is really the first week when you can get out and meet your neighbors again," says the Theatre's artistic director Sandy Spieler. The 15th annual MayDay Parade is a very special one for everybody at Heart of the Beast as it coincides with the 1989 ACD conference. The festival uses a variety of performance locations throughout the park, and both performance artists with short pieces and wandering street performers are invited to participate in the festival. The 15th annual MayDay Parade and Festival will be held on Sunday, May 7. All events are free to the public, and all those attending the 1989 ACD conference are encouraged to come out and join with us in this celebration of life.

We welcome anyone (with or without puppetry experience) to join us as early as one month in advance to help us create the festival. There is a limited amount of housing available. Those interested in participating should contact Bill Snyder, HOBT, 1500 E. Lake St., Minneapolis, MN 55407. Street performers and those with prepared pieces should send scripts, outlines, or descriptions of their work as appropriate. Letters received by April 15, will get replies no later than May 1. HOBT is always open to new types of involvement in the celebration. So please let us know your ideas. Those with questions may contact the theatre at (612) 721-2535.

— Bill Snyder
for Heart of the Beast

We honor the end of winter and the birth of spring.
We honor the strength of working hands and loving hearts.
In the park, we raise the Tree of Life to honor the community that brings together artists, organizers, families, street people, merchants and neighbors to celebrate this 15th annual MayDay Parade and Festival.
Hello! Welcome! Have fun!
in the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre and Friends.

Photo by Sal Salerno

18' Tall Mississippi River Puppet, Powderhorn Lake, 1983 Mayday Festival
**Preparations in anticipation of the celebrations and misrepresentations in all kinds of situations surrounding the quincentennial of the alleged discovery of “America”. Y’all come.**

Almost 500 years ago, Columbus' ships sailed into the Caribbean unleashing the age of modern colonialism. Soon governments, mass media, and Fortune 500 corporations will begin a massive celebration of what to them will be a great patriotic birthday. The story that they will tell and retell will feature the arrival of “civilization” (European) and the absorption of “primitive” peoples in the “inevitable” march of “progress.” If they created gross injustice, suffering and exploitation along this march, these were but unfortunate side effects and not really central to the story.

The Alliance for Cultural Democracy (A.C.D.) calls on artists, poets, teachers, storytellers, and other cultural workers and organizers to join with us to tell another kind of story. It will be a more varied history, told in the voices of many cultures.

It is the story of invasion and resistance; of 98% of the people of this hemisphere destroyed by plague, massacre, and enslavement; of the youth of Africa shipped wholesale in chains to serve in the mines and fields of the greedy; of the wealth of industrial Europe built on stolen lands and exploited workers; of the displacement of European and Asian peoples from their traditional lands into sweatshops and forced labor; of centuries of Native American resistance and enslaved peoples' rebellions; of underground railroads, mutual aid societies, labor unions; of pogroms, expulsions, thugs, and crossburnings; of solidarity in the face of repression; of cultures of resistance passing the embers of struggle from generation to generation to generation and now into our hands.

While administrations change in Washington, D.C., it may be an appropriate time to think about ending the one that has lasted five centuries: the Columbus Administration. Perhaps we can envision a world without the legacy of broken treaties, professional union busters, institutional bigotry and colonialism, and reckless disregard for the environment and human life. Perhaps there’s a better basis on which to build the next 500 years.

ACD, a national network of grassroots cultural workers, invites you to take part in a national cultural/educational campaign beginning now and lasting through 1992. Activities are already being planned or carried out in many U.S. communities as well as in Latin America and the Caribbean. Let’s create plays, songs, posters, film festivals, mass ceremonies, school curricula, tours, conferences and marches that tell the truth about our histories. Let’s build coalitions to ensure that the lies will not go unchallenged. Please tell us about events or projects related to the Quincentennial so that we can share the information with allies elsewhere. Let us know your ideas for nationally coordinated activities.
Encourage your organizations to take up the theme.

The Alliance will sponsor a national gathering in May 1989 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The gathering, entitled **Remapping Our Homeland** will explore many issues related to cultural diversity and political unity and will showcase contemporary cultural activism. We will discuss ways to work together between now and 1992. We are eager to join with friends and allies to celebrate our own true history.

Ricardo Levins—Morales
for the Alliance for Cultural Democracy
Quincentennial Project
P.O. Box 7591
Minneapolis, MN 55407

RICARDO LEVINS—MORALES is a founder of the Northland Poster Collective in Minneapolis and is the Vice-President of ACD.

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**“COLUMBUS DAY”**

(an excerpt from a longer poem)

Let us then declare a holiday
For ourselves, and make a parade that begins
With Columbus' victims and continues
Even to our grandchildren who will be named in their honor.

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JIMMIE DURHAM is a Cherokee Indian whose book, *Columbus Day*, is published by West End Press. He has been a delegate to the International Indian Treaty Council to the United Nations.

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GLENN SHELDAN is a published poet and a critic of contemporary and multicultural poetry. He holds an M.A. in English from Sangamon State University (Springfield, IL), and he has been a resident of Illinois for the last five years.
An Interview with Sherry Blakey

Olivia Gude: Sherry, various groups in the Americas are planning celebrations or commemorations of Columbus coming to America, could you share with us your perspective as a Native American woman on these upcoming events?

Sherry Blakey: To me, Columbus' coming is a day of mourning. It's a day when Europeans came to this country and settled on land that before had belonged to no one, to no people. They still say Columbus discovered America, but America was here before he came and before he came, people here lived in harmony with the Earth. When Europeans came that began the decimation of our culture and our people. We were wiped out.

OG: So for you, Columbus' coming is the beginning of a history of horror and sadness.

SB: Right. It was the beginning. The Europeans came to a people who were welcoming to them. They brought with them disease and a lot of other things that wiped out our people.

OG: Do you have any thoughts about what progressive artists can do in these times?

SB: For artists, and for all people, number one is education — to realize that Native Americans are a people who are still existing here. Look at the history books. You can go to school for 12 years and then you can go to college and you still won't hear about Native Americans. What information you get is warped and inaccurate. Look at what Ronald Reagan said when he went to the Soviet Union and was talking about signing peace treaties with other countries. Ronald Reagan hasn't even upheld the treaties with Native peoples in this country.

People can educate themselves about what's happening. Native Americans are still the caretakers of this country. I think Indian people know that we have a responsibility to take care of the land. It is still our land, our home. What's happened in the past is still happening now. The colonial structure that was set up with the coming of Columbus to America still exists. What happened after that, what happened to our people, the assimilation, the acculturation, the genocide; it's still going on today. The Indian people are still fighting the battle to survive.

I was fortunate to be raised with my language and culture and history. It gives me a lot of strength to go forward. A lot of our kids nowadays don't have that because of the government boarding school structure that eliminated a whole generation of people. My mother, for example, was not raised with my grandmother and grandfather. She was institutionalized and put in boarding schools. A whole generation of people were taken away from their parents. That was a government act that was
passed to assimilate us. The government thought by breaking the bonds with parents it would be easier. Those government boarding schools still exist. OG: So, the attempt was made at total assimilation, and it was unsuccessful because of the strength of Native American culture.

SB: Yes. Laws about land and treaty rights are still worth fighting about now. My feeling is that Europeans, non-Indian people, have to make themselves aware of this history. We don’t have to be doomed to let it happen again in the future. Ignorance is a bliss. People cannot be ignorant anymore; and that’s not just my people, that’s all people.

OG: Columbus’ vision when he came to the Americas was one of economic utilization, of colonization, and of exploitation. That vision of using people and using the land to extract resources has been the vision which has dominated the last 500 years.

...to respect, to have honor, truth, brotherhood, the taking care of, the preservation of, a people.

OG: Do you have a future vision, or the glimmer of a vision that you would like to share with us of the next 500 years?
SB: Yes, I think as people we have human instincts. As Indian people we have laws which have been handed down to us through the generations. They are unwritten laws, but they are basic — to respect, to have honor, truth, brotherhood, the taking care of, the preservation of, a people. I think these are human kinds of laws which cross all cultures and races. What I would want for my children and grandchildren is that they would carry these ideals out with all people in order to preserve future generations and the earth.

OG: Could you tell us something about how these issues connect to your work as an artist?
SB: I’ve been working here in the Indian community for the last 15 years. I was fortunate to be raised with my grandma and grandpa; with my culture. I try to work with my people, with the kids and bring that culture back to them. I sometimes work with Heart of the Earth Survival School and the Red School House, two alternative schools formed by the community, for the community, by Indian people for Indian people. They were born in the early seventies out of the American Indian Movement. Now they are federally funded. We sued the federal government one year when we didn’t get funding under the Indian Education Act — that goes back to treaties that were signed with Health, Education, and Welfare. In the seventies many of these schools were formed, unfortunately, these are the only two such schools left in the country.

I just wrote a show with an aboriginal woman from Australia. We did a woman’s piece. It had to be for women only because she wore her traditional body paint which according to the traditions of her people is not allowed to be seen by men. It really wasn’t a play or a show. It was more like a political exchange, and a recommitment for the future of our peoples because we’ve gone through the exact same experiences. She brought slides with her to tell the history of the aboriginal peoples in Australia. I was able to find almost identical images showing the chronology of the oppression of my people. We used these slides together in the piece we did.

We called the show Catfish meets Bear because her totem is the catfish and my clan is Bear Clan. It was a recommitment and a dedication to preserving and strengthening and caring about our traditional ways.

SHERRY BLAKEY, a Sauk/Sioux/Cree woman, is an artist and teacher currently living, working and making art in Minneapolis.

OLIVIA GUDE, a community muralist and educator from Chicago, is a board member of A.C.D. and an editor of Cultural Democracy.
AT THE ENCHANTED FALL OF THE YAQUI DEER DANCER

Mural by Danny Leon

Here begins the enchanted fall of the Yaqui deer dancer

"With enchantment as they say,"
the twitching dancer tells me

The dancer kneels beside the river
turning his whitetail’s antlers to dawn

His left hand shakes a small gourd rattle
dislodging the morning’s petals

He dances in the enchanted center of a wilderness world

He loosens the freshness of amaryllis, queen’s wreath and palo verde

And now the rocks adorned in petals shake their own gourd rattles

Up to each enchanted blossom comes a blue trout to wash its scales

As the water begins to open, drowning petals to release freshness

Here is the deer dancer

twitching under light blue dawn

Glenn Sheldon

LATINO CAUCUS STATEMENT
WASHINGTON, D.C.
OPEN DIALOGUE III 1988 SYMPOSIUM

Background
In mid-June of 1988, The Association of American Cultures (TAAC), held its third Open Dialogue Symposium in Washington, D.C. Over 700 culturally diverse artists and art administrators met to discuss issues impacting the future direction of the arts on state, regional, and national levels.

The formation of the Latino Caucus was one of many caucuses that developed during the 1988 Open Dialogue Symposium. Over 80 Latino representatives from across the United States participated in three preliminary meetings, sharing their viewpoints from a cultural and regional perspective.

1992 Quincentennial Celebration
We, the Latino Caucus, offer our solidarity with the American Indian efforts to confront those committees preparing for the international celebration of the 1992 Quincentennial. Known by western historians as either the “Spanish Conquest” or the 1492 Discovery of the Americas. This Quincentennial memorializes 500 years of European colonization in the western hemisphere. However, these events are viewed by the people indigenous to these lands, and those of African descent, as violent and genocidal encounters which tyrannized and transformed our peoples.

We, the descendents of these encounters, demand that our governments, languages, beliefs, art, culture and achievements be acknowledged in the activities commemorating the Quincentennial. Therefore, we stipulate the following actions:

• TAAC promote the equitable participation of indigenous American and African descended people through the appointment of representative individuals to international, national, regional, and state Quincentennial celebration commissions — particularly the existing Smithsonian commission.

• TAAC promote the development of national governmental policy statements acknowledging European occupation of lands rightfully owned by indigenous people of the Americas.

• TAAC advocate for equitable funding for planning and programming grants, as well as other resources, earmarked by national, regional, and state institutions and agencies for the Quincentennial celebration.

JUANA GUSMAN is a member of the Latino Caucus of The Association of American Cultures (TAAC) and lives in Chicago, Illinois.
The Freedom Quilt by Boston muralist David Fichter

Lisa Lawes and Bill Fleming

Art Pluribus Unum (APU), a ten-day political arts festival was held in Atlanta during the Democratic National Convention in July of 1988. Performers, visual artists, and cultural workers (many of them ACD members) from all around the city and the nation participated in raising issues and consciousness in a sort of alternative convention that took place on the walls, in theatres, and on the streets of Atlanta.

Art Pluribus Unum was organized by a group that varied in size from 3 to 3 dozen, and began meeting on a regular basis over a year before the start of the convention. This group was sub-divided into committees which handled fundraising, publicity, outreach, set policy, and arranged logistics. A common denominator of the group was that everyone was involved in some artistic endeavor, either doing it or organizing it (which can be thought of as the same anyway). Political views of the group members represented a broad spectrum and no attempt was made to arrive at one common point or consensus on specific issues.

There were 3 basic components to the festival: the creation of a mural on the wall of a downtown building; 4 nights of political satire and drama at the "Unconventional Cabaret" in an intown theatre; and street theatre and staged media events in the metro area. The goals of Art Pluribus Unum were three-fold as well. The first was to provide a forum by which cultural workers from around the country could view, critique, and collaborate with each other. The second was to create an environment supportive of political art work within the context of Atlanta's own cultural community. The third goal was to create the image among Democratic delegates, convention followers and citizens of Atlanta that political expression is more than party exercises and casting votes. It can and should be an integral part of the myriad forms of cultural activity.

As to particular aspects of the festival, a Freedom Quilt Mural was designed by David Fichter of Boston and painted by a consortium of people ranging from professional artists to community residents who had never worked in the medium before. The site of the mural was the 2,000+ square foot west wall of the Southeastern Regional headquarters of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). The process of finalizing the design was participated in by dozens of AFSC workers and visual artists. The wall in progress was visited by the likes of Russell Means, Mubarak Awad, Rigoberta Menchu and Rosa Parks. The wall depicts various historic and current persons being stitched together by the thread of nonviolent social change (Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Nelson and Winnie Mandela, Bishop Tu-Tu, Archbishop Oscar Romero, Harriet Tubman, Leonard Pelletier, Daniel Berrigan and Andrew Goodman) and groups of Palestinian refugees linked with the homeless in Washington, D.C. It is an explosion of the colors and patterns of the textile arts of various world cultures. The mural, inspired by Jesse Jackson, was (continued on next page)
dedicated in early October and continues to attract the attention of passing motorists, residents of, and visitors to, Atlanta. Those who support the work of the AFSC and the mural can purchase a “share” in the wall. Funds from these sales will go towards the creation of another mural in 1990.

Over 75 performers participated in the Unconventional Cabarets over 4 nights at Nexus Theatre. Included were groups such as San Francisco’s “Plutonium Players,” Philadelphia’s “Big Small Theatre,” “Loot and Susie” from Richmond, Virginia, “Flora de Cana” from Boston, SAME and Acme Theatres from Atlanta. Individuals David Lippman, (a.k.a. George Shrub) from the Committee to Intervene Anywhere (C.I.A.), Bill McLim from D.C., Clyde Smith from Raleigh, N.C., Isabelle-Lee Malone from N.Y.C., Jeff Glassman from Urbana, Illinois, and Atlanta’s Alice Lovelace, Malkia M’Buzi, Cynthia Watts, Ojeda Penn, Normando Ismay, and Akbar Imhotep, among many others, took to the stage with works covering a large range of issues. The tone and format of the shows were based on that of the performance evenings at the Women’s Building during the 1988 ACD conference in San Francisco. Like that event MCs played host, and a set was created by a collective of visual artists.

Daytime found artists and performers in the city at transit stations, in parking lots, parks, on the official demonstration stage (dubbed “protesters’ playpen” by ACDer Doug Patterson), and other nontraditional settings. Organized activities were designed to encourage participation by commuters, demonstrators, street folks and the curious who form the audience of public theatre. Events included an “Art Stampede,” the “Start Making Sense,” Parade and a 24-hour reading/singing of the names of Contra victims and political prisoners worldwide. The Cheap Art Cafe outside invited participation by theatre goers in the creative process and
afforded respite from the daytime heat inside.

In order to publicize these myriad cultural events a 20-page "Unconventional Guide" put out by APU ten days before the convention promoting "Bananaland," a Central American Theme Park, conceived and directed by ACD members Ruby

Lerner and George King, which was set up at Seven Stages Theatre both before and during the convention; "A Political Art Show" by the Mattress Group, a collective of visual and performance artists set up in a warehouse just off Peachtree Street; and "Faust for President," a musical which played to lively houses. Finally, the "Fannie Lou Hamer Convention" was a 3-day people's alternative convention complete with caucuses and workshops. Instead of electing a candidate, delegates hammered out an economic bill of rights and submitted it in a legislative package to both parties. Doug Patterson led a workshop on cultural policy at this convention at which ACD's own Declaration of Cultural Human Rights provided the connection between the diverse events of the festival and the issues of economic and cultural democracy.

In hindsight, of the three goals of Art Pluribus Unum, the first was achieved, the second partially realized, and the third, hardly approached. As a forum for the networking of ideas and collaboration the festival was extraordinary. The craft of cultural work, whether it is used to build community or satisfy the individual craving for political expression is honed in many different ways. It is a learning process to have these forms manifested. As concerns the second objective, the climate of activity surrounding the festival and convention caused a healthy fermentation of ideas and some original, site-specific, and even spontaneous, work was produced which dealt with the issues at hand. However, the lack of a unified statement or focus kept us short of the complete realization of this goal. In that respect, APU created the Pluribus but lacked the Unum or did not effectively project it. In terms of the third goal, the impact of Art Pluribus Unum in the national media was minimal. The press and television crews, focused primarily on the electoral convention, were most receptive to the antics of "Ladies Against Women" and their Deep South counterparts (certainly not sisters) the Southern Ladies Against Women (S.L.A.W.) who crashed party functions and conservative rallies interjecting a note of high satire into the already comedic media-inspired cacophony. The effect of APU on the Democratic Party platform was non-apparent, and contact with delegates non-existent. Yet for most passersby who were drawn in by what messages were being portrayed by street art, APU was a breath of fresh air in relation to the convention(al) theatrics that dominated the media.

BILL FLEMING AND LISA LAWES were organizers of Arts Pluribus Unum.
or Bayard Boiteux, murdered by the Brazilian military in 1967

As you march this year, and you will march, I know, like you always march this time of year, remember and sing of yourselves, of your sisters and brothers all over this land who dream of love and dignity and future.

Remember the oppressed refugees from the hellish terror and poverty of Latin America.

Remember the Native Americans who struggle for their birthright, for love of the land, its creatures, for all of us.

Remember the ex-slaves and their fight for dignity that is our fight too and is only beginning.

Remember the wobblies, the radicals and the reds, farmers, women and children, immigrants — their blood on the land's every acre.

The list is endless.

The truth is all but the rich are oppressed peoples in corporate America and its empire. All but the rich have nothing to lose when the peoples make the counting houses fall.

Tom Page

TOM PAGE lives in Springfield, Illinois, where he teaches part-time at Lincoln Land Community College. He has published a book of his poetry, ERA Vet, and is working on another.