

COSATU REGIONAL CULTURAL CONFERENCE

From 29th September to 1st October 1988, a COSATU regional cultural conference was held at the Ipelegeng Centre in Soweto. Representatives of various progressive cultural organisations were asked to attend, including FAWO (Film and Allied Workers Organisation), PAP, JODAC, FEDTRAW and COSAW and about 20 representatives from COSATU Cultural Locals in the Wits region were present.

The conference covered a wide range of topics, including:

*The structure and functioning of COSATU education, media and cultural units, from the local to the national level.

*'Culture and Ideology - what is culture?' presented by Cde Khalema.

*A paper on "Sport and Culture."

*Reports by progressive cultural groups on their activities and aims.

*Group discussions on various of the issues raised.

There were some interesting questions asked after the re-

ports by the progressive cultural groups, the most common of which was how can we set up working relations between COSATU cultural units and the progressive cultural groups and what input can the progressive groups offer.

It was decided that the relationship between the progressive cultural groups and COSATU should be worked out in discussions between the COSATU local cultural units and representatives of the cultural allies that they should invite to their meetings.

Regional Cultural Co-ordinating Committee:

The central purpose of the conference was to establish a COSATU cultural co-ordinating committee for the Wits region which would work towards the launching of a democratically elected COSATU Wits Cultural Committee. The Wits region is the second region to elect a cultural committee.

The regional co-ordinating committee that was elected is

as follows:

Regional chairperson: Vusi Shabangu

Vice-chairperson: Melphin Lemityi

Treasurer: Themba Mabusa

Committee Members:

Zolisa Kgteye

Arvin Mabizela

Sylvester Ngwangwa.

Some of the duties and functions of the co-ordinating committee that came out of the discussion are:

* to co-ordinate cultural activities in the region;

* to assist locals and affiliates in their cultural activities;

* to promote cultural debate, e.g. through seminars;

* to organise skills workshops;

* to organise sport and cultural programmes for the region;

* to assist the national cultural unit and to make recommendations to national structures;

* to liaise with other progressive cultural groups;

* to encourage and establish democratic cultural structures

where they do not exist;

* to encourage and assist educational and media local structures to function properly.

Some of the recommendations made at the end of the conference included:

* Sport: COSATU needs to educate its members about the socio-economic dynamics of sport, culture and politics, and to open up alternative venues, competitions etc.

* Research and workshops on the possibility of creating alternative sports events and recreation committees need to be held.

* The relations between progressive sports organisations and COSATU need to be strengthened.

* COSATU needs to organise

alternative arts festivals that will draw people towards the democratic movement.

* COSATU regional committees should work towards the formation of a national cultural movement.

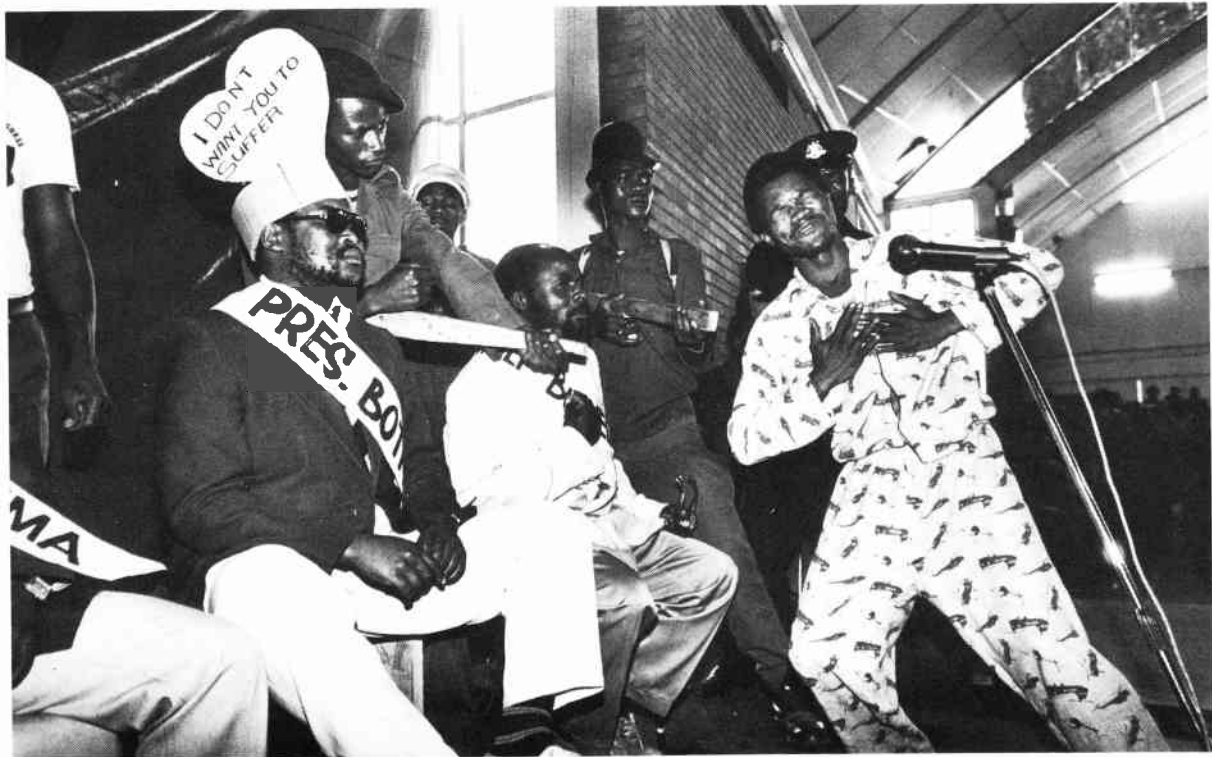
It was also agreed that the regional co-ordinating committee should organise a regional meeting of COSATU cultural representatives and representatives from the progressive cultural groups. It was hoped that the meetings between these groups could occur on a regular monthly basis and would serve as a major co-ordinating base for cultural activity in the Johannesburg and Transvaal areas.

A National Cultural Committee:

The process will continue this year, and when all the regions are organised, a national cultural committee can be elected. At the moment the COSATU national cultural committee consists of Mi Hlatshwayo and an administrative assistant, who were not elected but appointed to their positions to help establish the local, regional and national cultural units.

Earlier in 1988, COSATU found themselves unable to take a position on the Grahamstown festival because they did not have a national cultural committee that has a mandate from its members to respond to such issues.

The cultural structures that they are now in the process of establishing should solve this problem in future.



Cosatu Cultural Day, Johannesburg, July 1987. (Photo by Anna Zieminski)