

South African musician David Marks assembled a troupe of performers from a variety of walks of life - professional band members to church choir vocalists - from Johannesburg, Pretoria, and Alexandra - to form a multicultural group called "The Hidden Years", representing the rainbow message of and harmony.

The troupe won a grant to spend a week in the U.S. to spread the word about the struggle to uplift conditions in the Township of Alexandra and their efforts bring racial harmony and cooperation to the new South Africa. Funding support from The C.F.Byers Naude Development Foundation enabled Marks to respond to the invitation of Geryl Abramson and her partner, Roy Howard, current owner of the "Yasgur" farm, which hosted the original "Woodstock" concert in 1969. The group sang for South African Consul General Sheila Sisulu on the steps of the United Nations in New York, then got on a rented bus and headed for Bethel.

Marks and his supporters had hoped to bring his unique blend of folk, jazz, rock and African traditional music to a welcoming audience on Saturday, August 16. They arrived from a 17-hour plane ride, 10,000 miles of travel, to find the concert mired in local political squabbles, stopped by court order. Stunned to find that the concert may not take place, the group enlisted the help of Sisulu, who, with the assistance of County Attorney General Ira Cohen, met with Zone Commander of the New York State Police, Alan G. Martin. Cohen was subsequently arrested for a traffic offense in town.

Despite controversy over the use of the original site, currently owned by developer Alan Gerry, the group and the concert's promoters were determined to preserve the festival's legacy of "peace, love and harmony" at a time when their homeland most needs world support.

"People came 10,000 miles to play there was controversy over it that prevented this communication," Marks said. Once again, as he had so often found in South Africa, "the message was blocked."

But somehow the concert went on. Thousands gathered to attend and to vend wares, though many, including Howard, received orders to appear in court on Monday morning. Spirits high and the music carried on throughout the weekend. Marks performed the song he wrote, "Master Jack" which made the American pop charts in the seventies with a band called "Four Jacks and a Jill". After their first set, Folk star Melanie invited the band back on stage to join her in her classic hit, "Candles in the Rain". They are talking about a joint tour next summer.

Marks introduced Consul General Sisulu and Deputy Consul General Salim Aziz on stage. The band made presentations to the two in a private ceremony in Yasgur's barn, where an open mike had been set up for impromptu performances. "Uncle Jacob" Mosenohi, Educational Director of C.F. Beyers Development Foundation handed Sisulu a file about current activities in Alexandra and Choir Master Pat Smith led members of the Alexandra Township Emmanuel Church Choir and students from Pretoria University in a traditional African song of thanksgiving and praise, arranged especially for Sisulu.

"Students in the University of Pretoria Choir are raising funds for the upliftment of Alexandra," said Marilet Flett, a 19-year-old white student. "This is a dream come true," said Daniel Mokoka, a black from Alexandra who will return to finish studies in business management. His Sotho name, "Mutsami", means "walker". This trip to New York was a fantasy fulfilled for the excited troop members. Concert-goers thanked Marks for his band's intervention. "The concert wouldn't have gone on without you. Look what we would have missed!" said a local resident. (Film clip available.)

The troupe plans to bring its rainbow message to a broader audience through distribution of their CD, "The Hidden Years", produced by 3<sup>rd</sup> Ear Music, Durban, South Africa. A concert is planned for January 31, 1998, in Durban at the new International Concert Center, third largest in the world.

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