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THE RETURN OF SOUTH AFRICAN MUSICIANS AND A NATAL PEACE  
FESTIVAL - A PROPOSAL

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TO : (MANA) Music Association of Natal  
(INCC) Interim Committee of the Natal Cultural Congress

1) INTRODUCTION

Our musicians in exile will soon be <sup>INVITED</sup> ~~coming~~ Home - under "normal" circumstances this would be a cue for celebration - conditions in Natal are not normal - this proposal serves to suggest how we can best devise a creative plan to try and help normalize the situation by using the occasion of the returning musicians to positive effect.

Perhaps the time has come for music to play its part as an instrument of peace rather than a weapon of chance - especially here in NATAL. This proposal should be debated as soon as possible as it will, if implemented, effect aspects of the Cultural boycott - given the situation in Natal, this may prove to be a constructive and positive move.

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## 2) MOTIVATION

Music, can (and does) unite people - it is the most popular and accessible, of all the arts. Despite geographical, language, spiritual or ideological differences that years of separation and political madness have subjected us to, people still dance to the same rhythms and they do listen to the same tunes. For this reason music and musicians are the most exploited, and they are "used" by both politics and business.

Unfortunately, culture seems to have been relegated to the bottom of the negotiations agenda - yet most artists believe that popular cultural workers and professional performers do have constitutancies - they could play a more constructive and creative role in this process of change. Political violence and poverty in Natal must end and a "Peace Festival" could help.

Although, the cultural organisations of ALL of Natal's political parties and community organisations should be consulted, this event will only succeed if organised on a non-political basis, by a non-aligned organisation that embraces the full strata of SA culture. Such a non-aligned stand is VERY important to understand - it does not make the musicians commitment to the struggle for peace and justice any less - it makes their commitment more effective and less partisan.

## 3. THE PROPOSAL

Some of our musicians may have left the country as cultural workers, but many will return as professional performers. For them to perform and deliver their message they need facilities that only experienced organisations can provide.

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One of Natal's dilemmas is the lack of infrastructure and outlets for music expression at both grass-roots and professional levels - even now when many home-based professionals grace the stages of the world there are no venues for them at home. One of our motivations in establishing MANA in 1988 was to try and ADDRESS this dilemma. It was important that MANA did not become "another" specific or specialised dedicated music association, but rather an association that attempts to bind and bring together all those disciplines that contemporary music needs to function and survive : technical, creative and administrative. A link between commerce and culture - preparing for liberation.

To this end MANA should now be in a position to accommodate the returning musicians. However, as the situation in Natal is not "normal", I would suggest that as a gesture of goodwill and reconciliation , exiles should be invited to contribute to a NATAL PEACE FESTIVAL, and make allowances for :

1. the lack of infrastructure and facilities
2. the political situation
3. the importance of their contribution to the stability of the region.

Raising the funds and expertise for a "PEACE FESTIVAL" would be made a lot easier if we could coincide the return home of our popular musicians with such a FESTIVAL.

The musicians could be paid for their contribution - KHABA MKHIZE (Natal Witness) one of the original proposers of this idea, seems to think that the various Chamber of Commerce (in PMB and Durban ? ) could be approached to contribute/sponsor such an event. Contributions could not come from any one particular political organisation, but possibly from ALL (?)

If people are to pay an entrance fee then it should be a nominal (affordable) charge or even a collection if necessary - these funds could be used to go back into the communities. All costs must be covered by contributions and sponsors.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

There is good reason to suggest that if cultural workers can organise, free from politics, then important leaders from the different political camps should be invited to attend or endorse the festival. Reggae star BOB MARLEY, in Jamaica 1978, at a "Peace Festival" in Kingston - Brought 2 major political opponents together and had them shake hands on stage ending years of bloody violences and strife in that country. Similar to S.A's music, reggae music was slowly becoming recognised internationally, and this "Peace Festival" was the single most successful attempt to bring the people of that nation together. (by creative people)

#### A BRIEF BACKGROUND TO 3RD EAR MUSIC

3RD EAR MUSIC has had 20 years of festival and concert experience in cities and townships throughout Southern Africa from Luanda to Mozambique from Blantyre to Cape Town. As initiators of the FREE PEOPLES CONCERTS in 1970, 3rd Ear Music has operated as an "Alternative" vehicle and outlet for many of Southern Africa's contemporary musicians and music styles, not only "live" but on tape, record, TV and film. Our commitment to music as an instrument of change, peace and justice is well known.

MANA's intentions of uniting musicians and related skills into a national forum are taking shape. We feel that 3rd Ear could help MANA facilitate such a festival, which would assist MANA in setting up a much needed operational infrastructure in Natal and serve as a creative bridge between commercial and cultural music interests throughout Southern Africa.

Your comments on this proposal will be most appreciated.