

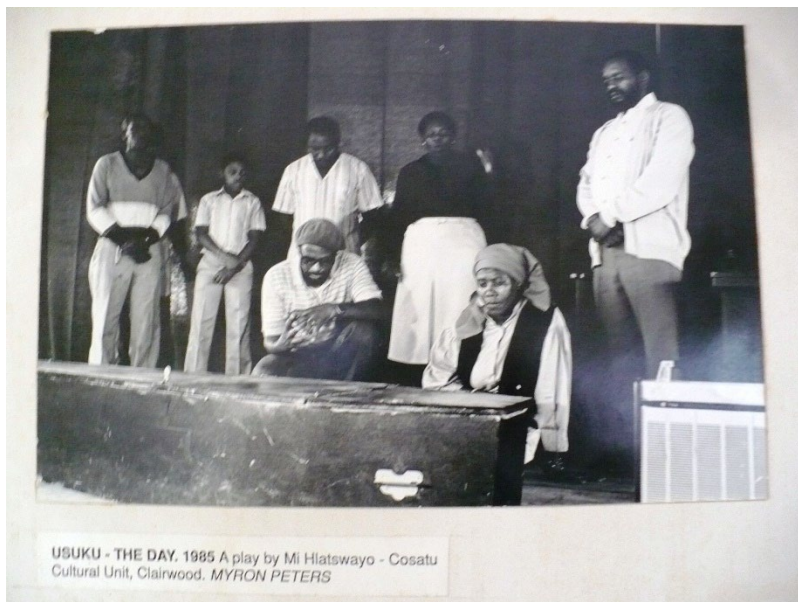
WORKER CULTURE IN DURBAN IN THE 1980s A PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY

INTRODUCTION

In South Africa, the mid-1980s through to 1990 was a period of high drama, violence, and much secret political intrigue and negotiating. This culminated in State President FW de Klerk's State of the Nation address to parliament and the unbanning of political organisations and the release of political prisoners, including, most famously of all, Nelson Mandela. These pivotal events are but the backdrop to a quite remarkable public culture which developed in Durban, and to a lesser extent in Pietermaritzburg, during the period. In a city which had long pioneered racially segregated residential and public spaces, there now developed mass-based and predominantly black expressions of an assertive new public culture. Certain venues become synonymous with this new culture. There was the municipal-owned Curries Fountain stadium and various trade unions and community halls in central Durban. Then there was the Rainbow Restaurant - during the weekdays a shabby black commuter fast food tavern adjacent to a PUTCO depot in Pinetown. Here, transformed on Sunday afternoons, were jam packed raucous multi-racial shebeen-style musical celebrations of township cultures - from township and big band jazz to *isicathamiya* - and, always, dance. Yet, with hindsight, there was another singular feature to this seize-the-moment public culture which developed in the midst of violent political cultures, including necklacing and night-long vigils before the execution of political prisoners. And from posterity's sake, this point is vital. These cultural events were being photographed by a quite remarkable group of young locally trained photographers.

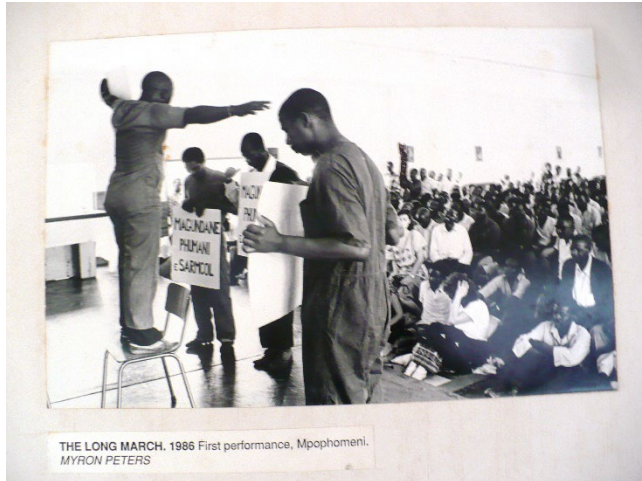
The examples of this work in this photographic essay were given to me in the early 1990s by a small worker advocacy and education non-governmental-organization - the Culture and Working Life Project - then in the process of closing down. It is not known if other collections of this and other similar work exist.

IMAGES



USUKU - THE DAY, 1985 A play by Mi Hlatswayo - Cosatu Cultural Unit, Clairwood. MYRON PETERS

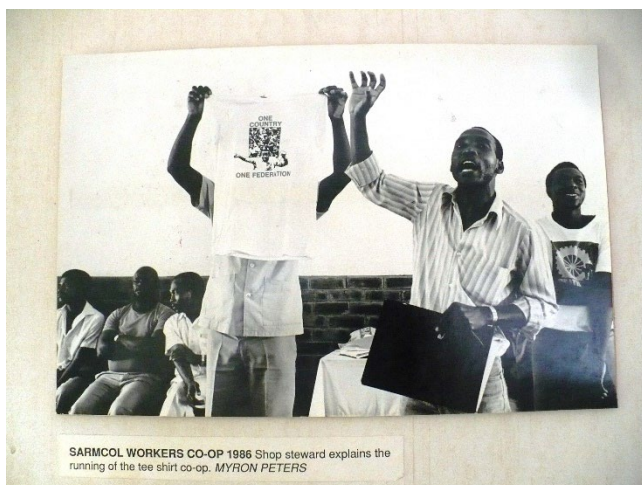
1. Usuku (The Day), a play by Mi Hlatswayo. Cosatu Cultural Unit, Clairwood, Durban, 1985. Myron Peters



2. The Long March, first performance, Mpophomeni, 1986. Myron Peters



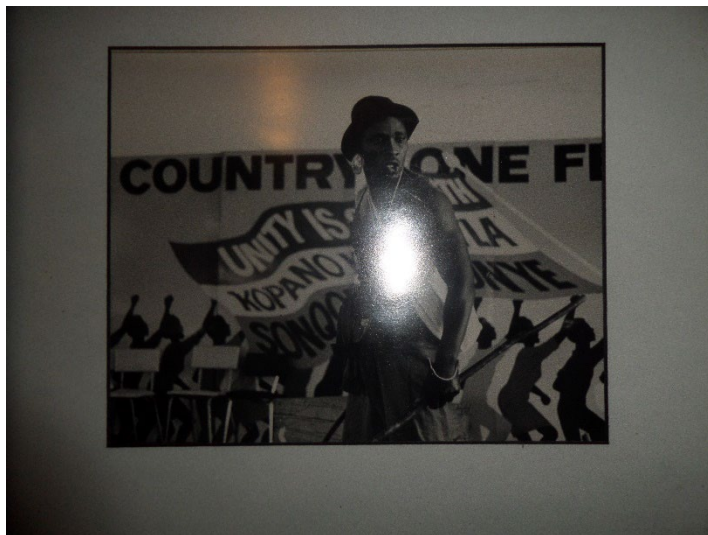
3. Dunlop Workers Party, Curries Fountain, Durban, 1986. Myron Peters



4. BTR Sarmcol workers co-operative. A shop steward explains the running of the 'T' shirt co-operative, 1986. Myron Peters.



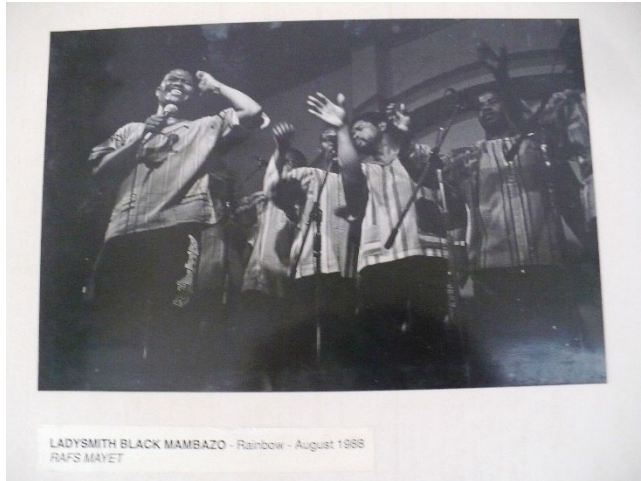
5. Worker Choir performing at the Metal and Allied Workers Union, Curries Fountain, November 1986. Jeeva Rajgopaul



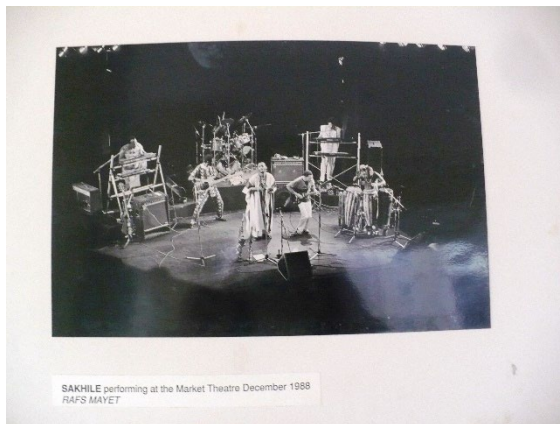
6. Siphobho Ndlovu "Qonda" (Vigilante) Cosatu House, Clairwood, 1987. Pax Magwaza



7. Layco (Lamontville Youth Congress) Lamontville Cultural Day, 1988. Myron Peters



8. Ladysmith Mambazo, Rainbow Restaurant, August 1988. Rafs Mayet



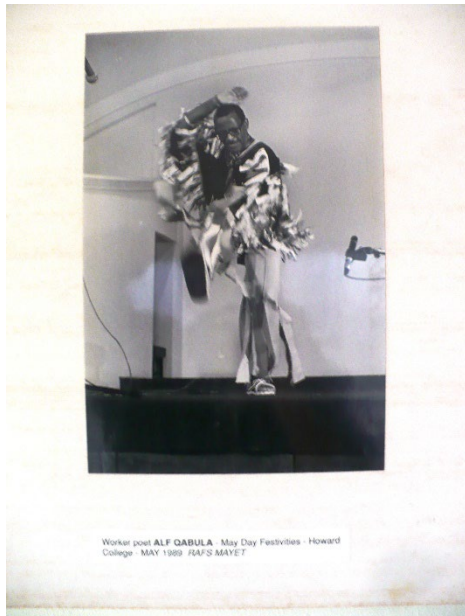
9. Sakhile, performing at the Market Theatre, Johannesburg, December 1988. Rafs Mayet



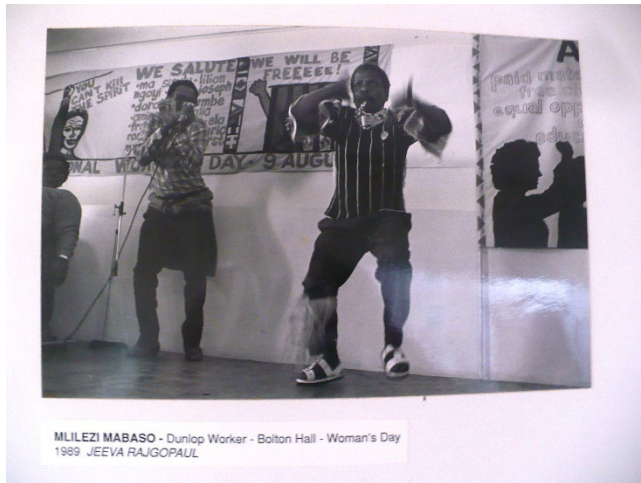
10. Madu Shangase, student poet, Women's Day, Bolton Hall, 1989. Jeeva Rajgopaul



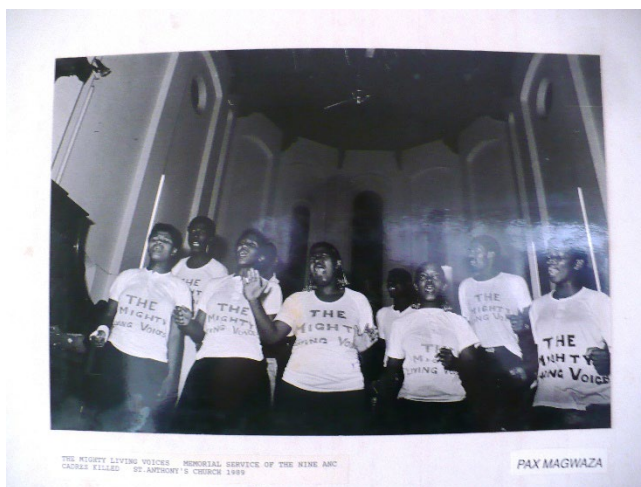
11. Mhlathini and Mahotela Queen, SJ Smith Stadium, 1989. Pax Magwaza



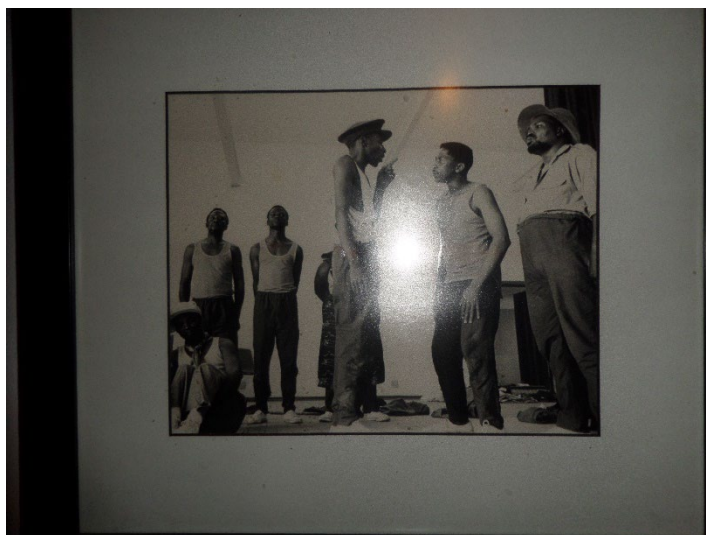
12. Alfred Qabula, worker poet, May Day festivities, Howard College, Durban, May 1989. Rafs Mayet



13. Milezi Mabaso, Dunlop Worker, Bolton Hall, Women's Day, 1989. Jeeva Rajgopaul



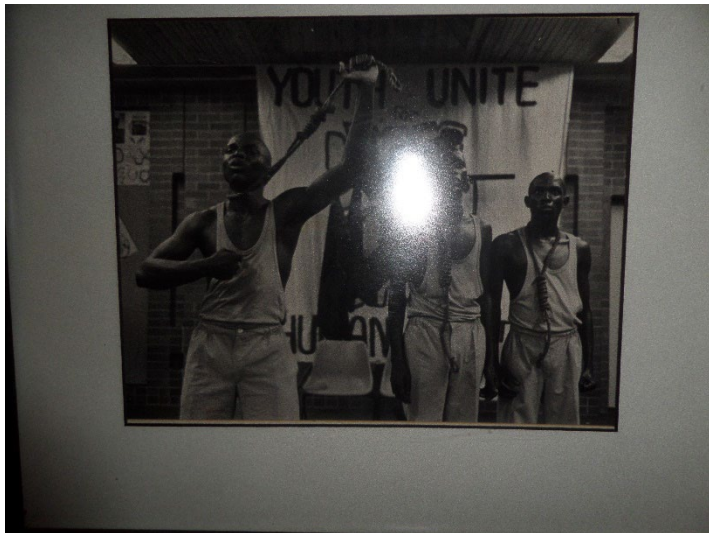
14. The Mighty Living Voices. Memorial service for the nine ANC cadres killed, St. Anthony's Church, Durban, 1989. Pax Magwaza



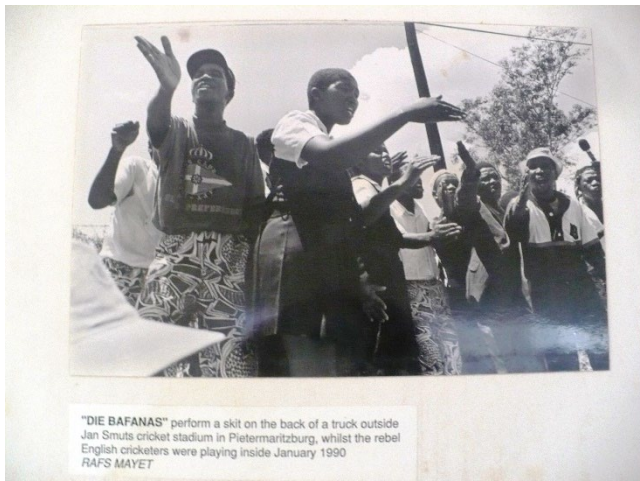
15. "Bambata's Children". Sarmcol Workers, Mpophomeni, 1989. Myron Peters



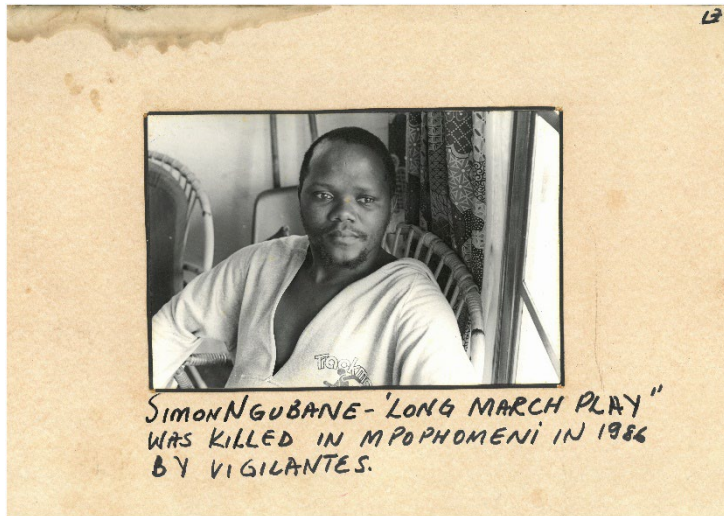
16. African Jazz Pioneers, Rainbow Restaurant, November 1989. Rafs Mayet



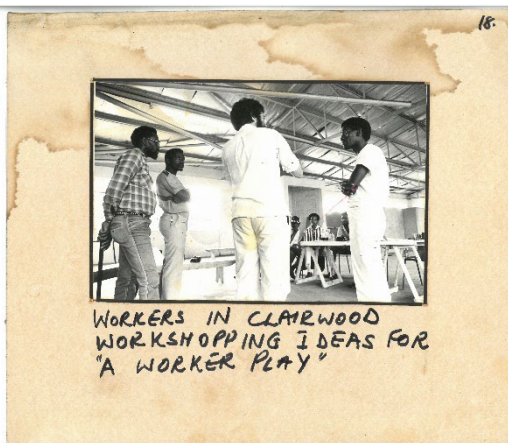
17. "Sounds of the Condemned". Play highlighting the issues surrounding the death sentence. Chatsworth, 1989. Jeeva Rajgopaul.



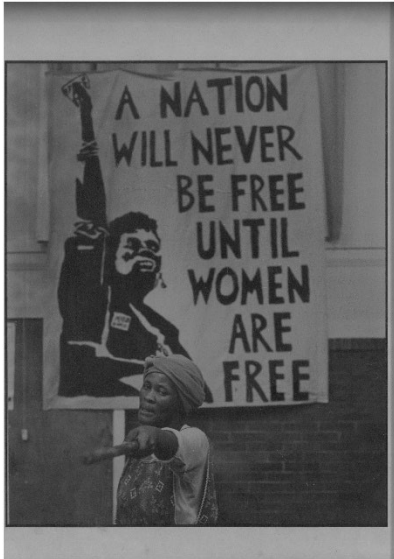
18. 'Die Bafanas' (The Boys) perform a skit on the back of a truck outside the Jan Smuts cricket stadium in Pietermaritzburg, whilst the rebel English cricketers were playing inside, January 1990. Rafs Mayet



19. Simon Ngubane of the BTR Sarmcol workers 'The Long March' Play. Killed in Mpopphomeni in 1986 by vigilantes. UNKNOWN



20. Cosatu workers in Clairwood workshopping ideas for 'A Workers Play'. n.d. UNKNOWN



21. Women's Day. n.d. UNKNOWN

CONDITION

All the images are in black and white. Sixteen of the images are mounted on thick white card, often scuffed at the edges and the card dirty. All these card mounted image shave typed up details. Five of the images are framed, but without any information provided on the back of the frames.

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Note. This document has been saved in Word format, so the thumbnail images can be enlarged so allowing for closer scrutiny of the images.

Iain Edwards
30 November 2019