

## Introduction to UDF Revues

In the 1960s, the Apartheid Government **appointed** Coloured and Indian Councils, which were **advisory bodies**, to indicate that the Coloured and Indian communities, each had a voice in government. These bodies consisted of opportunists who were willing to collaborate with the Apartheid Government.

In 1981, elections were held to legitimise these Councils and the Indian Congresses mounted a campaign to educate people about these dummy bodies and at mass meetings exhorted people to boycott the elections.

The boycott was a great success; only about 2% of the people voted to return the members of the Council to their seats.

Immediately after the elections, the Government announced its plan for a new constitution, the President's Council's (PC) Proposals that would establish a Tri-Cameral Parliament, three separate parliaments, one for Whites, one for Coloureds and one for Indians. Matters pertaining to each community would be discussed in separate chambers. Matters that required joint discussions would be discussed in the President's Council to which the White Parliament elected twenty members, the Coloured Parliament ten, the Indian Parliament, five and the President appointed twenty-five (White members).

This system was meant to demonstrate to the international community that South Africa was a democracy with universal suffrage.

The Rev Allan Boesak and the Indian Congresses rejected the proposals and began a massive boycott campaign that united all activists, Black, White, Coloured and Indian. The Work-in-Progress (WIP) Theatre Company became involved in the campaign and from April 1983 put on performances of *The Masterplan*, a revue that depicted the fraudulent nature of the PC Proposals. In August 1983, the United Democratic Front (UDF) was launched and formally brought all organisations opposed to apartheid under one umbrella

The WIP Theatre Company joined the UDF.

*The Masterplan*, written at the request of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC), was first performed at a celebration in April 1983 to welcome back Terror Lekota, who had been released from prison. After the initial performance, the revue was performed at NIC mass meetings. In September 1983, it was banned a week before a fund-raising function and *Chicken Licken* was written to take its place.

Then came a request for a revue for the Coloured community and that prompted *Alan's Coon Carnival*

Finally, I was asked to put something together for a group of youngsters from Lamontville and together we improvised a revue entitled

*Freedom Train*

. As this was not a scripted piece, it did not survive.

The revues were heavily dependent on material about Section 10 regulations, homelands policy, influx control regulations, the attempts to turn South Africa into a White homeland by denying African people citizenship and the President's Council's Proposals which would give Coloureds and Indians limited voting rights and no access to power.

Most of the material that was used came from Sheena Duncan of the Black Sash. Her papers on Section 10 and a case study of a South African whose parents were born in Zimbabwe are to be found in the section entitled Background Material.

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