

Editorial Statement**Theatre Artists as Cultural Combatants: The Bayreuth Autumn School****Joy L. Wrolson**

The four essays and report in this issue of Praxis are a product of the University of Bayreuth's Institute of African Studies' annual Autumn School Graduate Seminar on Cultural Production as Strategies for Conflict Mediation. This workshop occurred during the last two weeks of October 1999 at the University of Bayreuth, Germany. With multiple failures of military forces on peacekeeping missions as demonstrated by the many UN missions in Africa and Central Europe, the conference conveners felt a particular urgency to discuss the use of cultural production and local activism to mediate conflict. The participants were mainly graduate students from Europe and Africa who were specializing in development, theatre for development, and human rights. The intent of the course was to expose these graduate students to experts in the field who have worked on theatre or other forms of cultural production as means to negotiate conflict within communities. These experts would give the theoretical and practical experience of their successes and failures in the field.

These essays represent the academic and practical work of both the experts and participants. They also respond to the words and convictions that started to circulate around many of the presentations and the group's response to the process. These words are *cultural combat*. It came to replace a variety of words that participants and experts were using to refer to theatre and the work of theatre artists such as cultural producers or animators of culture. These terms were in common usage to explain the work of recreating selves, community, culture and belief. Bongani Linda, a South African designated as an expert, felt that particularly in his cultural context—the theatre artist is a cultural combatant—she combats decades of received culture with the intention of creating change or even revolution. Another South African expanded on this idea by saying, if we understand theatre as conflict—we can fight with fiction—the facts and details of everyday lives that leave individuals paralyzed and without agency. Fictive power changes the level of response available, i.e., the fictive world animates action and change.

These essays represent both the experts' and participants' work; they come from different experiences of development and the role of theatre with development. The essays deal with theatre or performance in its role of mediating conflict. They also represent different areas of Africa and Bosnia.