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PART I

Indian Delights: Sheep Head, Trotters — and Tripe

DURBAN, South Africa

January 1996

By Sharon F. Griffin

Last year I arrived in Durban on Monday, Jan. 9 at 3 p.m. on a South African Airways flight from Johannesburg. Scribbled in my daytimer were the names of four local people, given to me by people I'd met at Oxford and in London.

The first person I called on the list is a journalist. We met on Thursday night. She pitched up at my dark, grungy Tudor House hotel in central Durban on foot, dressed in washed-out jeans with a hole in one knee, a white T-shirt and a vest. Her outfit reminded me of clothes worn by regulars at Ocean Beach in San Diego, California — a favorite hangout of bikers and '60s hippies.

I once interviewed two unforgettable women in Ocean Beach. During our talk, I kept hearing a strange noise. Finally, the women confided that they owned a Vietnamese pot-bellied pig named Montgomery. Later I learned that the neighbors despised the women, not only because of the pig and the big dogs they owned but also because their property genuinely looked a mess. While eating fish tacos at a neighborhood restaurant one night, the women revealed plans to retire to a farm in Texas. To wreak revenge on their disapproving neighbors, the two white women said, laughing gleefully, that they'd decided to sell their house to black people. The idea warmed their spiteful hearts but left me cold, which brings me back to the Durban journalist.

The journalist and I ate Thai food at a noisy joint on the beach front called the Bazaar — a trendy shopping complex with mostly curio shops and restaurants. I read in a local newspaper not long ago that the place is in financial trouble. Rents apparently are too high to cover the low volume of tourists spending money; half of the tenants have already pulled out. Anyway, we were joined at dinner by another journalist, a lanky guy with black, almost waist-length hair parted in the middle. Three giddy twentysomethings accompanied him. I don't recall what anyone said because the music inside was loud. Plus, the screech and scream of traffic wafted up from Gillespie Street to the eatery balcony made it impossible for me to hear. So I satisfied myself with an order of green chicken curry and rice.

After dinner, the journalist and I walked down Smith Street toward City Hall, hoping to find a coffee shop at which we could chat. Finding none, we ended up at her flat about a half an hour before midnight. Her Indian boyfriend was asleep in a bedroom. She'd followed him from London where they'd met and, for a time, the couple had lived in an Indian township. It was an entirely new experience for her, a white woman whose roots stretched to the American mid-west. She volunteered that she was glad they'd moved from the Indian area; the isolationist character of the community bordered on cultural arrogance, at least to her.

At the apartment I told the journalist what I knew about KwaZulu-Natal, political and otherwise. Then I asked her to correct, elaborate and advise me on local goings-on, which she graciously did. Next I asked her to tell me something about

the Indian population here, one of the largest outside of India. "All you need to know about Indians is that they love their Gods, family and money," she said, reducing South Africa's multi-religious, multi-lingual, multi-ethnic Indian population of slightly more than one million to the size of a headache capsule.

I've not seen the journalist since that Thursday night. However, I was reminded of her after going to the Durban Playhouse to see a production titled "Your Own Dog Won't Bite." Written by an Indian playwright, the comedy pivots on the plight of an Indian family whose college-age son dates a "ticky tacky white girl." The interracial relationship causes all sorts of hiccups in the family, and leaves the mother whining that the "ticky tacky white girl" doesn't even know how to cook curries for her "Babu."

The mother's view of the girlfriend changed, however, when she learned that the young woman owned a profitable import-export business. The mother suddenly warmed up to Babu's love interest after learning that the businesswoman might import fine silks from India for her, the mother. As I walked out of the theater — crowded with Indians — the journalist and her synopsis popped into my mind, along with one other thought: In my first week here, I spoke with a black acquaintance who told me, "People here will probably think you're Indian." I asked: "Is that good or bad?" He said: "Depends..."

As it has turned out, eight out of 10 people here assume that I am Indian, that is until I open my mouth. Even opening my mouth doesn't always help; my American accent leads some to believe that I'm either a "Red" Indian, meaning American Indian, or an India Indian who happens to live in America. When I tell ordinary, working-class Indians that I'm African-American, I'm often met with "you a Negro!" Worse, a few have said, "You a nigger! Never I would have thought." Of course, my back stiffens when I hear the "n" word. However, none of the people intended any harm. They used the word out of pure ignorance.

A 76-year-old Indian woman here pooh-poohs any suggestion that I'm African-American. A grandmother and great grandmother, she believes that I am confused about my origins and insists on addressing me in Tamil, as if one day I'll come to my senses and stop hiding my true identity. My neighbors, 70-year-old Micky and his 60-year-old wife, Ethel, introduce me as their "Cherokee" friend. They know I have Cherokee Indian in my distant past because they've questioned me at length about my background. However, they also know that I describe myself as black/African-American. Furthermore, I've shown them dozens of photographs of my family. "Oh, your father looked like Johnnie Cochran," Ethel observed. Still, both insist on extracting from my heritage that which makes them comfortable and, for reasons I'll explain

later, it's not comfortable for most Indians I've met to associate me with anything close to black African.

Once while sitting at a bus stop outside Entabeni Hospital in Durban, I struck up a conversation with an aging black man. "You on your way to Phoenix?," he asked. (Phoenix is an Indian area.) "No," I said. "I live in town." He smiled. "That's what's so great about the new South Africa," he said. "Indian, Zulu, today we live where we want."

Sadly, but understandably, many South Africans lean on racial and ethnic stereotypes like crutches, as do many Americans. Without them, people haven't a clue as to how to maneuver. Given this reality, one of my first tasks here was to figure out what it means to be perceived as a "stereotypical" Indian. Suffice it to say, the reality is that not all Indians are the same. Just as the word Hispanic is used in the U.S. to clump together a diversity of Spanish-speaking people, the word Indian is used to capsuleize people with a diversity of languages, religions and customs.

Generally speaking, Indian is used to describe Muslims and Hindus. Under Hindu falls the sub-classifications of Hindi, Tamil, Telegu, Urdu and Gujarati. Which type of Indian I'm perceived as is unclear. "Hindis are bad," Tamil acquaintances claim, making the case for inclusion in their group. "They're Russians," meaning Hindi people have a reputation for being devious, dangerous and unscrupulous. (That Russian is used as a slur seems inconsequential.)

In the end, it hasn't mattered whether I'm perceived as Hindi or Tamil — which is not to say that people haven't inquired. To the contrary, most Indians I've met are assertive. They don't hesitate to ask questions that many Americans might consider forward, and that goes for whether they've known me for one minute or one month. For example, a brief conversation with an Indian woman working behind a photolab counter elicited these responses, which are more typical than not: "Where you from? America! Oh, so nice. But, no, where your family from originally? Not India! Oh. You study here? Ey, so good for you. Your mama she proud. Where you stay? In town. How much you pay? So much! You live alone? So sad. Who cook for you, darling?"

I've found that most Indians are happy to meet me, one of "their own" from America. They're quick to cart me home to meet the family, which in many instances means shaking hands with several generations in a single household.

Some homes in predominantly Indian areas are huge. They remind me of the big, four-story 18th- and 19th-century houses near the capitol building in Providence, RI — one of the several states in which I've lived. The first Irish and Italian immigrants to Rhode Island lived intergenerationally in the boat-

sized houses. The same setup exists among Indians here, though that reality is rapidly changing. While once it was common for a married man with children to live in the same house with his parents and perhaps several of his married siblings, growing numbers of today's young people opt to move out of their parents' homes. Financially, they're able to do so. Plus, many desire greater privacy.

The first Indian woman I befriended here has two grown daughters. Maya paid for the oldest to tour parts of Europe once she completed her schooling. Upon return, the daughter decided to move into a flat of her own, which seemed natural to me. After all, my brothers and I were given three choices when we reached age 18: "You can get a job, go to college or go to the military," my parents said. "But you're not staying home." In Maya's case, however, the daughter's decision to move away from home proved a hard blow, so much so that Maya refused to subsidize a similar trip for her second daughter. She feared that the young woman might get an itch for independence like her older sister.

Living intergenerationally has allowed many Indians to pool resources to purchase homes and cars, start businesses and send their children to technical colleges and universities — a high premium is placed on education among Indians. The result has been relative prosperity in spite of low wages and institutional barriers.

The downside of being "Indian" here in KwaZulu-Natal is that Zulu-Indian relations are not the best. Just as one example, in the early days of my stay here I prepared to attend an *imbizo* (a mass meeting of the Zulu nation) when a phone call stopped me. The Zulu friend on the other end of the telephone begged me not to go. My friend's mother runs a bakery/general store in a men's hostel in a black township. According to my friend, members of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) warned her mother to close the store the Sunday of the *imbizo* or face having it shut permanently. "Please don't go," my friend pleaded. "The people will think you're Indian and kill you."

It's hard to know whether my friend overreacted; I didn't go. Negotiations are going on now to hold another *imbizo* sometime in the near future. It will bring together for the first time since the 1994 democratic elections Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini, President Nelson Mandela, IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi, KwaZulu-Natal amakhosi (chiefs) and their respective constituencies.

The merits of holding an *imbizo* were debated recently on a morning talk show that featured two historians, one from the University of Zululand and the other from the University of Natal. It's hoped that the *imbizo* will bring stability to this province and halt the political killings committed by both the IFP and the African National Congress. A self-described white

man called the talk show and asked if whites, Indians and coloureds are free to attend the *imbizo*. University of Zululand Prof. Jabu (Simon) Maphalala, who treated me graciously during my first visit to the campus, said "no." He added: "The *imbizo* is for Zulus only." Needless to say, such a statement makes people like myself, a perceived Indian, hesitant to go.

Nearly all of the Indians I've gotten to know here in KwaZulu-Natal are apprehensive toward, if not fearful of, black South Africans, Zulus in particular. This attitude exists despite the fact that historically, and even now, Zulus and Indians maintain close contacts with each other. They live in close proximity to each other. Both groups rely on and often share the same public transportation. They work together in common businesses. Many of the Indians I know speak fluent Zulu. Moreover, South Africans of Indian descent occupy four top posts in the Government of National Unity, which is led by President Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC). However, the ANC captured only 26 percent of Indian support in the April 1994 elections.

On May 29 voters in KwaZulu-Natal are scheduled to vote in local government elections. There's a fierce competition between the IFP and the ANC to woo potential Indian supporters away from the Afrikaner-dominated National Party. Campaigning by the ANC began in the Indian township of Chatsworth last July, with a keynote address by President Nelson Mandela at the World Hindu Conference here. Deputy-president Thabo Mbeki has also visited Chatsworth, and so has National Minister of Health Nkosazana Zuma.

Even the Christian Coalition has its finger in local affairs. Much to my surprise, one Sunday morning I sat in a church in an Indian community called Shallcross, listening to a representative of the Christian Coalition talk about South Africa's "ungodly constitution," which allows "pornography, homosexual marriages..." The speaker, the only white person in the church, introduced a candidate for local elections to the congregation. The candidate, an Indian body-builder in his early 30s, is one of 50 Christians that the coalition is backing as independents in the local government election, the speaker said.

Bill Freund, author of "Insiders and Outsiders: The Indian Working Class of Durban, 1910-1990," wrote that Indians remain frightened of Africans because Africans are "poorer and have claims on resources which might threaten and endanger (Indian) gains." It's clear to me from conversations with Indians that they are specifically threatened by affirmative action, which they see as a scheme to uplift blacks and sideline them, and by African claims to land.

The commission on Restitution of Land Rights has received 2,470 land claims in KwaZulu-Natal, more

than double the number in any other province. KwaZulu claimants submitted 725 rural and 1,745 urban applications. Members of the Indian community will tell you that they considered the Group Areas Act the most pernicious and destructive law among the apartheid statutes. The Durban City Council put its Group Areas plan into operation in 1958. While the plan envisioned uprooting 75,000 Indians and some 8,000 coloureds, it was estimated in 1984 that no less than 140,000 Indians had been affected by the legislation. The legislation uprooted Indians from their homes, paid a pittance in compensation and relocated them miles away from their places of employment. Indeed, the Indian community was the hardest hit of all by this Act in proportion to its numbers.

Among the 2,470 claims submitted to the land commission is one by an Indian family demanding ownership of the multi-million-rand Westville Pavilion shopping center. The showpiece shopping complex is allegedly built on farmland owned by the late Gungaloo Pillay, who was among 40,000 Indians and Africans living in areas known as Cato Manor and Westville before being uprooted under the Group Areas Act. Reportedly, more than 300 claims from former Cato Manor residents have been filed with the KwaZulu-Natal Regional Land claims office.

Underlying Zulu-Indian relations is a collective memory of the 1949 Durban riots. Since my first month here Indians have been quick to tell me about an attempt by Zulus "to exterminate us." Exterminate is actually an exaggeration, and the truth about what happened remains a subject of debate.

A commission convened to investigate the origin of the rioting reported that harsh words between an African youth and an Indian shop owner on Victoria Street sparked the explosion. More specifically, the report said Africans and Indians waiting for transport at a crowded bus depot witnessed a tussle between the shop owner and boy, whose head accidentally crashed through the glass of a shop window. Blacks at the bus stop went berserk at the sight of a grown man assaulting a 14-year-old. Official estimates say the rioting resulted in the deaths of 142 people (1 white, 50 Indians, 87 Africans and four of undetermined racial origin). The injured numbered 1,087 (32 whites, 11 coloureds, 541 Africans and 503 Indians). One factory, 58 stores and 247 dwellings owned by Indians were destroyed.¹

Natal's leading black newspaper at the time, the

Ilanga Lase Natal, blamed Indians for the riots. Specifically, it cited black-marketeering by Indians, Indian opposition to African economic expansion, "shack-teering" by Indian landlords, social and racial humiliation of Africans by Indians and the differential treatment of Indians by whites, which gave the Indians "not only better rights, but a sense of snobbishness and superiority over the Africans."² (A continent away in the U.S., black Americans in the South-Central area of Los Angeles have lodged similar complaints against Korean store owners there. And in San Diego, I once wrote a three-part story looking at friction between black San Diegans and Chaldean store owners doing business in black neighborhoods. At the time I wrote the piece, Chaldeans owned all but one liquor store in the black neighborhoods of Southeast San Diego. A major complaint of blacks living there was that the Chaldean store owners took their money while treating them with contempt. Tension between the two cultures came to a head when a store owner used a baseball bat to chase a black youth wrongly accused of stealing.)

A more recent and equally tragic memory for South African Indians stems from an incident in 1985 in which Indians were forced to flee a settlement known as Bhambayi, a Zulu approximation of "Bombay." Bhambayi denotes the settlement of Phoenix on the eastern edge of the sprawling Inanda squatter camp northwest of Durban. Phoenix was originally a farm owned by Mohandas "Mahatma" Gandhi, who came from India to Durban in 1893 as a young barrister.

Gandhi often retreated to Phoenix to formulate ideas and publish his newspaper, the *Indian Opinion*. In 1904, he founded the settlement of Phoenix. This was an attempt by Gandhi to start a utopian society, which included training his followers in the ways of satyagraha (non-violent struggle) and to embrace a simple lifestyle of self-sufficiency, truth, self-denial and love.

Today, the building that housed Gandhi's international printing press is falling down and covered with graffiti. His corrugated-iron cottage, Sarvodaya, was pulled apart for building materials when a Pondo mob invaded.³ Ironically, the Pondo squatters are "a surviving ethnic island" amidst Zulus.⁴

The future of the Gandhi settlement is unclear. Last year the government of India sent a delegation to the old Gandhi settlement to study the possibility of re-

1. Bhana, Surendra, and Bridglal Pachai, eds. *A Documentary History of Indian South Africans*. (Cape Town: David Philip, 1984), pp.208-209.

2. Ibid., p. 209.

3. Pondo refers to the people from Pondoland, which was located in the former Transkei.

4. Pondo King Justice Sigcau is trying to secure a political home for his 1.6 million people. King Sigcau wants Pondoland, which was annexed by the British empire in 1894, to fall either in KwaZulu-Natal or the Eastern Cape. The kingdom falls between the Mzimkula River near Port Shepstone, which is south of Durban; the Katlamba (Drakensberg) mountains; and the Umzimvubu River near Port St. Johns.

developing existing structures and establishing a Gandhi institute. However, nothing has materialized. Violence and political unrest in the area left the India delegation reluctant to pursue such a venture. It's unfortunate; Bhambayi thirsts for rejuvenation and peace. It suffers 80 to 90 percent unemployment. The only profitable trade is the manufacture of kwashas (pipe guns) and the sale of dagga (marijuana). I've passed by the location on my way to the areas of Inanda and Ndwedwe on several occasions. However, the sight of burned shacks and police vehicles stationed along the main road has prevented me from stopping. Maybe one day the settlement will prove a draw for tourists. Until such time, however, I wouldn't suggest tourists venture to the location, at least not without a police escort.

The 1949 riots, the attempted pogrom at Bhambayi in 1985 and apartheid-era school curriculums that portrayed blacks as brutal have created a lingering climate of fear and apprehension among Indians toward Africans. Forty minutes south of Durban in a new housing development called Gandhi Nagar, which I wrote about in my December newsletter, dozens of house breaks have occurred. The burglars pitch up late at night and frequently enter through roofs, which is easy to do given that many of the houses lack ceilings. I stood among a chattering circle of Indian women living in Gandhi Nagar, listening as they blamed the break-ins on "Kaffirs." (Kaffir is the South African equivalent of nigger.) "True," one mother said. "It's the Kaffirs. They so poor. Rather take from us than work."

Escalating crime, a perception that education standards are falling and a belief that future prospects for their children are bleak has prompted more than a few Indians to consider leaving South Africa. While no accurate statistics are available, a spokesman for an agency specializing in Australian immigration reported that nearly 60 percent of the people in attendance at its free seminars are black, coloured or Indian.

The Muslim insurance agent I consulted about coverage for my car was more than happy to help, especially when he learned that I am American. "You know anything about the lottery to go to America?" he asked. "Sorry," I told him. "Sure don't."

A cab-driver-turned-lawyer I met also mentioned that he's considering emigrating to Australia. "I'm okay," he said. "But what about my children? What opportunities will they have 20 years from now?" He's not the only one worried about the future. An Indian trade unionist I got to know while attending classes at the Natal Worker's College wrote in a final

essay, "Everyone awakes early April 27, 1994 feeling like we are reborn. Freedom at last. But now with the present state of affairs my parents constantly ask, 'can we truly become South Africans?'"

Ironically, the trade unionist's question is one that has been debated for decades. Forty years ago the South African Institute of Race Relations sponsored a symposium, during which four papers were presented on "The Indian as a South African." At issue was whether Indians, more than 150,000 of whom were imported from India between 1860 and 1911 to work as indentured laborers in Natal's sugar cane fields, should be repatriated. The demand for the repatriation of laborers and their descendants came from a white electorate opposed in large part to Indian workers moving into jobs that paid higher wages. Today, Indians fear that South Africa's black majority will stifle their attempts to move into better jobs.

In my bus-riding days, which weren't so long ago, Indian women, mostly older ones, often approached me to ask for directions. I'd listen closely to their requests because I have difficulty understanding the dialect, speech and speed at which some South African Indians speak. More than 750,000 Indians in this province speak what sociolinguists have termed "South African Indian English." South African Indian English incorporates religious, kinship, cultural and culinary terms adopted directly from Indian languages, as well as terms absorbed from English and Afrikaans. Certain terms contain shifts of nuance and meaning from the original English sense. "Healthy," in informal speech, means overweight. My Indian neighbor, Ethel, calls me "ma," as a term of endearment. Similarly, a 31-year-old Indian friend calls his 2-year-old nephew "dad."

Numbers of Indian culinary terms have filtered into general South African English — words such as samoosa (deep-fried flour triangles with spicy curry fillings), bunny-chow,⁵ and breyani (a blend of spicy curry, cloves, ginger and rice).

Speaking of food, never have I visited an Indian home and not been fed or, at the very least, served tea, coffee or a soft drink. Such shows of hospitality extend to rich and poor Indians alike. What's more, rarely have I left an Indian home without carrying a container of food with me. Recently, for example, I dined with a couple named Mary and Saul and their four children. Mary prepared a full selection of special dishes for me, including (sheep) tripe and sugar beans. Just looking at the tripe turned my stomach, but I didn't have the heart to turn down the delicacy. They even gave me a con-

5. *ADA Magazine* describes Bunny chow as "a peculiar creation of apartheid." It started in the 1940s at a restaurant in the Indian-market area of Durban. Africans could not enter the restaurant, so the owner sold take-aways from a hatch he set up on the pavement. Styrofoam packaging had not been created yet, so he hollowed out a quarter-loaf of bread and filled the inside with curry.

tainer of the sheep stomach to carry home.

English is the main language in the South African Indian community, although a smattering of mostly older people speak Tamil, Telegu, Hindi and Gujarati. In 1951, only 6.3 percent of the Indian community used English at home. However, by 1970 that percentage jumped to 31 percent and in 1980 to 73 percent. Today, English is spoken in more than 95 percent of homes. So few Indians speak the language of their forefathers that local television programs that are broadcast in Indian languages carry English subtitles.

Although English has ousted several ancestral Indian languages, the English spoken within the community has a rhythm and rhyme all its own: "So hot it was today," a speaker might say. Or, instead of saying, "would you like a mango?," a speaker might say, "mango you want?" Just as one other example, a speaker might say: "Car haven't got. Your car where you parked?"

Slang is also widely spoken among Indian youths.

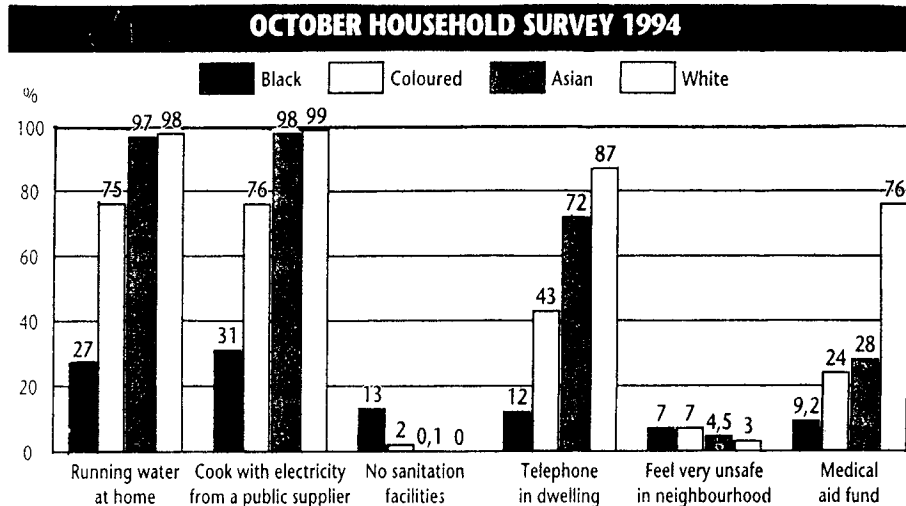
Some examples are Char-ou/Charra (an Indian, not derogatory); lahnee (a rich person); lightie (small boy); vet-ou (a white man); pekkie-ou (a black man.) Indians say vet-ou and pekkie-ou are not derogatory; I'm not so sure.

There is a strong and growing movement to preserve and promote Indian languages. Indeed, the South African Hindu Maha Sabha, the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha and the Natal Tamil Federation want Indian languages entrenched in the provincial constitution and have made submissions to the KwaZulu-Natal committee drafting the constitution. The South African Hindu Maha Sabha also wants Tamil, Hindi, Telegu and Gujarati taught in KwaZulu-Natal schools. Furthermore, its wants community organizations promoting these languages to receive public subsidies.

Language is not the only means by which South African Indians are looking to promote their culture and assert themselves ethnically. Last year on Sept. 16, the preservation of Indian heritage and culture



South African Indians at a glance:



The October Household survey collected information from 30,300 households in nine provinces, including the ex-homelands, between September and November 1994.

- The population of South Africa is estimated at between 40.6 million and 43.5 million. 76.1% of the population is black, 12.8% is white, 8.5% is coloured and 2.6% Indian. The fertility rate is 4.3% for black women, 2.2% for Indians, 2.3% for coloureds and 1.5% for whites.

- KwaZulu-Natal has the most Indians in South Africa. More than 60% live in and around the cities of Durban and Pietermaritzburg.

- Nearly two-thirds of South African Indians are Hindu (62.3%), The remainder are Muslim (18.7%); Christian (12.4%); Buddhist (0.07%); Confucian (0.08%) or other (6.1%).

- 96.2% of Indians live in urban areas, compared to 91.1% of whites, 83.2% of coloureds and 42.7% of blacks.

- Thirty percent of workers in regular employment nationwide are trade union members. Indians (41%) and coloureds (41%) are the most unionized, followed by blacks (35%). Only 16% of whites are members of unions.

- The unemployment rate for blacks is 37%, compared to 24% for coloureds, 17% for Indians and 9% for whites.

- The average per-capita disposable income is R8000 for whites, R3000 for Indians, R2000 for coloureds and R1000 for blacks.

- Eight percent of Indians survive on a level of spending below the poverty datum line, which in 1993 was roughly R180 a person a month. By contrast, 54% of Africans live below the poverty line and 25% of coloureds.

- A national literacy assessment conducted by the University of Cape Town and Harvard University found that Indians on average are more literate than whites, with coloured literacy between that of whites and blacks.

- At present, 37:1 is considered an acceptable pupil: teacher ratio. However, in many areas of KwaZulu-Natal ratios of between 46:1 and 67:1 are recorded for black pupils, and 43:1 for Indians. For white pupils the average ratios are up to 26:1.

Sources: 1991 Population Census. Central Statistical Service. the Education Atlas of South Africa, published by the Education Foundation. The South Africa Labour and Development Research Unit, University of Cape Town. National Social Development Report given by President Nelson Mandela in March 1995. World Bank-funded Living Standards and Development Survey.

took a big step forward with the opening of the Durban Cultural and Documentation Center. The double-story building complex is located near a city race track, and dates back to 1913. It originally was a school for white children, then coloured children and most recently a satellite campus for a local college. Lectures, music recitals, classical dance dramas and other cultural programs are regularly held there. And in the near future culinary arts and language classes will be taught. The center, which cost R1.7 million (U.S.\$450,000) to renovate, also houses a research library, board room, meeting hall and several rooms for art exhibits.

While touring the center with its curator, Ravi Govender, he pulled from a library shelf a video showing in graphic detail the massacre of Tamil civilians in Colombo, Sri Lanka. More than 40,000 people have been killed in Sri Lanka since ethnic fighting began in 1983. Tamil rebels are fighting for an independent homeland to escape what they say is discrimination by the majority Sinhalese.

Govender sympathizes with Tamil rebels and he's not the only one. He said some members of the Indian community here have organized drives to send clothing and blankets to their Tamil brothers and sisters.



Tongues and cheeks pierced with needles! Meat hooks imbedded in skin! Garlands of fruit and flowers hanging on the meat hooks! I saw all of this at a Hindu Kavadi Festival, which honors the God Muruga who supposedly has power to heal and to dispel misfortune. Self-inflicted pain is believed to be a sign of devotion to Muruga. The Kavadi itself is a semicircular wooden framework decorated with flowers, fruit and peacock feathers.





An agency called Durban Unlimited offers tourists what's described as an "Oriental Walkabout." Visitors get a chance to "experience the mysticism and vitality of the East!" I decided to sign up for the walkabout to see what trained guides might add to my knowledge of the Indian contribution and presence here. I was joined on the tour by one other person, an Indian woman from Surinam now living in Holland.

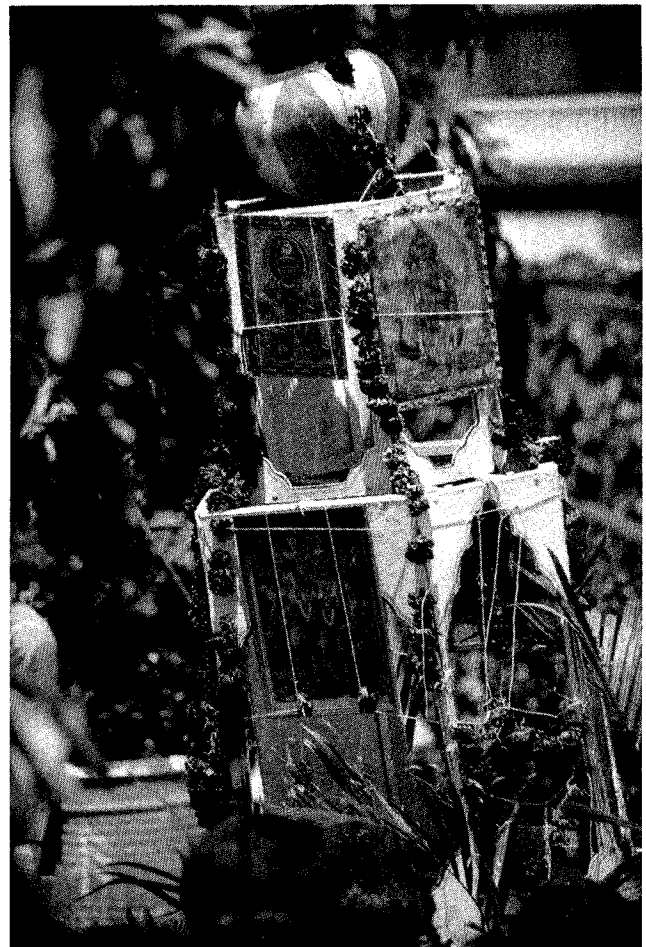
Our tour guide was a pleasant but not-so-talkative Zulu woman. She provided very little information about the Indian population in South Africa. However, she explained in detail the meaning of her Zulu name. And when a woman carrying a box on her head passed us on a crowded sidewalk, the guide stopped us in mid-step to explain that the round band of cloth between the woman's head and the box is called an *inkatha*.

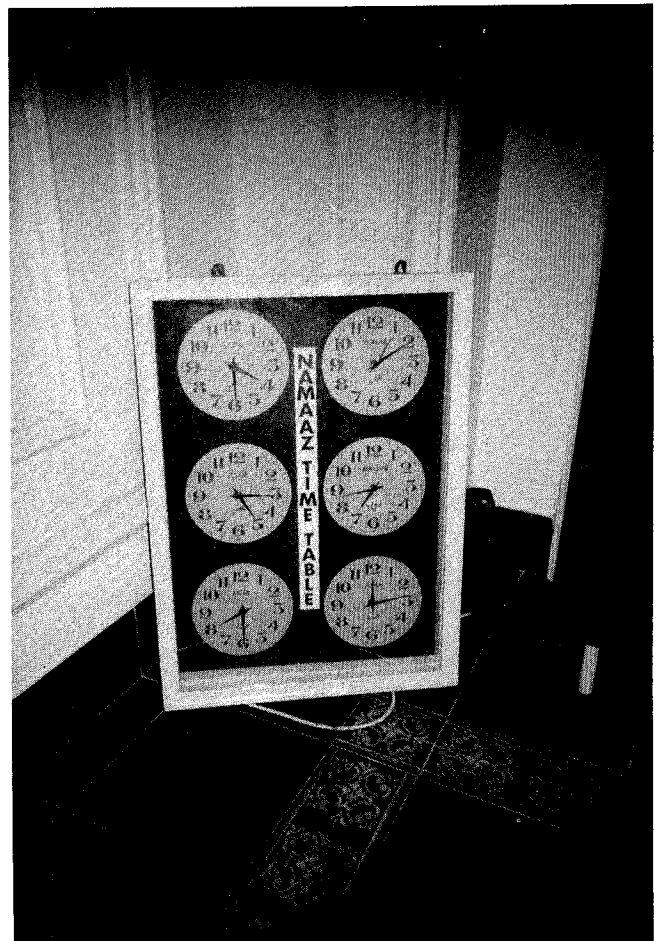
About two blocks into the walk, my touring companion from Holland asked: "You are Indian, aren't you?" I smiled. "Well, no, I'm African American." She looked closer at me and added: "But you look Indian." That's when I gave her my condensed history lesson on why African-Americans enjoy a range of physical characteristics.

The tour included a walk along Grey Street, a densely developed business section associated with the Indian community. There you'll find shops filled with fabrics, saris, gold jewelry, spices, household wares, leather jackets. You name it. It's there.

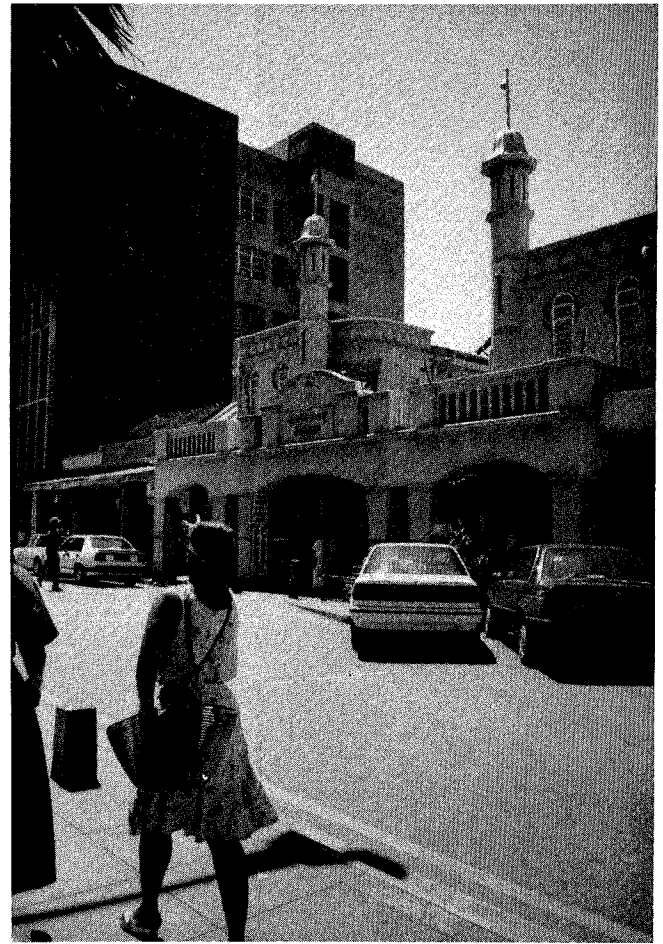
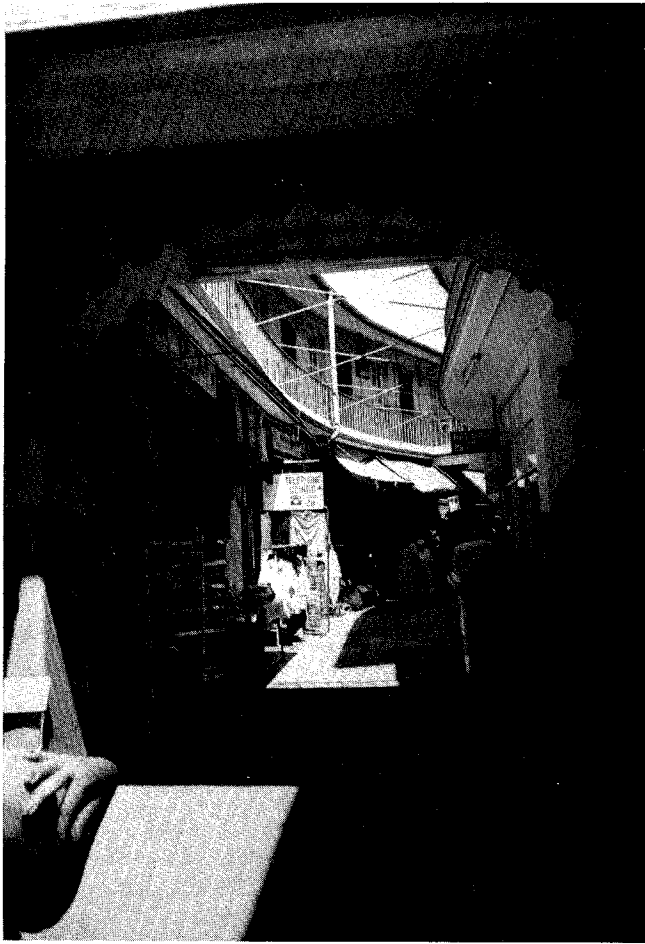
Next stop, the Juma Masjid or Great Mosque on Grey Street, which is reputed to be the largest in the Southern hemisphere. Our guide was somewhat hesitant to go inside. She said mosque leaders are finicky about tourists poking around the place. If what she said is true,

Devotees pulled a wagon carrying a Kavadi through the bumpy streets of Park Rynie, a small town south of Durban. As a sign of devotion to the God Muruga, people standing along the streets offered fruit and milk.





The top photo is an outside view of the Grey Street mosque. The bottom two were taken inside the mosque.



Streets scenes from the "Oriental Walkabout." Aboobaker Amod, a Gujarati Muslim, was the first fee-paying passenger Indian to Durban. Unlike the indentured laborers brought from India, passenger Indians came at their own expense, with capital. Amod opened the first Indian-owned shop in Natal on Upper West Street in 1874. He also built Durban's first mosque on the site of the present Grey Street mosque. The guide for the "Oriental Walkabout" pointed out Amod's house, which still stands.

mosque leaders have even more reason these days to shut out the public. That's because the mosque made news this month when it sacked its high priest, a Pakistani national, for "unseemly and obscene conduct." The priest faces charges of rape and indecent assault in the regional division of the Magistrate's Court. Reportedly, the charges stem from complaints made by the high priest's former wife, whom he married when she was 13. The ex-wife is now 21.

The mosque was empty except for a couple of white-robed men laying about in the main hall. They appeared wilted from the stifling heat. A member of the mosque congregation wandered in a few minutes after we arrived to explain the five main principles of Islam, and provide a little history of the place. Our guide perked up at the explanation as to why men are allowed to have up to four wives. Later she said: "I think that's good."

From the mosque, we crossed over to the Victoria

Street Market, an indoor market where Indian merchants sell everything from bed sheets and sheep head to Zulu beadwork and spices. We stopped in a spice shop where it became clear that the guide and owner had a deal: He talked to tourists, provided tourists were encouraged to buy. The tall, bearded store owner explained which spices go best with certain curries, and even suggested which ones an American novice such as myself should buy. The Indian woman from Holland took to the shop like a child in a candy store. I, on the other hand, showed no interest whatsoever in the purchase of spices. "Buy something," the guide kept repeating, as she traced my footsteps. "Here, buy this small jar. It's only R4 (\$1.05)" Finally, I bought a jar of pickled mangoes, just to stop the guide from buzzing in my ear like a mosquito.

Next we made our way to Emmanuel Cathedral, a Catholic church built in 1902. We arrived at the church during a midday mass, which was conducted by Indian and African priests. With the exception of a



Stacks of sheep head for sale in the fish and meat section of the Victoria Street Market.

white nun, everyone else in the place was either black or Indian. We stayed about 15 minutes, listening to the muffled voices of the clerics and watching as the faithful kneeled for bread and wine.

From the cathedral, we sauntered through crowded streets, looking in shop windows and dodging street merchants selling plump red grapes and plastic refrigerator magnets, among other things. Instead of walking back to the tour starting point, I decided to take a short cut to a city-center bookstore. The guide, however, dashed that idea. "Too dangerous," she insisted. "Rather you walk back with me, so I know you're safe." As I stood there facing the determined guide, it dawned on me that perhaps the tour had less to do with providing an Oriental experience and more to do with making sure tourists don't wander around Durban's increasingly mean streets unattended.

INDIAN DELIGHTS

One of the major ways in which I communicate with my mother is through cooking. I was 9 years old when she began teaching me to cook. The first thing I made was taffy. Still today, my mother likes to tell a story about that first cooking lesson:

She told me to read the taffy recipe and measure the ingredients as instructed. When I got to the part that said "separate three eggs," I pulled three from the refrigerator and placed them on a counter about 10 inches apart. The eggs kept rolling into each other, and I kept pushing them apart. Finally, my mother turned from the stove and asked what I was doing. "Separating the eggs."

By observing Indian women, I'm learning to cook basic Indian dishes, such as chicken curry and roti. Roti is unleavened bread made of flour; it reminds me

of flour tortillas made by Mexicans. Most of what I know I've learned from my neighbor, Ethel. She likes to cook between 10 a.m. and noon and, if I'm home at that time, I knock on her door. "Come ma," she says, "pull up a chair."

Soon I plan to spend a Saturday morning with a mother of five girls who earns money for the home by buying sheep head and trotters from a local butcher and cleaning the parts for working neighbors too busy to do the job. Meanwhile, here are four recipes I've pinched from *Indian Delights* by Zuleika Mayat, a bestselling cookbook published by Women's Culture Group, Durban.

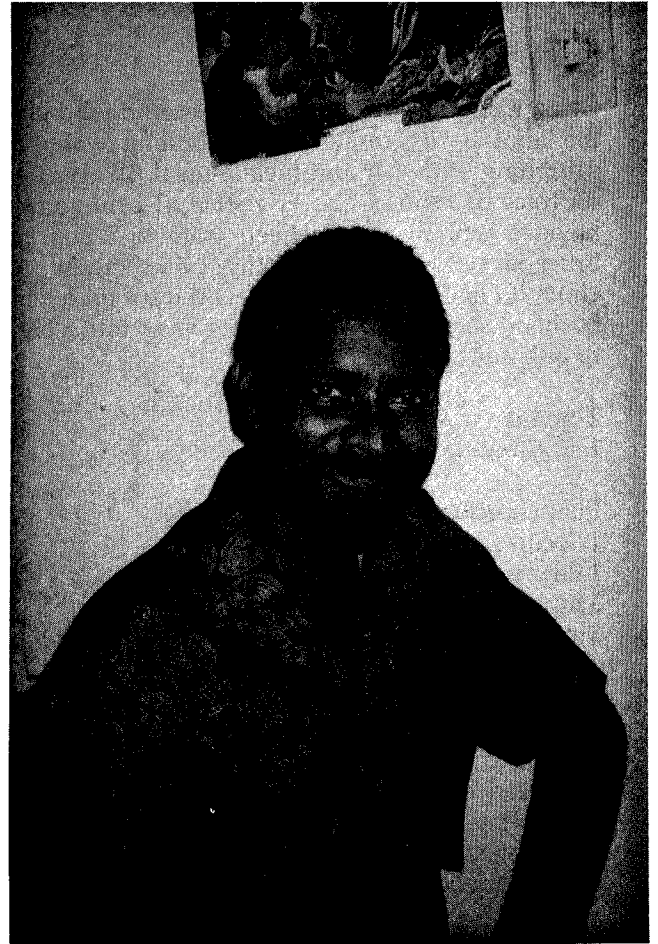
The Basic Curry

2 onions (sliced)
2 tomatoes (chopped, grated or liquidized)
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. chili powder
1 tsp. dhunia (coriander)/jeera (cumin) powder
1 tsp. turmeric
1 tsp. each ginger/garlic
2 tsp. oil

Saute onion in oil until transparent and add tomato and spices. Toss and turn. Simmer gently with lid closed till all spices are mixed and tomato blended, but not smooth.

Masalaad Brains

2 medium onions
3 green chillies
1/2 tsp. dhunia/jeera (coriander and cumin powder)
1 tsp. each ginger/garlic
1 brain (sheep's)
1/2 tsp. fine salt



"Mummy" is a middle-aged Indian woman who shares a two-room flat with her son, Emmanuel. She prepared for me a Sunday lunch of fish breyani, sugar beans, roti and a spicy hot carrot salad. A couple of weeks later she asked me to bring her a stack of old newspapers. She uses them to cover the top of her wobbly table.

Several of Mummy's neighbors stopped by while I was there. One, a pudgy man named Boya, was surprised to learn that the U.S. is my home. "I thought only whites and Africans lived in America," he said, scratching his head. Initially, I missed the implication of what he said. That's because he assumed that I am Indian and I assumed his eyes could see that I am African-American.



1/4 tsp. red chillies
1/4 tsp. arad (turmeric)

(Paya) Sheep Trotters

Clean trotters — taken from the second joint above the hoof — by immersing in boiling water and scrubbing with salt and mealie-meal till absolutely no trace of skin or hair is visible. (I confess that I haven't actually eaten sheep trotters; I just can't bring myself to try them. Why, I don't know. As a child, if I had 25 cents to spare, I'd head for a neighborhood candy store and dip my hand into a big jar to pull out a pickled pig foot.)

2 onions
1 dozen trotters (salt to taste)

Put in muslim bag:
1/2 cup whole coriander seed
1 tbsp. whole cumin (jeera)
3 tbsp. saumf (fennel)
3 sticks cinnamon
6 cloves (whole)
4 black elachi (cardamom pods)
1 tsp. whole black pepper

Put clean and washed trotters in pressure cooker with salt, bag of spices and one onion (sliced). Cover with water and cook for 1-1/2 hours until trotters are done. Remove trotters and reserve liquid.

Slice the other onion thinly and fry in 2 tablespoons of ghee (clarified butter or margarine). When it is gold in color, add the following ingredients:

1 tsp. ginger
1 tsp. crushed garlic
2 tsp. chili powder (or less)
1/4 cup yogurt

Cook slowly till masalas (spices) are blended. Add trotters and reserved liquid and cook for half an hour. Garnish with chopped dhunia (coriander) and serve with lemon.

Tripe (Ojri) Curry

500 g tripe (scrubbed clean in salted water, dried with a towel and cut in bite-sized pieces)
3 tbsp. chopped mint
1 tsp. freshly ground red chillies
1 large red or green sweet pepper (cut in small pieces)
6 black peppercorns
salt to taste
1 ball garlic (slivered)
8 cups water
2 tsp. crushed jeera (cumin)
1/2 cup oil

Fry half of slivered garlic in oil and as soon as it turns color add tripe and all other ingredients except



The vast majority of Hindu women here wear western clothing, though you'll see some older women dressed in saris. Special occasions are the exception. Then you'll see young and old women alike dressed in fine traditional silk saris. Here I am in a sari loaned to me by a friend's mother.

I was surprised to learn, given the urban ways, about the pervasive "western" look and the fact that three times as many young Indian women as men are now enrolled in the University of Durban at Westville (a historically Indian university), and that arranged marriages ("bookings") still take place.

the sweet pepper and cook gently for 2 hours.

Tripe should be nearly cooked by now and the water sufficiently evaporated to leave a pot full of mushy contents. Now add 3 tomatoes and sweet peppers and cook till they are blended.

Serve hot with garnish of mint leaves.

Green Watermelon Curry

(In the summer, in my native North Carolina, watermelon trucks used to creep through neighborhoods loaded with the succulent fruit. Drivers of the trucks signaled their presence by bellowing "whata-melon" as if the single word were a song.)

Large, unripened watermelon
1 tsp. red chili powder

1 tsp. turmeric powder
 1 tsp. coriander powder
 1 tsp. garlic puree
 salt
 2 tbsp. oil
 1 tsp. cumin seed
 2-3 tps. lime or lemon juice
 sugar to taste (optional)

1. Cut up the watermelon and remove the seeds. Peel off the skin and chop the flesh into 4 cm cubes. Take 1 cup of the chopped watermelon blend and make juice. To the juice, add coriander powders, garlic puree and salt to taste.

2. Heat the oil in a wok and add the cumin seeds and within 20 seconds add the juice. Lower the heat and simmer for 5 minutes or so, so that the spices cook completely and the liquid is reduced by a third. If using sugar, add it now, then add the lime or lemon juice and cook for 1 minute.

3. Add the chopped watermelon and cook over a low heat for 3-4 minutes, gently tossing until all the pieces are covered in the spice mixture.

Serves 2 or 4 as a side dish. The flavor should be hot, sweet and sour, hence the large amount of chili powder. Eat with rice or as a side dish. □

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2. *The Reader's Digest Illustrated History of South Africa.* Third Edition, 1994.
3. *ADA Magazine*
4. *Sunday Times*
5. *Daily News*
6. *Natal Witness*

Current Fellows & Their Activities

Hisham Ahmed. Born blind in the Palestinian Dheisheh Refugee Camp near Bethlehem, Hisham finished his A-levels with the fifth highest score out of 13,000 students throughout Israel. He received a B.A. in political science on a scholarship from Illinois State University and his M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of California in Santa Barbara. Back in East Jerusalem and still blind, Hisham plans to gather oral histories from a broad selection of Palestinians to produce a "Portrait of Palestine" at this crucial point in Middle Eastern history. [MIDEAST/N. AFRICA]

Adam Albion. A former research associate at the Institute for EastWest Studies at Prague in the Czech Republic, Adam is spending two years studying and writing about Turkey's regional role and growing importance as an actor in the Balkans, the Middle East and the former Soviet bloc. A Harvard graduate (1988; History), Adam has completed the first year of a two-year M. Litt. degree in Russian/East European history and languages at Oxford University. [EUROPE/RUSSIA]

Cynthia Caron. With a Masters degree in Forest Science from the Yale School of Forestry and Environment, Cynthia is spending two years in South Asia as ICWA's first John Miller Musser Memorial Forest & Society Fellow. She is studying and writing about the impact of forest-preservation projects on the lives (and land-tenure) of indigenous peoples and local farmers who live on their fringes. Her fellowship includes stays in Bhutan, India and Sri Lanka. [SOUTH ASIA/Forest & Society]

William F. Foote. Formerly a financial analyst with Lehman Brothers' Emerging Markets Group, Willy Foote is examining the economic substructure of Mexico and the impact of free-market reforms on Mexico's people, society and politics. Willy holds a Bachelor's degree from Yale University (history), a Master's from the London School of Economics (Development Economics; Latin America) and studied Basque history in San Sebastian, Spain. He carried out intensive Spanish-language studies in Guatemala in 1990 and then worked as a copy editor and Reporter for the Buenos Aires Herald from 1990 to 1992. [THE AMERICAS]

Sharon Griffin. A feature writer and contributing columnist on African affairs at the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, Sharon is

spending two years in southern Africa studying Zulu and the KwaZulu kingdom and writing about the role of nongovernmental organizations as fulfillment centers for national needs in developing countries where governments are still feeling their way toward effective administration. She plans to travel and live in Namibia and Zimbabwe as well as South Africa. [sub-SAHARA]

John Harris. A would-be lawyer with an undergraduate degree in History from the University of Chicago, John reverted to international studies after a year of internship in the product-liability department of a Chicago law firm and took two years of post-graduate Russian at the University of Washington in Seattle. Based in Moscow during his fellowship, John is studying and writing about Russia's nascent political parties as they begin the difficult transition from identities based on the personalities of their leaders to positions based on national and international issues. [EUROPE/RUSSIA]

Pramila Jayapal. Born in India, Pramila left when she was four and went through primary and secondary education in Indonesia. She graduated from Georgetown University in 1986 and won an M.B.A. from the Kellogg School of Management in Evanston, Illinois in 1990. She has worked as a corporate analyst for Paine Webber and an accounts manager for the world's leading producer of cardiac defibrillators, but most recently managed a \$7 million developing-country revolving-loan fund for the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH) in Seattle. Pramila is spending two years in India tracing her roots and studying social issues involving religion, the status of women, population and AIDS. [SOUTH ASIA]

Teresa C. Yates. A former member of the American Civil Liberties Union's national task force on the workplace, Teresa is spending two years in South Africa observing and reporting on the efforts of the Mandela government to reform the national land-tenure system. A Vassar graduate with a *juris doctor* from the University of Cincinnati College of Law, Teresa had an internship at the Centre for Applied Legal Studies in Johannesburg in 1991 and 1992, studying the feasibility of including social and economic rights in the new South African constitution. While with the ACLU, she also conducted a Seminar on Women in the Law at Fordham Law School in New York. [sub-SAHARA]

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