MIRACLE IN NATAL
REVOLUTION BY BALLOT-BOX
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Preface

Nelson Mandela's peaceful revolution in South Africa is potentially as important an event for the end of the twentieth century as the Russian revolution was for its beginning. A world which has been racked by division, war and endless confrontation at every level has been offered an alternative vision, one of co-operation and consensus, the politics of affection rather than opposition.

The fact that this vision of human unity has been sustained in the country which until recently was a by-word for racial inequality and separate development makes South Africa's example of pressing significance for the rest of us. If the now-defunct anti-apartheid movement took the lead in the international struggle for social justice, we desperately need a constructive successor inspired by the desire to nurture and extend South Africa's fragile non-racial experiment.

The Province of Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal) was further from consensus than any other, owing to the brutal war which was waged for several years between supporters of Inkatha and the ANC. Then, eight days before the election date, Buthelezi was persuaded to take part. The transition from war to peace was virtually instantaneous. The election itself was fairly chaotic (to paraphrase Justice Krieger). Even more remarkably, Mandela secured the agreement of his ANC followers to an Inkatha victory in a province which they were convinced they had won.

Whatever happens in the future, that moment of quiet revolution when racial domination was overturned was a precious achievement for all humanity. This pamphlet seeks to preserve a small fraction of what was a common experience by giving expression to the voices of some of the participants. The contrast between the mainly illiterate voters recorded here and the three anthropologists who were enrolled as counters for the election could hardly be more striking. We leave it to our readers to weigh up the lessons for anthropology's future direction contained in this two-sided collection.

The Editors
Introduction
The Substance of a Miracle

The election in Natal was a miracle in at least two senses. From the point of view of many of the voters - especially of Africans voting for the first time - it was a real miracle. Several of the voters who have described their experiences in the first part of this pamphlet use religious images to convey their sense of wonder at the day. For most of us the transition to democracy in South Africa was in the realm of the unthinkable. It was not that we believed that it would not happen, but that it was virtually impossible to foresee how it would happen. It seemed that there would have to be an upheaval of apocalyptic proportions in order for us to be able to make the leap into the new South Africa. And then, just when the patient feet steps of Mandela and de Klerk had shown us the way through, it seemed that we in Natal were going to be left behind and that we would not join the rest of the country in the promised land. Until a couple of weeks before the election we were preparing for a war in Natal. People were being armed and organised in all parts of the province in readiness for a confrontation that may well have jeopardised the entire election. It needed another divine intervention of sorts - although some would describe it in the more mundane terms of brinkmanship - to bring Buthelezi into the election and ensure that the miracle in Natal took place.

The other sense in which the election can be described as a miracle is an ironic one. For most of the people who worked for the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and who had to somehow deal with the increasingly farcical situation behind the scenes, the fact that the whole thing did not fall apart and that a result of sorts was produced was miraculous in the flippant sense of that term. The accounts of IEC counting officials in the second part of the pamphlet reveal the extent of the ineptitude and confusion that prevailed in the organisation. It was in the counting stations that the inadequacies of the IEC reached a culminating. The whole process of counting the votes was a thankless and frustrating task. As one of the contributors says, it would have been better had she not been involved with the counting at all because it spoiled the election for her. And in the end it seems to have been a futile exercise. I remember returning from a counting station where we had been working day and night to make sense of the confusion of boxes and ballots, and had been earnestly dealing with every ballot as though it counted, to discover that I had missed Mandela's victory speech. It seemed to me then, as it seemed to many others in Natal, that the election had been fixed and the results had been decided in smoke-filled rooms rather than in the counting stations. I am certain that the result of the election in Natal is not an accurate reflection of the votes cast here, but in an odd way it does perhaps reflect the will of the people. There was a feeling even among many supporters of the African National Congress that if Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) had got nothing out of the election then the violence in the province would have escalated once again. As one ANC voter says, "How come Inkatha won I really do not know but I was really confused and disappointed. After some time I realised that it was just a compromise and a good one too because when I come to think of it where would I be if the Inkatha hadn't won?" Another says that she voted for the ANC at the national level and for the IFP in Natal because she did not want Buthelezi to come away from the election empty handed.

This pamphlet is not an attempt to analyse the election in Natal or whether Inkatha should really have won, and it is not a catalogue of the errors of the IEC in the province. It is merely an attempt to inscribe something of that moment when for so many of us the world changed in a way that we could really feel and participate in. It was a moment that was filled with wonder and grace, a time of dreams and wishes and miracles. After so much brutality, and despite the blunders of the IEC, the spirit of the election emerged as something that transformed us all. It is that spirit and the way that it touched us that is distilled into these
pages, rather than the mechanics of political strategy and electoral organisation. It is also, I should add, a peculiarly if not conventionally anthropological view of the election. Most of the accounts of voters' experiences in Part One were recorded (and transcribed and translated) by anthropology students at the University of Durban-Westville and all the contributions in Part Two are by anthropologists. Beyond the anthropology of history lies the anthropology of the miraculous.

Allan Thorold

Part One

Voters
Seeing Heaven's Door Open

Ever since I was a little girl I was told that our people are fighting for their right. It never made sense to me because I was born in a rural area without television so I knew very little of what was going on around me. When I went to high school I started to understand, to hate white people especially Boers and to love my people and my country and also to respect them. I have been very optimistic about the future. I started to pick up certain political organizations which I felt will somehow give black people what they have lost, i.e. their land, their freedom and their dignity. I also felt sorry for the coloured and Indian races who really belonged nowhere.

All the time my parents were concerned about being loyal to the king. That never meant much to me because the king himself was oppressed and seemed to enjoy it. I was and still am proud of being a Zulu but that was not enough. It was not going to bring liberation because it seems the only way to show your loyalty to the king was by joining the Inkatha Freedom Party.

When Nelson Mandela came out I was more than excited. It was like seeing heaven's door open. To me he was like a redeemer without any weapon but offering himself. He was and looked very old but our eyes and trust were on him. Silently we were begging him to help us. Talks began. My eyes and ears were open. "Poor Mandela," I used to say. Tears from the white race came out. Some of them even left the country because it seemed the solution to it all was what they called the Election. It seemed fair to me. Why then were they afraid of the word or the outcome? I was also afraid not only for myself but for every South African because at that time things did not look too good. In my heart I always asked God to look after us blacks.

The talk about elections excited me more and more because deep down I knew that day would be the end of our misery, but also I knew it will never take away the hate that lies deep down in me and I and the black race were maybe hurt for life. One thing that went through both ears was "forgive and forget" - how could I, what about those people who were treated cruelly and died?

The election campaign began. It was a great experience. Everybody was excited but I was disturbed by Inkatha not joining. I knew they will never make it to the election but still I felt they should participate. When all the showing off was over I could feel it that the ANC has won though I never said it to anybody. The AWB frightened me but Mandela knew how to keep them quiet. I was really looking forward to the election.

We put bets on who was going to win the election. I was really surprised to see white people trying to get our votes in the election after so many years of oppression. They just behaved as if the whole apartheid system had been a joke.

We started to count the days in such a way that I forgot my birthday (which is in April) thinking about the election. The day came. I did not believe my eyes seeing all the posters put around our area. The night before that I could not bring myself to sleep. I was dancing and singing. My family joined me in the celebration and of course our neighbours. It was like New Year's Eve and somehow it was because the following day we were going to start a new life and I was ready for the so-called New South Africa.

I was up around five. Mum had voted the day before so there was no need to worry about housework. I was watching television. I felt so sad seeing so many people unattended especially old people who wanted to bury apartheid for good. I was happy to see Mandela voting. I knew he was the next president. About eleven in the morning we were standing in a very long line and I was fed up. Not even one person gave up and it was hot, really hot. Where I voted there was not a single person who did not look happy but there was only one tree for
shaded. Nobody seemed to notice that for we kept encouraging one another.

I was disappointed to see only Indians in the polling station. When I got in I did what I had to do with great excitement which I cannot describe. Since my area is dominated by the ANC we talked freely about who we voted for after we gathered outside. Most of my friends voted the ANC. We took a bus home that was free of charge. When I got home we heard about different kinds of cheating that had taken place like not sticking Dr Buthelezi's head on a ballot paper. I knew that will really disturb the election in our province. By six o'clock I heard that a few boxes had disappeared. I was really disappointed at this. All I could think about was the result. I really could not wait to hear them. Day and night I was in front of the television set. Minutes seemed to be hours and hours were days but I had no choice but to wait.

The day finally came. All along the ANC was doing well in Natal. But what a surprise! When the result came out everything changed. I was very happy that the ANC won and that Mandela would be the president but I could not keep my mouth shut about Natal. How come Inkatha won I really do not know but I was really confused and disappointed. After sometime I realised that it was just a compromise and a good one too because when I come to think of it where would I be if the Inkatha hadn't won?

Ntombozakhe Shangase of Bettlicheim in the Valley of a Thousand Hills

Those Things are only for Whites

When it was announced on the radio that everyone is going to vote I did not believe it because I told myself that those things are only for whites. I would believe it when it happens. First of all I asked myself what were they going to do about us as illiterate people and other disabled people. Later on it was announced that people who are disabled like myself would not vote on the same day as the other people, on the 27th of April, but would vote on the 26th of April. After that I asked myself a lot of questions because I was scared that what if I vote for a wrong person as I have the sight problem and am illiterate - how would I know that these people were ticking someone I want to vote for? I was also scared about that maybe I will be helped by someone who is not from the organisation I voted for. There were a lot of things that scared me. I also told myself that if a black man wins, whites will know and arrest me. People who were announcing the elections on the radio set us free by telling us that "your vote is your secret."

When the day of the elections came, 26th of April 1994, the day of the disabled people, I was unable to go there because I did not have a transport to go to the Community Hall. My neighbour asked whether I voted, and I told him that I had a transport problem and he said that transport was organised for us. It means I would vote the following day. He also told me to go with my grandson in order to help me while I am voting and also to see whether I was voting the right person. But I asked myself how would that happen because they said our vote will be our secret. But I also wanted to go with my grandson to see that no one is robbing me. I went on the 27th of April with all the people and I was not the only one who had a transport problem. There were others who were unable to vote on the 26th. We were the first people to be taken in to vote. They checked our identity documents then put the ink on our hands in order to prevent us from voting twice - that is what they told me when I asked them.

My grandchild was next to me, and they told him to move away for a while in order not to tell me who should I vote for, and he
did that. They gave me the ballot paper. When I looked for someone I wanted to vote for I did not see clearly and I could not read his name so I called for help. A lady who came to help me told me that what I am going to tell her is my secret and she will not tell anyone about it, I told her to tick that leader but I did have some questions in my mind about whether the lady ticked in the right space or just ticked where she liked to tick.

She said, "Granny it seems as if you do not believe that I ticked someone you like so it is better if I can call somebody I do not know." I said "Sure my child I really do not believe that you ticked someone I like." Then she called another lady and they told me that it is the one I want and they tried to show me the picture and I told them that they must not waste their time on showing me his picture because I cannot see clearly. I told them to call my grandson who will testify clearly. They then called him and he told me that I was the one that I want. I wanted to make sure that I voted for someone I wanted but I also told myself it is no secret because you can call other people and they will see who you voted for. I voted for the same person in the province and at the national level. After I had finished I was scared that as my place is a violence place maybe there are people who are waiting outside in order to harm us but there was a bus outside waiting for us and there were also policemen who were looking after people. We were secured.

After that we waited for the results of the elections and I thought that the violence would be more after the results. When I heard that the black man has won I thought there will be a war like Blood River but we died. God that it is quiet in this area. I also thought that there will be economic deterioration and our pensions will be taken away but there is nothing like that.

People were saying bad things because they wanted us to vote for them. I am very happy about the result and I wish that after five years during another election it can be like this.

Jane Zondi of Dambuzo, Pietermaritzburg - interviewed by Sindisiwe Shange

The Old Man and the Smile

Before the election I was nervous and exhilarated. My children made me comfortable by saying there will be voting officers to attend to us. The polling station was within walking distance and was situated on the busiest route in our area. Buses and taxis use this route since we moved into this area. I had knowledge of the polling station since most of my children did their primary education at the school. I preferred to go to the polling station by myself since I would meet friends as this was the day for us the elderly and I felt special on this day that for once in our lives we are finally appreciated.

As I walked out of my yard heading for the polling station my unsteady legs could not co-ordinate their movement - not due to the fact that I was weak but I was totally ignorant about the procedures at the polls. I did not know what I was going to do at the polling station. Fear had taken control of me but I did not want to expose that to my children as they told me that my vote would bring about a good life for us and that was my greatest concern in life. I took up my walking stick and headed for the polling station.

As I arrived at the station I was met halfway by one of the voting officers and asked whether I wanted to vote. He introduced himself as Norman and asked me to produce my dompas (book of life) and he let me into the school yard and told me to head for the big hall where I would be attended to. Inside the school yard I saw people in wheelchairs and most
were cripples, some were friends. I could see some policemen and soldiers and I started to feel threatened thinking about the violence in the area. I waved to my friends who had already cast their votes and asked them what actually was happening inside the hall. Before I could get any reply one young boy took me by the hand and told me that if I had any problems I should let him know. He escorted me to a table where a white lady was sitting. She smiled at me and the young boy told me to give her my papers. Never in my life have I seen kindness and warmth, and confidence started to spring up in me. My hands were sprayed with a spray and I was given a sheet of paper to wipe my hands. When I asked what that was for I was told that it was for their convenience and ours and I was told that I must vote only once. In my mind I thought that we were going to vote for the next three days.

Now came the biggest problem of them all - how to make my cross. I was given a big roll of paper with pictures of people with smiles on their faces. The young boy escorted me to the booth which was so narrow and dark and he left me there. What must I do in this booth? I asked the young boy and the answer he gave me was "Make a cross on the face of your choice." It was so embarrassing and I stood inside the booth with the paper in hand for a long time and did not know what to do. Eventually the young boy who escorted me realized I had problems and kindly gave me the pen attached to the booth and asked me to tick the face of my choice. I thought of an old man who once came to our area and he was mobbed by people young and old. The things he said made a lot of sense.

With my imperfect eyesight I saw two men who were identical to the old man and the smile he always carried on his face. The voting officer told me to tick only once next to my favourite leader but there were two pictures of the old man. I told the officer that there were two pictures of the old man and whether I should tick both. He told me to have a look and tick the right picture as the man looked alike. The booth was dark and made it worse for me to see the right person and I eventually called the voting officer and I said the old man's name. He politely took me towards a brighter booth in the hall and at last there I saw my man and without wasting time ticked inside the space next to the old man's kind smile.

I walked out of the booth and a young lady told me to fold the voting paper as my vote was secret and no-one should see that I voted for the old man. I thought I met another problem. I was told to correctly fold the paper in order for the stamp to be visible so that my vote would be counted. I had already folded the paper into a small piece and we had to fold the paper again. She was so rude and I asked myself where are her manners?

I refused to let her fold my paper and fortunately the young voting officer who escorted me folded my paper and we headed for the box into which I put my paper. The young boy kindly gave me another sheet of paper and told me to follow the same procedure. This time I was clever and I did everything for myself without help and even inserted the paper into the box and I stood there without knowing what to do next. A white boy called me in broken Zulu and showed me the way out and I asked what next and was told that I can go home. I was very happy as I came out of the hall with my stamps in the air.

Happy because I've taken part in the elections. I shouted to my God to take me as I have done my work.

Ncepho Vilakazi of Edendale - interviewed by Bonguza Ntsimo

Three Stars Shining

Before the days of the elections I totally knew nothing about the elections as such. This is due to the fact that I did not experience any elections before. I was very happy and eager for
country and the other was shining our Natal region and the last star was shining facing the area I could not identify. When I woke up I could not understand the logic of the dream and I narrated the dream to my husband but he too could not comment on it.

On the day of the elections the mood of uncertainty was overwhelming me and I did not know where the polling station was until I was told by neighbours that the local High School would be used as the polling station. During the election day, as early as six o'clock there was already a long queue in the polling station. This was not what I expected. I thought only the disheards would respond. Even the most disabled people were accompanied by their relatives to the polling station. As from the first day of the elections there was nobody carrying any form of armament and people were standing and waiting very patiently in the long queues irrespective of their political affiliation. To me the election day was just like a judgment day because only an individual knew the truth. I also felt that it was up to each individual to liberate or betray the nation.

When I entered the polling station for the first time my heart beat started to strike hard as if I had done something wrong and my hands were trembling. As I entered I met the voting officials and I was told what I was expected to do. I knew the political party that I intended to vote for, but to my surprise when I opened the ballot paper for the first time I was struck by 'blanket' and for the first few seconds I could not identify the political party easily. By that time I felt like collapsing because my future was striking much harder and at the same time I was perspiring a lot. It was just after a few seconds that I started to cool down. As I voted I made sure there was nobody who could see what I voted for. As I went home I was filled with pride and confidence. What I noticed from the first day of the elections is the fact that the violence in our area and in Natal as whole decreased greatly. This was very surprising to me because
the church people and the political leaders did call and pray for peace but it seemed all that had failed dismally. Therefore I strongly believe this situation is due to the mercy of God and our ancestors.

After the election days people in my area were very inquisitive and they wanted to know who I had voted for. In response I used to say "I voted for Makwetuwa." I was saying this because I knew that they would not look at me with a jaundiced eye since PAC was regarded as the central figure between the two rivals. When the elections were over I started to be restless about the results. What worried me a lot is what would happen if the IFP loses the Natal provincial elections because presently our areas belong under the jurisdiction of the chiefs and most of them are members of Umngwananda (IFP).

The day of the results I was very happy and we were singing and dancing together with my neighbours, celebrating the victory of our leaders. In the evening of that day my husband reminded me about the dream I had before the election day. He interpreted the dream as follows: According to him the star that was shining over the entire country represented the national victory of the ANC, the other star that was shining facing Natal as a whole represented the provincial victory of the IFP and the final star that was shining facing the area I could not identify represented the provincial victory in the Cape of the National Party.

Benzisangani Machi of Ikhebelo - Interviewed by Benjamin Mdłamhli

Free at Last

It was like a dream to all people of South Africa when they were opening to exercise their vote for the first time in the history of their lives. At the multi-party negotiating forum it was agreed that the elections must be held on 27 April 1994. This date came out of many threatening and controversial things that had happened in our country. The killing of the South African Communist Party Secretary General Chris Hani lost hopes of about 75% of the South Africans. It was felt that there would be no peace in this country. The national disturbance followed and the actions of the people were uncontrollable. On the other hand the right-wingers were saying openly that they will not recognise the government with a black as president.

Things were getting tough for the government of the day. The African National Congress was viewed as a future governing party with nation wide support. It was then when the South African political parties began to organise rallies. What was remarkable was that always there were hundreds of thousands of people at the activities of the ANC. One might ask why there were so many people at their rallies. It is because of their strategy of organising, the skills of leadership and the exposure of their policies.

When the Inkatha Freedom Party took a decision not to participate in the elections it was a top issue on the agenda of the parliament. Violence spread like a forest fire in the province of Natal. The IFP were saying there would be a civil war in South Africa if their needs are not accommodated. The government together with the major role players in SA politics organised the international mediation to look after the IFP’s dissatisfaction with the constitution. The mediation failed and the talk of war continued. Now the killing of people in trains in the city of Johannesburg was the order of the day. The state of emergency in Natal was proclaimed to combat violence. The National Peace Keeping force was deployed in the Transvaal in an attempt to stop violence. It was on 19 April, eight days before the election was to take place, when the IFP decided to take part in the elections. The fears of the people were soon thrown away.
When the political parties were canvassing they were promising people heaven and earth. Houses for the homeless, water, better education, jobs for the jobless, equality before the eyes of the law, a free hand and better health treatment. We were totally convinced that our lives will change. The question of housing was the most important one and we were told that soon after the elections millions of houses would be built, and we were so much keen on that.

On the election day itself we woke up very early. We open our electronic media to hear about the latest on the preparations for the elections and we were told that safety and security is very tight on all polling stations. We were there confidently and we joined the queues of mixed races. The election officers were very kind and people behave very well. In fact it was not expected that the atmosphere of peace might prevail in such a way that it happened. The transport to take us to and from the voting stations was organized very well. When people heard that the Jan Smuts airport had been bombed by right-wingers we thought that the proceedings of the day countrywide might be disturbed but our security forces were there to look after the safety of the people.

The international observers were here in our country to make sure that the elections were free and fair and were democratic one. The election days were even extended. Although there were irregularities more especially here in Kwazulu/Natal province whereby the IFP were controlling some of the voting stations and people were told publicly that they must vote for a certain party. On other voting stations one person was responsible for housing all the ballot papers and the ballot boxes were not sealed. After all that had happened the elections were declared free and fair by the Independent Electoral Commission. For the sake of peace in the country the elections results were accepted as they were. What a great joy when the result of the elections were announced. People were singing, celebrating, shouting, but others they take a deep breath saying we are free at last. Free at last. The government of our own choice was in place. The wounds of years were soon healed. It was a country of all its people with equal rights and equal opportunities towards a better life.

Shubertso Molenge of Khutsza Selection, Embo

The Boss and I

I would like to thank all those people who had to struggle to make it possible for us to select our own democratic government. I never knew that the days of voting will come while I am alive. We have lost brothers and children, sisters and friends, because of the difficult conditions in which we were living under the apartheid government. The laws of the past had forced us to be laughed in our motherland. We became very poor after the government took land from us by force. There was no other way to survive in the rural areas and we had to move to the cities to earn money because the taxes were only payable in cash.

In the cities too life was tough for us Africans. The jobs were not giving us enough money to feed our family. The violence had made my children remain without their father. He was shot on his way back home where we were staying in urban areas. This situation forced me to look for a job and my son had to leave school and look for a job too so we can have money to survive. We ended up working for an Indian who is a builder of houses. He employed me as his maid and my son as his garden boy. We have been living with him for more than ten years. Even on the day of voting I voted with him and his family. My boss is Mr Khan and he is married and they have two sons. We are staying together with his family. I hope that the new government can help me to get a pension and help my children
to go back to school because education is important in these days.

The boss was very happy for us that at last we are able to vote for the government we believe can bring about freedom and a better life. The boss on that day was going to drive me together with the family to the polling station. While we were at home he told me which party I must vote for because he believed that it is the only party which can bring about the liberation of Africans. I didn't know that he was supporting the organisation which I was going to vote for up until that day. That made me feel very happy because we are going together and united for one party which we support. This might sound strange that after we live for so many years together but I didn't know his organisation. It is because we do not talk about politics most of the time because he is very busy and he like money a lot.

The boss said I must prepare the breakfast for them before we can all go to the voting station. They all came down from their rooms to eat and then after eating I had to clean up the table. The boss called me to join him in the prayer room where he was going to pray as a Muslim. He then asked me to lead them in singing Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika. Thereafter we left the prayer room to the garage where we were going to take his car to the polling station. That was a serious moment when I realised that it was a significant day for all of us, Indians and Africans. The polling station is not far from where we are staying, it is just a five minute walk, but the boss wanted us to be together because that was a special day. I told them on the way that my wish is to have a peaceful voting without violence and disruption. They assured me that it was the safest place and the police would be there to maintain security and order. While we were approaching the polling station we could see that the queue was in order and everyone was moving smoothly. That was what I was hoping for and I wished that in other places the spirit of peace was also prevailing. I hoped that my brothers and sisters at home in the rural area were voting in a peaceful manner.

When we got out of the car at the polling station the boss told us the way and that we must follow each other. He wanted us to be together and follow each other in an harmonious way. The members of the IEC welcomed us with warm hands. They were smiling to every one of us. One young man asked me how many years have I been waiting for this moment. I responded by asking him his own age and he said "I'm thirty years old, mother." Then I told him to multiply his age by two so that he can know what this moment meant to me. Both of us laughed and he said "Mama, enjoy yourself." That young man made me realise that I was very fortunate to be among other voters and that I had survived the harsh and repressive rule of the apartheid government.

The first thing which the members of the IEC did was to check that I was voting for the first time. Then I had to produce my ID to show that I am able to vote. They gave me two ballot papers, one for national and the other for provincial elections. The ballot papers had a list of parties with different faces. Some of the faces reminded me of the removal from our land by force, and other faces gave me hope for the future. I made a cross next to the face of Nelson Mandela and I felt very proud to select him out of the other leaders. He is the father of all the nation and the African National Congress is the only party that can meet the needs of the people. I went outside feeling very happy in my heart of having finished peacefully. The biggest day I was now waiting for was the day of announcing the final result of the election. I hoped that my party had won both on national and provincial levels.

While we were driving back home we were all very happy and singing Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika. We stopped at the supermarket and bought meat so that we can have a braai. My son and
daughter joined us at home since they had voted separately. We all enjoyed ourselves by singing, eating and drinking. We were even discussing what we expect from our new government if they come into power. That was a peaceful but dramatic day for all of us, which signified change to a democratic South Africa. The biggest day ahead of us was the announcing of the result. The results of the election were continuously publicised from the start of the counting. It was easy for us to see that the ANC was leading. But what really surprised us was the fact that the Isiksha Freedom Party was leading in the KwaZulu/Natal region. This was disappointing because I believed that we were the leading party all over South Africa. This didn’t matter because we won the election at the national level and we were in possession of more power and authority in the government. This can help the ANC to have more influence and be able to deliver the needs of the people. The election to me was just the beginning of a long journey of building a free and united nation.

**Plumzile Mkhathini of Mzinkulu and Reservoir Hills - interviewed by V.S.QUIT**

**Not Dreaming**

My name is Welcome Lajimuk. I was born and bred in this province of Natal in 1945 during the end of the second world war. At a young age during my school days life was hard. As you know, we as blacks we have been oppressed in the past.

In the period up to the elections I was very excited because it was the first democratic election that I had to cast a ballot that I have been denied this right all these years since I was born. During 1990 when political parties and leaders were released from detention and unbanned it became clear to me that the ray of hope that I had was gradually becoming a success. I was particularly pleased when the then state president FW de Klerk announced that all liberation movements including the South African Communist Party were then unbanned. From then I actively participated in mass demonstrations and rallies so that our leaders communicate directly with us as followers and supporters of the liberation struggle which was aimed at giving us freedom and non-racial democracy for all as citizens of South Africa. Although I live in the rural area that does not mean that we had so political awareness. The oppression affected all blacks regardless of whether they are urbanised or not. Most of my relatives are working in Durban and others are working far away from home in Johannesburg but when they visit us during December holidays we normally discuss the politics and the way politics affected their lives in the urban areas.

I was very excited to wake up early in the morning during the day of the elections. I saw many people passing down there on that little dusty road. All were very excited and joy was seen in their eyes that the greatest day that we had been waiting for had come. Although I was suffering from cold flu during that day, but after seeing people in different colours of dresses going down the road full of joy and happiness I felt like my suffering had gone away. I took that grey suit that you see hanging up there and I took my family in my motor car and drove to the nearest voting station. During that day we were one happy family and there was no one willing to make war on another person. Everyone that I met shook hands and raised my fist as a sign of triumph for us all.

I had listened carefully to radio and television programmes on the election and how to vote. I can say that some of the voting rules were in my head. Interestingly the election was based on the secret ballot system whereby no one, including your wife and children, can know what political party you have voted for. This system is good and useful because it prevents polarisation.
among voters themselves. I saw a number of peace monitors and observers. We had already been told that there would be local as well as international observers so the people behaved very well in this election. There were few reports of misbehaviour although it was the first event for blacks. I do appreciate so much the effort of the IEC for the vital role they played to make the election a success. I hope in the future there will also be a body like this which is independent so that elections occur freely and fairly without state intervention.

At voting stations there was no water for people to drink. That is why many people more especially the elders fainted because of long standing in the open sun. In the voting station that I cast my vote in there was a very long queue, approximately it was two kilometres long, but that did not prevent me because something inside me was so strong, a wish to cast my vote during that day and not the following day. For many people it took about seven hours of standing in the open sun waiting to cast their first votes for a democratic new country of South Africa. It was two o'clock when I reached the ballot box. I felt like I was dreaming, but to see many people and especially my relatives and local people made me feel secure and I realised that I was not dreaming. I took my ballot papers both national and provincial and I went into my corner where I made my choice of which party I can vote for. I put my cross on the appropriate spaces provided and folded my ballot paper and put it into the ballot box. Then I went out and got into my car and waited for my relatives to vote and take them in my car to arrive safely at their homes.

After elections everyone in this area was excited and there were no more violent events reported in this area. In other words, violence was reduced because everyone had cast their vote. It became clear to me that the right to vote is one of the essential basic rights which by no means an individual may be denied or deprived of it . I wish the next elections would come soon because there is no more existing opportunity in my life than elections.

Welcome Diamini of Grovetille - interviewed by K.W. Luthuli

One of the Heroines of African Liberation

When I first heard about the elections I said “What the heck, they won’t do anything to help us the ordinary people, but will only work for the benefits of the already rich, making them even richer.” In the months towards the elections there was nothing else that people talked about, but just the elections. The radio and television, whenever I heard it at work, always talked about the elections but still I didn’t think they’d do any good. I heard that our had to get an ID in order to be able to vote in the elections. I had lost my reference book when my house was burned down back home but my employers urged me to go and get a special voting card from the Department of Home Affairs. I got it and was ready for the so much talked about election dates. Everyone was so excited and you could hear it in their voices in the trains and buses whenever they talked about elections.

When the IFP said it wasn’t going to participate there was a lot of violence throughout the country. In my area, the youths went totally berserk. IFP youths threatened everyone that if they went to vote that would be the last day they lived. ANC youths urged everyone to go out and vote for Nelson Mandela and oust the National Party regime. Such confrontation led to one of the youths being killed in my shebeen. When Mandela came to Umlazi on his election campaign all hell broke loose. In our area houses were burnt down, people were killed and there was a lot of lawlessness. The residents of a nearby men’s hostel who are IFP invaded our settlement and demanded to see everyone’s IFP membership card. My son Zwelakhe who is eighteen was taken
was hacking and left for dead in the bush because some men claimed he was a courier [i.e., an ANC supporter]. I had nowhere to go with my family so we just stayed amid all the killings. I started asking myself what was the good of these elections if our children are going to be killed.

I was very much for change but I didn’t know the direction that change would take or whether I would survive it. Over the years we have been told that Chief Buthelezi is doing everything for the black person. What I knew was that he formed his Inkatha because the Congress [ANC] was banned but I was confused about all the fuss he caused when Mandela was released and the ANC unbanned. Some people told us that Mandela didn’t have the Zulu’s interests at heart but only wanted to serve the Xhosa, so we shouldn’t vote for him but for Buthelezi. Others told us that Buthelezi was a sell-out and was using the Zulu monarch to further his own interests and was co-opted by the National Party government to sell out his fellow black men. During the time of high tension one was afraid to even talk about voting to strangers because you wouldn’t really know which side of the fence they were on.

I for one wanted nothing to do with the elections because they almost cost the life of my son, who is my only hope in life, not the new president, be it Mzimela or Buthelezi. I heard on the radio that education officers had been brutally gunned down in Nkwichi and this made me feel the whole thing even more dire and made me even more indiffident. Deep down I hoped and prayed that God could bring His Light onto the people of our country and make them stop killing each other. That was the only time I ever heard God answering prayers quickly. He changed Buthelezi’s heart and he joined the election process. This raised mixed hopes of the ending of this violence. Even I felt that I had a contribution to make and go and vote to change the course of our country. We all had bitterness in our stomachs because this was a first for all of us. We didn’t know what was expected of us or what we would be up against. In other parts of the country there were threats of bombing by the right wing, but the real threat in Natal was the less talked about hotheads that existed. Thugs could come into your house and ask what side you were taking and then harass you and take your belongings at gun point. Amid all this, hopes were very high that eventually everything would go according to plan. Excitement filled the air everywhere and people were in high spirits. I had also started regaining my high spirits as well because my son was then out of the hospital and on the way to recovery.

Came 26 April 1994, the voting day for the old and frail and other exceptional voters. I didn’t have much sleep the night before in anticipation of the following day, the day I would make my input in changing South African history. I sent my daughter Zodwa out early to fetch water so that I could take a bath, I had my pyjamas and was ready with my voting card in hand at about 6 o’clock in the morning. I knew the polling station wouldn’t open until seven, but being a history-maker means you have to wake up early and make your statement heard.

One hitch though, I still wasn’t sure who I was going to vote for, but I was sure I was going to vote the National Party out of office. Vote them out with their pass laws, their apartheid laws, their influx control, their racist and derogatory laws and everything they ever did to make the black man feel inferior in his own land. What I told myself in a way was that my vote would equal all the bullets of ‘76, all the atrocities they ever committed against us, and though being a Christian and against capital punishment, I hoped it would be a hangman’s noose for apartheid and all its supporters. I hoped that my vote would make my husband rest in peace in heaven, and that he would thank me when I joined him one day, for he never saw the day he longed for and indirectly died for. I thought of all the people
that had died for the struggle and felt an even greater urge to go out and vote for them. So myself, for my children, their children, the whole Nation and for the Almighty.

With tears in my eyes I went out into the street and joined many others who were on the same mission. It was touching to see old people, some in wheelchairs and stretchers, all being ferried to the polling station. It was like the promised day, when Jesus would come back, had finally come. Good Samaritans ferried us in their cars and buses to the polling stations. Once there I quickly made up my mind. It would be unfair to totally ignore Buthelezi and whatever he had done, but Mandela and his Congress deserved all the credit. So on the national ballot I voted ANC and on the regional ballot I voted IFP. Then the rest is history. But what gives me most pleasure is having been there and having played a very important role. Besides being a mother and taking care of my family, this is the next important role I have ever played. Although I still live in a shack and haven't yet got the house the ANC promised us, I haven't lost hope because I know they have many things to deal with and many wrongs to right that were made by the previous government. What I did wouldn't directly benefit me, but would benefit my children and their children in turn and God knows, maybe one day I will be called one of the heroines of African liberation.

Saraphina Sifiso of Umbuzo - Interviewed by Thami Mthunzi

Expecting a Promotion

Before the elections I was very scared, probably of the outcome. I suppose it was natural - other people were also scared and worried. I felt that the shops would be closed for months and we could not buy anything for a long time. I also thought there would be lots of shooting and killing of people. I felt that our homes would be taken over by blacks since people living in Chatsworth and Phoenix were threatened by possible takeovers. I felt that South Africa would become another Zimbabwe where people left the country and moved out. At the same time I felt that change was necessary and long overdue and would end white rule. I did not feel my life was in danger - not before the elections.

I was happy because it was a working day off. I was very excited on the day of the election and very eager. I felt that I wanted to air my opinion and therefore wanted to vote. I got up as usual in the morning, eager, but it was also an ordinary day. At about 9 o'clock in the evening I went with my father to the polling station at the Dr Macken Maistry School. I had no fears at this time since there were many of my friends there at the time. At the entrance I saw two policemen who directed us towards the polling booth. There were many policemen standing around doing nothing and there was adequate security at the polling station.

The IEC officials treated us like little children in the way they explained the procedure to us. I can understand that they had to do this because some people didn't know about voting procedures. Instead of making everyone wait in long queues those who didn't understand should have been identified and taken into a room or some other place where they could have been explained to about what to do. Long lines turned people away. Those who knew how to vote were left waiting in the lines. I waited for approximately 45 minutes before voting. After voting I felt good about what I had done. It was a good experience voting in the first democratic elections. The party I voted for was the National Party, because I felt they would make a good government. Without this party the election would not have been possible. In my opinion, de Klerk is very noble since he foresaw problems but went ahead. Even though the NP lost I felt they would win. Many Indians were scared of losing their homes and they voted for the NP for safety reasons. The people
I spoke to my friends that white rule would make sure they still had a roof over their heads. Even though others were still I expected the NP to win the election.

I thought the election went smoothly. The results were announced after a few weeks and obviously I didn't get the results I expected which was disappointing. The election was also a huge waste of money. There were many IEC officials who were highly paid for nothing. It should have been voluntary. People couldn't care whether the job was done properly or not as long as they were being paid.

I can't see what the ANC did so far. I am still a bank teller. I expected a promotion and a whole lot more. I am very disappointed. I felt Chris Hani's death would lead to a lot of bloodshed but it ended up the process. I was scared of the bomb blasts after the election in Johannesberg. I have no problem with black rule but I fear what happened in Zimbabwe. If a job is done properly there would be no problem. Things will only be calm while Mandela is alive. What will happen when he dies? Is he that wise? I looked black rule since I was also discriminated against. My family and I were barred from entering a whites only holiday resort.

I have no fears now. I do see job improvement. I should say that previously we were unable to get good jobs because we were not white enough but with affirmative action we are not black enough. Affirmative action is not being carried out properly. Instead it is a reversal of apartheid.

Sharon Groverdon of Durban - Interviewed by M.Siyamoney

Chaos at the Counting Station

I did not believe it when I heard that I was going to vote for the first time in my life. For so many years I could not understand why the white people did not let us black people vote. To me and other black people who were voting for the first time voting was an experience that we will never forget in our entire life. I waited impatiently for the day to come so I can vote. I was thinking that there is going to be a war before the 27th of April could come and that we cannot vote then. At last we were going to select leaders that we could be proud of. Fortunately all went well and we managed to vote though there were problems here and there.

I had fears that those who were opposed to the election were going to cause trouble and there would be bloodshed. The government and its police force had promised to make this day of voting peaceful one but it was very hard to believe the police because they had killed so many innocent people in our townships. Fortunately they did protect us and we managed to vote. Political parties were trying to make us vote for them. There were others I have never heard of who were trying to persuade us to vote for them. But we were told that our vote was secret and we were not to disclose it to any one even our close ones. I could not believe that. I thought that my vote was to be known to everyone and I started to have doubts about going to vote. If my vote was to be known to everyone that would be dangerous and I might be killed.

In this place I stay in, it is mostly dominated by one party, which is the ANC. We had fears that since we and other black people were not going to vote for the ANC they were going to find out that we voted for another party. Then they were going to find out and kill us. It is very difficult to trust these militant young children of today who can brutally kill a person through the necklace system or shoot a person several times. It does not
matter to them whether that person is old or young or of good use to the community at large. They just mercilessly kill that individual. Our fears were based on such occurrences.

I may say that we were not properly taught how to actually exercise our vote. We were told of just putting a cross next to the party of your choice but it was not clear to us. We waited until the day came and we did not know that there were problems the voting officials would have. On the day of voting we encountered many problems that we the older ones should not have experienced. We were told that they will provide us with transport to and from the voting stations. We waited for a very long time so that they can come and pick us up. We ended up walking long distances to the voting stations because the transport came very late. There were very few buses provided for the older generation and they were always fully packed. There were also very long queues that we had to follow. These lines were too long for us and since we are old people we cannot stand for too long. We were told that the ballot papers did not have another party’s name on them. So we had to wait for other papers to come which had IFP stickers on them. The papers took many hours to come. It took me more than three hours to exercise my vote and I was very exhausted afterwards. When I entered the voting centre I felt thrilled. There were voting officials who were there to assist us, I did not trust these people because I thought they were biased to some parties, I also even think that they were spies to find out who we had voted for. Party leaders on the ballots were not properly clear and they almost looked the same.

They must understand that we the older ones have many illnesses that affect us. The problem of the eyes made us have difficulties in seeing properly. I think in the next elections ballot papers should be much clearer than these ones so as to help others like me who have no clear vision. I still believe that a lot of older people voted for the wrong parties instead of the one they had intended to vote for. After I finished my voting we talked about our experience of voting for a long time. I nearly died without experiencing voting in my entire life and I hope that I will not die so that I will vote in the next elections. I never thought that voting was so complicated. These violet lights and ink which was invisible was something I never heard of in my life.

I then went home and waited for the results. I still do not understand why in this province of Natal we experienced so many problems that other regions did not have. I think it was purposely made to be so. There were problems with counting as well. Natal results came later than other regions. When the results came out I thought my party was cheated even in this province of KwaZulu/Natal. We were told by the media of the chaos and disturbances that were occurring in the counting stations. How do you expect proper and genuine results from such stations? But anyway voting was a lifetime experience that I will not forget. I am also happy that there was no war after the results.

Miwbso Mazibuko of Kwamashu - interviewed by E.N. Sibiizi
Part Two

Counters
I Stood there and Watched...

8 April 1994: Did you guys overseas get to see FW and Mandela on the television? Watched by 80 000 people in SA the television halls sold out - how the hell do they know? Anyway it was interesting, with Mandela talking about redistribution of state expenditure and FW talking about the IMF and the cost of interest repayments. They were both such remarkable men but they are both politicians, FW talking about the NP: "Our hands are clean" colour means nothing to the brown NP and so on. Mandela looking inscrutable, but also mooning off at every opportunity. It brought home to me, although nothing new, the way in which politicians can say whatever they like and get away with it regardless of how distorted a truth it may be. So elections are just away and "rolling mass action" is predicted for Natal. Rolling mass action? I have this mental image of Jamba impi with all the people curled up into balls, clutching their spears and rolling down the hillside - Eecker style.

25 April 1994: Jim has just walked in to tell me of the bomb in Johannesburg last night with three people killed and 70 injured. I wonder what will happen after the elections and where this conflict is going to. Did I tell you that I went to Synagoge on Friday night? It was a good night to go because the chief Rabbi was visiting from Johannesburg. I thought his speech was the best speech I have ever heard from any Rabbi. When he said he was going to talk about the elections I shuddered. But he basically said that everything was going to be okay if a) people continued to be good Jews and b) everyone made an effort towards the future of the country. He laid lots of emphasis on the fact that we could only have a multi-racial and democratic country if we all contributed towards it and all did our bit.

Saturday was interesting. I went down to the University of Durban-Westville for a workshop to train me in the art of

monitoring vote counting. We started at 10.20 and were all squashed into one small windowless classroom to be more accurate there were windows but they were riveted shut!! There were mainly Indian men present, and their lots of Indian women, followed by some African women and a few African men. There were only three white men and four white women. Our trainer Mercia came from Kimberley and was presumably a DET school teacher. She was hard to follow and was herself unclear on what was going to happen during the vote counting. After tea, of which there wasn’t any, we crowded back into the room to discover that Mr Naidoo (all the white and Indian men identified themselves only by their surnames, all the white, Indian and African women used their first names, African men also used their first names) had made an arrangement with Mercia and he took over the teaching. Mr Naidoo is a school teacher. After he took over suddenly everyone shut up and listened and there were no more problems.

It’s crazy and the whole election process is going to be chaotic. But to give the ANC credit it will probably all happen and be fine in the end. Did you know that each ballot paper has to be displayed to members of all 26 parties and decided upon before it can be counted? It will take days!! And there are hundreds of different methods of doing things and different seals which may or may not be broken by certain persons and different procedures and it will all be bedlam. And there will be claims for lost ballot boxes and stolen votes and intimidation and false ballots. And if we survive the election, how do we know that any of the parties will accept the outcome? Political tolerance is not something that we are particularly good at - after all just look at our track record!

5 May 1994: So here I am 27 years old and this last week has felt like a year. As you’ve probably gathered I didn’t keep a diary so all in all it was arranged the end although initially I had planned to. Where to start? I guess with trying to decide who to vote for. I tried to
take the whole thing very seriously indeed. I bought endless newspapers, read all the different parties jargon, listened to them on television and spoke to friends. I felt I could not vote NP, regardless of what the new National Party was advocating. I simply couldn’t support a party whose record I knew only too well and whose results I was only too familiar with. Then there was the DP. All those negative slogans and posters!! And such a salve to white conscience. That left the ANC which was where my gut feelings lay. But what about Nelson’s social readjustment campaign? I read endless reports on what was or wasn’t possible, about the IMF and the cost of borrowing money and about the NP’s alternative plans (for which there seemed to be remarkably little information). Everyone I spoke to seemed to think that the ANC was going to win anyway and what it needed was a moderating (and conservative?) influence so they were voting for the DP. I thought about that but what was I doing voting for the DP when I believed in the ANC? After I’d voted I felt good about my choice, I believed that the ANC had the most genuine interest in improving the country as a whole and I felt I had done something positive towards the future of my country, I wrote commemorative letters to André, Zim, Fiona and Cathy.

That was before I got involved in the monitoring and counting process. Which was my first night? I think Saturday or was that when Evie and I went down to the IEC offices to help out? I wrote to you about that didn’t I? Well I arrived, I think on Sunday night, at 5.45 pm all bright and cheery and ready to work all night but somewhat vague about my role. I’d spent a fair amount of time going through my manual and knew the procedure. Up until then no counting or reconciliation had been done. We finally got going at about 9.30 beginning with the reconciliation. In this process you are meant to count the ballots in each box and check the total number against the presiding official’s statement made at the polling station. Party officials watch over the procedure and hit the roof if someone so much as glances at a ballot (they are meant to be kept face down). If the figures do not tally, you have to recount until you have two identical totals. Then if they reconcile all the party officials and the Counting Officer have to sign a form. If they still don’t tally they sign the forms and complete another form (a “notification of discrepancies and irregularities form”). It took hours. Judge Kriegler had made his announcement to scrap reconciliation at 9 pm that night on television. We only stopped at about three in the morning when we started counting the votes.

Earlier on I had decided not to do anything except my job. Finally a woman came over to me and complained about something. “Not my job” I replied. “No, it’s not ever anyone’s job, well make it yours!” she said. After that we organised things between us. We completed the forms, got the party officials to sign them, reconciled them, copied them and kept a note of which ballot boxes they had to be inserted into. We were working in a school hall with two other stations and our station was positioned between the other two stations and the exit. This meant that there were lots of people from the other stations moving through our station all the time. By the second night we were a bit more prepared and we recongised the room. We used tables to block off the counting tables from the door and set up a number of checkers in the process. Still we found IFP votes in amongst the ANC ballots. Still ANC ballots ended up in the NP ballots necessitating a recount of 3000 odd ballots. And then there were the hold-ups and the disputes. Ballots could be either regular or irregular which could be counted or rejected. They could be valid or invalid. These could be counted or disputed. Anything irregular, rejected or disputed had to be kept separate and forms with long titles had to be completed. Then of course there were ballots which looked nothing like our book of examples and which were hard to make a decision about.

Once all the counting was done and the ballot boxes all resaled we had to total the scores for the three stations. No-one had thought to install a computer, so there we were, exhausted from
three nights work, checking and double checking the arithmetic on 105,000 ballots! It took forever to find the mistakes and to sort it all out. Meanwhile people from the other three stations milled around and made a noise. At one stage I had to go and make a phone call and there was so much noise I couldn't hear a thing. It was about midnight and I stood on the stage and shouted for everyone to shut up. Suddenly there was a deadly hush and everyone turned expectantly towards me for the election results. I was booted and cat-called when I asked them please to keep the noise down.

Shortly after midnight the ANC came in to celebrate and there was much toy-throwing and singing of our national anthem strangely juxtaposed with the popping of champagne corks. Strange for me because I had never seen toy-throwing as part of a victory. I stood and watched it all and felt completely removed from it all. Despite voting ANC this did not feel like my victory. Someone hazed a huge poster of Nelson Mandela's face over the crowd. I felt a sinking feeling as I stood there and watched. At exactly this moment Nkosi was sitting in Expo hall along with 2,500 other people while police searched the building looking for a bomb.

By 1 am we had finished checking the figures and we called together all the party officials to sign the final forms before we sent off the figures to higher authorities. Now the NBP wanted to open some boxes and do a random check (by this time all the counters had left). It would have meant checking an entire station and it would have taken hours not to mention what would have happened had we found mistakes. Finally everything was done (I composed the final forms and made sure they were signed to everyone). There were then at 2 am sitting listening to each politician making a speech about how marvellous the election was and who all thanked and on and on and on. I wanted to do was clear out and go to bed. Then we faxed the final forms (which my CO refused to sign) and everyone went home. Everyone except me because I had to phone and verify the final figures and it took ages to get through on the phone.

So yes, it was a disturbing experience, because I believed in my vote and I wanted to believe in a new country and in a "free and fair election". And all I felt afterwards was tired, disillusioned and sad. I liked most of the political officers though, especially the guys from the ANC. The NP people were very helpful as well. The one DP guy was a bit paranoid but they were all reasonable and responded immediately if one asked them to do, or not to do, something. The IFP guys all looked much younger than the others and sort of out of it. They were somehow more dissent possibly because they didn't speak English, every time there was a dispute with the IFP it had to be translated into Zulu. Once some of them realized that they might not have won, panic ensued. All on phones were engaged while policemen pacified debt collectors (at 12;30 at night!!!) and tried to make alternate plans for their lives. For the first time I realized just how much many people had invested on both a personal and a financial level. It was quite an eye opener to see and smell their fear.

Linda Weidman

Substantially Free and Fair

It was a still, clear grey-down, with hints of pink fading fast as the day grew stronger - enough at any rate to dispel some of the immense frustrations of the night before. And maybe even enough to impart some feeling of liberation. The street outside was busy with people wending their way to work - buses, taxis, queues. Oh! but on this particular morning, what a difference. In the distance I could hear them cheering in the new government with ANC chants and songs. The inevitable toy-toy rhythms rippled on the air. The crowd in the street shone black, yellow
and green; they were vibrant with triumph. Hunters blazed and passengers hung out of bus and taxi windows, flailing their arms and slaking heads with all and sundry, those in the bus queues and those just passing by:

Not for the first time, I felt I would have enjoyed the heralding of the new South Africa so very much more if only I had stayed out of the election process. If I had just contented myself with queuing patiently to deliver my vote, I could have been part of the exciting crowds now. Instead, I felt wretchedly tired, frustrated and rather inclined to think the elections had been a charade. Justice Krieger's "substantially free and fair" was an apt and euphemistic understatement of the confusion and chaos which had reigned throughout KwaZulu's election. Here we were, leaving our queuing stations after several frustrating nights; the outcome had been decided and we were barely a third of the way through our count. Surely we hadn't even needed to vote?

The outcome had been decided by sheer weight of anticipation. Such were the feelings I had as I left Etho that morning.

The experience of voting had only whetted my appetite to be involved. Queuing, as everyone rightly attests, was a delight. The day was fine, and the crowds were rejoicing. Everyone was determined to be friendly and helpful. Young mothers and old ladies were escorted to the front of the queue by the eager IEC polling staff; smiles greeted the voters at every turn, and unusually for Durban, people in the queues exchanged polite comments with the strangers next to them. Durban is wildly provincial, and a certainty doesn't do to trust your comments to a stranger in the normal course of events. I was voting in a largely white suburb, but there were many black faces.Madams were bringing their maids as if ensuring their right to vote was a trifle easier. It reminded me of role reversal rituals, as the maids got the chairs under the trees and the madams did the fasting. There were many students, too, all booming and joking with their colleagues. Being new to South Africa, I had not valued my vote until then. Now, the significance of each vote and each voice in the queue was palpable. When my turn to vote came, I couldn't bring myself to leave. The atmosphere of the queuing crowd was like an elixir, it was a remarkable spectacle, and so I lingered to see and watch for a while longer.

The desire to be involved in the process was quite intoxicating that day, but no word had come from the recruitment office. I didn't hear until the Thursday - the second day of voting. I was to be on night shift at Durban Expo Centre counting station 34, and we were to start the next evening.

The sight that met our eyes at the Expo Centre was impressive: queues of people were spilling out of the gates in all directions and cars were parked on all pavements and every other free space. Where were we supposed to go? Roo asked at the gate, but was summarily sent away to queue. We joined a queue and entered the Expo Centre well after seven o'clock. But that was of small moment; there were yet more obstacles. Within the compound, the hall which housed the counting stations was barred by another gate. This time, the queues were not inexorably moving forward, even by inches; they were not moving at all. Clusters of people stood around, grouped most thickly at the large raling gate 20 to the hall. It was dark in the compound away from the lights of the hall. Army Casuals and police vehicles lurked in the gloom, and there were groups rejoicing somewhere on the other side of the site. The rejoicing was coming from ANC party representatives who were crowded round a radio and cheering each snippet of information as it was broadcast. We could occasionally wander over there and find out the state of play in the process, but for the most part, we only needed to listen.

The inner compound was almost devoid of people. There were some officials wearing the blue and white IEC bibs and baseball caps, but my queries only drew blank looks. I looked around and
found that the doors to the hall itself were also guarded. I wandered into the only place had access to, and found myself among the party representatives who were assessing the mountains of unopened ballot boxes. I had been a rare white face until now. The predominantly white party reps welcomed me until they realised I was not one of them. I was then firmly directed to the guarded hall. I sat around for a bit, not knowing quite what to feel or do. Prostration vied with curiosity and the desire to be involved. I could go no further, and I was damned if I was going back! In the end I found Raa and Dinesh, equally despondent but certainly not beaten. It was half past nine, and we realised nothing was going to be happening that night. We debated a bit, reluctant to go, but eventually agreed to meet at the same time, same place, in town the following evening and try our luck again. We left for home. (Next day)

As counting monitors, we had to witness each ballot box being opened and then resealed, and we had to observe and note each disputed ballot paper. We were on no account to touch a ballot paper. This stipulation because quite difficult to adhere to when any irregular mark was in question; some voters had put the vote on the back of the form so that it could only be seen by holding the paper up to the light. Some had written the names of their candidate across the entire form, some had ticked all boxes except the one we presumed they were voting for. I was continually amazed by the inventiveness we encountered, and the earnestness, exhilaration and intent communicated itself through nearly all these variations. Accepting these variations was a matter of who was vetting the particular vote and what the nature of the irregularity was. Someone, for instance, had written NEVER across Mandela’s name but had not marked an alternative choice. We had decided upon a policy which allowed any paper through provided the intention of the vote was obvious to all present. This varied somewhat from the guidelines, but we felt it was more in keeping with the spirit of the event. However, the system was not stable and varied widely with each new shift of party reps.

After the painfully slow counting of two ballot boxes, one at each of the tables set up by the counting officer, we monitors suggested doubling up the counting by splitting each of the tables in two and counting at four points. We eventually had six counting points in our station, but not until close to the end of our first shift. It had meant we had needed to redistribute the enumerators; some were given two or three of the more obscure parties to collect, and we had two collecting for the ANC. It also meant we had to rush between the opening of each ballot box, and had six monitor several counting points at the same time. But by that time, we were fairly used to each other and knew where the trouble spots might be. Trouble came in the form of beleaguered party reps; in our case, because most of our ballot boxes contained ANC votes, it was the IFP. They counted as many votes as they could to hold up the process, even when the intention of the voter had been accepted by all the other party reps as being obvious. These votes were put to one side and entered onto the reconciliation sheets as a separate category. But by the end of our first shift together, we had worked out a system. It had taken most of the first night to negotiate a system we all felt was reasonable. Tomorrow, we hoped, would be more productive.

On the second night of counting we reached our station by ten o’clock, a marked improvement on the previous night. But we found that the day shift had left us with a certain amount of chaos. We could not tell which of the boxes had been counted; many of the boxes waiting to be counted were sealed, but when we opened them they appeared to have already been sorted with reconciliation slips. After opening several like this, we called a meeting. We chose to put these questionable boxes to one side and continue with new boxes collected from the central dispatch
point. Our problems were minor compared to the stories we were getting of boxes filled with grass, or neatly banded balls, all going for the same party. I was curious to actually see some of this, but the stories, I think, muddled us into believing that our boxes had been unthinkingly tampered with when they had probably just been stored in the wrong place. This, however, was not the only problem we had to contend with. Each counted ballot box needed a reconciliation slip giving details of the count. The reconciliation slip had to be faced to the IEC head office in Johannesburg, receipt acknowledged, then copies made for each party represented at the station. The original slip was then placed with the counted ballots in the sealed ballot box for storage.

At about midnight, the photocopy on our side of the hall ran out of tone. Very soon after that, all the other photocopyers ran out of toner as well. The only photocopyer left functioning was the one in the organizer’s office, and that had an hour and forty minutes waiting time in the queue. Then the fax machines started to play up. We called a halt at our station when we realised we could no longer send the reconciled boxes home. After some discussion, we thought we could carry on by leaving the reconciliation slips on top of the counted votes in unsealed boxes. We had both counting like this for some twenty minutes when someone on the hall PA system told all stations to stop counting and to stay sitting at their places. Abashed, this we did. In another twenty minutes or so, a group of police officers with dogs came through our station. The dogs were made to sniff around the ballot boxes and counting tables. The sight of the dogs caused some stirring among the enumerators who were not sleeping. The police had to pass through the entire hall, and we were left waiting for instructions to resume counting. It was a long wait and we took the opportunity to eat our sandwiches and, for the enumerators, to sleep.

Sometimes during the night, the rumour reached us that the head organisers for IEC at Expo had had a nervous breakdown and had been shipped off to the hospital. Very smiles not this; so there really was no one driving the bus! The instructions to resume counting never did come, and several of the neighbouring stations were already counting before our officer let us start up again. But, somehow, during the interruption, the day shift’s obvious boxes had been confused with our unobtrusive ones. It was now close to three in the morning. We had been at the Expo Centre since six o’clock the previous night, but had barely counted more than a dozen of our allocated boxes. By now, all the enumerators had their heads down and were sleeping. Dineth and I rounded up two teams of semi-somnolent but relatively keen enumerators to start counting again. We got as far as opening a ballot box when an interpretation of the cracking tinacy system petered down to us: we all had to leave the premises immediately.

Dawn was barely over, the sun still evaporating as the day took hold. When I saw the day brightening, it cleared my fatigue. But the frustration remained. I couldn’t decide whether to come back or not. I think it was hearing the people clamouring their approval of the victorious ANC that morning that decided me; if it had been generally accepted that the ANC had won, why did we need to carry on bashing our heads against the chaos of the Expo counting system? I suffered from a sense of guilt and бесапал all that day, but still I did not go back. Besides, I had been unable to sleep through the riotous day. And no one was answering phones at Expo.... Instead, I went out for a drink.

Pele Paliwe, University of Natal, Durban
Phoenix

I had decided to go to a voting station at an Africanists medium high school in Riversdale. This is a largely white middle class residential suburb, an area that some 30 years earlier was declared a white group area, and people of colour were removed to the townships of their race. I thought it was appropriate to vote in an area that had been expropriated from black people in the name of a so-called political ideology. On 27 and 28 April 1994 the domestic servants and the madams, the garden 'boys' and the bosses, white and black stood side by side, waiting patiently in a long queue to vote. Behind me there was an Africanist couple giving advice in a paternalistic way to their domestic servant on the procedures of voting. The domestic servant turned to a friend and remarked in Zulu that she was 'just going to humour the amabutho who still think that we cannot understand anything'. The voting itself at this particular polling station was efficient, disciplined, uneventful and uninteresting process. Election officials were polite and helpful, so those that still required any assistance, but with the mannerisms of bored clerks in a post office.

It was a peculiar sensation voting for the first time in such a rigidly structured process: forming a queue, handing over your identity document, being fitted printed (the invisible dye method), given directions as what to do next, filling in a form (the ballot paper), marshalled to the voting area and being directed to place the ballot in a box. Being told what to do was something that I have experienced many times in the old South Africa, especially when dealing with government bureaucracy. But for the occasion, voting for and in the new South Africa was strangely deja vu. Perhaps it was the atmosphere created by the sang-efficient and young upswell mobile election officials that made it feel like you were conducting a business transaction rather than ending a period of oppression. This contrasted with a polling station I visited in the Indian and coloured township of Roed Hill later that day. Here there was a festive atmosphere - a celebration of a new beginning. One approached the polling station through a cacophony of sounds and sights: political posters, taffic jams, music, political parties urging people to vote, posters offering voter education, and people in a multitude of sartorial designs, de rigueur party coloures of the political parties to the latest in fashionable yoppie designer wear. Although there were very long queues, people were in a generally jovial mood, taken with the mood which unmistakably suggested on your mind the monumental event taking place. And the voting process was not any less efficient, with the older generation, including the infirm and hands-clapped being happily escorted to the front of the queue by election monitors.

Training for some three hundred counting officers was conducted by a former student of mine, who upon recognising my colleague and myself, simply burst out laughing. It was flattering to be recognised and to note how well former students were doing, but downright embarrassing to be so identified. Training consisted of whipping through a manual prepared by the IEC on the counting procedures. The recruiting and training over - in a manner of speaking - the allocation of stations began. This consisted of matching 30 enumerators with a team of seven counting officers and a counting station. The uppit IEC official in charge should not have treated staff and stumbled, or rather the newly titled counting officers and enumerators, with the chauvin of a bulldozer. Pavlovemonium again! Eventually our team of counting officers successfully lured 30 students to be enumerators for the night shift at a counting station in the somewhat appropriately named Indian working class township of Phoenix. Thus our politically correct team was formed - racially mixed, gender sensitive in composition, and led by a woman chief counting officer - and presented to the IEC in full accomplishment, that which they tried for weeks to do.
On the first night of duty on Friday 20 April all counting officers and enumerators made their way to counting station 44 at Stammure Hall in Phoenix arriving there half an hour early. As it transpired we were to share the hall with counting station 45. All their counting officers and enumerators were also from the university, but of course we could act superior because our team of counting officers and enumerators were racially mixed and gender sensitive, with the scales in favour of women. We had lost a few enumerators, but there were more than enough local township people handy by the door of the hall. They must have heard of the good wages they could earn for one or two nights’ work. But there were no ballot boxes delivered, and counting of ballot boxes could not commence. We were informed by the co-ordinators of the two stations that ballot boxes would arrive later.

After making sure that the station was laid out according to the plan given to us by the IEC, we decided to pass the time by simulating the procedure to be followed. After this we checked the fax machines and telephones. They worked, but there were no cellular phones or computers. We had four ordinary telephones, each with a different number. At about 10 pm we were informed that ballot boxes were on their way from the Phoenix Police Station, and that the police guarding our station should immediately provide an escort for the last few kilometres. There was great excitement, all counting officers and enumerators trying to peer into the darkness to catch a glimpse of the arrival of the first ballot boxes to be counted. A few minutes later we heard from one of the policewomen that IEC regional headquarters had asked that the ballots be returned immediately to the CR Swart police station in central Durban. There was great disappointment. We never did find out why this happened, although it appeared that the IEC decided to centralise as much of the counting as possible in central Durban. Later we heard from the sole UN observer for our area that there were various disputes arising about where the ballots should be counted, based on allegations about the neutrality of the venues and IEC officials.

While all this palaver ensued, a young man strode in, cellular phone in one hand and screwdriver on the other. His female assistant followed a few steps behind with two fax machines. He began to disconnect our fax machines, and fled with the fax lines. Upon being confronted, he claimed he was an IEC official in charge of replacing the Telkom machines with the IEC’s own retired models. Whatever he did simply caused the machines to go dead. When this was pointed out to him, he said he would return later to fix it. We never heard from him again. When it was discovered that he was just a student at Natal University, all kinds of unfavourable comments were made. We had to get Telkom to come to repair one of the machines and the lines, all to the cost of the IEC.

Counting at stations 44 and 45 only really began the next night. We were to count the ballots for the district of Mphumulo, a rural area in northern Natal, and of course an Inkatha stronghold. In one 12 hour shift more than three-quarters of the ballot papers were counted, a count that was supposed to last at least 48 hours. This was only possible after we discovered that no real reconciliation of the number of ballots issued with the estimated number of ballots in boxes could be made. There were also at least six ballot boxes set aside because they looked as if they had been tampered with. We also found provincial ballot boxes mixed with national ballot boxes and piles of ballots, and in one national ballot box an envelope of provincial ballots. The IFP party agents were really embarrassed by this, and conceded that those votes could not be counted.

Funny thing about the party agents was that they presented such contrasts. The IFP and the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) sent more than enough party agents to the station to observe the counting. The ACDP appeared to have more party
agents than votes at the end of the counting. The ANC sent two agents, both of whom had bloodshot eyes from lack of sleep, and obviously could not maintain a consonant vigil for the night. Perhaps they thought that it was a lost cause. They were right as the ballots were overwhelmingly in favour of IFP, the fact of which one counting officer confirmed, did much to improve her levels of tolerance. The IFP agents clearly relished the moment, but most of them were very polite - courteous to the point of distraction, and this included the controller at their party headquarters. This contrasted very dramatically with the public 'bull in a china shop' image of the IFP. There was only one occasion when the IFP party agents managed to be silly by objecting to opening an additional table to do the final counting because they 'could not have a party agent at the table. Counting the ballots was not dependent on the presence of party agents. The MEC did not object. The ANC were not even present. A case of victim psychosis by the IFP? Perhaps so, as it could not have escaped the notice of the IFP party agents that most of the enumerators and counting officers were sympathetic to, or members of the ANC. Indeed the university student body is politically inclined towards an ANC-PAC axis, and had on occasion blocked IFP supporting student organisations from obtaining official recognition by the Student Representative Council.

There was also another occasion when a large number of spoilt ballots were mysteriously missing when double-checking the final tally. This would not have altered the vote, but it was simply impossible to understand why anyone would want to steal spoilt ballots. After all they could not be counted as valid ballots anywhere, even at another station, because the counting officer clearly marks each ballot as invalid once it is accepted as such.

On the third night of the count everyone arrived eager to count a new district's output the rest of the votes of the previous night's counting was completed by the day shift, by 7 p.m. all ballots had arrived. We were therefore informed that all vote counting was to be centralised in Durban, and that our counting station, along with all others in the vicinity, was to be closed. We were so check that all the final tally forms had been sent to head office in Johannesburg and secure the station. All enumerators were to be dismissed. (Of course as an argument began in to whether they would be paid for the night. Enumerators were assured that a strong case would be made to the IEC for payment.) The coordinator of counting stations 44 and 45 pleaded and begged for ballots to be sent to us, as we were not just eager, but also very efficient. But to no avail. Half an hour after we dismissed the enumerators we received a call asking us to keep open the stations. But by then it was too late as most enumerators had gone. Thos that were left were all huddled around a small black and white television trying to hear president-elect Nelson Mandela give victory speech.

Shabib Naidoo, University of Durban-Westville
There was also another occasion when a large number of spirit-beds went mysteriously missing when the monks had the final tally. This would not have occurred the next day. It was simply an opportunity to demonstrate why anyone would want to steal spirit-beds. And all they could not be counted as valid because they were in another situation. Because this system clearly marks each bedfast as invalid since it is accepted in such.

On the third night of the event the monks were spotted in the woods, a very different side of the nature of the Gesar cycle.
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