

Article

From Symbolic to Participatory Reconciliation: race relations in South Africa – the African-Indian case

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Introduction

The revelations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings have had a far-reaching impact on South African society. They have exposed the extent to which the former state and its various institutions were prepared to go, both to ensure their continued existence as well as to defeat any prospects for fundamental change to the socio-economic and socio-political order. Such exposure has led to a better understanding of the institutionalisation of violence in the former state as well as to an appreciation of how relations between whites and blacks became infused with violence. In this manner, the testimonies pointed in the direction where the resolution of past tensions and conflicts could be addressed.

However illuminating, painful and dramatic as the TRC hearings were, they fitted a particular manner of addressing race relations in South Africa. The resolution of tensions and conflict was taken away from ordinary people and given to high profile individuals or institutions. Because such individuals and institutions have limited periods within which to resolve such issues, there is a tendency to seek to address particular cases that are symbolic of the nature of the conflict. Once such cases have been addressed and a symbolic ceremony performed, the high profile individuals or institutions declare the issue to have been resolved. This manner of addressing tensions and conflict is referred to in this paper as 'symbolic' reconciliation. Symbolic reconciliation is not merely a cynical ploy to exclude people. It is informed by the uncertainty of outcomes which accompanies the involvement of ordinary people in reconciliation. The concern is that once ordinary people are directly involved, the high profile

individuals or institutions could lose the power to control and determine the trajectory and outcomes of the process. Nonetheless, by excluding the participation of the people concerned, symbolic reconciliation ensures that the causes of tensions and conflict remain unresolved. Consequently, the tensions and conflicts of the past captivate the imagination and pervade the social relations of the relevant groups.

Such a manner of addressing race relations is in stark contrast with a process that involves the groups concerned in reconciliation. Such a process recognises that people are born, raised and sometimes eventually die, as members of particular groups. As such their lives from birth to death are informed and, in turn, inform their particular group's environment. The socialisation institutions of groups, therefore, become essential as mechanisms for transforming the manner in which members of groups perceive their place in the world as well the place of others. Since socialisation occurs at home, in communities, at educational institutions, at work and at religious institutions, serious attempts to address socialisation must engage such institutions. Since such institutions function not only because of the leadership but also because of the nature of popular participation in them, attempts to address socialisation will prove more productive if they include the participation of general members in their various capacities. Such a manner of addressing tensions and conflict is referred to here as 'participatory' reconciliation.

This paper argues that a lasting solution to one of South Africa's race relation problems – those between Africans and Indians – has not been attained because solutions to the tensions and conflict have been at leadership level only and have not included the direct involvement of communities. It argues, moreover, that over the years the embers of conflict and tension have been stoked by the former state and by merchants who benefited from such tensions and, in some cases, fomented conflict between the two groups. The advent of the New South Africa in 1994 gave many (who had tirelessly worked for such a resolution) hope that conditions would be conducive to searching for a lasting resolution. However, recent events suggest that post-apartheid conditions may not be as conducive to such a resolution as was previously anticipated.

The argument in this paper unfolds in three ways. First is a presentation of two cases of conflict between Africans and Indians, with a particular focus on Kwa Zulu-Natal, as well as the 'symbolic' reconciliatory attempts to address the causes and effects of such conflict. Second, we investigate

the most recent attempt to address African-Indian relations. Of importance are its potential advantages and disadvantages. Lastly, the paper concludes by outlining the contours and form of 'participatory' reconciliation.

Past attempts at addressing African-Indian relations

On the landscape of African-Indian relations, two incidents stand out as evidence of the consequences of ignoring tensions and conflict between the two communities. In and of themselves, such incidents are not informative. However, taken in the context of subsequent relations which preceded them, the incidents themselves, attempts to resolve them and relations between the two groups, they demonstrate the conditions under which symbolic reconciliation has been implemented in the past, the nature of implementation and its consequences. The two incidents referred to here are the 1949 violence in Cato Manor and the 1985 violence in Bhambhayi.

The 1949 violence in Cato Manor

From the point of initial contact, relations between Africans and Indians in Natal were affected by the socio-economic and socio-political context within which the two groups found themselves. The potential for forming inclusive communities was defeated by the efforts of merchants who not only wanted nothing to do with Africans but also wanted to be distinguished from the poorer Indians. The radical multiracial unions of the early 1940s were defeated by the 'divide and rule' tactics of the former state and employers. The divisions engineered in the factories mimicked those engineered for the communities. The tensions that were exacerbated because of such divisions broke out into the conflict of 1949.

Between 1860 and 1913, there was minimal contact between Africans and Indians. Indians initially lived in plantation or employer compounds (Meer 2000) and Africans lived in their 'reserves' and only met commercially in towns as shop-owner and client or fellow customer. The emancipation of Indians from compounds freed them to find living space and employment in places such as Cato Manor, Clairwood, Riverside and Springfield. Such attempts were met with resistance and restrictions by the Port Natal Administration which did not want to allocate living and trading space within the city of Durban to Indians.¹ By the 1940s, increasing numbers of Africans were also moving to urban areas on a permanent basis to look for work. Prevented from finding living space within the city, most Africans and Indians found themselves living side by side in the newly incorporated territory of Cato Manor.

Africans were either renting from, or living with, Indians in these areas. Not all the Indians were landlords. Many were tenants like the Africans. And not all Africans were, or remained, tenants. Some rented pieces of land on which they built shacks which they sub-let to other Africans and Indians. The African and Indian tenants were the poorest of the poor of Cato Manor, while the landlords profited from such conditions. The lack of sanitation services that resulted in outbreaks of diseases and death affected poor Africans and Indians relatively equally. While Africans and Indians sent their children to different schools, their children played together as neighbours and the two groups shared much more than the air they breathed.

The relations that were developing between Africans and Indians in Cato Manor in the 1940s did not please the state. Interested in keeping Africans and Indians divided, the state saw the developing mix as a threat to its interests, especially after the Indian Government had raised the issue of South African racism at the United Nations.² Also, the relations between poor Africans and Indians in Cato Manor developed even though Indian merchants and small traders (the 'duka wallahs') discouraged such relations and argued against an alliance with Africans (Desai 1996:6). The merchants were equally disdainful of poor Indians.³ The Natal Indian Congress, which was established in 1894 by Indian merchants, and remained in conservative hands until 1945, sought to protect the relative authority of merchants and small traders over the interests of the general Indian population.⁴ The efforts of the merchants became useful tools that the state used to create divisions between Africans and Indians.

In 1945 a radical left bloc within the Natal Indian Congress (NIC), which espoused the cause of the general "non-European" oppressed community', ousted the conservative merchants (Padayachee 1999:393). Such a move strengthened the common cause Africans and Indians had in the workplace as well as in the communities in which they lived. In 1947, the African National Congress (ANC), NIC and the Transvaal Indian Congress signed the so-called 'Doctors' Pact' to stand together against the threat of a racist offensive.

Despite such developments, tensions between poor Africans and Indians continued. In the factories, companies managed to create divisions between African and Indian workers as demonstrated by the Dunlop strike of 1942 (Hemson 1979, Padayachee et al 1985). Because Indian merchants were also landlords, shacklords, shopkeepers and operated the transport service

in their communities, African complaints against these services became generalised as complaints against Indians. The rise in rents and bus fares were seen by some as acts against Africans. African small businessmen who saw Indian merchants and small traders as an obstacle⁵ to their own ambitions of 'serving' Africans tended to take the lead in raising charges against Indians.⁶ A small incident on the bus or at the store would be used as an example of how 'Indians' either felt or thought of Africans.⁷

The 'Doctors' Pact' was of great concern to the former state and it began to act increasingly in ways that heightened tensions between Africans and Indians. At the time, no one was allowed to trade on the streets without a 'hawker's permit'. A permit was only issued to a resident of the city. And since Africans were not considered residents of the city, their applications for permits were not approved. African small traders of Cato Manor were able to use the fact that the police prevented Africans from making a living while they did not prevent the Indians in the same way. After the National Party (NP) came to power in 1948, more restrictions were put on the African presence in urban areas. Many such restrictions did not apply to Indians. Consequently, the generalised protest against the state and police would sometimes be carried over to Indians as well.

At about 17h00 on Thursday January 13, 1949, violence erupted between Indians and Africans. The 'spark' seems to have been a conflict between an African boy (14 years) and an Indian boy (16 years). The conflict was joined by an older Indian man who assaulted the African boy. After being struck by the Indian man, the head of the African boy went through a glass window and the boy received cuts. Africans, who were waiting for transport to take them home, saw the incident, a heated argument ensued and Africans started attacking Indians. The violence was joined by African men who had been drinking in a nearby beer hall. The violence quickly spread to all the areas in which Africans and Indians lived in and around Durban, including Cato Manor. Violence continued intermittently in various areas until the following Monday. In some instances, the police shot Africans to protect Indian lives and property. At the end of the violence, according to Webster (2000), the official estimate of loss was:

Deaths: 142 (1 White, 50 Indians, 87 Africans and 4 unidentified)

Injured: 1087 (32 Whites, 11 Coloureds, 541 Africans and 503 Indians)

Buildings destroyed: 1 factory, 58 stores, and 247 houses

Buildings damaged: 2 factories, 652 stores, and 1285 houses

While attention was mostly placed on violence and its effects, stories of inter-racial co-operation and support during the violence went unrecorded. Stories of Africans who protected Indians by hiding them in their own houses abound. But none is as demonstrative of the type of relations that Africans were able to build in the context of Cato Manor as the story of an African woman who, when seeing her Indian neighbour being attacked, threw herself on top of the neighbour. In this way, she saved her neighbour's life.⁸

During the weekend of the violence, the ANC President, Xuma, came down from Johannesburg and, together with the leaders of the NIC, toured the areas affected by violence. At the end of his short visit Xuma, with the NIC leaders, issued a short statement condemning the violence and calling for closer co-operation between Africans and Indians. Xuma's visit to Durban as well as the statement he made with the NIC leaders seem not to have resonated in every African heart and mind. A Durban correspondent wrote a letter complaining about Xuma's attitude to the *African World*: 'Xuma came to Durban and, without consulting the Natal ANC, issued a statement on behalf of the ANC to co-operate with Indians after meeting in camera for a few hours'.

The correspondent charged the ANC leadership with being the pawns of Indians saying: 'Today there is talk everywhere that the leaders are under the thumb of Indian politicians, who with money available, have called the tune and our leaders have danced to it' (Webster 2000:10-13).

The local Natal ANC leadership (Champion, Luthuli and Msimang) – who understood and shared the depth of grievances⁹ – felt that the meeting was too early and preferred a meeting at a later date. In fact, Champion and Msimang were prepared to participate in a Joint Committee three weeks later. But the need visibly and immediately to intervene in the conflagration left the ANC leadership with very few choices.

However, the lack of consultation that characterised such an intervention opened up the leadership to the accusations with which they were charged. These suggest that, while the ANC leadership felt that they had done their work in Cato Manor at the time, local ANC leaders and ordinary people felt that the ANC did not understand the issues which preceded the violence, why the violence took the direction it took and how future conflicts could be prevented.

Despite the devastation of the 1949 conflict on African-Indian relations, African and Indian leaders were able to present a common front against the

same enemy. Barely three years later (1952), they were able to mobilise large numbers to embark on a 'Defiance Campaign' – a campaign to defy all apartheid laws. The momentum of such a campaign led to the drafting and adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1955. The late 1950s mobilisation of large numbers of people that followed the adoption of the Freedom Charter progressively threatened the NP's hold on power.

In the early 1960s the NP government set out to consolidate by destroying radical organisations and diffusing their influence. The populations of places such as Cato Manor were dispersed into apartheid designated 'ethnic' enclaves and Cato Manor was destroyed and rezoned as a 'white' area. Radical organisations were banned and their leadership arrested. Some of the members of such organisations left the country for the safety of foreign lands. The NP government invited conservative Indian leaders to form an advisory body on Indian affairs. That body was later named the South African Indian Council (SAIC). Some of the SAIC members would become members of the House of Delegates in the tricameral parliament in 1984. This NP strategy was matched by efforts to entice conservative African leaders to opt for the independence of the 'homelands'.

In the new locations, the NP government set about to deepen, economically and socially, the apparent physical separation of Africans and Indians. Better infrastructural services were provided to Indian areas such as Chatsworth (an Indian 'location') as compared to kwaMashu and Umlazi (African 'locations'). The per capita funding for social and educational programmes for Indians was higher than those for Africans. Industrial companies increasingly reserved supervisory positions for Indians and Africans could only be hired as labourers (Webster 2000). Indians were spared the police repression characterised by 'pass raids' that became the hallmark of the relations between Africans and the state.

The consequences of better provisions for the Indians were that, between 1960 and 1980, increasing numbers of Indians received better education, achieved a higher socio-economic standing, and became professionals. Such success became evident in the clothes they wore, the houses in which they lived and in the cars they [increasingly] drove. Such success was, however, not enjoyed by all. The majority of Indians remained lower middle or working class, sometimes working alongside Africans in the factories. Such Indians were, however, still often economically better off than Africans.

Most of the interaction between Africans and Indians during this period was on the factory floor, between buyer and seller or as customer and merchant. As supervisors, Indians were the ones who brought both good and bad news to workers. What lasts longer in the minds of workers is the bad news brought by their supervisors. Such practices as the custom of white managers to send Indians to fire Africans have made negative and long-lasting impressions on the minds of African workers. The unscrupulous practices of some Indian merchants in preying on Africans has continued into the present era. The effects of such practices were exacerbated by the inflation that began its grip on the country in the late 1970s.

Living apart produced an environment in which stereotypes of others developed. Since Indians, by and large, did not visit African areas, what they knew about Africans and their way of life was what was sensationalised in the media, what they heard from others as well as what they either saw or heard from their co-workers or domestic workers. African lack of prosperity was blamed on African 'stupidity', 'laziness', and 'lack of ambition'.¹⁰ Poor Africans, without stable sources of income, who bent over double in begging Indian merchants for handouts created an impression of Africans as 'charity cases'.¹¹ The stereotypes directed at Africans were eventually accepted as true by most Indians.

Africans, on the other hand, developed stereotypes of Indians from their relations with merchants and fellow workers on the factory floor. Such stereotypes were perpetuated by anecdotes about the other group. Their experience with Indian merchants led to characterisation of Indians as 'cheats', 'con-men', 'liars' and 'exploiters'. Their relationship with Indians on the factory floor led to the characterisation of Indians as 'spies', 'pimps' and 'back-stabbers'. The Indians who displayed positive attitudes towards Africans were considered as the exception that proved the rule.

Generally, Africans and Indians continue to know very little about each other's lives and their interactions are still clouded by stereotypes. Since stereotypes emerge out of particular types of relations, one would expect that they would change as relations change.¹²

The 1985 violence in Bhambhayi

The inability properly to address the causes of the 1949 violence, together with the divisions engineered by apartheid in the 1960s and 1970s, contributed to the attack on Indians in Bhambhayi in 1985.

By the 1970s, the effects of apartheid separation were evident in African-Indian relations. The depth of the separation of Africans and Indians was such that the historically important 1973 Durban strike wave was, by and large, an 'African strike'. For the most part, the 1976 confrontation between students and the state passed Indian communities by. Very few Indians – mostly those associated with the NIC, which was revived in 1972 – participated in the protests that followed the 1976 confrontation. In fact, for some, the militant protests and strikes matched the violent stereotypes they had of Africans.

However, Indian students at universities joined the protests and strike actions that put pressure on the state for the end of apartheid. Some of such actions were taken to various communities where they were used to mobilise the communities against the reforms that the state had embarked on in order to propitiate conservative Africans and Indians as well as the international community, which was exerting pressure for meaningful change.

The activities of university students as well as other community organisations were such that, in the early 1980s, when the state tried to co-opt Indians into the national parliament by providing them with seats in a tricameral parliament, the majority of potential Indian voters abstained from participation. Instead, they supported organisations which affiliated with the United Democratic Front (UDF), which mobilised against the tricameral parliament, demanding fundamental changes in the constitution.

The common cause sweeping all the disadvantaged races gave the state great concern. The state devised plans to smash the UDF and its affiliates, to strengthen the support for conservative leaders and to weaken the solidarity between races. The police and army virtually occupied townships and undermined UDF affiliates by chasing their members underground and by protecting and supporting conservatives within their areas.

In the 1950s, and again in the 1970s and 1980s, many African and Indian professionals – leadership cadres – stood together in opposing apartheid. At the same time, strikes and demonstrations were mostly supported only by Africans. Indians who rose as leaders of trade unions essentially led largely African trade unions. The visibility of such leaders belied the absence of ordinary Indians.

Even the mass mobilisation of the UDF did not address critical issues related to African-Indian relations. Like other organisations before it, the UDF had its eyes on defeating the designs of apartheid in luring Indians and

Coloureds into joining it in the tricameral parliament. The successful mobilisation against the tricameral parliament did not translate into an understanding of common circumstances and a common future for all races, particularly among ordinary Africans and Indians. The loosely affiliated UDF organisations were largely structured on a community, and thus by definition racial, basis.

The Ngcobo area of Inanda (now a part of Metro Durban) has a long history of being an African freehold area. Indians also started moving into the area as landlords and tenants almost from the time they arrived in South Africa. The particular area of Inanda in which Indians bought land, built and rented houses (including Gandhi's Phoenix settlement) eventually got to be referred to as Bhambhayi – a local name for Bombay. Between the early 1900s and the 1950s, relations not unlike those that developed in Cato Manor between Africans and Indians developed in Inanda. However, as the demand for labour grew in Durban especially from the 1970s and more and more Africans were drawn to it, Inanda became the first stop of call for many Africans from the north coast of Natal who wanted to live near town.

As more and more Africans moved to and became tenants in Inanda, there developed a housing shortage. The African shacklords of Inanda who competed with Indians for African tenants were effective in associating the issue of the shortage of land and housing with Indians, particularly amongst these newcomers.¹³ The stereotypes of Indians as 'exploiters' of Africans were used to prejudice African tenants against Indian landlords.

A housing shortage was not the concern of Africans only. The NP government was also concerned. Inanda created a problem for apartheid and the government wanted to attach it to the KwaZulu 'homeland'. Drought affected most of KwaZulu in the early 1980s; a typhoid epidemic ensued. Fear of the epidemic reaching Durban spurred the wheels of development in the city government. The Urban Foundation was engaged to devise a development programme for Inanda (Meer 1989).

The final development plan proposed the removal of Indians, compensation for their properties and the upgrading of the area for African settlement. The resistance of Indians and their demands for better compensation heightened tensions in the area. The corresponding interests of business, the NP government and the KwaZulu government for the removal of Indians from Inanda resulted in some elements taking the initiative forcibly to move Indians from Inanda (Meer 1989:147-56). Enemies of Indians opportunistically used the demonstrations against the

assassination of Victoria Mxenge to launch an assault on Indians and their property (Sitas 1986:107). Such attackers were, however, later joined, especially in the looting, by some Inanda residents.

At the end of the attack, many Indians had lost their property, at least 19 Africans had lost their lives and Inanda was virtually cleared of all Indians.¹⁴ The 1985 attack on Indians re-opened the old wounds of the Cato Manor violence of 1949. The 1985 attack underscored the unresolved tensions between Africans and Indians. It is convenient to argue that the attackers were politically brainwashed into taking Indians as the enemy. It is also easy to claim that the NP government had its nefarious 'third force' at work in such attacks. It is harder to face the fact that the attackers would not have succeeded had Africans and Indians stood together. The question then is, why did they not stand together?

For the most part, recriminations between political parties on the causes of the attack on Indians, as well as on those responsible for the attack, were not followed by serious attempts at addressing the causes of the conflict and at compensating those who lost property and lives. Even less effort was spent on reconciling the affected Indians and Africans. Such an attempt at reconciling Africans and Indians over the 1985 conflict only came fifteen years later. On Sunday, February 27, 2000, President Thabo Mbeki opened a reconstructed Mahatma Gandhi Settlement that was destroyed in the 1985 attack (*The Mercury*, February 29, 2000). However, like the Cato Manor attempt at reconciliation, the 2000 attempt did not have community participation at its core. While a community leader apologised 'for the destruction of the settlement', it is not clear whether most of Bhambhayi shared his sentiments nor whether such sentiments were accepted by the Indians who lost everything in the 1985 violence.¹⁵

Between 1985 and 1994, the confrontation between communities and the state intensified. Many of the organisations that confronted the state were members of the UDF. However, as was the case in the early 1980s, the majority of Indians were not drawn into these struggles. Indian participation was limited to members of the NIC, university students and members of a few radical community organisations.

The 1994 and 1999 elections

The 1994 elections presented many people with difficult choices. Particularly, many poor and working class Indians had very difficult decisions to make. On the one hand, the apartheid government had accorded

them a preferential status that was better than that of Africans. Over and above this, they were not sure that Africans could govern South Africa. On the other hand, their ambitions were frustrated by glass ceilings that existed in their places of work and 'affirmative action' policies presented opportunities for them to break through such ceilings. However, a large number, particularly around Durban, preferred to preserve the status quo.

To those Africans who expected Indians to turn their backs on apartheid masters, such a vote substantiated their stereotypes of Indians as 'backstabbers'.¹⁶ Somehow, despite all the problems between the two races, many Africans expected Indians to vote with them against the government that had caused them so much misery. But it was not to be. Even the ANC leaders were hurt. Mandela's statement, after the elections, is one of the few that were publicly verbalised:

In the Indian ... areas you found as much as 70 per cent of the population voted against an African government. They decided to vote to be part of a minority and not the majority, they decided to be part of a past which has divided us, created conflict, hostility, instead of being part of the future... (Desai 1996:88)

To anti-ANC Indians, the problems the ANC government has experienced with crime prevention, ensuring job security and with schooling vindicated the claim that Africans cannot govern South Africa. Such sentiments are rife among poorer section of the Indian community. An example is that when the Education ministry cut funding for schools, which resulted in many poor Indians losing their jobs as cleaners and gardeners of schools, many African children who attend school in Chatsworth and Phoenix were attacked by crowds shouting 'Go attend your own schools'.

Negative sentiments seem to be muted among the middle classes. Perhaps this is because the middle classes among the Indians have access to government jobs. Those who do not have such access find opportunities for employment in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and other western countries (Padayachee et al 1999). However, many Africans take such emigrations for another 'stab in the back'.¹⁷

The post-1994 period suggests a beginning of change in relations between Africans and Indians. The overall 1999 elections indicated a pattern of voting that was not very much different from that of 1994. However, a more nuanced picture shows that, while Indians in relatively poorer township areas tended to vote for the DP and NP, Indians in relatively well to do areas tended to vote for the ANC in 1999 as well as in

1994. Whether this is a lasting trend, time will tell (Padayachee 1999). Desai has also noted encouraging signs of co-operation among poorer Africans and Indians. The co-operation of poor Africans and Indians, living in an area called Bangladesh in Chatsworth, in agitation against light and water cuts by the Durban City Municipality suggests the potential role of common socio-economic conditions in building political community (Desai 2000).

In sum, the two cases reveal that relations between Africans and Indians were affected by the economic and political contexts in which the two groups found themselves. The early attempts at forming communities were defeated by rivalry and conflicts between Indian merchants and African small businessmen. The former state and employers played their role in defeating the radical multi-racial unions of the early 1940s. The successful division of workers in the factories was carried through to the communities where Africans and Indians lived. Despite the efforts of radical African and Indian leadership to bring to the two groups closer to each other, the tensions that arose because of such divisions broke out into the conflict of 1949. The inability to address properly the causes of the 1949 violence, together with the social, economic and political divisions engineered by apartheid in the 1960s and 1970s contributed to the 1985 attack in Bhambhayi. The 1949 and 1985 violence together with the divisions created by apartheid have become the 'cultural capital' that both Africans and Indians call upon to make one or other point. While the 'cultural capital' Indians acquired in their relations with Africans led them to vote overwhelmingly against 'African political parties' in 1994, the 1999 elections revealed that well-to-do Indians seem to have changed their attitudes against 'African parties'. Despite such positive developments, African-Indian relations are likely to remain as they are, if the preferred method of resolving tensions and conflicts does not take such issues to the communities, schools, religious institutions and the workplaces of both groups.

Recent attempts at addressing African-Indian relations

Having discussed attempts to address African-Indian relations during the apartheid era, it is important to see whether the new dispensation carries better opportunities for the betterment of such relations. Looking at one recent serious attempt at addressing African-Indian relations will enable us to see what the new dispensation hold for such relation. As could have been

expected, the recent attempt got tangled up in the ANC versus IFP politics of KwaZulu-Natal. As a result, the province has recently witnessed competing initiatives which claim to seek to address African-Indian relations.

On January 21, 2000, a workshop on African-Indian relations was held at the offices of the *Daily News* in Durban. The workshop sought to address issues related to African and Indian relations which surfaced after an editor of *Ilanga* published a scathing attack on Indians and white people in South Africa, calling them, among other things, 'blood suckers who thrive on the blood of Africans'. Even though the editor of *Ilanga* was pressured to resign from his position, it emerged that his sentiments were shared by a larger audience than just the relatively poor Africans who read the biweekly tabloid.

The workshop was co-chaired by M G Buthelezi, the Minister of Home Affairs and leader of the IFP as well as Anglican Bishop Rubin Phillip. Minister Buthelezi and Bishop Phillip opened the workshop. A wide range of social, political and economic issues affecting African-Indian relations was addressed. Some of these included the history of African-Indian relations, relations between Africans and Indians in the workplace, issues relating to the integration of African and Indian pupils in schools and perceptions and prejudices between Africans and Indians. The workshop was meant to be a frank discussion of such issues that would assist in directing the workshop on the strategies to be adopted in addressing such issues. The workshop resolved to establish an African-Indian Institute to co-ordinate efforts at addressing African-Indian relations.

The organisers and the content of the workshop were subject to verbal attacks within days of the workshop. Officials of the ANC – who were conspicuous by their absence at the workshop¹⁸ – attacked the organisers for planning, convening and publicising the workshop 'in an ashamedly partisan manner' (*The Mercury*, January 28, 2000). The explanations by the organisers of how people were invited to the workshop and how the president of the IFP ended up chairing it seem not to have assuaged the feelings of those who felt excluded. They charged the workshop for 'promoting guilt' among Indians instead of 'nation-building' (*The Mercury*, January 31, 2000). In an obvious counter to the establishment of the Institute, they proposed the creation of a 'monument' to commemorate the arrival of Indians in South Africa.

Relentless attacks on the organisers, the workshop itself, as well as the

African-Indian Institute have taken their toll. The editor of the *Daily News*, Kaiser Nyatumba, ended his participation in the African-Indian Institute (*The Mercury*, January 31, 2000). The charge that the African-Indian Institute seemed to prioritise African-Indian relations over other relations led to the dissipation of the Institute's focus. The African-Indian Institute changed its name to the Institute for Inter-Ethnic Relations (*The Mercury*, March 1, 2000).

It is clear, therefore, that the workshop participants accepted that issues affecting African-Indian relations are political, social and economic and that they involve various levels such as race groups, communities as well as individuals. As such a solution to such relations had to involve the active participation of all people in all the various levels. However, the solutions proposed by the Kwa Zulu-Natal ANC – particularly the erection of a 'monument' – seem to suggest that the issues should be addressed at a symbolic macro level.

To conclude, the new dispensation, while it provides greater opportunities for Africans and Indians to meet and discuss their issues, does not seem to have promise for African-Indian relations. This is partly because the differences on the strategy to be adopted got mixed up with party political issues and political rivalry. Consequently, the province has competing initiatives, all of which claim to seek to address African-Indian relations.

Conclusion

This article has tried to draw some lessons from the past with the hope of finding a lasting solution to the issue of African-Indian relations. The first lesson is that addressing African-Indian issues at the leadership level only has had limited effect in the past. It did not build the foundations that are the necessary countervailing forces against future conflict. Second, while building commemorative monuments is important and monuments serve as reminders of past events, relations and inter-actions, outside the context of concerted effort at creating community understanding and racial sensitivity, such monuments quickly become 'white elephants', as has happened with the Luthuli-Gandhi Park in Phoenix.

The post-1994 era presents an environment no longer dominated by a central power interested in fomenting tensions and conflict between groups. In this era, it should be possible to establish mechanisms and institutions that facilitate understanding between people of different races, cultures, ethnic backgrounds, to accompany interventions by leaders as well as the

establishment of commemorative symbols. But such institutions have to be consciously built and vigorously supported; they cannot develop on their own. One of the major challenges of our time is that the understanding that segregation and apartheid created divisions which have had deep and lasting effects in our society has not been followed by a realisation of the effort and energy required to uproot and roll back more than 100 years of socially constructed divisions and conflict.

The following is an outline of what it may take to begin to address African-Indian relations. It is clear that issues between Africans and Indians do not exist only at the level of the whole racial communities taken in totality; they may be also communal, work place related and individual. Also such issues are related to the economic, social, and cultural differences between Africans and Indians. Therefore, efforts at addressing such issues should be established in communities, workplaces, churches, temples, mosques, schools and universities.

More and more Africans are living in formerly Indian townships. Relations between residents have been left to take their normal course. For such relations not to lead to conflict, it is important to develop mechanisms and structures that facilitate understanding between Africans and Indians. Such structures should develop racial and cultural awareness and tolerance between Africans and Indians. While the example of Bangladesh (in Chatsworth) is instructive on how Africans and Indians can work together in communities, such co-operation does not have to emerge only in resistance against the Durban Metro Council or the central government.

The institutions of the central government together with the departments of the Metro Council need to work in ways that foster community development rather than division. For instance, the provision of 'housing units' or 'housing subsidies' by the ministry of Housing and various Housing Departments leads to the emergence of segregated slums. The building of 'housing units' indicates the aim of housing policy to be the housing of atomised individuals and not the development and re-development of communities shattered by 100 years of socially engineered conflict.

Like communities, the workplace environment has to be mediated by structures that develop racial and cultural awareness and tolerance. The work place is an ideal environment for working together for a common goal and solving problems together. In the post-1994 era, it seems that there are fewer reasons for such co-operation not to exist and for African-Indian

workplace relations to continue as before. Such co-operation will be possible when employers and workers together actively create conditions for it. However, since employers, so far, have not taken the opportunity, either incentives or coercion may be necessary to lead them to taking the required actions.

While religious institutions may teach the virtues of loving one's neighbour, tolerance and acceptance of other's differences, it is difficult to see how such virtues can work between Africans and Indians while they worship separately and do not share in the same activities in their religious institutions and communities. There needs to be more effort within civil society to build a sense of shared common purpose.

Instead of the integration of schools and universities becoming an example of how Africans and Indians can relate to one another peacefully, it has been allowed to become a site of conflict between the two communities. This is largely because there were no mechanisms created to facilitate understanding, tolerance and acceptance at such institutions. Hence, it was not surprising when Indian parents opposed the integration of 'their' schools and when, as more and more Africans were enrolled at the University of Durban-Westville, Indian parents increasingly moved their children away from the university.

The provincial Education ministry has taken important steps aimed at creating better understanding in schools, such as the introduction of Zulu language lessons. However, the fact that there are no similar efforts at the community level may result in such interventions not bearing the required fruits.

Much has been said about the uniqueness of the Indian experience in South African and, generally, about Indian culture in the diaspora. The South African Indian diaspora may be the 'largest Indian community outside India' but it is not unique. Indians have settled, lived and intermarried with other races in the West Indies and on the Horn of Africa. The fact that in some countries, such as England and South Africa, Indians have seemed relatively impervious to the majority community's culture has as much to do with the social systems of these countries than with the inherent character of 'Indian culture', despite what some would lead us to believe.

A chance for better relations between Africans and Indians will be ensured when individuals, groupings and communities of the two groups become directly involved in attempts to create better understanding and to resolve tensions and conflict between the two groups.

Notes

1. Early residential restrictions in Durban were directed at Indians. Africans had rural homes and were only in the city to find work. Those African men who found employment in towns were housed in company compounds and hostels.
2. Because of the original agreement between India and Britain on service in South Africa, indentured Indians appealed to India to intervene on their behalf during disputes. During such time it was almost impossible for Africans and Indians to form a united front. As time continued, especially after the establishment of the Union, such co-operation became increasingly possible.
3. Because the merchants tended to come from western India where people have lighter skins, merchants tended to treat dark-skinned Indians poorly. In some instances they were called by the same derogatory names reserved for Africans. Such deprecation of dark-skinned Indians exists to this day although it is not restricted to merchants anymore.
4. The merchants and small traders who were largely Urdu or Gujarati-speaking (both Muslims and Hindus) were interested in getting the colony to distinguish between them and other Indians (see Swan 1985:44).
5. Indian merchants opposed African applications for business licences (Webster 2000).
6. African small businessmen complained about the dominance of Indian merchants in trade and bus services in African areas: '... the above area to our knowledge (Cato Manor) is proclaimed an African Area. The trading facilities are the heritage of the African people. To our surprise trading facilities are in the hands of the Indians...' (Webster 2000).
7. To be sure, some of the charges were warranted. Indian merchants generally tended to despise Africans whom they considered to be at an 'underdeveloped stage' (*Indian Opinion* 1936). Indian merchants were notorious for overcharging, for substituting poor quality products when customers had paid for better quality and for packaging and folding foam when Africans had paid for blankets.
8. According to African tradition, the potential murderer would have had to kill the African woman first.
9. Champion expressed sentiments similar to those held by many in 1949, when interviewed in 1973. While he supported the 'Doctors' Pact', he felt that Indians needed to be taught a lesson, 'They had become too big for their shoes. They were too proud. They looked upon us as nothing except as labourer and kaffir ... We are not friends with Indians ... I was glad when they were assaulted. It taught them a very good lesson' (Webster 2000).
10. Not long prior to this, whites used exactly these terms to refer to Indians. Such stereotypes were useful in rationalising one group's exploitation of another group.

11. Another example of this which Mkhize (2000) presents are Indian workers who offer sandwiches to Africans at work but decline the offer when Africans reciprocate.
12. In fact, Sitas (2000) argues that relations between Africans and Indians at work are changing. As relations change, stereotypes also change. See also Webster 2000.
13. An Urban Foundation representative told an IBR researcher that Africans had told him that it was unfair for Indians to have shops in African areas when Africans did not have shops in Indian areas (Meer 1989:153).
14. While the attackers of Indians may have been from the outside and may have belonged to a particular conservative political organisation, the fact that it happened so easily and that local Africans, other than hiding a few Indians, did not do very much to protect them and their property, says a lot about African-Indian relations at the time.
15. Similar apologies were made after the 1949 violence. Over and above that, the leader who apologised is not the one who led the attack against Indians in 1985.
16. While Indians in other areas of the country may have voted for the ANC, the overwhelming numbers of the Durban Indian population tilted the 'Indian Vote' away from the ANC.
17. The claim is that Indians took advantage of inexpensive education in South Africa. Instead of paying back the country, the argument goes, they choose to work for themselves in other countries.
18. When some workshop attendees asked how it was that the ANC was not co-chairing the workshop, the response was that people had been invited as individuals.

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