

## DOCUMENTS

### ELECTION DAY MESSAGES FROM SOUTH AFRICAN LIBRARIANS

Date: Wednesday, 11 May 1994  
From: pbischof@library.berkeley.edu  
To: allusers@library  
Subj: Comment from South African Colleagues

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to share with you excerpts from a few of the many messages I have received from South African colleagues whom I met during my trip to their country a year ago. What is remarkable about these messages is their common expression of a new sense of lightness. Perhaps that is one way one describes what it means to be free, free at last!

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**From Mrs. T. D. Shah, Architecture Branch Librarian,  
University of Natal, Durban**

Greetings from OUR new country! Words cannot express my feelings and the feelings of this country in the past two weeks and more especially yesterday, the greatest day in South Africa.

It is literally true that all of us are walking with our heads held high and with a spring in our step. I wish you were here to experience this. It is wonderful to see that this freedom of ours is celebrated worldwide and the world was physically and spiritually with us yesterday. Our "prisoner President" has brought tears of joy and hope that are difficult to explain.

**From Christine Stillwell, Senior Lecturer in Library  
Science, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg**

We have all been quite euphoric and seeing the ANC's celebration party in Johannesburg on telly made us all want to groove. The experience of voting was very interesting - to see how whites had adjusted to change and the joy for the enfranchised. Many of us feel as if an enormous burden has been lifted off our

backs. I have waited all my life for this liberation and it feels great. My brother and his family had voted in Australia and it was very interesting to share parts of the day with them. I think they were very homesick and found it unbelievable that liberation had come so swiftly. We are very excited about tomorrow and the liberation of the union building from years of dourness. One of the most enjoyable things about the new government is their "joie de vivre" - we have been such a bunch of Calvinists.

We aren't thrilled to have Inkatha in power in Natal but we must accept the result as possibly the one least likely to lead to further bloodshed in the region. They will be under pressure to deliver, especially, in my book, as regards implementing policy to enable women.

The whole mood here is changed. It is lighter, more joyous and people are enjoying the sense of being the same - one nation at last. Many people have wept with joy and emotion on and off for days! It means a lot that you are with us.

**From Margaret Richards, African Studies Library,  
University of Cape Town, Rondebosch**

We are filled with such joy and pride and relief that this day has finally dawned, it is a truly walking-on-air feeling, which seems to have swept the entire nation.

I, along with a good few of my colleagues, was on the Parade to greet our new President - elected on Monday, and to hear his address. As with the Inauguration yesterday, an emotional occasion. These last weeks have been an extraordinary time to live through. We seemed on the brink of civil war, when a last-minute breakthrough secured the election process. The election itself touched every person in a remarkable way. Like most of the country's people, I stood in a queue for five and a half hours to vote, and in that time, somehow, the feeling grew, in all of us, that we really were one people, for the first time.

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Shared with you here at Berkeley in the spirit of helping to celebrate this remarkable period in South African history.

*Phyllis Bischof*