

## The formal education journey of Cassim Dangor, 1963–1985: Reflections on education challenges in apartheid South Africa

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Many of the students who attended the University College, Durban, on Salisbury Island<sup>1</sup> were pioneers in the sense that they were amongst the first to attend an ethnic/racial university for Indians as well as being first generation students, a term that in this article, refers to individuals whose parents had not attended an institution of higher learning. There is a large global literature on the challenges that such students face, such as a lack of life skills, social capital, and the parental support enjoyed by higher income and second generation students.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, there is growing interest in the agency of black<sup>3</sup> South Africans under apartheid which suggests that despite the mission and vision of apartheid's ideologues, individuals found ways to exercise agency despite constraining social, economic, and political structures.<sup>4</sup> These themes are explored through the formal education journey of Cassim Dangor, now an emeritus professor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN).

This article is divided into two parts. The first examines the impact of segregation and apartheid policies on black South Africans' education needs,<sup>5</sup> while the second looks specifically at the education journey of Cassim Dangor<sup>5</sup> from 1963, when he commenced his university studies, until 1985, when he was

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1. The name of the university changed from the University College, Durban, to the University of Durban-Westville when it relocated to Westville in the early 1970s; and to the University of KwaZulu-Natal when it merged with the University of Natal in 2004. Most students who attended the university on Salisbury Island simply refer to it as "Salisbury" or "Salisbury Island", which is mostly used in this article.
2. See, for example, T. Spiegler and A. Bednarek, "First-generation Students, What we Ask, What we Know and What it Means: An International Review of the State of Research", *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, Published online, 16 July 2013. DOI:10.1080/09620214.2013.815441. Accessed 18 July 2013.
3. While race is not a biological fact it is a social fact in South Africa. In this article, "Indian" refers to migrants and their descendants from the Indian sub-continent; "African" refers to the indigenous population; "coloureds" refers to people of mixed heritage; and "whites" refers to the descendants of settlers who arrived from Europe. The term "black" acquired political significance from the late 1960s and refers jointly to African, Indian and coloured people.
4. The point that apartheid was not the result of a single grand narrative or a totalising experience has been persuasively and amply demonstrated. See for example, D. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid, 1948–196: Conflict and Compromise* (Clarendon Press, London, 1991); and G. Vahed and T. Waetjen, *Gender, Modernity and Indian Delights: The Women's Cultural Group of Durban, 1954–2010* (HSRC Press, Cape Town, 2010). On forced removals see S. Field, *Oral History, Community and Displacement: Imaging Memories in Post-apartheid South Africa* (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2012); and the work from the History Workshop at the University of the Witwatersrand which is based on life histories, such as N. Nieftagodien and S. Gaule, *An Oral History of Orlando West* (Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 2012).
5. Cassim Dangor was initially interviewed by researcher Fatima Asmal for the purposes of this article, on 26 September 2012. Four follow-up telephonic interviews were conducted by Goolam Vahed.

awarded his doctorate. A life-history method of qualitative research was adopted to explore Dangor's individual (micro-historical) experiences. Data was generated from interviews, which helped to establish both the "facts" about his life as well as his viewpoints on various issues.<sup>6</sup> Dangor's story not only helps us to understand how certain individuals attempted to make sense of their lives under apartheid but also provides a lens through which to track long-term social, economic, and political changes in South Africa.

### **Schooling: the Transvaal context**

Indians began arriving in South Africa in the second half of the nineteenth century in two streams: as migrants under contracts of indenture who arrived to labour on the sugar plantations, coal mines, railways, and other industries of Natal; and as free migrants from Gujarat on the west coast of India. A number of migrants, overwhelmingly from the latter category, made their way to the Transvaal from Natal, as well as from Mozambique and Mauritius, when gold was discovered on the Witwatersrand in the 1880s.<sup>7</sup>

The government of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek, an independent Boer republic, passed legislation to restrict Indian trade and residence rights.<sup>8</sup> Indian hopes that conditions would improve under a British administration after the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902) proved futile because new legislation restricted Indian entry into the Transvaal Colony and segregated those who remained in the Transvaal.<sup>9</sup>

The Transvaal republican government had made no special provision for Indian education before the war but the new British administration of the Transvaal Colony established a Department of Education in 1903. Schools were established for Indians and coloured pupils, who were forbidden entry to white schools.<sup>10</sup> After the Transvaal obtained responsible government in 1906, General Smuts, as Minister of Education, promulgated Act 25 of 1907, which stipulated that schools were to be racially segregated. Indian and coloured learners were to attend the same schools, while Africans and whites were to attend separate schools. "Non-whites" could not enrol at white schools.<sup>11</sup>

Johannesburg-based trader, Habib Motan, established the Johannesburg Government Indian School in Newtown on 9 February 1913. The Education

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6. See P. Chamberlayne, J. Bornat and T. Wengraf (eds), *The Turn to Biographical Methods in Social Science: Comparative Issues and Examples* (Routledge, London, 2000); M. Jolly (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Life Writing: Autobiographical and Biographical Forms* (Routledge: London, 2004); and P. Thompson, *The Voices of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1978).
  7. See S. Bhana and J. Brain, *Setting Down Roots: Indian Migrants in South Africa, 1860–1911*, (Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1990).
  8. C. de Jong and P. Glass, *Satyagraha: M.K. Gandhi in South Africa, 1893–1914* (Tanam Press, New York, 1983), p 11.
  9. R.L. Johnson, *Gandhi's Experiments with Truth: Essential Writings by and about Mahatma Gandhi* (Lexington Books, Washington, 2005), p 167.
  10. A.L. Behr and R.G. MacMillan, *Education in South Africa* (J.L. Van Schaik, Pretoria, 1966), p 339.
  11. S. Dilla, "The Nationalisation of Indian Education in the Transvaal", MEd dissertation, University of South Africa, 1973, p 15.

Department stipulated that the principal had to be white. Two other schools for Indians were the Pretoria Government Islamic Indian School, which opened in 1914, and the Tamil Vedic Government School, founded in 1921.<sup>12</sup> In terms of the 1927 Cape Town Agreement, the Indian and South African governments agreed to “uplift” the social and material conditions of Indians in South Africa. The Indian government saw education as the key to “upliftment” and sent K.P. Kichlu, then deputy director of Public Institutions in the United Provinces of Aghra and Oudh, to South Africa to compile a memorandum on Indian education. Kichlu reported that teachers in Indian schools were poorly qualified and that the infrastructure in these schools was inadequate. He called for an end to sectarian (religious, ethnic, linguistic) Indian schools and the establishment of government schools exclusively for Indian learners.<sup>13</sup>

A commission was set up in the Transvaal in 1937 under the Reverend W. Nicol to investigate the secondary school system. The Nicol Commission, named after its chairman, reported in 1939 that only a third of Indian pupils had reached Standard Five (now known as Grade Seven). For example, of the 360 pupils who started school in 1932, only 68 had reached Standard Six (which was the first year at high-school level), in 1939. The commission blamed “the lack of suitable accommodation” and went on to report that “most of the Indian schools are housed in hired, dilapidated buildings. The environment is not conducive to learning by any means”.<sup>14</sup> The commission also felt that the syllabus was “too academic” and called for less language and arithmetic and more health education, gardening and agriculture, handywork and domestic science. It recommended separate schools for Indians and coloureds due to religious, language and vocational differences.<sup>15</sup> By 1950, 90 percent of Indian and coloured children attended separate schools. Enrolment at Indian schools increased from 1 589 (15 schools) in 1930, to 14 982 in 1960 (32 schools), although only 17 percent were attending grades above Standard Five.<sup>16</sup> This was mainly due to the fact that there were only four high schools in the Transvaal for Indians – in Johannesburg, Benoni, Pretoria, and Standerton, which was Dangor’s hometown.<sup>17</sup>

There are many recorded instances of the difficulties encountered because of the shortage of schools. Ahmed Kathrada, born in 1929 in Schweizer Reneke, a small town in the Western Transvaal (now the North West Province), writes in his *Memoirs* that “by the time I reached school-going age, I was forced to come face-to-face with an animal called ‘segregation’, as apartheid was euphemistically known before the National Party came to power”. There were schools for whites and Africans in the town but none for Indians. Shortly after his eighth birthday, Kathrada was

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12. P. Kichlu, “Memorandum on Indian Education in the Transvaal”, Pietermaritzburg, 1928, p 15. Available at the Documentation Centre, University of KwaZulu-Natal.
  13. Kichlu, “Memorandum on Indian Education in the Transvaal”, p 27.
  14. Behr and MacMillan, *Education in South Africa*, pp 149–152.
  15. The commission suggested English for Indians and Afrikaans for coloureds. Indians were seen as having an aptitude for commerce and coloured pupils an aptitude as handymen, semi-skilled labourers, and agriculturalists. See Dilla, “Nationalisation of Indian Education in the Transvaal”, pp 37–38.
  16. Dilla, “Nationalisation of Indian Education in the Transvaal”, p 41.
  17. Dilla, “Nationalisation of Indian Education in the Transvaal”, pp 37–38.

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packed off to a distant Johannesburg to stay with a paternal aunt in Fordsburg, and attend the Indian school there. I suppose that was the first politically flavoured event that affected me directly and recognisably ... Bags were packed, tearful goodbyes were said. Of all the farewells, this one was most keenly felt, and the memory remained with me all my life – a little boy pretending not to cry and making all sorts of excuses for his moist cheeks ... I could not understand the strange adult logic that required me to be wrenched from my home and friends and sent to school in far-off Johannesburg.<sup>18</sup>

Recalling life in Potchefstroom in the 1920s and 1930s, Zuleikha Mayat laments her father's search for a decent school for his children:

How was it that we had to struggle so hard to obtain an education, when Potchefstroom was an educational centre – the equivalent of Cambridge or Oxford – in South Africa? It had innumerable schools for primary, secondary and tertiary education. There was the Volk Skool which catered for those Afrikaners who were bent on their children being taught Afrikaner values in their mother tongue; there was the Girls High and the Boys High and the Convent; then there was the Gymnasium High and the Commercial High, and for children with learning problems, there was the Ambag Skool where they learnt manual skills such as carpentry.<sup>19</sup>

Mayat's brother attended Sastri College in Durban to complete his high school education. Many people who grew up at this time can attest to the pain of separation from their families.

Cassim Dangor was lucky in that he was amongst the small number of Indian children in the Transvaal who did not have to travel away from home during his school years because his birthplace was home to one of the few high schools in the Transvaal.

### Schooling in Standerton

Cassim Dangor was born in Standerton in 1943. He points out that Standerton is famous in history because Mohandas K. Gandhi was arrested just outside this town during the passive resistance campaign that he organised in 1913. Dangor was the second youngest of twelve siblings and was a few months old when his father, M.A. Dangor, passed away. His eldest brother, who was studying Dentistry in India, had to abandon his studies and return to return to assist in the business and to assume the responsibility of keeping the family intact and

to ensure that they generated income for us to live on. That was quite common where you had family support, the "brother system" ... we all lived under one roof and we always had financial support. After I completed my degree I also contributed to the family pool.<sup>20</sup>

With the support of his family, Dangor was able to qualify as a pharmacist; one of his brothers graduated with a medical degree (at the University of the Witwatersrand), and two others graduated from the Teacher Training College which was opened in 1955 in Fordsburg for Indians. Dangor points out that this

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18. A.M. Kathrada, *Memoirs* (Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2004), pp 26–27.

19. Z. Mayat, *A Treasure Trove of Memories: A Reflection on the Peoples of Potchefstroom* (Madiba Press, Durban, 1996), p 75.

20. Interview 26 September 2012 and subsequent telephonic interviews with Cassim Dangor.

generational responsibility was a feature of many families at the time. Older brothers worked to support the education of younger siblings. Those who achieved a professional qualification assisted the others in various ways. While girls rarely had access to education, they were expected to assist with bringing up younger siblings and with household chores.<sup>21</sup>

Dangor describes Standerton as “a typical Vaal town”. Around 1 000 Indians were segregated on the east side of the town and most of them lived behind their shops. Johan Wassermann, a professor of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, lived on a farm outside Standerton in the early 1970s and recalls that:

most serious shopping was done at [Indian] shops [in Standerton] before the advent of supermarkets in the area. Tea was always served to customers and the shop/s belonging to the “Turks”, as Indians were called, were singled out as good for clothes. I bought a jacket for my brother’s wedding here in 1974. Others “traded” goods for produce like butter and other farm products. Farmers from just across the border in the Free State also always bought at these shops. The *lingua franca* was without exception perfect Afrikaans.<sup>22</sup>

The passing of the Group Areas Act resulted in the relocation of large numbers of Indians in the Transvaal. Writing in 1967, Nana Sita observed that 75 000 Indians in the Transvaal were affected by this Act. An estimated 57 000 Indians were moved from Pretoria, Johannesburg, and the East Rand to the three Group Areas proclaimed for Indians, namely Laudium, Lenasia, and Benoni. Out of a total of 26 little towns and dorps affected in the Transvaal, it was only Indians who were forced to move in 24 of these towns, while in two others, Standerton and Rustenburg, a small number of whites were relocated to “much better places”.<sup>23</sup> Indian homes and businesses in Standerton were moved to the western side of the town. The school and hostel that the community had built over many years were destroyed. According to Wassermann, the new “Indian” area was the low-lying part of town that flooded regularly when the Vaal River overflowed and this remained the case until the building of the Grootdraai Dam upstream of Standerton in 1982 to meet the water demands of the SASOL plants at Secunda and ESKOM’s power stations on the coal fields in the Olifants River basin.<sup>24</sup>

Dangor matriculated in Standerton in 1961. The high school opened in the early 1950s and drew pupils from surrounding towns such as Ermelo, Kingscross, Lydenburg, and Bethal. These learners stayed at the Standerton Muslim Hostel. The school and hostel were built by the local community and the Education Department rented the school for a nominal rent. A local committee was formed to

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21. See Mayat, *Treasure Trove of Memories*, for a discussion of Indian Muslim families in the towns and dorps of the Transvaal as well as the relationship between Indian traders and their Afrikaner clientele. Chapter 2 is entitled “The Arabier and the Koelie”, pp 49–55.
  22. E-mail correspondence from Johan Wassermann, 16 July 2013.
  23. N. Sita, “Group Areas: Extract from the Statements Made by Nana Sita at his Trial under the Group Areas Act in the Magistrate’s Court in Pretoria on 17 August 1967”, *The Black Sash*, November 1967, pp 24–25 at [http://www.historicalpapers.wits.ac.za/inventories/inv\\_pdf/ AK2117/AK2117-J7-DA167-001-jpeg.pdf](http://www.historicalpapers.wits.ac.za/inventories/inv_pdf/ AK2117/AK2117-J7-DA167-001-jpeg.pdf). Accessed 18 July 2013.
  24. “Grootdraai Dam”, Department of Water Affairs, at [www.dwaf.gov.za/Orange/vaal/grootdra.aspx](http://www.dwaf.gov.za/Orange/vaal/grootdra.aspx). Accessed 18 July 2013.

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take care of the property and run the hostel which was under the care of a ‘house father’. Dangor describes this as “a wonderful arrangement” because the children of Standerton had a large group of peers to interact with. He recalls with relish that every minute of leisure time was spent playing soccer and cricket. Dangor has fond memories of his schooling:

I get up at half past seven, ten to eight you are in the classroom. In winter we had feeding schemes; we had lovely fires in the rooms because the winters were severe but it was warm enough in the classrooms. We were properly steered and trained and we were focused in terms of Islamic value systems as well. We had good sporting activities, we played for the school, represented Eastern Transvaal in cricket and in soccer, played for the town, represented the A side in cricket and in soccer, so, it was a very fulfilling life sporting-wise and otherwise.<sup>25</sup>

Dangor’s was among the first group of matriculants from Standerton High. As there was not a sufficient number of students to make up a matric class, the parents persuaded a few “old boys” to register for matric and drop out after a few months. With classes having started the Education Department had no option but to complete the academic year. After matriculating, Dangor spent the first six months of 1962 in Johannesburg studying English in order to improve his marks to gain admission to Salisbury. He mainly spoke Gujarati at home and Afrikaans in the shop with the local white clientele. While English was Dangor’s third language, after six months of intensive post-matric study, he gained university admission. Language was a contested issue for many Indians in the Transvaal because English was the language of instruction at school whereas they spoke mainly Afrikaans at home and at work. Ahmed Kathrada recalls in his *Memoirs* that

for all our Gujarati origins and the emphasis on Arabic and the Quran we grew up speaking more Afrikaans than anything else. It was almost my first language. The women in my family still speak Afrikaans, and *boeremusiek*, traditional folk music played on a concertina, still makes me nostalgic.<sup>26</sup>

Salisbury was Dangor’s only option for tertiary education:

Salisbury Island started just two to three years before I completed my matric and it was an institution with very reasonable fees, and in terms of the apartheid environment it was the only place where we could go in this country and study certain qualifications. So I had no choice but to come to Salisbury Island. Going to India was too expensive.<sup>27</sup>

The University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) would have been the obvious choice given its relative proximity to Standerton and the fact that he could have stayed with his brother in Johannesburg. However, changes in the higher education terrain prohibited this. Prior to 1959, the Universities of the Witwatersrand and Cape Town were considered “open universities” in that they admitted students on academic grounds irrespective of race.<sup>28</sup> The 22 000

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25. Interview 26 September 2012 and subsequent telephonic interviews with Cassim Dangor.

26. Kathrada, *Memoirs*, p 22.

27. Interview 26 September 2012 and subsequent telephonic interviews with Cassim Dangor.

28. In 1959 there were 633 African, Asian, and coloured students enrolled at UCT (and 4 471 whites); while at Wits there were 297 (and 4 813 whites). See B. Beinart, J. Dugard, I.G. Thomas, E. Khan, R. Lee and D. Welsh, *The Open Universities in South Africa and Academic Freedom, 1957–1974* (Juta & Co., Cape Town, 1974) p 20.

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students at nine South African universities in 1957 included 1 300 African, coloured, and Asian students at Wits, Natal, and UCT.<sup>29</sup>

The segregation of university education was achieved through the Extension of University of Education Act, No. 45 of 1959.<sup>30</sup> There were just two institutions offering higher education for black students, namely Fort Hare and the Medical School in Natal. This Act transferred control of Fort Hare to the Department of Bantu Education and made provision for four new universities – the University College of the North at Turfloop; Zululand; Western Cape; and University College, Durban (Salisbury Island).<sup>31</sup> Sections 31 and 32 of the Act permitted black students to apply for ministerial consent to attend white universities where courses were not offered at the respective “racial” universities. Dangor could not enrol at Wits because Pharmacy was offered at Salisbury.

### First impressions

Dangor arrived at Salisbury Island in early 1963 with little of what we may call “social capital”. He found himself in an unfamiliar city with no friends or family, at a strange campus on an island that was designed to segregate Indians and he had concerns about his English language skills. Dangor came from a close-knit family and moving such a long distance from home was initially difficult. His teething troubles were compounded by the fact that he arrived in Durban in the middle of summer and in the Islamic month of Ramadan and was required to abstain from food and drink from dawn until sunset and engage in additional nightly prayers. The strain of fasting; the heat and humidity of the Durban summer; the intense academic programme; the alienating campus environment; and the logistics of getting to and from university, almost proved too much for Dangor who wanted to return to Standerton:

That was the first time I had ever left home for a long period of time. It was February, it was Ramadan, and there was oppressive heat and humidity here. I spent one week at university, where there were very strict conditions. I phoned my brother, I told him, I couldn't bear the conditions, I'd like to come home. I was travelling every morning, getting up at six, taking a bus. During the apartheid era it was just either walking or taking a bus and sitting at the back. I lived in Warwick Avenue where the market is. I was boarding with the Karodia family, wonderful people [a family friend connected him to the family], I used to first take a bus from the market to Dick King Jetty on the Esplanade and thereafter a ferry across to Salisbury Island. So all in all it would take me an hour of travelling going, and an hour of travelling coming back home. There were occasions when we would listen to the radio for warnings of gale force winds so that we would not have to go to campus. If there were gale force winds all lectures were cancelled ... Anyway, I phoned my brother to tell him I didn't want to study. His response was “Pack up your bags and come into the shop”, so I rethought the whole thing that night and said “I'm not coming back, I'm going to give it a shot”.<sup>32</sup>

Students and staff caught the ferry between the Gardiner Street Jetty and the College Wharf on Salisbury Island. An alternative route was to catch a train to the Fynnland Railway Station which was about a mile and a half from the College.

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29. Beinart et al., *Open Universities in South Africa*, p vii.

30. Beinart et al., *Open Universities in South Africa*, p 9.

31. Beinart et al., *Open Universities in South Africa*, p 20.

32. Interview 26 September 2012 and subsequent telephonic interviews with Cassim Dangor.

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During the university term, students were given an official season ticket which they used throughout the term; at all other times they had to pay the normal fare.

Dangor had spent most weekends and school holidays working in the family shop and was determined that shop keeping would not be his career. This motivated him to “stick it out” on campus and persevere with his studies. During the first Easter vacation, Dangor went home for a week and after that, “I was over it [the homesickness] ... I used to miss home but, fortunately, I could phone home at that time using one of those phone cards – once in two weeks I’d phone them”.<sup>33</sup> Ultimately, connecting with fellow students, his involvement in his academic work, and nurturing a sense of belonging to Salisbury were key contributions to Dangor’s academic persistence.

### Academic challenges

Dangor recalls being in the “third batch” of BSc students at Salisbury which comprised twenty students. He specialised in Pharmacy, which he notes was “a new vocation open to non-whites at that time”. The Group Areas Act was rapidly implemented in the 1960s and for apartheid to function effectively, it needed Indians (and by extension Africans and coloureds) to fill positions in pharmacies and hospitals in the exclusive group areas that were being developed. This explains the gradual expansion of the range of courses on offer at Salisbury and other so-called “Bush Colleges”.<sup>34</sup> It is clear that the separate development structures were pretty totalising in terms of corridors of race and upward mobility.

Dangor was a “guinea pig” because the Pharmacy Department was in the process of being established at Salisbury. An indication of the challenge that this presented is the state of the Department of Pharmacology at Wits. Bruce Murray writes that at Wits, Pharmacology “languished in the doldrums at the end of the war [1945].” The head of Pharmacology for 36 years from 1920 to 1956 was Professor John Watt. Murray writes that under Watt’s headship, Pharmacology “was a Victorian relic, simply not abreast with the new scientifically-based therapeutics”. The department “continued as a backwater and without a permanent head” until Robert W. Charlton, who subsequently became vice-chancellor of Wits, was transferred from the Department of Medicine in 1967 to revitalise the programme.<sup>35</sup> This was the very time that the new department was being launched at Salisbury.

Pharmacy was a five-year degree course. In his first year of study, Dangor enrolled for subjects in the general BSc course. Although he was concerned about his proficiency in English and his academic preparedness for university, he feels that he

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33. Interview 26 September 2012 and subsequent telephonic interviews with Cassim Dangor.
  34. According to the prospectus, 12 students were awarded the BSc degree in 1963 and 24 in 1967, the year in which Dangor graduated. In terms of the subjects offered, Botany, Chemistry, Geology, Hygiene, Mathematics, Physics, Physiology, and Zoology were offered by 1963. The Department of Pharmacy was established in 1966; a Department of Engineering was added in 1968; and Microbiology and Applied Mathematics were added in 1967.
  35. B.K. Murray, *Wits: The “Open Years”. A History of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg 1939–1959* (Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 2001), p 192.

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... did extremely well considering that I didn't do Biology in matric. The first year was very difficult because we had to do Physics, Chemistry, Botany and Zoology, all of which were the first-year courses of the two-year major subjects. At the end of the year I passed all, doing well. I was very happy because these were difficult courses.<sup>36</sup>

His proficiency in English was not the problem Dangor had feared it might be, because many of his lecturers were Afrikaans-speaking and incorporated some elements of Afrikaans into their lectures; their use of English was at a level that Dangor was easily able to comprehend. Students from Natal sometimes struggled to understand lecture material because of the Afrikaans language and accent of many lecturers. In terms of the structure of the degree, Dangor served an internship of two years before returning to university for his final two years of study. Securing an internship in 1964

... was however, quite a struggle. The first challenge I had is that no white pharmacy was willing to take on a "non-white" – I use the word "non-white" in brackets because that's what we were called then – as a pharmacy intern because of various reasons. One pharmacy in Johannesburg told me: "we don't have separate toilets for you"; another said, "our clientele will not feel comfortable having someone non-white behind the counter serving pharmaceuticals which are essential products", so I came back to do my second year [BSc] but, fortunately for me, two weeks into the year, I was offered a position in Johannesburg at the Coronation Hospital [now Yusuf Dadoo Hospital] ... My two years of apprenticeship was a very good experience. I visited the wards, helped with manufacturing of galenicals, dispensing to patients and ward nurses ... Working in a hospital is where I learnt a lot about practical pharmacy: manufacturing; counselling; social skills; communication skills; working with patients and advising; looking at package inserts; understanding indications of use; interactions, etc ... The programme has changed tremendously. In those years it was product-orientated, nowadays it's patient-orientated.<sup>37</sup>

During the apartheid era, Coronation Hospital (now renamed after an activist, Rahima Moosa Mother and Child Hospital) catered primarily for black (Indian, coloured and African) patients, while senior doctors and management were all white. At the time, there was one other apprentice, as they were known, a coloured male. Dangor underscores the importance of extended family in this period:

One again, the role of one of my elder brothers in encouraging me to continue my studies and for allowing me to live with him and his family for two years, as well as giving me weekly financial support, shall always be remembered because it was crucial in allowing me to complete my apprenticeship. He later even "donated" a vehicle to me. This was a gesture of generosity that I shall always relish.<sup>38</sup>

The two-year apprenticeship gave Dangor a clearer understanding of what his work as a pharmacist would entail and a better appreciation of the vocation. When he returned to university a more mature person, "it was easy sailing because I was focused, the interest was there". In his fourth year, Dangor studied

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36. Interview 26 September 2012 and subsequent telephonic interviews with Cassim Dangor.

37. Interview 26 September 2012 and subsequent telephonic interviews with Cassim Dangor. Dangor explained that when he first started the emphasis was on research in the industrial sector and in dispensing medicines. Over the past two decades, the emphasis has gradually shifted to public health awareness and improving patients' quality of life.

38. Interview 26 September 2012 and subsequent telephonic interviews with Cassim Dangor.

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Pharmaceutics 1; Pharmacognosy and Physiology 1. And in his final (fifth) year he did Forensic Pharmacy; Chemistry III; Pharmaceutical Chemistry; Pharmaceutics II; and Pharmacology.

Dangor's lecturers in Pharmaceutics; and Pharmacognosy and Pharmacology, were George E.A. Mathew, a graduate of the University of Cape Town, who did post-graduate work at Oxford University under Professor Sir Ewart Jones,<sup>39</sup> and W.G.G. Bruce who held a doctorate in Science from Potchefstroom University,<sup>40</sup> "as well as two members of the undergraduate support staff". The 1968 university prospectus lists the two laboratory assistants as R. Vengetsamy and Ms S.L. Naidoo (B.Sc., Madras). Mathew joined the Chemistry Department in 1962 and was subsequently moved to Pharmacy.<sup>41</sup> Dangor describes Mathew and Bruce as being

... very helpful. They were given a special compensation in terms of salary for making themselves available to teach at a "Bush College" which means a university or a college exclusively for a racial group. At that time we had four [such institutions]. One was Salisbury Island; the second was Western Cape; the third one was Fort Hare, and the fourth was the University of the North. I think these [lecturers] were committed people, they worked very hard.<sup>42</sup>

Dangor particularly enjoyed Chemistry, which was taught by

one or two retired lecturers. Access to equipment was limited, like high pressure liquid chromatography equipment, but we certainly had good people. We had Prof. [Krish] Bharatram, who is now a nuclear physicist, taking us, his brother Ramesh as well, who is now in charge of research at the University of the Western Cape. Lots of them were doing postgraduate studies. We also had Professor Herbert ("Herby") Govinden, a chemist from Fort Hare University who was excellent.<sup>43</sup>

In this recollection Dangor points to some of the individuals from Salisbury who went on to carve out outstanding careers in their respective fields.

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39. "Chair of Pharmacy at the University of Durban-Westville", *Fiat Lux*, May 1971, p 5.

40. G.E.A. Mathew (BSc Cape Town); W.G.G. Bruce held a DSc from Potchefstroom University. Matthews also did an NTC and ZFIC while Bruce held an FPS, PhC and LRIC from the United Kingdom.

41. *Island Intelligence*, April 1962. This was a quarterly newsletter probably published by the PRO of the university and was favourable towards the university. The Documentation Centre at the University of KwaZulu-Natal has the 1961 issues and the April 1962 issue.

42. Interview 26 September 2012 and subsequent telephonic interviews with Cassim Dangor. While Dangor refers to Salisbury as a "Bush College", some commentators, including one of the anonymous reviewers, felt that the term is inappropriate because Salisbury was an island in an urban setting and that "Bush College" is more appropriate for universities established for Africans in rural areas. However, in apartheid South Africa, this was more of a political term and did not signify the actual physical location of the university. For example, Ciraj Rassol, reflecting on the University of Western Cape (UWC), wrote: "As you drove a little further and the signs pointed to UWC, the parental instruction was swift and resolute: 'Look to your left and do not look to the right!' For this was the bush college, a site not just of unequal education but also of inferior education, in a university specially created to produce compliance and mediocrity", *Mail & Guardian*, 4 May 2012.

43. Interview 26 September 2012 and subsequent telephonic interviews with Cassim Dangor.

## Social life on campus

Life at Salisbury presented several challenges. One was the rigidity of campus life. Dangor recalls having to wear a coat, shirt and tie for the first time in his life. University rules (as stated in various prospectuses of the 1960s) prohibited informal attire. There were other restrictions too. All organisations and societies on campus were subject to the rector's control, individuals were forbidden to join organisations not approved by the Council, and students could not travel to campus by car. Dangor recalls that the rector was a "powerful figure". In terms of the university's statute he was the chief disciplinary officer. Kleinschmidt, a member of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), wrote in 1968, probably with some exaggeration and sarcasm, that while at most universities it would be hard to find the rector, at Salisbury,

... the Rector can be seen strolling on the Campus. Amidst the bustle and disorganisation of the fly-infested cafeteria it is not uncommon to find the Rector stride in like an overseer. The Rector is also unique in that he presides over the Student Amenities Committee where ... he dictates the issues of the day. A student's comment on this unofficial SRC was: "It reminds me of Poland in 1939 when the Nazis established the 'Jewish Council' in the ghettos of Warsaw". All is known to the Rector and his efficient secretary – [who knew] who was holding hands with whom, and where; who was getting married, and why; who was wearing a miniskirt with netted stockings to match; who was not use a tie; who was singing "freedom" songs, and where; [and] who said what at the hostel luncheon before his stomach turned. [According to the rector in 1963]: "The walls have ears and the wind blows words to my ears".<sup>44</sup>

Dangor himself recalled:

I remember when we'd come in the morning, we had to wear a tie and a jacket and if we didn't, then there was someone from the administration who'd march us to the vice rector's office and he would warn us and in fact after a certain number of warnings we would be asked not to come back for a day or two, miss out on lectures. The library facilities were good, but they were limited to different times because most of them [the staff] had to leave ... there was a ferry service which had regular times, so by six o'clock we had to leave Salisbury Island, because there was a lot of security. The Navy was still there for a while, but later on they moved. So there was a lot of security. Access to the island was through the causeway from the Bluff area or by ferry boat, from the Dick King Jetty in town, two access points, so there was control and [high level] security.

Despite the controls, Dangor enjoyed many aspects of campus life:

We would have little parties at times. Birthdays were celebrated and we played a lot of sport. In the cricket season we'd play competitive cricket, so the sports fields were abuzz with cricket, soccer, etc. We were very competitive. After our evening meals, it was common practice to go out for walks on campus, and talk about the day's events. Everyone looked forward to that because [it] was an opportunity to socialise, and by half past seven we had to be back in residence [which was] totally segregated and apart, about 200 metres away.<sup>45</sup>

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44. H. Kleinschmidt, "Fear Dominates Indian Campus", *CAMPUS*, 14 June 1968, p 18. At the time of writing the article, Kleinschmidt was a member of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) and the South African Christian Institute (CI).

45. Interview 26 September 2012 and subsequent telephonic interviews with Cassim Dangor.

## The formal education journey of Cassim Dangor, 1963–1985

Dangor formed close friendships with many students “from upcountry ... because of the fact that we were away from the city” and shared these tranquil moments. According to him, by the end of the 1960s, Salisbury offered a variety of amenities such as athletics, soccer, cricket, football, swimming, chess, drama, and debating. Occasional relief was provided

[such as] plays staged at Howard College. There were special arrangements made and buses were provided by the university to take us to these plays ... We also produced plays on campus. The Arts Faculty was very good. We had prominent people who featured in performances like “The Passion Show” which was staged every year during Easter and Christmas ... there were productions at the City Hall as well.

Another treat for Dangor was watching movies:

On Saturdays there was special transport for us to go into the town [city], to a movie or to do shopping. There were ferry boats available to the mainland at 12 o’ clock and 4 o’ clock ... We used to watch Indian movies, Western movies and anything else of special interest. I remember after one of the papers [examinations] in Pharmacy we went to see “Born Free” which we thoroughly enjoyed. That was in 1966 or 1967 and it was a film about a couple, the Adamsons I think, who reared an orphaned lion cub in Kenya and eventually released her into the wilderness. This film stuck in my mind, maybe because of our fear of lions.<sup>46</sup>

Dangor came from a devout Muslim family and Muslim students were allocated a room in the barracks in the Education section where they performed their prayers, which were led by a student who went on to become an advocate, Hafez Abubakr. In terms of politics, Dangor recalls that generally political activity was in a lull during the mid-1960s but by the end of the decade the Black Consciousness Movement was beginning to make an impact. Names like Steve Biko, Saths Cooper and Strini Moodley became well known. At the hostel too there were students willing to stand up to Security Branch harassment – names such as Sebastian (from Johannesburg), Ballim (Pietermaritzburg), Ebrahim Aboo (Standerton), Fatima Wadee (Heidelberg), and George Mitha stand out in his memory as being amongst those who were politically active on campus.

### **Cassim Dangor as warden**

Dangor completed his degree in 1967. The list of students who graduated at the ceremony held the next year at the Durban City Hall on 18 May 1968 includes two students who completed the BSc degree in Pharmacy: Cassim Dangor and Suliman Mahmood Saloojee. Two more students completed the same degree at the end of 1968: Dalsukh Dayaram and Yakoob Essop Manjoo.

Dangor found research exciting and intellectually rewarding and was keen to pursue post-graduate studies. He spoke to Professor Matthews who “created a post for me [in 1968] as a part-time junior lecturer”. Dangor lectured Pharmaceutics to second year students. His Honours year was very demanding because “I was lecturing part time as a junior lecturer and I was a warden as well. I had to attend lectures, lecture in one subject ... in addition to that I had my responsibilities as a warden after hours”. He completed his Honours degree in

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46. Interview 26 September 2012 and subsequent telephonic interviews with Cassim Dangor.

## The formal education journey of Cassim Dangor, 1963–1985

1968 (examinations being written in February 1969) and was then appointed as a junior lecturer in Pharmacy. He is listed in the University Calendar as a junior lecturer in 1969 and 1970.

Dangor explained that he decided to take on the extra academic responsibilities for two reasons:

Finance was one, convenience was another. I stayed at the residence there, fully paid for, meals provided ... Instead of having to travel every morning I stayed on in campus in the residence. This gave me the opportunity to work in the department, which is within walking distance of the residence, till late at night doing research, using the library facilities, etc. Remember, in those years we didn't have all these fancy software and computer programmes ... literature survey had to be done by going through academic journals, reviews, as well as published articles.

He has fond memories of the friendly matron at the Salisbury residence:

It was my responsibility to guide and advise students. That was an excellent experience. We had a matron there who was a spinster in her fifties, and her name was Miss Thumbadoo. She had been in London for a long time and she came back and they offered her the position of matron. [She was] a very pleasant, kind, courteous woman, and we'd always tease her on certain occasions about the songs she sang about her fond memories of living in London, such as "London Lights are Burning". We used to tease her about this.<sup>47</sup>

Hostel food was apparently not without some appeal, and included:

... green banana curry ... we also had beans. It was a typical diet for the South Indian people because they were in the majority. Fridays' meals were very good – we had fish and chips and we always looked forward to that. The chef used to be a good friend of mine and he made sure that when I come in for meal a bit late, he would keep food for me ... which was maybe favouritism.<sup>48</sup>

There were 630 students on campus when Dangor began his studies at Salisbury in 1963. By the time he graduated in 1968, the student population had increased to around 1 000, with some 400 living in the residence. Most of these students were from Northern Natal and the Transvaal, with a small number from the Cape. The position of warden was an important one. The university's prospectus for 1970 states that "the general control of the Residence is vested in the warden of the Residence". The warden had the power to issue house rules if this was deemed necessary. Dangor worked with a Hostel Committee which reported to the University Council through the rector.

On the whole, Dangor found the students "very cooperative". One of his main responsibilities as warden was to mentor young students who experienced

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47 Interview 26 September 2012 and subsequent telephonic interviews with Cassim Dangor. Miss Thumbadoo, the daughter of well-known community, sporting and political figure Vincent Thumbadoo and his wife Bomeeamal, was part of a family that made an immense contribution to Indian education from the middle decades of the twentieth century. Her brother, George, taught English and History at Sastri College and was later principal of the S.M. Jhavary and Springfield Schools; Teddy, who represented the Natal Indian soccer team, was principal of Dundee, Newcastle, Tagore, and Surat Hindu Schools; while Rama taught at Dundee High, Sastri College and Springfield College.

48. Interview 26 September 2012 and subsequent telephonic interviews with Cassim Dangor.

## The formal education journey of Cassim Dangor, 1963–1985

difficulties adjusting to campus life. Many up-country parents apparently saddled him with the responsibility of “keeping an eye” on their children. He recalled with laughter that the biggest challenge was the flying cockroaches:

Because there were always a lot of ships coming into the harbour, we had these flying cockroaches in the residence and when we were having a meal, we'd see a cockroach in there and everybody would complain bitterly. We'd call the rector in, and he would say: “Don't worry, it's just a flying cockroach coming in to investigate the food”, but [of course] the students were highly upset and up in arms about it.<sup>49</sup>

### The University of Mississippi

Dangor was keen to do a Master's degree and felt that he would benefit academically by going abroad. Without the financial means to do so, he checked advertisements regularly and applied for a Fulbright Scholarship when he became aware that the United States government offered bursaries to students to undertake postgraduate studies. In 1970, after several interviews, he was granted a scholarship and proceeded to do a MSc degree in the Department of Pharmaceutics at the University of Mississippi (known fondly as “Ole Miss”) in the United States. He was accompanied by a “chap from Physics, Nadasan, who did his Master's at Salisbury and completed his PhD at Purdue. He [Nadasan] did not come back to South Africa.”<sup>50</sup>

Going to the US transformed Dangor socially and academically. The first challenge was getting there. He travelled with the support of the Institute of International Education (USA) on a cargo liner because, as he put it, it was “the cheapest way to get there [Boston]. There were ten passengers; most of these guys were retired Americans who were just cruising along”. The journey took about twelve days. From Boston he took a bus to Memphis and another bus from there to Mississippi, a journey of just over 24 hours. Growing up in apartheid South Africa, the US experience was an eye-opener for Dangor. The political situation in the US bore some resemblance to South Africa:

Mississippi had just come out of the civil rights environment so I was at an institution where predominantly there were two student unions – a black students' union and a white students' union. But there was lots of activism for rights and there was also a great deal of protest about Vietnam, so [it was] different from South Africa [in terms of activism].<sup>51</sup>

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49. Interview 26 September 2012 and subsequent telephonic interviews with Cassim Dangor.
50. This is a good example of the importance of verifying information that is relayed orally. According to the University of Michigan prospectus, Arunajalam Nadasan, a nuclear physicist, did his BSc and Honours at Fort Hare (1960) and MSc at Rhodes (1967) before joining the University College, Durban as a lecturer. When Nadasan became professor emeritus, the proceedings of the Board of Regents of the University of Michigan, carried a short biography of him. It stated that this “native of South Africa” received the Fulbright and went to the US where he completed an MSc (1971) and PhD at Indiana University (1977) [not Purdue University, which is also in the state of Indiana]. He taught for five years at the University of Maryland then joined the University of Michigan-Dearborn (1982). He became associate professor in 1987, full professor in 1992, and professor emeritus of Physics in 2002. See Proceedings of Board of Regents, University of Michigan, at <http://books.google.co.za/books?id=A+Nadasen+physics+PhD&source=bl&ots=A%20Nadasen%20physics=false>. Accessed 18 July 2013.
51. Interview 26 September 2012 and subsequent telephonic interviews with Cassim Dangor.

## The formal education journey of Cassim Dangor, 1963–1985

The racial differentiation came as a surprise to Dangor; he had thought that he would be escaping this kind of thinking when he left a South Africa that was so rigidly divided by race. “Ole Miss” had experienced racial riots in October 1962 when the university was forced to admit its first black student, James Meredith, in the face of opposition from white students; the residents of the town and the state governor, Ross Barnett. Meredith was prevented from attending the university when the academic year commenced in September. Riots broke out on 1 October when US marshals accompanied Meredith into his lectures and the US president, John F. Kennedy intervened by sending in federal troops to restore order. Meredith eventually graduated with a degree in Political Science.<sup>52</sup> In contrast to the US, political activism was relatively muted in South Africa at the time due to the National Party government’s banning of the African National Congress and Pan Africanist Congress, and the banning, imprisonment, and exile of opposition leaders in the wake of the Sharpeville massacre of March 1960.

Dangor was surprised to find that even though the 1960s had witnessed an explosive civil rights struggle in the US led by the likes of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, some of the black students were unaware of the situation in South Africa. His first roommate in the dorm was African-American:

... a teacher who was doing his Masters degree in Education. He was a black American and he was shocked ... when I briefed him on what happened to us here [In South Africa] – no voting rights, no freedom of movement – exclusively Indian University College – they couldn’t believe it and were very sympathetic towards me.

There were other “eye-openers” for Dangor:

I remember one day when I went there to the library, my eyes fell on *Playboy* and *Penthouse* magazines which were banned in South Africa at the time because the middle pages carried all the nudes photographs, etc. and people would look at these [publications] very slyly. But I didn’t bother looking at them because of the upbringing that I had ... they didn’t interest me at all.<sup>53</sup>

The social aspects of campus life in the United States broadened his outlook considerably:

I met people from other parts of the world and we shared an apartment and we did our own cooking. On occasional Fridays we’d go for prayers to Memphis, which was about eighty miles away. Each campus had a foreign student advisor and ours was very helpful and he had a lot of functions for foreigners to familiarise us with the environment, to make us comfortable away from home ... It was brilliant. I enjoyed it.<sup>54</sup>

Dangor subsequently left the campus residence and shared a home with fellow students,

... [three] guys, two from India and one from Pakistan. I’m still in touch with one who is in America now, lecturing in law at one of the junior colleges; and also my colleague from Pharmacy – he’s a vice-chancellor at a university in Pakistan. We all

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52. See N. Bryant, “Black Man who was Crazy Enough to Apply to Ole Miss”, *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 53, 2006, pp 60–71.

53. Interview 26 September 2012 and subsequent telephonic interviews with Cassim Dangor.

54. Interview 26 September 2012 and subsequent telephonic interviews with Cassim Dangor.

## The formal education journey of Cassim Dangor, 1963–1985

stayed together. We rented two rooms in an apartment that belonged to a professor in English – he was an Italian chap – so we got to learn a lot about other cultures as well. During Bakri Eid [Muslim festival involving animal sacrifice], we'd buy a sheep and we'd make a sacrifice in our basement. We'd go to Memphis to visit other friends for weekends. We bought a car together and used that car to go to Washington for a holiday.<sup>55</sup>

Dangor spent almost two years in America before returning home. He could not afford a visit his family before this because “it was too expensive”. After completing his studies, Dangor bought a bus pass from the Institute of International Education (IIE) for US\$99 for 99 days. He travelled by bus to Chicago, Washington DC, St Louis, Memphis, Mississippi, California, and went to San Remo, “a casino place” as well. As for accommodation, he stayed with “American families for a minimum of two days wherever I went, all on the house, nothing to pay for, meals provided, that was the American hospitality that I enjoyed.” The memories of those years have remained with him, although he never considered living in the US, in part because of family commitments and in part because he felt a strong obligation to his home country.

Dangor did a coursework Master's degree with a short dissertation. He passed with excellent marks. His Salisbury Island training had prepared him well: “I had a very good background because when they tested me they ... were very happy. It was very challenging but not impossible.” Indeed he coped better than other overseas students and was on par with most students who had begun their studies in the US. He completed the MSc degree in the Department of Pharmaceutics in 1972.<sup>56</sup> Dangor's favourable impression of his lecturers at Salisbury and his academic preparedness for graduate study in the US goes against conventional wisdom about the standard of education available at so-called “Bush Colleges”. Kleinschmidt for example, wrote in 1968 that the academic staff at Salisbury comprised

... an impressive array of mediocre, old professors from the Universities of Stellenbosch, Pretoria, the Free State, and Potchefstroom. Students wish that the actual standard of lecturing were half as impressive as the imposing list of staff in the annual calendar of the University College.<sup>57</sup>

There is clearly more to learn about how lecturers in different fields were selected and the availability of expertise; Dangor's positive experience may be because Pharmacy was an exception due to its specialised knowledge, or because the likes of Mathew and Bruce may have been motivated by paternalism or benevolence. On the other hand, it does suggest that the state took its vision of “separate development” seriously. It needed to develop expertise in order to really showcase its vision of creating opportunities for talented individuals within a segregated society.

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55. Interview 26 September 2012 and subsequent telephonic interviews with Cassim Dangor.

56. His name is listed on the Department's website under “Alumni of the Pharmaceutics Program”. There were four graduates in 1972: Cassim M. Dangor MS; Elizabeth Land Morgan MS; Guey-Meei Lin MS; and Larry G. Miller PhD. See The University of Mississippi, School of Pharmacy, Alumni. Available online at <http://www.pharmacy.olemiss.edu/pharmaceutics/alumni.html>. Accessed 18 July 2013.

57. Kleinschmidt, “Fear Dominates Indian Campus”, p 19.

## University of Durban-Westville

Dangor wanted to pursue his PhD at Mississippi before returning to South Africa but back home, the university, now named the University of Durban-Westville (UD-W), was unwilling to retain his junior lecturer's post in the light of the fact that he had already been overseas for two years. He duly returned to South Africa in 1973 with mixed feelings: "Initially, there were regrets because it was a challenge here [in South Africa] getting started and finding a suitable topic, getting a suitable supervisor, etc." The campus had relocated to Westville and Dangor returned to a "different" university in many ways: "In comparison to Salisbury, UD-W was good, much bigger, new facilities, a new environment, a new campus, many more staff members, more interaction, a larger number of students ..."

Much had changed in the period from Dangor's original registration at Salisbury to the time of his return to South Africa. Enrolment had increased to 1 642 students in 1970 and 2 267 in 1975.<sup>58</sup> At Salisbury, the university followed the syllabus of the University of South Africa (Unisa) which also set the examinations. This changed in 1969 when Salisbury was granted a measure of autonomy through a special statute which formally constituted it as a university. In January 1970, university status was also conferred on the universities of Fort Hare, Zululand, the Western Cape, and the University of the North. The University College, Durban, became the University of Durban-Westville in January 1971 when the construction of the new premises was complete.<sup>59</sup> By 1973 the number of university students nationally had increased to an impressive 73 567. Of these 3 632 were enrolled at Fort Hare, the University of the North, and the University of Zululand; 2 192 at UD-W; and 1 600 at UWC.<sup>60</sup>

Councils and Senates at these universities remained predominantly white, however, and these universities did not have a Convocation, which in South Africa has representation on the Council and is an expression of the continuity of university life and the corporate identity of graduates.<sup>61</sup> These universities had limited autonomy. The minister appointed the rector and vice-chancellor; and decided on staff in consultation with Council which controlled appointments, promotions, dismissal of staff, salary scales, and conditions of service.<sup>62</sup> Funding was another problem. Around 75 percent of the funding of white universities in the early 1970s was in the form of a state subsidy. Black universities did not enjoy this autonomy because they fell under their respective ministers (of Bantu Education, Coloured Relations, and Indian Affairs) who exercised a strong influence on the university in all respects.<sup>63</sup>

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58. C.M. Stimie and C. Geggus, *University Education in South Africa* (Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria, 1976), p 32.

59. Stimie and Geggus, *University Education in South Africa*, p 32.

60. Beinart et al., *Open Universities in South Africa*, p 20.

61. The Council of a university governs the institution and the institutional statute. Its members include, amongst others, the rector and vice-chancellor, and various vice-rectors, as well as individuals nominated by the Minister of Education; those elected by the Convocation; and those elected by the permanent academic staff. The Senate is accountable to the Council for the academic and research functions of the university and carries out all duties delegated to it by the Council. See Beinart et al., *Open Universities in South Africa*, p 20.

62. Beinart et al., *Open Universities in South Africa*, p 22.

63. Beinart et al., *Open Universities in South Africa*, p 22.

There were six members of staff in the Pharmacy Department when Dangor returned in 1972. Dr Mathew was appointed chair and professor of Pharmacy in 1971. The BSc (Pharmacy) degree was phased out and a new Bachelor's degree of Pharmacy was introduced in 1971 (the first students graduated in 1974). The new degree was structured differently. Students did four years of fulltime study followed by a year of training at a pharmacy approved by the Board. Aside from the structural changes (Dangor had worked for two years after his first year of study) course content also changed with the introduction of Pharmacology, Health Education, and Pharmacy Administration as subjects of study. The syllabus and the quality of education were prescribed and regulated by an external body, the South African Pharmacy Board.

The decision to create a formal chair in Pharmacy was motivated by the desire to stimulate research. For example, a pharmacological unit was established at Westville under Dr Bruce to investigate the fungicidal and bacterial properties of synthetic and natural drugs.<sup>64</sup> Another reason for expanding the department was to increase the number of Indian Pharmacy graduates. According to an April 1972 report, there were 20 pharmacists for the Indian population of 630 000, a ratio of one per 32 000. The ratio for whites was one per 4 000. The number of Indian pharmacists had to be increased in order to make apartheid work.<sup>65</sup> Other members of the department included two senior lecturers, the Irish-qualified Ms J. Black and Ms M. Pillay of Uitenhage who held a B.Pharm degree from Madras University and M.Pharm from London; and two lecturers, Dangor and V.M.B. Redding.

Mathew retired in 1976<sup>66</sup> and Bruce left shortly afterwards. There were nine members of staff in 1979, with Professor A.M. Veltman, who held a doctorate from Potchefstroom University, as chair.<sup>67</sup> This reflects the rapid growth of the department as well as the increasing specialisation of teaching and research. During the 1970s, the student intake in Pharmacy was limited to about 20 students per annum. Dangor's return coincided with an important change in orientation. From 1975, the department arranged for its final year students to study the use of drugs amongst patients at local hospitals in order to educate them about the use and abuse of drugs and enable them to witness the impact of drugs on patients firsthand.

Overriding the academic aspects, according to Dangor, was the political climate which he witnessed from the time of his return to South Africa. Political protest had escalated and he recalls that the years from 1973 were highly charged, particularly during the protests in 1976, 1980, and 1981. The boycotts of 1980, which lasted for about four months, were, he believes, the most intense of this era. This was indeed a very difficult time for academics that had to balance pressure from the university authorities and from the security forces with their

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64. "Chair of Pharmacy at the University of Durban-Westville", *Fiat Lux*, May 1971, p 5.

65. "Training and Opportunities for Indian Pharmacists", *Fiat Lux*, April 1972, pp 11–14.

66. *Fiat Lux*, March 1977, p 29.

67. Other teaching staff included senior lecturers: Black, Pillay, Dangor, and H. Igel who held a doctorate from Germany; and lecturers Redding, Ms D.M. Alexander who qualified in London, V. Rambiritch, who had an Honours degree from UD-W, and Ms S. Laxton, who held a Masters' degree from Wits University.

desire to ensure that students' academic programmes did not suffer. Dangor's students, such as Pravin Gordhan, current Minister of Finance in South Africa, Indris Moodley, and several others, were arrested for their roles in protest politics. Dangor also observes that in the decade or so after 1976, there was a gradual decline in Afrikaner control of the institution because some Indian academics and administrators were given positions of authority.

Dangor was promoted to the position of senior lecturer during these years and went to the University of London in 1977 on an Ernest Oppenheimer Trust bursary to do research for his PhD. His research was conducted under the supervision of Professor Arnold Beckett, a world authority on modified drug delivery dosage forms. However, Dangor did not present his dissertation in London because "it was too expensive to enrol, I didn't have the money to pay for the fees so I was awarded my PhD from the then UD-W."<sup>68</sup> Dangor's research and his award of the doctoral degree in 1985 was a source of great pride for the family, particularly for his ageing mother, Sarah who admitted to being "very proud". Although she was not well, she attended the graduation ceremony.

[My mother attended] my PhD graduation – she didn't go to any of the graduations for her other children, only for mine. [She came] from Standerton ... to Durban with my eldest brother who was my guardian, who brought me, up plus my younger one who's an insurance agent. I always remember them for their contributions to my success and know that I will never be able to reciprocate [their support and encouragement to me] ... [I am also grateful] to my other brothers, sisters and their spouses for their support to my success. This was a feature of many families at the time where education was seen as a family endeavour.<sup>69</sup>

Dangor, the first permanent Indian member of the staff in Pharmacy, found it "a challenge to be promoted in the beginning, it was always a matter of competing, but eventually it changed. Though I was frustrated at the time, one's *takdir* [fate] is in God's hand and justice eventually prevailed". Shortly after being awarded his PhD, Dangor was promoted to associate professor because "I published and I produced graduates, and I started the research unit, and got funding, increased the number of students. I was then promoted [to the position of] ... professor". He subsequently served on the Council of the university and was appointed Dean of the Faculty.

Dangor taught at UD-W until it merged with the University of Natal to form UKZN in 2004. He retired from UKZN in 2009 and was made an emeritus professor in recognition of his contribution to the university and to the field of Pharmacy both nationally and internationally. He continued to lecture in Biopharmaceutics and medicine registration on a part-time basis. He is a fellow of the Pharmaceutical Society of South Africa; has received an award from the industry as Pharmacist of the Year for his contribution to the development of pharmacy in the country; has been a member of the Pharmacy Council of South Africa since 2004; and serves on the Medicines Control Council as a member of

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68. Dangor worked on an appetite suppressant called diethyl propion hydrochloride. Through this research, he developed a multi-unit long-acting capsule for that dosage form, compared it with other single-product tablets on the market and took blood, urine, saliva, and perspiration samples. His dosage form had fewer side effects and better long-term therapeutic outcomes because of the absence of major fluctuations.

69. Interview 26 September 2012 and subsequent telephonic interviews with Cassim Dangor.

the Executive Committee and chairman of the Pharmaceutical and Analytical Committee. The most “gratifying and fulfilling” part of his long journey is the many pharmacist alumni “who I taught [over the years] and who are currently assuming high profile roles in commerce, politics, law, research institutions, academia, and health care delivery, both in the public and private sectors”.

## **Conclusion**

While individual stories can be esoteric and unrepresentative, the experiences of individuals like Dangor point to the mixed legacy of apartheid-created universities. They had little choice on where they could study, unlike their white contemporaries who could apply to a range of institutions with long-established histories, beautiful settings and international recognition. The separate development structures of apartheid were pretty totalising in terms of corridors of race and upward mobility and forced most South Africans to operate in racial silos. This included attending and teaching at institutions of learning at a time when political opposition against the apartheid regime was intensifying with detentions, bannings, and exile a common feature of life. The Soweto uprisings of 1976 are widely recognised as an iconic moment in this struggle, but the education boycotts of 1980 and 1981, which drew together politicians, students, and community members were equally significant in the longer term demise of apartheid.

Yet, in this context, the so-called “Bush Colleges” produced several generations of professionals, both men and women, and played an important part in the upward mobility of many black South Africans. These ethnic/racial universities started without autonomy under the auspices of the University of South Africa. Their lower fees and greater educational opportunities created openings that would most likely not have been available at “open universities” for black students and staff. One of the unresolved debates around such institutions is whether those who attended them were right to do so. Should there have been liberation before education or education to prepare for liberation? It is ironic that while many Indians were critical of Salisbury and UD-W because of apartheid policies, in the post-apartheid era, as is evident in letters to newspapers and interviews with people across the political spectrum, there is a nostalgic yearning for a past when places at university were easier to secure due to this racialisation.

While this article began by suggesting that tertiary education was particularly difficult for first generation students such as Dangor because of their lack of intellectual and cultural capital, as one of the anonymous reviewers of this article points out, and which this author concedes, the first generation experience was not confined to black South Africans. Many white South Africans, especially Afrikaners, were in a similar situation in the early 1960s. Furthermore, after experiencing initial difficulties due to an English language deficit, Dangor succeeded in his studies and excelled both academically and professionally.

## **Abstract**

Most students who attended the University College, Durban, which was established on Salisbury Island in 1961, were pioneers in two important senses: they were amongst the first to attend a racially exclusive university for Indians, as

well being first generation students. Both scenarios presented challenges. This article focuses on the experiences of the Transvaal-born Cassim Dangor who, as an “Indian”, faced many restrictive segregationist policies in his attempts to acquire tertiary education. While apartheid is often portrayed as a totalising institution, and despite the fact that individual stories can be esoteric, anecdotal and unrepresentative, a life history methodology provides a means to examine how individuals understood apartheid; how they were affected by it; the ways in which they attempted to make sense of their lives; and how they sought spaces in the system. The article also charts the growth of Pharmacy as a discipline at the university.

**Key words:** Salisbury Island; University of Durban-Westville; Pharmacy (as an academic discipline); apartheid.

### Opsomming

#### **Die formele opvoedings reis van Cassim Dangor, 1963–1985: Refleksies rakende opvoedings uitdagings in apartheid Suid-Afrika**

Die meeste studente wat die Universiteits Kollege, Durban, wat in 1961 geskep is, bygewoon het was pioniers op twee belangrike wyses: hulle was die eerstes wat aan 'n universiteit wat eksklusief vir Indiërs geskep gestudeer het en hulle was ook die eerste geslag universiteits studente. Beide die scenarios het uitdagings geoffer. Die artikel fokus op die ervaringe van die Transvaals gebore Cassim Dangor wie, as 'n Indier, vele beperkende apartheids wetgewings beleef het in sy strewe na tersiëre onderwys. Hoewel apartheid gereeld voorgehou word as 'n totaliserende instelling, en ongeag die feit dat sommige stories esoteries, eensydig en onverteenwoordigend kan wees, laat 'n lewensgeskiedenis metodologie 'n eksaminering toe van hoe enkelinge apartheid ervaar het, hul daardeur beïnvloed is, hoe hulle probeer sin maak het van die stelsel en hoe hulle hul plek daarin gesoek het. Die artikel karteer oof die ontwikkeling van Farmasie as 'n vakgebied aan die universiteit.

**Slutelwoorde:** Salisbury Eiland; Universiteit of Durban-Westville; Aptekerswese (as 'n akademiese veld); apartheid.