#### GANDHI'S "FOUR PEARLS"

Thambi and Veerammal had nine children: Kuppusamy, Thayanayagee (Thailema), Pakirisamy (Pakiri), Naransamy (Roy), Barasarthi, Balakrishnan, Shanthavathi (Shanthie), Seshammal and Mithalin. Shanthie died in childhood, probably of smallpox, at Tolstoy Farm.

In 1909 Kuppusamy was sentenced to seven days' imprisonment with hard labour for hawking without a licence. In 1910 he was again sentenced to three months with hard labour.

At Gandhi's farewell banquet in July 1914 on the eve of his departure for India, Thambi presented four of his sons – Naransamy (Roy), Pakirisamy (Pakiri), Barasarthi and Balakrishnan – to him, saying that they were to become servants of India. The boys had been Gandhi's pupils at Tolstoy Farm. He referred to them as his "four pearls".

"Of all the precious gifts given to us, those four boys are the most precious. I don't know that we are worthy to take charge of them."

Mohandas Gandhi

The boys travelled to India in 1915 and were educated in the tradition of sacrifice and dedication to the common good at an ashram in Kochrab, Ahmedabad. In March 1916, Pakiri died at the ashram.

After Pakiri's death, Veerammal insisted that the other boys be sent back to South Africa, and raised the money for their return passage. Barasarthi and Balakrishnan returned to South Africa in 1919, but Roy stayed on to study under the poet and Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore at Santiniketan.



Gandhi bids farewell to his friends in Cape Town, 1914. *Photo: Wits Historical Papers* 

"I sat up, alone, by his side on the last day of his life. Pakiri's father had entrusted him to me. When Pakiri had gone, I lost the other three brothers too."

Mohandas Gandhi



## LIFE WAS SERVICE, SERVICE WAS JOY



"I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy." Rabindranath Tagore

Naransamy, nicknamed Roy, returned home from India in 1928. By then he was deeply under the influence of the Indian nationalist movement and the teachings of Tagore: "opening the mind and reawakening the goodness of mankind". His life thereafter was dedicated to the South African liberation struggle.

"Indians cannot improve their lot until they come out in open defiance of segregation. The days of going to government officials, hat in hand and begging for minor concessions, are over." Roy Naidoo

Roy worked in a laundry and as a driver for a bakery. He was active in his trade union, the Transvaal Peace Council and the Tamil Benefit Society. He was elected deputy president of the Transvaal Indian Congress and campaigned for the vote for Indians, the repeal of segregationist laws such as the Ghetto Act and the Pegging Act, and non-racial alliances.

Through politics he made lifelong friends, like the Afrikaner Communists Bram and Molly Fischer, and ANC leader Walter Sisulu. Roy was an uncompromising believer in the ideals of non-racialism and equality. He instilled these ideals in

"My dad was a very dedicated member of the Communist Party. He was also a founding member of the Friends of the Soviet Union. And he always wore a red tie." Murthie Naidoo



#### MILITANT PASSIVE RESISTANCE

Thambi Naidoo died on 31 October 1933. His ashes were buried in the Indian Cemetery in Brixton.

"Crowds turned out for the funeral of the late Thambi Naidoo. It was an aweinspiring sight and a fitting tribute to a great patriot and hero. The procession was nearly two miles long, evident of the great appreciation for the man who was determined to lay down his life for the honour of the Indian community in South Africa."

Indian Opinion, 17 November 1933

The impact of Thambi's life of sacrifice was felt far beyond the South African Indian community. His and Veerammal's descendants would continue the struggle for justice and equality for decades to come.

From the late 1930s, a radical grouping known as the nationalist bloc emerged in the South African Indian Congress, lead by Dr Monty Naicker (Natal Indian Congress) and Dr Yusuf Dadoo (Transvaal Indian Congress). World War II and the fight against fascism in Europe greatly influenced their political thinking.

In 1946 the Indian congresses launched a countrywide passive resistance campaign. Over 2 000 people were imprisoned, including Roy, his sister Thailema, his wife, Ama, and three of Ama's brothers. The Indian Passive Resistance Campaign continued Gandhi's tradition of non-violent resistance, but in a more militant fashion.



The Hindu Crematorium in Brixton, Johannesburg, where Thambi Naidoo was cremated. *Photo: Elias Mendel* 



Roy and Dr Dadoo addressing a crowd during the Passive Resistance Campaign, 1946. *Photo: Wits Historical Papers* 

"Roy was a committed Communist, and a militant. He was not entirely a pacifist. Being involved in the passive resistance struggle didn't mean that you weren't militant." Prema Naidoo



### INSTILLING A SPIRIT OF DEFIANCE

"The 1946 Indian Passive
Resistance Campaign became
a model of the type of
protest that we in the Youth
League were calling for. It
reminded us that the freedom
struggle was not merely a
question of holding meetings,
passing resolutions but of
meticulous organisation,
militant mass action and the
willingness to suffer and
sacrifice." Nelson Mandela

The Indian campaign set the basis for a united struggle against apartheid. In 1947 Dr Naicker (NIC), Dr Dadoo (TIC) and Dr AB Xuma (ANC) signed the 'Doctors' Pact' for cooperation against racial oppression. The shocking violence of the 1949 Durban riots, which pitted African against Indian, further spurred South African Indian Congress (SAIC) and African National Congress (ANC) leaders to seek ways of working together.

The 1952 Defiance Campaign, spearheaded by the ANC and the SAIC, was the first multi-racial resistance campaign. Thousands of people heeded the call to defy apartheid laws, and various members of the Naidoo and Pillay families were imprisoned. But for this family, defiance was a way of life. Resistance was in their blood. The Defiance Campaign merely gave formal expression to their everyday way of being.

Roy was appointed Chief Welfare Officer of the Defiance Campaign. Tragically, he died of a heart attack in 1953. He had been warned by his doctor that he was working too hard. Roy often quoted the famous words of Emiliano Zapata, and now this came to pass.

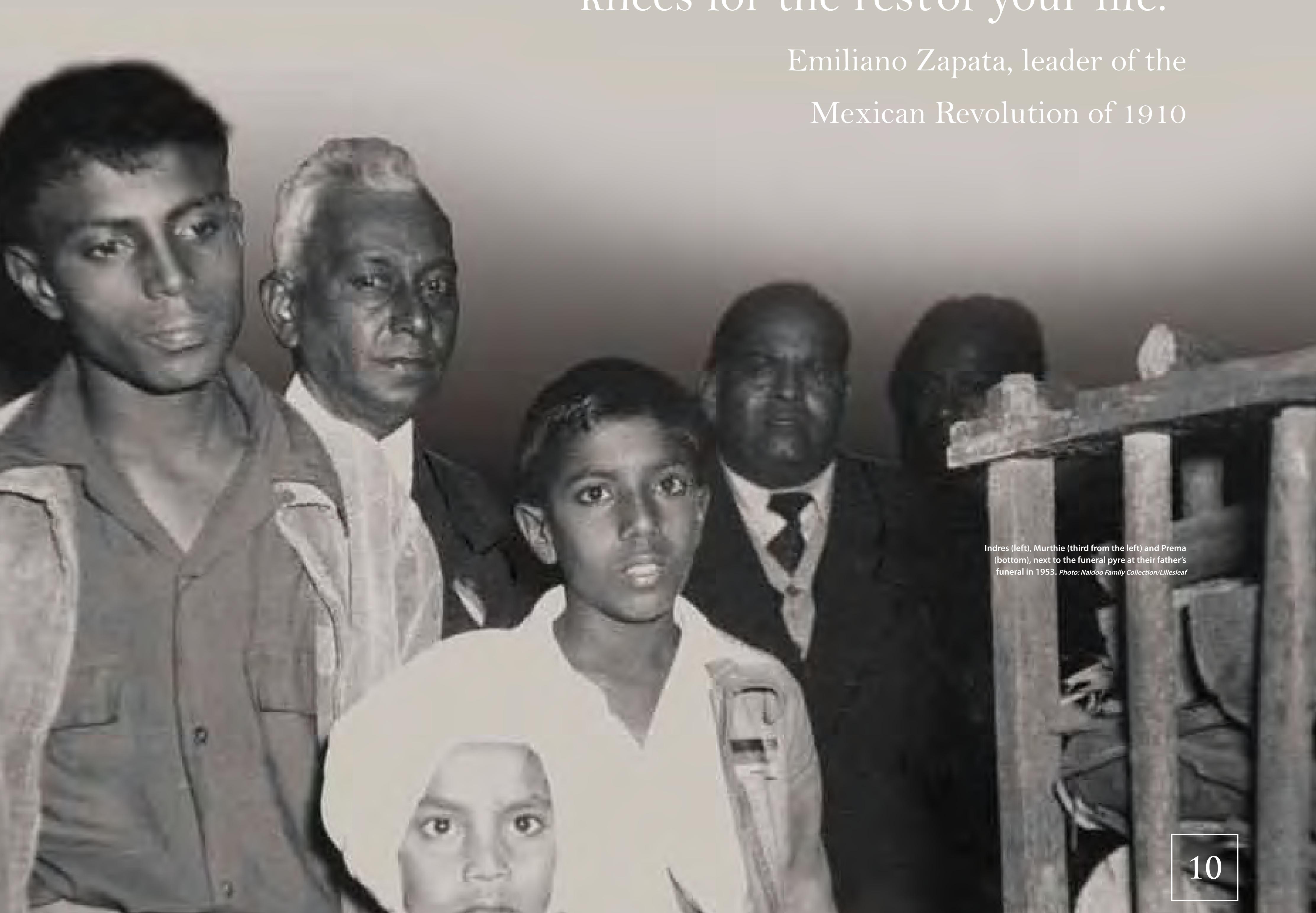


Left to right: Mosie Moolla, Mrs Pillay, Parvathy Padayachee, Manilal Gandhi (behind Parvathy) and Patrick Duncan during the Defiance Campaign of 1952. They had participated together in a protest against separate amenities by sitting on benches marked Whites Only in a park in Germiston. Photo: Jurgen Schadeberg



The tombstone of Thambi and Roy Naidoo in the Hindu Cemetery in Brixton, Johannesburg. *Photo: Elias Mendel* 

"It is better to die on your feet than to live on your knees for the rest of your life."



### EIGHTY ENERGETIC YEARS OF ACTIVISM

"Jail was almost a family shelter and, at times, our home address." Thailema Pillay

Roy's sister, Thailema, was four years old when her family moved to Tolstoy Farm. Like her siblings, she was politically active from a very young age.

Thailema – known to all as Mrs Pillay – went to prison during the 1946 and the 1952 defiance campaigns. But she became famous not only for her activism, but also for her cooking. When the Treason Trial, in which 156 people of all races were charged with treason, moved to the Pretoria Synagogue in 1959, Thailema organised volunteers to collect groceries and cook meals for the accused. They provided breakfast and lunch daily from 1959 to 1961 when the trial ended.

The security police frequently came to her house and demanded information about people who provided supplies, but she was never intimidated.

"When the trial started I was 15 or 16 and my mother used to wake us up at 4.30 to make food. I used to get so mad. We had a green station wagon which she would load with food and my father's brothers would go and deliver it." Sinda Pillay-Naidoo

Thailema remained an activist all her life. In 1988, aged 80, she protested alongside her grandson, Thillay, against segregated municipal elections. They were arrested by a relative who had joined the South African Police.

Thailema died in 1991. She was the oldest surviving resident of Tolstoy Farm. Many ANC stalwarts attended her funeral, among them Walter and Albertina Sisulu, Ahmed Kathrada, Molvi Cachalia and Mosie Moolla.



Mrs Pillay on the left, assisting at the Treason Trial lunch table. The Treason trialist in the foreground is Sonya Bunting. Photo: BAHA



Treason trialists having tea. Photo: BAHA



### WATHINT' ABAFAZI, WATHINT' IMBOKODO

# "You strike a woman; you strike a rock."

After Roy's death in 1953, Ama took in sewing to make ends meet. She also rented out rooms to lodgers. However, she continued her political activities, going door-to-door, often with a child in tow, to persuade people to join or support various campaigns, such as the Congress of the People of 1955.

In 1954, Ama was elected to the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW) executive. Many FEDSAW meetings were held in Rockey Street, with Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Amina Cachalia, Hilda Bernstein, Ruth Mompati and others. Ama was active in mobilising and recruiting for FEDSAW, and baked cakes to raise funds for the organisation.

In 1956 she was involved in organising the FEDSAW march against proposed pass laws for African women.

"Ama would never stop. She went from house to house to get women to join. Many Indian women came from very traditional households and had to ask their husbands' permission to participate." Ramnie Dinat

20 000 women, including Ama and her daughter Ramnie, and Thailema and her daughter Sinda, marched on the Union Buildings in Pretoria on 9 August 1956 to protest against passes.

On 10 December 1963, Indian women activists led by Zainab Asvat again marched to the Union Buildings to protest against the Group Areas Act. At the time, Indians were being evicted from areas like Fordsburg and Doornfontein, and taken to Lenasia. Ama, Thailema and other family members joined the march. The police turned dogs on the marchers and baton-charged them.



The FEDSAW executive of 1954, left to right: Philippa Levy, Frances Baard, Ama Naidoo, Sally Ayer, Lilian Ngoyi, Amina Cachalia, Violet Wynberg, Ruth Mompati and Esmé Goldberg. *Photo: Wits Historical Papers* 



Women dressed in white saris marching against the Group Areas Act in 1963. *Photo: BAHA* 





#### PRISON WAS OUR HOME ADDRESS

"Solitary confinement is the worst kind of torture that can be inflicted on any human being. No amount of physical torture can equal that of solitary confinement. I had absolutely no contact with any of the other prisoners but I could continually hear the beating and sjamboking."

Murthie Naidoo

From Thambi's first incarceration in January 1908, over a period of more than 80 years, many members of the Naidoo and Pillay families were detained, tortured, imprisoned and held in solitary confinement in some of South Africa's most notorious holding cells and prisons.

In particular, the Old Fort and the Women's Gaol in Johannesburg housed three generations of Naidoos: Thambi, Kuppusamy, Roy, and his children Indres, Shanthie and Prema.

"The hardship my mother suffered all these years, going from one prison to another to visit her sons and daughters. Is there another mother who has seen the inside of more prisons than Ama?"

Indres Naidoo

NAME	YEAR	PRISON	DURATION
Thambi Naidoo	1908 - c. 1920	The Fort Pietermaritzburg	Imprisoned 14 times
Kuppusamy Naidoo	1908	The Fort	
	1909 1910		7 days 3 months
Veerammal Naidoo	1913-14	Pietermaritzburg	3 months
Seshammal Naidoo	1913-14	Pietermaritzburg	3 months
Parenithama Pillay	1913-14	Pietermaritzburg	3 months
Pakiri Naidoo	1913-14		3 months
Roy Naidoo	1946	The Fort	2 sentences
	1950		
Thailema Pillay	1946 1952	Pietermaritzburg	1 month 3 months
	1988	Laudium	1½ day
Ama Naidoo	1946	Pietermaritzburg	1 month
Cagran Dillar	1952	Germiston  Drotorio Control	1 month
Sagren Pillay	1964	Pretoria Central Prison	5½ months
Shanthie Naidoo	1964	Marshall Square	1 day
	1969 1969-70	The Fort Pretoria Central	2 weeks 371 days in solitary
		The Women's Jail	confinement
Indres Naidoo		Marshall Square	
	1963-73	Leeuwkop Prison Robben Island	10 years
Murthie Naidoo	1965	Roeland Street Police	2 days
	1065	Station  Protoria Control	6 months
	1965 1965	Pretoria Central Compol Building	6 months
	1980	Pretoria Local	2 weeks
	1980	Modderbee Prison	6 months
Prema Naidoo	1981	John Vorster Square/ Vereeniging Police	4 months
		Station	
	1982-83	The Fort/Diepkloof Prison	1 year
	1985	Diepkloof Prison	8 months
	1986	Diepkloof Prison	6 months
Issy Dinat	1965	Fordsburg Police Station	4
NI B'II	1966	Pretoria Central	4 months
Nava Pillay	1980 1980	Compol Building Erasmia Police Station	1 day 1 day
Thillay Pillay	1988	Laudium/Attridgeville	1 day
	1989	Erasmia	1½ days
Kuben Naidoo	1988	Protea Police Station/ Diepkloof Prison	22 days
	1989	Laudium/Attridgeville	1 day
Thushan Padayachee	1981	Compol Building	1 day
Parmesh Everitt	1988	Laudium/Attridgeville	1 day
Shan Naidoo	1989	Laudium	1 day

