

South African-born and recently naturalized U.S. citizen Pauline Ditala Manaka makes it easy to appreciate the special rewards and challenges of a life of both shared engagement and permanent vicariousness. She's a librarian, professionally curious, working as your docent and mine in personal and public archives of shared

credentials, esteem of colleagues and students who work with her in the library and classroom.

Manaka might begin by telling stories about the south: the monsters of the former apartheid South African regime, the one-time liberal Southern segregationist J. William Fulbright, the Southern U.S. President Jimmy Carter. And since 1988 she's lived in, yes, the southern part of

opportunity, the excellent student without a school applied for a Fulbright Scholarship, choosing Atlanta University – in part, she says, because of Gladys Knight and the Pips. Indeed, best about America were our own revolutionary civil rights leaders, including Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., but the peachy state with a terrific library program was also the subject of a hit song, the

# SOUTHERN STATES

UCI LIBRARIAN **PAULINE MANAKA** IS AN EX-PAT FROM APARTHEID-ERA SOUTH AFRICA WHO BRINGS A WORLD OF REFERENCES TO ORANGE COUNTY

BY ANDREW TONKOVICH ■ PHOTOGRAPHY BY RALPH PALUMBO

memory, perception and stories, remembered or cataloged and in the stacks, or online.

Recently, the longtime research librarian in anthropology and sociology at the University of California Irvine (Woodbridge resident) surrendered to the urgings of her U.S.-born younger son and took the citizenship test. She didn't need to study (probably could have created the test). It was a symbolic acquiescence, a reconciling with a richly complicated biography.

Manaka recently also voted for the first time, perhaps committing in her way to newer roots. More of her life has now been in her adoptive country, a phrase that raises the question of who adopted whom.

She must certainly get weary of explaining herself, yet does cheerfully, a lovely woman small of stature but with an impish grin, understanding that an imp is a powerful entity famous for mischief-making, a handle Manaka would embrace. The immigrant often gets stuck teaching the world to other Americans – geography, politics, history – a mildly subversive form of intellectual mischief that arrives, is earned, with global perspective.

The engaging and solicitous Manaka possesses every kind of go-to story toward framing her circumstances and ours, beyond obvious and available personal details – senior job position, impressive academic and professional

the Golden State, where the purple-flowering jacaranda trees of her other homeland grow easily and abundantly. Squint a little, Manaka says, and Orange County so resembles the southern African landscape that sometimes she does a double take. In her case, a double take means twice as much, with stories about it all, judiciously if generously offered but insistent, with a powerful punch line worth waiting for.

Crediting the president from Plains might be a hard sell. But, as she tells it with enduring – almost personal – affection, it was Carter who, softening up the murderous apartheid government, invited scholars from that racially segregated state to the U.S. to study, including a certain University of Fort Hare graduate.

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She remembers her loving if strict father, wanting his daughter educated toward somehow getting around everyday political and economic injustice, not fighting it. He disapproved of Manaka's activism. She laughs, recollecting both her naiveté and boldness. She'd been punished by her government, which was under siege from international human rights campaigners, not to mention its own people.

Torn between struggle and scholarship, and encouraged by academic colleagues to grab the

now-classic "Midnight Train to Georgia" – not the last of many musical and American pop culture references (she is a reference librarian, after all), which animate Manaka's stories, each framing nicely her serious bibliographic research on Steven Biko and the anti-apartheid movement.

Working nights as a newspaper librarian at The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, she animated the corporate newsroom, matching her perceptions of her new country to requests for photos, say, of Dr. King, Jr. She'd send the handsomest picture she could find, via old-school pneumatic tube, find it rejected, with a request for a familiar stock photo. She'd try again, a different image, and get the same demand, as if readers wouldn't recognize King otherwise.

She found a more receptive career, one reflecting her big, generous worldview, where today researchers in anthropology, sociology, German, women's studies, demographic and social analysis and a multitude of other disciplines appreciate her eclectic if also authoritative storytelling, and nobody sends back reports or photos or suggestions.

And, funny thing, she's consulted yearly by her own new country with visits from none other than demographers of the United States Census, who visit Librarian Pauline Manaka, adopted and adopter, to learn best how to account for, and count, us all. ●

