

BON VOYAGE & ALUMNI CONFERENCE

SATURDAY 31 AUGUST 2019

HELD AT THE WITS CLUB, UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

August 31st marks the end of winter in the Southern Hemisphere. It heralds the start of a new season, new growth, and new beginnings for a new cohort of Rhodes Scholars, eager to start their journey at Oxford University.

Last Saturday, the African sun shone brightly on the members of the Rhodes Scholar Community, assembled at the Wits Club in Johannesburg, to wish the Scholars-Elect from Southern Africa *Bon Voyage*.



Photos by Bev Johnson

Sixty two Scholars and Friends of the Rhodes Trust attended the annual event organised by the Southern African Association of Rhodes Scholars (SAARS). The gathering included senior Scholars from the USA (Paul Vaaler - Minnesota & Worcester, 1983), Germany (Herbert Behrendt - Germany & University, 1980), India (Sengupta Arghya – India & Balliol, 2008), Zambia (Karen Mumba - Zambia & New College, 2015) and Zimbabwe (Julie Taylor- Zimbabwe & St Antony's, 2003). The Scholars Elect (2019) from Southern Africa had the opportunity to engage with recently returned Scholars, such as Saul Musker (SA-at-Large & Lincoln, 2017); resident Scholars, such as Lehlohonolo Moche (South Africa-at-Large & Green Templeton 2018); alumni Scholars; Honorary Secretaries from partner schools, Diocesan College and Paul Roos Gymnasium; the National Secretary and his Deputy; supportive partners and volunteers.

Lisa Klein (South Africa-at-Large & St Antony's, 1994 and SAARS President) and her Events Committee, Charne Lavery (South Africa-at-Large & Balliol, 2008) and Sha'ista Goga (South Africa-at-Large & St Antony's, 2004), crafted a wonderfully diverse programme and sourced an inspirational line up of speakers for the conference.

The thought-provoking programme touched on a wide range of topics. From the keynote address delivered by recently retired Constitutional Court Judge, Edwin Cameron (SA-at-Large & Keble 1976), on the importance of the values enshrined in the South African constitution in a time of transition; to issues of land

reform (Ruth Hall - South Africa-at-Large, & St Antony's, 1996). From the “myths” of entrepreneurship (Dom Pitot - South Africa-at-Large & Keble 2005); to the research being done in marginalised communities in the Karoo by Beth Vale (St Andrew's College, Grahamstown & Linacre, 2012). From “The Balancing Act of Leading a Business in SA” (Dr Jonathan Broomberg - SA-at-Large & Balliol & London School of Economics, 1985); to the deeply personal account of an “unlikely” Rhodes Scholar’s journey from the dusty streets of Khayelitsha to the spires of Oxford (Dr Vuyane Mhlomi - South Africa-at-Large & St Edmund Hall, 2014).



Justice Edwin Cameron



Ruth Hall



Dr Vuyane Mhlomi



Photo by Charne Lavery

The Southern African Scholars-Elect were introduced to the Rhodes Scholar community and each given a three-minute window to share their Oxford hopes, dreams and aspirations. They engaged with senior Scholars, many of whom are leaders in their fields; shared with young alumni reporting back on their recent experiences of Oxford; and met up again with members of the Selection Committees who interviewed the scholars in late 2018.

Once Scholar-Elect commented: *“I cannot believe how many people came out today to show their support and that they care about us.”*

Beth Vale’s concluding advice to the new cohort of Scholars was to seize opportunities with both hands; to challenge themselves; “fail if you must” but feel free to reach out when you need help. She passed on the sage advice that she had received from an Oxford academic: *“Don’t let your DPhil get in the way of your education.”*

Bon Voyage 2019 was a very happy and collegial day. The event highlighted the lifelong fellowship and bonds forged by the Rhodes Scholarships across the generations, across disciplines, and across international boundaries.

From all at SAARS and the Rhodes Trust in South Africa, we wish the Scholars-Elect of 2019 every future success - *Hamba kahle!*

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