

The Road after Rhodes

Nadia Laws

The Rhodes Scholarship, an international post graduate award allowing students to study at the University of Oxford, is considered one of the most prestigious of its kind. We speak to three past Bermuda Rhodes Scholars to find out where they are now and how the award shaped their lives for future success...



Jay Butler '06

Photo by David Morrill

Since being named the Bermuda Rhodes Scholar in 2006, Jay Butler has experienced a long list of accomplishments. He studied Jurisprudence (aka law) at Oxford, then went on to receive a juris doctor degree from Yale Law School, before becoming a member of the New York bar.

He acknowledges that the Rhodes Scholarship supported his growth both academically and personally. "Many of my best friends now are people I met at Oxford," he explained. "They are all doing important work in their own fields, and they are a source of constant inspiration."

Currently, Mr Butler is the Joseph W. Dorn Research Professor of Law at the University of Virginia. "I teach and write in the areas of Corporate Social Responsibility, International Business Transactions, and Public International Law," he said of the role.

Prior to that, he was an associate professor at William & Mary Law School and a teaching fellow at Columbia Law School; he has also taught as a visiting professor at Yale Law School and the George Washington University Law School. A prolific writer, Mr Butler has submitted a number of academic articles to international publications. In 2018, he won the Lieber Prize from the American Society of International Law for a paper exploring alternative means of conflict resolution, and he was selected as a fellow in the Law and Public Affairs Program at Princeton University that same year. In 2021, he was awarded the Francis Deák Prize by the American Journal of International Law for his article, 'The Corporate Keepers of International Law'.

He notes the Rhodes Scholarship helped him dive deeper into which of his skills and talents he could use to make the world a better place. "The Rhodes is a community of purpose, intended for people who want to contribute positively and make the world better," he said. "The Scholarship comes with an obligation to contribute in your own way to improving the human condition, and I continue to be propelled forward by that charge."



Christie Hunter Arscott '07



While many Rhode Scholars choose to study traditional subjects such as medicine or law, Christie Hunter Arscott knew she was destined for a different path. In 2007, she pursued a master's degree in Women's Studies at Oxford University, looking at gender, leadership, and management styles in the corporate sphere. The following year, she went on to do a second master's in Comparative Social Policy, which allowed her to study the impact of Family-Friendly Employment Policies on women's engagement in the workforce.

"I truly feel the Rhodes Scholarship has had an immeasurable impact on my life and career," Mrs Hunter Arscott said. "On a personal note, just being part of the Rhodes Scholar community has been one of the greatest experiences of my life. One of the requirements of getting the scholarship is you have to be someone with real community and social consciousness and commitment. As a Rhodes Scholar, you get to meet people from around the world who are not just extraordinary academics, but extraordinary members of their communities and really aspiring to make an impact on those around them. That for me just infused my academic experience and ongoing relationships with so much inspiration and also with the most amazing conversations."

She recalls having life-changing discussions with other "wise and incredibly insightful human beings" during her time as a Rhodes Scholar. The cherry on top of the cake? She also met her husband, Jamaica's Rhode Scholar, Dr Ramon Arscott, while taking part in the programme.

After graduating, Mrs Hunter Arscott went on to work at global consulting company, Deloitte. She travelled extensively in her role, supporting the firm with its diversity and inclusion service offering throughout the U.S. Nine years ago, she decided to launch her own practice to focus exclusively on issues such as gender, inclusion and women at work. Today, in addition to researching, writing and publishing, she is also a sought-after public speaker and career advisory coach for women. "I love supporting women as they navigate their careers and take more intentional risks in all realms of life," she said. "My first book 'Begin Boldly', which helps women to reimagine risk, embrace uncertainty and launch a brilliant career, was released on August 2nd, which has been really exciting."

Unlike other scholarships and awards that support participants for a season of their lives, Mrs Hunter Arscott said being a Rhodes Scholar stands the test of time. "It becomes part of your identity and continues to be a reminder for you to focus on social impact and change," she said. "It has infused my life with connections with amazing scholars from around the world who are all at different stages on the journey to make an impact and do meaningful work in their various fields. That is what differentiates this experience from other awards - you are encouraged to do something in your lifetime that is bigger than yourself."



Aliyyah Ahad '14



As the 2014 Bermuda Rhodes Scholar, Aliyyah Ahad pursued a master of science in migration studies and a master of public policy, with distinction. She described her time at Oxford as "both exciting and transformative". "I had the pleasure of studying with some of the top professors in their fields, and alongside some of the most intelligent and inspiring people I've ever met - many of whom have become dear friends," she said.

During her two years of study, Ms Ahad admits she was not only challenged academically but also pushed to think critically about the world's challenges and the impact she could make. "The experience opened my eyes to the myriad ways of 'fighting the world's fight' and gave me access to an extremely supportive network to aid in those efforts," she explained.

Since being awarded the Rhodes Scholarship, Ms Ahad has been afforded the opportunity to live and work in places far and wide - from Rabat in Morocco, to Washington D.C., London, and Brussels. "I am currently working in my dream role, representing the Government of Bermuda in our Brussels Office," she said. "Brussels is the capital of the European Union and has been the perfect place to combine my passions for international affairs, public policy, and public service."

Ms Ahad credits her time at Oxford with building her confidence so that she "could overcome the dreaded, but all too common imposter syndrome, which frequently shuts women and people of colour out of decision-making roles and responsibilities". She added: "Having such a diverse community of scholars and classmates also helped widen my perspectives, allowing me to thrive in international work environments and learn from best practices all over the world. As they say, once a Rhodes Scholar, always a Rhodes Scholar. And I'm grateful to contribute to and be part of this community - wherever the future leads." ■

For more information or to apply, visit www.rhodes.bm. You can also email Mrs Hunter Arscott directly at christie@christiehunterarscott.com