

SAARS ALUMNI VIRTUAL GET-TOGETHER, 10 MAY 2023

## POST-EVENT REPORT

It was wonderful to see our Scholars from across the world at the annual alumni get-together on Wednesday 10 May 2023. Over 100 Scholars, representing seven decades of Scholars, signed up for this virtual event.

Kumi Naidoo (South Africa-at-Large & Magdalen 1987), global champion of climate and social justice and moral lodestar, delivered the keynote address in brilliant style. He cautioned that the decade ahead was perhaps the most important in our history, and could determine humankind's future. Kumi noted that "pessimism was a luxury the world cannot afford". Given the perfect storm of crises facing our planet (pandemics, climate change, poverty and inequality), the key leadership challenge is to keep younger generations energized on the tasks ahead. Kumi's address is available [here](#).



Dr Kirsty Bobrow (South Africa-at-Large & Magdalen 2004)

Joining the event from San Francisco, Kirsty Bobrow (South Africa-at-Large & Magdalen 2004) spoke about her medical research into dementia and "brain health in Africa". Kirsty cautioned that tech does not always provide a silver bullet to solve all ills and that there are often lots of other treatments – albeit more difficult and sometimes less 'sexy' - that may be a lot more effective. Kirsty shared brilliant insights about the role of data, generative AI, and narrative in the public healthcare landscape.

The multi-talented Charles Carter (Diocesan College, Rondebosch & Wolfson 1986) shared an evocative and incredibly moving photographic essay of magnificent black and white photographs taken on a post-pandemic pilgrimage to the Groot Swartberg in South Africa.

Thanks to the Warden, Elizabeth Kiss, who concluded the programme with an update on the latest Rhodes Trust news, highlighting the progress made to the revamp of Rhodes House, and the success of the Africa Impact Initiative, for which resident Rhodes Scholars (including some SA scholars) successfully raised funds for grassroots African NGOs working in education.

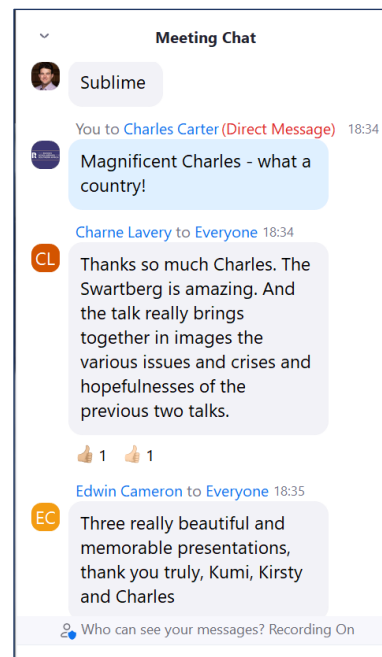
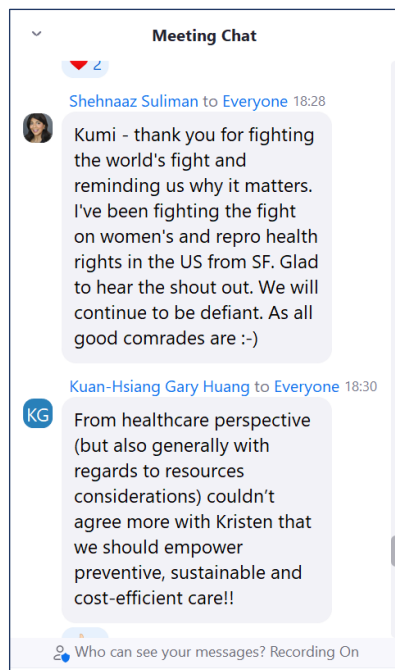
Scholars enjoyed engaging with the speakers, and spent time in virtual break-out rooms catching up with old friends and making new connections.

We were delighted to welcome fourteen Rhodes Scholars-Elect (2023) from across Africa to their first Scholar get-together. In the breakaway group, the Scholars-Elect were able to meet each other for

the first time, share experiences and exchange contact details. We hope that this will enable the newest cohort of Scholars from Africa to form a supportive community that will continue to grow during their time at Oxford.

Comments from Scholars in the Chat:

*"What a treat to have such a mix of inspiration, beauty and hopefulness alongside the interesting content in all three presentations."* (Sha'ista Goga)



Listening to our speakers reminded us all that there is no single template for Rhodes Scholars. We are a diverse, multi-faceted and creative community, "fighting the world's fight" in our own unique way. The characteristics we share are a strong desire to make a difference, the courage to lead, and a commitment to making a positive impact on the broader community.

We are grateful to the SAARS Organising Committee, comprising Lisa Klein (South Africa-at-Large & St Antony's 1994) and Charne Lavery (South Africa-at-Large & Balliol 2008), for all that they do to ensure that SAARS remains relevant, forges connections between the African-elected Rhodes Scholars from across the world, and builds community.

Sincere thanks too to Beverley Johnson and the Rhodes House team for their ongoing professional support.

**Save the Date:** an in-person Bon Voyage and Alumni Conference is planned for **Saturday 26 August 2023 (09:00-17:00)** in Cape Town. Further details will follow and we look forward to catching up with you at this event.

Ends  
Bev Johnson  
14 May 2023

(Updated 11 July 2023)