



THE RHODES
SCHOLARSHIPS FOR
SOUTHERN AFRICA

NEWS

29 NOVEMBER 2022

Meet the Southern African Rhodes Scholars-Elect, 2023

Ten outstanding young graduates from Southern Africa have been announced as the Rhodes Scholars-Elect for 2023.

MICHAEL BEUKMAN (Gauteng Regional Finalist, SA-at-Large Scholar-Elect 2023)

Michael (23) grew up on the West Rand in Gauteng, where he attended the Hoërskool Noordheuwel. He is currently completing a MSc in Computer Science at the University of the Witwatersrand, working on improving the generalisation of machine learning agents. Before this, he completed a BSc (Hons) at the same institution and was recognised as the top student in the Faculty of Science for both his undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. He has numerous research interests, including improving technologies for low-resourced natural language processing, procedural content generation for video games and high performance computing.

At Oxford, Michael hopes to read for a DPhil and would like to continue his studies in Computer Science, working on understanding the underpinnings of how machine learning systems can be applied to various settings.

When not engaging in research, Michael can be found rock climbing, playing squash and Chess. An avid reader, he also has a Black Belt in Karate.



MARAH CHIBWANA (BLMNS (Malawi), Scholar-Elect 2023)



Marah (25) Marah hails from Blantyre and is a Malawian medical doctor and an upcoming clinician-scientist in Immunology.

She holds a medical degree (MBBS) from the Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (Malawi), and an MSc in Integrated Immunology from the University of Oxford. Marah believes that the translation of basic medical science research into bedside patient care and policy formulation is important in overcoming diseases locally and globally.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, she led work in her home country that focused on understanding the seroprevalence of SARS-CoV-2.

Marah is passionate about training the next generation of scientists; and runs a science club and mentors young people in her country to pursue careers in science.

At Oxford, she plans to read for a DPhil in Molecular and Cellular Medicine, to understand the factors that drive the differential recruitment of immune cells during inflammation.



Meet our Rhodes Scholars-Elect, 2023

JOSHUA FIEGGEN (SACS & Partner Schools, Cape Town, Scholar-Elect 2023)

Joshua (26) is a junior doctor and aspiring clinician-scientist. He studied medicine at the University of Cape Town and is currently completing his internship at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital as well as an MPH in epidemiology and biostatistics. Josh is passionate about the analysis of routinely collected data to improve health outcomes in resource-limited settings. His aspiration is to work at the interface of medicine and data science helping facilitate the natural synergies between the two disciplines.

While at high school Josh was a keen rower representing the Western Province and South African Schools Rowing Teams. At university he was actively involved in SHAWCO and the Surgical Society. In his spare time Josh can be found running, enjoying dinner with friends, or buried in a newspaper.



MARY GOUWS (St Andrew's College & DSG, Makhanda, Scholar-Elect 2023)



Mary (25) is a medical doctor currently completing her internship in Gqeberha, Eastern Cape. In addition to being the top MBChB student in her graduating class at the University of Cape Town, she was the President of the UCT Internal Medicine Society in her final year of medical school. She was also involved in the founding of the UCT Health Sciences Orchestra, in which she played the violin. During her studies, Mary tutored medical students and worked as a volunteer and committee member at a mobile student-run clinic (SHAWCO) in Khayelitsha, Cape Town.

Mary's passion lies in combining clinical medicine, innovation and education in resource-limited contexts. She defines herself by a growth mind-set and enjoys hiking and camping in her free time.

At Oxford, Mary intends to read for an MSc in Translational Health Sciences.

MARCUS MONTAGUE- MFUNI

(KZN Regional Finalist, SA-at-Large Scholar-Elect 2023)

Marcus (22) matriculated at Hilton College and is completing a BA (Hons) in Psychology and Computer Science at Harvard University. He is passionate about utilising a rigorous empirical understanding of human social cognition in creating policies that guide people toward better decision-making. Marcus' research has involved collecting the largest psychological dataset on causal reasoning and demonstrating how combining computational cognitive modelling with machine learning methods can produce an understanding of human behaviour precise enough to predict and inform the impact of policy interventions.

Outside the lab, Marcus is President of the Harvard South African Society and an opinion writer for The Harvard Crimson newspaper, where he's been the Op-eds Editor and Diversity and Inclusion Chair. At Oxford, Marcus intends to hone his data science skills and learn about crafting effective public policy.





Meet our Rhodes Scholars-Elect, 2023

KAPIL NARAIN (KwaZulu-Natal, Scholar-Elect 2023)



A graduate of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), **Kapil** (26) is a multi-award-winning youth leader, One Young World ambassador, and Pan-African activist from Durban.

Passionate about research since his undergraduate studies (MBChB - Nelson R Mandela School of Medicine), he published 15 articles with his most recent being an editorial on Malaria vaccination strategies in Africa, featured in the World Health Organisation's official journal, *The Bulletin*.

Recent accolades include serving on the African Union's African Youth Front on Covid-19; being named in the *Mail & Guardian's* 200 Young South Africans (2020); and being awarded an Abe Bailey Travel Bursary. Kapil is also Deputy Chair of the Active Citizens Movement, a human rights civil society organisation.

At Oxford, Kapil intends to read for a DPhil in HIV Immunology focusing on discovering novel immunogens to contribute towards HIV vaccine development.

SOPHIA RABIE (Diocesan College & Partner Schools, Cape Town, Scholar-Elect 2023)

Sophia (22) grew up in Cape Town where she attended Herschel Girls' School. Having graduated with a BA in Philosophy, Social Anthropology and Ancient Cultures with Distinction and numerous awards, Sophia is currently completing an Honours degree in Social Anthropology at Stellenbosch University, where she is investigating migrant integration in Southern Africa through creative initiatives. Sophia works for the university's *Bridge the Gap* fundraising campaign alleviating difficulties impairing student success, as a team-member studying the Observatory River Club development, and conducts research on preventing statelessness in eSwatini through legal reform. She is committed to pursuing social justice through practical means.

At Oxford, Sophia hopes to enhance her capacities for social intervention, translating her education into research and policy change to combat xenophobia and harness migrancy's widespread benefits. She intends to develop fundraising programmes for student support at South African universities through Oxford's peer-to-peer philanthropy. She also plans to pursue collaborative research, musical and artistic activities.



MOKONE THORSTEN SHIBAMBU

(Western Cape Regional Finalist, SA-at-Large Scholar-Elect 2023)



Thorsten (21) hails from a small village in Limpopo (Makuleke) that borders on the Kruger National Park. He attended the Jim Chavani High School in Limpopo and is currently completing a BSc (Eng) in Mechanical Engineering at the University of Cape Town. At UCT, he directs *Project Tshehetso*, a programme that assists students from resource-scarce high schools to adjust to university; and has served as an orientation leader and a tutor for the engineering faculty.

He is interested in the integration of urban farming with renewable energy sources, the brine challenge of water desalination, the improvement of already existing technology in the energy sector, and academic challenges faced by students from rural South Africa. At Oxford, Thorsten hopes to gain a deeper understanding of the energy sector and work on potential solutions to energy challenges. He intends to apply for an MSc in Energy Systems.

In his spare time, Thorsten enjoys watching sport, playing football, and visiting nature reserves.



Meet our Rhodes Scholars-Elect, 2023

KAITLYN SPARKS

(Paul Roos & Partner Schools, Stellenbosch, Scholar-Elect 2023)



Kaitlyn (25) attended Rhenish Girls' School in Stellenbosch and is a graduate of the University of Cape Town (UCT).

Kaitlyn is currently a Neuroscience Honours student at UCT, where she is studying the genetic underpinnings of ALS and related neurodegenerative disorders. Her love for Neuroscience developed while researching Optogenetics at the Biomechatronics Group of the MIT Media Lab. At Oxford, Kaitlyn hopes to read for the (1+3) DPhil in Neuroscience, focusing on the computational side of the field.

In addition to Neuroscience, Kaitlyn has a passion for mental health in the academic space. She believes that facilitating open discussion in this environment is imperative for the development of well-rounded and healthy individuals.

When she is not researching, Kaitlyn can be found procrastinating with one of her many hobbies. These hobbies include archery, gardening, photography, writing, and many more.

LISO ZENANI (Eastern Cape Regional Finalist, SA-at-Large Scholar-Elect, 2023)

Liso (23) Liso holds an LLB (cum laude) from the Nelson Mandela University and is currently serving articles at Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr in Johannesburg. While at university, he served in various leadership capacities, including as President of the Madibaz Debating Union, Secretary of the Seventh-day Adventist Student Movement and Chairperson of the Southern African Universities Debating Council.

Liso spent his early childhood in rural Eastern Cape, where his grandfather was the local chief. He developed a strong impression of law as a communal enterprise in which it is the right and duty of every person to participate. His interests are thus underpinned by civic responsibility and corporate citizenship. Through his studies at Oxford, he hopes to gain a thorough understanding of legislative and structural means through which governments can foster civic participation and accountable corporate environments and how such environments can reduce poverty and promote socio-economic stability.

When he leaves the office, Liso can be found reading, writing short stories or watching anime



We are very proud of the new cohort of Rhodes Scholars-Elect. All academically gifted, socially committed, and exceptional young leaders, we believe they will make their mark on Africa and the world in the years to come. Diverse in backgrounds, experience, interests and talents, we are excited by the potential of our “unlike-minded but like-hearted” Scholars-Elect (2023) from Southern Africa. We wish them every success and happiness at Oxford University in the years ahead.