

FINISHING STRONG

Becoming a force for change
through the Power of Us

 Canon Collins Trust

ANNUAL REVIEW 2024

*Harnessing the power of scholarships
to create systemic change*

***Towards lasting impact on social justice and
democratic development in Southern Africa***



CHAIRPERSON'S REFLECTION

► Keith Holdt



As we present the Canon Collins Trust annual accounts for 2024 and reflect on the past year, I want to begin by expressing my deep gratitude to Marjorie Ngwenya da Silva our outgoing Chair, for her exceptional leadership over the past few years. Marjorie has steered the Trust through significant challenges, including the global pandemic, and played a pivotal role in appointing our new Executive Director, Ivor Baatjes. She leaves behind a strong foundation—and big shoes to fill!

It is both a privilege and an honour to serve as Chair of a Trust with such an extraordinary legacy and impact. Over the past 40+ years, Canon Collins Trust has supported more than 3800 postgraduate scholars across Southern Africa. Today, in an era of growing global uncertainty and deepening inequality, the Trust's mission remains as vital as ever: to cultivate ethical leaders and champion social justice for a fairer, more open Southern Africa.

In 2024, we continued our commitment to empower talented individuals from marginalized backgrounds, ensuring they can achieve their academic and leadership aspirations. Thanks to the generosity of our donors and partners, we supported over 100 scholars from a diverse range of inspiring change makers across the region who will go on to shape the future of their communities and beyond.

2024 marked the beginning of an ambitious strategic transformation—one designed to lay the foundation for the next 40 years and extend the Trust's impact for future generations. The funding landscape is evolving fast, and ensuring the Trust's long-term sustainability is at the heart of our strategy. This transformation is about broadening our reach, strengthening our programmes, and reaffirming our role as a catalyst for ethical leadership and social justice change in the region.

None of this would be possible without our committed community—Canon Collins scholars, alumni, donors, partners, and volunteers—who continue to believe in this mission and support this vital work in so many ways. Your continued engagement is a beacon of hope that enables real, lasting change.

Education and leadership development are the most powerful tools available to build a more just, equitable, and thriving society. The task ahead requires bold action, collaboration, and steadfast dedication—and with your continued support, I am confident that the best is yet to come.

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world" – Nelson Mandela

Thank you for being such a critical part of this journey.

Keith Holdt

REFLECTING ON 2024

► Executive Director: Ivor Baatjes

The year 2024 marks a significant milestone for the Trust as we celebrate a decade of building the Canon Collins Network. In July 2024, with the support of our funders and alongside our scholars, we hosted a memorable 10th Annual Scholars Conference under the theme “The Power of Us.”

We believe that expanding our alliance with universities and civil society fosters meaningful collaboration that drives impactful research toward social justice and lasting change. We are excited about the opportunities to advance a social justice research platform in collaboration with the newly established Social Justice Alliance – an initiative that unites participating universities and the Trust. This initiative aims to promote socially engaged scholarship and practice while emphasising the importance of ethical leadership. We take pride

in the leadership of our esteemed alumna, Kwezi Mzilikazi, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University, for her role in co-hosting this initiative.

We are also proud to strengthen our relationships with civil society organisations working at the forefront of socio-economic struggles in communities. These partnerships provide valuable insights into pressing social issues that can be addressed through applied research and engagement.

In addition, we continue to build relationships with state institutions, recognising that the scholarship of social justice and ethical leadership is essential for the human resource development of any society committed to fairness, justice and peace. This commitment has led us to embark on a vital engagement initiative, with the aim of including all states in the SADC region.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the dedicated staff at the Trust, whose hard work makes all of this possible, as well as to our trustees, advisors and patrons in South Africa and the United Kingdom. The Trust remains committed to advancing education in the interest of social justice, economic growth, and societal development – work that is made possible through the generous contributions of our partners, alumni and individual supporters in the UK.

The impact of your support is clearly reflected in the achievements of our scholars, while the ripple effects are far-reaching and immeasurable. We sincerely thank you for your support.

With much appreciation

Ivor Baatjes



A Strengthened Compass: Our New Theory of Change



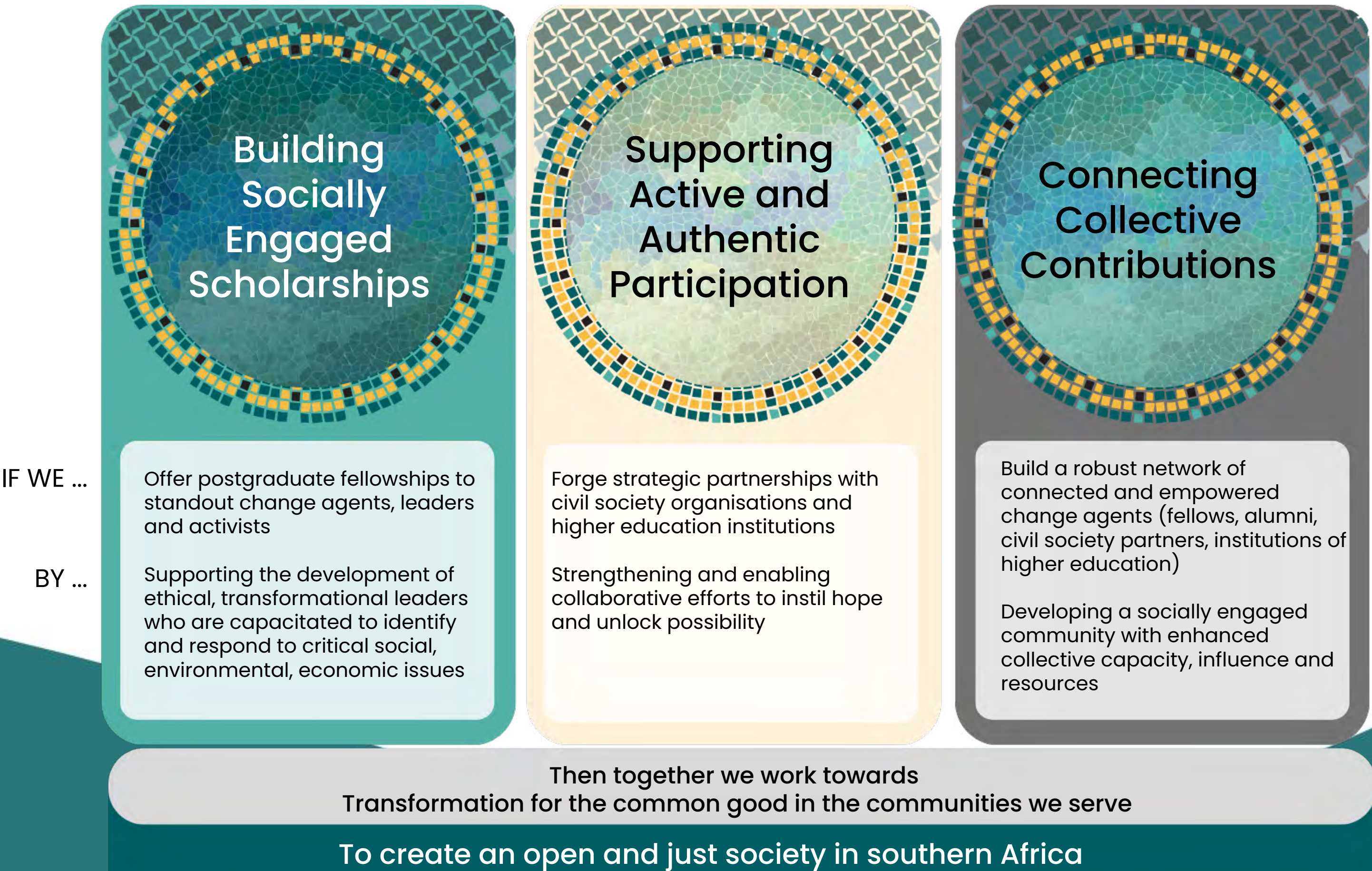
In 2024, Canon Collins Trust undertook a significant organisational journey to refresh its Theory of Change (ToC) and build a robust Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) framework. This was not a quick fix, nor merely a technical exercise—it was a deep, reflective process that unfolded over several months, shaped by collective learning, honest questioning, and renewed strategic clarity.

Led by an external facilitator and driven by our staff across all focus areas, the process invited teams to critically re-examine how we understand change in the context of social justice and postgraduate education in southern Africa. Through individual area work and shared sessions, we surfaced insights, interrogated assumptions, and rearticulated what it means to invest in leadership for transformation.

The result is a refreshed Theory of Change that affirms our core purpose while responding to the complexities of the current landscape. It strengthens our focus on advancing equity, enabling socially engaged scholarship, and connecting individuals and networks committed to systemic change.

Vision: Cultivating an open and just society in southern Africa

We work towards advancing social justice in southern Africa by **building, supporting and connecting** strong communities of ethical leaders, activists and organisations who collectively contribute to positive change.



Canon Collins Strategy Simplified

Importantly, the accompanying MEL framework is not simply a tool for tracking activities—it is a mechanism for learning, accountability, and strategic decision-making. It defines clear milestones and outcomes, ensuring we can measure progress, honour our commitments to funders and partners, and guide investment toward the areas of greatest impact.

This process has not only clarified the change we seek—it has deepened our alignment as a team and strengthened the foundation on which we will continue to build meaningful, long-term impact.

Some of the key elements of our new strategy include:

- Closer collaboration with **Higher Education Institutions** and selected **government departments**;
- Outreach to **business and industry** to support scholars' access to higher education;
- Ensuring research continues to be relevant in addressing socio-economic issues and development in society by **promoting socially engaged scholarship**;
- **Robust network** of scholars dedicated to advance the principles and values of social justice.



Compassion



Curiosity



Courage



Agency



Accountability



Solidarity

Canon Collins Values



IMPACT 2024

A picture in numbers

114 Scholars supported 4 Differently abled



Countries

Botswana	4
Eswatini	3
Lesotho	4
Malawi	14
Mozambique	1
Namibia	6
South Africa	47
Zambia	3
Zimbabwe	32



University

University of Cape Town	25
University of Malawi	3
Durban University of Technology	2
University of Fort Hare	10
University of the Free State	3
University of Johannesburg	5
University of KwaZulu-Natal	4
University of Limpopo	2
University of London	8
Northwest University	4
University of Pretoria	10
Rhodes University	8
University of Stellenbosch	5
University of South Africa	2
University of the Western Cape	10
University of the Witwatersrand	13

Sex

Female	61
Male	51
Non-binary	2



Degree

LLB	16
Masters	46
PhD	52



Area of study

Anthropology	2
Arts/Music/ Drama	6
Climate/ Environment	7
Education	17
Economics	3
Gender	3
Geography	3
Humanities	20
Law and Human Rights	37
Politics & Peace Studies	5
Health Sciences	9
Sciences	2



2024

Graduations 2024

Top left clockwise: Adam Mukushi PhD Social Work, Rongedzayi Fambasayi LLD, Fundiswa Mdunge MA Psychology, Nonkululeko Busika PhD, Solomon Ndongo MPhil, Takudzwa Matekwe LLM, Golda Rapozo LLM, Bafana Kane LLB, Carly Katzeff MPhil, Kaylianne Aploon Zokufa PhD, Siyabonga Dlamini LLB

FINISHING STRONG TOGETHER

► Paralympic Glory for Louzanne Coetzee



Louzanne Coetzee won bronze at the 2024 Paris Paralympic Games in 2024. The middle-distance track star not only earned a Bronze medal with a Personal Best at the Stade de France, but all three medallists also finished the race faster than the previous Paralympic record. The win is even more remarkable given Louzanne's struggles with injury and illness last year.

Louzanne was born with Leber congenital amaurosis, a condition that leads to undeveloped retinas and vision loss. Her extraordinary athletic journey is an inspiration to all – not only because it could not have been achieved without her tireless dedication, but because it could not have been achieved without the support of guide runners, family and community.

And this is what makes her journey especially meaningful to the Canon Collins community. For Louzanne running is a team sport that requires close and meaningful collaboration. There is no loneliness for this runner!

Postgraduate study can often feel like a lonely, isolated path too. It should be treated like a team sport, with scholars and alumni, university and civil society walking alongside each other to be more creative and make more significant impact.

Louzanne was supported with a Canon Collins scholarship in 2016–2017 to complete a Masters in Disability Studies from the University of the Free State. At the time, scholars also selected Louzanne to receive an impact award for her social impact efforts that encouraged and facilitated differently abled persons to seek higher education.

“For me the most important thing is that we teach disabled learners that they can really make something of themselves.” Louzanne said.

Louzanne consciously cultivates and strengthens communities in sports, higher education and among the differently abled. She inspires persons with disability to use their voices to empower themselves and their own communities. “People don’t understand the world that a disabled person is necessarily in, and it’s your job as a person with a disability to make them understand it.”

Louzanne continues to live out that powerful conviction. She works at the University of Free State juggling a wide array of commitments as a coordinator in the University of the Free State’s Sports Department, where she is in charge of Para-Sports or Disabled Sports, as well as eSports (online sports).

In 2025, she will launch an initiative for final year sports students that will help them become career ready and transition into the working world. She also Heads a Female Residence at the University, leaving a little time over for her to pursue athletics.

Louzanne is also a double Tokyo Paralympic medallist (silver and bronze).



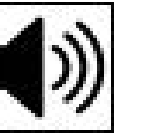
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

THE CANON COLLINS TRUST IS BUILDING A ROBUST NETWORK of connected and empowered change agents, To develop a socially engaged community with enhanced collective capacity, influence and resources.

Together a force for transformation.



Celebrating a Decade of Solidarity at the 2024 Scholars' Conference



The 2024 Canon Collins Trust Annual Scholars' Conference brought together over 140 scholars and alumni from across Southern Africa in a powerful gathering of reflection, learning, and shared purpose. Marking ten years of academic excellence and community-building, the event carried the theme **"The Power of Us"**—a tribute to the collective strength that defines the Canon Collins network.

This year's programme was anchored by two inspiring keynote speakers whose life's work reflects the values at the heart of the Trust.

Opening the conference, Noncedo Madubedube—General Secretary of Equal Education—delivered a compelling address on the role of activism in driving systemic change. A passionate pedagogist and social justice leader, she challenged scholars to

harness the transformative potential of collaboration, scholarship, and lived experience in pursuit of justice.

Closing the conference was S'bu Zikode, founding President of Abahlali baseMjondolo, South Africa's largest movement of the urban poor. Drawing from his own leadership journey and the Movement's landmark legal and grassroots victories, Zikode urged scholars

to ground their work in humility and solidarity, and to use their education in service of human dignity and equality.

Together, these voices reminded us that the power of us lies not only in ideas—but in action, community, and courage.



THE CHANGE MAKER AWARD

When Generosity Met Opportunity



At this year's Annual Scholars Conference, six powerful scholar-led projects were in the running for the Change Maker Award. Only three R20,000 grants were available, and the final decision rested with the scholars themselves.

After the votes were cast and just before the winners were announced, something remarkable happened.

A supporter and friend from the Ros Moger

Terry Furlong Scholarship, who was sitting in the audience stood up and offered to fund the remaining three projects—ensuring that all six would receive the support they needed.

It was an unplanned act of generosity that turned a moment of competition into one of shared celebration. Every scholar walked away with more than a grant—they left with a clear message: their work matters, and they are not alone in bringing it to life.

<https://youtu.be/PgkEv6u6E60>



WATCH VIDEO



UpLift Community Programme
Kimberly Mabaso



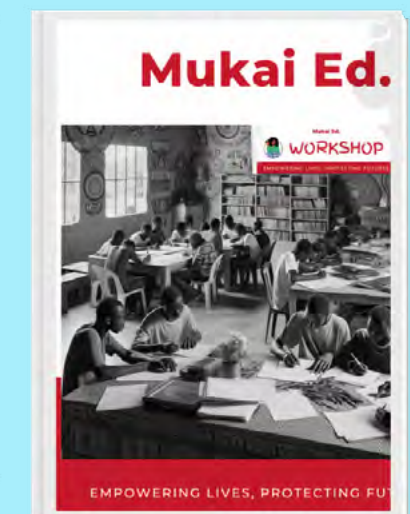
Empowering Teachers with Gender Sensitive Pedagogies
Yvonne Kabombwe



Empowering Women in Urban Waste Recycling
Ntobeko Mlotshwa



Kauzhumba Primary School Library Project
Patrick Tom



Mukai Education Project
Tavonga Mazhetese



The Tete à Tete show
Gift Siziva



Marking 10 Years of Connection, Purpose, and Shared Vision

SCHOLAR'S SCHOLARS 2024

The Scholars' Scholar Award is a unique Canon Collins Scholarship funded annually through the efforts of alumni and awarded to scholars who exemplify the values of the Canon Collins Trust network.

Poet, Writers, Changemakers

"This award has amplified our voices and expanded the horizons of our scholarship, reaffirming our commitment to diversity, inclusion and social justice."

Poet, Writer and Translator

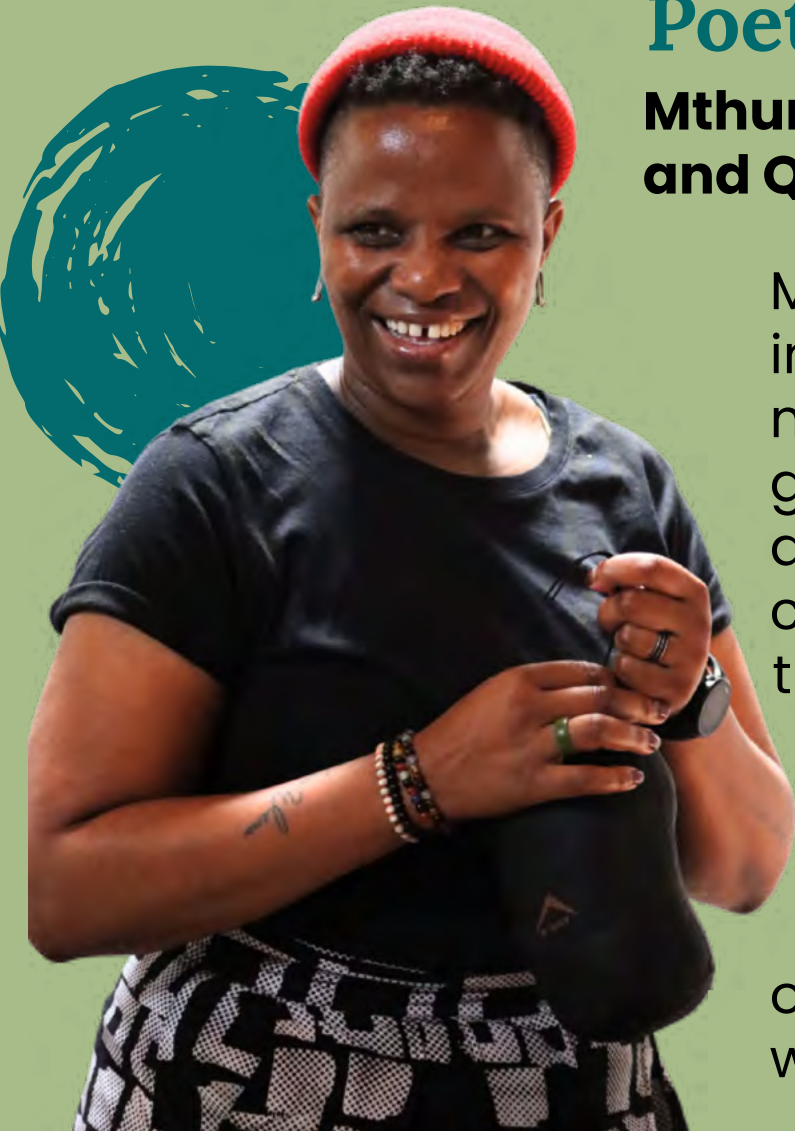
Mthunzi Mbangwana – PhD in Languages, Literature and Queer Studies, Rhodes University

Mthunzikazi is interested in illuminating the multidisciplinary ways of growing isiXhosa language and literature using popular culture, creative works, and the queer language of love, intimacy, and sex.

She is a PhD candidate at the Rhodes University School of Languages and Literature, where she also teaches part-

time. Her doctoral study focuses on literary texts written by and about black lesbian South African women.

She holds a Masters Degree in Creative Writing in isiXhosa. She is the author of two poetry collections, Umnikelo (2015) and Unam Wena (2021).



"We are reminded of the immense value of our Canon Collins community which exemplifies the transformative power of education and a network committed to collective action and enduring change."

Trans Triumph

Landa Mabenge – PhD in Public Health, University of Cape Town

Landa Mabenge is the author of *Becoming Him – A Trans Memoir of Triumph*. He is the first known South African trans-gender man to successfully motivate a medical aid to fund his gender affirming surgery.

As a trans-gender activist, he works with organisations to develop and implement policies for diversity, equity and inclusion. He holds an MA in

Gender Studies (Cum Laude) from the University of Sussex and is a PhD Candidate at the School of Public Health, UCT.

"This award has reminded me that there is more good than evil in the world, and I am inspired to continue with this work."



Called and Queer

Megan Robertson's book, based on her PhD, *Called and Queer*, has been published in the Palgrave series in Lived Religion and Societal Challenges.

Called and Queer is the first in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of queer Christian clergy in an African context.



Louise quietly dedicated her life to a just society

Louise Asmal, who was the Regional Director of the Canon Collins Trust for over a decade, passed away 24 November, 2024.

"Using the proceeds from the Defence and Aid Fund and donations, she set up and managed the southern Africa office in Cape Town. She built on earlier education for liberation campaigns to shape the Canon Collins Trust. The passing of Louise Asmal is a sad loss for all those who worked alongside her in the struggle against apartheid."

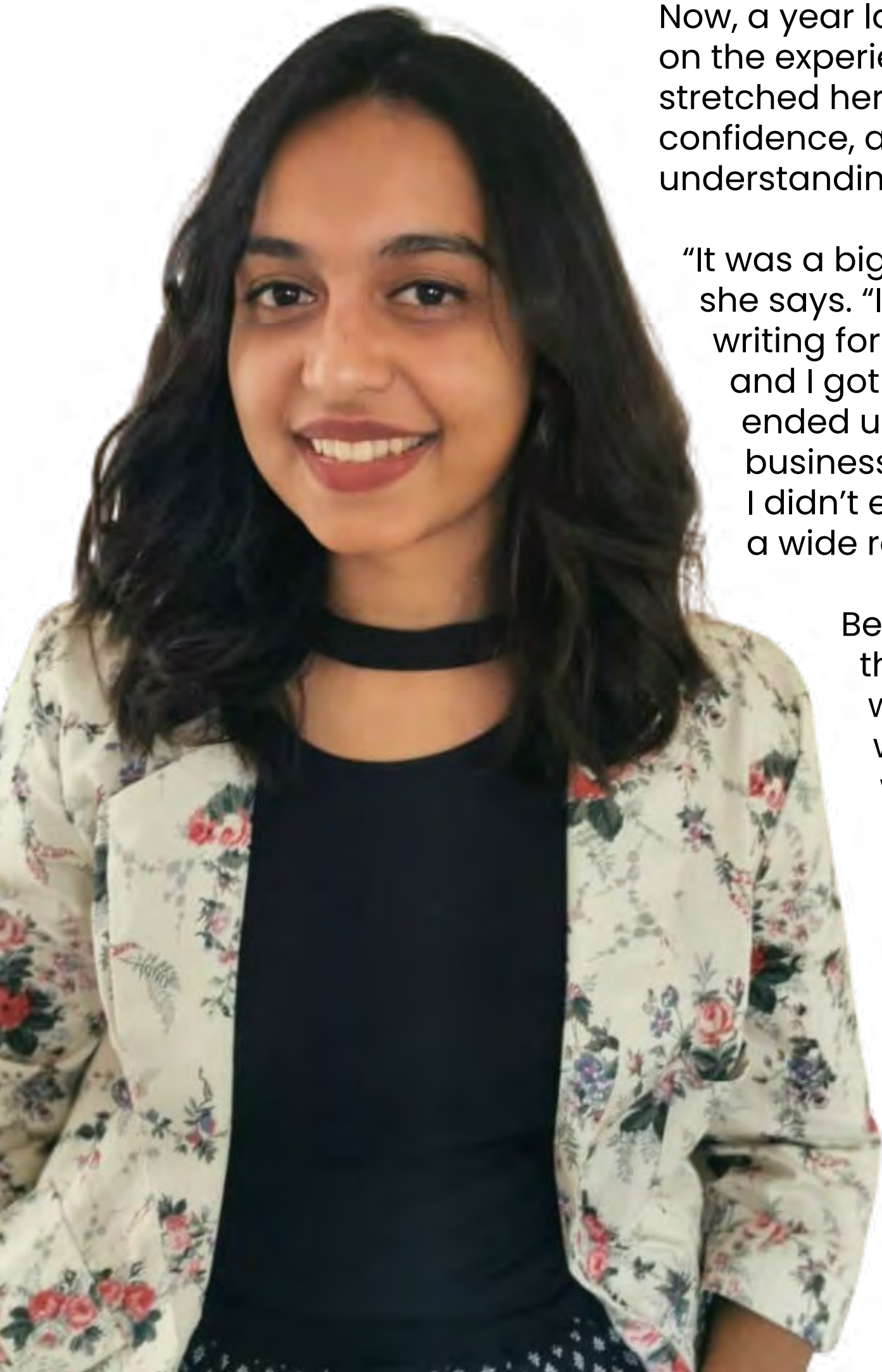
Former alumnus and trustee, Prof Maano Ramutsindela



Finding Her Voice in the Newsroom



Aarti Bhana’s Journey of Growth and Courage



When Aarti Bhana joined the Mail & Guardian as an intern, she stepped into a world of both challenge and possibility. Now, a year later, she reflects on the experience as one that stretched her skills, deepened her confidence, and redefined her understanding of journalism.

“It was a big moment for me,” she says. “I’d always dreamt of writing for the arts section—and I got to do that. But I also ended up writing politics, business, and climate stories. I didn’t expect to cover such a wide range of topics.”

Before arriving at the M&G, Aarti had worked at MoneyWeb, where the structure was more rigid. “At most newsrooms, once you’re in one

niche, you stay there. But here, I was allowed to explore—and that made all the difference.”

She quickly learned to push past initial fears, particularly around business reporting. “I was terrified of it at first,” she laughs. “But I realised I could handle it. I actually enjoyed it.”

The learning curve wasn’t limited to content. “Every newsroom has its own style,” Aarti explains. “At the M&G, the focus is on depth. It’s not just about telling the story—it’s about asking the soul-piercing questions. That pushed me to grow.”

One of her most memorable experiences was reporting during the national elections. “I covered voting day in both Sandton and Soweto, following politicians and speaking to voters. It was

exhilarating, and something I’d never done before.” But it was the smaller, more personal stories that stayed with her. “Talking to people in their homes, listening to what really matters to them—that reminds you why you do this work.”

Reflecting on the year, Aarti speaks not only about the articles she wrote, but about how she changed. “This internship taught me to trust myself more. It helped me claim my voice—not just in the newsroom, but in how I see the world.”

As she moves forward in her career, she carries with her a new sense of clarity. “Good journalism reminds us that people matter—and that their stories matter. That’s something I’ll take with me, always.”



Aarti at a citizen journalism workshop supported by the Sylvester Stein Fellowship. Top photo: Aarti with Peter Monethe, of Abahlali base Freedom Park. Bottom, Aarti with fellow scholar and housing activist Shakira Qwabe

A selection of articles written by Aarti during her internship

SA’s new law a propeller for the continent, say African climate specialists

South Africa is also playing a leading role during negotiations for climate policies, and is using its position to advance conversations for the whole of Africa. [Read here](#)

Botswana’s ban on local citrus produce will hurt farmers and the economy

The ban on South Africa produce is contrary to international rules of trade, economists said [Read here](#)

Patriarchy takes centre stage in the world of jazz

The music sector is rife with discrimination and harassment, making it difficult for women. [Read here](#)

Joburg libraries are a place where books go to die

The closure of the city’s biggest library is a loss to the public, and some of the other libraries are also battling to keep the culture of books alive. [Read here](#)

Journalism under Repression



“Dreams Crushed by a Baton” is a powerful and deeply personal account by PHD Journalism Scholar Tendai Manyangadze. In it, he reflects on the harrowing realities of reporting under repression in Zimbabwe. Returning home with dreams of reshaping the media in 2016, Tendai was instead met with brutal resistance. A peaceful protest turned violent. He was beaten and had his equipment stolen by police—an experience that shattered his sense of purpose and security.

The article traces his journey through trauma, disillusionment, and resilience, as he navigated censorship, surveillance, and

emotional tolls within the profession.

But Tendai’s story is also one of hope and advocacy. Drawing on his personal experiences, his PhD research champions mental health support for journalists, especially in high-risk environments. His call is clear: protecting press freedom must go hand-in-hand with protecting journalists themselves.

His compelling reflection reminds us that behind every news story is a human being—courageous, vulnerable, and worthy of care.

[READ his article in The Standard.](#)

Reauthoring the World:

Jenna-Lee Strugnell builds gender peace online



For Jenna-Lee Strugnell, stories are not just how we make sense of the world — they are how we change it. A trained psychologist and narrative therapist turned peacebuilder, Jenna has devoted her life to helping people reauthor their lives, reframe their pain, and reclaim their power.

“My greatest passion is narrative therapy,” she says. “It sees people and communities as the experts of their own lives. Our role is to ask the right questions and hold space for new stories to emerge.”

After studying psychology and traveling the world, Jenna-Lee returned to South Africa to pursue a Master’s in Peacebuilding, supported by a Canon Collins scholarship. There, she began blending narrative therapy with peacebuilding — in person and online.

Through a global peacebuilding retreat, Jenna-Lee met Stefan Snel and Geoffrey Mamputa, veteran mediators from gang zones and political negotiations. Together, they launched [Tales of Turning](#) — a platform that merges social media, psychology, and conflict transformation.

Using social media listening and narrative dialogue, they engage thousands online, even those with extreme views, to foster self-reflection and change.

“We don’t debate or dominate,” says Jenna-Lee. “We show up with curiosity. That’s where transformation begins.”

Jenna-Lee also works to protect women peacebuilders from online abuse — a growing threat forcing many to withdraw. Her team defends their stories and right to be heard.

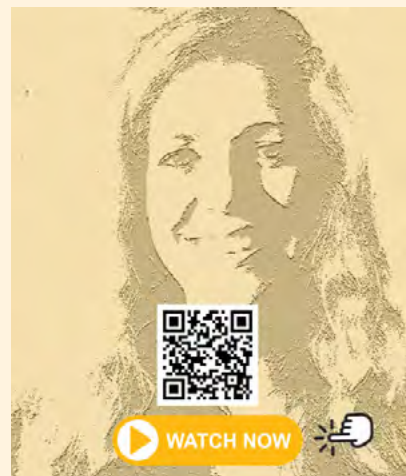
A powerful outcome of this work has been mobilising men, especially young men, to take a stand against gender-based violence. “When they reflect on their lives and the women they love, they begin to shift. We’ve seen thousands say: this ends with us.”

From mothers’ groups to taxi drivers to digital spaces, Jenna-Lee’s mission is clear: help people see that changing their story can change the world. Reach out to [Jenna-Lee](#) if you want to find out more or get involved.



In this powerful conversation, Jenna-Lee shares her insights on using digital platforms to bridge gender divides and build more peaceful, inclusive online communities.

<https://youtu.be/eoM9AQWSZ5E>





In the evolving landscape of South African higher education, transformation is often discussed — but rarely embodied. Professor Monwabisi Ralarala, appointed Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic at the University of the Western Cape in 2024, and a Canon Collins alumnus, is changing that.

Seeding the Future:



Deputy Vice Chancellor, Professor Monwabisi Ralarala is reshaping South African higher education — one radical, inclusive step at a time.

His leadership stands at the intersection of innovation, inclusion, and institutional disruption.

For Prof. Ralarala, equity isn't an outcome; it's the method.

"Universities have always been associated with ivory towers," he says. "We never valued the knowledge that comes with students."

That mindset began to shift after a pivotal moment: a student asked, "If critical thinking doesn't equip me to build an app, it's useless." That challenge became the spark for a complete rethinking of what, and who, a university is for.

Co-Creation Over Command

In response, Prof. Ralarala pioneered a co-creation model for curriculum design — a radical departure from the traditional top-down approach. Academic programmes are now shaped not only by professors and industry experts, but also by students and community members.

"We're talking about being inclusive. We're talking about being diverse in programme

development," he explains. This approach redefines what counts as knowledge — valuing lived experience alongside academic theory, and prioritising relevance, engagement, and real-world application.

Equity as Action, Not Aspiration

For Prof. Ralarala, transformation isn't a buzzword — it's a moral imperative. "We keep saying there are no Black professors out there. Well, let's make them."

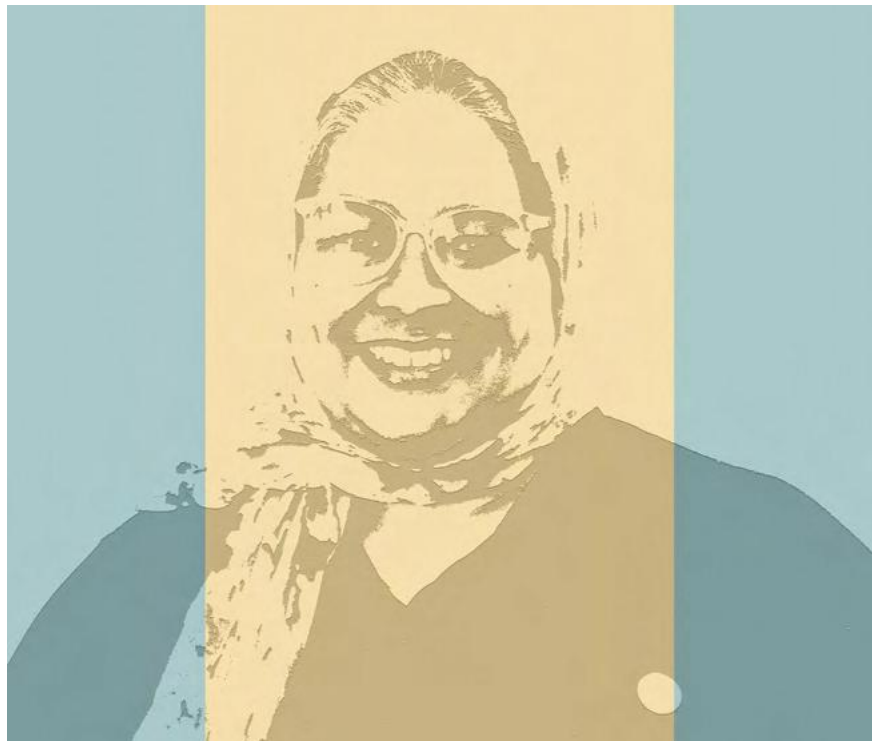
His directness, paired with strategic insight and collaborative leadership, is redefining what South African universities value — and who they serve.

There is a quiet power in Prof. Ralarala's leadership, rooted in purpose rather than ego. In a sector that often clings to tradition, he is offering something rare: a vision of the university as a truly public good.

In his world, equity is not symbolic. Inclusion is not optional. And justice is not a theme — it's the foundation.

Advancing Mental Health Care for Persons with Disability

Sumaya Gabriels



In this insightful conversation, Sumaya Gabriels—a physiotherapist and newly appointed Head of the Division of Disability Studies at the University of Cape Town, currently pursuing a PhD in Education—discusses her pioneering work at the intersection of disability studies, education, and mental health care.

[Watch on Youtube](#)



She Held the Door Open:

Dr. Aploon-Zokufa's Work for Education Justice



For Dr. Kaylianne Aploon Zokufa, education has always been more than a profession—it's been a path to transformation. Growing up in a working-class home where higher education wasn't a topic of conversation, Kaylianne saw education as her ticket out of poverty. "It was clear to me from high school," she reflects. "No one sat me down to explain it—I just knew good grades were the only way forward."

That clarity led her to pursue a Master's in Education, specialising in Curriculum Studies at the University of Cape Town, with a Canon Collins scholarship. "Without that scholarship, I wouldn't have been able to study. I come from a poor background. Canon Collins asked about our lived experience, and I shared mine honestly. I think that's what made them choose me."

What followed was a deepening commitment to understanding how education systems either enable or entrench inequality. Her postgraduate

research was part of a national project that studied schools performing above and below expectations across the Western Cape. "We were trying to understand what makes some schools thrive and others fail, even when they serve similar communities," she explains. "My Master's helped me ask the right questions."

This inquiry into educational justice has continued to shape Kaylianne's work, from examining the pacing of curricula to addressing barriers faced by early childhood development (ECD) practitioners in accessing higher education. Her doctoral research focused on helping ECD practitioners transition from vocational training colleges to universities, and she now lectures at the University of the Western Cape's Institute for Post-School Studies.

A standout achievement is the grassroots network she founded: ECD Connect—a community of ECD practitioners working to upskill, support one another, and access formal

qualifications. "Many of these women are teaching children every day without recognised credentials. They're doing critical work but aren't seen as professionals," she says. "I help them navigate applications, follow up with institutions, and feel that they are not alone."

Her journey has come full circle within the Canon Collins network support. *"Academia can be lonely. The community the Trust provides has been invaluable—from writing groups during COVID to opportunities to publish and be heard."* Her essay was published in the Mail & Guardian, sparking calls from NGOs, academics, and practitioners alike.

Ultimately, Kaylianne believes what binds the network is shared experience. "We've all come through something—poverty, marginalisation—and we see the world differently because of that."

"That's what keeps us connected."



Empowering Educators: Melvin Dirkse's Mission to Strengthen Mental Health and Leadership in South African Schools

“When teachers thrive, schools and communities do too.”

This powerful conviction drives Canon Collins scholar Melvin Dirkse, whose educational journey reflects both personal resilience and a deep commitment to social change. Born and raised in Cape Town, Melvin’s professional path has spanned classroom teaching, public education at the Western Cape Provincial Legislature, and postgraduate studies abroad. Today, as a PhD candidate in Educational Psychology at the University of the Western Cape, he is tackling one of South Africa’s most urgent yet under-addressed educational issues: teacher mental health.

A Crisis of Care in the Classroom

Melvin’s research focuses on teachers working in Cape Flats communities, where the lingering effects of apartheid-era displacement have produced a legacy of trauma, poverty, and social disintegration. Gang violence, substance abuse, and absent parenting are everyday realities for learners—and their teachers. Yet while much attention has been given to student well-being, Melvin notes a glaring gap in practical support for the educators tasked with managing these environments.

“Teachers are trained to teach, not to carry the weight of these psychosocial challenges,” he explains. He points to rising levels of stress, burnout, absenteeism, and early resignations—particularly among young teachers ill-equipped to cope with the demands of the profession.

From Theory to Practice: A New Vision for Intervention

While existing research often highlights the causes of teacher stress, Melvin’s work seeks to go further by identifying and advocating for intervention models that are practical, locally relevant, and teacher-centered. His aim is to move beyond theory into tangible strategies that schools can implement.

The Power of Leadership in a VUCA World

Melvin champions a new paradigm of courageous, empathetic leadership in education—one capable of navigating the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) landscape facing today’s schools. Drawing from both research and lived experience, he outlines a leadership model grounded in vision, agility, emotional intelligence, and collaboration.

He highlights inspiring examples from Cape Flats schools such as Western Primary, Spine Road High, and Mondale High—institutions that have achieved extraordinary academic success under visionary leadership, despite being located in high-risk communities. These schools, he notes, have not only improved academic outcomes but cultivated cultures of belonging, pride, and resilience.

Looking Ahead: Shaping the Future of Education

Melvin’s post-PhD vision is clear: He intends to develop teacher training

programmes, facilitate mental health workshops, and consult on policy-level interventions. Not drawn to traditional academia, his passion lies in bridging the gap between research and real-world impact.

“Educators tell me, ‘We want something we can actually apply.’ That’s what I’m working towards—tools that make a difference in classrooms today.”

Why This Work Matters

At its core, Melvin’s research and advocacy underscore a powerful truth: healthy, supported teachers are essential to educational success. By investing in their mental health and leadership development, we don’t just strengthen schools—we uplift entire communities.





Listen to the
PODCAST





Harnessing the Healing Power of Communities through Scholar Activism



Meet Dr Fadia Gamiieldien: an Occupational Therapist Senior Lecturer at the University of Cape Town and fierce community advocate whose PhD work transforms mental health care. She brings her academic skills and deep empathy to support individuals living with severe mental illness—not just in clinical educational settings, but through grassroots, relational support and visionary leadership. This conversation shows how her whole-life commitment to recovery redefines what it means to heal—and how one person’s mission can ripple out to change communities and deepen our sense of humanity.



Watch the
Video





THE WAR ON EMPTY STOMACHS

On 6 August 2023 in the village of Tholeni, Butterworth, Eastern Cape, a debt collector visited the house of 38-year-old Bongeka Buso, looking to collect repayment on a debt. She found her and her three children dead. Bongeka had taken her life and poisoned her three daughters. Police investigation revealed that Bongeka and her children had

been starving for weeks.

This tragedy is one of many incidents born out of South Africa's growing hunger crisis. Relief organisations decry that it has “*become normal to starve*”. Scratch beneath the surface of this crisis, and you will find the solutions that are needed are **structural**, e.g. laws, systems,

policies and administration; and **ethical** - governance without corruption.

Canon Collins scholars and alumni are addressing the goal of zero hunger across various disciplines of study with social justice as their lens. Meet some of them on this page.



SCHOLARS' WORKING TO END HUNGER

This snapshot of scholars and alumni working to end hunger began to form last year, when the Trust participated in a University of Stellenbosch Social Justice conference, focused on the Zero Hunger Sustainable Development Goal.

Leading up to the presentation of a paper there, the Trust met regularly with scholars and alumni engaged in that same goal.

The paper “**Building socially engaged scholarship in food sovereignty: A *transdisciplinary approach***” was submitted for publication during the conference proceedings.

FOOD FOR PEACE



► Darlington Tshuma

Durban University of Technology, PhD in Peacebuilding



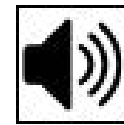
Last year, Darlington was appointed to work with the World Food Programme on secondment as an Advisor to the Under Secretary General (USG) and in the Office of the Special Advisor on Africa.

As a PhD in Peacebuilding, his work seeks to leverage homegrown school feeding programmes in Africa as macro-economic development tools to support long term

development. Hunger leads to conflict, but a sustainably fed community has a stronger chance of living peaceably. In the work he is doing, Darlington is seeking to scale up homegrown school feeding initiatives across the continent through supporting access to energy, water, markets and supply chains. They are also exploring how communities can empower themselves through food systems transformation and community-driven research towards greater local food sovereignty.



FOOD SYSTEMS



Dr Witness Kozanayi

University of Cape Town | PhD Environmental and Geographical Science

Dr Witness Kozanayi's educational journey speaks of a scholar whose tenacious curiosity and intellect refused every discouragement. School closures during Zimbabwe's war of liberation meant he was only able to enrol for Grade One at the age of 11. Owing to family commitments and the challenges of living in Zimbabwe, Dr Kozanayi took eight years to complete his PhD in Environmental and Geographical Science at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Today he works at the Marondera University of Agricultural Science and Technology as a Senior Lecturer and Chairperson of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Management. His dissertation on the Baobab tree resulted in the (regulated) commercialisation of Baobab Fruits and the improvement of the livelihoods of people in the marginal areas where these resources are found.

"The baobab tree is dear to the hearts of the people of my community due

to its various uses – consumable and non-consumable. It's also the subject of songs, folklore and idioms. Yet, like the local people's knowledge system, until the 2000s, when commercial harvesting started, the baobab was not readily acknowledged as an important tree by government authorities."

Dr Kozanayi's dissertation sought to bridge indigenous knowledge and State's information in the hope that shared resource governance could support local people's livelihoods and the environment.

Ties with his alma mater continue to be strong and Dr Kozanayi now works in partnership with UCT on the "Seed and Knowledge Initiative" (SKI) programme. This 12-year regional programme advances agroecology in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Malawi and Zambia. His work entails establishing and managing a network of universities, academics

and researchers who work in the agroecology space to develop scholarship on agroecology. The programme supports farmers to own traditional seed and building on that develop food products and production mechanisms that will enable local communities to exercise food and nutrition sovereignty. Dr Kozanayi works closely with the small-holder farmers as they embark on farmer led research, and advocate for policies that will enable food system transformation.

Dr Kozanayi is also part of a cohort of 52 international researchers working on the "Resilient Rules" project managed by the University of Zaragoza, Spain, focusing on agricultural communities from across the globe. The project explores how agricultural communities govern shared resources.

DEVELOPING THE RIGHT TO FOOD IN SOUTH AFRICA

► Ona Xolo

University of London, LLM Human Rights Law



Ona Xolo worked as a public interest lawyer at the Legal Resources Centre (LRC) in Makhanda (formerly Grahamstown) in the Eastern Cape, while completing her LLM through the University of London. She grew up in a small rural community in the province, and her decision to study human rights law was driven by a desire to bring legal support and information to communities like hers. She recalls one client telling her, **“We are fighting a war of hungry stomachs.”**

Ona was part of the LRC team that produced a study called *Developing the Right to Food in South Africa*, which supports advocacy efforts around food access. The research

highlights that children’s right to food is closely linked to their right to education — a right that must be met immediately.

The study identifies two major issues affecting food access: food wastage and poor infrastructure. These challenges are not unique to South Africa — they also affect farmers in rural Zimbabwe and Namibia.

In South Africa, a lack of funding means that food supply systems, food safety, and nutrition standards are often not met. One key recommendation is to strengthen the National School Nutrition Programme by building stronger links with local small-scale farmers.

The issue of large-scale food waste in a country where many go hungry can be tackled through changes to the law that encourage businesses to donate food safely. Through the ongoing work of the LRC, advocates like Ona hope to make healthy, safe food more accessible — and help address South Africa’s hunger crisis. Her work shows that law can be a powerful tool in the fight against hunger.

“It’s not that I want to be anyone’s saviour, but I want to be useful. And I believe I have value to bring.”

Ona Xolo

CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE



► Idah Mbengo

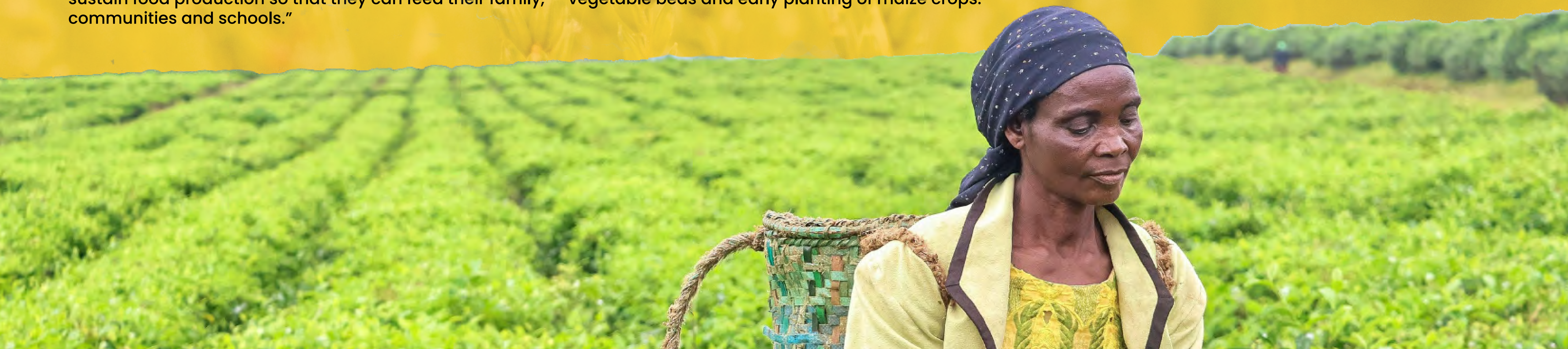
Rhodes University, PhD Environmental Science

Idah supports rural smallholder farmers in Zimbabwe. They are almost exclusively women, and she helps them to develop resilient soils and crops. Like the women she supports, Idah is a farmer. She completed her PhD in Environmental Science after she encountered crop failure on her land.

“Hunger is the most pressing concern for the African child,” Idah explains. “There is no structural support for farmers to sustain food production so that they can feed their family, communities and schools.”

The main challenge is water. “Those without access to bore water are stuck but boreholes are expensive – they require equipment to drill, solar panels, tanks and more.”

Idah is seeking to address the challenge at its root. Her dissertation explored climate change adaptation by small scale farmers. Today, she carries her new expertise into her work and reports that she is seeing an uptick in adaptation techniques. These include mulching the garden, raising vegetable beds and early planting of maize crops.



FOOD PRESERVATION BRINGS MULTIPLE BENEFITS TO THE RURAL ECONOMY IN NAMIBIA



Sara Iyaloo Ekondo

University of the Witwatersrand,
Masters in Entrepreneurship and New Venture Creation

Sara Iyaloo Ekondo, is a passionate advocate for sustainable food security in Africa, and she has just completed her Master's degree. Iyaloo (her preferred name) is from Namibia. In 2023, she founded Awana Foods, an agro-processing start-up that sources excess local indigenous food produce from smallholder farmers.

"I've always had an interest in food production because my own parents and grandparents were subsistence farmers." She explains.

Awana sources food that is either in excess or considered degraded and adds value to the food by manufacturing them into a range of preserved food products. This approach reduces food wastage, increases the amount of nutritious food available for consumption and supports local farmers revenues. "The climate in Namibia is arid. It was my interactions with small scale farmers during COVID, when food was scarce,

that really drove me to delve deeper into increasing productivity as a country and reducing reliance on South Africa."

In 2023, Iyaloo set up her factory at the back of her house and in 2024, expanded the product range to include dried mangoes. Today it's a best seller. The company also manufactures tomato powder, lemon and ginger tea, and hibiscus tea.

"If you have value being added on locally, it means the money that is being created is circulating and adding value to those local individuals before it leaves circulation either through imports or any other way. So that's what really inspired me to start Awana Foods."

In 2025, Sara plans to take sign language classes because half of her staff members are hearing impaired or deaf. "It's been the most fulfilling thing to learn how skilled and excellent my staff is at what they do."



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

THE CANON COLLINS TRUST IS CULTIVATING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND RELATIONSHIPS with civil society organisations and higher education institutions.

To strengthen efforts that address social injustice by being collaborative.

Together a force for change.



FOOD GARDENS THAT BRIDGE COMMUNITY DIVIDES AND CLIMATE CHANGE



► **Ruwimbo Mutirwara**

Rhodes University, PhD Environmental Science

Ruwimbo Mutirwara is a current scholar whose PhD focuses on urban agriculture (food gardens in particular) as a nature-based solution to food production and climate change adaptation. The Eastern Cape in South Africa is the poorest province in the country and vulnerable to the knocks of food insecurity and climate change. Ruwimbo's research explores the potential and viability of food gardening in two of its towns – Port Alfred, which is coastal and humid; and Graaff-Reinet which is situated in the dry, hot Karoo desert.

Every field study participant received two packets of seeds and Ruwimbo has seen people take up food gardening for the first time with those seeds. Residents also reported that the project has achieved something that the town has not been able to for many years

– uniting its racially diverse residents. “You have managed to bring together the black community and the white community in one room for one cause. We all wanted to do it, but we didn't know where to start.” They reported.

One of the findings the project demonstrates is how significantly the microclimate is affected by planting fruit trees, dropping temperatures significantly. In water scarce Graaff-Reinet, where temperatures can be upward of 40 degrees every day, this is very significant. Ruwimbo has the enthusiastic support of the local and provincial government who plan to use her research to upscale their own food gardening projects. Uppermost will be the promotion of planting fruit trees to better manage the climbing temperatures.





CRUCIAL CRUCIFERS



Nombuyiselo Caroline Zondi



University of Pretoria, PhD Education

Buyi Zondi, as she is affectionately known, is a passionate young teacher who believes that reading is the core learning skill at the Foundation phase of education. Zondi has developed a children's storybook in isiZulu, Setswana, Sepedi and English that inspires young readers about the nutritional importance of vegetables. It is the first in a series of storybooks that will deal with different social justice themes.



THE CANON COLLINS TRUST IS SUPPORTING SOCIALLY ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP

Our postgraduate scholarships advance social justice across multiple disciplines by supporting standout knowledge creators, change agents, leaders and activists to identify and respond to critical socio-political, environmental and economic issues.

Together, a force for good.



**STRATEGIC
OBJECTIVE**



LONDON MARATHON THE MAGNIFICENT NINE



Thanks to 2024's exceptional and inspiring Canon Collins runners, South African radio personality Clement Manyathela, mother and son Nichola and Stuart Roy, Mary Beth Ezra, David Ezra, Legal Resources Centre attorney Odette Geldenhuys, Robert Hodgson, Khulekani Mathe, Deputy CEO of BUSA (Business Unity South Africa) and Alumnus Hillary Musarurwa.

Alumnus Hillary Musarurwa runs in memory of fellow alum, countryman and human rights champion, Dewa Mavhing

"The backing I received from the Canon Collins Trust was pivotal, opening doors to a world of academic pursuits and significantly sharpening my social research acumen. This support did more than just enhance my career; it instilled a deep-seated commitment to "pay it forward." Motivated by this ethos, I participated in the London Marathon 2024 to raise funds for the Canon Collins Trust, serving both as an alumnus and an ambassador for the cause, continuing the cycle of opportunity and transformation that the Trust so generously initiated."



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT



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Beverly Naidoo for royalties from her book *Journey to Jo' burg*; Irish Embassy South Africa for the Kader Asmal Scholarship Award Partnership; Microsoft Corporation for their annual software sponsorship; and Webber Wentzel for the scholar conference venue.

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“

With deep gratitude to the Canon Collins Trust, we are empowered to unite, dismantle the barriers of injustice, and lead Southern Africa toward a future where every voice is heard and every dream is realized.

Gerson Shikukumwa – Masters Candidate U.F.S



SIBAHLE NCIKI

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY, MSC



“

Canon Collins Trust gave me the courage: the courage to continue my studies, the courage to learn and grow, the courage to be part of a community, the courage to understand that the work we do may sometimes go unnoticed but remains important regardless, and the courage to be proud not only of myself but all those who venture for Social Justice and continue to strive for better even when things are tough

”



Nombuyiselo Caroline Zondi
University of Pretoria, PhD Education

Together, with resilience and unity, our generation holds the power to confront and transform Africa's social justice challenges.

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