



# THE OPPENHEIMER MEMORIAL TRUST

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## THE PHILOSOPHY

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*"The real wealth of a country is not in its material wealth; it is in its people. They are the real strength from which we draw pride and the trees from which we receive shade. It is our firm conviction in this reality that directs us to put all our efforts in educating the people."*

His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan I, Emir of Abu Dhabi



There are ordinary people and there are extraordinary people: there are scholars and activists, dreamers and thinkers, scientists and artists, teachers and philosophers. They live in cities and in villages; they share or shun the spotlight. All are characterised by one thing - they have hope, and a burning desire to translate their ideas into reality, one that makes a difference to their lives and others. These people shape what we are and where we are today, and demonstrate the impact of the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust over the past 50 years, through a commitment to the development of the individual through learning.

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Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, son of a German cigar merchant, started work as a diamond broker, moving from London to South Africa in 1902 at the age of 22. Hard working and entrepreneurial, he and partners formed the Anglo American Corporation of South Africa Limited in 1917; always involved in civil society whether as town councillor or Mayor, he represented the Kimberley constituency as a member of the United South African Party led by General Jan Smuts from 1924 to 1938. While the business grew rapidly, he became well known for his philanthropy, telling shareholders of Anglo American in 1954: "We do claim for our Corporation that its policies and its enterprises are directed with a high sense of the public interest and with the aim of performing useful services to the community and the country. The aims of this Group have been - and they still remain - to earn profits, but to earn them in such a way as to make a real and permanent contribution to the well-being of the people and to the development of South Africa."

Four years later, following Sir Ernest's death in 1957, Harry Oppenheimer honoured his father's memory as a man committed to the common good, when he established The Ernest Oppenheimer Memorial Trust, "...in consideration of the love and affection which he bore him." With a generous donation of £1 000 000,00 (matching the issued share capital of the Anglo American Corporation 40 years before) the Trust set out to use its income and, if necessary, portions of the capital, "for the benefit of any institution for the advancement of science or art, or of an educational, charitable or ecclesiastical nature, ...and otherwise wholly for purposes which are in the public interest...". The Trust Deed goes on to guide rather than restrict the Trustees when it states that "... such assistance and

aid shall be primarily for the benefit of the people of the Union of South Africa, South West Africa (Namibia) and the Federation of the Rhodesias and Nyasaland (Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi), irrespective of race, colour or creed ...".

Ahead of its time? Undoubtedly within the South African context. The 1950s were a period of enormous upheaval for the majority of South Africans. Increasingly repressive apartheid laws impacted on every aspect of black South Africans' lives through a process of unprecedented social engineering. Inequality was embedded. It was against this socio-political backdrop that The Ernest Oppenheimer Memorial Trust - now better known as The Oppenheimer Memorial Trust (or OMT) - framed its founding documents, committing to the progress of South and Southern Africa and all its citizens.

Like his father, Harry Oppenheimer was known both for his business acumen and enlightened approach to the role of business within society. From the outset, these characteristics informed the intent of the Trust and its activities, consistently responsive to the prevailing environment to ensure that resources were targeted effectively. A sound and conservative investment policy guaranteed the sustainability of the Trust, and the inclusion of non-family members as Trustees, drawing on individuals with different life experiences, offered a broad and invaluable perspective to support its philanthropic giving.

## THE FOUNDING TRUSTEES

### A FEW GOOD MEN... AND WOMEN

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*It is well to remember that it requires the exercise of not less ability than that which acquired the wealth, to use it so as to be really beneficial to the community. Besides this, it may fairly be said that no man is to be extolled for doing what he cannot help doing, nor is he to be thanked by the community to which he only leaves wealth at death. Men who leave vast sums in this way may fairly be thought men who would not have left it at all, had they been able to take it with them.*

Andrew Carnegie, industrialist and philanthropist,  
in his essay 'Wealth', June 1889



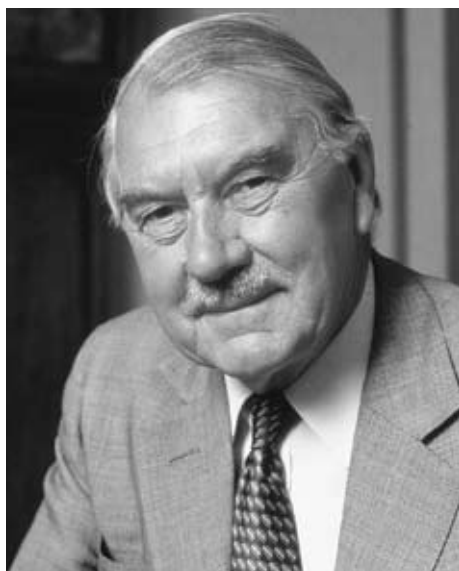
The five men invited by Harry Oppenheimer to join him as founding Trustees were characterised by a sense of duty and loyalty to company (almost all were employees of Anglo American) and to country. In other hands this might have presented an opportunity for manipulation of people and society, but all were known for their intellect, compassion and generosity. It was, too, a different time and place, where there was time to think and plan before acting - letters took days, even weeks, and the courtesy in the exchanges between Trust and applicants not only reflects the depth of enquiry and discussion that preceded any grant, but also the genuine interest of the Trustees.

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Harry Frederick Oppenheimer himself was a man who believed in good ideas and their implementation. As astute a businessman as his father before him, he recognised the need to invest in people and their aspirations to grow the nation; as a politician - he too represented Kimberley in Parliament from 1948 to 1957 - he was opposition spokesman for economic affairs. Always aware that business could introduce and drive change far more effectively than government, during his long career he funded the Progressive Party's lonely stand against the Nationalist Party, supported the establishment of the South African Foundation, the legitimising of black Trades Unions and set up The Urban Foundation, among other initiatives. The Trust created a platform through which he could extend his personal engagement with the development of South Africa, at a particularly bleak time in the country's history, geared to his expressed objective of "*... a high-wage capital-intensive economy. This cannot of course be accomplished in a single generation, and it requires a massive investment not only in capital goods but in education and training of all kinds.*" (Harry Oppenheimer, Optima, Vol. 23, 1973).

Richard Hagart was perhaps the elder statesman among the group, whose experience and accumulated wisdom were invaluable. He had moved from bank manager to assistant manager at Anglo American Corporation in 1927, and his quick grasp of figures and all things financial was matched by his unerring ability to get to the heart of any issue or problem. He subsequently became Sir Ernest Oppenheimer's deputy, a position of considerable responsibility that he handled with ease and sensitivity.

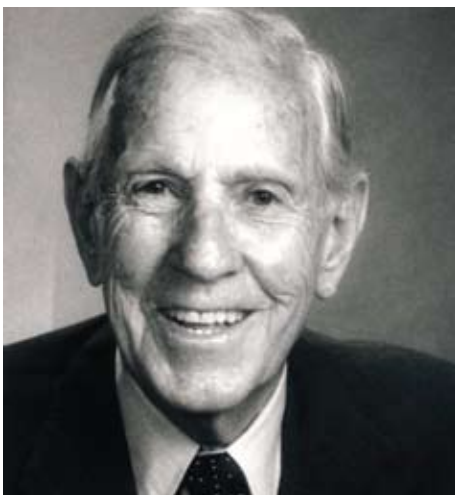


Ian Haggie grew up loving machines, making his first visits to the family's steel wire rope factory when he was 5. Apprenticed at Haggie's, he obtained a degree in mechanical engineering from Cambridge. Although qualified as a fighter pilot, his skill as an engineer was required by the RAF's Repair and Service Unit in the retrieval and rebuilding of planes wrecked in the North African desert during World War II. Taking over as Haggie's Managing Director in 1951, he was guided by an undying belief that business went hand in hand with philanthropy, and that making a great deal of money was a pointless exercise unless you used it well for the benefit of others - amply demonstrated by his commitment to the Order of St. John, the initiation of primary health care clinics in South Africa, support for The Market Theatre and various educational programmes. He received the Bailiff Grand Cross from Queen Elizabeth II of England, and posthumously the Order of the Grand Counsellor of the Baobab in Silver (for outstanding contribution to education, health, arts and culture and for his achievement in business in South Africa) from former South African President Thabo Mbeki.



Thomas Stratten was a natural leader, who shone in the classroom and on the sportsfield. A Rhodes Scholarship took him to Oxford, followed by a two-year post graduate fellowship with American General Electric, before returning to South Africa in 1929 to become assistant electrical engineer at De Beers Consolidated Mines. He went on to take senior positions at Iscor, at the Union Corporation, Escom (sic) and to successfully expand SAPPI's operations - with an intervening wartime stint as Director of War Supplies in General Smuts' government.

William (Bill) Wilson qualified as a lawyer at Cambridge, practising at Middle Temple in London before returning in 1939 to the Johannesburg Bar. Called up to fight in World War II, he served as an artilleryman and air intelligence liaison officer; by the time the war ended in 1945 he was, at the age of 30, one of the youngest lieutenant-colonels in the army, highly regarded as an effective leader. In 1946, he left the Bar to join Anglo American at a time of unprecedented growth and went on to become Managing Director in 1957.



Another stalwart of Anglo American was Keith Acutt, who joined the company in 1928 as a young enthusiastic 19 year old, with a passion for mining. His talent was spotted by then Chairman Sir Ernest, who encouraged his interest and ability. Following active service in World War II, he was appointed resident director of Anglo in the newly established Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland - given the remit of the Trust, his inputs were essential. In recognition of his contribution to the economy of the Federation, he was awarded a C.B.E by Queen Elizabeth II of England, and subsequently knighted.



As a group of socially conscious businessmen, the founding Trustees were equally well respected as professionals in the worlds of mining, finance and industry as they were for championing good causes. During their tenure, they put in place policies that put people first, and established a culture of flexibility that survives to this day. While undoubtedly, personalities and ideas and attitudes inform its activities, the Trust has guarded its reputation for delivery, for insight, for risk-taking - and a glance at some of the subsequent appointments supports this view.



MARY SLACK

In 1971 Mary Slack (daughter of Harry Oppenheimer) was the first woman to become a Trustee, and she remains one to this day. She recalls the founders as decent, good people - generalists one and all - and acknowledges that long-time Chairman Bill Wilson was extremely influential, subscribing to her father's view that business was a key part of nation building. *"The Trust's intention was always to make a positive difference to society. He had a wide view, even though the initial focus was on education and ecclesiastical studies which informed his notion of the development of people and learning. The resulting support for mission schools was critical in ensuring quality education for black South Africans."* Having worked initially as the Trust's Secretary, her inclusion as Trustee had, she feels, more to do with a simple notion that this was something women might do than any effort to be politically correct. *"It was probably unusual at the time, but the Trust always accommodated a broad church of interests, and there were relatively few family members on the Trust at any one time."* Slack introduced real insight and knowledge of the arts world and its role players, increasingly evidenced by focused support for local arts and culture. She remarks on the change over time from providing bursaries for undergraduate study directly to individual applicants which became impossible to manage, to channelling funding to specialist bursary organisations such as CareerWise, REAP, MESAB, the Mosvold Trust and the Institute of Race Relations. Commenting on the Trust's evident disregard for the politics of the day, she says: *"We never set out to rock the boat, but to help those in need - for example we pioneered places for needy young black children at private white schools, and supported extraordinary people on the basis of their ability, such as Lionel Mtshali, Jimmy Matthews, Mamphela Ramphele, Aggrey Klaaste, Ingrid Jonker, Frank Chikane, Wally Serote, and many,*



“Although we have more money to spend we do not want to lose our sense of helping the individual. It is always necessary to think about excellence and where young South Africans can benefit.”

*many more.”* Its commitment to individuals was matched by its desire to eliminate bureaucracy, and she recalls meeting John Dugard (a Civil Rights lawyer) years after he had received support in the early 70s. *“He was, he said, astounded and overcome that acknowledgement of his request had come back with a cheque!”* The Trust continues to reward achievement and keep international exchange alive, to react to the national situation and trigger scholarly debate, and the sabbatical support grants represent a niche area of funding - a feature throughout its long history to assist top local academics further their studies overseas and bring knowledge and experience back to South Africa. The Trust will continue to adapt to current needs, and Slack is adamant that *“Although we have more money to spend we do not want to lose our sense of helping the individual. It is always necessary to think about excellence and where young South Africans can benefit.”* Her experience has been immensely rewarding at a personal level. *“For my part, being a Trustee fills me with huge optimism. In particular, I am always struck in interviews by the children coming through from rural schools - they are fantastic. For example there was a youngster from a small village near Bulwer - he travelled daily 1 hour each way by bus to get to school. He was a mathematician, and wanted extra teaching. There was no-one to teach him, so he found the books and taught himself - he, and many others, are simply impressive. Another young man from Newcastle was helped, and is now going off to do aeronautical science. All, I must note, come from schools that have completely committed and dedicated principals - they are the lucky ones.”* Mary Slack has been unstinting in her active participation over the past 40 years, whether as Secretary, Trustee or Chairman, ensuring that the Trust continues to fulfil its mandate and benefit all peoples in South Africa.

“I pushed the point to give the entire sum (requested by an applicant) rather than a small amount so they have to scrounge around to get the rest.”

*“It was impossible to say no to Harry”, says veteran politician*

Helen Suzman who joined the Trust in 1975. No stranger to committees and confrontation during her long parliamentary career as the lonely voice of the opposition, she was pleasantly surprised by the absence of strong disagreements in this particular caucus, attributing it to the marvellous and careful way in which applications and enquiries were sifted before reaching the decision-makers. Modestly, she insists her major gift to the Trust was largely functional: *“I pushed the point to give the entire sum (requested by an applicant) rather than a small amount so they have to scrounge around to get the rest, which infers you’re worth it but can only have a part. There is no methodology to judge whether one is worth all or part.”* Commenting on her appointment to the Trust, she is characteristically forthright: *“Neither Mary (Slack) nor I were feminist pioneers, but it was quite significant that big business decided to include two inexperienced women.”* This from a parliamentarian of some 20 years’ standing! She admits to the Trust’s sincerity and intention to make the right decision within a highly polarised society. While Harry Oppenheimer was known for his liberal views, *“We tried to steer clear of aligning with any specific political party, and never disqualified anyone on political grounds. We concentrated on creating opportunity for young black South Africans to advance - not only scholars but also artists and musicians. We supported organisations involved with land reform, for instance, and education - all of considerable value to the broader community.”* It is her firm belief that funders of education have a critical role in the country, and she suggests that the Trust, looking ahead, may consider shifting its focus into the training of educators and extend its engagement with trade or technical schools. *“The knowledge that so many scholars and researchers have benefited from the generosity of the Trust has been a source of much satisfaction during my longstanding membership of the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust.”*



HELEN SUZMAN

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BOBBY GODSELL



“This is a Trust without a mantra.

Philanthropy should let a 1000 flowers bloom, and not pre-empt history.”

In 1987, businessman Bobby Godsell took over from Bill Wilson as Trustee and as Chairman. Godsell records that it was something of an anomaly that although the Trust was initially a family Trust to commemorate Harry Oppenheimer’s father, he always wanted a role for non-family people, invariably that of Chairman. *“I appreciated that he never told me what to do. If he wanted to do something generous, he did it from his own pocket. I think there is a deep and vital tension in this Trust which I hope it does not lose. It is a family Trust. The tension is between the family and society. A family is entitled to spend money how it wants, perhaps in arrogant, obsequious monuments to its name. What HFO wanted was the vital involvement of the family, but he wanted them engaged with broader society through the Trustees. This dialogue is important. This is both moving and humbling - the independent Trustees can be irritating and challenge the status quo but if you see yourselves as being in society rather than above it, this is an effective way to engage with philanthropy. This Trust is a good model of personal philanthropy.”*

He asserts that the Trust was, and remains, about ideas - not pet projects; a minimum of rules and minimum bureaucracy created a very effective system. *“What I loved, and we have this still, is that there was not a form people had to fill in! You just had to write us a letter or be introduced by someone. The Trust is without walls or unnecessary blocks.”* Charged with reviewing the undergraduate bursary programme, Godsell led the Trust into what appeared to be a Utopian solution to the increasingly unmanageable number of applicants - some 10 000 applicants of whom 150 or so would be successful. A partnership with a major financial institution and universities was intended to offer students more than just academic education: now they could, through these mentoring agencies, learn how to run their own lives. *“Good social engineering!”* he comments. *“It was a complete failure. Happily, the model is now implemented successfully by NSFAS (also*

*supported by the Trust for a period) which has the advantage of being able to operate with garnishee orders.”* Another indicator of the Trust’s visionary thinking.

He oversaw the introduction of the Harry Oppenheimer Fellowship Awards, which espoused their namesake’s philosophy of building people, being excited by ideas in any discipline. *“HFO believed that ideas matter (a lot of people think that power matters). He took academia seriously - ideas across all spheres of intellectual exploration, and saw this not just as supporting individuals but growing human capital. Society can be served by making an academic a better academic.”*

At the level of institutional funding, the Trust was always willing to assist effective programmes alongside individuals. It was, for example, a major supporter of the New Era Schools Trust (NEST) from the outset. *“This was revolutionary in South Africa in the 80s - multi-racial quality education, and across class and gender to enrich the educational experience.”*

At a personal level, he says, the most heroic grants were those given to people to do things he did not approve of. But, he adds, *“I learnt about the real meaning of ‘noblesse oblige’ - the notion that to whom much is given, much is expected. We have an unbelievably rich society in the range of individuals, some conformist, some eccentric, and black South Africans who have overcome huge disadvantage. Attending a Trust meeting is a deeply encouraging experience.”* It is, he stresses, of critical importance that funders do not imagine themselves godlike, and that philanthropists understand the choices they make. In this instance, he feels the Trust’s success is that it constantly re-invents itself. *“This is a Trust without a mantra. Philanthropy should let a 1000 flowers bloom, and not pre-empt history.”*

“All Trusts work with a vision and then get tied up and become bureaucratically arthritic. The OMT was something of an anti-inflammatory.”



PROFESSOR CHARLES VAN ONSELEN

Ten years on, and Professor Charles van Onselen's

appointment brought other new perspectives. As much of a maverick by reputation as the Trust itself, he looks back on his tenure with pleasure. *“The Oppenheimer Memorial Trust is a group of very cerebral people looking at contemporary South Africa from a social, educational and environmental perspective, very consciously trying to identify where the gaps are - areas periodically either neglected by the state or simply off the radar of other companies in respect of corporate social investment, or of foundations abroad. All Trusts work with a vision and then get tied up and become bureaucratically arthritic. The OMT was something of an anti-inflammatory.”* Conscious of the Trust's freedom, because it is a family Trust, to do what is right without having to account to shareholders, he says: *“It was eccentric, non partisan and non prescriptive - never middle of the road. Amazing people have benefited over time - very little of the good it does is known in the public arena.”* Reiterating the value of focusing on individuals rather than bricks and mortar, where the value is often seen to be in the public hand-over of a cheque, he remarks that there is something uplifting about being able to reach a person in a way that makes a difference, and very often all that is needed is encouragement and some money. Consistent with this was his work with Godsell on developing the Harry Oppenheimer Fellowships, where the underlying rationale was to support senior academics properly. *“These awards stand out for their generosity. There are no strings attached and an academic is free to travel with his or her family. The OMT does not fiddle about with the ‘B’ team - this targets people characterised by drive and a thirst for excellence. The mindset is ‘once you’ve identified talent and potential, it’s not about money and rules’.”* Leaving the Trust in 2004 to write his second book, ‘The Fox and the Flies’, his overriding memory is of stimulating debate, exciting exchanges of opinion - and all ideas welcomed.

“It is about investing in sustainable development - and this is essential to move society forward. Key to this is support for human and intellectual development - it is really an investment that can never go wrong.”

In 2008, the legendary Dr. Mamphela Ramphele was welcomed on board. Doctor, political activist, educator and business woman - her relationship with the Trust started many years before when, during her years of exile, it supported her in setting up Ithuseng, a pioneering community association. Looking back, she reflects: *“At that time, support from the South African business community for non governmental organisations connected to people seen to be politically dangerous by the state was not a common feature.”* The Trust’s support then gave credibility to a fledgling organisation and, she believes, continues to present an example of how the private sector can remain engaged with society. *“It is about investing in sustainable development - and this is essential to move society forward. Key to this is support for human and intellectual development - it is really an investment that can never go wrong.”* She asserts that investment in people delivers tangible results and hopes that the Trust will forever play the role of doing what others will not, focusing on specific, niche areas, interrogating what others are doing to avoid duplication, and above all promoting the notion of equity and excellence. She is adamant that *“Unless we enhance the quality of maths and science teaching in schools, nothing will change. We have to become excellent in all we do and aspire to do.”* Her experiences living and working in rural and poor communities inform her view, when she comments that thought might be given to developing incentives to encourage rural health practitioners or teachers to remain, and to remain positive, in relatively neglected or isolated areas. *“For example, one could enable them to take sabbaticals and explore a wider perspective - it*



DR MAMPHELA RAMPHELE

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*would always be about growth and developing new skills.”*

She considers that perceptions of the Trust are positive. *“The Oppenheimers have a good name in business and for investing in socially relevant causes. This Trust is the flagship of the kind of innovative investments they have made. If one thinks of the brand that is the Oppenheimer name, and their legacy - this is the best. The issue is how to remain relevant to changes in South Africa, and make a difference to our country.”*

While the Trust, its Trustees and Board members, past and present, offer an edifying example of the exercise of the obligations of wealth, it is through the stories of the recipients of grants and awards that one might chart parts of our history - efforts made and opportunities won and lost - and reflect on the value of such an endowment to society.

## TELLING TALES

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*... people can do more with money than  
governments can.*

Chuck Feeney, founder of Atlantic Philanthropies, 1982





Arts, linguistics, education, philosophy, theology, social sciences, political theory, commerce, archaeology, architecture, engineering, medicine, science, biology, geology, environment, conservation, pharmacology, psychology, neurology, physics, mathematics... championed by too many to mention here, have benefited over the past 50 years.

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Every file - dusty with age or shiny and new - tells a story and speaks to us of people and places, circumstances and situations that change with changing times; each one unique, each articulating a particular need to support an institution, to advance a hard-won career, to grow knowledge ... to take advantage of opportunity. While the Trust is relatively reticent about its activities, snapshots of some of the recipients present compelling witness to the resilience and achievement of individuals, and to the difference access and support can make.

Support for education was - and remains - of paramount importance, and the Trust acted in 1958 to fulfil its mandate by introducing generous bursary programmes alongside capital grants. In 1962, following comment by visiting British physicist Sir Nevill Mott (who later won the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1977), that much research being undertaken in South Africa was equal to the best anywhere and it was unfortunate that scientists elsewhere in the world had no opportunity to share in it, the Trust initiated the Sir Ernest Oppenheimer Fellowships. In later years, the Trust introduced University Travelling Fellowships, the W.D. Wilson Visiting Fellowships and the G.R. Bozzoli Senior and Junior Technikon Fellowships. 2000 saw the introduction of the Harry Oppenheimer Fellowship Awards.

1950s

Educational Grants/Loans:

(a) The Chairman reported that the following amounts had been paid to student applicants :-

- |        |                            |                         |                         |
|--------|----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| (i)    | G.F.G.O. Muelenaere        | 1st Year<br>M.B. Ch.B.  | Proctor's<br>University |
| (ii)   | J.J. van Dyk               | 1st Year<br>M.B. Ch.B.  | Proctor's<br>University |
| (iii)  | P.W. du Toit               | 1st Year<br>M.B. Ch.B.  | Proctor's<br>University |
| (iv)   | R. Robinson                | 3rd Year<br>M.B. Ch.B.  | Proctor's<br>University |
| (v)    | E. Hazelhurst (Miss)       | 1st Year<br>B.A. U.E.D. |                         |
| (vi)   | P. Jacobs                  | 5th Year<br>M.B. Ch.B.  |                         |
| (vii)  | I. Shapiro                 | 4th Year<br>M.B. Ch.B.  |                         |
| (viii) | Dona Vgudilwa<br>(African) |                         |                         |
| (ix)   | L.F. Mchali<br>(African)   |                         |                         |

(a) The Chairman reported that the following amounts had been paid to student applicants being received :-

The 1950s were a time of increasingly limited access for black students in South Africa seeking education beyond that prescribed by the Bantu Education Act of 1953.

**Pius XII Catholic University College**, established in 1945 in Roma, Lesotho (then Basutoland) following a decision of the Synod of Catholic Bishops, was a beacon of hope and a haven of opportunity. Founded as a *university to enable the youth of Africa to play their part in the struggle for truth and social justice*, it quickly developed a reputation for quality education, attracting a wide range of educators and scholars committed to making higher education available to all Africans. The indefatigable Rector Fr. Romeo Guilbeaut requested help to build additional boarding hostels and facilities, which would assist the College, already linked to the University of South Africa, to qualify for full academic status. Its Staff News at the time records a student body comprising 54 people from the Union of South Africa, 28 from the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 15 from Basutoland, 1 from Swaziland, and 1 - surprisingly - from the United States. Regularly attracting leading academics to teach, it goes on to report that:

*"Mr. Raymond Kunene, a young Zulu poet and dramatist, joined the Bantu Languages Department early this year. His volume of poems 'Idlozi Elingethentethelo' won a prize in a Bantu literature competition recently held by the Afrikaans press. His work has been the subject of much favourable comment in the Zulu press."* A

subsequent address by the celebrated American Bishop Fulton Sheen, encouraging US leaders to support underprivileged countries, highlighted the importance of this independent African centre of learning: *"...the future continent of the earth is Africa..."*. OMT funding was secured, and the Trust extended its student bursary scheme for students to Pius XII College, which is today the National University of Lesotho. Among some of its luminaries the young Lindiwe Sisulu (currently South Africa's Minister of Housing) received a grant to help her

study at Pius in 1974/5, and Professor Jeff Guy (a recipient of the Harry Oppenheimer Fellowship in 2007) lectured there in the Department of History in the 70s and 80s.

As an aside, Professor Njabulo Ndebele, former Vice-Chancellor and Principal, University of Cape Town describes his experience of the younger Guy in those days: *"It is my recollection that Jeff Guy thrived in that environment. It was an island of academic freedom in a sea of repression across the borders of Lesotho. He was a stimulating lecturer who developed genuine non-patronising relationships with his students. We debated endlessly with him as equals. At least he made us feel so. Some of us may, in retrospect, have been rather hotheaded, but he had infinite patience with us. This kind of teacher is unforgettable. ... Jeff Guy was able to attract to Lesotho some of the best contemporary historians on South African history. We had the likes of Charles van Onselen, Stan Trapido and Shula Marks debate in front of our eyes - one of the many other unforgettable moments brought about by Jeff Guy the scholar, the teacher, the researcher."*

1960s

Iahla, P.  
 Luthuli, H.C.V.  
 Maharaj, R.J.  
 Maharajh, J.  
 Mbombo, O.  
 Motale, C.  
 Mwelase, H.L.Z.  
 Naidoo, N.  
 Navalkisoor, A.  
 Omar, M.A.K.  
 Parag, K.B.  
 Patel, A.  
 Ramasuvha, V.  
 Ramphele, M.  
 Rampono, J.  
 Salejee, J.  
 Schrueder  
 Seebaram  
 Sewdars  
 Singh  
 Siwel  
 Tsol

WESTERN CAPE

Duiker, D.H.H.  
Persens, J.

SOUTH AFRICA

Chanke, M.S.  
 Hitzeroth, D.B.A.  
 Jephth, I.F.  
 Kachin, W.A.P.  
 Kakaal, G.M.  
 Kogomalia, P.S.  
 Koloanlon, B.  
 Konyatal, J.S.  
 Kull, M.B.  
 Kull, M.B.

In 1960 the Trust responded to another troubling challenge in the educational landscape, arising from the South African government's 1951 embargo on African students from northern territories attending tertiary institutions in South Africa, and the closure of the Jan Hofmeyer College - then the only institution in Africa devoted to the training of black professional social workers. The Trust made a large capital grant and underwrote a loan, to the value of £60 000,00 to establish a multi-racial college of social service in Lusaka whose aim was to produce for Central Africa trained social workers at two levels: candidates eligible to go forward with formal university training, and professional social workers able to work in industry, municipalities and government. Apart from funding, the Trust took the lead in driving additional support from other agencies, triggering a UNICEF grant of £15 000,00 a year to cover costs of professors, lecturers and bursaries targeting students outside the Federation and their fieldwork costs - *"The first the Fund has made to any schools of social work in Africa - and perhaps in the world,"* trumpeted the Rhodesia Herald in September 1962. Other funders included the Beit Trust with £5 000,00, the British South Africa Company with £18 000,00, the Dulverton Trust with £5 000,00, the Gulbenkian Foundation with £3 000,00, the Commonwealth Welfare and Development Fund with £7 860,00, the Southern Rhodesia Government with £1 000,00, the Rhodesian Lotteries with £13 000,00, the Nyasaland Government with £1 000,00, and the Northern Rhodesian Government with £15 000,00. The amounts invested in this institution - huge at the time - reflect the intention. It was, said Rodney Malcolmson, then Minister of Local Government and Social Welfare in Northern Rhodesia, to be a constructive force training people in social sciences and social work so that *"...today's rapid changes can be interpreted for the good of the people. ... We have concentrated on economic development and education in*

*the sense of imparting knowledge. This college gives us the opportunity to study people, rather than plans, and to make sure that the ordinary citizen will be able to understand the benefit in terms of happiness from economic and political change."* Known as the **Oppenheimer College of Social Services**, it overcame various political and construction hurdles, and opened in April 1962. A strong relationship was forged with the University of London and Professor D.V.Donnison, Professor of Social Administration at the London School of Economics and Political Science, visited the College and reported to Harry Oppenheimer in November 1962 that: *"I was impressed with much I saw. Studies of social change in Central Africa now being made at the college will contribute to academic knowledge and university education on an international scale. ...There is an urgent need for trained social workers in Central Africa, in government, industry and voluntary bodies. This need will grow still more urgent as a result of the rapid economic and social changes now proceeding, the extension to Africans of services hitherto provided for Europeans only, and the growing demand for African staff in the social services."* At the first graduation ceremony held in 1964, diplomas were presented by Dr. Kenneth Kaunda, Zambia's then Prime Minister. In 1965, the newly named Oppenheimer Department of Social Work was absorbed into the University of Zambia, offering both degree and diploma courses.

In April 1958, a relationship started between the Trust and the 30 year old **South African Institute of Race Relations** that continues to this day through its programme of annual grants. But during the 50s, initial ad hoc assistance was followed by a major grant for a national Conference on Coloured Education. SAIRR was established in 1929 as an independent research body with the objective of promoting policies for positive socio-economic change based on extensive research across a range of sectors, including politics, economics, education and health. Often incurring the wrath of



government, political parties or business, the SAIRR maintains its independence despite being reliant on donor funding.

It was perhaps a radical digression, for both parties, when the OMT supported the Institute's engagement with the visual arts in 1963, with *Art of the Nation*, later known as *Art South Africa Today: Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary South African Art*. This followed SAIRR's pioneering support of theatre as a driver for change, with the African musical *Mkhumbane* and the drama *Sponono*. Organised by the incomparable Jo Thorpe, who went on to start the African Art Centre in Durban, the exhibition involved BICA (Bantu, Indian and Coloured Arts) with the Natal Society of Arts and the Durban City Council offering gallery space. Its purpose was described in the catalogue, "... to show paintings and sculpture from all corners of South Africa and from all its different peoples. In so doing, it intends to give South Africa the unique opportunity of seeing how artists of all races contribute to a common culture, which is typically South African. Many of the younger South African artists who are rapidly winning reputations in the major centres are completely unknown to their fellow countrymen. ...The successful outcome of this exhibition which has already provoked tremendous interest and enthusiasm among artists all over South Africa will contribute to better human relations and understanding among the peoples of our country." With OMT funding, extended to 1975, the organisers had absolute freedom to apply an annual grant as they saw fit. The literature reads like a *Who's Who* of the South African art scene over this period, with selectors of the calibre of Pauline Vogelpoel, organiser of the British contemporary Art Society at the Tate UK and US art critic Clement Greenberg; judges that included Walter Batts, Professor Neville Dubow, Esme Berman, Cecil Skotnes and Khabi Mngoma; exhibiting artists such as Louis Maqhubela, Andrew Verster, Malcolm Payne, Omar Badsha, Bill Ainslie, Sydney Goldblatt, Ezrom Legae,

Lawrence Scully, Azaria Mbatha, Maud Sumner, Paul Stopforth and Gavin Younge. Exhibitions were regularly opened by celebrities such as writer Uys Krige, architect Revel Fox and patron Mary Slack.

The focus changed. John Kane Berman, current Director of the SAIRR, comments on the relationship with the OMT. *"This has been a formal relationship since 2000, and the OMT funds two things - approximately 20 annual bursaries administered through SAIRR for tertiary studies based on academic ability, promise and need. Disciplines are not stipulated but this funding offers access to universities and technikons, across a spread of gender and origins countrywide, and SAIRR tries to ensure that students from poor rural schools benefit. The second area is an annual grant for core funding."*

Kane Berman regards this an unusual and enlightened approach, which is enormously appreciated in an age of reducing donor funding. *"The great majority of donors - and it is a growing trend - unfortunately want to fund specific projects and especially visible projects such as a crèche or hospice."* He does not dispute the need for such facilities but emphasises that SAIRR operates at a policy level. *"Problems in education, for example, cannot be solved simply by building more schools, teachers or facilities; while necessary, education in South Africa is failing because of poor policy. One can deal with crime by financing Community Police Forums and buying vehicles but it is policy that drives the change and the SAIRR believes it is essential to deal with problems at the policy level which necessitates research into facts, behaviour, options. These are hugely expensive activities. They are usually politically tricky."*

Funding from the OMT enables SAIRR to conduct research and inform rather than actually deliver on the ground. There are, he asserts, very few that are willing to support such activity, or to support individuals, activities or projects, that are not necessarily politically



correct or flavour of the month. *“Again, that is rare both in this country and for major US foundations which are seldom as far sighted as the OMT has been. Their support for us, and other independent institutions of civil society, is critically important for our democracy.”*

The Trust was also a keen supporter of the **Bureau of Literacy and Literature**, founded through SAIRR as part of its adult education programme, shortly after its 1947 Conference on Adult Education. Early commentary records the Bureau’s commendable focus on building literacy, teacher training, helping African writers with publication, offering African language courses for Europeans with initial primers produced in Tsonga, Zulu, Sotho, Xhosa, Venda, Pedi, Tswana, and in English and Afrikaans, coupled with the dubious desire to keep Africans away from ‘pernicious’ literature. Over a period of 18 years, it produced 26 books in 9 languages; ran literacy classes on the mines, at missions, at farms and in industries throughout the country. A report drafted in 1959 revealed statistics on literacy and language trends - some disturbing and some impressive. It also noted the need to ensure adult literacy given the growing literacy of the younger generation, and acknowledged the value of literacy for industry in regard to educational advancement and safety issues, and the potential for positive effect on consumer markets should literacy grow. In the latter instance, the authors noted that the *“purchasing power of the Bantu population already exceeds £400 000 000,00 per annum.”*

Prescient indeed - these views were echoed by **Maja Katha Mokoena**, a resourceful student leader who fled to Botswana in 1976 following the student riots. He received a scholarship to (Massachusetts) Amherst, supported by the Trust, and wrote in the Harvard Business School Bulletin of 1993: *“The real strength of political power lies in the economy. The sheer number of blacks in South Africa could support new businesses. And*

*there would be much more harmony between white and black people if they had things to do in common on the business front.”*

But the focus was ever on people, and an early individual recipient of funds was **Walter Holzhausen**, in the late 50s a young newly married employee of Barclays, studying for a B.Comm through UNISA. Looking back, he writes: *“... I have never been a normal student and never saw a university nor professors or students. This was the UNISA way. ...It may interest you that of the four or five years with Barclays Bank, I spent most of the time as a little clerk in their branch situated in the ground floor of the Anglo American building.”* A grant from OMT helped him to finish his studies, and an Honours (‘The Harmonisation of Export Credit Insurance Schemes in the European Economic Community’) and a Masters degree (‘Federal Finance in the Developing Economy of Malaysia’ - subsequently integrated into a text book), both from UNISA, followed. Now in his 80s, he wrote recently to thank the Trust for their faith in his abilities

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WALTER HOLZHAUSEN AS UN REPRESENTATIVE WITH HIS HOLINESS  
POPE JOHN PAUL II IN GHANA



some 50 years ago, which equipped him to take up a position with the UN serving over 24 years as UN Development Programme Resident Representative and UN Co-ordinator in Malaysia, Indonesia, Uganda (*"... in the days of His Excellency, Life President, Field Marshal, Doctor, Al Haj Idi Amin Dada, V.C., D.S.O., M.C., Conqueror of the British Empire"*), Malawi, Ghana, Bangladesh and Turkey. Recognising what the Trust's support had meant to his life and career, while in Uganda he organised his own scholarship programme and helped 15 AIDS and war orphans to get their university degrees. *"...The fact that some of those students that my wife and I sponsored in Uganda never thanked us for our support, reminded me of the fact that I too probably never thanked your fund in a proper way. The purpose of this message is to thank you belatedly for your generous grant in those days which made my life easier and enabled me to continue studying. Without my degrees I would not have been able to fulfill the basic requirements of the United Nations."*

Among the first black recipients were **Dowa Mgudlwa** to study for a BSc. at the University of the Witwatersrand, **Conrad Koza** to study medicine at the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin, and **Lionel Mtshali**, who was assisted with his BA UED studies at Fort Hare. Mtshali later became the first Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology in the newly democratic South Africa. Overall the list of early beneficiaries is impressive, including **J.K.I. Matthews** to study medicine at Birmingham, **Andrew Tracey** and **Aggrey Klaaste**, with interests ranging from arts to entomology to race relations.

Strangely - but happily for posterity - whether in war or peace, civil disturbance or social acquiescence, certain aspects of life go on. Since 1951, the Jagger Library at the University of Cape Town had been building up a collection of letters and other manuscript material relating to General Jan Smuts. Field Marshal Smuts was

a former Chancellor of the University, and this collection included personal, hand written letters - for example to General Robertson accepting a dinner invitation, correspondence with Sir Thomas Graham (covering the period 1902 to 1937) when he was Minister in the Cape Cabinet immediately after the South African War, and information about Smuts' military expedition into the Cape Colony and his plea for lenient treatment of the Cape 'rebels'. The material was purchased initially with the financial assistance of the **Smuts Memorial Committee**, on whose behalf the items were bought, but in 1964 the collection was given to the University Library. Janine Dunlop, Librarian: Manuscripts and Archives at UCT Libraries, says *"It seemed appropriate that other papers and correspondence becoming available from time to time should be added to the collection, so in early 1965, the Acting University Librarian, Miss L. E. Taylor, approached the Trust to fund the purchase of such items should they be offered commercially. The Ernest Oppenheimer Memorial Trust made the grant available to the Jagger Library in April that year."* This grant - and subsequent funding - was gladly accepted by the University's Principal at the time, Dr. J.P. Duminy, giving the means to secure rare and much sought after memorabilia. Dunlop adds: *"According to our records, a number of very important and valuable letters were acquired, including 30 letters by General Smuts, all in his own handwriting, on scientific subjects mainly relating to discoveries in palaeontology and pre-history during that time. The library also acquired a bust of General Smuts by Marion Walgate, as the Trust's view was that although the primary purpose of the grant was to collect papers and documents relating to General Smuts' life, it would be desirable for the collection to also contain artefacts."*

It was this collection, housed at UCT, that enabled publication in 1967 of the Smuts papers 'The Sanguine Years' by Cambridge University Press.

No less important is the support the OMT has given to the **African Studies Library** over many years. A discrete unit in the UCT libraries, the ASL is committed to collecting material covering the entire African continent with a natural strength and focus on South and Southern Africa. ASL is funded jointly by the University of Cape Town Libraries as well as by an annual grant from the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust through the Harry Oppenheimer Institute, which has enabled the library to develop collections in a very special way. Sandy Rowoldt Shell, Head: African Studies Library at UCT comments: *“Whereas the funding from the university enables us to purchase materials covering South and Southern Africa, the OMT grants have meant that we have been able to send a member of staff to three or four different African countries at regular intervals to seek and purchase local imprints, as well as materials relating to each country that would otherwise be difficult, if not impossible, to identify and locate.”* The result of these focused purchasing trips is invaluable: *“The ASL is widely regarded as one of the best African collections in the country as well as on the African continent, and compares favourably with similar collections in Europe and North America.”*

This important and developing resource is housed at the African Studies Library, and is accessible to the staff and students of the university as well as to all bona fide researchers. But the process of acquisition is apparently never smooth, as told in extracts from an essay that records trips made by Dr. Colin Darch, *‘Travels of a Bibliophile in Africa - By the Book’ (UCT’s Monday Paper 29 October 2007).*

“...These book-buying forays are one of the pleasures of his (Darch’s) job. He loves books and he loves Africa and has a wide and useful network of friends and former colleagues on the continent. It makes hunting and procurement that much easier. ... His 2002 sortie took him to Lusaka, Blantyre, Zomba, Harare and Maputo.

In 2003 the search went to Accra, Lagos, Ibadan and Port Harcourt. And last year he visited Kigali, Kampala, Nairobi, Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam.

His reports read like travelogues. The trips are not leisurely rambles through African bookstores, universities and libraries. There’s quite a bit of preparation required in procuring title lists from publishers in each country. And it’s tiring work. Each purchase requires its own paperwork, notes and descriptions.

But it’s the unexpected find that thrills him. Each trip yields something rare and interesting – beyond scholarly monographs or research reports. In Rwanda he was able to complete a rare, three-volume dictionary in Kinyarwanda and French, with examples of usage taken from Rwandan oral poetry. These are things you can’t order by post. Each trip yields between 400 and 600 new items for the African Studies Library.”

Showing commendable independence, the Trust did not shy away from people or causes that, at the time, were widely viewed as dissident or unfashionable. An intriguing case in point involves the Albert Geyser Heresy Trial of the 1960s. Geyser was a Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk Minister and Professor of Divinity at University of the Witwatersrand who had in 1962, while Professor of New Testament Theology at the University of Pretoria, been convicted of heresy by a synodal commission of the NHK because of his opposition to apartheid in the church. A settlement was reached and the commission’s findings set aside, but an early recipient of an Ernest Oppenheimer Fellowship, Pretoria theology student **C. Jongeleen** reported to the Trust that, having testified for Professor Geyser at the Heresy Trial, *“...I encountered great ill will”* – presumably from students and staff. The Trust agreed to renew his fellowship following his relocation to Stellenbosch. For his part, in 1963 Geyser publicly leaked internal Broederbond documents passed on to him by Reverend Beyers Naude (himself a disenchanted former

Broederbond member) because, as he said, he wanted to frustrate their aims: *"My immediate observation was that these people (Broederbond) were making the church, which is the bride of Christ, the servant girl of politics."* In the ensuing political furore, the opposition United Party called for Nationalist Prime Minister Verwoerd's immediate resignation as he had been a member of the Broederbond for 25 years. Predictably, he spurned the suggestion, saying that many organisations held secret meetings *"including the Oppenheimer organisation."*

Another aspect of the spoken word, poetry, was not overlooked either. Outspoken critic of the nationalist government, the controversy around poet **Ingrid Jonker** was enhanced by the fact that her father, Abraham Jonker, a National Party MP, was chairman of the Parliamentary Select Committee responsible for censorship of the arts, publications and entertainment. The Trust supplemented the prize of £1 000,00 she received in 1964 from the Afrikaans Pers-Boekhandel for her book of poems 'Rook en Oker' (Smoke and Ochre), enabling her to make a study tour of Europe and attend a lecture course at the University of Amsterdam. Dying tragically in 1965, her poem 'Die Kind' (*The child who was shot dead by soldiers in Nyanga*) was read by President Nelson Mandela at the opening of the first democratic Parliament in South Africa, and she received posthumously the South African Government's Order of Ikhamanga for her contribution to literature and commitment to the struggle for human rights and democracy in South Africa.

During this period, the Nationalist Government made it extremely difficult for black South Africans to travel, and the Trust made numerous grants to individuals wishing to study abroad and, if needed, to pay the necessary deposit for a passport. Among these was aspirant - now acclaimed - photographer **Peter Magubane**. A grant was made to **Skota Publishers** (founded by T.D.

Mweli Skota, well known newspaper editor, writer and interpreter) to introduce the first *African Who's Who*.

Another grant covered maintenance of a family for one year while the father - the breadwinner - took a scholarship in West Germany, exemplifying the Trust's practical response to life's vagaries. Such grants did, in fact, become a regular feature of the Trust, enabling advancement without undue financial pressure. Working with the **Council of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand**, the Trust sustained research into issues around education, such as dual medium or bilingual schools, and the potential of an immigrant teacher scheme. It supported the visit to South Africa of **Sir Robert Birley**, then headmaster of Eton, who prematurely gave up this position to become Visiting Professor and Head of Education at Wits: he also taught at Orlando High under then principal, Professor T.W. Kambule who subsequently built a library in his honour. And, among many other grants, one **F. Green** was supported in making a Choreological Study of Indigenous Dance, through the University of Cape Town; and **Trevor Jones**, now famous for his musical scores for blockbuster films, was assisted with music tuition, demonstrating the range of activities funded.

The **Prisoners' Relief Fund** was another of the early recipients of a standing annual grant. The Trust was asked initially by the Reverend Donovan Martyn of Sunninghill Parish to assist prisoners serving long sentences at Pretoria Central to take up academic courses and use their time well (the correspondence shows that the primary occupation at the time was stitching - by hand - postal sacks). Reverend Martyn writes: *"This is heartbreaking work and I have several times been tempted to give it up, but I do want you and your Trustees to know how much your graciousness and understanding have encouraged me and the prisoners concerned. None of us will easily forget."* There were many prisoners who benefited from the Trust's payment

of course fees and materials. The reports show uniformly high marks across courses that range from construction and draftsmanship to legal and business degrees. One individual, studying in 1964 for his B.Comm, writes to thank the Trust: *"The knowledge my studies have given me, and still give me, have altered the way of thinking which resulted in my coming to this place ... your benevolence has completely changed the life of one man, and I shall always remember with gratitude that when I stood at the cross-roads of life there was a hand held out in encouragement ... I hope that the day may come when I shall, in my turn, be able to help another as you have helped me."* He did, in fact, help others but not perhaps in the way he intended: he was asked by the Department of Economics at UNISA for permission to reproduce some of his work in tutorial material, because of its unusually high quality!

A decade on, the Trust reviewed its activities and noted that during 1969 it had supported 169 undergraduates ranging from librarians to doctors, of whom 102 were black... and there was an almost 100% pass rate. Of the 700 new bursary applications received that year, only 66 were approved but at the same time, grants were introduced for postgraduate studies at South African universities and, for the first time, for professors and senior lecturers to advance their studies overseas during sabbatical leave. Interestingly, this latter group included **Professor Chris Barnard**, the Groote Schuur surgeon celebrated for conducting the world's first successful heart transplant, and **Dr. M.C. Botha**, the immunologist in the heart transplant team. The Trust also reported that a social worker from the Meyrick Bennett Children's Centre in Durban, **Violet Padayachee**, was sent to Columbia University where she obtained her Masters in Social Science, becoming one of the most highly qualified social workers in the country.



1970s

.M.  
H.K.  
L.M.  
E.M.  
oeka, H.P.  
ele, H.P.  
G.M.  
Wauchope, J.M.  
Williams, J.M.

NORTH

Chikane, F.  
Deane, S.A.  
Z.B.  
Hlongwane, J.J.  
Kekane, M.J.  
Khumalo, M.A.  
Koena, G.S.  
Langa, J.L.  
Ledwaba, J.S.  
Lentsoane, B.K.  
Mahango, S.  
Mahlophe, M.G.  
Malaka, N.  
Matentsi, C.C.  
Matlala, A.M.  
Mmethi, J.  
Modise, Y.H.  
Mokgatlhe, S.M.  
Mongalo, R.  
Monoreng, S.  
mule, S.



The 70s were a time of growing political and social upheaval, with the younger generation of black South Africans increasingly articulating their dissatisfaction with a system that afforded them neither voice nor education nor opportunity.

The Soweto riots of 1976 marked a turning point, and not surprisingly the Trust's focus on education sharpened. It continued to exhibit immediate responses to the needs of individuals - from funding passport fees, to covering a family's local expenses while the breadwinner took up a scholarship abroad, to covering costs of a spouse - sometimes the entire family - to join the recipient.

In 1971, the Trust approached some 900 high schools across all race groups, offering a one year scholarship abroad for a graduate male teacher - the minutes record enthusiastic reference to "*brilliant young men*"; the addendum "*with possible assistance for wife*", was in fairness another indicator of the Trust's espousal of reality. Surprisingly, they only received 148 applications, many of which were late, and the scholarship was not awarded. The sabbatical leave scheme, known as the Overseas Advanced Study Grant, targeting professors and senior lecturers was more successful, and continues today. The long established bursary programme enabling black children to attend independent white schools continued unabated; support for mental health services was introduced, and a variety of organisations in Rhodesia received funding, among them the **United College of Education**, the **Tribal Trust Research** and the **University of Rhodesia Medical Faculty**.

The Trustees' compassion and freedom to act was evident in the story of a family living in Port Elizabeth experiencing the horrors and absurdity of apartheid legislation. In 1970, a man wrote directly to Mr. H.F. Oppenheimer describing how he and his wife married in 1940 as 'white' and are proud parents of 10 healthy children then aged 7 to 29. In his words, "...we have

*all been living as white, working as white, my children attended white schools, we attended white churches. I served in the South African Air Force during World War II, we attended white functions and cinemas and are still generally accepted as white.*" On the introduction of obligatory ID cards, they were supplied with cards that classified them as coloured. Overnight, their lives were changed. "*Everything became so confusing*" he says. While the various employers were sympathetic, the schoolgoing children had to move to different schools and the family began to experience social ostracism. Two legal applications to change the classification failed and "*In utter confusion and frustration we decided to leave our beloved country and settle in Australia.*" He and his eldest daughters resigned their jobs and, unable to travel under the Assisted Passage Scheme, pension funds were cashed in to pay for the family's tickets. Delays in traveling incurred unexpected costs; their lawyers handling the reclassification sued for non-payment and the family "*...find ourselves in an intolerable position.*" No doubt a position shared by many other families at the time, it was nevertheless brought before the Trust, leading Sir Keith Acutt to comment: "*...in contrast to its standard formal grants, the Trust should occasionally risk assistance for the sake of goodwill and the relief of human suffering.*" Two months later, the family received funding for their tickets and headed out to a new life. The grateful father wrote: "*Please allow me to tell you that this good news has brought untold happiness to my entire family and myself, as appropriately enough we received this wonderful letter on Family Day ...without your generosity our departure to Australia would have been impossible.*" He goes on to request a signed picture of Mr. Oppenheimer "*...I would very much like this to hang in my home in Australia in lasting memory of a real and trusted gentleman...*"; and then in November 1971, the final missive, "*...through whose assistance we are now living a life whereby we enjoy our freedom and live as human beings without fear and dread as to what will happen next.*"

Resolutely non partisan, despite its liberal leanings, the Trust records its support for the young **P.T.C. (Pietie) du Plessis**. Described as “a very promising politician”, he went on to hold several Cabinet portfolios in the Nationalist Government, among them Minister of Manpower, before falling from grace in 1993. By way of contrast, funding was also given to **Raymond Suttner** for his PhD studies in Leiden. Well known for his role in the anti-apartheid struggle and first democratic ANC Government, and now Professor and Head: Walter and Albertina Sisulu Knowledge and Heritage Unit, UNISA School for Graduate Studies, Suttner recalls: *“... as I remember I only used the money for two years and ended up not going to Leiden but first to Oxford and then to London University where I did intense research which led to a great deal of subsequent publication. So it was an investment rather than a completed product, but I draw on that investment to this day and have various books as well as a PhD out of that and later experiences. Unfortunately, therefore, mine does not fit your picture of an ideal type of user of such grants, though I am very indebted to the Trust for giving the funds.”* Suttner’s most recent book, ‘The ANC Underground’, was published in August 2008.

In 1974, the Trust partially funded an innovative colloquium of politicians, sociologists, educators, trades unionists, traditional leaders, civic leaders, Head of the Federated African Chambers of Commerce, historians, poets and religious leaders (**Adam Small, David Welsh, Alan Hendrikse, Cassim Saloojee** and **Sam Motsuenyane** among them) to discuss, among other things, measures to eliminate racial discrimination in South Africa, and how to reduce and address areas of inter-racial and inter-group friction in South Africa. Some success was recorded as there was complete unanimity among those attending but whether or not its influence extended beyond the colloquium is not easily demonstrable.

Despite initiatives like this, the lack of support available to dedicated professionals in the educational field to improve their skills, coupled with blind bureaucracy, was astonishing. In 1974 **Godfrey Radebe**, Principal of Isibonelo High School in Kwa Mashu and President of the African Teachers Union, requested help. Although he had 10 years’ service in the Natal Provincial Administration, existing policy did not allow for any accumulated leave. He had been accepted as a participant in a two-month Leader Exchange Programme in the USA (US-SA Leader Exchange) but was told, despite his standing and the value of this opportunity for all, he would have to take unpaid leave if he wished to take part. Given his financial obligations - home and children - he could not survive without any income for 2 months. Within 2 weeks of his application, he had the necessary funds to make up for lost income. Writing from Connecticut in April 1974, he says: *“I write to say how grateful I am for the gesture. ... You are making it possible for my family and I to live ... Pardon me for taking your time, but I could write on, and on. It is heartening to know that I shall arrive in South Africa not only wiser but richer through the kindness of the EOMT.”* It appears that Natal Provincial Administration policy on leave did eventually change.

The Trust’s support for the arts never flagged, whether or not the subject or the recipient was controversial.

**Richard Rive** was given a travel and subsistence grant to take up a scholarship at Magdalen College, Oxford in 1971, to complete research on Oliver Schreiner for his BLitt or DPhil in English literature: *“I hope that with your assistance it will be possible for me not only to complete my course, but to make it possible for me to carry back whatever knowledge I have accumulated to people in South Africa”*, wrote Rive, who spent the year travelling between South Africa and Oxford, bringing back Schreiner material. In 1974, he converted to a DPhil, saying: *“I wish to thank your Trust for the financial*

*assistance it gave me while I was at Oxford working on my thesis on Olive Schreiner. I have been awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and this would have been almost impossible were it not for the assistance I had received from your organisation."*

In 1972 another writer, **Sydney (Sipho) Sepamla** was supported to attend drama school in the United Kingdom. Khabi Mngoma, then principal of the African Music & Drama Association (AMDA) at Dorkay House in Johannesburg, wrote: *"...any assistance to enable him to improve his skills as actor, producer or writer, would be of great help not only to himself, but also to African development in theatre."* Sepamla moved from teacher of mathematics and English, to publicist for a radio station, to public relations officer, to salesman *"...I have found selling distasteful"*, and was determined in his ambition to write and work in the theatre. He commented: *"...my own contention relating to poor standards in black theatre locally. I believe, and I believe so very fervently, that it is with such trips as I'm about to undertake that our position can improve. Groping in the dark means we shall always be some 20 years behind current trends. ... I am very clear in my mind that I go only to return. There is no way I can emphasise this point. I have a duty to perform locally."* The Trust later gave bridging funding to AMDA, and offered bursaries to its students. Icon and role model, founder of the Federated Union of Black Artists, Sepamla was awarded the Thomas Pringle Award in 1997 and the French Ordre des Arts et des Lettres for his writing.

In 1975 with some foresight, **Professor Pali Mohanoe**, Head of the Department of Didactics at UNISA, received support to conduct his Doctor of Education studies on 'Socio pedagogical perspectives in the education of the black adolescent'. He wrote: *"I am interested in this area of educational study because of its importance at the present time. Indications are that the social milieu in which black pupils are reared is making a significant*

*impact on their education. The high drop-out rate and the not infrequent upheavals at secondary schools in particular are but some of the problems that find their causes in the black pupil's social background."* In early 1977, following the student riots the previous year, the Professor confirmed he would need to update his study.

There were many others, all individuals whose names now are well known, whether as drivers of change, senior academics or captains of industry - an impressive roll call. In 1971 the Trust showed its usual flexibility, supporting the family of **Jakes Gerwel** while he studied abroad: Professor Gerwel now heads up the Nelson Mandela Foundation and is himself in a position to dispense largesse to those in need. **Julian Sonn**, currently Professor: Executive Leadership and Diversity at the University of Stellenbosch and Director of Village Leadership Consulting, was in 1975 assisted with his final years of study for his PhD in Social Psychology at New York University, which focused on 'Cross Cultural Studies and Dehumanisation'. He attracted unreserved recommendation from one Professor of Psychology at New York University, who wrote: *"Mr. Sonn's promise as a researcher and teacher is truly outstanding. Certainly he is among the most talented and promising students I have encountered in over 20 years of teaching."* **Vincent Maphai**, as a young student at UNISA was first assisted with postgraduate study in Belgium and by 1983 he had secured his doctorate in 'Moral and Legal Philosophy' outlining the relationship between morals and the law. A Professor of Philosophy at Wits, where he then worked, said of him *"he has thus far distinguished himself as our most popular lecturer"*, and Maphai himself erroneously predicted *"...I think I am irrevocably committed to an academic life..."*. The Trust again entered his life, adding to a British Council grant to work at Oxford, and then in 1988 assisted with his travel costs for doctoral studies at Harvard. Maphai is indeed a philosopher businessman, and is currently Chairman of BHP Billiton.

**Oscar Dhlomo**, in 1976, was an educator, school teacher, university lecturer and author of history textbooks for African schools. This young professional had an established reputation at the University of Zululand, and wrote: *“Among other community roles, I am secretary of the Natal Workshop for African Advancement whose function is to look into the needs of underprivileged members of the African community and to help them help themselves.”* He was also a member of the Education Commission of the Federation of Black Women of South Africa, charged with the responsibility of *“investigating the African educational system with a view to bringing it to the level of the educational system of our white fellow citizens.”* He requested funding to support doctoral research across developing countries of Africa, such as Sierra Leone, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi and Zaire, and developed countries such as Britain and the USA. *“Besides the fact that this study is academically necessary, I am of the opinion that it will also be of great benefit to the educational authorities of KwaZulu when they re-organise teacher education in KwaZulu schools. When it is considered that this proposed study will focus on issues like the selection of candidates for teacher training, quality as against quantity in teacher training, staffing of teacher training colleges, curriculum, teaching practice during training and in-service training, it could be said that the study will indeed be of great benefit to KwaZulu education. ...it is generally accepted that academics (in the Department of Didactics, University of Zululand, where I am employed) should take the lead in planning courses for teacher education to make up for the shortcomings of the previous system of Bantu Education.”* Clearly a man ahead of his time, he received a Travelling Fellowship to visit the United Kingdom and African countries. He later became MEC for Education in KwaZulu Natal.

The concern with autonomy and self-help as a driver for self-respect and growth, played out in an entirely different

arena later in the 70s, through the Ithuseng Community Health Project. A letter supporting the request for funding reads: *“the Trust should support such a valiant and reliable person.”* The writer speaks of the young and indomitable **Dr. Mamphela Ramphele**, consigned by a banning order to Lenyenye in the district of Naphumo, near Tzaneen, who refused to give up. She reflects: *“One of the interesting things is how we banished fear from our approach to involvement with the struggle at the time. When you have people close to you killed as brutally as happened, you lose your fear; if you are no longer afraid to die, you are free.”* Confronted by a cycle of poverty, ignorance and disease, Dr. Ramphele established Ithuseng to engender a spirit of self-reliance by addressing needs in ways that allowed the community themselves to take part in managing their own health, education, farming and the development of small business. She acknowledges that the Trust’s support enabled Ithuseng to start up - *“It was groundbreaking, unusual and reflected a very forward-looking view, in that the ideas of the then government were not necessarily reflective of the future of SA. For people like me - ‘political outcasts’ - we were seen by the Trust as change agents for a future that none could predict. This was an important vote of confidence in that dark hour.”* This triggered further funding, from Christian Aid in America, the South African Council of Churches and, eventually, others from the private sector. Today, Ithuseng is still standing and remains an important centre for lifestyle educational interventions: loveLife uses the youth centre as the node for their services in the region, and has established a model of how to run an effective rural health centre. In her view, *“This is a good example of institution building that moves beyond the individual - the institution has survived. It has set an example of how one intervenes in the education and lives of poor people whose problems are complex - there is no second chance if you are poor - encouraging them to take ownership. This is not patronage.”*

This theme was reiterated in 1979, when **Ruth Pityana**, then Nursing College Principal at the Cecilia Makiwane Hospital in Mdantsane, Eastern Cape, motivated for funding for a trip to attend the 10th International Conference on Health Education in London. Emphasising the need for people to take charge of their own lives, she wrote: *“More and more people need to be trained to meet the present day needs for health services where the community must also be involved. I know that I, as well as the (health) service, will benefit from the experience I will gain from the conference and the hours thereafter.”* She was successful with her request, but it is an interesting footnote to history to observe that her application, sent in through the SAIRR, had come from the Administrative Officer in the Department of Plural Relations and Development - Staff Section. This visionary and dedicated woman’s son, Barney Pityana, emulated his mother’s drive and became Vice-Chancellor and Principal of UNISA.

Always impossible to predict history, tragedy lay in store for one grant recipient, **Wellington Tshabizane**. In 1977, the Trust granted this talented young man a bursary to study at Oxford. It is, as they say, a small world and here stories and people interconnect. Robert Birley had taught Tshabizane at Orlando High and, says John Kane Berman of SAIRR, regarded Tshabizane as one of the sharpest mathematical brains he had come across. Birley asked Kane Berman, also studying at Oxford, to look up his fellow South African, then a resident at Wadham College. Recalls Kane Berman, *“He played top level bridge in the UK, and we used to play two-handed bridge together. The (South African) government of the time had actually refused him a passport and Sir Robert Birley intervened: the British Embassy leaned on the South African Embassy in Pretoria. Wellington got a passport. He had refused to leave on what was normally issued - an exit permit - as he did not want to leave his ageing mother. He switched from his original course to engineering - perhaps*

*expecting that what he would learn in engineering would be politically more useful. He came back and worked for De Beers in Botswana for a while. Then he was arrested and within 24 hours was dead.”*

Wellington Tshabizane was implicated in the Carlton Centre bombing, arrested and died while in detention. Wadham College established an award in his memory, for young African writers.

In a letter dated 15th September 1975 Bill Wilson, one of the founding Trustees wrote:

*“I think that the Trust has gone roughly in the direction Harry (Oppenheimer) as founder wanted it to go ... I think, having approved the general direction, he does not want to tie the Trust down too rigidly, or to restrict its flexibility in responding sensitively to special or urgent applications from either institutions or individuals.”* It is clear that the Trust viewed its support of individuals particularly as an investment, and while no obligation was placed on anyone, nor inferred, it encouraged recipients to achieve what they set out to do. Nor did the Trustees balk at offering sustained funding for study - in one memorable, but never repeated instance, supporting an undergraduate over 15 years during which he tried out a variety of career choices!



INSTITUTIONS

1980s

Help Assoc. of Paraphlegics  
ss Roads  
w Era Schools  
Council of International Programmes  
Christian Education Movement  
Wits - African Studies Institute  
Sir Percy Fitzpatrick - Ornithology  
Market Theatre Foundation  
Prisoner Relief Fund  
Isaacson Foundation  
Rhodes Univ. (1820 Settlers)  
Wits - Pre-University School

LOCAL STUDY GRANTS

Van Wyk  
Waterford School Bursary (D. Bursary)  
(Rhodes Univ) - H.L.M. Mathe  
T.C. Mkhize  
A. Magwaza  
St Barnabas Bursary (St. Barnabas)  
St Barnabas  
L.A. Lupton  
P.I. Mwan  
P.I. Fleming



The Trust's engagement with South African society continued to grow. Travelling Fellowships were reintroduced and funding was given to set up and run the **New Era Schools Trust (NEST)**. These non-racial private schools, undoubtedly seen as a social experiment, were described as: *"A training in citizenship."* Change was in the air.

Much of the correspondence reflects not only the exigencies and events of the times, the dignity and humility of the applicants, but also the immediate responsiveness of the Trust. In 1980, C.M. Koza, then Principal of the **Inanda Seminary** in Kwa Mashu, the only registered private school for African girls in South Africa (founded in 1869 by American missionary Mary Edwards), wrote to the Trust as follows: *"You made my day a wonderful one yesterday when I opened your letter. I am more than grateful that you have responded to this project. To be honest, I had already misappropriated a fund from Bread for the World and started on the fence. The matter became more and more urgent when two men were collected at our gate by police who later appeared in newspapers as terrorists arrested near Durban. I do not know where they came from and how police trailed them until we witnessed the drama of their arrest. The police have refused to give information and we find it hard to explain their presence and the purpose of their visit. It became imperative to put up a fence immediately and we started at once. But I have had sleepless nights wondering how I shall ever refund this amount."* The fence and gate were built as requested to secure the safety of the learners at Inanda; the money was refunded to Bread for the World; the fate of the two arrested men is unknown. Mrs. Koza later wrote commending the Trust's commitment to change: *"This change cannot take place without much effort being put into the education of the black child. The Inanda Seminary is in the vanguard of the type of education that helps our students to find themselves as they are groomed as a whole person."* The Trust went on to fund the construction of new dormitories at the Seminary.

And there were more amazing people ...pioneers, doing work that collectively made a huge difference. The Trust once again demonstrated its insights and acute sense of what was needed. **Loueen Everil de Jager**, lecturer and organiser of the University Diploma in Nursing Education at the University of Natal was running the only training course, in 1981, for black nurses. She secured support to do a Doctorate in Nursing Education at the University of Port Elizabeth, conducting a review of available nursing education courses and comparing these with courses in Britain, the USA and Australia. Her aim, practical and commendable, was to prepare a new generation of educators for nurses in South Africa. *"Please convey my most grateful thanks to the Board,"* she wrote. *"Without this assistance I would not have been able to continue as, except for R400,00 from the Nurses' Association, I have not been able to obtain grants."* Subsequent support for a trip to the USA and Australia was forthcoming, to gather further information. Professor Mellish of the University of Natal was adamant: *"...her research regarding the preparation of nurse educators is of vital concern to all those who are involved in nursing education in this country."*

The Trust recorded a footnote - *"We agree."*

Another innovator was **Professor Brian Figaji**, a professional engineer who entered the educational environment at Pentech as a Head of Department. In this role for 8 years, he found himself positioned as the intermediary between students and staff; staff and management; students and management. *"I wanted theoretical training - I saw my experience as insufficient for my role as manager and educational innovator. I wanted a non-South African perspective on resolving conflict."* He was, in 1988, awarded a scholarship to the Education Faculty at Harvard University in the States, effectively the answer to his dream - *"...to be a person creating an academic environment in which students feel free to*

*express themselves and one which will empower them to manage their own learning.”* The scholarship targeted mid-career candidates with leadership potential who could contribute to the management of higher education in South Africa, and would allow Figaji to enter the Education Masters Programme in Administration, Planning and Social Policy. He found himself in a situation common to many before him, where family commitments precluded a lengthy absence. *“I was at the point where I had to turn down the scholarship and allow my dreams to remain just that, dreams.”* Financial support from the Trust made the difference and enabled him to accept this opportunity accompanied by his family. This, he believes, contributed to his peace of mind which led to outstanding academic performance and provided an unforgettable and enriching experience for his wife and two children. He believes that the Trust should share its model and experience with other South African companies, *“...so that philanthropy can become more personalised, enlightened and less criteria based. Too often companies design the criteria and the rules and then only consider those applicants that match the criteria. I am sure that had the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust adopted this stance then a 45 year old mid-career person like myself would have been found to be too old for consideration, already sufficiently established in a job, and hence not in need of any further educational opportunity.”* Declining a further US scholarship to study for his PhD, Figaji returned to South Africa to apply his skills and honour his own commitment to society. *“I am very indebted to the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust for making this investment in my life. It enabled me to become the Vice-Chancellor of a higher education institution and to play a significant role in contributing to the shaping of the higher education landscape in South Africa.”*

# 1990s

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Prof. E.M.Q. Mokhuang  
Mr S. Makama

Miss B.M. Bilankulu  
Mr Z. Kgositsile

S A Friends of Cambridge  
Black Lawyers Association  
Fernwood Press

Mr A. Bergheim  
Mrs V.M. Hayes

Prof. S. Aspinall  
Ms L. Muofhe

Mrs A. Kay  
Mr S. Mbili

Ms M.M. Nyamza  
Mr B. Shelver

Mr B. Luthango  
Dr P. Rheo

The desire for learning was widespread, and two academics at the University of Zululand demonstrated, like Figaji and de Jager before them, the need to shake up accepted educational formulae and explore new methodologies.

**Professor Samuel J. Zondi**, Dean of Commerce and Administration, was in 1992 given a Travelling Fellowship to visit universities across America (Cornell, Villanova, Temple, Drexell, St. Joseph, Michigan, Columbia, Bourne State, Howard). He had the enthusiastic support of Deans of Faculties of Commerce, Economics, Management and Administrative Sciences at other South African universities in developing insights into commercial degree courses. The starting point for his report, 'A Critical Review of Business Oriented Degrees' was the University of Zululand's B.Comm degree, largely inherited from UNISA's curriculum pattern in 1960. He describes his general philosophy as "...developing a thinking person, rather than equipping a student with a complete set of tricks in a particular field", and was vehemently opposed to the 'partitioning' of education, saying, "A general business education not complemented with a strong liberal arts foundation is academically questionable." It would appear that this philosophy has not been widely adopted, perhaps something Professor Zondi predicted when he wrote the following introduction to his report. *"This report is dedicated to all those persons who still retain a genuine love for scholarship and pursuit of knowledge. In recent times, such people are a rare breed, an endangered species."*

In a different field entirely, **Professor Patrick Themba Sibaya**, a researcher in Educational Psychology in the Department of Education at the University of Zululand, received support for sabbatical studies in 1997, to conduct research locally and in the United Kingdom and the USA. His paper was entitled: 'An analysis of the nature of theoretical background information and validity of instruments in educational research:

a comparative study of SA, UK and USA'. He too was ahead of his time, when he said: *"The quality of research is very important, particularly in the field of humanities. The humanities are under threat all over the world. The humanities are sidelined in favour of science and commerce subjects."*

Interestingly this is a view echoed 10 years later by philosopher Professor Paul Cilliers, who was awarded the Harry Oppenheimer Fellowship in 2006. He commented: *"We are living in a largely instrumental world where marketing values determine our existence. There is nothing wrong with that, but we are possibly losing our humanity."*

Happily, the humanities did receive support from the Trust. Architect **Johan Vorster**, who had approached Cape Town to develop the concept of a 'sustainable city' to support its Olympic bid, was helped to complete his MSc on energy efficiency in buildings at Oxford Brookes University School of Architecture. Demonstrating commendable determination, he worked as an unpaid tutor at Oxford and bravely sold his assets in Cape Town in order to complete his study of integrated solar components. And **Peter Matlhare**, a health educator in Sebokeng whose focus was on primary health care in the community, received a grant from the Trust, enabling him to take up a British Council Fellowship Award at Leeds University. Like others, he was unable to take advantage of the scholarship as this would mean leaving his wife, who earned a relatively small income, to cover all household costs. The OMT funded his bond for the duration. Interestingly, on his return, he records the value of the learning experience, marred only by his superintendent blocking implementation of any changes! Bureaucracy is hard to beat.

In 1994, the Trust helped two young and talented dreamers, **John Vlismas** and **Protas Ndlovu** to attend Interplay, a triennial international festival of young playwrights held in Queensland, Australia. Commenting

on the Trust's even handed approach to the arts, Vlismas feels it is clearly rooted in a more classical tradition, where scholars are encouraged to pursue all disciplines with equal emphasis. In his letter of thanks to the Trust, this then 21-year old performer writes: *"...this festival is a great asset to the world community of young writers as this is our place to find each other and exchange 'voices', a practice which can only lead to greater clarity in future cross-cultural communication - the root of our own social dilemma."* More philosopher than the comedian we know, he comments now: *"It is interesting that the world changed over time to marginalise the Arts as a 'nice to have' and seems now to be coming full circle as more quantifiable fields prove that the value of the Arts to fundamental development and higher learning is very high. I've read somewhere that in their highest forms, Art and Science become each other."* He recalls that when he received the grant, he was graduating from the Natal Technikon Drama Department in Durban. *"The Performing Arts Councils were about to be disbanded, but still auditioning final year students for residency in their companies. I had refused to audition for NAPAC and was criticised by some of the older actors I had met as a dresser during my holidays. They felt that the theatre was already shrinking and to refuse to work for the only permanent company was arrogant. That didn't bother me as I had already helped arrange a boycott at the Technikon when I heard that we were doing King Lear and black students were advised not to audition as there would be a 'black' play later in the year. King Lear was cancelled due to lack of interest."* The OMT grant meant everything to this young aspirant playwright and performer, enabling him to take up the invitation he had won in the earlier AfriPlay leg of the festival in Kenya. *"Where the trip to Kenya was humbling and quite profound - the Australian trip was like a creative explosion, which made me realise that I would have to work much, much harder at my writing."* Noting that the business of theatre is not for the

fickle, and demands hard sweat and some luck, he feels it is critical for South Africans to move onto the world stage - and not just artists. *"...We tend to reach acceptable levels in our relevant ponds. Getting out there throws you out of your comfort zone, and shocks you through the minor anxieties that tend to limit you, until you connect with your craft - and then you can really start to cook ... And while it's good to go everywhere - it's as important to always come from somewhere - it's probably more important than anything. Wherever I am, I am always from South Africa."*



2000s

## THE OPPENHEIMER MEMORIAL TRUST

- 2.1 Harry Oppenheimer Fellowship Award
- 2.2 OMT / Career Wise Scholarship Scheme
- 2.3 Professor David Lewis-Williams, University of the Witwatersrand
- 2.4 Centre for Development & Enterprise
- 2.5 Black Tie Ensemble

### 3. APPLICATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE BOARD

- 3.1 Dr Kelly Chibale, Sabbatical Studies, School of Medicine, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 3.2 Dr Salome Charalambous, PhD Research, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, London, UK
- 3.3 Ms Lauren Paremoer, PhD Political Science, New School for Social Research, New York, USA
- 3.4 Ms Vuyelwa Ndlebe, Postdoc Studies, Biomedical and Health Sciences, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 3.5 Ms Melike Nel, PhD in Neuroscience & Neuropsychology, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 3.6 Mr Erik Dippenaar, Artist Diploma in Performance, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 3.7 Ms Laura Pereira, DPhil, Centre for the Environment, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 3.8 Ms Pinky Makoe, PhD in Education, Institute of Education, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 3.9 Mr Senzo Myeni, MSc Financial Management, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 3.10 Ms Pumeza Matshikiza, ROH Y, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 3.11 Ms Helen Robertson, MPhil, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa



While undergraduate study has since inception been a key area of investment for the Trust, the management of individual undergraduate bursaries had proved difficult.

From personal pleas for help to a more distant engagement through university and bank, no model had worked sufficiently well until, in 2000, the Trust forged relationships with a number of specialist organisations including **CareerWise**. CareerWise evolved from the Anglo American stable where it ran the company's internal bursary scheme, to take on responsibility for a range of bursary and scholarship programmes for business, government and some private foundations and trusts. It receives an astounding 60 000 to 70 000 applications each year, and places around 500, says Director Monique Adams. *"We filter the applications and in the case of the OMT organise interviews with some of the Trustees, who then make the awards. We also have a support system for the students, and monitor their progress."* The focus is on students with a good work ethic and a particular type of background, specifically schools with good teaching and learning in place.

Typically, the students would not get to university unless funding is found, and the OMT bursaries cover tuition, residence, books and meals: recently, this was augmented to include travel allowances so that students can return home twice a year. Says Adams: *"Full funding like this offers the experience and opportunity of attending a mainstream campus. Where possible, the family is expected to make some contribution or the student must seek some paid work. And we encourage them all to do some voluntary work - 'Someone is contributing to your education so we expect you to put something back'."* The Trust funds approximately 50 students per annum, with many coming from very disadvantaged schools. To bridge the gap, CareerWise offers two maths and science programmes every year to identify children with potential but no access, and once at University, monitors and guides the students. But she emphasises that there



CAREERWISE STUDENTS

are many levels of disadvantage - social, educational, financial and linguistic. To help youngsters move forward, the Trust and CareerWise build personal relationships with promising scholars at the schools. These bursaries - unlike others - are not bonded, so while they do not guarantee employment, a successful graduate is free to take any job. Adams reflects on current attitudes to this freedom of choice: *"A lot of students are, naturally, very concerned about job prospects so tend to focus on commerce and technical subjects as they - and their families - see these as viable areas of opportunity. When we meet them in matric, we try and guide them, and now have candidates successfully studying law, music, medicine ... but there is reluctance among disadvantaged*

students to study broad humanities.” At another level, many of the candidates underestimate the complexity of what they are about to undertake “...suddenly a small fish in a big pond competing with a more sophisticated group. Problems arise when they do not do the broad stuff like going to movies or a play or sport - they don’t see the benefit of that, and only mix with kids from the same background which negates the broad educational value of attending a university.” The absence of rules or conditions, with bursaries open to all disciplines is rare, according to Adams who says that nearly all other awards come with specific funding obligations. *“This is a scholarship programme that enables people to pursue their needs and abilities - they are expected to excel. The OMT programme is literally in support of learning and not about putting people in boxes, about talented individuals who work hard and overcome adverse circumstances to give it a shot - invariably these are first generation university students. Sadly, it is unusual to find a stable background, and parents range from unemployed, single parents to totally dysfunctional households.”* To date, through CareerWise, the OMT has provided some 315 bursaries to undergraduate students.

Understanding that education is a process that starts with young children, the Trust administers a **Primary School Scholarship Scheme** and also works in structured partnerships with agencies such as the **Alexandra Education Committee, Vuleka Schools, the Student Sponsorship Programme, Drakensberg Boys’ Choir School, St. Barnabas and Bishop Bavin Schools.** The **Alexandra Education Committee**, originally a voluntary association and now a registered Public Benefit Organisation, first approached the Trust in 2001, requesting support for its work to redress chronic educational imbalances resulting from dire social conditions of poverty, overcrowding and associated ill-health in Alexandra. Through the AEC, the Trust offers bursaries to high achieving and financially needy local primary school children, for the duration

of their secondary school career. This is critical, given that Alexandra’s schools consistently underperform within their district; unsurprising when one reads of the life circumstances around each child - all affected by grinding poverty, some affected by TB, others losing parents to HIV/AIDS, noble but elderly grandparents stepping into the breach, or simply absent or uncaring caregivers or parents. Despite their daily reality, this new generation of thinkers and dreamers go on to achieve their academic and creative potential, once given the chance. Letters from the bursars over the years offer insights into what this support means. *“This is the moment that I have been waiting for when I was awarded the Endeavour Certificate for Natural Science”; “In my life I had been looking for the love of a parent, now I have found one”; “... knowing that we are going to the school that we never thought we will go to ... gives us something to smile about, and when our hearts have no anger, everything we do we try the best”; “You have sent me to a lovely, disciplined school with very good facilities ... in my first term I didn’t do my best since I told myself I was clever. That’s where I realised I was wrong”; “I grew up in a township where people admired people who represented all the bad things. Where people accept failure and never do anything to change the situation. Hence people never try for success, never hope, never aim to achieve.”*

All summed up by one highly motivated learner at Highlands North: *“My new year resolutions are to reach for the stars and strive to be the best, for two reasons: firstly, because the sky is the limit and, secondly, because I know, I can and I shall. I know because I believe, I can because nothing is impossible, I shall because you have given me the opportunity.”* While it is easy to be moved by the plight of the youngsters, and their delight at achieving their aims, this engagement is also testimony to the generosity and commitment of those educators and volunteers who staff the AEC and offer unstinting support and advice to all their charges. AEC’s Chairman,

Clare Roussouw, writes: *"Your (OMT) ongoing support is enabling so many wonderful young people to escape from the hopelessness and dejection that almost inevitably results from extreme poverty. Gradually we are really beginning to feel that all our efforts are making a small contribution to the terrible skills shortage in South Africa, and especially in places like Alexandra."*

The Trust also supports children with special needs by providing operational support and assistance to essential institutions like **Forest Town School**, the **Key School** and the **Bel Porto Foundation**. The Trust's involvement with what was part of the "Federation" - today's Zimbabwe - continues in the form of support for university students and young academics whose energies and intellects will contribute to the future reconstruction of that country.

Both feeding aspiration and rewarding excellence, the Trust demonstrates how intelligent spending can impact on individuals and, through them, on society. At the University of Limpopo, the ebullient **Mokgadi Molelemane** is unequivocal. When in 1995 she saw visually impaired students in the University Library relying on sighted students to access information in reference books, she was inspired to help. *"I learnt Braille, and found that the Library had equipment (for the visually impaired) but no-one to use it."* As Administrator responsible for students with disabilities at the University, *"...getting the grant (to study rehabilitation teaching for the visually impaired at Western Michigan University, Department of Blindness and Low Vision Studies) was the best thing that ever happened to me. Skills in my field are scarce in South Africa - when it comes to people with disability, we're on a learning curve. The programme I took was a real eye opener on how I, Mokgadi, view a person with disability, and certainly fine-tuned me career wise."* Today, after the course in Michigan, *"I can teach someone who is blind*

*to read Braille and give people courage, help them to be independent so they can lead a normal life."* At the same time, she assists her colleagues in teaching the visually impaired and applies her new skills in the examination process; the provincial Department of Education works closely with her. Currently Acting Assistant Registrar and Head of the Examinations Section, she is immensely grateful for what the grant did for her and what she, now, can do for others, saying *"I believe any acquired knowledge and skills not shared with others soon becomes obsolete."*

**Dr. Nisha Singh** of the School of Biological and Conservation Sciences in the Department of Botany at the University of KwaZulu Natal initially received support from OMT in 1998, and again in 2005 for her sabbatical studies at the Research Centre for the Development of Horticultural Technology at Chungbuk National University, Korea. As principal technician in the Department of Botany, support from OMT has enabled her to significantly expand her horizons. *"...exposure to new technologies and thinking is greatly needed. The grant gives you the leverage and the possibility to see what is available in your field, and importantly the encouragement and confidence to continue."* Learning new trends and technologies is essential, she says, given that South Africa has hundreds of medicinally useful plants that are over exploited, and supplies are dwindling. This has triggered her focus on in vitro bio-processing technology to sustain production of rare and protected plants and create bulking of bioactive substances. In her view, the Trust's application of a proper and exhaustive evaluation process, rather than simply handing out money, is key to finding *"...people that do, and who move things forward."* Now studying for her MBA, Singh has renewed respect for business which, she asserts, drives this country forward - *"developing and growing a philanthropic attitude will grow South Africa."* The sky appears to be the limit for this resourceful scientist who wants to develop a

plant system for bioprocessing phytocompounds: *"This will mean local product, local business, local jobs."*

Literature and literacy, reading and writing, remain central to education, particularly in an increasingly electronic, visual world, where time is at a premium and attention spans are minimal. A good book can seduce the most hardened technophile to engage with words, and is a powerful medium to introduce the reader to new worlds and new ideas. In recent years, the Trust has supported **SA PEN** and the **Anthony Sampson Foundation** and since 2001 has been a major contributor to **The Caine Prize for African Writing**. The Prize is awarded for a short story by an African writer published in English, and currently carries a purse of £10 000,00. Named after Sir Michael Caine, former Chairman of Booker plc and Chairman of the Booker Prize management committee for nearly 25 years, the intention is to encourage not only writing, but - in Caine's words - recognition of the quality, the richness and diversity of African writing in English, in the open, competitive world market. Speaking at the inaugural award ceremony, when Leila Aboulela from Egypt and Sudan took the 2000 prize, writer Ben Okri, himself a former Booker Prizewinner and Caine Prize selector, emphasized the value of this award in transforming perceptions and enriching the literary canon. He said: *"It is easy to dismiss Africa, its people, its problems, its literature. It is easy to patronise Africa - all it takes is having a fairly good education and needing someone to feel superior to in order to feel good. It is easy to profess to like Africa - for the wrong reasons. It is easy to have liberal views about Africa. And it is just as easy to condemn, to bash, to wound, and to insult Africa - all that it takes is ignorance and meanness of spirit and the desire to provoke, to get a reaction, to get some attention. But it is difficult first of all to see Africa. To look at it, in its variety, its complexity, its simplicity, to see its people, and to see individual, human beings. It is difficult to see its*

*contributions, to see its literature, to hear its laughter, to behold its cruelties, to witness its spirituality, to withstand its suffering, and to sense its ancient philosophy. ... Which is why literature matters. It gives the opportunity of encountering other possibilities and people in the mind, in the heart, first. It is the best ambassador of the unity of humankind."*

An important element of the Prize are the annual writing workshops, introduced in 2002, bringing writers of different ages and from different African countries to work together in a focused, dedicated space, free from distraction. Says one: *"For 10 days you write and eat and sleep."* This forum encourages peer review: *"I so rarely have the chance to discuss my work with other writers - and never with writers from elsewhere in Africa"*, says another. But, say the organisers, the most telling comments are about the breaking of isolation and the building of relationships across this vast continent: *"I'll always know I'm not alone"*, says writer Stanley Gazemba, who works as a gardener in Nairobi; sentiments echoed by Carol Fofu, a civil servant in Pretoria, *"Now I know there are other people writing out there, young people."* Demonstrating how effective the Caine Prize is in igniting interest in African writing, and its credibility in the wider literary fraternity, all winners (from Sudan, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Uganda and South Africa to date) have attracted immediate interest from literary agents and publishers outside Africa, and all have gone on to publish a full-length novel or prepare one for publication. The number of entries continues to grow from countries across the continent. To quote Ben Okri once more: *"African literature has long been on the margins. That is one of its strengths. It has so much to do, so many new moods and possibilities to bring into being. It will bring many unsuspected gifts and wonderful surprises. ... O ye who invest in futures, pay heed to Africa."* As the Trust has, and continues to do.

So too does the Sydney Brenner Fellowship Award, founded in 2006 by South African born and trained Dr. Brenner who, after receiving the 2002 Nobel Prize for Medicine and Physiology, donated US\$100 000,00 of his prize money to establish a prestigious post-doctoral fellowship in molecular sciences, that must be taken up within a South African institution. The inference is clear: we are world class. The Trust has partnered in this fellowship programme, seeing it as complementary to its own interest in original thinking and the unfettered pursuit of ideas, as articulated by Harry Oppenheimer. Run through the **Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf)** and the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, the Fellowship targets the world's brightest and best in this field. In 2007, the first two-year fellowships were awarded to **Dr. Zenda Woodman** of the Institute of Infectious Diseases and Molecular Medicine and **Dr. Shaheen Mowla** of the Department of Human Biology at the University of Cape Town. Both will benefit from personal mentoring by Dr. Brenner who is renowned for taking an independent view and applying lateral thinking to resolve scientific puzzles.

Whether transforming scientific knowledge and disability into opportunity, or revisioning our perceptions of ourselves, an open mind is the key. **The Most Reverend Thabo Makgoba**, installed in January 2008 as Archbishop of the Anglican Church in South Africa, Lesotho, Mozambique, Angola, Swaziland and St. Helena is no stranger to enquiry well beyond the realms of theological discourse. He regards the OMT's support of his current doctoral research into 'Mine, Health and Safety issues in relation to workplace spirituality', focusing on spinal cord injury and African male miners, as enlightened, and a model for other businesses operating in South Africa.

Well known as an educator and writer, with profound and often controversial insights into South African education,

**Professor Jonathan Jansen** is also exploring the workings of the mind, from a different perspective. With a PhD from Stanford University School of Education and Masters in Science Education from Cornell University, he was Dean in the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria for 7 years, charged with transforming the attitudes of young white Afrikaner students. This, he asserts, requires understanding. During this time he started work on a book capturing his insights, but recognised his approach was wrong - to quote C.S. Lewis he was, he says, *"Surprised by joy; I realised how much they had changed me."* He started to rewrite, and the award of a 4-month sabbatical grant to visit Stanford University in California in 2007 enabled him to conduct research amongst his peers engaged in similar work on issues of reconciliation and ethnicity, youth, history and memory. While in his view the application process for an OMT grant compared to other academic awards is relatively uncomplicated, he feels privileged: *"Decisions are made on the quality and depth of scholarship, and genuinely award individual talent with no tokenism. The fact that it is highly competitive, and we are judged by our peers, makes it something worth striving for."* And there was real value, too, in having an opportunity to concentrate on his work without daily interruption or concerns - *"It is a very practical grant - there is no stinginess. I think one will see from the book, 'Knowledge in the Blood,' that one can only produce this level and quality of work if given the time and space. I was desperate for a space to write - this was an opportunity to talk and reflect with colleagues, in a place I knew well - and I started writing from day one and ended as I left."* He stresses the need for South Africans to grapple with their past and look to their shared future: *"A lot of us as South Africans are hurting. I am hoping, apart from its contribution to scholarship and social science, my book will drive dialogue between black and white South Africans."* *'Knowledge in the Blood - how white students remember and enact the past'* will be available in 2009.



Accepting that dialogue of all sorts is essential to our shared future, the support the Trust offers to young pioneers in the arts, encouraging new ideas and in some cases actively supporting their careers, is of critical importance. Following an initial grant enabling her to take up a residency programme at De Ateliers, Amsterdam, **Dineo Bopape** was in 2008 assisted to take up her scholarship for a Masters in Fine Arts at the School of Arts, Columbia University in New York. *"It would," she says, "be easier to study locally where everything around me is familiar and safe, and I am 'home'. But easy is not exactly what I want ... I want a challenge! I want to grow ...and explore the unfamiliar, where possibilities that I have not yet dreamt of are possible!"* Growing her work and developing her craft is, in her view, as important as having access to major trends in the arts world, and making new connections. *"South Africa is a player within the global field, and it is our responsibility as its citizens to represent ourselves in the best way possible, with all our resources and capabilities ...brand South Africa must grow further!"* She has no doubt she will bring back to South Africa *"a special knowledge, special skills and a special way of looking, interpreting and creating the world we live in."* A new conversation.

Another young voice expresses itself through music. **James Oesi** started playing piano, then violin and then ...he discovered the double bass. Winning a music scholarship to St. Johns College in Johannesburg, in 2004 he became a member of World Youth Symphony Orchestra. At 16 - the youngest in many years - he was accepted for a one-year preparatory certificate course at the Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Russia. Still there 3 years later, this undergraduate music student - whose studies and living are supported by both OMT and the Apollo Music Trust - is adamant that the opportunity to study and learn abroad is important. *"My teacher is exceptional, and I have*

*constant access to extraordinary performances."* Up until recently, the double bass class was held backstage of the main performance centre, The Bolshoi Hall of the Conservatory *"...I could sneak in ...once I had a lesson and my professor asked if I knew who was rehearsing. He suggested I go and watch - it was Yo Yo Ma, and I was the only person in this audience!"* He considers the Trust's inclusion of music education as very unusual within the South African context where he believes the arts are not ranked highly. Looking forward, he plans to start his career in Europe, coming home *"...to make performing contemporary and 20th century music a high priority"* and *"to contribute to elevating the status of South African music throughout the world."* In this regard, he is completely in tune with the **Buskaid Soweto String Ensemble**, based in Diepkloof, Soweto, whose distinctive interpretations of classical and contemporary sounds and styles have enlivened orchestral performance wherever they appear - most notably at The Royal Albert Hall in 2007, as part of the celebrated 'Proms' season. The Trust's support for this 11-year old school that offers intensive musical training that generates extraordinary results, includes direct bursary funding for several Buskaid students of exceptional promise to continue their undergraduate studies at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, England. The first recipient was violinist **Samson Diamond** who, after 4 years of study, secured a first class BMus (Hons) degree and a high distinction for practical examination recital which secured him the College's Philip Newman Prize for violin, allowing a further year's postgraduate study. He now freelances for orchestras such as The Hallé, Britain's oldest professional orchestra.

What is music without dance ...something the Trust has consistently supported - from the choreological study grant in the 60s, to today's young contemporary and classical practitioners, including the funding of bursaries for talented young ballet dancers to train with



the **South African Ballet Theatre**. In 1993, with the assistance of the late Harry Oppenheimer and several other prominent businessmen, Lady Anya Sainsbury established a South African Dance Scholarship Fund at the Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance specifically to help young black dancers. 10 years later, the Trust responded to a direct approach to help an unusually talented young dancer from Port Elizabeth, **Dane Hurst**, to complete his final year and obtain his Professional Dance Diploma from Rambert. His letter of thanks to the Trust is a poignant record of a young man's efforts to survive a disruptive homelife, and survive he did "...because I knew there was something that I just couldn't leave. This something was a sort of refuge from the complicated ordeals of family life. This something was known as ballet." Referring to the grant, he wrote: "Words couldn't comprehend how grateful and emotional I am towards this gift that is of such value that it could change the rest of my life forever." And it has; since graduating, Hurst successfully auditioned for and joined the Rambert Dance Company, Britain's oldest modern dance company, received the 2007 Critics Circle Award for Spotlight Dancer of the Year, and is currently a member of the Phoenix Dance Theatre based in Leeds. He plans to return to South Africa "...with enough experience and maturity to create a work ... I will continue on this journey and hope to one day share what I have learnt along the way." Another award winning choreographer and dancer **Gladys Agulhas**, founder of Agulhas Theatre Works, received a grant from the Trust to accept an invitation to attend the World Alliance Dance Symposium in Italy.

Long a proponent of dance for people with disabilities, and as well known for her professional performance as for her work with children, she was invited to present a paper on dance in education. "This gave me the chance to link into this huge dance network worldwide - hopefully we will start a World Dance Alliance branch here in Africa which, in turn, will give us a platform to exchange work with Europe on an equal footing." She was both surprised and honoured to receive a prestigious Stefano Valentino Award for her work with disabled dancers and for composing the International Dance Day message, which has been translated into over 100 languages around the world. It begins, "The spirit of dance has no selected colour, no selected shape or size ... Each dancing soul - young, old, persons living with disability, creates and transforms ideas into life changing moving Art."

And there are times when actions do speak louder than words. Displaying its customary sensitivity to current events, the OMT was quick to respond to the waves of xenophobic attacks that gripped the country mid-2008. A donation of R1 000 000,00 was made to **Operation ReachOut** to secure immediate relief for immigrants displaced and affected by the xenophobia, with a further R250 000,00 each to the **Methodist Church** and the **Salvation Army**, both of which were housing numerous men, women and children. On behalf of the Trust, Mary Slack expressed her dismay at the behaviour of South Africans towards their neighbours, and commented on the value that immigrants could introduce to a country - new ideas and new energy - just as her grandfather, a Jewish immigrant, had done some 100 years before.

Drive, energy and the intent to change their lives and the lives of those around them marks most, if not all, of the beneficiaries of the Trust, and the Trustees themselves. It is a tribute to this country, and one we should all celebrate, that it remains so full of pioneers and solid citizens, some overcoming seemingly insuperable odds to move ahead, and all committed to a positive future.

# HARRY OPPENHEIMER FELLOWSHIP AWARDS

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*Good ideas must be harnessed if they are to  
remain a creative force...*

Harry Oppenheimer



These Fellowships were introduced in 2001 to commemorate Harry Oppenheimer and all he stood for, specifically his efforts to advance scholarship and to support ideas. With an annual monetary value of up to €100 000,00 the Award focuses unambiguously on excellence in scholarship in all its forms, across all disciplines, and is granted to candidates of the highest calibre to enable them to undertake a programme of cutting-edge, internationally significant work that has application to the advancement of knowledge, teaching, research and development in South Africa and beyond.

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In practical terms, what these Fellowships mean to the recipients is the freedom to progress their ideas: to the layman, they represent a window into a world of ideas and thinking so far removed from the daily round that it confounds South Africa's general sense of itself as a developing nation. Abstract and abstruse as some of the research and associated knowledge may be, the Fellowships are ultimately of enormous benefit to South Africa - the country keeps its scholars, researchers and thinkers here and they in turn inject new ideas into the system - undoubtedly contributing to a fast moving world of which we are part.

Recipient of the inaugural Fellowship in 2001 was **David Glasser, Professor of Chemical Engineering at The University of Witwatersrand**. Commenting on the nature of the Fellowship, he says: *"This is a good example of realising the potential of the people in this country. In particular, when working in South Africa with its very high ratio of students to lecturers and professors, academics are under enormous pressure. In order to do top class research you want to be an innovator not a follower and this Award presents an opportunity to let the creative juices flow."* In his particular field he describes how, traditionally, chemical processes are decided by people who have prior experience in the field. *"When you change processes you do it incrementally so tend to move slowly. We have been trying to develop ways of assessing how effective existing processes are, to extract useful methodologies and from this to synthesize new processes - we are looking at **big** opportunities and there are no prior fundamental methods of doing this."* Spending two 6-month sessions in Australia, the Award gave him complete freedom from normal responsibilities and - its biggest benefit - time and space to think and share ideas with his peers. Of the research, *"...results go into open literature that belongs to the world ... but scientists and engineers don't get much of a press, perhaps because results are not seen in the short term."*



PROFESSOR DAVID GLASSER

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**Jan-Hendrik Hofmeyr, Professor of Biochemistry at the University of Stellenbosch**

received the second Fellowship in 2002 for his work in Systems Biology. He explains that whereas a biochemist studies living things *"...and the first thing a biochemist does is kill it and break it down into the component parts"*, a systems biologist studies the whole organism from an integrative and systemic perspective. *"My work in systems biology has been to develop the glue to put a living thing back together. This needs a theoretical, or mathematical, framework through which to interpret and understand the functional organisation peculiar to living things - something shared by all living things despite their amazing diversity. It is necessary to understand that the emergent behaviour of complex systems depends not only on the properties of the components, but also the way they are connected and the causal relationships that drive the whole system."* The search for a formal framework with which to describe the functional organisation that distinguishes living from non-living systems is the focus of his current work. He uses the analogy of a factory: *"When something goes wrong in a non-living (technological) factory, production stops and one must replace or repair components. A living 'factory' - for example, a yeast cell or a person - can autonomously self-fabricate or regenerate its component parts. Hence, a living organism is a system that lives longer than the lifetimes of its individual components."* What makes such a living organism possible lies in the way its components are organised into a system with circular causality, and he has been able to unravel the biochemistry underlying this organisation. The implications of his work lie within the entire framework of Complexity Theory, with potential application to social, economic and ecological systems. Like David Glasser before him, he is adamant that South Africa is on a par with the world in terms of scientific study and research but considers it strangely misunderstood, particularly at a time when popularisation of science in the rest of the world is at its height. *"This Award is unique,"* he says, *"and a very positive example for*



PROFESSOR JAN-HENDRIK HOFMEYR

*other philanthropic organisations in South Africa. It gave me, with my family, one year of freedom - from financial concerns, from the pressures of teaching - and so the time to ponder on these questions. It is undoubtedly the most prestigious Award in the country - with its focus on ideas it is often referred to as South Africa's Nobel Prize."*

Interestingly, Professor Hofmeyr works closely with Professor Cilliers - the 2006 Fellowship award winner, and proposes the development of a Centre for Studies in Complexity, another example of South Africa taking the lead.

In keeping with its expressed focus, no Fellowship was awarded in 2003, but in 2004 two awards were made to individuals working in very different fields at the University of Cape Town: **Professor Frank Brombacher of the Division of Immunology and Infectious Diseases** and **Professor Igor Barashenkov in the Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics.**

**Brombacher** says the Award presents a rare and special opportunity that does not exist in many countries, affording him recognition as a scientist and through its generosity freeing him to advance his thinking. As an immunologist, he asks: *“Why do we get sick or keep healthy? What are the decisive immunological mechanisms and switches? How can we use them for our benefit?”* Currently working on experimental models to combat Leishmaniasis, TB, Bilharzia and Sleeping Sickness (all prevalent in Africa and among the top 10 World Health Organisation’s declared infectious diseases), this requires identifying and isolating key genes that drive either susceptibility or protection, and from this developing a rational strategy for prevention or cure through drugs and vaccination. *“The Award was given to me to develop animal models, which better allow one to identify and evaluate such genes and gene products for drug candidates. It allowed me to visit and work in laboratories overseas which are specialised in these problems, giving me the opportunity to familiarise myself with new developments and select which to use in my own laboratory at UCT.”* He recalls that his international colleagues were impressed by the opportunity afforded him, and emphasises that *“It allows outstanding South African scientists to be exposed to or to develop new and exciting ideas out of the box, which means out of their normal living and working context, and free of financial worries. Certainly this has a positive effect on academic development in South Africa and using my example I clearly see the change of my focus, the enrichment for the benefit of my area of science.”*

In contrast, **Barashenkov’s** general research area is Applied Mathematics, with specific focus on localised waves and localised structures in pattern-forming systems. This would, for example, include the study of: *“... freak waves at the sea, optical pulses in fibres used in telecommunication lines, vortices in magnetic materials, superconductors and superfluids, dislocations in crystal lattices, and so on. All these localised objects are commonly referred to as solitons. (The name derives from the solitary*



PROFESSOR FRANK BROMBACHER



PROFESSOR IGOR BARASHENKOV

*nature of these waves and structures).*" At a practical level the Fellowship enabled him to work for 9 months in Germany with leading physicists, developing the theory of ferrosolitons, which presented an extraordinary opportunity to cement ties with colleagues and between institutions. As an academic who does receive research funding from a variety of established scientific bodies - whose job it is to so fund, he says: *"In the case of the Oppenheimer Fellowship, the Award comes directly from society, and the implication is that society as a whole (not just academia) appreciates the value of what you are doing. It is enormously stimulating."* This sense of a broader value, both to science and to South Africa, was confirmed when the work completed by him and his colleagues took centre stage at the annual symposium of the Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics (SIAM) in Rome. *"Several hundred physicists and mathematicians from around the globe could see that South Africa can be not only a source of news on crime and corruption - it can also contribute to intellectual endeavour."* He commends the Trust for taking a comprehensive view of education, rather than focusing only on student bursaries. While the latter are indisputably necessary, particularly for previously disadvantaged students, he comments: *"Many South African companies ... tend to forget that the education process includes not only students but also teachers, lecturers, supervisors, researchers. If they continue to focus only on the bottom of the academic construction, and if the upper part of the pyramid continues to suffer the brain drain at the current level, in the next 10-15 years the level of education at South African universities will match the level of other SADC countries. The Oppenheimer Trust sets an example of a more balanced and thought-over philanthropy, which takes into consideration the academic construction as a whole, not just some portion of it."*

**Professor Norman Owen-Smith, Research Professor at the University of the Witwatersrand,** received the Award in 2005 to support his groundbreaking research into the ecology of large mammals in African



PROFESSOR NORMAN OWEN-SMITH



PROFESSOR PAUL CILLIERS



savannas. *“The intent of my research is to place the conservation of these species and the regions that they inhabit on a firmer scientific foundation. Actions undertaken with good intentions have frequently led to adverse consequences because of inadequate understanding of ecological processes. At the same time, ecology ... is a challenging science because many influences operate, often not in simple or direct ways. Hence I have emphasised computer modelling as an essential support for field studies, and books that I have written have outlined how such models might be formulated.”* As a Research Professor at Wits, he acknowledges the prestige of the Award and describes the opportunity to take sabbatical leave overseas - generally not available to academics within South Africa - as *“a huge reward for perseverance in attaining academic excellence.”* He considers that South Africa limits intellectual growth - but not necessarily intellectual capacity - by the inadequacy of salaries offered to academics, and the meagre resources available for research, particularly in less commercial fields such as his. He echoes Barashenkov: *“There has been widening awareness that we are not attracting and retaining the intellectual talent within South Africa to replace retiring ‘greybeards’.”* While he feels a real obligation to contribute more widely to the development of ecological science in South Africa as a result of this Fellowship - *“It would be regretful to merely retire quietly at this peak stage in my career”*, it is his contention that whereas the Award has created opportunity, the institutional structures hamper forward movement.

There was a move away from the natural sciences in 2006. **Professor Paul Cilliers, lecturer in Deconstruction, Cultural Philosophy and Scientific Philosophy and Ethics at the Department of Philosophy, University of Stellenbosch** received the Fellowship for his work in Complexity Theory. His theory *“...acknowledges the limits of our capabilities and*

*our understanding, and resists the hubristic claims ...by arguing that we cannot reduce everything to calculation. This is the strategy of a critical philosophy and it clearly introduces normative and ethical issues into the study of complex systems.”* As mathematician, musician and philosopher, who in his words survived school, university and military service by listening to music and reading, he believes his early experience of the ‘real’ world when he worked as an engineer renders him atypical of most academics, and is gratified by the affirmation and recognition this Award gives his work. *“The opportunity to do research freely and unencumbered for a year is vital for the development of ideas - rare in the current context. Instead of being only busy with instrumental activities, one has time to reflect. Without reflection, academia will become stale.”* He acknowledges that South African academics lack exposure, and often the confidence, to present their work internationally, but the Fellowship opens up exciting possibilities. *“The fact that this Award was made to a philosopher was of great significance to me. It indicated that ‘business’ values philosophical reflection, and in this way inverted a lot of stereotypes, for example about the ‘bottom line’ and the dominance of profit. I think it serves as an example not only to business, but to universities and research establishments as well!”*

In 2007, leaders in two very different worlds each received an award: **Professor Winston Hide, founder and Director of the South African National Bioinformatics Institute at the University of the Western Cape** and **Professor Jeff Guy, Professor Emeritus of History and Research Fellow at the Campbell Collections at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.**

**Professor Hide** was recognised for his seminal work, both in establishing SANBI, and in developing and using computational techniques to understand the workings

of the cell. His particular focus is on the disease of cancer: *"Cancer is a disease that appears to result from the mismanagement of the body's tissues. Tissues are made up of cells. My interest lies in discovering what processes are involved in managing cancer genes - genes that appear to go haywire when the cells have cancer."*

A highly collaborative researcher, Hide is applying his new approaches to the understanding of the workings of cancer stem cells, the cells responsible for the proliferation of cancer, while working at the Harvard School of Public Health for 8 months. *"I am embedded in a powerful intellectual medium, forcing me to take my research to its limits and so moving forward at a far faster rate than I normally enjoy."* Flowing from this, he and other researchers at Harvard have not only submitted a paper to the journal 'Science' which is under review, but also forged links between Harvard and other South African institutions, entrenching the view that South African research faculties and its scientists are world class. He acknowledges that the Award has generated more than simple exposure, providing him with an unparalleled opportunity for personal, scientific and academic development. *"The Award is an example of directed growth - it has a multiplying effect on scientific development at institutions in South Africa. It has too meant that I can deliver freely and rapidly on scientific goals. It has built my career, given me a better self image, and allowed me to compete with the best here in the USA and to show leadership at home. I naturally feel strong loyalty to the Trust, and wish to make it proud of South Africa."*

**Professor Guy** makes history come alive, says a colleague, and indeed he has a history of his own to tell. Working as a teacher in London in the 1960s, he gave a paper on South African history at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies. *"The next day I was invited to the offices of Anglo American, where I was asked how much I would need to stop teaching and pursue full-time*

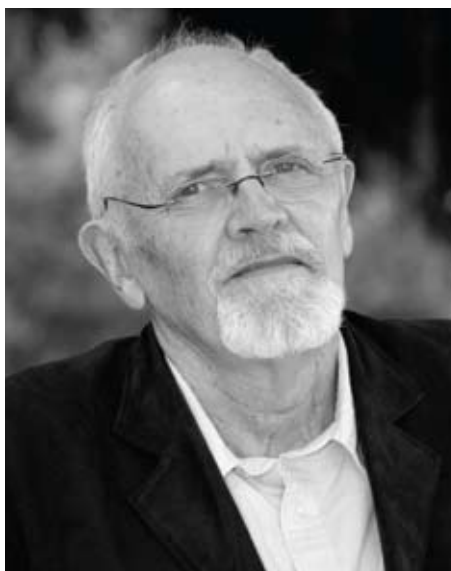


PROFESSOR WINSTON HIDE

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PROFESSOR JEFF GUY

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*research ... I have no idea what would have happened if I had not subsequently been offered the Ernest Oppenheimer Fellowship which allowed me to leave school teaching and give all my time to doctoral research. I do know, however, that it changed the course of my life and that to this day the research and the writing of history has been for me not just the source of great pleasure and fascination, but above all it has been its own reward."*

He goes on to say he wrote his first two books from an office in the Oppenheimer Block at the University of Lesotho (formerly Pius XII College). In the current instance, he was honoured for his internationally recognised work on 19th century Natal, and will take advantage of the Fellowship to explore the life of the enigmatic Theophilus Shepstone, Natal's Secretary for Foreign Affairs *"and the extent to which the perpetuation and the present revival of African social, political and cultural traditionalism can be explained by the policies he developed towards the government of African societies in colonial Natal."* Here he will subscribe to the Trust's expressed guideline that work should continue once the Fellowship is completed, by bringing on board two young postgraduates as colleagues (Percy Ngonyama and Eva Jackson at UKZN). Guy acknowledges that his relationship with the Trust, direct and indirect, has itself spanned some 50 years. He sums up his appreciation of their support by saying: *"Of all the comments that I could*

*make I will choose just one - and by my present thinking the most important and significant of them all, and one for which I am most grateful. Generally, the ideas that inform my historical research and conclusions are unsympathetic to those who have guided the course of South African and indeed global economic development, as is obvious from my historical writing. Yet there has never been the slightest attempt, or even the suggestion of an attempt, to guide how I worked, how I thought, how I argued, or how I presented the past. In so doing, the Trust has granted me the privilege of not just a material but an intellectual freedom which, generally I believe, gets more rare, and therefore more valuable, by the day. It is for this freedom above all that I thank the Trust and those responsible for it."*

All scholars, all pushing boundaries, all constrained by lack of funds to take up opportunity. Something this generously endowed Fellowship attempts to address each year.

## SEEN AT THE AWARDS PRESENTATIONS

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**BELOW, LEFT:** TRISH TRAHAR, CLARE DIGBY

**BELOW, RIGHT:** BOBBY GODSELL, JEFF GUY

**MIDDLE, LEFT:** MARGIE KEETON, HELEN SUZMAN

**MIDDLE, RIGHT:** UKZN'S PERCY NGONYAMA, JEFF GUY, FIKILE MAZIBUKO, JOHAN JACOBS AND EVA JACKSON WITH MARY SLACK

**BOTTOM, LEFT:** THERO SETILOANE, POLLY CARR

**BOTTOM, RIGHT:** FRANK BROMBACHER, CHERYL DE LA REY





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**BELOW:** JAN-HENDRIK HOFMEYR, MICHAEL O'DOWD, BRIDGET OPPENHEIMER

**MIDDLE:** NICKY OPPENHEIMER, MARY SLACK, WIELAND GEVERS

**BOTTOM:** POLLY CARR, JESSICA SLACK, JENNIFER OPPENHEIMER



2008 marks not only the 50th anniversary of the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust, but also the 100th anniversary of the birth of its visionary founder. In commemoration of its genesis, the Trust hosted a concert at Regina Mundi Church in Soweto featuring inspired performances by young soloists and ensembles - all current or past recipients of support from the OMT, accompanied by the Johannesburg Festival Orchestra and the Gauteng Choristers. The invitation to perform was gladly accepted by each participating singer and musician; this was their turn, in their own inimitable way, to honour and thank the Trust for its investment in their lives. In addition, the Trust will launch the inaugural Harry Oppenheimer Memorial Lecture with an address by Fernando Henrique Cardoso, President of Brazil from 1995 to 2002 and author of the *Plan Real*. This introduced a set of macro economic policies (and a new currency) which rescued his country from rampant inflation and economic instability and still provides the economic framework for Brazil under his successor, Labour Party leader Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. Since stepping down from political office, Cardoso has continued to play an active political and academic role. He chaired the UN Panel on Relations with Civil Society and the Club de Madrid (an organisation of 70 former heads of state and government that aims to promote democracy) and is a member of The Elders, a group of prominent world leaders.

All this sits within a wider framework. Clare Digby, Manager of the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust, comments that although the precise nature of giving and areas of focus may have changed over the past 50 years, *"It is always about scholarship. The common denominator is the willingness to be flexible and position awards in a practical way, recognising the need to support talented people, individuals with strong and interesting ideas, to promote international networking within various sectors and, through investment in education, to place South Africa on the global stage."*

If - to paraphrase Andrew Carnegie - it is truly much more difficult to give money wisely than to make it, history shows that the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust has risen to the challenge.

## OMT 50TH ANNIVERSARY

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Research, doctorates and theses are difficult to showcase, but not so performance. At the Trust's 50th anniversary concert held at the Regina Mundi Church in Soweto on 31st August 2008, the audience was held spellbound by soaring music and voices...







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**LEFT** THERO SETILOANE LOOKS ON AS MARY SLACK, NICKY OPPENHEIMER AND BARBARA BAILEY APPLAUD THE YOUNG PERFORMERS

.....

**BELOW** THE GAUTENG CHORISTERS LED BY CONDUCTOR SIDWELL MHLONGO





.....  
**THIS PAGE, TOP** THE MELODI MUSIC ENSEMBLE ENTERTAINED THE AUDIENCE BEFORE THE CONCERT AND DURING THE INTERVAL

Founded by Nimrod Moloto, this ensemble trains aspirant wind musicians and is supported by the Trust

.....

**THIS PAGE, MIDDLE** CELLIST NEIL VAN ZYL PERFORMS WITH THE JOHANNESBURG FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

The Trust's support enabled him to study music and political science at the University of Michigan

.....

**THIS PAGE, BOTTOM** THE JOHANNESBURG FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA UNDER THE BATON OF RICHARD COCK

.....

**OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP** THE GAUTENG CHORISTERS

.....

**OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM LEFT** FILIPA VAN ECK AND NJABULO MADLALA SING MOZART'S 'LA CI DAREM LA MANO' - THIS GLORIOUS DUET, MARKING VAN ECK'S FIRST PERFORMANCE WITH AN ORCHESTRA, BROUGHT THE HOUSE DOWN

Van Eck is currently in her final year of study (BMus in Western Classical Music) at the University of Cape Town and baritone Madlala is completing his studies at the Guildhall School of Music in London

.....

**OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM RIGHT** DAWID KIMBERG'S LIVELY AND ENTERTAINING RENDITION OF ROSSINI'S 'LARGO AL FACTOTUM' (FIGARO, FIGARO, FIGARO!) TOOK THE AUDIENCE BY SURPRISE

.....













.....  
**OPPOSITE, TOP** CONDUCTORS RICHARD COCK AND SIDWELL  
 MHLONGO TAKE A BOW BEFORE INTRODUCING THE GAUTENG  
 CHORISTERS  
 .....

**OPPOSITE, BOTTOM** THE MELODI MUSIC ENSEMBLE  
 .....

**LEFT** LIONEL MKHWANAZI AND NJABULO MADLALA SING BIZET'S  
 'PEARL FISHERS' DUET

Tenor Mkhwanazi completed his Master's degree in the USA  
 and now teaches at the University of KwaZulu-Natal  
 .....

**BOTTOM** BUSKAID'S THSETSO MASHISHI





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**BELOW, LEFT** DAWID KIMBERG PERFORMS MOZART'S 'DEN VIENI  
ALLA FINESTRA'

Baritone Kimberg studied at the Royal College of Music in  
London

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**BELOW, RIGHT** APPRECIATIVE CONCERT-GOERS

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**BOTTOM** BUSKAID SOWETO STRING ENSEMBLE LED BY ROSEMARY  
NALDEN





.....  
**BELOW, LEFT** VETERAN POLITICIAN HELEN SUZMAN ALONGSIDE STRILLI AND NICKY OPPENHEIMER  
.....

**BELOW, RIGHT** THEO MAGONGOMA SINGING GOUNOD'S 'AVANT DES QUITTER'

Baritone Magongoma graduated from UCT's Opera School and then took up a scholarship to study vocal performance at Southern Methodist University in Dallas

.....

**BOTTOM** THE JOHANNESBURG FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA



## THE TRUST IN BRIEF

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The Deed of Trust is registered on 15th February 1958.

The founding Trustees hold their first meeting on 12th March 1958.

Other members are appointed:

1971	Mrs. M Slack
1975	Mrs. H Suzman
1981	Dr. GR Bozzoli, PG Henwood and NF Oppenheimer
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2008	Dr. C de la Rey and Dr. MA Ramphele

The Trust constitutes an Advisory Board on 30th May 2006. The current Trustees and members of the Board are: Mrs. Mary Slack (Chair), Mrs. Polly Carr, Dr. Cheryl de la Rey, Ms. Clare Digby, Prof. Wieland Gevers, Bobby Godsell, Mrs. Margie Keeton, Mrs. Jennifer Oppenheimer, Nicky Oppenheimer, Dr. Mamphela Ramphele, Thero Setiloane, Ms. Jessica Slack, Mrs. Helen Suzman, Mrs. Trish Trahar

Over the years, the Trust introduces various grant schemes, awards and fellowships, including:

- 1958 Overseas advanced study grants  
Undergraduate bursary scheme  
Capital grants
- 1959 Grants to institutions
- 1960 Charitable and sundry grants
- 1962 Ernest Oppenheimer fellowships for postgraduate study
- 1964 Industrial fund for assistance to private schools
- 1974 University travelling fellowships  
Local and overseas study grants
- 1981 Private schools' scholarship scheme
- 1982 Technikon staff and student awards
- 1988 WD Wilson visiting fellowships  
University exchange programme  
Primary school scholarship scheme
- 1989 Technikon research grants
- 1990 Young academics fellowships
- 1992 Student loan scheme
- 1997 GR Bozzoli senior and junior technikon fellowships
- 2000 Undergraduate scholarship scheme
- 2001 Harry Oppenheimer fellowship award

At present, the OMT provides assistance to academics (in the form of grants for sabbatical study) and grants for postgraduate study locally and abroad. It continues to provide funding to institutions to support undergraduate education, learners at primary and secondary school level and other deserving causes.

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