

Ruth First Educational Trust

Trustees: Helen Charnley (Secretary), Cheryl McEwan, Francis Pritchard (Treasurer), Lotte Shankland, John Tierney, Michael Thompson (Chair)

Patrons: Sir Thomas Allen (opera singer, former Chancellor of Durham University), Bill Bryson (writer, former Chancellor of Durham University), Gillian Slovo (writer, former President of English PEN, daughter of Ruth First)

UK Charity No. 1019975
Registered address: 28 Geoffrey Avenue, Durham DH1 4PF
ruthfirst.trust@durham.ac.uk

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

The aims of the Trust are:

- To enable southern African students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds to undertake postgraduate study at the University of Durham.
- To educate and inform students and staff at the University, as well as residents of the area, about educational and development issues in southern Africa.
- To raise funds to support these activities.

Southern Africa is defined for this purpose as comprising the following countries: Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Republic of South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

This report gives details of activities undertaken by the Trust in the year ending 31 July 2023 in pursuit of these aims.

The Ruth First Scholarship in 2022-23

The scholarship was awarded to Sicelo Ngwenya, a lawyer from Zimbabwe. Sicelo completed the LLM in International Law and Governance and is seeking opportunities related to human rights law.

The Ruth First Scholarship in 2023-24

There were 51 eligible applications, with the largest number from Zimbabwe (24) and South Africa (15). We presented a ranked shortlist to the University's scholarships panel, which approved our selection. The Scholarship was awarded to Scholastic Mpofo, a civil engineer from Zimbabwe. Scholastic is taking the MSc in Civil Engineering. He arrived in Durham on 8 October 2023 and moved into St Chad's College. Further details about Scholastic can be found on the Trust's website:

ruthfirsttrust.webspace.durham.ac.uk/this-years-ruth-first-scholar

Updates on past Ruth First Scholars

The 2021-22 Scholar, Shamiso Zamba, returned to Zimbabwe and continued to run her rural pharmacy. In 2023 she and her family moved to the UK for her husband to take up a medical post in Winchester.

Barbara Mutedzi (2013-14) is running a life coaching business, completing an online PhD in Conscious Business Ethics, and lecturing in leadership at the Bali campus of Netherlands-based university NHL Stenden.

Information about all former Ruth First Scholars can be found on the RFET website:
ruthfirsttrust.webspace.durham.ac.uk/former-scholars

Events

Our collaboration with the *Celebrating Ruth First* research project based in the University's Centre for Humanities Engaging Science and Society (CHESS), led by Professor Nancy Cartwright, culminated in an uplifting concert by the Soweto Gospel Choir in Durham Cathedral on 24 October 2022 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Ruth First's death. Before the performance Canon Michael Everitt, Gillian Slovo, Mike Thompson and Sicelo Ngwenya gave short speeches to a packed cathedral, and a collection at the end raised £1300.

In January 2023, a book sale in the Sociology Department raised £65 for the Ruth First Scholarship.

Dr Blade Nzimande (South African Minister of Higher Education, Science & Technology) agreed to give the Ruth First Lecture in May 2023 as part of a visit to the University. Unfortunately, changes to the delegation's plans for their tour of the UK resulted in the cancellation of the event.

The Ruth First Scholar Seminar was given by Sicelo Ngwenya at St Aidan's College in June 2023 with the title 'Under Siege: Confronting Digital Authoritarianism in Southern Africa'.

Two sponsored walks were completed in this period. One in September 2022, postponed from June, involved Mike and Shamiso in Durham, Helen in Norway and two former RF Scholars (Pearson and Peter Okeno) in Malawi; it raised £3200. This year's walk took place in July 2023 with seven walkers including Sicelo and Pearson, raising £4100.

Finance

The accounts for 2022-23 will be presented at the AGM by the Treasurer. While more fundraising is always required, the scholarship can be supported in 2024-25.

An annual grant is received from Durham County Council (£2000 per year). We are very grateful to the County Council for its continuing support, and to the City of Durham Parish Council for its enthusiastic support for the concert.

We are also grateful to Durham University for its commitment to awarding tuition fee scholarships to Ruth First Scholars (and for supporting the Soweto Gospel Choir event); to the Departments that provide teaching and supervision; to St Aidan's College and its Principal, Dr Susan Frenk, for hosting Ruth First Scholar Seminars; to St Chad's College and its Principal, Dr Margaret Masson, for their valuable commitment to supporting Ruth First Scholars and integrating them into the College community; and to Nancy Cartwright and the *Celebrating Ruth First* team for their energy and initiative.

20 November 2023

Mike Thompson

Chair of the Board of Trustees