

# Reflect

## Albert Luthuli

CENTRE FOR RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
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Once again we have reached a point where the Albert Luthuli Centre for Responsible Leadership is proud to present an edition of Reflect, our electronic newsletter. As you might have gathered by now, this is our attempt to share some thoughts with our readers in the hope that this will stimulate debates, get you thinking and most importantly, cause a bit of a stir.

Our choice of topics usually zooms into the dark corners of leadership, often unexplored or way too controversial, and not for the faint-hearted or sensitive reader. This edition however doesn't attempt to blow you away with yet another crazy and unconventional idea around leadership. On the contrary it is one of those topics that can never be discussed or debated enough; at least that is how I feel about it.

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The Albert Luthuli Centre for Responsible Leadership aims to develop a new generation of responsible leaders, shaping local and international business practices and policies in support of social and environmental justice.

### FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR



## The mountain or the summit?

*Prof. Derick de Jongh*

In an interview in October 2016, Simon Sinek, world-renowned British American author, motivation speaker and consultant was interviewed on his views of millennials in the workplace and more specifically developing these millennials to become the next generation (responsible) leaders in the corporate world. He starts off by giving a rather bleak picture of millennials stating they are entitled, narcissistic and want immediate gratification amongst other things. As a father of two millennials, I find this a bit harsh but having said that, must admit even in my case, some of these characteristics (except for narcissism) sometimes do creep in at the odd occasion (and my two daughters will probably never forgive me for actually putting this on paper). Probably the most obvious one that jumps out is "instant gratification".

Well I guess as a parent who views himself as very privileged, and kids growing up in a very privileged household, instant

gratification often comes with the territory. Perhaps I should blame social media and not my own inabilities as a parent (as a cheap cop-out). But let me go back to Sinek's views. He also states that millennials strangely enough also want to work for companies with a clear broader societal purpose and that these millennials want to make a positive impact in the world. If you would support his views on millennials, it seems like an impossible task to create a working environment where these often-conflicting needs of millennials can be met. On the one side an insatiable need for instant gratification (the average "screen-ager" today) and on the other side millennials showing an interest in making a difference in society (Greta Thunberg to mention the most obvious name). How do we instill amongst millennials the values of a longer-term perspective acknowledging that the impact of our decisions today only negatively impacts on society in the long-term?

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*Reflect November 2019 Edition*  
*Guest Editor: Remofilwe Dikoma*

There is no instant gratification here. Let's for instance consider e-waste. The latest and greatest cellphones is something millennials love to have and upgrading every 18 months. The devastating impact of e-waste on the natural environment unfortunately only becomes evident in the long run when we realised we have used up all possible landfill space with our bad habits of over consumption.

But let me get back to the issue of millennials and leadership. The question is how do we create a sensitivity amongst millennials to balance short term mindsets and gratifications against a long-term perspective when social media acts as a rampant accelerator? Sinek speaks about that well-known hormone called dopamine which is released every time your smart phone reminds you with that undeniable "ping" – you have a message. That feel-good emotion of being wanted. Millennials actually counts the "likes" and experience rejection and trauma when being "unfriended". Facebook and Instagram suddenly become substitutes for meaningful interpersonal relationships. It also justifies a short-term mindset. Can we therefore blame millennials for not thinking about the future? I don't think so. Can we do something about that? I definitely believe so. The question is what.

A starting point could be to restore the role of good old-fashioned family values such as caring for each other, being there in times of crisis and unconditional acceptance and love. These values should define the society (and workplace) we

want to live and work in. The importance of building and maintaining meaningful relationships should take center stage. Unfortunately, it doesn't happen as fast as a "like" on your latest Facebook entry. It requires patience, self-confidence and focusing on the "mountain instead of the summit". Deep fulfillment in life and work would mean seeing yourself as part of a bigger whole where the sum of the individual parts is greater than the total. Even in my own kids I often see how they struggle to understand their own role in broader society beyond just getting a qualification or a "like" on an Instagram posting. The unintended consequences of social media of which isolation is but one such consequence, has a devastating effect on developing long-term meaningful relationships and a more balanced understanding of their role in broader society.

As educators, we need to do deep introspection about our role in this. It's about how we can facilitate processes of building values-based networks and relationships while having the opportunity to interact with millennials on a daily basis. The classroom should become a place where we allow millennials to reflect on their role in society (the mountain) beyond just getting a degree (the summit). I have engaged with many millennials both in SA and international and I am very hopeful of the future. It takes someone like Greta Thunberg to start a global movement where millennials mobilise against climate change. There is nothing short-term

gratification in doing that. By the way, I have no doubt that social media played a big role in her campaigns and is becoming a force of positive change.

Millennials can and will become future responsible leaders. Greta Thunberg is an example. It's up to us as educators to facilitate the intersections between generations and technologies and help millennials make sense of a long-term perspective in the midst of a sea of instant gratifications. It is in the beauty of the mountain where the pathways to the summit lies. This is where relationships are built through endurance and supporting each other. Reaching the summit should be a byproduct. Responsible leadership is about climbing the mountain and not about reaching the summit.

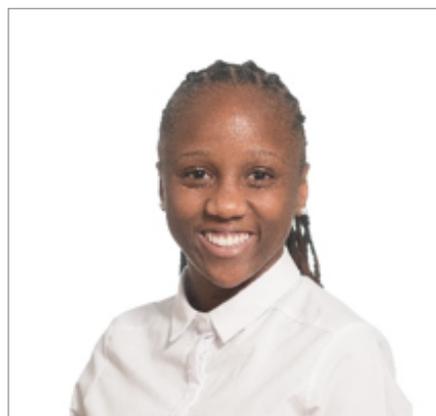
I am very happy to present this "Reflect" to you as our readers and supporters. Thanks to Remo who was our guest editor of this edition. I can see the joy in your eyes in climbing the mountain every day. Thank you to all the contributors most importantly our millennial student leaders who are examples of responsible leaders now and in the future. Your stories inspire me and give me hope. You are the real mountaineers and I know the summit is only something in the far distance. I can see that you enjoy every step along the way.

**Please keep on recruiting fellow mountaineers that will enjoy the beauty of the mountain more than just focusing on the summit. I salute you.**

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# Should the "blazer" go?

By Remofilwe Dikoma



**In student leadership, wearing the "blazer" could mean various things. To some the blazer means having legitimate power and authority and to some the blazer simply is a form of personal advancement.**

Whether or not student leaders are there to serve the greater student body or to serve themselves, the blazer remains a key factor as to why students occupy leadership positions.

Student leadership comes with great responsibility and commitment. According to the Intercultural Development Research Association, "Student Leadership is the ability of the student body to influence major decisions about its quality of education and learning

environment. As a student leader you not only a mechanism in finding solutions but you become the solution.

Today, it is difficult finding student leaders who want to become the solution. Instead, we find individuals who want to wear the glorious blazer because it comes with certain advantages. However, being in academic institutions that require us to be all rounded students we cannot blame these individuals for wanting to wear the blazer even if it's not

to serve others. Every student wants to leave university with some form of work experience and student leadership tends to be the first point of call. More often or not, students don't realise or expect the amount of work that comes with being in these positions. So, when the heat in the kitchen gets too hot, they get out but, in this instance, you can't leave the kitchen until the term ends. On the other hand, we get students who occupy leadership positions just to advance their political careers or just to be in a position that comes with power and authority. All this leads to defective student leadership.

So, should the 'blazer' go?

Some may argue that it should go, because then maybe we'll find students that really want to be in these positions for the right reasons. Students who will be committed and will at all times remember their role as a student leader. Taking away the blazer means having students leaders who have no ambition other than being the voice of the greater student body. It means the heat in the kitchen will always be controllable and never overbearing.

So, I ask the question again. Should the blazer go?

Maybe not.

Because at the end of the day nothing will ever change. In a democratic country like ours where everyone has a right to vote for their own personal choice, we'll always end up with one or two rotten apples. Perhaps that means student leadership goes beyond what we know and think. It means that it also up to the normal student to advocate for their own rights. It means conversations of social justice amongst us as students should be more popular and that will lead to a more conjusive space, where everyone is committed to making sure that everyone's needs are met. It is up to us to create that platform and space for ourselves.

# Where are they now?



## **Michael Bongani Reinders**

*Fullbright Scholar for MA In Democracy and Governance (Georgetown)*

### **LEADERSHIP:**

- 2016 University of Pretoria SRC Member
- 2017 South African Washington International Program Participant

### **EDUCATION**

- BA Law (University of Pretoria)
- LLB (University of Pretoria)
- BHons Political Science (University of Pretoria)
- LLM (University of Pretoria) – Ongoing

### **If you could describe student leadership using one word, what would it be?**

Rewarding

### **How has student leadership contributed to where you are today?**

Student leadership was integral to my personal growth and development. It was a long a challenging journey but the exposure I had to different situations and people from different backgrounds was invaluable in teaching me how to take on a variety of challenges. It also forced me to reflect on who I was and to learn many difficult lessons about myself and others. I still carry these lessons with me today. I learnt to be humble, to work with

different people, to design and manage projects, and to resolve conflict, amongst other things.

### **What would you do differently in preparing students to become the leaders we need on campus?**

I would encourage aspiring leaders to start working on their growth and development as soon as possible. Get involved in leadership, even if it is at a lower level as soon as possible. We are all leaders in our own right but there are some things you can only learn once you are a student leader. Also I would ensure that there are more support structures in place to assist leaders with their social, academic, and emotional wellbeing all of which take a knock when you are a leader.

I would also emphasise the need for genuine leaders who are in it for the right reason. It is not a popularity contest but about servant leadership for the greater good of the student population.

### **What could we expect next from you?**

Once I complete my studies at Georgetown I intend to spend approximately one year in DC doing internships and gaining practical knowledge. Thereafter, I will be returning to South Africa to work in governance and policy with the aim of contributing towards solutions to the complex issues of inequality and access to socio-economic rights in the country.



**Nobungcwele Mbem**

*Doctoral candidate in History, Andrew Mellon fellow and Biography of an Uncharted People researcher (Stellenbosch University)*

**LEADERSHIP:**

- 2015-2016 University of Pretoria SRC Member
- 2016 University of Pretoria Member of Senate
- 2016 University of Pretoria Member of Independent Monitoring Board (IMB)

**EDUCATION**

- BA Humanities
- Bachelor of Historical and Cultural Sciences (Honours in History)
- Masters of Social Sciences in History, Andrew Mellon fellow

**If you could describe student leadership using one word, what would it be?**

Growth

**How has student leadership contributed to where you are today?**

Student leadership has contributed immensely to where I am today because it taught me to follow my passions and go against the grain. Additionally, it is a process of self and collective growth whereby I have learnt to always stay true to myself and convictions despite my aspirations not being a norm from the kind of community I come from. Through student leadership I have learnt how to respect others while maintaining my own ground and also evolving through the process by accepting differences and accepting change where it is necessary. Student leadership has taught me how to be innovative and open-minded as a doctoral student involved in an interdisciplinary research project that has a great international footprint. It has taught

me the importance of centralising humans in research within the social sciences which seeks to address multiple economic, social, environmental and political issues.

**What would you do differently in preparing students to become the leaders we need on campus?**

Creating a safe space for dissent among different student groups. One of the challenges I experienced was the high levels of intolerance among students coming from different backgrounds and with different views and convictions. For me, this was counter intuitive as most times the goals of students were similar most times despite the different approaches. Furthermore, creating an institutional culture that prioritises different forms of leadership so as to avoid polarising the space and creating an awareness that in the outside world individuals will be faced with a working environment that is multicultural and plural in many ways.

**What could we expect next from you?**

This is a rather difficult question to ask a doctoral candidate, however I hope to produce a good enough PhD in history that will contribute towards the uncharted histories of black Africans in South Africa. Furthermore, I am also a founder and CEO of a civil society organisation called Fair and Equitable Society (FES) which is comprised of majority UP alumni. The organisation FES is aimed at upholding the principles of the Constitution of South Africa by holding accountable different members of society as well institutions accountable to the people of South Africa. It is imperative that young people contribute in other ways towards the realisation of justice and equality of our society through the law, advocacy and grassroots community engagements. There are many other things that I aim to do, however, these two roles are the main priority, especially when considering the question of leadership and my commitment towards people and my society.



**Brand Pretorius**

*CEO Momentum Short-term Insurance*

**LEADERSHIP:**

- Former 1996 - 1997, 1997 - 1998 SRC President Rand Afrikaans University (now University of Johannesburg)
- Former 1999 Deputy Chairman of South African Universities SRC (SAU-SRC)

**EDUCATION**

- BCom Law
- LLB

**If you could describe student leadership using one word, what would it be?**

Privilege, because it is a privilege to be of service to others.

**How has student leadership contributed to where you are today?**

A short answer would be IMMENSELY. My interest in leadership was initially triggered in high school where I was fortunate enough to be selected to

be a part of a non-racial leadership development programme in 1991 (Edu-Train). The premise of this programme was to put 60 Gr.11s of different races and genders on a train for a week and facilitate conversations between us regarding the socio-economic and political

challenges facing South Africa at that time. It gave us an understanding of how different but also the same our hopes and fears were, and allowed opportunity for critical thinking regarding the challenges facing the imminent “new” South Africa. This for me was a life changing experience and it helped me realise how I wanted to live my life.

I started to understand the importance of purpose and that was and is still a critical driver of how I manage my life. I define my purpose as being someone who wants to help people to unlock their potential. Whilst at university I became involved rather early, and served on the SRC for a number of years. I could not have asked for a better way to learn the art of leadership. It forced me early on in my life to become clear about what I believed in, why and develop the courage to stand up for it. I also learnt that leadership is a lot more about influence and serving others and not power. Being SRC President meant nothing if I couldn't get the buy in of people across the political spectrum, and enlist their assistance to address real issues that could make a difference in the lives of all our students, not only a select

few. It was a privilege and responsibility I did not take lightly. In addition, student leadership helped me realise that as a leader you don't always have to have all the answers, your role is to enable others to be the best version of themselves and bring their full potential to bear on any opportunity or challenge.

**What would you do differently in preparing students to become the leaders we need on campus?**

It would be arrogant of me to think I know what student leaders need now on campus. I can only respond from my experience more than 20 years ago. Being a student leader is fulfilling, but also challenging and demanding. It can often be a lonely place and it is difficult to balance the demands of your academic responsibilities with your student political responsibilities. I would encourage student leaders to ensure they have sufficient support, in the form of mentors, and to not be too proud to ask for assistance, guidance or advice. As I indicated earlier – you needn't have all the answers. Furthermore, I firmly believe that successful leaders (student or otherwise) have the ability to really

connect with people. They understand the importance of strong (human) relationships built on a foundation of trust and mutual respect. They actively work on strengthening these relationships – when times are tough and you have to address a difficult issue, the quality of these relationships often make the difference.

**What could we expect next from you?**

I firmly believe that one needs to be the change they want to see in the world and for me it means more time spent on helping others develop and hopefully enabling them to unlock their potential.

My current role as a chief executive of a business obviously provides a wonderful platform for me to live my purpose, and I hope to use this platform in a responsible and constructive manner, and positively influence the lives of those who I interact with. The power of your example as a leader, should never be underestimated. We need more good examples of responsible leaders of high integrity and I will continue to strive to be such a leader.



**Naledi Chirwa**  
*Member of Parliament – Economic Freedom Fighters*

**LEADERSHIP:**

- FeesMustFall Activist
- 2017 Mail & Guardian 200 Most Influential Young South Africans

**EDUCATION**

- BA Drama (University of Pretoria)

**If you could describe student leadership using one word, what would it be?**

Navigating-Conventions-Of-Power

**How has student leadership contributed to where you are today?**

There isn't much of a difference to what I'm doing now to what I was doing then. It's just a shift of spectacle geographically and maybe much more intricate than that, but the source of activism which is fighting injustice, is still at the centre. Student leadership organically prepared me to be able to articulate the convictions of resisting the Black condition. Student leadership also opened me up to realising that even in the midst of genuine activism, capitalism will find ways and modes of penetrating spaces with intention to steer resistance off from its path.

**What would you do differently in preparing students to become the leaders we need on campus?**

Sharing platforms of engagements should be much more decentralised and not limited to individuals or 'faces' of struggles or movements. By this I mean that everyone on the picket line has something to offer to the process of thinking together. There has to be an intentional pursuit of normalising alternative identities of leadership. Leadership is not always masculine, bold and imposing. Leadership can also be subtle and composed. It can also be far from any of the things I mention. Conventions of leadership should never be mainstreamed as much of what could become of our discourse as young student leaders may get lost in the culture of performativity. I'd also very much centralise the importance of mental

health. Not many students who decide to be activists are prepared for the mental turmoil that will be the result of resisting the establishment which survives on the subjugation of marginalised groups. Feminist discourse would also very much form part of everything. From organising, to mobilising. We underestimated the arrogance of patriarchy and misogyny even during genuine moments of zero ego. Take out the trash to keep the house clean.

**What could we expect next from you?**

I form part of a revolutionary collective. Expect more confrontation with the system from the EFF. More activism, and more tangible results of what political will can do. Expect and prepare for a socialist government in our lifetime.

# Leading relations: Imagining leadership for a complex world

By Dr. Yolande Steenkamp and Dominik Fischer

If there was ever a simple world that one could break down into clear categories, then that world is certainly a thing of the past. Our current reality is such an intricate network of networks, with stakes often so high, that it is not an easy thing to begin to contemplate the sort of leadership that would allow us to address the interwoven nature of the challenges facing us.

A good starting point for thinking about what leadership requires of us during this volatile time in the Anthropocene might be the fundamental anthropological insight that being human means to exist in relation. We are social creatures, and our very existence in the world is best expressed and described through various forms of relationships. If we view our world and experience through this lens of relations, then many of the categories into which we divide our world suddenly become artificial. While separating our 'economic' life from our 'civil,' 'religious,' or 'cultural' lives may admittedly have heuristic value, such categorisation does not reflect the true nature of our world as several networks of relations where all these spheres are interwoven and impact on one another.

In a world consisting of such complex and intersecting networks, leadership refers to the ability to not only live in relationships but also to capitalise on relational capacity in order to create value for multiple interwoven stakeholders. Navigating relations between different organisations from one or more sectors requires skill in securing legitimacy for your organisation while succeeding in value creation for all stakeholders. Cultural and economic distance between actors complicate these relations, and leadership under these circumstances requires the ability to chart a course through the stormy waters of competing interests. Acquiring particular types of resources from providers in order to exploit the possibilities of new markets is often complicated by cultural nuances and expectations. Increasing the potential to create value of any enterprise in such a context is no simple matter, and requires the relational intelligence that will enable

organisations to make the most of the cultural capital offered by the diversity that characterises the contemporary workforce.

Another skill that is uniquely suited to strengthen leadership efforts in our current context is imagination. Contributions from evolutionary biology have described the imagination in two ways, both of which have played no small part in allowing homo sapiens to not only survive but indeed thrive. The first is empathy, or the capacity to imagine ourselves in the shoes of another person. In this way, the imagination formed the basis of our moral development, and can also be argued to have enabled our existence as particularly relational, to begin with. The second is the ability to imagine our world differently, which in turn enables us to make actual changes to our environment that are better suited to our needs.\*

Making conscious use of the imagination and our ability to relate will enable us to construct new means to provide stability and meaning to our social behaviour. It is, of course, true that we have formal institutions, such as laws, that provide such stability by regulating our public conduct. However, conforming to such formal regulations is never enough to meet the needs of real-life complexities. Instead, our behaviour is regulated above all by informal standards that are often determined by cultural norms and values. Since these show significant variance in different contexts, and since transgressing such cultural or societal values may result in great damage in an organisation's reputation, this calls for great relational intelligence on the part of leaders.

It is for this reason that educational efforts should develop means of increasing the relational intelligence and creativity of their students. Teaching students to apply both their skill in relations and their imagination consciously will contribute to the leadership that is sensitive to feedback and adaptive to the sometimes rapidly changing needs of relational contexts.

**“In a world consisting of such complex and intersecting networks, leadership refers to the ability to not only live in relationships but also to capitalise on relational capacity in order to create value for multiple interwoven stakeholders. Navigating relations between different organisations from one or more sectors requires skill in securing legitimacy for your organisation while succeeding in value creation for all stakeholders.”**

\* For further reading on the role of the imagination as described by evolutionary biology, see Bernice Serfontein, 2018, "Imagination, Religion, and Morality: An Interdisciplinary Approach," PhD thesis, University of Pretoria, <https://repository.up.ac.za/handle/2263/71030>

# Is this the future of Leadership?



Greta Thunberg, Swedish Environmental Activist on Climate Change.

“I don’t want your hope. I don’t want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic, I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. And then I want you to act. I want you to act as if you would in a crisis, I want you to act as if the house was on fire, because it is.”



**Food for Thought:**  
<https://theconversation.com/our-house-is-on-fire-why-greta-thunberg-infuriates-conservatives-124341>

## Prof. Tawana Kupe’s views on Student Leadership



### What are your views on student leadership?

Student leadership at the University of Pretoria is very energetic and by this, I mean we have student leaders who really try to the best of their abilities to represent the interests of others and that anchors the main reason why students are here, which is to get their degrees but also to gain leadership experience making students well-rounded individuals. One thing that is unique about the University of Pretoria is that there are various leadership training courses and

various platforms that try to somewhat form leaders who are going to make a difference in society.

### Moving forward, what are the plans does the institution have in promoting student leadership?

Yes, the University has various platforms like stated before but that does not reach all the students. We would like all students in one way or another to get some form of leadership training, whether its in leading their own club or being a student representative in class. The plan

is to mainstream leadership in a way that every student at the University of Pretoria will be exposed to one form of leadership training that will cultivate values of being selfless, being sensitive to the needs of others by doing things that are beyond your own personal benefit and most importantly being able to exercise good judgment in leading others. We already have formal leadership structures like the Student Representative Council and other Faculty Houses but there is more to be done. I would really love to produce students who will form part of leaders who will drive Africa's future forward.

**According to the Intercultural Development Research Association, "Student Leadership is the ability of the student body to influence major decisions about its quality of education and learning environment", do you think student leadership here at the University of Pretoria embodies that statement?**

I have only been in office for a year and I must say it has been a very interesting year for me but from what I have seen I can say that I have seen the courage and drive of student leaders here at the University. I have found myself in

various unplanned conversations with respective student leaders in the shaping of decolonising the academic curriculum at the University. For me this showed that the student leaders not only want to partake in the curriculum, but they also want to be part of the transformation of that very same curriculum. This means that they were reflecting very actively on what the curriculum ought to be and what it encompasses. So, to answer your question regarding the above-mentioned statement. I would say yes, student leadership at the University of Pretoria embodies the statement.



**FIXER**

A fixer has the illusion of being causal.  
A server knows he/she is being used in the service  
of something greater, essentially unknown.  
We fix something specific.  
We serve always the something:  
wholeness and the mystery of life.  
Fixing and helping are the work of the ego.  
Serving is the work of the soul.  
When you help, you see life as weak.  
When you fix you see life as broken.  
When you serve, you see life as whole.  
Fixing and helping may cure.  
Service heals.  
When I help, I feel satisfaction.  
When I serve, I feel gratitude.  
Fixing is a form of judgment.  
Serving is a form of connection.

*-Author Unknown  
Derived from "In the Service of Life"  
by  
Rachel Naomi Remen*

# Reflect

The official newsletter of The Albert Luthuli Centre for Responsible Leadership

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