

## The South African High Commission and British Council pay tribute to 15 Years of the Bambisanani Partnership

**A**t a prestigious Reception at The University of Leeds, Tyrone Gunnie from the South African High Commission in London and John Rolfe MBE from The British Council paid tribute to the work of The Bambisanani Partnership on the occasion of its fifteenth anniversary.

For the past fifteen years the multi-award winning charity has operated in one of the most challenging parts of South Africa using the power of sport as a catalyst to promote education, health, global citizenship and leadership. Founded initially by David Geldart as school partnership between St. Mary's School, Menston and Mnyakanya School in KwaZulu-Natal, the initiative has grown considerably and now significantly involves The University of Leeds and Leeds Trinity University as key members and drivers of the organisation. The charity has gained international acclaim for its pioneering work which is committed to creating learning opportunities for young people in both countries. During that time more than 10,000 young people have engaged in a variety of Bambisanani Partnership programmes and projects which now operate in primary schools, secondary schools and universities in both countries.



At the event, the Chair of the charity, David Geldart, spoke of the 'very special relationship' between Leeds and South Africa. In particular, the significant role that the city and its people played in the Anti-Apartheid Movement and the great sporting links personified by the Leeds United legend's Albert Johanneson and Lucas Radebe.

**“ In his visit to Leeds in 2001, Nelson Mandela acknowledged this special relationship and also pointed to the future with the hope of further collaborations that would create a lasting legacy. Additionally, Nelson Mandela had frequently spoken about the power of sport and education to change the world. All of this stayed with me and five years later in 2006 I had the opportunity to visit South Africa and take the first tentative steps of collaboration in order establish what we would eventually call The Bambisanani Partnership.”**  
**– David Geldart**

At the Reception, Teachers and Lecturers involved in the programme – Catherine Chattoe, St. Mary's, Menston, David Farmer representing primary schools of The Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust, Andrew Lockwood, University of Leeds and Dr Chris Rowley, Leeds Trinity University spoke passionately at the event about their absolute commitment to creating 'two way' learning opportunities, the various Bambisanani programmes and the impact of this work on their students and institutions.



Former students from St. Mary's, the University of Leeds and Leeds Trinity University, Sylvia Cullen, Brogan O'Connor, Charlie Stevenson and Jake Almond, who had previously visited South Africa, all gave moving and powerful accounts of how the experience had had a significant impact on both their lives and on their world view.



Speaking on behalf of The British Council John Rolfe MBE said:

**“ The British Council is proud and delighted to work with such an exceptional group of global educators at the Bambisanani Partnership. The work, which engages young people in the UK and in South Africa, is truly outstanding and has created a model for others to follow. The partnership has developed some of the best international education programmes and practice in the world. Today I would like to invite members of this inspirational team to become members of the British Councils Internationalism Alliance in order to share their experience and expertise with other organisations around the world. I would also like to take this opportunity to present St. Mary's School, where this all began, with the British Council International School Award which recognises fifteen years of exceptional and hugely impactful international work. The whole school commitment to international dimensions of teaching and learning is embedded at the school through its ethos and values. The Bambisanani Partnership with its engagement with primary schools, secondary schools and universities in both countries is absolutely brilliant and just keeps going from strength to strength. Congratulations on fifteen years of exceptional pioneering work that is making a real difference in the world.”**



Tyrone Gunnie, First Secretary at The South African High Commission added,

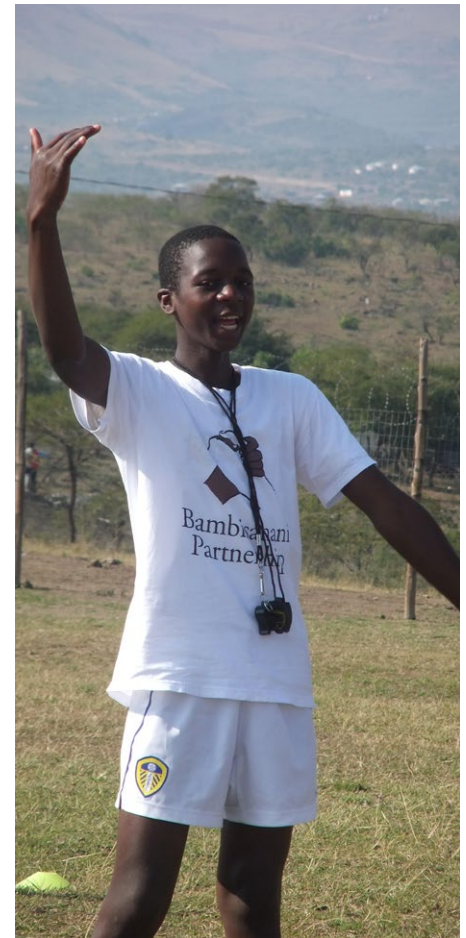
**“ The Bambisanani Partnership brings together a group of people who want to use the power of sport, together with their individual skills, to work in partnership with a rural community in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, to help the children of this community realise their strengths and talents. However, while the strengths and talents of the children are ignited, the team at Bambisanani underpin the importance of education. This project is so different to most that I have seen and this is why it is so effective. Every project that is implemented is the brainchild of the local community, endorsed by its leaders, and then implemented in partnership between the community and Bambisanani. This project serves, as a model for how to ensure that the dignity of the recipients of the project is not only upheld, but reinforced. It is the reason that year-on-year for 15 years, Bambisanani, and different communities, have celebrated so many achievements, and success stories, most notably, the impact that children from Leeds and Nkandla have on each other’s lives. Its genuine commitment to ‘working together, and learning together’ in the spirit of Ubuntu can be seen in everything that it does. Many organisations could learn from this approach. The special relationship and legacy that Nelson Mandela spoke about when in Leeds certainly continues through the outstanding and influential Bambisanani Partnership.”**



Honoured guests John Rolfe and Tyrone Gunnie were presented with special Bambisanani commemorative trophies in recognition of their outstanding support for the partnership.

**Bambisanani Partnership programmes and projects include:**

- Leadership through Sport programmes for secondary and primary students
- International exchange visits for teachers and students
- Art through Sport projects
- Creative Writing through Sport projects
- Student led Enterprise projects to support the partnership
- Training of Community football coaches and referees
- Education through Football project (Premier Skills)
- High School Bambisanani Award Scheme promoting Leadership, Enterprise and Global Citizenship at Bronze, Silver and Gold levels
- University and Vocational College Scholarships
- Recognition of Achievement through Bambisanani Awards in both secondary and primary schools
- Primary School Sports Festivals
- Cycling to Success’ programme which teaches young people how to ride and maintain bikes
- Collaborative training of Physical Education teachers and Sport Coaches at university level
- Bambisanani International Athletics Challenge



**During the past fifteen years:**

- Over 10,000 young people from both countries have engaged in a variety of Bambisanani projects and programmes
- Over 3,000 students have participated Bambisanani Sports Festivals
- Over 775 students have gained Bambisanani Leadership Awards
- Over 280 UK students have volunteered on Bambisanani programmes in South Africa
- Over 270 students have completed the Cycling to Success course
- Over 1,200 South African students have been supported into school by the partnership
- Over 1,700 students have participated in Bambisanani Reading Festivals
- Over 650 students have participated in Art/Creative Writing through Sport projects
- 55 UK/SA teachers have visited each other’s countries on Exchange Visits



**Tyrone Gunnie from the South African High Commission explains that his day in Leeds had more than a few surprises**

When I first heard of The Bambisanani Partnership charity I was so intrigued that I contacted its Founder and CEO, David Geldart, to arrange a visit to meet members of the remarkable team from St. Mary's School, Menston, The University of Leeds and Leeds Trinity University. The fact that the partnership's 15th Anniversary was imminent seemed most timely and a full day of meetings and presentations was arranged.

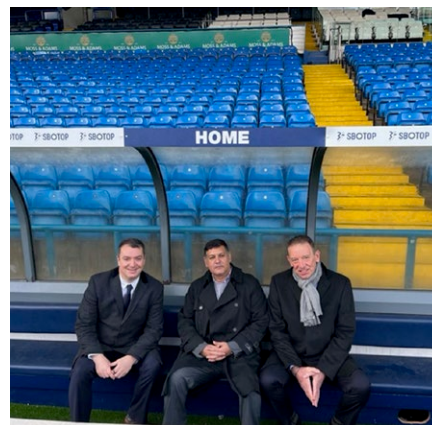
The Bambisanani Partnership is full of surprises but little did I know!



On arriving in Leeds, I was whisked away into a taxi by David and Brogan O'Connor, a Trustee of the charity. Before I knew it, I could see floodlights and a stadium. We had arrived at Elland Road which was not on the plan. Some months earlier I had mentioned to David that since my boyhood days growing up in South Africa, I had been a Leeds United fan. I explained that my uncles had been fans, I think originally inspired by the great Albert Johanneson being at the Club in 60's and then of course by the 'Glory Years' of the 70's. For all these years (with all its ups and downs!) I have been a Leeds fan but I had never been to Leeds or seen them play live. I could not believe that I was here at last, it was emotional. Not for one minute did I think that the taxi might actually stop – I was in heaven anyway just being outside the ground thinking about what my uncles would say if they could see me now. Much to my amazement the taxi did stop – I couldn't

believe it – were we going to have a look at the Billy Bremner statue and perhaps look at the outskirts of the stadium? David said that we should get out for a few minutes 'just to stretch our legs' - I was being misled yet again! We were met immediately met by Stuart Dodsley, Head of Commercial at the Club who gave us the warmest welcome and proceeded to take us a private tour of the ground.

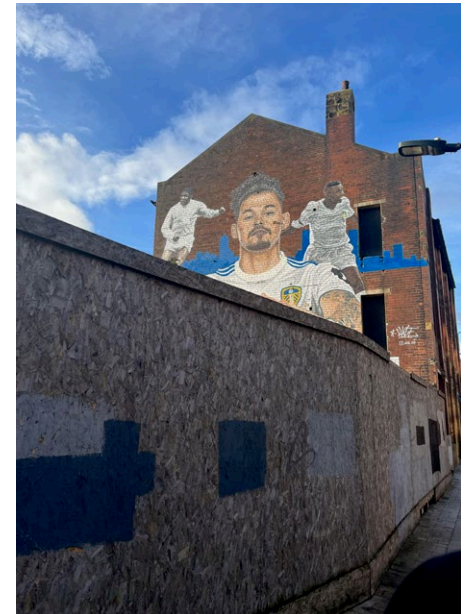
Our first stop was at a memorial plaque for the great Albert Johanneson, the first black player to play in an FA Cup final; a trailblazer for so many black players that would follow. I don't think that I was actually able to speak for several minutes. As we viewed the incredible pitch from the East Stand my thoughts turned to all the games that I had watched on TV, to my fellow countrymen, the he mercurial Albert Johanneson, Phil Massinga and of course Nelson Mandela's hero, the Chief himself, the great Lucas Radebe, all of whom had graced this hallowed turf. Again, I thought of my uncles and may have even shed a tear.



Walking round the pitch, sitting in the dugout, walking down the tunnel, visiting the Lucas Radebe Suite, seeing all the trophies, shirts, photos – never in my wildest dreams did I think that this could be possible. Everyone we met at the Club was so friendly and welcoming despite it being a match day and them all having much to do. Stuart's kindness and generosity were simply unbelievable, nothing was too much trouble. What an ambassador he is for the Club. On leaving I was presented with a gift which I will treasure.

As we drove through Leeds, I was to hear of more St. Marys School, Leeds United, South Africa, Bambisanani Partnership connections like former students, Aidy White who had played for the club, members of the Kaiser Chiefs who had named the band because it

was the name of Lucas Radebe's club in South Africa (the Kaizer Chiefs) and actor Matthew Lewis, Patron of The Bambisanani Partnership, who does the weekly Leeds United podcast. As David said 'all great lads, massive Leeds fans and wonderful supporters of The Bambisanani Partnership.'



Clearly staying 'off plan' the taxi pulled up and I noticed a huge mural on a building. Alongside present day Leeds United hero Calvin Phillips, I could immediately recognise Lucas Radebe and Albert Johanneson. I felt very proud that Lucas and Albert were being celebrated in this way; the link through to Calvin, connects the past with the present and is most significant. I could just sense Calvin's love, admiration and respect for Albert and Lucas. How fantastic to use art and sport in this way; it says much about what the city and its people value.

Onwards we went to the wonderful Mandela Gardens with its outstanding bronze statue of Nelson Mandela's arms stretching out to the world. From here in Millennium Square I could see Civic Hall and the steps from which Nelson Mandel had spoken in 2001 with Lucas Radebe at his side. The 'Special Relationship' between Leeds and South Africa that David had told me about was being reinforced at every turn. Nelson Mandela's visit recognised this relationship not least for the unconditional support and solidarity received from the people of Leeds during Apartheid. The Anti-Apartheid movement in Leeds was so strong and it was wonderful to learn more about the Leeds Women's Anti-Apartheid group that was so effective in what it did on so many levels.

I also learned of the role of the students of The University of Leeds in the Anti-Apartheid Movement who were highly committed to the cause and extremely good in raising awareness and mobilising other universities up and down the country.



From here in Millennium Square we walked the short distance to that great university for the Bambisanani Partnership Reception and meetings. This was the focus of the day and although David had kept the morning activities a secret from me it was clearly all related, the connections all made sense. At the Reception I learned so much more about the remarkable Bambisanani Partnership. I heard a succession of presentations that were simply breath-taking in their authenticity. To actually meet the people involved – students, teachers, sponsors and supporters was inspirational. I was both honoured and humbled to receive a special award from the partnership for my small part in its development. For here I will just say of The Bambisanani Partnership that I have worked all over the world but have seen few initiatives as effective at using the power of sport and education to change lives. Its philosophy, based on the Zulu concept of Ubuntu, manifests itself into the most impactful practise that really does change the lives of young people in both countries. The work that this charity does, and the impact it has, is extraordinary. I was both honoured and humbled to receive a special award from the partnership for my small part in its development.



A development meeting followed the Reception with Bambisanani team members, John Rolfe from the British Council and myself. What was clear is that this partnership never sits still for a minute! We had just come from a prestigious celebration event and they were now sat down talking about 'what next?'. The team is quite unbelievable; it is always looking to learn more and move forward, not surprisingly it has ambitious plans for the future which I will support in any way that I can, wherever I am in the world.

With the meeting over I was told that it was a 'little chilly' outside and was presented with a scarf – not just any scarf but a Leeds United Scarf! Wonderful. I wore it with pride.

As we walked down to the railway station David and Brogan had one more wonderful and poignant surprise for me. A slight detour from Mandela Gardens took us to the beautiful St. Anne's Cathedral where we spent a little time reflecting on the most wonderful of days.

There is indeed a very special relationship between Leeds and South Africa – I had read about it and I had heard about but I count myself very fortunate to have felt and experienced it. The work of the Bambisanani Partnership embodies this relationship through its myriad of connections.

On arriving back in London, I learned that Leeds United had won 1–0 in added time.

What a magical day. I look forward to us Marching On Together for many years to come."



For more information about The Bambisanani Partnership visit

[www.bambisananipartnership.org](http://www.bambisananipartnership.org)

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