22 OLD RHODIANS IN THE TOP 200 YOUNG SOUTH AFRICANS

The Mail and Guardian published their annual survey of *Young South Africans you have to take to lunch*. These are young people who will shape our country in the decades to come, in the sporting arena, in public life and in business. Out of the 200 chosen 22 were Old Rhodians which makes Rhodes very proud.

The choices in the edition suggest that South Africa is a country brimming with talent. These are world-class young people who have blazed a trail locally and abroad.

ARTS & CULTURE

Daniel Buckland (1999)



Daniel Buckland, son of the South African theatre legend Andrew Buckland, could have doomed himself to a life of comparison by choosing the same field as his father. But since graduating from Rhodes university with a first-class honours degree, he has shown that he has all the passion, talent and innovation to survive being measured against his famous parent.

After graduating he spent a year working for ubom!

Eastern Cape Drama Company, for whom he co-devised Plunge in 2003. In 2004 he performed in the Mouthpeace Theatre Company's Fuse, a show devised by his father, which toured extensively, played a season at the Edinburgh Festival and was nominated for the stage award for best ensemble; the play won a Naledi award for best cutting-edge production and Buckland was nominated for the best newcomer award. In 2005 he performed in the Fortune Cookie Theatre Company's The Travellers, directed by Sylvaine Strike, which also won a Naledi Award for best cutting-edge production and played at the Adelaide Fringe in Australia.

His career has included a role in the 2008 South African film Jerusalema and, together with his father, he spent a year in Las Vegas, where he played the lead in LOVE, a production by the renowned Cirque Du Soleil, which he considers to be one of the highlights of his career so far.

He formed the Dark Laugh Theatre Company, for whom he produced and directed The Butcher Brothers this year and recently played Hally in Athol Fugard's Master Harold ... and the Boys. Wherever his career takes him, Buckland has proved that following in your father's footsteps does not have to mean living in his shadow. -- Lisa van Wyk

Lunch spot: Picobella, Melville, Johannesburg

Lindi Matshikiza (2001)



Actress

She's young, talented and beautiful, so why isn't Lindi Matshikiza slapping someone on a soapie already?

It's a question this award-wining actress and rightful heir to the Matshikiza theatre throne gets asked a lot.

The truth is that, right now, she wants you to laugh at her solo stage antics in Bafana Republic, agonise over her conflicts in Closer and even question herco-direction of The Unspeakable Story.

It's this sheer commitment to developing her craft that ensures Matshikiza's name tops the most competitive of bills and that she gets nominated for

Naledis year after year. Right now, the world is her stage, which means tackling every challenging role, audience and director with the hunger of a young Rhodes drama graduate and the dedication of a passionate professional. But if Hollywood calls, don't be surprised if she answers it, even if the love of theatre runs deep in her veins. -- Cat Pritchard

Lunch spot: Kebab braai stand, Cyrildene, Johannesburg

BUSINESS & LAW

Nick Ferreira (1999)

Research Clerk, Constitutional Court

How do you reconcile a government's obligation to uphold its citizens' basic human rights with the limitations imposed by time, cost and capacity? It's a question that has troubled Nick Ferreira and to which he has dedicated the better part of a decade, studying through the prism of philosophy at Oxford University.

But there's absolutely no doubt in his mind: questions of feasibility are a simplistic way to undermine communities' fights to access their basic rights. Now a clerk for Justice Edwin Cameron at the Constitutional Court, Ferreira is on the cusp of becoming an advocate at the Johannesburg Bar, where he plans to use the power of litigation in favour of greater equality and social rights.

Ferreira, who realised relatively late in his career that he wanted to be a lawyer, studied simultaneously for his DPhil at Oxford and his LLB at Unisa to catch up -- a superhuman feat by any standards. --Lionel Faul

Lunch spot: Trieste Café, Greenside, Johannesburg

Rob Burrell (1997)

Managing Director: mukuru.com

Rob Burrell is a serial entrepreneur of the Richard Branson kind. At 31 he has already tried, unsuccessfully, to shoot an independent film and launch an international calling card to get around restrictions in Zimbabwe, his homeland.

A diehard innovator with a desire to help his fellow Africans rise above their restrictive environments, Burrell set up Mukuru.com, an online platform that enables Zimbabweans, and other dispersed nationals, to transfer money back home.

In six months Mukuru.com grew its customer base from 300 to 10 000 and later picked up a swanky innovation award. The idea may have started in London, where he spent six years building a following for his band, Mann Friday, but its heart is firmly rooted in Africa.

So what's next? MukuruMusic -- a socially conscious platform that will enable grassroots musicians to sell their music and collect royalties online. -- Cat Pritchard

Lunch spot: Bombay Bicycle Club, Cape Town

Tembeka Ngcukaitobi (2000)



Director: Constitutional litigation Unit, Legal Resources Centre

Tembeka Ngcukaitobi was the most junior member of the Legal Resources Centre (LRC) in Grahamstown when the groundbreaking social grants class action suit, Ngxuza v MEC for Welfare, went all the way to the Supreme Court of Appeal, and the LRC won.

As the only isiXhosa-speaking lawyer in them office Ngcukaitobi criss-crossed the former Transkei, taking statements and explaining the case's implications to the people involved. Now he directs the LRC's constitutional litigation efforts from Johannesburg, having spent a year as clerk to former Chief Justice Arthur Chaskalson and seven years in interest litigation with Bowman Gilfillan.

Ngcukaitobi also serves on the South African Law Reform Commission, which advises Parliament and the executive on the constitutionality of laws from both the pre- and post-apartheid eras.

"I am dedicating the skills at my disposal to resolving the structural inequalities in our society, be it as a lawyer, an SC [senior counsel], a policymaker, or a judge," he says. --Lionel Faull

Lunch spot: Mastrantonio, Illovo, Johannesburg

CIVIL SOCIETY

Eusebius McKaiser (1997)

Political and Social Analyst

Eusebius McKaiser could variously be described as a public intellectual, an analyst, a commentator or a moral philosopher. But labels don't concern him.

"What matters to me is getting to grips with the social and political topics that matter, in ways that make people sit up and take notice," he says.

McKaiser writes a Friday column for Business Day, and presents a weekly late-night politics and morality show on Talk Radio 702. He's also working on his first book, "an autobiographical account of what it was like for a black kid to belong to the first

generation of coconuts to attend a former Model C school". In the future, he plans to present a hard-hitting TV interview programme, modeled on the BBC's HARDtalk, and then to enter party politics.

"Far too few academics -- and especially philosophers -- do enough to make themselves relevant." We're betting that's one thing McKaiser won't ever be accused of. -- Lionel Faull

Lunch spot: Wang Thai, Sandton

Ishtar Lakhani (2003)



National Coordinator: One in Nine Campaign

The One in Nine Campaign is an unapologetically feminist collective of organisations and individuals working for social justice for women.

Ishtar Lakhani, the group's national co ordinator, is responsible for mobilising direct action around particular cases of sexual violence, as well as organising programmes that serve to engage women activists in getting their word out in the media. She has ensured that important cases such as the Buyisiwe gang-rape case were well supported and reported, both outside the court and in the media.

Her upbringing makes her ideally suited to coordinate the innovative visual public campaigns that have become the trademark of the One in Nine Campaign.

Lakhani was weaned on activism and the arts. Her mother is a gender activist with a fine arts degree, her father ran the Communikon Theatre, which showcased protest theatre.

"I am a part of a collective struggle against patriarchy and fighting for a world where women have autonomy because I feel it is morally right," she says. -- Lionel Faull

Lunch spot: Jasmyn's, Richmond, Johannesburg

Jen Thorpe (2003)



Feminist Writer and Researcher

"I'm a grassroots kinda girl," Jen Thorpe will tell you, reflecting on her proudest achievement -- a collaborative women's writing project called "My First Time", which went digital in February this year.

"I was thinking how the significant moments in a woman's life are experienced as some sort of crisis. But there was very little space anywhere for women to talk about these. So every two weeks I invite submissions on a particular theme and the stories go up on the blog

[www.1sttime2010.wordpress.com].

"The stories I receive are powerful. Once the blog picks up, I plan to take writing workshops to places like Khayelitsha and rural areas in the Cape, where women's voices are almost never heard in the mainstream."

Thorpe also works as a researcher and database administrator for Rape Crisis Cape Town, an NGO that offers counselling and court support to rape survivors in the Mother City. -- Lionel Faull

Lunch spot: Caveau at The Mill, Newlands , Cape Town

HEALTH

Dr Rebecca Hodes (2000)



Deputy Director aids and Society Research Unit: University of Cape Town

At 28, Dr Rebecca Hodes's list of academic achievements is longer than the waiting list at Chris Hani-Baragwanath.

The founder of the students HIV/Aids Resistance Campaign at Rhodes -- the most active student group of its kind in the country -- Hodes won a scholarship to undertake her graduate studies at Oxford, where she wrote her doctoral thesis on HIV and South African television.

But instead of adding to South Africa's growing "brain drain", she brought her knowledge to the Treatment Action Campaign, whose policy, communication and research department she managed before joining UCT's Aids and Society Research unit.

A passionate writer, who admires the style of Ariel Levy, Hodes takes her activism to heart and paper, communicating issues around sexuality and racy activist strategies to theatrical politicians and the patients they refuse to acknowledge.

And though she believes that the era of state-sponsored Aids denialism has past, she isn't about to let an era of "theoretical" advancements begin. Not on her watch. -- Cat Pritchard

Lunch spot: Liquorice and Lime, Kloof Street, Cape Town

MEDIA

Nadine Hutton (1997)



Photojournalist

Nadine Hutton has been a photojournalist for 13 years. Now her work has expanded to include film, fine art and performance. She rejects a cold, objective approach to images.

"As a photojournalist my interest is directed towards in-depth documentation of stories that may not necessarily seem newsworthy," she says.

"I tell stories, narratives that are a neglected part of the process of the past decade and which have important implications for the understanding of South Africa." Much of her work is concerned with social issues, which include the rights of women and the dispossessed and "those whose voices are rarely heard above the furore"

This personal approach was apparent in 2006 when she documented her own mother's story as a survivor of gender violence and won a Ruth First scholarship.

Since then, she has been a finalist at Spier Contemporary, and has been selected to be artist-inresidence at The Bag Factory. Recent projects include work relating to the World Summit on Arts and Culture and facilitating a video art workshop aimed at artists who have little experience of digital media.-- Lisa van Wyk

Megan Kakora (2001)



Online Editor: Cosmopolitan online

As online editor of South Africa's biggest women's glossy, Megan Kakora manages, oversees and liaises on all marketing and management issues and assumes final responsibility for all design and content. So there's really very little downtime.

Luckily Kakora is very hands-on, which is why she studied journalism at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology and is constantly looking for new ways to sharpen her media skills.

She may have grown up in Kuils River, dreaming of becoming a magazine editor, but it was the online space that stole her heart, giving her every opportunity to help educate and entertain young South African women through a strong online community. And it doesn't hurt that she gets to interview stars such as John Legend. --Cat Pritchard

Lunch spot: Royale Eatery, Long Street, Cape Town

Nikiwe Bikitsha (1996)



Senior news anchor: e.tv

Nikiwe Bikitsha has never worked a normal day. From her years as a junior reporter at Cape Talk 567, where she worked "all hours" to impress, to her early mornings at SAfm, where she co-anchored AM Live, a 9-5 day has been as foreign to Bikitsha as some of the stories she reports on as senior news anchor for Newsnight.

At 32, Bikitsha is one of those rare individuals who has the voice for radio, the face for TV and the nose for print, and has pursued all three with the professionalism and poise you would expect from the journalist who "got the exclusive" with Winnie Madikizela Mandela back in 2003.

It's not surprising to find that she put herself through Rhodes university or that she now has her own fortnightly column, "High Heels", in the Mail&Guardian. But what many don't know is that her velvety voice could have hit Broadway instead of our airways. Lucky us. -- Cat Pritchard

Lunch spot: Allora, Sandton

POLITICS & GOVT

Rulleska Singh (2005)

Media Spokesperson: Mayor of Cape Town

There are not many 21-year-olds who could take up a job as the media spokesperson for the mayor of Cape Town, with a brief stint at Top Billing as her only work experience.

But then Rulleska Singh is not your average Rhodes university journalism graduate.

A self-confessed "A Type" personality with a passion for the public sector, Singh is used to swimming in the deep end.

It doesn't bother her that she's contractually bound to keep her cellphone on or that she fi elds calls from 5:30am to 11pm every day.

Luckily, she's just as comfortable handling queries from the Vietnamese consul as she is preparing for the mayor's address to the World Economic Forum.

It's this variety of challenges and people that inspires her to aspire to becoming a strong, capable leader who affects real change.

Because that's what the public sector means to her -- an opportunity to serve her country. -- Cat Pritchard

Lunch spot: Chai Yo, Cape Town

Ross van der Linde (2004)



Chief Operations Officer: Democratic Alliance

'Powerful policies will solve South Africa's problems, not powerful personalities."

Is this an official statement from Ross van der Linde, former media director of the Democratic Alliance, or a personal manifesto from a liberal democrat who wants to get people debating about real issues not personal agendas?

Either way, it's a politically informed opinion from a 24-year-old who, according to generational profiling, should probably be doing some menial job that doesn't require too much effort or responsibility. Instead, Van der Linde gets to work (read: Parliament) before 8am and spends his day engaging with the press, reviewing draft documents and statements and meeting with MPs.

In his current position Van der Linde doesn't have to choose between his two loves -media and politics -- which he did when he started out in politics, working in the DA's parliamentary research department. It didn't take long before he was appointed press offi cer, just ahead of the 2009 elections, and then head of the party's media department.

As the newly appointed Chief Operating Officer, Van der Linde oversees and manages parliamentary operations and focuses on political communications, which means getting the DA's message across and keeping tabs on the political stories being reported in the press.

It's a perfect fusion for a man who graduated top of his politics class at Rhodes university and obtained an honours degree in philosphy, politics and economics from the University of Cape Town, while dabbling in a bit of journalism on the side, including a brief stint as a sports reporter for e.tv.

But politics is definitely this Jo'burg boy's true calling.

It's the reason he's committed to building a competitive political system and why he's so proud to have had a hand in modernising the DA's parliamentary operation. Because effective systems help to promote more proactive policies -- policies he hopes will solve South Africa's problems. -- Cat Pritchard

Lunch spot: Eastern Food Bazaar, Cape Town

SCIENCE & EDUCATION

Adrian Tiplady(1997)



Physicist

Adrian Tiplady is the self-professed black sheep of his family. "No one in my family plays any instruments or has anything to do with science," he says.

So where Tiplady got his talent for jazz and physics is anyone's guess.

An avid saxophonist, he's played jazz and classical music at international festivals and is one of the project leaders in South Africa's bid to host the largest radio telescope in the world, the Square Kilometre Array (SKA).

He advises the science minister and represents the country on international astronomy and telecoms boards.

When Tiplady was at university he aspired to become a conductor. "It was never my plan to be a practising scientist," he says. But fate had other plans.

Having selected music and computer studies and looking for a third major subject, Tiplady closed his eyes, flipped through the student manual and landed on philosophy. "But it clashed with one of my other subjects. So I did it again and landed on physics," he says.

Seven years later, he completed a PhD in his accidental subject, specialising in radio astronomy and digital instrumentation.

Once he had his PhD he had his heart set on going to Paris to be a jazz musician. But an invitation to become involved in the SKA changed that, fulfilling his ambition to become involved in high-impact events. Five years later, he's one of the point men in South Africa's SKA bid.

Tiplady believes the SKA provides the perfect opportunity for African scientists to invest in the knowledge economy, build technical expertise and collaborate with the world's leading science institutions.

"We've already [become] a leading light in the astronomical community in terms of design and engineering," he says.

The accidental scientist still holds on to the dream that maybe in five years he'll be playing jazz in a Paris café. Then again, he admits, "maybe I'll be involved in a scientific project". -- Faranaaz Parker

Lunch spot: Cranks, Rosebank, Johannesburg

Jason van Niekerk (2000)

Lecturer: Wits University

Jason van Niekerk looks at life from a unique perspective -- one that wouldn't cross most people's minds.

He feels that the depth and complexity of human relationships are underappreciated, particularly in Western thought, so he turned to the African theory of ubuntu to explore these issues further -- and this has formed the basis of his doctoral research at Wits.

Born and raised in Johannesburg, Van Niekerk relocated to Grahamstown to do his BA and master's in ethics and philosophy.

Having been very ill during his high school years he only became part of a community when he went to university. It is this, he says, that gave him a particular appreciation for human relationships, which most people take for granted.

Van Niekerk moved back to Jo'burg in 2007 to do his PhD at Wits, and is currently in his final year. In addition to lecturing at the university he is involved with the fledgling Wits Centre for Ethics, which aims to bring issues of ethics and philosophy into public life. -- Tarryn Harbour

Lunch spot: FOOOD, Cresta Shopping Centre, Johannesburg

Athambile Masola (2006)



Volunteer: Nombulelo Reading Programme

Rhodes University master's student Athambile Masola was eager, in her first year, to work with a student volunteer programme that was really only intended for more advanced students.

"We would go out into the surrounding community and help where we could ... we would try to meet any needs that they had," she says.

Masola became involved with a small reading club three years ago and became a volunteer at the Nombulelo Reading Programme.

She was appointed as community engagement councillor of the Student Representative Council for 2008/9 and now coordinates training for the representative council of learners in Grahamstown schools.

"I suppose because Rhodes is such a small campus in the middle of the community, you can't help but notice the issues around you," says Masola, who was recently selected as a Mandela Rhodes scholar.

With a foundation in compassion and first-hand experience Masola is focusing her thesis on foundation-phase literacy in a mother-tongue Xhosa school.

"I am looking into the practice of teaching; what informs what is taught, and how it is executed," she says.

And through the Mandela Rhodes scholarship Masola has forged a relationship with Oxford University Press, because, she says, the resources for teaching reading and writing in mother-tongue African languages are problematic.

"The quality and access to them and how teachers use them is the issue," says Masola who is considering further developing such resources.

"If kids don't have a solid foundation in an African language, how are they ever going to switch over to a complex language like English?" -- Lisa Steyn

Lunch spot: Red Café, High Street, Grahamstown

Janice Limson (1990)



Head of Biotechnology: Rhodes University

In 2009 Janice Limson was promoted to associate professor, a move that, she says, means both a lot more work and a lot more responsibility.

On the plus side, she was granted a six-month sabbatical in January this year, which has given her a lot more time to focus on her research.

In addition to her academic role Limson is editor-in-chief of Science in Africa, the continent's first online science magazine, which she started nine years ago, and winner of the Highway Africa New Media in Journalism and a National Science and Technology Forum award.

Limson's research team of 12 master's and PhD students is working on cancer diagnostics and drug delivery, with the ultimate aim of developing marketable tools for cancer diagnostics. "We're all about turning research into reality," she says. --Tarryn Harbour

Lunch spot: Yellow House, Grahamstown

Preven Chetty (2009)



Facilitator, Wildlife and Environmental Society of South Africa

In a family of engineers Preven Chetty sticks out like a sore thumb.

He spent his childhood hiking along the banks of rivers, investigating them and cleaning them up -- and this has been his passion ever since.

Born and bred in KwaZulu-Natal, he sees rivers as the current running through life; everything is connected and what happens upstream affects what happens downstream.

After high school Chetty went to Chennai, India, where he studied classical music, becoming proficient on the veenai, a 5 000-year-old Indian stringed instrument.

He returned to South Africa in 2002 and studied environmental science at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, later becoming a geography teacher.

Four years ago Chetty joined the Wildlife and Environmental Society of South Africa, where he runs a course in environmental education.

His use of a documentary using cellphones and social networking sites to inspire and motivate communities living on the banks of the Umgeni River to take better care of the water system earned him a place as a finalist in the inaugural Rolex Awards for Enterprise: Young Laureates Programme.

Although he did not win, Chetty still plans to run the project: he's sourcing funding and hopes to get it off the ground by July.

He is currently studying for his master's degree in environmental education at Rhodes University, looking at the use of social networking sites to create environmental activism.

As a representative of the Howick Unit of the United Nations Regional Centre for Expertise, a network of educational institutions focusing on the delivery of education for sustainable development, he was, at the time of writing, planning a trip to Brazil.

Chetty, who lives in a cottage on a farm in Howick, where he keeps a rooster and some chickens for eggs, and gets his milk from the farm, is the lead singer of a band called the Tantric Monks, which plays environmentally-conscious rock songs. --Tarryn Harbour

Lunch spot: Picnic at Karkloof Falls, Howick

TECHNOLOGY

Heather Ford (1996)



heather

Founder: Creative Commons South Africa

Heather Ford downplays the story about the day Al Gore offered her a job. "He wrote it on a napkin. It said something like, if you ever need a job or a mission, call me. I don't know if he was serious," she muses, "but I still have the napkin." She moves in impressive circles.

Ford has worked with Lawrence Lessig and Jimmy Wales, the founders of Creative Commons and Wikipedia, been invited to parties by the founders of Google, whom she refers to as "Larry and Sergei", and rubbed shoulders with the chief executives of companies such as LinkedIn.

So how did a girl from Pietermaritzburg who didn't even use the internet until her third year of university end up in Silicon Valley? She volunteered.

After landing a scholarship from Benetech to attend Stanford University, she became heavily involved in Creative Commons, a non-profit organisation dedicated to increasing "the body of work that is available to the public for free and legal sharing".

She later launched Creative Commons in South Africa, then became executive director of iCommons, a British charity that supports the ideals of open education and free software. In this role, she oversaw a \$1-million annual budget, ran summits

around the world and organised scores of volunteers. Ford also served on the Wikimedia Foundation's advisory board.

Last year she initiated GeekRetreat, an annual event that brings leaders in the South African IT community together to improve the internet. Today, Ford has started to lose faith in the possibilities for both Creative Commons and Wikipedia, which she believes are not inclusive enough of the developing world. And she hopes to find better ways to improve access to information in Africa, particularly for educational use. But for the time being, she's just another information master's student at the University of California, Berkeley, albeit one with a summer fellowship from Google. -- Faranaaz Parker

Lunch spot: Next to Mike's Kitchen in Parktown there is a little grassy verge with plastic tables and a caravan that serves the best pap, chakalaka and chicken curry known to man or woman



Alistair Fairweather (1997)

Social media and online Strategist: Media24 Magazines

Alistair Fairweather is paid to be on Twitter and Facebook every day. It's part of his job. A small part, as Fairweather also helps the digital teams at Media24 Magazines to maximise the benefits of and reduce the effort involved in their social media channels.

And then there are the editorial strategies and measurements he has to put together because, let's face it, online audiences don't grow themselves. More often than not he spends his time convincing business people that social media technology is not a fad just because their kids spend much of their time on Facebook.

But if business is reluctant to move into the social media age, it simply can't ignore the fact that Fairweather knows how to grow a fan base -- he grew Huisgenoot's from 4 000 to 15 000 on Facebook in a matter of weeks.

Not bad going for a 31-year-old who studied journalism at Rhodes University and started his career as a web designer. Somehow Fairweather, who discovered the

internet when South Africa was first discovering democracy, found his way to MWeb where he learnt some hard lessons about web editorial and online product management. It's also where he launched his first-ever web application -- MWeb's photo -- album system.

By 2007 Fairweather was a product management specialist, with the good fortune to have strong teams capable of launching new products such as Laaik.it, Play24 and Answerit as part of 24.com's social networking and media division. Part consultant, part evangelist, Fairweather believes social media technology has the potential to become the most powerful mass action medium ever, citing the Obama campaign as a good example of this.

All it needs is strong leadership to take the like-minded into battle. That, and accessible broadband, of course. Here's one man who can't wait to see cheaper broadband arrive here. -- Cat Pritchard

Lunch spot: The Roundhouse, The Glen, Camps Bay

Haroon Meer (2009)

Founder: Thinkst Haroon Meer, armed with a BCom degree in information systems from the University of Natal and an honours in computer science from Unisa, is currently busy with his master's in computer science at Rhodes University. But don't think of Meer as some sort of serial student -- he's busy working in one of the globe's most skilled IT fields: the niche world of internet security. Meer left Durban in 2001 to join "five guys in Pretoria" with an internet security company (SensePost) that "started off in a bedroom".

There, his main focus was on research and development. But he got out quite a bit. "I got to speak at Oxford University and at lots of conferences, in the United States, Austria and Malaysia," he says.

"We also gave training in places like Australia and in US government departments." But this year Meer broke out on his own.

With Thinkst, his aim is to have "people who have tough problems give them to people who like to solve them by using applied research" and to "take some of academia's research tools and solutions and come up with real world solutions". -- Vuvu Vena

Lunch spot: Spur, Rosebank, Johannesburg

Source: http://www.mg.co.za/specialreport/200-young-south-africans