

humanitarian



Chivas Humanitarian Award In honour of Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris, Z"tl

PROFESSOR JONATHAN JANSEN

Few people have had the positive societal impact in recent South African history as Professor Jonathan David Jansen. He is an internationally renowned education academic and a leading intellectual expert. He has a solid academic grounding, is a captivating speaker, a best-selling author and a master story teller. His insightful and forthright comments on education and societal issues as a speaker and columnist are the stuff of legends. Jansen, in short, calls it as he sees it – and he sees through the eyes of a free thinker. He is, indeed, a most worthy Chivas Humanitarian Award winner.

In his more recent leadership roles at Universities, his true wisdom and leadership colours have shone through “with compassion, humility and deep understanding,” as one pundit put it.

“There is a fascinating revolution underway with respect to language usage in everyday life on a university campus like the UFS: there is no discernible tension, anymore, about using English only in meetings of residences and other public meetings where all students (and staff) are in one place.”

Today, as Rector and Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Free State, Jansen has overseen the transformation of the once whites-only Afrikaans institution with aplomb. To a lesser or greater extent, Jansen has led through his example, the transformation of education as a whole in SA.

Jansen is also the Honorary Professor of Education at Wits and visiting Fellow at the National Research Foundation. He also serves as an Independent Non-Executive Director for Advtech Limited and is the Chairman at the School Evaluation and Teacher Appraisal.

Amongst his current positions are:

- Bloemfontein Administrator - Durban University of Technology since 2006
- Chairman - School Evaluation and Teacher Appraisal
- Non-Executive Director - ADVTECH Ltd
- Vice-President - Academy of Science of South Africa
- Chairman - Ministerial Committees on Further Education and Training
- Rector and Vice-Chancellor - University of the Free State

Professor Jansen's Degrees include:

- Honorary Doctor of Education - The University of Edinburgh
- Honorary Doctorate - Higher Education Administration - Cleveland State University

Jansen is the author of two widely read books: 'Knowledge in the Blood: How white students remember and enact the past' (2009)

and 'We Need to Talk' (2011).

Jonathan Jansen has risen above the challenges of being classified as a Coloured under the Apartheid era, and as part of his own growth, is helping South Africa rise above the barriers of racism.

RACIAL INTEGRATION, RE-SEGREGATION, AND CONTROVERSY

Jansen was born on 29 September 1956 in the picturesque town of Montagu in the Western Cape. He grew up there, in a township on the Cape Flats. His youthful outlook was shaped by upheavals, including the loss of family land and property due to forced removals.

He graduated with a BSc from the University of the Western Cape, completed his teaching qualifications through UNISA, and went on to obtain his masters from Cornell University in the US and his doctorate from Stanford University and is internationally regarded as one of the top researchers in the field of education.

UFS only admitted its first black students in the early 1990s, as apartheid began to collapse. Students of all races at first supported racial integration of housing, and for several years UFS was seen as a model integration project. However, in the late 1990s, blacks began to form a larger percentage of the student body and, after a 1996 riot, the UFS student residences became de facto re-segregated.

In addition, as classes became offered in English as well as Afrikaans, so they became segregated as whites favoured Afrikaans-language classes and blacks favoured English-language classes.

“NOTHING SHORT OF A MIRACLE”

UFS also faced controversy in 2008 following a video made by four white students of the Reitz residence which was referred to as being a protest against racial integration on the campus. The council of the university closed the Reitz hostel over the incident and the incident triggered a broader investigation into racism in education by the Department of Education.

It was into this toxic environment that Jonathan Jansen - a strong proponent of intellectual freedom – was thrown as Vice-Chancellor. He has subsequently initiated a process for campus-wide racial integration among students which included inviting the four students to continue with their studies at the university. In 2010 The university was awarded the World Universities Forum Award for Best Practice in Higher Education which praised amongst other the racial integration and harmonisation of the student community.

On receiving her honorary doctorate in education from the university in 2011, Oprah Winfrey called the transformation of the university “nothing short of a miracle.”