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A Man And A Vision: Cecil Rhodes And His Scholarship

Colette Gunn-Graffy

Part One: The Man

The Rhodes Scholarship is arguably the most prestigious, most widely recognized educational award in the English-speaking world — in part because, as a “brand,” the Rhodes name stands for intelligence, leadership, and talent that is out of the ordinary. Students who win “the Rhodes” are selected on the basis of their perceived potential to effect positive world change.

The irony, noted by many of Cecil Rhodes’ biographers and commentators, is that the Scholarship’s founder did not meet his own criteria. Sir Anthony Kenny, former Warden of Rhodes House, wrote:

It is a striking feature of Rhodes’ specification for his Scholars that the qualities which he sought were not, with the exception of leadership ability, ones which he possessed himself. His academic performance was miserable: he took seven years to obtain a pass degree. He was an indifferent sportsman, and, while capable of astonishing endurance, he was constantly dogged by ill health. And while he was capable of great kindness to individuals in trouble, he was in general prepared to sacrifice the interests of the weakest members of the community to his grander political ambitions.¹

During his lifetime, and certainly after his death, Cecil Rhodes was denounced as an unscrupulous business buccaneer who, driven by self-interest and imperialist fervor, exploited and segregated the black natives of southern Africa. His record has many examples of sacrificing principle for expediency. Yet, Rhodes has also been called a “man of his era,” and in his time, he was held in very high regard (sometimes, bordering on adoration) by many businessmen and heads of state, including Queen Victoria and Kaiser Wilhelm II. Indeed, the Scholarship that

¹ Anthony Kenny, “Afterward.” *The History of the Rhodes Trust*, Ed. Anthony Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 524

bears his name stands as a memorial — possibly more enduring than bricks and mortar — to his achievements, rather than to his sins. Still, the reprehensible side of the founder cannot simply be wished into oblivion, a fact that has proven troubling for some Scholars.²

This article examines Rhodes’ life and works to determine the extent of his continuing influence on the Scholarship that bears his name.

The Scholar

Cecil John Rhodes was born July 5, 1853 into a relatively modest background. His father was a Hertfordshire vicar whose family was of yeoman farmer stock. Rhodes — as, in fact, he preferred to be called instead of Cecil, even as a boy³ — was not provided with the same public school education given to his three older brothers (two of whom were sent to Eton). Instead, he attended the local grammar school where he did little to distinguish himself, winning only a classics scholarship for three years and a medal for elocution.⁴ At the age of 16 he left school, ostensibly to be tutored at home by his father for rigorous university exams, for which his rudimentary schooling had left him ill-prepared. At this point, Rhodes anticipated a career as either a barrister or a clergyman, professions that required university degrees. He did not, however, sit his exams the following year. A period of bad health and subsequent diagnosis of consumption led him to embark instead for Natal, South Africa where his brother Herbert was trying to earn a living as a cotton farmer.⁵

Rhodes had little success with cotton, due in part to his brother’s incompetence and negligence. However, in the late 1860s, huge diamond deposits had been found in South Africa, and Herbert Rhodes frequently abandoned the farm to go down to the diamond fields of Kimberley, a rough frontier town. Though Rhodes kept up the management of the farm on his

² In 1967, Richard Schaper, a white American applicant to the Scholarship, told his selection committee that although he vehemently disagreed with the social structures that had permitted Rhodes to amass such a fortune, he would nevertheless “accept the Scholarship and try to put some of the ‘blood money’ to use.” See Thomas J. and Kathleen Schaeper. *Cowboys into Gentlemen: Rhodes Scholars, Oxford, and the Creation of an American Elite* (United States of America: Berghahn Books, 1998), p. 238.

³ Cecil Rhodes never used his first name and even signed off on letters to his mother as “C.J. Rhodes.” See Anthony Thomas, *Rhodes* (London: BBC Books, 1996), p. 42.

⁴ The latter, several historians point out, is an anomaly, as the adult Rhodes was known to be a notoriously bad speaker. Indeed, biographer John Flint remarks that it “says little for the competition” at his grammar school! See John Flint, *Cecil Rhodes* (London: Hutchinson, 1976), p. 6.

⁵ Several of Rhodes’ biographers claim that this was a misdiagnosis, that the ailment that afflicted Rhodes — indeed, afflicted him all his life and was the ultimate cause of his death — was a “weak” heart.

own for a year, he ultimately left to join his brother in Kimberley. It was a fortunate decision. By 1873, Rhodes, through a combination of hard work, luck, and prudent partnerships, owned shares in the Kimberley mines worth about £10,000.⁶ While further success in the mines seemed certain, Rhodes had always had an ambition to pay his way through Oxford; he now had the money to do so.

It is arguable that Rhodes already had political aspirations; at the very least, he believed his studies at Oxford would cultivate the sort of reputation and social connections that could serve him well in the fields of law and government. Yet, the first Oxford College Rhodes applied to—University College—deemed him ill-prepared for the intellectual requirements of the University.⁷ He was admitted instead to Oriel College, his second choice, in 1873 where he read Classics (*Literae Humaniores*). As a result of ill-health and ongoing problems with the mines, Rhodes spent the next seven years alternating terms between Kimberley and Oxford before he obtained his B.A. pass degree.

In those seven years, Rhodes did little to distinguish himself at Oxford, academically or otherwise; however, it was there that his obsession with expanding and uniting the British Empire took root. In the 1870s, Britain, under the premiership of Benjamin Disraeli, acquired new territories in Africa and consolidated its hold over India. The publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) had engendered a new pseudo-scientific justification for racism, as many whites seized upon the idea that they occupied the top rung of the evolutionary ladder, and that their conquest and oppression of what they saw as the less fit, "lower-rung" civilizations of Africa and Asia was only natural. At that time, Oxford was a hotbed of imperialist fervor, notably led by the Slade Professor of Fine Art John Ruskin. In his inaugural address of 1870, Ruskin called on Britain to expand its empire or:

Perish, she must found colonies as fast and as far as she is able, formed of her most energetic and worthiest men; — seizing every fruitful waste ground she can set her foot on, and there teaching these her colonists that their chief virtue is to be fidelity to their country, and that

⁶ Flint, p. 20.

⁷ There is some uncertainty as to whether it was Rhodes' early schooling at a local grammar school, his failure on a Latin entrance exam, or his aspiration to gain merely a pass degree that led to his rejection from University College. See Schaeper & Schaeper, p. 3.

*their first aim is to be to advance the power of England by land and sea.*⁸

Though biographers dispute the degree to which Ruskin could have been an influence on Rhodes, it was around this time that Rhodes began writing his “Confession of Faith,” a manifesto proclaiming the supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon race, and his wish “to render myself useful to my country.”⁹ It was also during this period, in 1877, that Rhodes became a life member of the Masonic Order. Though he considered the secret rituals of the Masons ridiculous, he saw in their organization a way to achieve his own ideals. As he wrote in his “Confession”: “Why should we not form a secret society with but one object the furtherance of the British Empire and the bringing of the whole uncivilized world under British rule for the recovery of the United States for the making the Anglo-Saxon race but one Empire.”¹⁰ An addendum to this manifesto left his worldly possessions in trust to the attorney general and the secretary of state for the Colonies to carry out this mission in the case of his premature death. Rhodes’ next five subsequent wills were essentially variations on this “Confession.”

The Entrepreneur

Rhodes’ success in business was a product of both his ingenuity and his determination. For example, in the mid-1870s, when the Kimberley diamond diggers hit a hard, blue ground beneath the crumbly yellow soil, most sold off their claims for rock-bottom prices, thinking the mine had been exhausted. Rhodes, by contrast, bought all the claims that he could afford, which he and his partners amalgamated to form the De Beers Mining Company. This proved to be a critical move; it was later discovered that the blue ground was richer in diamonds than the yellow, and that it could be worked once it received prolonged exposure to air and sunlight.

Rhodes seemed to have few scruples when it came to advancing his interests. He was famous for saying, “Every man has his price,”¹¹ a maxim that appeared to hold true for much of his career. One of his early ventures involved securing a lucrative contract to pump water out of the Kimberley mines; after a short time, the mining board told Rhodes his contract was to be

⁸ Schaeper & Schaeper, p. 5.

⁹Cecil Rhodes, “Confession of Faith,” (1877) as reprinted in Flint, p. 248.

¹⁰ “Confession of Faith,” Flint, p. 249.

¹¹ Thomas, p. 93.

revoked because he lacked adequate equipment to keep the mines dry. By coincidence, when the board set up temporary pumping operations to replace Rhodes', the mines flooded after an unknown "speculator" bribed the engineer £300 to sabotage the machinery. This "speculator" was revealed as none other than Rhodes himself. Yet, in part because he was able to deliver his pumps on time immediately thereafter, Rhodes managed to escape any negative consequences associated with the scandal.

By the mid-1880s, the race was on for control of a monopoly over the diamond mines. As the mining companies knew, the only way to maintain the high price of diamonds was to restrict their output through consolidation of the individual companies. At this time, although Rhodes owned all the shares in the De Beers mine, his company was still smaller and worth less than Barney Barnato's Kimberley Central Company. His strategy — of borrowing money to buy every share of the Kimberley Company available — led to a stock market war with Barnato that drove prices up by 350 percent. Still, Rhodes kept his nerve and managed to acquire three-fifths of the shares before Barnato gave up. Following this victory, his plan was to reorganize these two companies to create a new corporation that would have the power:

To buy or sell anything at all, diamonds for sure, but also gold, coal, land, trademarks, patents, and all other property in Africa or elsewhere. It could trade, mine, manufacture, make roads and railways, construct canals, and erect gas and electric works, reservoirs, or anything "conducive to any of its objects," which appeared indeed to be limitless. It could move its headquarters anywhere. Most curious of all, the draft deed empowered the company to acquire "tracts of country," take grants and accept rights from territorial rulers, make treaties, and spend its assets on the administration and government of such territories.¹²

In 1888, dissident Kimberley Central shareholders took court action, charging that their company's amalgamation with the newly reorganized De Beers Consolidated Mines was illegal, as De Beers was no longer a "similar company." When the court ruled in favor of the petitioners, Rhodes thumbed his nose in response. As he already controlled Kimberley Central, it was not difficult to liquidate the company and sell its assets to De Beers. Thus, by 1891, Rhodes had acquired all the mines in South Africa, and in effect, 90 percent of the world's diamond production.

¹² Flint, pp. 90-1.

At this time, Rhodes had also become involved in the mining of gold in Witwatersrand. In 1887, he had formed Gold Fields of South Africa (later to become the Consolidated Gold Fields of South Africa) and organized it along the lines of De Beers, so that its trust deed gave it powers beyond the scope of gold mining. Although his profits from gold proved to be twice what he derived from De Beers, he confessed a general lack of enthusiasm and interest in the yellow metal. For Rhodes, it was power, not money, that was important. In his schemes and dealings, money was only “the means to the end, never the end itself.”¹³

The Empire-Builder

As his diamond empire had grown, Rhodes had realized that to gain the political support necessary for consolidation and expansion of the mines, he would have to enter politics. In 1881 he did so, as a junior member for Barkly West, a rural constituency of the Cape Parliament made up mostly of Dutch farmers. By 1890, he was prime minister of Cape Colony. Although Rhodes did not possess the quick intellect and eloquence required to be a good parliamentarian, he proved himself a skilled politician: perceptive, calculating, and excellent at building contacts and acquiring influence. Indeed, this man who once said, “I have never met anyone in my life whom it was not as easy to deal with as to fight,”¹⁴ was a charmer, able to convince men and women alike that he was on their side, a kindred spirit fighting for their cause.

Rhodes’ main concern was the territories to the north, where the British had not yet settled, and which offered the promise of gold, diamonds, and additional native labor. Should this land be acquired by the wrong hands (i.e., not his own), the value of his mines could be wiped out. By this time, the Liberal party had returned to power in England, and their ideology meant that even though they governed a country with extensive imperial interests, they were not eager to finance the building of empire. To make matters worse, the other European powers in Africa were beginning to expand their own territories in events that became known as the “Scramble for Africa.” Frustrated with his home country, Rhodes turned to the Afrikaners (Dutch settlers, also referred to as “Boers,” a Dutch word meaning “farmer”), in the belief that he could one day create an alliance of South African states powerful enough to support his plans in the north. In his efforts to curry favor with the Afrikaners, Rhodes voted for measures protecting agriculture and, more notoriously, to disenfranchise black African voters and to place them on a “native

¹³ Thomas, p. 263.

¹⁴ Thomas, p. 140.

reserve.” This last action was part of the “Glen Grey Act,” which gave each black African eight acres of land in the Glen Grey District which they were forbidden to divide or sell and which could only be passed down to the eldest son, effectively confining the men to their land.

Yet as other English charter companies began advancing in the north, Rhodes was forced to take action on his own. In 1888, he sent three of his contacts to meet with King Lobengula of the Matabele, a Zulu tribe living in the territory with which he was so concerned. These men were instructed to convince the king that what they wanted was to dig for minerals on his land, and that, in exchange for a monopoly on mining rights, they would provide him with large amounts of weaponry and ammunitions. However, the contract the king signed also granted the white men “full power to do all things that they may deem necessary to win and procure [these minerals].”¹⁵

Rhodes would use the ambiguity of this wording to his advantage, forwarding the document to London as proof of his right to Lobengula’s territory, and thus legitimizing his request for a royal charter. By 1889, Rhodes had secured a charter for his British South Africa Company and was able to lay claim to African territory stretching from the Indian Ocean almost to the Atlantic, and from the Limpopo River northwards to the African lakes. He called this new country “Rhodesia.” Through a series of intrigues involving the chartered company’s mounted police force, Rhodes and his men convinced the home government that an attack against the Matabele was necessary to protect the lives of the new settlers; in the end, the tribe was massacred.

Still, Rhodes felt his wealth and power were not secure. Rhodesia had not proved to be the goldmine, literally, that he had anticipated it to be. Instead, it was the mines of Johannesburg, located within the Boer Transvaal territory, which seemed to hold endless wealth. Although Rhodes had been working politically towards a peaceful absorption of the Transvaal, in 1895, he and his close associates concocted a plan to invade Johannesburg, overthrow its illiterate Boer president, and seize its gold fields. This event, the infamous Jameson Raid, involved the orchestration of a planned uprising among the working British expatriates of Johannesburg, which the Chartered Company’s troops, led by Dr. Leander Starr Jameson, would join and defend. Although the uprising did not take place, Jameson’s troops invaded the Transvaal and were consequently fired upon and arrested. In the scandal following the raid, Rhodes resigned

¹⁵ Thomas, p. 196.

his premiership of the Cape but managed to retain his charter. Politically, the raid led to the second Anglo-Boer War and the second Matabele War, costing 75,000 lives: 22,000 British soldiers (7,792 battle casualties, the rest through disease), 6,000 – 7,000 Boer soldiers, 20,000 – 28,000 Boer civilians and perhaps 20,000 black Africans.

The Legacy

When Rhodes died in 1902 at the age of 48, he left behind approximately £3.3 million¹⁶ and two highly successful mining companies, De Beers and Consolidated Gold Fields. His political contributions included the founding of the colonies of Northern and Southern Rhodesia (modern day Zambia and Zimbabwe) and aiding in the establishment of a prosperous agricultural industry in the African Cape. In order to achieve these goals, however, Rhodes ran rough-shod over the black African population and is considered by many to have laid the foundations of apartheid.¹⁷ With the Jameson raid, he sabotaged his long-held goal of creating a united South African federation, and prompted instead further enmity between British and Afrikaners. That Rhodes is better remembered for his eponymous Scholarship is likely due to its longevity. And if so, its success may have as much to do with skilful management by successive generations of Trustees as with the founder's vision.

Part Two: The Scholarship

In his 1877 “Confession of Faith,” the 23-year-old Cecil Rhodes proclaimed that, the “chief good in life” was “to render myself useful to my country.”¹⁸ At the time, he envisioned himself posthumously creating a secret society dedicated to the expansion of the British Empire; however, in Rhodes' last will, written nearly a quarter of a century later, this vision had been refined to the provision of education for “young Colonists at one of the Universities in the United Kingdom” in order to “[give] breadth to their views for their instruction in life and manners and [to instill] into their minds, the advantage to the Colonies as well as to the United Kingdom of the

¹⁶ £3.3 million in 1902 is equivalent to £250 million today.

¹⁷ See Thomas, p. 271.

¹⁸ “Confession of Faith,” Flint, p. 248.

retention of the unity of the Empire.”¹⁹ That this education should take place at Oxford University was no surprise. Rhodes was fascinated by the prevalence and prestige of Oxford graduates in British public life. An Oxford man himself, he believed the university’s residential college system played a vital role in the personal and social development of the student. Rhodes believed it essential the Scholarship be given to those who would “esteem the performance of public duties [their] highest aim” as opposed to mere bookworms.

At his death in 1902, Rhodes had provided for 52 Scholarships per year: 20 to be allotted to countries that were (then) part of the British Empire and 32 to the United States (two every three years for each then existing State).²⁰ In a codicil to his will, Rhodes allotted an additional five Scholarships to Germany, it being his belief that “an understanding between the three great powers [would] render war impossible and educational relations make the strongest tie.”²¹ The terms of the will called for an award of £300 per year to be awarded to Scholars for three consecutive years of study at Oxford. In 1903, the first twelve Scholars from Germany, Rhodesia and South Africa arrived at Oxford. The following year, all constituencies were represented.

Much discretion was left to the Scholarship trustees as to how the selection of Scholars should be regulated, and whether new Scholarships could be created. Since 1904, the list of Scholarship jurisdictions had grown to include India, Pakistan, Kenya, Hong Kong, Bermuda and the Commonwealth Caribbean. The Scholarships originally granted to the former country of Rhodesia have been reallocated to present-day Zambia and Zimbabwe. The Scholarship was opened to women in 1977. Scholars are now able to pursue graduate degrees. The typical term time for a scholar is two years, although, depending on the degree program chosen, the Scholarship may also be held for one or three years. The Rhodes Trust pays the entirety of each scholar’s educational and travel costs, as well as a maintenance allowance to support the scholar both during term time and over vacations.

¹⁹ “The Will of Cecil Rhodes” taken from “Appendix II” in Kenny, pp. 568-78.

²⁰ The 20 Scholarships allotted to the British Empire were distributed thus: 6 for Australia (one per colony or state); 5 for South Africa (one for Natal, and one each for four named schools in the Cape); 3 for Rhodesia; 2 for Canada (one for Ontario and one for Quebec) – this was later increased to 8; 1 for New Zealand; 1 for Newfoundland; 1 for Bermuda; and 1 for Jamaica.

²¹ Anthony, Kenny, “The Rhodes Trust and its Administration.” Kenny, p. 5. (It should be noted that between 1916 and 1925 and 1939 and 1970, Germany’s Scholarships were reallocated to countries within the British Empire.)

The Selection Process

Potential candidates for the Rhodes Scholarship are judged on the basis of the four criteria set forth in Cecil Rhodes' last will:²²

1. Literary and scholastic achievement;
2. Energy to use one's talents to the full, as exemplified by fondness for and success in sports;²³
3. Truth, courage, devotion to duty, sympathy for and protection of the weak, kindness, unselfishness and fellowship;
4. Moral force of character and instincts to lead, and to take an interest in one's fellow beings.

Initially, these criteria caused some consternation, as Oxford was (and certainly still is) an exclusive institution. Oxonians – tutors and their students – had misgivings about the caliber and class of foreign students to whom they were to open their gates. In particular, they were concerned that Scholarship winners, selected on the basis of “well-roundedness,” rather than strict academic achievement (which, no matter how excellent, was not likely to include a proper classical education), would lower the academic standard of the institution as a whole. One Oxford don is said to have “consoled himself with the thought that American savages would be so busy on the sports field that at least they would have little impact on the rest of college life.”²⁴ The agreement reached by the Organizing Secretary of the Scholarships, Dr. (later Sir) George R. Parkin and university officials was that Oxford's colleges would accept the Rhodes Scholars so long as they passed a basic examination called “Responsions,” which, among other subjects, tested for competence in Latin and Greek.²⁵

At this time, too, although all potential candidates were supposed to be judged by Rhodes'

²² This wording of the criteria can be found in the brochure “Oxford and the Rhodes Scholarships.” July 2007. *Office of the American Secretary of The Rhodes Trust Web site*. 24 February 2008 <<http://www.rhodesscholar.org/brochure.html>>.

²³ In Rhodes' will, this criterion was worded as “his fondness of and success in manly outdoor sports such as cricket, football and the like.”

²⁴ Taken from an article in the *New York Times*, 9 October 1903, p. 8, as referenced in Schaeper & Schaeper, p. 22.

²⁵ In 1919 this requirement was dropped.

four criteria, selection procedures varied across jurisdictions. In Germany, for instance, the Kaiser himself nominated the Scholars — as Rhodes had stipulated in his will — whereas, many constituencies, including the United States and Canada, made their selections through district committees of prominent individuals. In South Africa, Rhodes had specified that four out of the five Scholars be picked from specifically named schools.

Today, the selection process in nearly all jurisdictions requires candidates to submit evidence of their qualifications for the Scholarship, including academic transcripts, letters of reference, and an essay explaining the applicant's reasons for applying and proposed course of study. Candidates are then short-listed for an interview with a selection committee, the make-up of which includes individuals from various career fields, some of whom have themselves been Rhodes Scholars at Oxford. Even after being selected for a Scholarship, however, one is not assured a place at Oxford. He or she must also submit two samples of written work to the desired department of study; only after the candidate has been accepted both by an academic department and an Oxford college, can the Rhodes Scholarship be formally conferred.

Selection Concerns

Some of the issues the selection committees have faced over time include the problems of "brain drain" and the limitations of Rhodes' will concerning the selection of minorities and women. In some of the less developed Scholarship constituencies, the fact that many of the brightest and most ambitious Rhodes Scholars do not return to their home countries after completing their degree is worrisome — particularly given the original aims of the Scholarship to "render oneself useful to one's country." So great was this concern at the beginning of the twentieth century, that the New Zealand selection committee required that candidates promise to return to the country, and, "in some cases to follow a particular profession."²⁶ Even today, the Web site for the South African Rhodes Scholarships states: "In view of Africa's urgent development needs and its limited resources, it is essential for Rhodes Scholars from Southern Africa to be committed to working for the benefit of Africa in general or Southern Africa in particular."²⁷ The Web site goes so far as to say that those who cannot commit themselves to a future in support of their own country should not apply.

²⁶ Anthony Kenny, "The Smaller Constituencies." Kenny, p. 422.

²⁷"Information for Applicants – How to Apply." 28 April 2008. The Rhodes Scholarships in Southern Africa Web site. 30 April 2008 <<http://www.rhodestrust.org.za/apply.html#criteria>>.

As for women and minorities, the former were not permitted to apply according to the strict wording of Rhodes' will; the latter, while theoretically accepted under article 24, which reads, "No student shall be qualified or disqualified for election to a Scholarship on account of his race or religious opinions,"²⁸ were limited by the racial realities of the countries and institutions from whence they came. For instance, although the first black Scholar from the U.S., Alain LeRoy Locke, was selected in 1907, the Scholarship was not awarded to another black American until 1962. This racial disparity was due, in part, to the fact that the majority of the awards were handed out to traditionally white institutions. Traditionally black institutions, meanwhile, often did not have campus representatives whose role it was to inform their students of the opportunities afforded by the Rhodes Scholarship. As American colleges began to desegregate and admit more minority students, an increasing number of minorities applied to and won the Rhodes Scholarship.

On this issue, South Africa posed a particular problem. Unlike any other jurisdiction to which Scholarships were allocated, South Africa had to select four out of its five Scholars from among the graduates of the four private boys' secondary schools that had been named in Rhodes' will. As these schools did not admit black students, the Scholars selected from their ranks were uniformly white, and the fact that South Africa was under apartheid left little doubt that the fifth Scholar selected would be white as well. Not until the 1960s was there any great global criticism of the South African selection process. When there finally was an outcry, the Trustees remonstrated that they lacked the authority to change the terms of Rhodes' will; this could only be accomplished by amending the original piece of legislation under which his will was administered. Despite the Trustees' argument that selecting Scholars from these schools defeated the real purpose of Rhodes' will, the British courts maintained that it was the Trust's duty to faithfully execute the will as written.

In the 1970s, in an effort to remedy the situation, the Trustees created four new "South-Africa-at-large" Scholarships, to which candidates from anywhere in the country could apply and be considered by a national committee made up of black, as well as white, selectors. Additionally, the Rhodes Trust allocated monies for the creation of the Rhodes Trust Scholarships to fund the university study of promising black candidates and hopefully nurture the

²⁸It is generally believed that Rhodes, like many men of his time, used the word "race" as a synonym for culture, and that the inclusion of this clause in his will simply meant that the Scholarships were to go to both the Dutch and the British "races" of South Africa. Fortunately, the Rhodes Trustees assumed a wider interpretation of the word. See Schaeper & Schaeper, p.18.

development of black Rhodes Scholars. Not until the end of apartheid in 1991, however, was there a significant diversification in South African Scholars.

Women Join “the Club”

The rather unambiguous wording of Cecil Rhodes’ will – “male,” “his,” “him,” “manly,” “manhood” – makes it clear that the Scholarship was never intended for women. Still, at the beginning of the twentieth century, it had been hoped the Rhodes Trustees might use their authority to alter the terms of the Scholarship to admit women. In 1903, the year the first Rhodes Scholars were admitted to Oxford, one of the female colleges, Lady Margaret Hall, petitioned for women to be considered for the Scholarship, but to no avail. This request was turned down yet again, in 1920, the year that Oxford finally extended University membership to women.²⁹

The women’s movement prompted reconsideration of this topic once more in the 1960s. In 1968, having considered the possibility of opening the competition to women, the Trustees decided instead to create a Rhodes Fellowship that would allow for each of Oxford’s five women’s colleges to receive a visiting fellow from one of the Scholarship constituencies, in turn, for a period of one to two years. Yet this scheme was a far cry from democratizing the Scholarship itself, and by the 1970s, students – male and female, at Oxford and abroad – were beginning to protest and organize petitions against what they felt to be discrimination against women.

American students and institutions, in particular, put pressure on the Trustees to admit women. Several universities, including the University of Minnesota, endorsed female candidates and had them appear before Scholarship selection committees. While the committees were still obliged to select male Scholars, there was a more serious concern that universities would stop sending candidates to the committees altogether. This fear threatened to become a reality when, after the rejection of a female candidate endorsed by the University of Minnesota, the Minnesota Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit to prevent all Minnesotan higher educational institutions from participating in the program.

Much of the pressure from U.S. institutions was related to the passage, in 1972, of a series of amendments to education legislation, one of which, Title IX, stated: “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or

²⁹ For over 40 years previously, women had been allowed to attend lectures and take exams, but could not receive degrees.

subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” Applicants to the Rhodes Scholarship had to be endorsed by an educational institution, and the universities were in other ways instrumental in the selection process. The passage of Title IX meant that even tangential involvement with the Rhodes Scholarship, such as merely publicizing its existence, could result in the revocation of federal funding. This was, of course, a prospect more disastrous to universities than the loss of the Rhodes Scholarship.

Canadians, too, were concerned. Some filed formal complaints alleging that the Scholarships were discriminatory and thus in violation of the law. Arthur Scace, secretary of the Ontario selection committee, commented on the “strong feeling in all quarters that women should be admitted. I suspect that the lawsuits will start fairly shortly and we will be in a comparable position to our counterparts in the U.S. ... I hope the Trustees do something before we all end up in jail.”³⁰

It must be noted that, in addressing the issue of extending the Scholarship to women, the Rhodes Trust faced two great obstacles. The first, and more difficult to overcome, was that Rhodes’ most unambiguously-worded will was embodied in an Act of Parliament, and could therefore only be amended by a similar Act. Yet, the Trustees were told by Her Majesty’s Government that using Trust funds to promote the passage of any such bill would be illegal for the simple reason that “resources provided by a Testator could not be used to overturn his stated intent.”³¹ In addition, there was the problem that female Rhodes Scholars could only be housed in the women’s colleges. As there were only five women’s colleges, compared to 26 for men, Oxford could offer about a fifth as many places to women as to men. To accept female Rhodes Scholars from overseas would be to deny a number of already coveted places to highly competent British women. Oxford, the Trustees claimed, was simply not “in a position to offer hospitality to women from overseas on the same generous terms it can offer to men from overseas.”³²

By the mid-70s, several events occurred in conjunction to untie the hands of the Rhodes Trust. In 1973, the new Labour government in Britain introduced an Equal Opportunities Bill

³⁰ Douglas McCalla, “Canada and Newfoundland.” Kenny, p. 244.

³¹ William J Barber, “A Footnote to the Social History of the 1970s: The Opening of the Rhodes Scholarships to Women.” *The American Oxonian*. Spring 2000, p. 136.

³² David Alexander, “The American Scholarships.” Kenny, p. 152.

that focused on gender discrimination in employment. Seeing a possible solution to their problem, the Trustees wrote to the Home Secretary to request that the provisions of the anti-discrimination legislation allow trustees of educational charities to amend their trusts to provide equal opportunities to women.³³ In 1975, the bill passed with the Trustees' addendum, allowing educational charities thenceforth to petition the Secretary of State for Education and Science to make whatever changes were necessary to prevent gender discrimination. In December 1976, Education Secretary Shirley Williams (a woman) removed the word "manly" from the will, allowing women to apply for and participate in the Rhodes Scholarship. Also at this time, Oxford's colleges began to go co-educational, easing the burden of admitting female Scholars solely to women's colleges. The first class of female Rhodes Scholars entered Oxford in 1977.

Rendering Oneself Useful

During his 1992 presidential campaign, William Jefferson Clinton effectively became the Rhodes poster boy, the paragon of the smart, eloquent (some might say glib), powerful world leader prescribed in the will of Cecil Rhodes. The media attention bestowed upon the Scholarship over the last few decades has helped to create the mythos of the Rhodes as a passport to success in future life — political or otherwise, but certainly on a national or global scale. Yet how many Rhodes Scholars actually fit this mold?

In 1903, Parkin claimed that all the selection committees had to do was pick the men whom they could envision becoming President of the United States, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, or U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain.³⁴ Apparently, looks have been deceiving, as Clinton is the only Rhodes Scholar ever to have been elected president, and while three Rhodes Scholars have served as associate justices of the Supreme Court, neither the chief justice nor the U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain has ever emerged from the ranks of the Rhodes.

Since 1903, the preferred career choices of Rhodes Scholars have remained relatively constant, with the top three being education, law, and business, followed by medicine, science, government, journalism, writing, and broadcasting.³⁵ A significant criticism leveled against the

³³ Anthony Kenny, "The Rhodes Trust and its Administration." Kenny, p. 68.

³⁴ Lord Elton, Ed. *The First Fifty Years of the Rhodes Trust and the Rhodes Scholarships* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955), p. 9.

³⁵ Schaeper & Schaeper, pp. 277–9.

Scholarship is that it seems to have churned out many “bookworms” of the sort Rhodes disdained — he had intended to populate the world with Oxford-educated politicians and statesmen, not academics and lawyers. In 1953, the English *Daily Mail* ran an article under the headline: “He [Cecil Rhodes] Wanted Giants — But He Got Steady Citizens,”³⁶ which captured the essentially quiet leadership displayed by the solid professional class the Scholarship has largely produced. In truth, Rhodes Scholars are not among the ruling elite of every country — which should surely dispel the conspiracy theories about a secret society for world domination that have circulated since the conception of the Scholarships. Their career trajectories tend to mirror those of other high-achieving graduates of the well-regarded universities from which they are drawn.

Perhaps the more controversial onus that hangs over them today has to do with the memory of Rhodes’ treatment of the African natives and the precedent that many of his labor and voting laws set for apartheid. When it was first suggested that the Scholarship be opened to India, an Indian congressional leader warned “Indians with a grain of self-respect [to] think twice before accepting the crumbs thrown out from that arch-imperialist’s table;”³⁷ similarly, black and white Scholars alike have spoken of the “taint” of Rhodes’ “blood money,” and the need, if one were to accept it, to put it to good use.

The Rhodes Scholarship is not alone in its checkered origins, or its promotion of the “haves” at the expense of the “have-nots,” but like other prestigious institutions, it has democratized with the times — often dragging its feet, but evolving nonetheless. As for making use of the Scholarship, surely all education at higher and elite institutions should be “put to good use” — an education is only wasted when the student refuses to learn. Although Scholars sometimes speak of the “burden of expectation” that the Rhodes can bring, failing to meet the dictates of the founder’s vision is hardly a crime. Far more serious would be to blur the connection between the Scholarship and its “bloody” origins, thereby disowning the founder. Cecil Rhodes remains a noteworthy figure. Perhaps, for a group of young people groomed for worldly success, it is particularly instructive to contemplate how swiftly a set of ideals able to inspire remarkable accomplishment by a man widely respected, can become generally reviled.

³⁶ From *Oxford Today*, Trinity issue, 1993, 7, as cited in Schaeper & Schaeper, p. 281.

³⁷ Anthony Kenny, “The Smaller Constituencies.” Kenny, p. 450.