

# EVENT REPORT

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

SOUTH AFRICA

HANNA SCHNEIDER

July 2018

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## Discourse Café - The Qunu 9

### Reflections and Documentary on the Mandela Month Leadership Conversation at Qunu

**On 26th July 2018, the Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert Institute (FVZS) at Stellenbosch University (SU) in cooperation with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) hosted the fourth Discourse Café at the Stellenbosch University Museum.**

The Discourse Café series aims at promoting a culture of informed debate on various issues with the specific topic of this evening being "The Qunu 9 – Reflections and Documentary on the Mandela Month Leadership Conversation at Qunu". The event thus centred around the personal experience and impressions of nine selected students from Stellenbosch University who had the opportunity to travel to Nelson Mandela's birth place Qunu in the Eastern Cape region of South Africa on the occasion of Mandela Month.

The discourse event was opened by Zama Nkabinde, Programme Coordinator of the African Leadership Development Programme at the FVZS, who addressed some welcoming remarks to the audience

and introduced the theme of the evening.

Christina Teichmann, Project Manager of the KAS Office Cape Town welcomed the audience on behalf of the Foundation and presented the mandate of KAS in South Africa to promote Democracy, Good Governance and the Rule of Law. Moreover, Ms Teichmann remarked the Foundation's appreciation for the students' initiative, highlighting that a transformative journey like the one to Qunu not only constitutes a travel to the roots of Nelson Mandela, but can also be a travel to the roots of the individual students themselves, thereby uniting young people of very diverse backgrounds.

#### Crossing inner borders

After the opening remarks, a documentary comprising footage taken during the students' journey was screened, showing the pure emotions and conversations of the students during the trip. Through the documentary it thus became clear

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that for all students and also the staff members accompanying them, the journey was essentially also an opportunity for reflecting on and exchanging views about crucial topics like identity, leadership, racism and the South African society in general. Students thus described that crossing the border to the Eastern Cape also meant crossing an inner border and opening themselves up for the conversations and experiences ahead.

### **Opportunity for reflection and dialogue**

Following the documentary screening, a dialogue between the students and staff members was guided by questions of one of the Qunu 9 participants, encouraging all of the participants to share their memories and reflections from the journey after having returned to Stellenbosch. For many of the students, especially their visit at the Walter Sisulu University in the Eastern Cape remained a striking memory since they realized that the culture at that university, which is traditionally predominantly hosting black students, was very different from the culture they knew from Stellenbosch.

In comparing their impressions from the two universities, the students critically mentioned that they miss a similar sense of collectivity

at Stellenbosch University, where they feel a dominant notion of individualism that seems to preclude alternative and more communal forms of leadership.

### **Experiences around race, identity and leadership**

Moreover, being students from very diverse social, but also racial backgrounds, the trip also constituted an opportunity for them to get to know the experience that others make at Stellenbosch University. Some of the nine students, who also come from different fields of study, accordingly reported that it was very shocking for them to hear that fellow students still feel discriminated against on racial grounds at the university today. In line with that, they explained that only through the open – and also emotional - dialogue at Qunu, they came to understand that their own feelings are not necessarily shared by all other students on campus and that there is a need to come together and address these challenges, both between the students but also at an institutional level.

During the last part of the Discourse Café, the discussion was opened for including questions and remarks from the audience, with many participants engaging in a lively and honest debate moderated by Zama Nkabinde. With the

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formal part of the event eventually coming to an end, it could however be seen that the topics discussed by the "Qunu 9" during their trip are of great interest and relevance to a broad audience, thus providing a base for more fruitful dialogue within Stellenbosch University and beyond.



**Impressum**

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