

**TRIBUTE FOR A PHENOMENAL WOMAN:
DR BEATRICE WIID - THE VISIONARY FOUNDER,
TRUST CHAIR, INTERCHANGE FOUNDATION (IF)**

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The major input from Marthe Muller (IF trustee)

“My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humour, and some style” Maya Angelou

Beatrice Wiid would never have said like this quote personally, but, in writing a tribute in honour of this phenomenal icon, compassionate, diplomatic, humanitarian and enthusiastic visionary... it so is befitting her ...even the well-known maxim of the Interchange foundation “Together we become” also so apt of this grand lady. A lady who respected all, no matter what their creed, socioeconomic status or belief systems were.

I met Dr Beatrice Wiid personally in the 80s during a historical Congress held at the University of Bloemfontein. She was one of many professionals in the Human Movement Sciences Departments from the different Universities in South Africa, with Inspectress in Physical Education for Girls of the 4 Education Departments (the then White, Coloured, Indian and Black Education Departments), Lecturers in Physical Education at the various National Teacher Training Colleges joined this group of professional Sport Specialists, Scientists, Heads of Physical Education Departments and Government officials for a congress in Physical Education, Sport and Sport Sciences. This was an exceptional platform to get all together on the same platform enhancing the focus on Physical Education for Women and Girls.



Photo credit: A historical meeting at the University of Bloemfontein at a Physical Education Congress in 1987. Beatrice Wiid standing forth from the left at the back row between Amelia du Toit and Dr Hantie du Toit, In front – centre-with the black bag under her arm is Professor Isabelle Nel - a former vice-President of IAPESGW. Professor Edith Katzennellenbogen second from left in the second row. In red, in front, third from left in front Doreen Solomons,

Dr Beatrice Wiid obtained the degrees B.Sc., B.Ed., M.Ed. and D.Ed. at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. She worked as a lecturer and senior lecturer at colleges and

universities her entire professional life, including at Purdue University. During her long academic career, she served as Director of the Institute of Sport and Movement Studies at the University of Stellenbosch (1986-1990), member of the working group of the National Curriculum for school Physical Education (1972-1983) and co-researcher for four research projects sponsored by the Human Sciences Research Council.

Her community service record includes her being Co-Director of Educational Camps at Tricelle, a piece of land she and Prof. Isabelle Nel bought for this purpose (1962-1984); Director of Interchange Foundation (1988-2004), of which she remained an active participant and leader until her death; Co-ordinator and script writer for a 13-television series, "Together we Become" (1993); Chief Coordinator of the Youth Peace Festival, "Together we Become" (1994) with national attendance of 10 000 children; Facilitator and Co-ordinator of Interchange Foundation Projects such as "Multicultural Educational Exchange" for youth and adults (1962-1994), "Homes not just Houses" (1992-1996) and "Creating viable and unified Communities" (1992-2021).

As early as 1962, Dr Beatrice Wiid and her life partner, Prof. Isabelle Nel, first set out to build bridges between different cultures in South Africa, through organising educational recreational camps to promote bilingualism and better understanding between English-and Afrikaans-speaking children on a piece of land called Tricelle. These camps were held over a period of 21 years, and involved nearly 1500 children.



Photo Credit: Dr Beatrice Wiid and Prof. Isabelle Nel (former vice President of IAPESGW)



Photo credit: Dr Beatrice Wiid with her dog "Tolka", and fellow Tricelle Movement Science specialists, Corné Rossouw, Prof. Isabelle Nel, and Prof. Edith Katzenellenbogen

In 1986, the target shifted to serve multi-cultural groups, with the aim of promoting positive attitudes between people, establish good inter-group relations and build self-esteem among people. During the late eighties, Tricelle handed the baton over to a

new initiative called "Operation Interchange," as it recognised that the scope of focusing only on school children was too narrow. The new scope included all generations, to address a broader definition of social challenges. "Operation Interaction" was launched through the Department of Human Movement Science and the Institute for Sport and Movement Studies of the University of Stellenbosch. The purpose was to contribute to building a South Africa where peaceful co-existence, quality of life and nation-building formed the focus of co-existence. I assisted at two of these camps presenting the National Dance section to these eager girls.



Photo credit: Young girls and boys at separate Tricelle camps.

During the late '80s and early '90s, the political landscape of South Africa changed drastically with the release of Nelson Mandela. Operation Interchange had to adapt, and as a result, the "Interchange Foundation" was formally constituted in 1989 as a non-governmental and non-profit organisation to continue operating the community service aspect of "Operation Interchange". The "Interchange Foundation" has kept to the guiding principle of "together we become" and have continually evolved, to eventually support the objectives and goals of the National Development Plan.

Thousands of South Africans have participated in Tricelle/Operation Interaction/Interchange Foundation activities since 1962. It will require millions of committed South Africans to collaborate towards reviving such opportunities for multi-cultural interaction, using social action values to co-create viable, compassionate and caring communities.

Networking with numerous other community organisations was a feature of the projects Dr Wiid managed. She was happiest when surrounded by collaborators, and sharing her vision of community-led development.



Although Dr Wiid retired in 1990, after 35 years as lecturer and senior lecturer at the University of Stellenbosch, (having started in 1954) her interest in the personality development of children and her vision of creating viable, compassionate and caring communities remained vibrantly alive.

She emphasized in 1994, at the 1st Africa Regional Conference on Physical Education, Recreation and Dance in Botswana that “the need towards the healing process in education in any community due to injustices or adverse circumstances is a universal phenomenon”. Such a process will have to consider the needs of all, and must involve all parties concerned. Basic human values are a fundamental tool that contributes towards acceptable behaviour, peaceful co-existence and group solidarity. Realising these values at grass roots level within a community is a wise starting point. To live according to common beliefs, “action values” may help to endorse “right” practices.”

In the last year of her life she was named one of 17 Social Justice Champions by Prof. Thuli Madonsela, Social Justice Chair at the Department of Law at the University of Stellenbosch, and she initiated a new community development project with 10 families living in Zinsa Close in Enkanini, Khayelitsha, where she had donated a home to Natasha, one of the Helderberg Retirement Village



Photo Credit: Dr Beatrice Wiid and Professor Thuli Madonsela in 2020. Centre: with Doreen Solomons. Right: Thuli Madonsela with Marthe Muller

employees. Until the last weeks of her life she worked closely with her many collaborators to create viable and unified communities. We extend our deepest condolences to her family, her many friends and collaborators, and to all those who knew and loved her. May her example of selfless and caring service to the wellbeing of others invigorate our nation.

Dr Beatrice Wiid was one of the special guests at the 19th Congress of the International Association of Physical Education and Sport for Girls and Women at Stellenbosch University in 2009 and together with Prof Chiyoe Matsumoto, we honoured these two phenomenal women during the Opening Ceremony for their passion and their continuous focus for women in Physical Education and sport.

Dr Wiid has been working closely over the years with Professor Isabelle Nel, Dr Edith Katzennellenbogen, Cornë Rossouw, Amiene van der Merwe, Dr Liz Bressan, Dr Maxi Weixleederer, Kobus Visagie and Metrisia Terblanche in the Breede River valley. Some of them, until recently will have fond and nostalgic memories they shared with her, academically, during workshops, at camps, critical discussions and being in a close knit friendship over many memorable years.

Doctor Wiid had an insatiable passion for what she believed in. A sharp thinker and communicator. Two weeks after hearing that she was frail and in hospital and then

doing better, I sent her a message of wellbeing...soon after that on the 26th January, she sent me a message that she wanted to contact Metrisia Terblanche and I as there was an urgent need for weekend camps!! She ended off this last message to me:

Hou die gees jonk, Liefde Beatrice (Keep your spirit young. With Love. Beatrice).

This... I will definitely do, from a woman of such great integrity whom I respected tremendously.

I quote and echo the sentiments from an obituary that was put in a local Afrikaans newspaper by the Family, Friends and the Interchange Foundation who are celebrating her life:

“With sadness, but gratitude do we take leave of an extraordinary thinker, mentor and friend – a spirit greater than we can ever comprehend. We thank Dr Beatrice Wiid for the inspiration, wisdom and unknown passion she had for our country and its people. We are grateful that she never stopped dreaming and believing. Our appreciation to her - that through word and deed – she taught us what it meant to live together. Her leadership and friendship will make us strong and inspire us to strive to follow in her footsteps. She has earned the right to surrender with honour. On behalf of many people in various communities which she has touched: Ngiyabonga Gogo! (Thank you Great mother)!!

From the willow tree in Jonkershoek Avenue to the furthest end of the universe – we will carry the flame that was ignited by her and keep it burning passionately.

Together we become!

Travel light, friend”... (translated)

Until we meet again Beatrice Maria Wiid

Thank you for your life... Thank you for your example.

Rest in peace

Doreen Solomons

South Africa

