



Founded 1922

HERSCHEL SENIOR SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

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Dear Parents

We need women who are so strong they can be gentle, so educated they can be humble, so fierce they can be compassionate, so passionate they can be rational, and so disciplined they can be free.

Kavita N. Ramdas (Ramdas is director of the Open Society Foundations' Women's Rights Programme and is a globally recognized advocate for gender equity and justice).

When I messaged the Head girls to ask them to share a sentence or two on what Women's Day means to them, Jenna Betty thought immediately of this empowering quote on Nicole Arendse's classroom door. Nicole Arendse is Jenna's tutor. I love the fact that this inspiration was posted on a classroom door. In walking around the school, I have noticed the extensive positive and thought-shaping messaging on classroom and corridor walls and doors. These are the messages that seep into the memory of Herschel students and teachers and they are empowering, inspiring and transformative.

International Women's Day was celebrated on the 8 March. In South Africa we celebrated Women's Day on the 9 August, this past weekend. Given the latest statistics from StatsSA and the World Economic Forum, one could argue that there is not a whole lot to celebrate; especially with respect to the high levels of gender-based violence and discrimination against women in the workplace. "South Africa has one of the highest rates of violence against women

and girls in the world, and a femicide rate that is five times the global average, with an estimated 12.1 in 100,000 victims each year. South Africa's gender-based violence statistics (GBV) are equal to a country at war". (Megan Gieske author of the blogsite below, which I include because it makes very interesting reading and highlights Cape Town-based NGOs working for women's rights):

<https://www.one.org/international/blog/gender-based-violence-ngo-cape-town>

This year's theme for Women's Month is "Generation Equality: Realizing Women's Rights for an Equal Future". The concept of Generation Equality is a global campaign and links South Africa to global efforts to achieve gender equality by 2030. The theme of 2021 is *Let's all choose to challenge*. It appeals to all South Africans to challenge and call out gender bias and inequality. It also encourages us to seek out and celebrate women's achievements.



<https://twitter.com/presidencyza/status/1291634060868149249>

As an independent girls' school, it is our duty to equip our students with an understanding of the importance of allyship amongst women and of our duty of care to one another; it is also important to ensure that we demonstrate the independence, equality and aspiration that supports the path to gender equity and justice. **Gender equality is a human fight, not a female fight** (Frieda Pinto). If we are to achieve gender equity, we need the engagement of all people because it is everyone's responsibility. This is a societal issue.

What I love about Herschel students is that they absolutely get this! Below are a number of responses which the House Directors kindly shared with me. I hope that you will be left feeling as encouraged and inspired as I was when I read them. I have used the last line from June Jordan's poem as a heading for this collection of statements from Herschel students:

WE ARE THE ONES WE HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR.

(June Jordan, *Poem for South African Women*)

To me, Women's Day is a celebration of the beings that provide the planet with life. It's the appreciation of all women around the world despite any differences and it's a day that unites women-kind as a whole. It is a day that allows us to remember women have struggled and are still struggling for equality and to appreciate them. – Jaryd Stewart (Gr 12)

As a teenage girl in today's society I believe that Women's Day is a reminder to all South Africans of the history of women not only in South Africa but across the world. It acts as a reminder that we as women are powerful and worthy of being seen in society as equals to men. That we as women are faced with so much from bearing the responsibility of carrying children, being patronised, GBV and being

treated as the less important gender and that it still happens today no matter how far we've come. Women are important and most of all we are fighters and together we can make our way to the top! – Taskya Pillay (Gr 9)

Women's Day symbolises the collective efforts of all those past, present and to come as they redefine what it means to be a woman and defy the barriers society places on them. It is a day to celebrate to mourn and to come together as women and to remember the fight we came from and the fight we have ahead of us." – Haadiyah Ebrahim (Gr 12)

Women's Day is about honouring all empowered and inspiring women around the world and their efforts in shaping a more equal future. – Laura Formby (Gr 12)

This Women's Day I was inspired to take up more space in society; there is power in assertiveness. We must recognize how far we have come, without forgetting how far we still have to go. – Jenna Betty (Gr 12)

To me Women's Day means unity it's not about men and women being separate, it's about the world celebrating women and our individuality – 'Viola Unite-Penny (Gr 8)

Women's day is about treating women and men equally and not about praising and parading women just on this one day. It is a reminder to treat women fairly and equally on every single day of the year not just the 9th of August. I feel greatly privileged that South Africa has a day like Women's Day. – Suzy Whall (Gr 10)

Women's day is a very special and important day to notice not only the women from the past that have helped women seek the rights they deserve, but also the women around us like our teachers and mothers who give us so many opportunities to be great women too. – Sienna Roussouw (Gr 8)

Women's day marks the anniversary of a day in which our women stood up for freedom and equality and I think it is important to remember that this women's day. I think it's also important to celebrate women's day and this month of August by showing love to our fellow women despite any differences we may have, and to serve one another through acts of genuine kindness and love. Use this day as a reminder to show our appreciation and love to the women in our lives. – Ester Couves (Gr 10)

Women's day in South Africa provides an important opportunity to pay tribute to the contribution and role of women in society and to reflect on progress made and current challenges in achieving gender equality. National Women's Day commemorates women from all generations who've made significant contributions to South Africa's freedom and democracy. – Ruby Moller (Gr 11)

To me Women's Day is a day of recognition. where society actually acknowledges how much women do for us and how we would struggle without them, it is a day that allows me to be thankful for the all the women who have immensely impacted my life, whether it be my mother, my friends, my teachers, or my sisters. – Zaynah Darsot (Gr 9)

A celebration of the women who have inspired, empowered and guided. The women who make me proud to be a woman. – Danielle Gie (Gr 10)

Women's Day is a way of honouring all women in south Africa for their achievements and is a remembrance of the struggle for gender equality and economic empowerment of women. – Sophie Vickers (Gr 8)

Women's Day is the celebration of the sacrifices and difficulties women in my country have undergone to better my future. – Natasha Paul (Gr 12)

Women's Day is a day to honour and acknowledge all the wonderful woman in this world who have been at the forefront of fighting against gender inequality and bringing solidarity through physical and spiritual outlets. I feel very privileged to not only honour myself, but also all of the women who have suffered and who don't have a voice. Woman's day is a reminder of how far we have come and how far we still have to go. – Jaime Finlayson (Gr 11)

Further comments from students across a range of grades expressed heartfelt and insightful sentiments:

"Women's day is a celebration of the women of today and the women who paved the way. Women fought for our rights in the past and now it is our turn to carry on the fight".

"It's the day we celebrate women, honour and acknowledge them for their contributions that they have made to the community".

"A day of acknowledgement; no negative or positive connotations – just an acknowledgement of where we are at, how far we have come, and how much further we need to go."

"It is an acknowledgement of all the amazing women and what they've been through".

"The day to celebrate all the powerful around us".

"Celebrating and empowering all women".

"A reminder of the struggles that women had to go endure so that we could be free".

"A reminder that despite all the progress women have made against the patriarchal society we still have a responsibility to keep fighting for all women's rights and equity for women."

We can be assured that Herschel students are well aware of the ongoing need to stand together; to take up space and to have their voices heard in the struggle for equality. The messaging is consistent, insistent and collaborative and as we celebrate the women we know, we are reminded of the incredible responsibility that we have in delivering on the tagline that underpins the Herschel experience: ***Learning to make a difference.***

Poem for South African Women (June Jordan) is an inspiring reminder of the longevity of this cause. Let us not forget the courageous women who marched on Pretoria on 9 August 1956, laying down a foundation for the pursuit of societal justice and equality that is highlighted in August, but that requires a sustained focus way beyond a designated month!

Poem for South African Women – June Jordan
Commemoration of the 20,000 women and children who, on August 9, 1956, presented themselves in bodily protest against the “dompas” in the capital of apartheid. The poem was presented at The United Nations, August 9, 1978.

Our own shadows disappear as the feet of
thousands
by the tens of thousands pound the fallow land
into new dust that
rising like a marvelous pollen will be
fertile
even as the first woman whispering
imagination to the trees around her made
for righteous fruit
from such deliberate defence of life
as no other still
will claim inferior to any other safety
in the world

The whispers too they
intimate to the inmost ear of every spirit
now aroused they
carousing in ferocious affirmation

of all peaceable and loving amplitude
sound a certainly unbounded heat
from a baptismal smoke where yes
there will be fire

And the babies cease alarm as mothers
raising arms
and heart high as the stars so far unseen
nevertheless hurl into the universe
a moving force
irreversible as light years
traveling to the open
eye

And who will join this standing up
and the ones who stood without sweet company
will sing and sing
back into the mountains and
if necessary
even under the sea
we are the ones we have been waiting for

from *Passion* (1980) and from *Directed by Desire*.
The Collected Poems of June Jordan.



HERSCHEL OLYMPIC CLOSING CEREMONY



Congratulations to Ms Bowren's tutor group for designing the best Olympic Poster (far left poster)

Please check in to the Parent Hub on the intranet to engage in topical subjects and educational issues, as well as topics that explore aspects of the transformational journey at Herschel.

Current focus areas include: *Creating community and shaping culture* and *Unity in Diversity*.

Please pop on to the site and let us know what you would like to hear more of and what issues are of interest to you. We would welcome input as the aim of the Parent Hub is to create a vibrant space for brave conversations and engagement through sourcing a range of texts in response to your needs. Please see the contact tab on the right-hand side of the page which allows you to email your ideas and suggestions.

The Parent Hub has the potential to become a gateway in to exciting and open conversations that directly impact the Herschel Community.

BABY DRIVE UPDATE



This week a generous donation of 1000 units of baby formula was delivered to the Shellcross Charity Foundation in KZN as part of our Herschel Baby Drive. The Shellcross Foundation is now busy distributing the formula to those families where it is really needed. (Taskya Pillay, Gr 9)