



Dear Parents, Old Boys and Friends of Michaelhouse

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Rector's Message

This coming Sunday, 21 March, is one of the four days in the annual calendar which our boys have earmarked as important to commemorate. It is Human Rights Day and part of our assembly on Monday was dedicated to understanding the importance of the day. Our Senior Prefect, Kwande Dhlomo, spoke to the boys and staff about the significance of human rights and, instead of my paraphrasing his comments, I thought it appropriate simply to use his own words to endorse its relevance for us all:

“This may seem obvious, but in exactly 6 days it will be Sunday. Now initially that may seem unimportant to you, but I can assure you that Sunday marks something momentous, historical, generation defining. For a whole 24 hours we will not have to see the staff and they won't have to see us. Now obviously I am joking, but Sunday does indeed mark something momentous, historical and generation defining. Human Rights Day. To those of you who know, this day is reserved as the day where we as South Africans collectively recognize the struggle for human rights for all. I think it is important that we are all aware of the history of this day, and so allow me to take you on a trip down memory lane.

Just about 61 years ago on 21 March 1960 a group of demonstrators gathered outside Sharpeville police station. Initially the crowd was estimated at about 10 000 and they were there to offer themselves up for arrest for refusal to carry their passes. These were the passes that restricted and controlled travel, dictating when, where, and for how long black South Africans could stay within white areas. Initially the atmosphere was described as peaceful and rather festive but, as the crowd grew, the police officers started to worry more and more until the crowd amounted to about 20 000. There is some debate about what sparked the violence, but around the early afternoon the police officers started firing on the demonstrators. The incident left 69 dead as well as 180 people injured. In 1996 Nelson Mandela declared 21 March should be recognized as national Human Rights Day in memory of the happenings and in celebration of the newly-established freedom for all South Africans. Along with this came the launch of the South African Human Rights Commission, a non-profit



organization which aims to support constitutional democracy through promoting, protecting and monitoring the attainment of everyone's human rights in South Africa without fear, favour or prejudice. 21 March is solemnly remembered as the Sharpeville Massacre, and we honour those who gave up their lives for the struggle on that day.

Even though this event happened what seems like eons ago, there were still decades of conflict that followed this. Few of us here may know people who were around in that time. Maybe even fewer of us know people who were there at Sharpeville, but regardless of that this day should affect us all. With all its horror and meaning the day has relevance that we as young... and old... people should be able to embrace whole-heartedly. Even though the apartheid regime was officially dismantled by 1994, it would be naïve of us to believe that everywhere things are currently in order. It's not at all far-fetched to think that somewhere somehow people are still engaged in a constant struggle for their human rights. Whether it be their access to healthcare, food, water or their access to social security. We need to acknowledge that we do have a connection to the past and it still has a prevalence today, and so while you think there is no way to effectively commemorate the day, there is. You can donate to organisations that are set up to uplift and maintain the human rights of masses, like the SAHRC I previously mentioned or People Against Suffering, Suppression, Oppression and Poverty (PASSOP). Or, and this may be a bit harder, you can have conversations! Understand how people may have been affected in the past. Understand how people can still be affected today by the past. Understand how you could, whether it be intentional or not, possibly contribute to the undermining of the human rights of others. I think the biggest mistake we make today is that we think that by acknowledging the past we revitalize the demons that dwelled in it, but this couldn't be further from the truth. Self-interrogation can allow people like us who have immense privilege to learn how we may sometimes fall short. How we can sometimes do more, and I think that each and every one of us here has both the capacity and the capability for that self-interrogation.

So, when this Sunday comes about, if you don't do anything else, just reflect. Maybe reflect on what I have said here today or reflect on your own understanding of what Human Rights Day is and what it may mean to you or your friends or your family. I, for one, believe that it will contribute to your becoming not only a more holistic Michaelhousian but a more holistic South African. So, while you are lying in your bed or working at your desk or playing on the fields or practising in the Music School, just keep a few of those things in mind".



Sports & Cultural Achievements

Athletics

Tshiamo Boikhutso took part in a Durban League meeting. He came 3rd in his age group in the 200m (24,90sec) and 2nd in his age group in the 400m (54,89sec). Congratulations, Tshiamo!

Waterpolo

This past Friday we held the Inter-House matches and, after shoot-outs, the results were:

1st – Founders

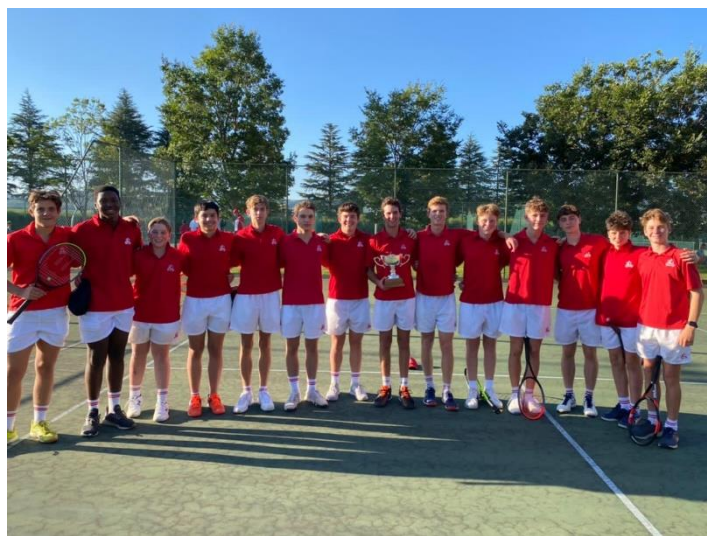
2nd – Ralfe

3rd – Farfield

The staff won the internal Inter-House Waterpolo league that was completed on Saturday.

Tennis

The past two weeks saw the introduction of the Clark Cup which is a trophy contested between the staff and the top 28 tennis players in the school.



The first round of the year was narrowly won by the boys 8-6.



Debating

The PMB Debating League held the second round of senior debates on Thursday 11 March on the on-line platform, Discord. The motion was *This House, as a developing country, would prioritize Technical and Vocation Training (TVET) colleges over universities.*

Michaelhouse 1 which comprised **Jadin Jordaan, Ross Keep, Kwande Dhlomo** and **Jason Makhele**, as proposers of the motion, won their debate against Howick and **Ross Keep** was awarded Best Speaker.

Michaelhouse 2 which comprised **David Nienaber, Frederick Waller, Xihluke Marhule** and **Mayenziwe Nene**, as the proposers of the motion, won their debate against St Anne's and **Xihluke Marhule** was awarded Best Speaker.

Well done to our debaters on a successful week.

B Block Open Day

The B Block Open Day will take place online this term. Your son's teachers will be or have been in touch with you to set up online meetings which will take place at a mutually convenient time starting yesterday, Tuesday 16 March and being concluded on Tuesday 23 March 2021.

If your son would like to change subjects, please note that the deadline for subject changes next term is **Friday 30 April**.

D Block Discussion Series

This year it was not possible to run our D Block camp at the start of term. The camp is designed to help the boys think through the year ahead, consider issues of relevance to their Grade 9 year and think about how they can make their D Block time significant. In particular, there is a focus on how to create and maintain good relationships.

In place of the camp for 2021 the D Block had a series of discussions with their Assistant Housemaster. These took place on Monday mornings and involved some input from a guest speaker followed by about 45 minutes of conversation in House groups regarding the content of the talk.



The first speaker was Derek Redfern, a lawyer based in Pietermaritzburg. Derek's talk was '**Actions Bring Consequences**' and looked at the consequences, legal and otherwise, of poor decisions or poor relationships.

This was followed by a presentation by psychologist, Tim Barry, who spoke to the boys about the teenage brain, how to maintain good mental health and developing their '*preferred self*'. Tim stressed the importance of the teenage years in laying down strong neural pathways that lead to lifelong reflection and empathy.

Finally, for this term Rob Pluke, also a psychologist, examined how to make **meaning at Michaelhouse** and how to make sense of 2020. He introduced the boys to the 5 lessons that we all must learn if we are to make sense of our lives. The discussion that followed considered what each House group could use, lose, and improve from their E Block year.

Over the next three quarters we hope to include some further sessions on relevant topics, including social media and subject choice.

End of Term Transport Bookings

Please find attached, as a separate document to this newsletter, the details of the teachers travelling on the various buses at the end of term. (Annexure A)

A reminder to parents to please ensure you place your bus bookings for the Durban and Johannesburg buses **before midday on Monday 22 March** via the portal and inform **Nirvana Naicker**, the School's Transport Co-ordinator, of any flight details and airport drop-offs/collections.

For any queries please contact **Mrs Nirvana Naicker**, School Transport Co-ordinator:

Cell: 060 562 3954

Office: (033) 234 1170

E-mail: opsadmin@michaelhouse.org

Caring for Life Initiative

A few weeks ago the students were asked to show their gratitude to healthcare workers involved in the fight against COVID-19 by writing a note of appreciation and donating a small amount to go towards care parcels for these healthcare workers. The care drive was initiated by a local Educational Psychologist, Naomi Holdt, and has targeted the Pietermaritzburg hospitals' frontline workers. Over R6000 was raised from donations by staff and students.



In Monday's school assembly the boys were reminded of the value of gratitude by our Second Prefect, Jason Makhele, and the importance of appreciating those who care for our health needs. It also provided an opportunity to recognise and thank the healthcare workers on our doorstep. A portion of the donations was handed over to our community outreach branch of St Raphael's, which provides primary healthcare services to our local community (represented by Nkosi Mahlaba from our Community Partnership Trust). Our San Sisters were also thanked for their hard work, and given small care packages on behalf of the students.



With my best wishes

ANTONY CLARK
RECTOR