



# The US Witsie



**Wits Fund Newsletter September 2023**

[witsfund.org](https://witsfund.org)

Wits turned 100 in 2022. Learn more [here](#).

SUMMER CAME AND WENT, and here we are, renewed with energy and focus, looking to make a positive impact in the world. In this month's newsletter, we carry stories of donations made, and lives already changed because of it.

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## **ZOLA DENTAL CLINIC: TRANSCENDING PHILANTHROPY**

The Zola Wits Dental Clinic is a refurbished and re-equipped 15-chair, state-of-the-art facility for community-based training and clinical services in Zola, Soweto. The project was made possible by a generous donation from the Stanley, Marion, Paul and Edward [Bergman](#) Family Foundation to Wits University's [Centenary](#) campaign.

Officially launched by the Gauteng Department of Health with Wits University and the Zola community on 15 September 2023, the dental clinic is now operational.



Delivering the keynote address at the launch, Ms Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko, Gauteng MEC Health and Wellness, said, “This important occasion specifies a new chapter in our commitment to provide top-notch oral health services to our communities.”

“This donor, who is our partner, whose identity we hold with high esteem, has shown extraordinary dedication to our community’s oral health,” said the MEC. “Their vision and support have transcended mere philanthropy. It has been an investment in the health and wellbeing of our community.”

The MEC said, “This refurbishment represents a substantial stride forward providing comprehensive, high-quality oral healthcare to our community. The clinic now stands as proof of an accessible top-tier healthcare for all. With the enhanced capabilities of this clinic, we are poised to make a lasting impact on the oral health of our community.” Read more [here](#).



*Pictured above L-R: Prof Shabr Madhi, Dr Marion Bergman, Prof Judith Bruce, Prof Zeblon Vilakazi, taken on a site visit by Dr Bergman earlier this year.*

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**NEW PRIZE ALERT: FABULOUS SPOT PRIZE ADDED  
A ROUNDTRIP TO SOUTH AFRICA  
ON AWARD-WINNING QATAR AIRWAYS  
TO BE GIVEN AWAY AT THE PARTY.**

TIME IS RUNNING OUT TO RSVP, CLICKE HERE: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WitsAlumniParty2Oct23>

Witsies  
You're  
invited!



A fab time, with SA foods and treats and live entertainment  
with members of the SA band "RABBITT"

## Wits Alumni Party

2nd October 2022  
6:30 - 9:30p  
Midtown Terrace, 267 5th Avenue  
(bet. 29th & 30th Street), New York City

RSVP BY SCANNING QR CODE:



## REUNIONS IN TEXAS



Wits University Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Zebulon Vilakazi visited Texas in September. He had an exceptionally productive **Texas** road trip with fantastic offers of local volunteer-driven initiatives to keep Witsies in Texas connected.



See photos of the reunions here:

[Dallas](#) | [Austin](#) | [Houston](#)  
| [San Antonio](#)

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### Wits VC at NASA



[University of the Witwatersrand](#) Vice-Chancellor and Principal Professor [Zebulon Vilakazi](#) was given an official protocol tour of NASA sites and training centers in Houston. Look out for the full report in an upcoming newsletter.

[#WitsForGood](#)

[#Wits2ndCentury](#)

[#WitsMoonshot](#)

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WATCH: WITS LATEST NEWS IN SIXTY SECONDS - Sowetans will benefit from oral healthcare services offered at the new state-of-the-art Zola Wits Dental Clinic, celebrate African innovation and creativity at the 10th Fak'ugesi Festival, learn about ancient crocs and South African meteorites, and see in pictures how Witsies celebrated culture and tradition on Heritage Day. Read the full stories [here](#).

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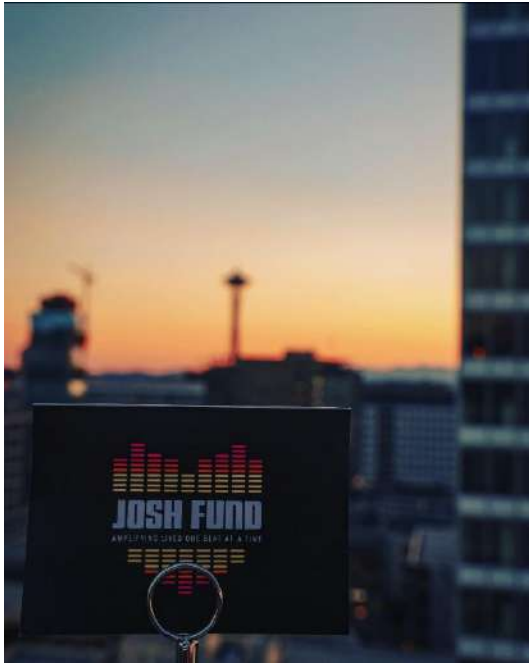
#### **Vision**

To ensure that Wits University remains one of Africa's – and the world's – pre-eminent research-intensive educational institutions, with top academic standards, committed faculty, and supportive alumni.

[Donate Today](#)

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**JOSH FUND RAISES SUPPORT FOR MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP**



[The Josh Fund](#) hosted an event in Seattle to honor and celebrate Josh's 30th birthday in July. Representing [the Wits Fund](#) was board member, [Ms Lindiwe Tardif](#). Her heartfelt speech, and wonderful life story touched the attendees:



"I feel truly honored to stand here on this auspicious occasion on behalf of The Wits Fund, which represents my alma mater, the University of the Witwatersrand, fondly known as Wits.

If you're thinking – wait, "What is Wits Fund"? and "What does this have to do with Josh"? Hang tight and I'll get to that in a moment. Before I do, let's take a moment to remember why we're all here. We're here to honor the amazing person Josh was.

As you know, **Josh was gifted in music, composition, production, and entrepreneurship. He possessed a profound passion for multicultural music, particularly the soul-stirring sounds of South Africa. He believed that music held the power to transform lives and that aspiring and talented artists, regardless of their circumstances, deserved opportunities to shine brightly.**

In honor of this profound conviction, and as a testament to their love for their son and his musical legacy, Josh's parents established The Josh Fund, ensuring that Josh's musical legacy lives on by supporting young musicians as they pursue their dreams.

And this is where the Wits Fund comes into play. When Josh's parents thought about the kind of young musicians their son would want to support, they turned to the Wits Fund.

### **So, why the Wits Fund, you ask?**

The Wits Fund is a nonprofit organization based in the United States that's all about supporting Wits in Johannesburg. Our goal is to ensure that Wits remains one of the top-notch educational institutions in the world.

### **How do we do that?**

By strengthening the bond between Wits and its alumni; boosting Wits' global profile; and raising funds to support special projects, attract top-tier faculty, and assist deserving students in need of financial support.

**Wits University holds a special place in the hearts of the Markowitz family. Stephen, Josh's dad, is a Wits graduate who credits his personal and professional growth to the education he received there. Josh, too, had a deep connection with South Africa and embraced the vibrant culture of the country. He even invited South African students to his Bar Mitzvah in Seattle, showing his warm and inclusive nature.**

Given these strong connections, partnering with the Wits Fund was a natural choice. The Josh Fund, through the Wits Fund, provides scholarships to deserving students in their final years at Wits. As we approach the second year anniversary of The Josh Fund, I'm thrilled to share the incredible impact it has already had.

**In 2022, the Josh Fund awarded a scholarship to Sibonelwesihle Kodisang, affectionately known as Sibonelo. Sibonelo is a talented jazz saxophonist currently in his fourth year at Wits.** He is pursuing a Bachelor of Music degree and he embodies the same spirit and passion for music that Josh did. Recently, the Wits Music Department expressed immense pride in his academic achievements. When reporting on his progress, they highlighted his growth, maturity, dedication to his studies, and emerging leadership qualities. **I see his story as a shining example of the transformative impact that financial support can have on deserving individuals.**

Given this amazing start, just imagine the stories we'll share in the years to come! Tales of lives changed and the lasting legacy of Josh and The Josh Fund. Through Lori and Stephen's generosity and commitment to improving the lives of others, we have the power to change countless destinies.

**As I stand here today, I'm reminded of my own beginnings in Soweto growing up under apartheid. I lived under apartheid for 20 years at a time when the "separate and unequal" system of education, known as Bantu Education, was in place.** In those days, someone like me could only get access to a great education in private schools which had opened their doors to students of color, in defiance of apartheid. But these schools were very expensive and my mom's pockets weren't deep enough for them. Luckily, her employer (BMW South Africa) stepped in to help out and **I was able to attend and**

**graduate from one of these "open" junior and high schools, Sacred Heart College, and to go from there to earn 3 degrees from Wits, qualify as an attorney, move to the US, earn a 4th degree from Boston University, and have the opportunity to work for corporates like EY, Amazon, and Slalom. Without the generosity of others, I wouldn't have had access to quality education and I would have remained a victim of apartheid.**

**My journey shows how a simple act of kindness – of investing in someone's education can create a ripple effect of positive change that transcends time and borders.** I carry this appreciation in my heart and am driven to pay this kindness forward by advocating for equal educational opportunities for all so that others, regardless of their circumstances, can also benefit from the transformative power of generosity and education.

Today, there are countless individuals in South Africa, just like Sibonelo, who are eager to overcome their circumstances and embrace a brighter future. The Josh Fund, through its scholarships, offers a much-needed helping hand to these aspiring talents.

On behalf of Sibonelo and the Wits Fund, thank you Lori and Stephen for your incredible generosity.

Josh, thank you also. Your belief in the potential of young artists will carry your spirit forward for eternity.

Thank you all for joining us on this special occasion.

May Josh's memory continue to inspire us all.

May Josh's memory forever be a blessing.

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Love this newsletter? Have some suggestions? Want to tell us your story of how you got here? Please write in and tell us: <https://witsfund.org/contact/>

Missed one of the previous newsletters? Here they are, on one page: <https://witsfund.org/latest/>

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