

**Vice Chancellor, I have the honour to present, for the award of the degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa, William Daniel Carmichael.**

Franklin D Roosevelt said: “*Yours is not the task of making your way in the world, but the task of remaking the world ... May every one of us be granted the courage, the faith and the vision to give the best that is in us to that remaking*”.

Bill Carmichael has spent the last 45 years remaking his world. In particular, he has dedicated his life to advancing the causes of human rights and social justice.

He has outstanding credentials, having studied economics at Yale, Princeton and Oxford. He was a Rhodes Scholar (hence Oxford), an Assistant Professor of Economics and Public Affairs at Princeton and a very young Dean of the Graduate School of Business and Public Administration at Cornell. He was all set up for making his way in the world, with an excellent, but probably comfortable, career in government.

But there were a number of events that were conspiring to change his future. The first of these was the Vietnam War and the fallout that he experienced on Cornell Campus, but more important was his own growing compulsion to work practically with human rights issues in developing countries. He was then asked to head the Ford Foundation’s programmes in Brazil and moved to Rio with his young family. At that time, the philosophy of the Ford Foundation was very much along the lines of supporting governments in economic terms<sup>[1]</sup> – accelerating economic growth by working with planning ministries and sending in foreign expert economists.

One of the important decision points was in April 1969, during the second military coup in Brazil, when Ford Foundation grantees had been fired, jailed or sent into exile<sup>[2]</sup>. There were two options: leave Brazil and work in Chile or Mexico until things had settled down or run the risk of staying in the country; working from within. The Foundation chose to stay in the country, and this *modus operandi*, of finding ways to support internal organisations to engineer a successful return to democracy, became the hallmark of Bill Carmichael and his team.

When Carmichael came to South Africa in the mid 1970s as the head of the Ford Foundation’s Office for the Middle East and Africa, he says that he knew nothing about either region. “Good. Then you won’t bring any biases to the job<sup>[3]</sup>”, said his boss. But the knowledge that he had gained in Latin America - of not just working to the book, but engaging with people on the ground, and of course those impeccable academic credentials, was what he brought.

On his first day in South Africa, Sheena Duncan, President of the Black Sash, took him to a court that was hearing pass law cases. He sat for a few hours absorbing the reality of the South African human rights abuses<sup>[4]</sup>. Then he got down to work. He refocused the Ford Foundation’s South Africa programme and found multiple creative ways to support change - such as the Legal Resources Centre and the South African Council for Higher Education. Working within the confines of the law, but always right at the edge, carefully balancing the activities so that they were just legal.

Bill Carmichael has exceptional academic credibility and political acumen but with this comes an amazing ability to be truly compassionate<sup>[5]</sup>. He uses his intellect and his logical mind to clarify and contextualise but he is also able to connect with people, respond to their stories and, most of all, help **them** to see the broader meaning and impact of their purpose.

It was Franklin D Roosevelt who spoke about *the task of remaking the world*. It is Bill Carmichael who has had the *courage, the faith and the vision to give the best that is in him to that remaking*.

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1. Hartnell, C., 2009. *Twenty years since the fall of the Wall: Philanthropy, democracy and civil society. Interview - Bill Carmichael. Alliance magazine.*
2. Welch, C.E., 2001. *NGOs and Human Rights: Promise and Performance: University of Pennsylvania Press.*
3. Carmichael, W.D., *Personal Communication, 5 June 2014*

Strictly embargoed until 15h00 on Friday 13 June 2014

4. Dale, H., 2007. *Interveiw with Bill Carmichael*. LRC Oral History Project 22nd April 2007.
5. Bonbright, D., *Personal Communication*, 6 June 2014