

A photograph of an elderly man, Francis Wilson, sitting at a desk. He is wearing a dark brown sweater over a light-colored collared shirt. He is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. His hands are resting on a desk with papers and a pen. In the background, there is a wooden bookshelf filled with books and papers. The text "FRANCIS WILSON" is overlaid in large white letters on the right side of the image.

# FRANCIS WILSON

A COLLECTION OF TRIBUTES  
TO THE LIFE AND WORK OF  
THE FOUNDER OF SALDRU

Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU), 2022



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN  
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD





This book is a collection of tributes to the life and work of Francis Wilson.

Francis Wilson taught for over thirty years in the School of Economics at the University of Cape Town (UCT). In 1975 he founded the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU) within the Division of Research of the UCT School of Economics in 1975. He directed the unit until 2001, when he became the founding director of DataFirst.

He was Chairperson of Council at the University of Fort Hare from 1990-1999 and the first Chairperson of the National Water Advisory Council between 1996-1999. During part of 2000, 2001 and 2002 he was Visiting Professor in the Woodrow Wilson School of Public & International Affairs at Princeton University. In 2001 he became Chairperson of the International Social Science Council's Scientific Committee of the international Comparative Research Program on Poverty (CROP). He also authored a number of books, chapters, and articles over the years.



## FOREWORD

---

Francis Wilson, the founding director of SALDRU, died on 24 April 2022. At the end of that month, the SALDRU newsletter included a short tribute to Francis. We noted too that current SALDRUpians wanted to respond collectively by writing personal tributes for inclusion in a SALDRU compilation. We planned to present the responses to Lindy, Francis' widow, and to place it on the SALDRU website.

We knew that this desire to pay tribute to Francis would be shared by many who had either worked for SALDRU over the years and or had engaged with the Unit through Francis. In the newsletter we invited all who wanted to join with us in this response to submit a tribute for inclusion in this volume. Many were moved to do so.

All these tributes are collated here. Largely, they have been left unedited so that they can speak for themselves. This is not a polished collation. It serves simply as a collective response of the SALDRU community on the loss of Francis, scholar, leader, and social justice activist who was dear to so many of us.

Murray Leibbrandt

Director

*Murray Leibbrandt speaking at the farewell celebration held for Francis Wilson on 23 April 2018 in the UCT School of Economics Building. Murray was one of several people who spoke at the event. These speeches were recorded and can be watched on [YouTube](#). Credit: Robyn Walker, UCT News.*

## TRIBUTES TO FRANCIS FROM SALDRUPIANS

---

In this section, we share tributes to Francis Wilson which were sent through to SALDRU by current SALDRUpians and SALDRU affiliates. These, and other tributes included are shared verbatim, without any editing other than small punctuation fixes.



*Francis Wilson at the graduation where he was conferred the degree of doctor of letters honoris causa by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in 2016. Credit: Michael Hammond, UCT News. Francis Wilson's graduation address can be listened to or read on the [UCT News website](#).*

## MURRAY LEIBBRANDT

*This tribute is a lightly edited version of the speech that Murray Leibbrandt read at Francis Wilson's funeral on 2 May 2022.*

In 2016, Francis Wilson was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by UCT. Nominators of a person for this highest honorary degree get to select from one of two criteria:

- On grounds of exceptional scholarship in accordance with the ideals and principles of the University.
- On grounds of exceptional other achievement or public service in accordance with the ideals and principles of the University.

Those nominating Francis ticked both boxes! And there was no contesting this as the nomination wended its way through the notoriously fractious processes of Senate and Council.

Francis made a unique contribution to documenting and analysing key historical and contemporary social issues affecting our South African society. Even more rare was how he used his research and that of others to promote social change for good in South Africa. The heart of Professor Wilson's contribution lies, quite uniquely, in the space between the two honorary doctorate criteria. He had a lifetime of exceptional contributions to scholarship and of taking these into the public domain to fight for a just society.

Having returned to South Africa and UCT from his PhD in Cambridge, in 1971 and 1972 he published three pieces of

research that individually and collectively have been immensely influential. In 1971 *"Farming 1866-1966"* was published as a chapter in the Oxford History of South Africa. Then, in 1972, *"Labour in the South African Gold Mines 1911-1969"* was published by Cambridge University Press out of his PhD. Finally a book, *"Migrant Labour in South Africa"* was published. Taken together these works tell a connected story of the economics of the gold mines and their need for cheap labour, the decimation of rural life in South Africa to effect this supply of migrant labour, and the terrible social consequences of this system for these migrants and their households.

It is important to highlight that Francis' academic leadership and his broader contributions were founded on his work as a researcher. He was an extraordinarily thoughtful and creative researcher. Along with this talent, he always invested the considerable time and intellectual perspiration required to craft his research. He valued the honing that came with writing and re-writing and so demanded this discipline of himself. He knew that his research was a foundation stone for his broader contributions, giving him confidence about what needed to be said and what needed to be done. This was an unflinching lifelong commitment to the hard work of careful scholarship.

Francis' research produced rock-solid evidence detailing fundamental prevailing realities. Many have referred to his famous series on real wages by race in the gold mines in Labour in the South African Gold Mines as an example of the loud power of his work. All of us who aspire to produce such research have to confront questions about why we produced this work in the first place and what we are going to do with it. For Francis it was self-evident that it was his privilege and purpose to produce such research for it to have larger impact.

In 1975 Francis launched the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU). The founding grant was made by Anglo American. Given his work up to this point, this is more than ironic. It has to serve as an early example of Francis' absolutely unique spirit and gift of communication and engagement.

Francis led this new unit in new research areas such as farm labour and health. He also became a researcher and a convenor of research processes. In the 1970s he co-convened with his SALDRU colleagues research engagements on farm labour and on the economics of health care in South Africa. Each of these engagements led to books that he edited with others. To this day, now eminent academics speak of these engagements as being defining of their career choices and their commitments as researchers.

By the end of the 1970s, an extraordinary array of young anti-apartheid activists had flowed into the safe space of SALDRU, even seeking shelter from the physical and psychological brutality

of the security police under the tables in its small space on UCT's upper campus. Francis and Dudley Horner, his co-leader in fashioning SALDRU, were very comfortable with such a SALDRU. But they were equally clear that this remained a research unit, albeit a rather special one. All those within this safe space were unapologetically required to commit to the hard discipline of collating evidence, writing, discussing, re-writing and, through this, honing and strengthening in a way that only the craft of research can do. Those early SALDRU Working Papers make wonderful reading and many are influential to this day. They were important and empowering to the people who wrote them.

Francis and SALDRU had established legitimacy with political groups operating outside of the apartheid parliamentary structures and also with foreign donors, who saw in him and SALDRU strong beacons of credible research on key South African issues. When in 1982, the Carnegie Corporation decided to fund the 2nd Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in South Africa, Francis was asked to direct this Inquiry with SALDRU serving as the base institution.

In the initial years of the Carnegie Inquiry leading up the conference of September 1984, Francis went the length and breadth of South Africa speaking to people about its purpose. He visited academics, as well as community groups, NGOs, private sector groupings, and committed individuals who were trying to make a difference in their own way. Many wanted to be part of this conference. But here too Francis was clear: to do so they had to produce a paper that marshalled evidence

and made them think hard about the issue that they wanted to bring to the table. There were close to 400 presentations at the 1984 conference and a photographic exhibition. Soon after the conference, 380 working papers were printed and distributed widely across the country and internationally. In 1986 Omar Badsha's photographs were published as a book, with a text written by Francis Wilson.

This collective effort presented a formidable and graphic documentation of the structural impoverishment of black South Africans under apartheid. It is hard to think of anyone else with the academic and broader societal credentials who could have convened and marshalled such a process at that stage in our country's history. This is a massive contribution worth honoring in and of itself.



*Mamphela Ramphela speaking at Francis Wilson's 2018 farewell celebration. Credit: Robyn Walker, UCT News.*

The consolidation of the 380 working papers was undertaken by Francis and Dr Mamphela Ramphela. The 1989 book, *Uprooting Poverty: The South African Challenge*, is a landmark study of poverty in South Africa. It offers a textured account of the harsh life for ordinary South Africans in the 1980s and is probably South Africa's most well-known book on poverty. In many senses, the post-apartheid research thrust starts with this work.

By 1992 the ANC policy desk was preparing for taking office and had begun formulating policy to govern. A particular concern was the need for a national household living standards survey that produced baseline evidence of the state of the nation at that time. Once more it was Francis and SALDRU who were approached to partner with the World Bank in producing these data. He put in place a diverse and very talented South African management committee that was savvy enough to guide the World Bank into a genuine partnership. An instrument was crafted that drew on available research to give particular attention to the South African circumstances and needs. The apartheid state had refused to include the entire country in its censuses. This damage to the national statistical system made drawing a credible, nationally representative sample very difficult. It required first-rate application of the art and science of survey sampling.

South Africa's national living standards measurement survey, the Project to Support Living Standards and Development (PSLSD), undertook its fieldwork in the second half of 1993. It used a set of regionally credible survey groups to implement and oversee

the quality of this national effort. The results of the survey were released to the public at a conference less than a year later in September 1994. This turn-around time from the field to public release remains one of the fastest on record for the hundreds of World Bank LSMS surveys that have been conducted across the globe.

These 1993 data were used intensively in the 1990s for research and policy purposes, including several influential papers on South Africa's social grants that motivated the consequent expansion of this grant system into one of the largest in the world. They continue to be used to detail the state of the nation at the advent of the post-apartheid period.

But most of the initial research was undertaken by international researchers rather than South Africans. There were few South Africans with the skills to do this work at that stage. Francis flagged it as imperative to build the capacity of South Africans to analyse their data and to undertake the policy analysis. He set up capacity-building initiatives that have reached into South Africa's historically disadvantaged institutions and our policy research communities that run to this day.

Over the next 20 years Francis worked as a zealous advocate in the cause of the public release of survey data. He was the founding Director of DataFirst in 2001, a research data service dedicated to giving open access to data from South Africa and other African countries. DataFirst has grown substantially over the years and flourishes to this day as a world-class African data centre. Its data are available online, along with available accompanying documentation. This promotes access and appropriate use.

In the early 2000s Francis handed over the directorship and leadership of SALDRU to me and a group of economists in the School of Economics in



*Francis Wilson speaking at his 2018 farewell celebration.  
Credit: UCT News.*

order for him to found and grow DataFirst. But he did not ever retire from SALDRU, blowing right through his official retirement from UCT in 2004 and even his decision to clear and vacate his SALDRU office in 2018. Many of us in contemporary SALDRU had the privilege of working alongside Francis for a very long time as colleagues and friends. We have all benefitted many times from the magic of engaging with Francis. He inspired us. He never hesitated to tell us that he was very proud of our quest to produce excellent academic work and would always remind us to ensure that we keep this work embedded in our broader mission as SALDRU.

Francis was so genial, engaging, inspiring and energising for all. This makes it very easy to assume that his contributions and achievements flowed naturally, even effortlessly. This was not the case. This tribute has drawn attention to the fact that he was very serious about his scholarship and committing the time, care and perspiration required to undertake this research. As he told some of us, he followed the dictum of John Maynard Keynes in his chosen field, economics: it is a method rather than a doctrine - a way of understanding and explaining the world. Francis accumulated evidence and then sought to be true to it, to struggle with its awkwardness and its refusal to accommodate simple, hydraulic explanations. While his research has been invaluable to all, Francis never fitted easily into any school of thought or belonged snugly in anyone's camp.

In the fraught world of apartheid South Africa, today in contemporary South Africa, and in between, this has been

an uncomfortable and somewhat lonely walk. Despite the importance of his work on the decimation of black agriculture in South Africa's rural peripheries and the creation of a black labour supply for the mines to the emerging radical historiography of the 1970 and 1980s, he did not fit or sit comfortably in this school. Over the past decade, people in power, nearly all of whom knew Francis and some of whom said that they had been inspired by him, were enacting policies that did not pass the test of being in the best interests of all in this country when benchmarked by available data or by Francis' boots on the ground.

Francis' unshakeable credibility and the respect that he showed to all were essential in navigating some of this awkwardness. Yet his chosen path was not an easy walk.

One of his most precious gifts to us in SALDRU was that Francis shared this aspect of himself, perhaps as a way of steeling us for the stresses accompanying this way in the world. He was open about the fact that there were times when this had been too much for him; when he just would not have coped or been able to continue on his mission without his own muse and mainstay, his precious Lindy.

Together they found a way around the obstacles. In his life he ticked many boxes, way beyond the two criteria stipulated for an Honorary Doctorate. All of us in SALDRU and many others have benefited from his personal and intellectual legacy and are deeply grateful for his life.

## ANDREW DONALDSON

Though I wasn't there, the Carnegie Conference in 1984 profoundly shaped both my thinking on development practice and my approach to building a career in economics.

We have all, so often, heard the call to "specialize", we admire narrowly focused research, we favour depth over context. But here was a conference in which everything was under discussion, understanding poverty was about so many inter-connections and overlapping dynamics; development economics was not enough – there were lawyers, anthropologists, nutritionists, engineers. Narrative and statistical evidence was bound up with consideration of opportunities for change. The programme held some 298 papers, a collection of films titled "Festival of Hope", an exhibition of photographs and so much more. The conference itself and subsequent research initiatives have benefited, of course, by deep specialization in many sub-fields of development and economics. But the idea of an open-minded encompassing perspective stayed with me, and consciously or unconsciously I have found myself over the years resisting the call to specialize.

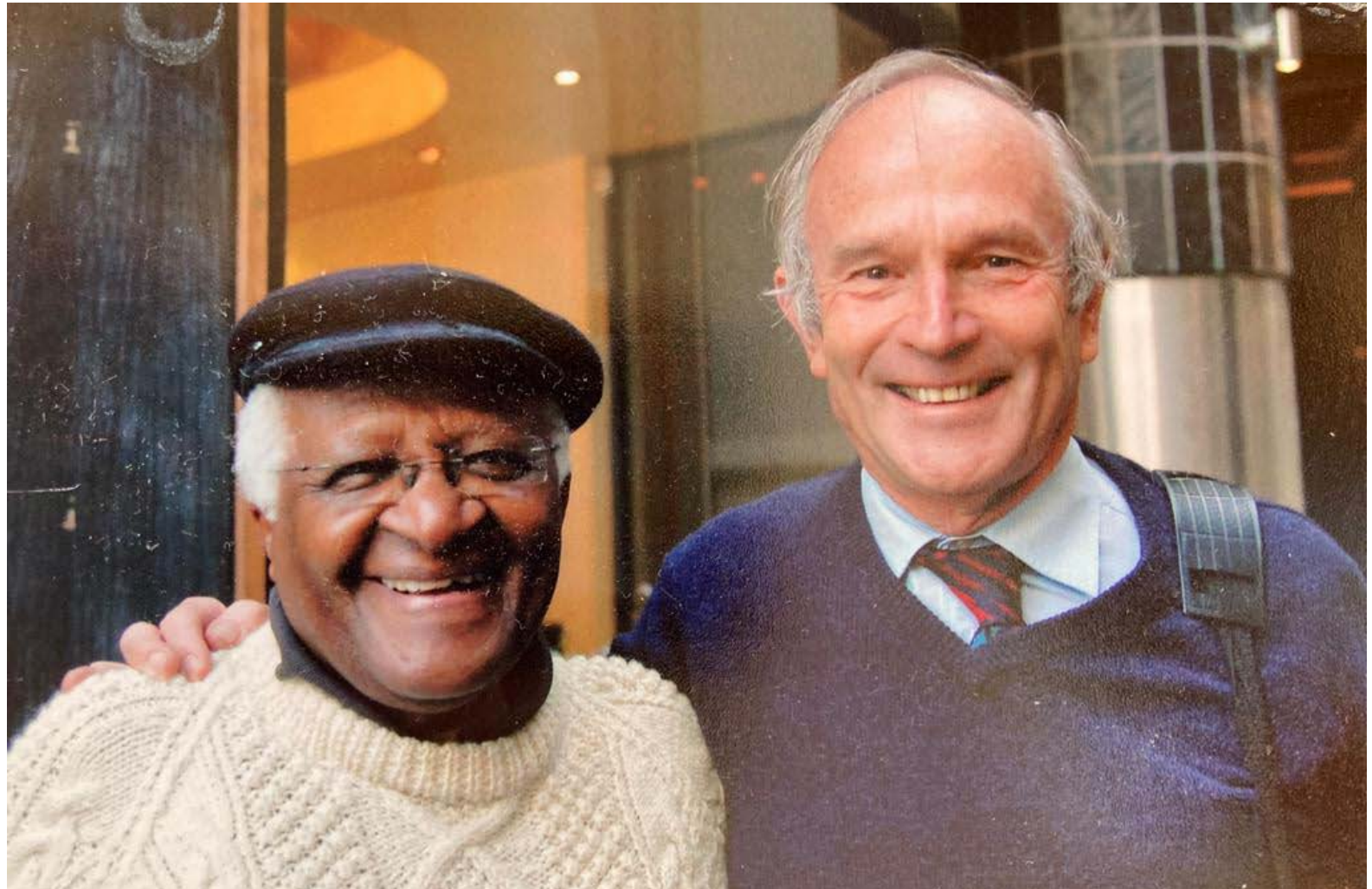
For me, and perhaps for many, the Carnegie Conference helped in moderating sometimes sharp divisions between radical and liberal campaigns, and opened up avenues for engagement in progressive development practice. SALDRU grew and broadened the scope of its work, and is now complemented by other centres of excellence in development and public policy



both at UCT and elsewhere. The ability to question, to listen, to wrestle with the data, to add descriptive content to statistical evidence, and to provide an informed bridge between research and policy considerations, have remained embedded in SALDRU'S DNA and in South Africa's research community more broadly.

*Omar Badsha presenting Francis Wilson with a framed photograph at Francis' farewell celebration in 2018. Credit: Robyn Walker, UCT News. Omar Badsha edited a book 'The Cordoned Heart' (available [online](#)) which is a collection of photographs from the photographic exhibition which occurred alongside the 'Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa' conference, held in 1984. The book was published in 1985 with an introduction and text written by Francis Wilson and a foreword by Desmond Tutu.*

*Francis Wilson with  
Desmond Tutu.  
Credit: Lindy Wilson.*



It has been a special privilege to find an academic home at SALDRU, late in my career – and yet it is like coming home after

a long detour: Francis's spirit of encompassing reflection and compassionate engagement is still with us.

## DAVID LAM

### Reflections on Francis Wilson

It is hard to describe how influential Francis Wilson was on me and my career. He also had an enormous influence on the work of many other social science faculty and students at the University of Michigan, where he visited many times and helped launch a set of collaborative activities that have lasted for over 25 years.

I first went to Cape Town in late 1996 on a hastily arranged trip with David Featherman, who was then director of the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research (ISR). David and I had been sent by the Mellon Foundation to explore possible collaborations between Michigan and UCT in the social sciences. Early in our visit, David and I were staying at a guest house near the UCT campus, and Francis was scheduled to pick us up for lunch. We had never met Francis and I don't think we had even seen pictures -- we just knew he was the famous economist founder of SALDRU. We were sitting on the porch of the guest house watching for cars arriving to see which person might be him. A shiny new Mercedes pulled up and a very serious man got out wearing a stylish suit. We figured it was Francis and walked over to him, but he walked by us and went inside, obviously not looking for us. A few minutes later a classic Mini pulled up and a man climbed out of it, dressed much more casually. Of course it was Francis, and he was immediately his warm engaging self. The three of us squeezed into the Mini (with me in the tiny back seat) and went off to the Company's Garden for the first of many

wonderful lunches that I would have with him there. It was the perfect welcome to Cape Town, SALDRU, and Francis.

At the encouragement of Francis, I decided to spend a sabbatical at UCT in 1997-98, based in SALDRU on the Hiddingh campus



*Francis Wilson and David Lam at SALDRU on Hiddingh Campus in 1997.  
Credit: David Lam.*

(photo attached). It was a pleasure working with Francis, and we were successful in launching a number of collaborative research and training activities between Michigan and UCT, including the foundations of what became the Stata training course, DataFirst, and steady exchanges of faculty and students. Francis had an enormous impact on all of the Michigan faculty and students that he came in contact with, whether in Cape Town or Ann Arbor. My wife Tina and I have many fond memories of dinner parties we hosted in Ann Arbor, with Francis patiently and charmingly answering endless questions about South Africa and his experiences as an academic under apartheid. Francis was always a great ambassador for South African social science.



I had the pleasure of joining Francis with David Featherman and a group of international social scientists in Brazil to discuss the use of survey data to inform public policy (photo attached).

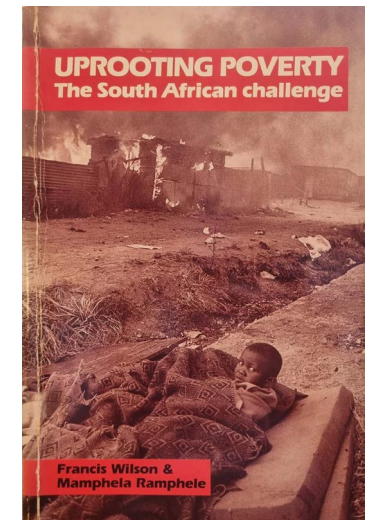
I have always considered Francis to be the epitome of a social scientist committed to using research, data, and the open exchange of ideas to help address the biggest challenges in the world. He inspired generations of researchers, not just in South Africa, but all over the world. I feel incredibly fortunate to have gotten to know him and work with him. He will be greatly missed.

*Photograph taken in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, at meeting of the Social Hubble project team (in approximately 1999/2000). Left to right: Francis Wilson, Solange Simões (Brazil), David Featherman, Shen Mingming (China), Neuma Aguiar (Brazil), Tomas Zarycki (Poland), David Lam. Credit: David Lam.*

## INGRID WOOLARD

I first encountered Francis when I did Economics 2 in 1991. It was a life-changing experience. Up until then, I hadn't considered majoring in Economics as it seemed incredibly dry and not very useful. What could possibly be the real-world application of a two-dimensional plot of the possible production possibility frontier for the production of guns and butter? But Francis made economics come alive. I spent the long vac reading and annotating *Uprooting Poverty: The South African Challenge* and knew that I was going to be an economist. Three years later, I was a trainee economist at National Treasury (NT) and completing my Economics Honours degree at UNISA. I was running the macro model for NT which was reasonably satisfying but I was restless. Through a series of serendipitous events, I landed a job at SALDRU working on South Africa's first nationally representative household survey, the Project for Statistics on Living Standards and Development. Francis wasn't around much during the first few months of the year – he was doing important work in preparation for the 1994 elections – but he did drop by to tell me how delighted he was to have a South African working on the data; we couldn't let the World Bank keep this precious data all to themselves! It was a challenging time - I had no experience in working with micro-data and the World Bank team members were not initially particularly enthusiastic about having to train a novice. But Francis persisted and insisted that I would be involved in every step of the survey process. He made sure that Dudley kept a close eye on things while he was away

at the IEC and soon enough Carlo del Ninno and the rest of the World Bank team were generously training me. It was an unbelievably exciting year. I learnt an enormous amount and met incredible people, thanks to Francis and the enormous goodwill that he generated. How many people get their first class in poverty analysis from a future Nobel prize-winner (Angus Deaton)? Francis also introduced me to this "hot-shot new hire in the department", Murray Leibbrandt, who went on to be my PhD supervisor, co-author, mentor and boss. That year changed the entire course of my career – without Francis's enthusiasm and doggedness, I would never have found my passion for micro-data analysis and policy work. I left SALDRU at the end of 1994 but came "home" in 2005. While we didn't work together very much, Francis was always available and made one feel as though he had nothing better to do than chat – even though he must have had an unbelievably demanding schedule. After a conversation with Francis one left feeling lighter and brighter, more knowledgeable, and inspired to do more and better work. My life – like that of generations of students and social scientists – is immeasurably richer for having known him.



*The cover of 'Uprooting Poverty: The South African Challenge', co-authored by Francis Wilson and Mamphela Ramphele, published in 1989. The book was a report on the 'Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa' conference, held in 1984. The copy of the book shown here is one of several well-used copies available for use at the UCT Library.*

## JOSHUA BUDLENDER

I was very lucky to grow up with Francis as a kind of “uncle” figure, and my fondest memories of him are of his warmth, generosity and mischievous smile. I especially remember boisterous Christmas dinners in Hogsback, which earlier in the day always included Francis gently snoozing as he guarded the Weber with the slowly-cooking turkey, and culminated in him and his brother Tim singing the loud Warthog song. As a child I experienced him as a magical figure, full of stories and hilarity.

But he also had an important influence on my professional life. Apart from anything else, the way he saw his own work has been a guide as to what I want to achieve. When discussing some of his Cambridge contemporaries, he self-deprecatingly declared himself an “imposter” in comparison, saying

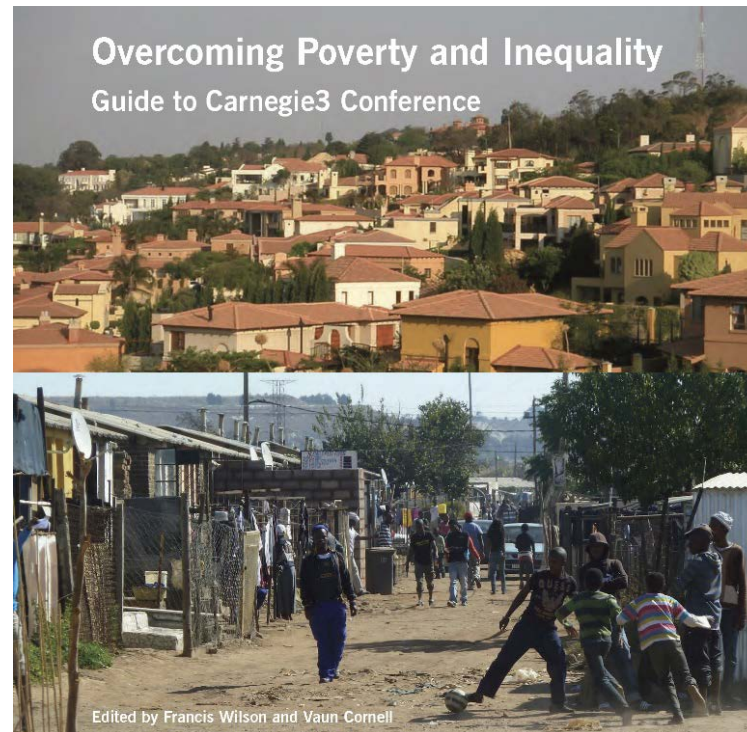
*“I’m really a seat-of-the-pants economist who got to conclusions by going out to get information (e.g. about the gold mines) and then trying to explain the facts. More even than Amartya (who is also brilliant theoretically) my work is empirically based and the tools I used to ‘explain’ are dead simple: basically a hammer and a screwdriver with the odd chisel thrown in.”*

With the absurdity of his modest self-description as an “imposter” evident for anyone to see, I draw great comfort from this in my own empirically-based attempts to “find and explain” the facts.

I send all my love to Lindy, David, Jessica, Tanya, and Tim and Ilse.

## JUDY FAVISH

I was privileged to work very closely with Francis in the Mandela Initiative. During the Initiative, I came to appreciate why Francis had been able to build extensive networks spanning many fields of practice. The Mandela Initiative sought to bring people together from NGOs, government, community organisations, universities and business to reflect on why extraordinarily high levels of poverty and inequality continued to characterise SA after 25 years of democracy, and to generate ideas for addressing these challenges. Francis was able to engender enthusiasm and support for the goals of the Initiative amongst the many people he had worked with during the course of his working life. He had a number of special qualities which made it possible for him to do this. I observed how people responded to his warmth, charm, interest, and deep respect for them and their ideas. His leadership style helped to empower people who worked with him through a remarkable openness to learning from, and listening to, others. Very importantly I think people also recognised that he was a very special kind of academic. They appreciated his deep commitment to surfacing the voices of people on the ground and blending their insights with those of academic research to deepen our understanding of the socio-economic conditions of people living in poverty and advance an inclusive approach to development. And they knew that he cared deeply about the people that he researched and wrote about and wanted his research to be used to help build



resistance to oppression and exploitation in SA. I learned so much from observing how Francis worked and will treasure my memories of the Mandela initiative in which he loomed large.

*The cover of the [report](#) from the 'Towards Carnegie III: Strategies to Overcome Poverty and Inequality' conference. This five-day conference, held in September 2012, was the first phase of the [Mandela Initiative](#). Over 500 people attended the conference which was directed by Francis Wilson.*

## PIPPA GREEN

In one of my last conversations with Francis Wilson, he exhorted me to go down a mine.

*“You can’t write about South Africa unless you’ve been down a mine. You must organise it. It’s another world. Another world.”*

I had gone to see Francis a few times in the last months of his life to help write an introduction to what would turn out to be his last work – a collection of essays on South Africa’s political economy called “Black, White, and Gold” (which is to be published next month by KKM Publishers). He was visibly ailing but clear about the purpose of his work.

As always, he was passionate about the injustices his work had uncovered. For his first book, Labour in the South African Gold Mines, he had been down mines, and into the hostels that housed migrant workers.

What was his impression?

*“Well, what would your first impression be in a room full of 90 men in hostel beds. So what I did was just to describe them.”*

But it was not the most shocking thing he had found.

*“No when I worked out that men were being paid – I don’t know – R4.40 a day for a full day’s work at the bottom of the gold mines. I thought that was appalling. You have to see the work, Pippa.”*

He described the work conditions in his book:

“It is perhaps easiest to start by thinking of a road labourer digging up a pavement with a jack-hammer drill. Now imagine him doing that work thousands of feet underground, in the intense heat, where he cannot even begin to stand upright, and where the drill is not going with the aid of gravity into the ground beneath, but where it has to be held horizontal and driven into the wall in front. Add to this picture the noise of a road-drill, magnified several times by the confined space; dust, which, despite strenuous efforts to control it with water, invades the lungs; and the possibility that the roof of the mine might suddenly cave in under the pressure, or that a spark from the drill or a careless cigarette might ignite a pocket of methane gas...”

By then, Francis had worked out that in 55 years – from 1911 to 1966 – black miners’ wages had not only not increased they had declined in real terms. It was this work that stamped him as an economist, a researcher, and a tireless campaigner for social justice. Through his academic work, his wide network of contacts, particularly among black consciousness activists in the Eastern Cape, and the church, he waged a singular campaign against migrant labour and the pass laws.

He combined careful research with eloquent writing. He was born, as he told his mother, Monica Wilson’s biographer, “with a golden nib in his mouth”. His paternal grandfather, John Dover Wilson was a Shakespearean scholar of note<sup>1</sup>.

Like his father, Godfrey, he suffered from bouts of clinical depression. While at Cambridge, he told his mother, Monica, the renowned anthropologist, that her letters “scared the lion away.”

In later life, his wife, Lindy, scared off the lions.

His life’s work was to produce the evidence that would influence policy.

He used his network of contacts to help him – and us – understand the way in which apartheid destroyed intergenerational wealth for black people, not only in land and gold, but also education. His mother had been close to ZK Matthews and his wife Frieda.

But who would have known their ancestry and what it illustrated about apartheid’s effect on education had Francis not told us:

“In the midst of the upheavals caused by Shaka’s expansion of his Zulu kingdom... a young woman arrived with her two small daughters (Jaliswa and Yogwana) to seek refuge among isiXhosa-speaking people living near the Keiskamma River in the Eastern Cape. At the same time, approximately 1824, a young man, Colwephi Bokwe, met a small group of Scots missionaries who had settled in the area. He was converted, became a Christian and moved with the missionaries to Lovedale on the banks of the Tyhume River where he sent his son Jacob to the school that was established in 1841 with 11 black and 9 white children. Jacob Bokwe did well at school, became a teacher at Lovedale and married Yogwana ... They had three children one of whom, John Knox Bokwe, became ... administrator of Lovedale; but he was also a composer and a journalist, and went on to become ordained as a Presbyterian minister who founded a school for destitute white children in Ugie.

“The next generation of Bokwe children all became professionals including a doctor and one, Frieda, who taught music until she was over 90 ... Frieda, like her father and grandfather, went to school at Lovedale where black and white were taught together for the century after its founding. In due course she married a scholarship boy from Kimberley who was to become famous as Professor ZK Matthews of Fort Hare, scholar, teacher and political leader. Of their five children, two became doctors, one a lawyer, one a nurse and one a biology teacher. The lawyer, Joe, also went into politics like his father and one of his children, Naledi, followed suit and is today Minister of Science and Technology... [now of Foreign Affairs].

“The point of this story... is to illustrate how human capital can be accumulated over time provided the surrounding social conditions do not make it impossible.”

But the social conditions under apartheid indeed made such accumulation impossible. He was heartbroken when Lovedale

College was burnt down in a student protest following the 1976 uprising.

For all his achievements, Francis was also remarkably humble. I had gone into his office during his last years at SALDRU between his first and second retirement, to ask him to explain one of Murray's graphs on the inelasticity of intergenerational earnings elasticity. He looked at it a while and then chuckled.

*“I must admit,” he said, “that I was in my second year of economics at Cambridge when I realized I had no idea what inelasticity meant.”*

He must have mastered it though because years ago, when I was a first-year student, he explained it to my Economics 1 class using the example of cigarettes and price elasticity in the days when smoking was a major student pastime. We all understood that we would be hard-pressed to give up even if the price went up by a few cents.

He was teacher, boss, colleague, friend, mentor. He was a treasure. Rest in peace, Francis.

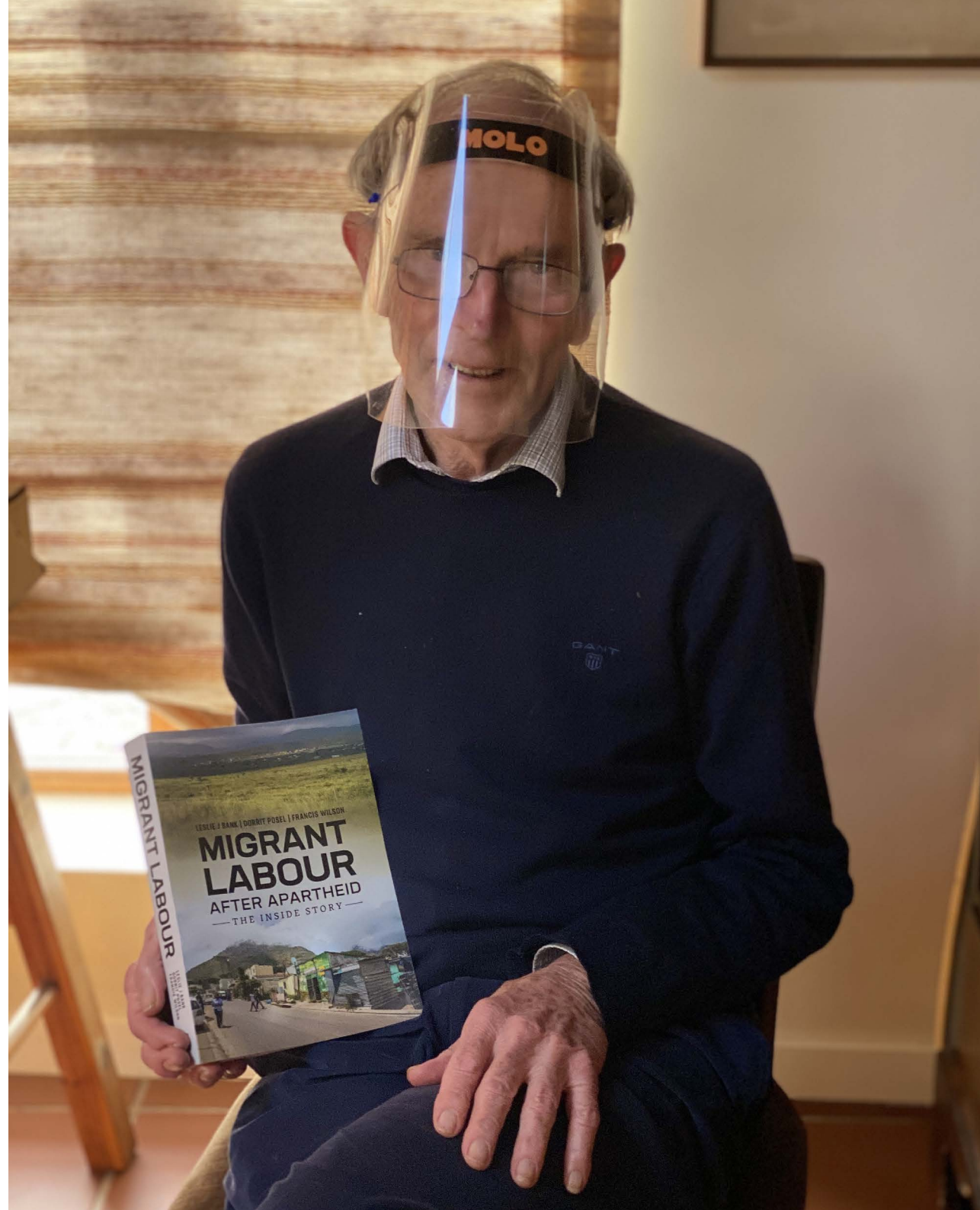
## SAMANTHA CULLIGAN

Dear Lindy and family,

My heart aches for your loss. While this is a difficult time, I hope it is also a time of coming together to celebrate Francis' journey through life and the impact he had on those he met along the way.

I was fortunate enough to cross paths with Francis recently while I helped him transcribe the articles for his upcoming publication — *Black, White and Gold*. I will forever have the fondest memories of our weekly meetings where we spent the majority of the time drinking tea in the garden and exchanging stories rather than discussing the work at hand. He has a way of connecting with people through stories and showing great compassion. As phenomenal as his achievements in life are, nothing comes close to the kindest he showed towards those around him. I deeply miss Francis and think of him each time I sit outside with a cup of tea.

*Francis Wilson pictured with a copy of 'Migrant Labour After Apartheid', produced by the Human Sciences Research Council in 2020, and edited by Francis Wilson, in partnership with Leslie Bank and Dorrit Posel. Credit: Haajirah Esau.*



## VIMAL RANCHHOD

### My memories with Francis Wilson

The first time that I met Francis was when I was a graduate student at Michigan in 2006/2007. Until then I had only a vague notion of who he was but hadn't read any of his work. He gave a seminar on the events that led to the end of the apartheid regime. Francis was quite charismatic, and held the crowds' attention in a way that was rare in most economics seminars. His main point was that there were several events that led to the eventual dismantling of apartheid, but the first key turning point was that the owners of large businesses were becoming increasingly frustrated with the labour market distortions that it was causing.

I thought that the seminar was really interesting, but there was one detail that he had failed to mention. I found him afterwards in the office he was using and asked him about the 1992 referendum. I said to him, "I see the overall point that you're making, but the ordinary white South African was not a Captain of Industry, and they still voted to continue with the reforms that De Klerk was proposing". Francis had a good chuckle! He said,

*"Yes, you're right. I guess we don't always recognize how much white South Africans wanted to be accepted and play rugby and cricket!"*

I was early on in my post-doc in SALDRU, 2008 I think, when Francis came to me and asked if I wanted to go on a road trip with him to the Eastern Cape. A colleague of his at the University of Fort Hare needed help with some data on a survey they had run in the Tyhume Valley, and I would stay at his place in Hogsback. He also wanted to move some stuff from there back to Rondebosch, and asked if I would help drive a lorry back with him.

This was one of the most amazing trips of my life. I had never spent time in rural South Africa before. In the daytime I was busy working on the data and driving through the valley, which was incredibly useful as an eye opener. Boots on the ground economics. It made me realise just how distorted my worldview was, having lived in urban places my entire life.

In the evenings, I would chop wood with a little axe that he got somewhere in Scandinavia and we made a fire in the cast iron stove. He seemed to really like this axe, and it did work remarkably well. Then he would prepare dinner; he was an incredibly generous host. After dinner we would play chess by the fire until it got quite late.

We walked about the estate and he showed me all the different trees. He took me to his mom's library and I browsed through this fantastic collection of old books. Francis said that the library

and buildings were being donated to UFH as a resource and a place for scholarly retreats.

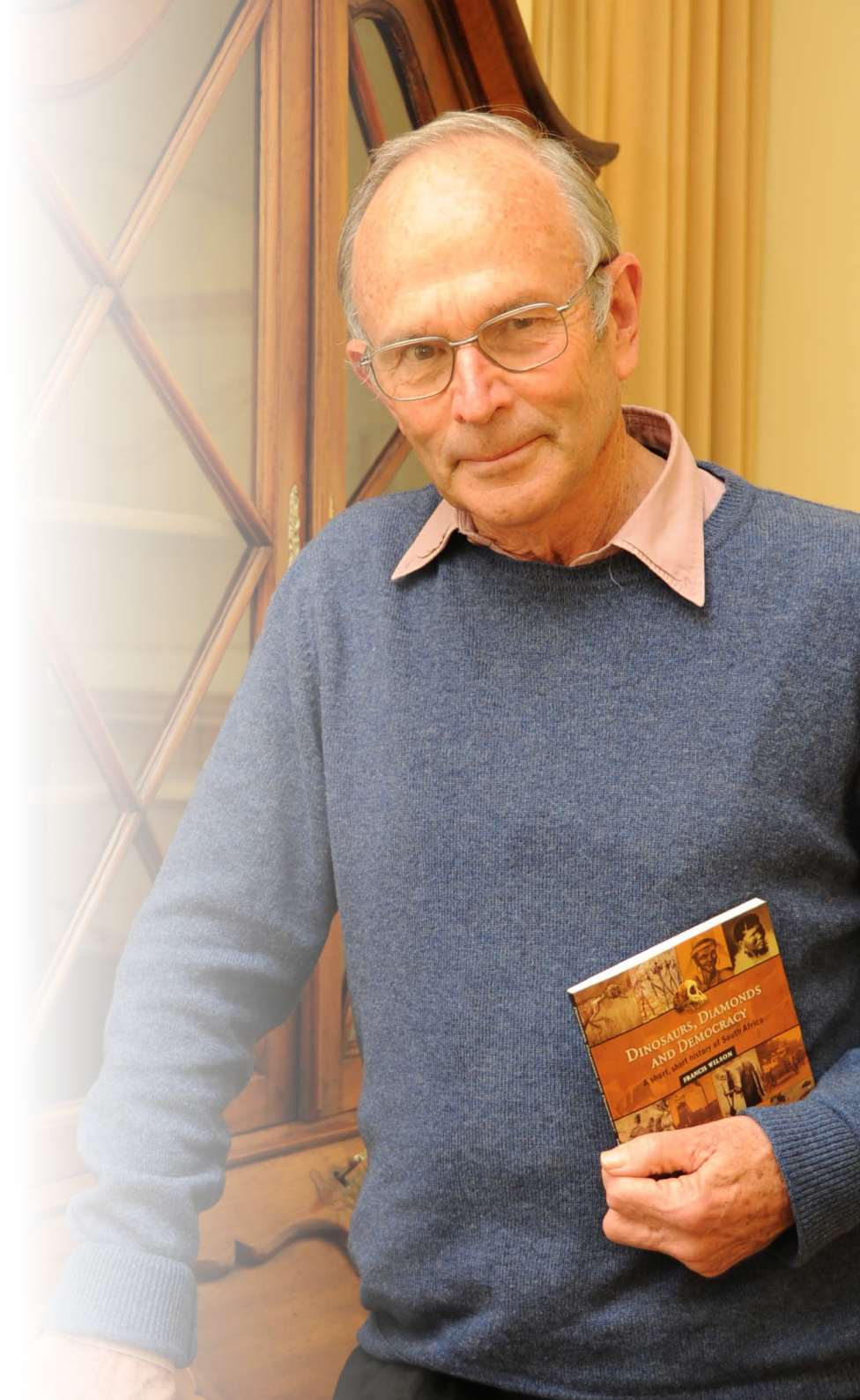
One weekend we went to a huge social event at Lovedale School. There were so many dignitaries there. It was a big party to launch a program to restore some of the famous mission schools in the country. What struck me most was that the school's hall had fallen into a state of complete disrepair. The building was not safe to use; windows were broken and tiles had fallen onto the floor with large patches of blue sky visible from the inside. Grass was pushing up through the concrete between the tile slabs.

On the way back I asked Francis about how a school with such a proud history had reached this point. He quickly stopped to show me the 'apartheid' school that was built in close proximity, as a strategic way to undermine Lovedale. He said that this was probably the best resourced African school in the entire country, and what was observable in 2008 was that the tarred road ended just outside the apartheid school. We had a long discussion on the history of education for Africans in South Africa, the role that the mission schools played, and how threatened the old government were by not being able to control the educational opportunities that were being offered to black people.

Of the many conversations that we had, I also recall Francis talking openly about his challenges with depression. As a young scholar who had also struggled during my PhD, I found this to be remarkably affirming. I think that the recognition of difficulties with mental health in academia has increased since then, and they have become less stigmatized, but he remains the only senior academic that I have discussed this topic with in depth. For this I was deeply grateful.

On the morning of the drive back, Francis told me that we were out of fuel and the nearest petrol station was in Alice about 30km away. What an ominous start to a long cross-country drive with a lorry full of furniture and things! We got the lorry started and left Hogsback and coasted about 20km downhill until the main road, and then eventually had enough petrol to make it into town. During the road trip Francis gave me the most

*Francis Wilson pictured with a copy of 'Diamonds & Democracy: A short, short history of South Africa'. The book's first edition was published in 2009. Credit: UCT News.*



incredible narration about the history of this part of South Africa. He had an amazing memory and had a chronologically ordered history of the expansion from Cape Town through the Eastern Cape. So as we travelled, he would point out certain landmarks or rivers where important frontiers had existed and how and when these had been breached. His knowledge spanned far beyond the realm of economics, although it certainly complemented his scholarly work as an economist. I asked him so many questions, many of which would have been rather naïve or ignorant, and he patiently and kindly answered all of them.

In the years since then, I often saw him in his office and would stop and chat. We used to sometimes have lunch dates where we would play chess together in the SALDRU boardroom. The chess was mostly an excuse to hang out and catch up. I remember Francis and Lindy coming with a group of us to watch test cricket at Newlands, and seeing them by chance at Keurboom Park and walking around the grounds with them and my dogs.

The last serious conversation with him (that I remember) was around 2016. The students had been protesting for some time, the UCT community had become increasingly polarized, and I was really unhappy to be in such a conflictual environment. At the same time, the State Capture apparatus was at its worst and

the future of the country seemed rather bleak. I was about to leave on a sabbatical to the US and was seriously thinking about whether I should search for opportunities to stay there.

I met with Francis and asked him about his thoughts about the prevailing state of affairs. He empathised with my sense of despair, but then also told me about what it was like in the 1970s and 1980s, with the banning of political parties and activists, the States of Emergency, and detention without trial. For him, and for many of those who were present at the time, the current trajectory was vastly better than what any of them would have thought possible at that point in time. He said that there would always be new struggles and more challenges, and sometimes these will seem impossible and overwhelming. And yet, there is always hope, and some things are still worth fighting for.

So, upon some reflection, these are the ways that I remember Professor Wilson. He was warm, kind, generous, caring, patient, fun, charming, charismatic, inspiring, a brilliant orator, an exceptional scholar, and an unwavering idealist.

I am very grateful to have met him on my journey, and was deeply saddened to hear of his passing. But, at the same time, based on everything that I know about him, he really did give us an example of a life well lived.

## ADDITIONAL TRIBUTES WHICH WERE SENT TO SALDRU

---

In this section, we share tributes to Francis Wilson which were sent through to SALDRU by those other than current SALDRUpians and SALDRU affiliates. As with the tributes in the previous section, these tributes are shared verbatim, without any editing other than small punctuation fixes.

### ANTHONY BLACK

Francis touched many lives with his enthusiasm, charm and passionate concern for social justice. He certainly influenced me. I can still remember his inspiring lectures on South Africa's migrant labour system when I was a first year student way back

in 1975. These lectures encouraged me to major in economics rather than psychology. Later in 1987 he hired me as a temporary lecturer in the School of Economics. That was the start of a 35 year career at UCT!

### CRAIN SOUDIEN

Dear Lindy and the wider Wilson family.

Francis's loss is such a big moment in our lives. I first met him in 1973 as a student in Economics at UCT and then, of course, came to know him as a colleague. But much more significantly, I came to see him through the extraordinary relationship the two of you had with Neville Alexander. The two of you meant so much to Neville and I would always treasure that. The way you, together, loved and respected what he was about. The way you supported him. I know that he would have been deeply saddened to hear of Francis's passing.

Talking personally, I had much to do with Francis as we were setting up the Nelson Mandela Initiative and want to say that his energy and creativeness – in service of the idea that we could craft a new country of respect, regard for dignity and justice – and self-effacing humility was inspirational. I know that you will struggle in the next few weeks and months, but know too how much in his long life he touched and influenced so many of us – how he came to exemplify what we all would wish to be. A simple human being who lived fully and loved generously.

Much love in this difficult time.

## DAVID FEATHERMAN

All who were embraced by Francis' intellect, wit, and generous spirit shall miss him greatly. He was a man blessed with many graces, those that earned him high academic distinction and the esteem of his peers and also those that endeared him as dedicated mentor, supportive colleague, and faithful companion.

It remains without any doubt that Francis' legacy at SALDRU, UCT, and in far wider intellectual circles is profound. I recall our first meeting, facilitated by my Michigan colleague David Lam's prior acquaintance, in which this enthusiastic, tanned man emerged from his car (a vintage Mini, if I recall correctly) and nearly in a single bound up the stairs of our small hotel grasped my outstretched hand firmly in both his and smiling broadly announced,"

*"I'm Francis Wilson; welcome to Cape Town."*

What followed was an equally enthusiastic exploration of mutual opportunities for joint institutional ventures, sometimes over the years while walking the paths of Table Mountain or over tea at the Vineyard Hotel. He was a fountain of thoughtful ideas, many becoming shared academic adventures in which dozens of our respective colleagues and students subsequently joined or better still, led. And then we became friends, as I am sure many such initial encounters with gentle, generous, generative Francis have similarly evolved. One of the most memorable conversations, perhaps now two decades or so ago, extended over a three-day road trip into and about the Karoo, during which Francis variously exclaimed the histories of small towns like Calvinia and Prince Albert and the stunning beauty of familiar landscapes--stark mountains and high normally arid leeward plains, some suddenly bedecked with a riot of ephemeral colors after recent rains.

We at Michigan's Institute for Social Research (ISR) benefited enormously from what Francis enjoined, and of course not the least was the building and strengthening of long-lasting colleagueship with his SALDRU family. We'll all be ever grateful, me especially. To that point, out of the blue, perhaps two years ago, Francis phoned to thank me for all I had contributed to the SALDRU-ISR collaborations. I demurred, for in truth I said so many have contributed equally to make these mutually beneficial--and remarkably pleasant. And if any single individual stands out, it




*Social Hubble project team in Cape Town with Francis Wilson's mini (in approximately 2000).  
Credit: David Lam.*

was he who provided the essential catalyst for this wonderful chemistry. But he insisted. My only point is entirely about the enduring generosity and thoughtfulness of Francis, reaching out, letting an old, very retired friend know he was remembered.

Like so many others, I'll forever be thankful for Francis' friendship and for so much of what he shared so fully: his incisive intellect, creative insights, and warm heart.

May we all who miss him find solace, even delight, in celebrating him with our memories.

A photograph of Francis Wilson, an older man with glasses, wearing a dark suit and a blue tie, speaking at a podium. A microphone is in front of him. The background is a blue screen with a red banner that reads 'STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME POVERTY & INEQUALITY'.

*Francis Wilson speaking at the 'Towards Carnegie III: Strategies to Overcome Poverty and Inequality' conference in 2012. At the time Francis was UCT's Acting Pro Vice-Chancellor, Poverty and Inequality. Credit: UCT News.*



## HAROON BHORAT

Francis was not only a great economist but also one of the most prominent public intellectuals in post-apartheid South Africa. He had such a massive influence on many of us - particularly the rising number of black economists at UCT in the 1980s. In this respect SALDRU - which with his typical inspiration and foresight Francis established in 1978 - became the seed bed for training a new generation of applied economists, many of whom went into prominent public positions in the post-1994 period. For me personally, as I told Francis many times over the years - he was the inspirational spark for my lifelong interest in studying poverty, inequality and labour market dynamics in South Africa. I still recall watching that banned BBC programme on migrant workers in South Africa - and then hearing Francis in his typically eloquent prose - describing how the system of migrant labour on the mines served to condemn generations of workers and their families to a life of indigence. How many of us over the years have had the honour and fortune of being able to learn at the feet of one of South Africa's grandmasters? I will eternally be in your intellectual debt, Francis. Rest well Francis Wilson - one of our beloved sons of the soil.

*A still from SALDRU's  
2017 [video](#) interview of  
Francis Wilson where he  
answered five questions on  
the history of SALDRU.*

## JAMES LEVINSOHN

My involvement with South Africa stems from a meeting with Francis oh so many years ago. His vision and enthusiasm sparked an idea to build a training program that led to the first SALDRU summer program. From there, his mentorship and guidance built a program that is still humming. At least as important to me, though, is the set of friends and colleagues that I've built all because of that initial meeting with Francis. Francis built a

community and I'm hugely grateful to be a small part of that community.

I'll miss the sparkle in his eye and the hint of mischief in his voice. I'll even miss the offer of scrambled eggs and Marmite for Sunday supper.

## MZAMO MASITO

Thanks Prof Francis Wilson

When I was lecturing at UCT and doing my Masters "Afrikaner Economic Empowerment (1800-2000) and lessons for BBBEE", I was struggling to access experts - Afrikaners and BBBEE. I bumped into Prof Wilson while walking the corridors of Commerce faculty building. I told him about my struggle and the research I am doing. He asked me to walk with him to his office as he wanted to know more about my research topic. While at his office he quickly contacted Prof Gilliomee and Prof

Sampie Terreblanche at Stellenbosch uni. From just these two experts contacts, it was a true snow balling effect. Each expert introduced me to more experts. I had more experts than I needed for the research.

Thanks Prof Francis Wilson for being a great ally, for giving me articles to read and some not yet published, for opening doors for me and I passed with distinction.

Thank you for having being useful and helpful.

## MAX PRICE

My deepest condolences and shared sadness on Francis' passing.

What always so impressed me over the many years I knew Francis, was his irrepressible energy, enthusiasm, commitment, and his insistence that he would continue to make a difference. This passion to improve the lives of the poor continued long after he

was supposed to have retired. When I attended meetings of the Poverty and Inequality Vice-Chancellor's Initiative, he was there not just as an elder giving advice on the Steering Committee, but as a researcher reporting on the community workshops he had convened. He was always concerned to engage at grass roots level. And this was in his mid-seventies.

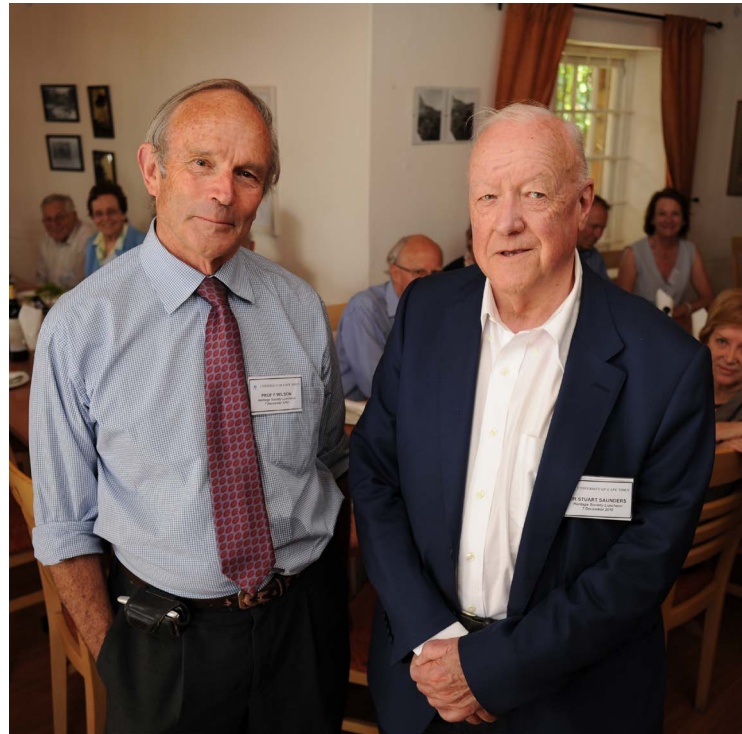
He loved his alma mater, UCT and made a huge contribution to the institution and its standing in the world. He was a fantastic teacher, mentor and friend to thousands, and as a result had the most amazing networks.

He accepted appointment as President of the UCT Heritage Society and did a wonderful job mobilising bequest commitments from senior alumni. When I attended events with him it was clear people had come along primarily to see Francis, to reconnect with him (often they had been his students) and to experience his warmth.

I am also deeply grateful for the support he gave me personally in my role as Vice-Chancellor.

He will be remembered by countless colleagues all over the world.

*Francis Wilson with Stuart Saunders, at the 2010 luncheon where Francis took over the position as president of the UCT Heritage Society, from Stuart Saunders.  
Credit: UCT News.*



## ROB TURRELL

Dear Lindy, Jessica, Tanya, and Tim,

Francis was instrumental in securing me a post as a researcher in Naledi Pandor's private office when she was Chair of the National Council of Provinces in 2002.

He wrote a reference for me, even though I had not been one of his students.

But I had written a book about migrant labour on the early Kimberley diamond fields.

I worked for Naledi as a political adviser and speechwriter for nearly 20 years.

I never knew about Francis' migrant labour march in 1972, until I heard about it this week at the funeral, and the impact it had in forcing mining companies to confront their record on cheap and migrant mine labour.

In 1978 De Beers refused to give me access to their archive and I had no idea, until the funeral, that it was down to Francis they were so fearful of young scholars researching their records.

So Francis wrote me a reference in 2002 and Naledi employed me, and later, in 2008, I went with her as part of her ministerial entourage to Hunterstoun and witnessed the handing over of Monica's house and library to Fort Hare University.

I even wrote Naledi's speech for the occasion and, looking back at it yesterday, I was surprised to see how coherent it was, because over the years I wrote many dull and unimaginative speeches for her.

Then I remembered that Francis had sent me a clear and concise account of Monica's work!

Francis made a huge impact on my life, especially, when bearing in mind that as a youngster I was a radical scholar (one of Shula Marks' many PhD students) and there were some fairly intense ideological battles between radicals and liberals over the big issues of race and class.

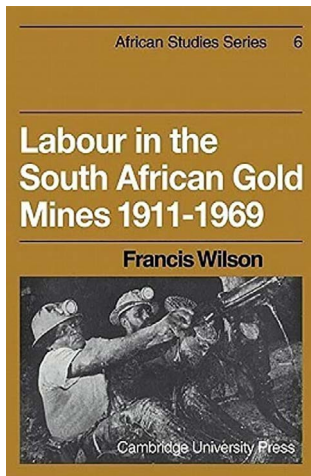
But as I heard at the funeral, Francis' great gift was to energise associates and to bring scholars and activists together.

A great man ... Francis will be well and long remembered.

*The original SALDRU logo which is a picture of a rock drill operator drawn by Tony Grogan at the request of Francis Wilson. As he explains in a [short SALDRU podcast in 2017](#), Francis' early research in the mining sector inspired the logo. The image served as SALDRU's logo for just over 40 years, from 1975–2017.*



## S FULLER



*The cover of 'Labour in the South African Gold Mines 1911-1969', written by Francis Wilson and published by Cambridge University Press in 1972.*

My route to becoming a student at UCT was not the conventional one of finishing high school, and then going on to university – with male students perhaps doing army service first. My route was me having to scramble to do the full year-long matric exemption programme, required for university admission, as well as a year of elementary Latin, for law before taking a place on the benches at UCT. Classes were every night of the week, often two classes a night and I was nipping over three times a week to UCT to attend Latin lectures – all the while also caring for an infant, and working in two sectors of the economy – wine education and retail design.

So my getting to be a full-time student in 1975 was very hard-won. I was determined to get a good education, so as to give my son a good life at all levels. I was sure of one thing – I would complete my degree but not totally sure if becoming a lawyer was my future, so I wanted to try on Economics, too, as it seemed crucial to an understanding of the world.

It was in this context – and in turbulent times in South Africa – that Francis Wilson entered my life. I was 21 when I sat down in the front row for my first university Economics class. Francis Wilson – a charismatic figure, impressive in his stature physically, intellectually and morally – was the professor teaching first-year economics – Economics I.

I knew by the end of that class that whatever I would pursue in law, I would be majoring in Economics, as well, no matter the mathematical demands; no matter how mathematically

equipped, I was, given my parents, on immigrating to SA had had me, – over my high school years – in different cities and different schools – one year alone being a pupil in three different schools, all in different cities. After that first class I was totally committed.

Francis immediately instilled a special confidence. One knew immediately one was in the right place; that he was completely committed to his teaching and to his subject, a subject that he thought was not only worthy but could greatly increase one's understanding of how the world worked and one's sensitivity to injustice.

As a physics undergraduate, he was no slouch with numbers and calculating, but it was clear he was not just going to make students jump through mathematical hoops. He would show how knowing how to work with calculations would open one to discovering what was not easily discernible in other ways. He knew this well, and very personally, as his PhD dissertation in Economics at Cambridge – looking at SA Chamber of Mine figures – examined the huge difference in white and black gold miners pay rates, finding that, in fact, black wages had not grown but fallen in real terms by 1R over the early to mid 20th century, from 1912 to 1966.

In his forthcoming book, *South Africa: Black, Gold and White*, to be published this year, he discusses in the forward how he was himself surprised by the “off the charts” findings.

His findings were not only very dramatic finding– done through careful data collection and examination – but pulled open the mechanisms of the soul and character of the white-owned and run SA economy.

It is said that Marx used the commodity, a small element, to bare capitalism's mechanism, secrets and soul. Francis by looking at wage rates – hugely unequal in SA – showed the dramatic levels of black labour exploitation – and with that just how much of SA's wealth and development was obtained through the exploitative system of segregation, with its attendant migrant labour system. Francis was not a Marxist economist by any means, connecting to the ideas as a student and on, but it was not a body of work which fully captivated him, but, that said, one could imagine Marx applauding his work, which, with rigor, revealed just how big and brutal the exploration was. Never after Francis' seminal dissertation work on gold mining, published as a book in 1972, could any "white" South African not know where the wealth in SA came from.

I may not have been able, as a beginning first-year student to express it then, and I did not have that mucin knowledge of his research findings but I knew one thing for sure – Francis was the real deal.

I was his student in many classes as he was teaching Economics I, which ran on a year basis in contrast to a semester system. He taught me the basics of, the then accepted economic theory but also about social justice, how to teach well, and how to engage fiercely but generously with people.

He was what one could include to be an anti-apartheid activist; was a presence on campus, engaging with campus activities, as well as generously holding lunches at his home on Saturdays, which students and others attended.

There were others in UCT's Economics Department who were also impressive. Francis expected students to be committed – maybe even demanding that they were – is a better description.

I recall an incident in class. One of the male students was reading the newspaper, while Francis was lecturing. Francis stopped, saying, do not read the newspaper in my class, especially the sports pages! Francis was not going to allow that level of disrespect; a disrespect for him, the subject and the crucial issues being addressed, and, I believe, too, for the great privilege all of us, sitting there, had. My place at UCT was hard-won but if I were black I would have been excluded!

I was always aware, before meeting Francis, how lucky I was. Being female in economics, even law then, was not common but I did not feel as if it excluded me from engaging as an economist, which I suppose I was with a major in the subject, embarking then on a career in Economic, Political and Financial journalism, first at the FM, then at Reuters. So hard-won for me but almost impossible, had I been black.

This book of tributes will speak to Francis' many virtues, and I say this in the widest sense. He was exceptional. I likely would have competed my degree in Economics, as I am a finisher. But having Francis as one of my teachers in my first year made it a certainly.

*Francis Wilson speaking at a 2011 UCT Photograph Exhibition by Martine West entitled 'Amabandla Ama-Afrika: The independent African Churches of Soweto, 1969-71'. Credit: UCT News.*



Many, as we know and will now read, respected Francis, and indeed loved him. I am one of those.

I knew him from the start of 1975, kept in contact over the years I lived in SA and then after immigrating in the later 1980s when SA then was under a state of emergency, people were being killed daily and mass funerals held almost weekly. I kept in touch on visits, sending him emails of appreciation, more than once, to which he always replied but the last one some months ago. I did not know he was ill and I expect that was the reasons I did not hear back this time.

I have know him, and in a number of different roles, including asking him for insightful comments when I was a journalist. Francis left his mark as a scholar, a great teacher, as well as as a decent human being. I believe it was former Vice-chancellor, Stuart Saunders, at his SALDRU farewell, who called Francis a maverick. That he may well have been but always doing everything he did mindfully and with respect.

## WILLIAM MOSES

I was so sorry to read of Francis' passing. I obviously knew that he retired years ago, but he always seemed so vital that it's a shock to think he is no longer with us. Not only was he a pioneering economist and a social entrepreneur, he provided so much of the leadership on how to respond to and eradicate the legacy of apartheid.

I was also happy to share a Zambian connection with Francis. I was not born there, as was Francis, but much of my early childhood was there before immigrating with my family to SA around the age of 10. Zambia was where his well-respected parents, Monica and Godfrey, did important research in their earlier academic careers, having met earlier in Britain, where Godfrey was born, and where both received their education.

SALDRU was also established in 1975, the first year I attended UCT, with Francis at the helm, and I watched it grow in influence at UCT and later as a journalist. It lives on and thrives.

I looked forward to my catch-ups with all my former UCT teachers when I visited SA, continuing to call them whenever I was back in SA – six times in total over some 24 years until my last two visits in 2011.

I was hugely influenced by Francis – as I was by many of my UCT professors – as a teacher, an analyst of SA, and as a moral compass in the bleak and awful world that was SA of the 1970s and 80s.

I found him quite inspirational. He gave those of us who want to fight social injustices a path to follow consisting of creativity, passion, vision and data. Please accept my condolences and please pass on my condolences to his remarkable family.



*In loving memory of  
Francis Wilson  
(17 May 1939 – 24 April 2022)*

*Francis Wilson in the SALDRU office block  
in the School of Economics Building in  
2012. Credit: Megan Morris, UCT News.*