



## NEWSLETTER issue 1

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### EIGHT YEARS OF THE GENOME INSTITUTE

The Provincial Minister of Education Yousuf Gabru opened the Claremont (Upper Lansdowne actually) offices of the Genome Education Institute in March 2009. It was a magnificent occasion. Our friends and colleagues, individuals all devoted to the cause of biology education, attended.

The Genome Institute started initially as a division of the Human Sciences Research Council in 2001 (I named it the Africa Human Genome Initiative) in partnership with the Academy of Science in South Africa and the (Spier) Sustainability Institute. Wieland Gevers, Mark Swilling and Jeffrey Lever helped me in the effort.

After a year as a Moore Visiting Professor at the California Institute of Technology 2003-2004, I returned home and launched the Africa Genome Education Institute as an independent legal entity in 2005. The HSRC, the Kellogg Foundation and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) provided the founding grants.

We spent a joyous one and half years in wonderful offices at the Mandela-Rhodes Building but then ran short of funds. The AGEI shrunk and moved into my Claremont home, with a poorly paid staff consisting of myself and a part-time assistant and we proceeded to rebuild the organisation piece by piece!

In this effort, Raj Ramesar gave me great support, Beryl Eichenberger managed the Darwin Seminars and other media needs with great aplomb and Jacqui le Roux provided reliable administrative back-up. Today, fully staffed, there are 11 of us running three projects, the Teaching Biology Project, the Darwin200 Series and the Science Think-Tank.

We also, on behalf of the Economic Justice Initiative (an initiative of Jakes Gerwel and I), are hosts to the popular Difficult Dialogues Seminars. Finally, on behalf of the Fynbos Foundation (the Trustees of whom are Mamphela Ramphele, Shaun Johnson and I), we direct a climate change and global warming programme of work.

Cheryl Douglas and Lorna Holtman manage the Teaching Biology Project. Raj Ramesar oversees the Darwin200 Series. Michael Kahn runs the Science Think-Tank. John Matisonn is responsible for the Difficult Dialogues programme. Peter Johnston is helping us with our climate change related work.

Which leaves finally to thank our funding partners: the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the British Council, the Ford Foundation, Fynbos Holdings and Distell. The AGEI has grown up into a sustainable organisation!

Wilmot James

Executive Chairperson

### EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGY WORKSHOP

The **Teaching Biology Project** ran the first in-service Evolutionary Biology workshop for Life Science teachers from 6 - 9 April at Diocesan College (Bishops), Rondebosch.

It was a huge success!! 50 teachers attended from a range of schools across the Western Cape and the theme of the conference was Skin Colour. Dr Wilmot James gave the opening address and other excellent presentations were made by a range of specialists.



Mrs Cheryl Douglas, Project Manager

### MAY 2009 EVENTS

May 15: *Darwin Day at the MTN Sciencentre:*  
Enquiries Carmen: 021 529 8100

#### PROGRAMME:

10:00 to 11:00 a **DNA & Genetics Workshop** with Valerie Corfield (Suitable for Grades 8 - 12);  
11:00 **Travels with Charlie** by Mike Bruton;  
13:00 **Travels with Charlie** by Mike Burton;  
15:00 **Lucky's Lab - Dissection Time!**