

AUDREY'S SOCIETY WHIRL

Shared Interest introduces 'Conversations for Change' with change-makers



By Audrey J. Bernard
Society Editor

Shared Interest, a New York-based nonprofit social investment fund working in Southern Africa, mobilizes the resources for Southern Africa's economically disenfranchised communities to sustain themselves and build equitable nations. On Thursday, May 25, 2017, Shared Interest, which is a tax-exempt nonprofit organization, as defined by section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, introduced the first of a series of *Conversations for Change* between key South African and U.S. thought leaders to spark conversation and build community at its annual gathering of distinguished U.S. and African leaders, top diplomats and dignitaries and supporters at the historic Columbia University's Low Memorial Library Rotunda, New York City.

The evening featured a cordial cocktail reception followed by a lively conversation of thought-provoking discussions and ended with dinner and an inspiring musical performance. Proceeds from the event will further the important work of Shared Interest. A portion of the ticket was tax-deductible. Event Chairs **Stanley Bergman** and **Hon. David N. Dinkins** opened the program with warm welcoming remarks.

Conversations for Change recognized the nonprofit organization's commitment and ongoing work towards economic democracy and development in Southern Africa. Since the end of apartheid in 1994, Shared Interest has mobilized US investors, philanthropists, corporations and faith-based organizations to invest in South Africa's future by providing microfinance organizations, agricultural cooperatives, small businesses and low cost housing organizations with access to capital. More than two million Black South Africans — the majority of them women — have benefited from Shared Interest's loan guarantees to create jobs, launch small businesses, and build affordable homes.

"For more than a century, South Africa and the United States have drawn insights and inspiration from each other," stated **Shared Interest's Founding Executive Director Donna Katzin**. "In these challenging times, our Conversation for Change will give new voice to that continuing history — and shared interest."

A prestigious panel of change-makers delivered an evening of provocative and lively conversation needed for real change right now in the world! Panelists explored their shared challenges and histories



Host Felicia Mabuza-Suttle Atmosphere



Moderator Felicia Mabuza-Suttle and panelists Dr. Saleem Badat, Danny Glover, Amy Goodman



Shared Interest Board Chair, Timothy Smith, Donna Katzin, Jeff MacDonagh, Matt Kirby-Smith



Harriet Olson, Amy Goodman



Danny Glover, Charles Hamilton, David Dinkins

and the work happening now to eliminate economic disparities and provide sustainable livelihoods.

South Africa's trailblazing television journalist and entrepreneur, **Felicia Mabuza-Suttle**, returned for another year as moderator. The award-winning journalist has been deeply committed to empowering and inspiring South Africa's next generation and women through many channels. Through her talk show, *SABC's Felicia Show*, and later, *Africa Channel's Conversations with Felicia*, she used the power of media to challenge perceptions -- bringing Black and white South Africans together to debate and openly discuss issues during and since apartheid.

The powerful trio of panelists were **Dr. Saleem Badat**, director, Andrew J. Mellon Foundation and former deputy chancellor, Rhodes University; actor and global activist **Danny Glover**; and **Amy Goodman**, award-winning journalist, author, and host of *Democracy Now!*, an independent global news hour.

"This is a pivotal year for our work and for Southern Africa's next generation," said Katzin. "The United States and South Africa are both at turning points in their histories. For more than a century, the people of both countries have learned and drawn strength and inspiration from each other. This moment is no different."

The Honorable & Mrs. David N. Dinkins served as this year's honorary chairs. The 2017 gala host committee included: **Alan Altschuler**; **Peggy Dulany**; **Gay & Richard Harter**; **Anne H. Hess & Craig Kaplan**; **Rachel Knight**; **Julie Kushner**; **Sarah**



Felicia Mabuza-Suttle, Former Ambassador Alice Dear



Performers

ah Leshner; **Anne & Vincent Mai**; **Nancy Meyer & Marc Weiss**; **Harriet Olson**; and **Amelie Ratliff**. This year's major corporate sponsors were: **The Bergman Family**; **Walden Asset Management**; **Citi**; **Brand South Africa**; **PepsiCo**; **South African Airways**; and **Synergos**.

The distinguished conversation committee included: **Steven Fahrer**; **Isaac Johnson**; **Kay Logan**; **Dr. Stephen Matseane**; **Jeff MacDonagh** and **Kendra Stensven**; **Yvonne O'Neal**; **Pamela Palenque North**; **Archley Prudent**; **Aniket Shah**; **Wayne Silby**; **Ruby Sprott**; **Booi Themeli**. (Photo Credit: Manonce Manonce)

About Dr. Saleem Badat

Dr. Saleem Badat, a South African who served as vice-chancellor of Rhodes University from June 2006 until July 2014, is based in New York City. A former student activist himself, he has played an important role in shaping South Africa's education policy since 1994, as he has retained his participation in movements for change. In August 2014,

he took up the role of program director, International Higher Education and Strategic Projects program at the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. He is a recipient of the Inyathelo Exceptional Philanthropy Award in recognition of Excellence and Leadership in Personal South African Philanthropy. His portfolio includes the South Africa program and international grantmaking in higher education.

About Danny Glover

Danny Glover is a Shared Interest Advisory Board member. The American actor, film director and political activist, is well known for his leading roles in the Lethal Weapon series, *The Color Purple*, *To Sleep with Anger* and *Angels in the Outfield*. Inspired at an early age by South African playwright, Athol Fugard, he has never lost sight of art's power to inform our common humanity. He is driven by his deep appreciation of the struggles, dignity and dreams of people excluded from opportunity, wealth and power. His activism brought him to union campaigns — ranging in support for the United Farmworkers to the United Au-

toworkers and numerous other unions. A UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, he has also chaired the TransAfrica Forum and been a clear and consistent voice for a free and just South Africa for more than 40 years.

About Amy Goodman

Amy Goodman is host and executive producer of *Democracy Now!*, a national, daily, independent, award-winning news program airing on over 1,400 public television and radio stations worldwide. Co-author of six *New York Times* bestsellers, her latest one is *Democracy Now! Twenty Years Covering the Movements Changing America*. She is also the first journalist to receive the Right Livelihood Award, widely known as the 'Alternative Nobel Prize' for "developing an innovative model of truly independent grassroots political journalism that brings to millions of people the alternative voices that are often excluded by the mainstream media." The Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard honored Goodman with the 2014 I.F. Stone Medal for Journalistic Independence Lifetime Achievement Award.