

ATHOL WILLIAMS



Athol Williams is an award-winning poet, social philosopher and social entrepreneur. His community work focuses on pursuing freedom through education and his academic work explores political and economic institutional arrangements to further human prosperity and social justice. He has worked as a strategy advisor to international businesses and has earned advanced degrees from some of the world's top universities. He has founded and served on the boards of numerous businesses and non-profit organizations. He is an inspirational speaker who draws on his personal experience of overcoming Apartheid in South Africa to demonstrate the power of self-belief and perseverance to live an extraordinary life.

Mr Williams was a Partner at global strategy consulting firm *Bain & Company*, working in their Boston, New York, London and Johannesburg offices where his clients included corporations and investment firms. He was the Strategy Director for *Old Mutual*, a financial services corporation and Business Evaluation Executive for *Rio Tinto*, a mining corporation, both listed in London. In 2003 he founded *Taurus Associates*, a corporate strategy and investment advisory firm. He has served on the boards of numerous companies across a range of industries.

Mr Williams believes firmly in the value of education to enable freedom and its transformative power for individuals and communities. He founded two non-profit organizations to carry out this work, *Taurus School Solutions* which works with school leadership to improve performance, and *Read to Rise* which promotes youth literacy. *Read to Rise* has already distributed 30,000 new books to children in needy communities and delivered inspirational classroom sessions to many thousands. In 2012, Mr Williams received an *Inyathelo Award in Education* from the South African Institute for Advancement and in 2013 he was recognized by the City of Cape Town for his community work by his inclusion in the *Heroes Walk* in Mitchells Plain.

Mr Williams finds creative and philosophical expression in his poetry. He has published three books of poetry, the most recent titled *Bumper Cars* in which he appeals to both reason and intuition to paint images of a new consciousness and new institutions that offer hope of a peaceful human existence. His poems are regularly featured in international literary journals and in 2015 he was awarded the *Sol Plaatje European Union Poetry Award*. He has published two children's books as part of the ongoing *Oaky* series of educational and inspirational books. He has held silent vigils to protest against human rights abuses and executive produced two human rights films. He is a pacifist and a vegan.

He holds a master's degree in Public Administration from *Harvard University* where he was a *Fellow* in the *Edward S. Mason Program in Public Policy and Management* and was awarded a *Littauer Award* for 'academic excellence and significant contribution to the Harvard community.' In addition Mr Williams holds an MBA from the *M.I.T. Sloan School of Management*, a master's in Finance from the *London Business School*, a master's in Political Theory from the *London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)* and a bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from *Wits University*. He is currently a student in Political Philosophy at *Oxford University*. Mr Williams was appointed Adjunct Professor at *Wits University* in 2009 and was a part-time lecturer in Business Strategy to MBA students at the *University of Cape Town*.

Mr Williams is a regular speaker at conferences and professional events where he has spoken on topics including visionary leadership, personal excellence and his far-reaching ideas for global society. He draws on his own professional and personal experiences, especially in overcoming the choking oppression of Apartheid, as well as his poetry, to inspire audiences.