

SETTING THE FORMAT FOR THE DEBATE BETWEEN MARTIN HALL AND DAVID BENATAR

Below are email communications between:

1) Martin Hall and David Benatar, in which they agreed on a format for the debate. (Key passages are indicated here, but not in the original, in **red type**.)

2) Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela and David Benatar, in which the former attempts to change the format of the debate, while the latter resists. (Key passages are indicated here, but not in the original, in **blue type**). Martin Hall's brief interpolations are also included.

1)

On 4/4/07 7:49 AM, "Martin Hall" <Martin.Hall@uct.ac.za> wrote:

>

>> Dear David

>>

>> I'm looking forward to your inaugural lecture next week. Looking beyond this
>> formal presentation (which allows no opportunity for discussion), I write to
>> invite you to take part in panel discussion on transformation issues with
>> Professor Achille Mbembe. This would be part of the "Respect" programme
>> which

>> the Vice Chancellor launched on March 21st (I've attached the current draft
>> of

>> the programme - the transformation discussion would be part of the "Values"
>> stream). Achille has accepted the invitation to take part in such a panel

>> and

>> I will be looking with him for a suitable date in May. The session would of
>> course be open to the UCT community, and would also launch a series of
>> debates

>> on the theme "Finding UCT" that Nick Shepherd and Zimitri Erasmus are putting
>> together.

>>

>> My proposal would be that you would speak to the themes that you will
>> introduce in your inaugural, and that Achille would develop the position that
>> he presented in outline in his piece in the Sunday Times this weekend.

>>

>> I hope you will agree to this: these are critical issues, and we need to
>> work

>> to improve the vigour of public intellectual life within UCT so that gain a
>> deeper understanding of critical issues and their implications.

>>

>> Regards

>>

>> Martin

>>>> David Benatar <David.Benatar@uct.ac.za> 2007/04/04 11:16:39 pm >>>
> Dear Martin
>
> Thanks for your email and invitation.
>
> Given, as you say, that inaugurals provide no opportunity for discussion, I
> had planned to propose another forum in which there would be a debate
> between me and somebody else (perhaps you?), followed by discussion from the
> floor. You're suggesting that we do this as part of the Respect programme.
> I'm concerned that that might not be the best forum. First, there are other
> issues on the agenda for that panel, including the issues raised by Achille
> Mbembe in his Sunday Times piece. I'm concerned that this will preclude
> sufficient focus on the specifically affirmative action issues. However, I
> would be entirely amenable to being part of the panel. Might I propose that
> I'd speak directly to Professor Mbembe's Sunday Times piece (or any other
> paper he provides)? That would make the panel more focused. I could then set
> up another forum for a debate about affirmative action. I don't even mind
> our making that forum part of the Respect programme if you wanted to
> incorporate it. Otherwise it could be done independently of that programme.
> How does that sound to you?
>
> I should tell you that I'll be in Canada from 15 to 22 May. 23 and 24 May
> would also be bad for me, but I would be free most other days (within the
> constraints of my teaching and other commitments).
>
> Regards,
> David

On 4/5/07 1:37 PM, "Martin Hall" <Martin.Hall@uct.ac.za> wrote:

> Dear David
>
> The scheduling is a little more complicated than I thought, since the date
> that works for Achille Mbembe is May 15, which is the first day of your period
> away (unless of course you are able to do a lunchtime seminar before leaving
> for Canada?). Its also too long after next week's inaugural to pick up on the
> issues.
>
> My suggestion, therefore, is a discussion and debate around the points you
> will raise at your inaugural during lunchtime of Monday 16 April. You would
> summarize key points from your inaugural, I would respond and then it would be
> open to the floor. This would be the first of the "Respect" events and, I
> think, a very good way of launching discussion. We would of course need a
> chair.
>
> Would this format - and the date of Monday 16 - be acceptable to you?
>
> Regards
>
> Martin

From: David Benatar <David.Benatar@uct.ac.za>
Date: Fri, 06 Apr 2007 03:00:24 +0200
To: Martin Hall <Martin.Hall@uct.ac.za>
Conversation: Equity: taking the discussion further
Subject: Re: Equity: taking the discussion further

Dear Martin

Thanks for your replies. As it happens, I may well be able to make a lunchtime event on the 15th. Will it be done by 2pm? If so, I can see whether I can juggle a few things to make my participation possible. By when do you need a response on this?

I'm happy to have the discussion about affirmative action on Monday 16 April. However, I would prefer a slightly different format. I think that there should be some debate between you and me before it is opened up to the floor. In other words, the real test of one's position is if it can withstand interrogation. It's insufficient for one of us to make a point and the other reply and then we move on. We need to be able to have some back and forth. So I'd suggest about 5 minutes intro from me, about ten minutes reply from you, fifteen to twenty minutes of debate between us, and then fifteen or twenty minutes of discussion from the floor. (This assumes that we'll have only 45 minutes. If we have an hour, we can extend our debate and the general discussion time.)

I'll give some thought to a suitable chair and then get back to you.

Regards,
David

On 4/6/07 1:13 PM, "Martin Hall" <Martin.Hall@uct.ac.za> wrote:

> Dear David
>
> I'm happy with this format for April 16. I've asked Pumla Gobido-Madikizela
> if, in principle, she would be able to chair. I think the key point for the
> chair is not so much managing good order between you and me (I hope!) but
> rather ensuring that interventions from the floor are appropriate, given that
> this is an area of discussion that often evokes emotion rather than logic. Do
> you have some alternative suggestions if Pumla is unavailable?
>
> Will I be able to have a written copy of your inaugural on Wednesday
> (preferably electronic)? I will want to consider your points carefully and
> with accuracy, and to speak from a prepared position (for which preparation
> time will be short for me).
>
> Regards
>
> Martin
>

2)

>>> Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela 2007/04/13 01:27 pm >>>

Dear David and Martin,

I look forward to chairing the debate on Monday. I thought I should give you a heads up on some of the practical arrangements that are in place. Alex Reynolds, our technician in the psychology department, has been working with Classroom Facilities to prepare the hall for the event on Monday. The hall is not ideal for a sit-down plan. I've asked Alex to set up two podia with mics on either side of the hall in the front, where I suggest you each stand during Q & A. Two roving mics will also be provided for the audience.

I wish to propose the following structure for your presentations:

David speaks for 14 minutes.

Martin also takes 14 minutes to respond.

I'll then take no more than 2 minutes to ask each of you a question related to your comments; then you respond briefly and we open the discussion to the floor. It's important that we give the audience a chance to engage with you and the issues you'll raise. Please let me know if this format is acceptable.

Kind regards,
Pumla

--

Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, PhD.
Associate Professor, Department of Psychology
Graduate Humanities Building, Room 4.09
University of Cape Town
Rondebosch, 7701
Phone: (27.21) 650 3427
Fax: (27.21) 650 4104
Email: PGobodo@humanities.uct.ac.za

From: Martin Hall <Martin.Hall@uct.ac.za>
Date: Fri, 13 Apr 2007 14:42:09 +0200
To: David Benatar <David.Benatar@uct.ac.za>, Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela <Pumla.Gobodo-Madikizela@uct.ac.za>
Subject: Re: Monday 16th Debate

Dear Pumla

This format is acceptable to me.

Regards

Martin

From: David Benatar <David.Benatar@uct.ac.za>
Date: Fri, 13 Apr 2007 13:35:23 +0200
To: Martin Hall <Martin.Hall@uct.ac.za>, Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela
<Pumla.Gobodo-Madikizela@uct.ac.za>
Subject: Re: Monday 16th Debate

Dear Pumla

Thanks for your message and for your efforts to have the venue set up appropriately.

Martin and I had previously agreed on a slightly different format, which involved my speaking for five minutes, his responding for ten, and then about fifteen or twenty minutes of debate between us before opening the matter to the floor for discussion.

Given the time constraints, I'm happy to waive my opening. I really don't think that I need to rehash anything I said on Wednesday evening. We could, if Martin is happy with that, launch directly into his response. But I think it is crucial that he had I then have an opportunity to debate one another before it is opened to the floor.

I'd also like to see the discussion from the floor not being an opportunity for people simply to mouth off, but rather to *engage* with Martin and me about what we've said. That requires some to and fro. If interlocutors from the floor are required to be brief (on pain of being cut off), and we respond crisply, we could have a good quality debate.

Regards,
David

On 4/13/07 2:43 PM, "Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela"
<Pumla.Gobodo-Madikizela@uct.ac.za> wrote:

> Dear David,
>
> I would like to propose that we see this as a debate not just between you and
> Martin, but also an opportunity for the UCT community to engage with these
> issues with the two of you leading the debate. I think the nature of the topic
> requires that the dialogue be opened up for some audience participation. I'd
> like us to permit a fair amount of time for this.
>
> I think it's important that you present your opening remarks ~ perhaps we
> could shift the time allocation a bit. So please consider a slightly different
> format to the one that you and Martin had discussed :
>
> David presents for 10 minutes (if you use less that's OK)
> Martin speaks for 15.
>
> Moderators/Chair asks 2-minute question
> Martin responds briefly
> David responds briefly
>
> Q & A
>
> If time allows I'll invite each of you to make brief closing comments.
>

>
> Would this plan be acceptable?
>
> As chair, I will of course be responsible for maintaining proper order and
> decorum, and this includes ensuring that people don't go into long speeches
> when they ask questions. I would also like you as speakers to exercise some
> patience and perhaps some tolerance for the different speaking styles or
> levels of articulation that one encounters at such events.
>
> With all the best,
> Pumla

From: David Benatar <David.Benatar@uct.ac.za>
Date: Fri, 13 Apr 2007 16:29:29 +0200
To: Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela <Pumla.Gobodo-Madikizela@uct.ac.za>, Martin Hall
<Martin.Hall@uct.ac.za>
Conversation: Monday 16th Debate
Subject: Re: Monday 16th Debate

Dear Pumla

What I had suggested was first a debate between Martin and me and then a dialogue between us and the floor - in other words, both the dialogue you propose and debate. The debate is important, because it's very easy to respond to a position with a plausible sounding but fallacious retort. The way one really tests positions is via the to and fro of debate. Since no one of us can engage in that detail serially with everyone in the room, the debate between Martin and me is a kind of proxy for that.

I'm not sure that it's a profitable use of the limited time for me to restate, but only more briefly, what I said before. Martin will pick up on those points he wants to address, which will provide a focus. If I think that he has mischaracterized my position, I'll say so and offer clarification. If I think he has accurately characterized my position I'll respond.

Perhaps the three of us should meet at 12h50 and we can decide then how exactly we'll handle it. I'm happy to speak off the cuff if we decide then that a brief introduction from me is necessary.

Regards,
David

From: Martin Hall <Martin.Hall@uct.ac.za>
Date: Fri, 13 Apr 2007 16:36:58 +0200
To: David Benatar <David.Benatar@uct.ac.za>, Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela
<Pumla.Gobodo-Madikizela@uct.ac.za>
Subject: Re: Monday 16th Debate

Dear Pumla and David

I had intended to start off my stating my interpretation of David's position, which I need to do to offer the refutation.

M

Correspondence about this matter ends here.