

BU Honorary Graduate Citation - Kwilole Chisuse-van der Boom

Pro-Chancellor,

Ten years after graduating from BU, Kwilole Chisuse-van der Boom has made a global impact as the chair of a charity providing a home and education to orphaned children in Zambia.

Kwilole took over leadership of the Funsani charity immediately after completing her degree. She has since overseen its work to raise 18 children orphaned by HIV and to support a further 500 children at a local school. With the charity's first cohort now forging their own careers as engineers, nurses and teachers, the Funsani Home has recently welcomed nine new children into its care.

The transformational power of education was impressed upon Kwilole from an early age. Having been adopted by her aunt and uncle, who are both doctors, the family moved from Zambia to Oxfordshire when Kwilole was aged 12. She recalls attending the local comprehensive and being the only black person in a school of 1,000 pupils, but feeling empowered and encouraged to embrace her uniqueness.

Having excelled at school, she set her sights on a career in medicine, until getting her first-ever C grade in the first year of her science A-levels and deciding to change tack. Leaving school at the time that Barack Obama became the first American black president, she applied to BU's journalism degree stating that she wanted to report on future historic events. However, BU's academics suggested that her creative style of writing would be better suited to a degree and career in public relations and gave her an unconditional offer. Today, alongside her charity work, Kwilole is a Senior Account Director at a healthcare communications agency.

Kwilole cites her drive and determination to help others to having overcome her own personal challenges. Born to a teenage mum in a culture where this was not accepted, she was adopted by her grandmother before losing her to HIV when Kwilole was aged just five. She went on to live with an aunt who died from the same disease before being adopted by the aunt and uncle who raised her as their own. She passionately believes in the power of education to break cycles of poverty and disadvantage.

Pro-Chancellor, I have the honour to present Kwilole Chisuse-van der Boom, and I ask you to confer upon her the degree of Doctor of Business Administration, honoris causa.