

## **FAQs: RENAMING OF THE RW WILCOCKS BUILDING**

### **Why is Stellenbosch University renaming buildings?**

- The renaming of buildings forms part of a long-term and extensive visual redress process on the SU's campuses in an attempt to not only remove offensive symbols, but also to introduce new visual symbols that point to a shared history, our diverse stories and public spaces that are welcoming to all. This process was launched a few years ago and much progress has been made in recent years to create student and staff-friendly living and work spaces that conform to the needs of a diverse group of students, staff and other stakeholders, and at the same time promoting a welcoming campus culture.

The University is making a concerted effort to create spaces for dialogue about public symbols and historical figures. In addition to that, specific committees have been put in place to facilitate university-wide discourse about public symbols and the naming of buildings.

### **What are the reasons for renaming the RW Wilcocks Building?**

- The RW Wilcocks Building was named after Prof RW Wilcocks, a former rector of SU. Although staff, students, alumni and the public have strong and differing opinions on what the name symbolises, the fact is that due to perceptions regarding his involvement in apartheid-related matters and race based policies, as well as his connections to Hendrik Verwoerd, the legacy of Prof RW Wilcocks is shrouded in controversy.

In addition, there is also well-documented criticism from the current national psychology (Prof Wilcocks's field of expertise) community on the current name, as well as pleas from successive Student Representative Councils, other student movement leaders, as well as staff, to change the name. Academic disciplines and divisions housed in the building have also requested to change the name. These include the Department of Psychology, the Division of Research Development and Stellenbosch University International.

What is more important for the University though, is naming buildings and residences in a way that points to a shared history, that tell our diverse stories and that creates public spaces that are welcoming to all. Renaming the RW Wilcocks Building is an opportunity to expand this process and to allow for a critical conversation about names and symbols in general.

### **How will the new name be selected?**

- The final approval of the new name of the former RW Wilcocks building will be taken by die Executive Committee of Council after completion of the following preparatory phases. SU staff and students, and Stellenbosch community structures currently represented on the SU Institutional Forum were invited to submit proposals for a new name by the closing date for nominations on 26 August 2020. All nominations will be considered by the Committee for the Naming of buildings, venues and other facilities/premises, and a shortlist will be presented to the Rectorate for their consideration. The Rectorate will then table the proposed name at the Executive Committee of Council, who is responsible for the final approval. The Executive Committee of Council will report its decision for cognisance of Council members at the first Council meeting after the decision has been made. The Wilcocks name has been removed from the building, but will, as was the case in the HB Thom Theatre (now the Adam Small Theatre Complex) be contextualised in the building.

### **What names have been proposed?**

The following valid nominations have been received:

- Cochoqua Building
- Die Vlakte Building
- Die Vlakte Converse Building / Die Vlakte Ubuntu Converse Building
- Elizabeth Botha Building
- Eva Krotoa Building
- International Office Building
- Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr Building
- Lilian Ngoyi Building / Lilian Mesediba Matabane Ngoyi Building
- Mzansi Building
- Russel Botman Building
- RW Wilcocks Building
- Steve Biko Building / Bantu Steven Biko Building
- The Acre Building
- The Hope – Ithemba Building / The Hope Building /The Ithemba Building
- Vlam Joubert Building

### **In 2015 the RW Wilcocks building was informally renamed the Lillian Ngoyi Building. Will this name be included in those considered for the renaming?**

- The name has been included for consideration due to it having been nominated according to the outlined process.

### **What are the guidelines for renaming a building?**

- The process of renaming of buildings, venues and other facilities is outlined in the University's Policy on the naming of buildings, venues and other facilities/premises. [Click here](#) to read the policy (link to policy).

### **Explain the processes that have been followed to rename the building?**

- A call for proposals for a new name was sent to SU staff and students, as well as the community structures represented on the SU Institutional Forum on 24 July 2020. The closing date for nominations was 26 August 2020. All nominations, signed by at least 10 staff members, students and/or members of the community structures represented on the Institutional Forum of SU will be considered by the Naming Committee. Each nomination also had to be accompanied by a motivation for the specific name, and could include supporting documents, such as the relevant research, publications or opinion pieces.

### **Who are the members of the Naming Committee?**

The Naming Committee comprises the following functionaries:

- The Registrar (Chair)
- Chief Director: Finance
- Senior Director: Corporate Communications and Marketing
- Senior Director: Development and Alumni Relations
- Senior Director: Social Impact and Transformation
- Representative from Facilities Management
- Representative from Legal Services
- Representative from the Department of History

For the Wilcocks renaming process the following members were co-opted:

- Two student representatives, one from the 2019/2020 SRC and one from the 2020/2021 SRC;

- A representative from the community structures with membership on the Institutional Forum of SU; and
- Two current “residents” of the former Wilcocks Building.

### **What other name changes have been made over the past few years?**

A number of name changes have taken place over the past few years. Examples of some include the following:

- The Coetzenburg Centre (previously the DF Malan Centre)
- The Stellenbosch University Library (JS Gericke Library)
- The [Adam Small Theatre Complex](#) (HB Thom Theatre)
- The [Pieter Okkers House](#) (7 Joubert Street and now named after the first resident, Mr Pieter JA Okkers (1875–1952))
- Huis Simon Nkoli House (Victoriastraat 39)
- Several new residences over the last few years have been named to reflect our shared history and tell our diverse stories. These include Prof Russel Botman (Huis Russel Botman House), Huis Ubuntu House and [Nkosi Johnson House](#).

### **What other projects have been undertaken as part of the visual redress process at SU?**

A number of projects have been undertaken over the past few years. These include the following:

- “The Circle”, a bronze art installation featuring 11 phenomenal South African women thought leaders that was erected on the Rooiplein towards the end of last year.
- Welcome messages in 15 languages have been carved onto benches in public areas on campus, including braille, Sign Language and San.
- A map of Die Vlakte was installed at the entrance of the Arts and Social Sciences building which is built on the grounds where families were evicted under the Group Areas Act in the 1960's.
- The creation of the Lückhoff Living Museum.
- Displaying the University's Centenary Restitution Statement at the SU Library.

Click here to read more about the Visual Redress Project (insert link:

<https://www.sun.ac.za/english/Lists/news/DispForm.aspx?ID=7058>)

### **Further reading: RW Wilcocks building:**

- *[RW Wilcocks: Die man en die naam.](#)*  
Article by Prof Albert Grundlingh, Historian, Stellenbosch
- *[RW Wilcocks' legacy- volksheld or apartheid architect?](#)*  
Article by Prof Anthony Naidoo, Department of Psychology, Stellenbosch University
- *[Purist positivism and delusions of “relevance”: disreputable origins and unpalatable functions](#)*  
Article by Prof Lou-Marie Kruger, Department of Psychology, Stellenbosch University