Stellenbosch students suspended amid ‘blackface’ party outrage

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TWO female Stellenbosch University students were suspended from their residence yesterday after they attend a party smeared in what appeared to be black paint this week.

They have been suspended pending the outcome of an investigation into the “blackface” incident at a housewarming event at a residence earlier in the week.

This comes as Open Stellenbosch members are threatening to take legal action against Stellenbosch University for failure to act more decisively against the two.

The group met management of the Heemstede Dameskoshuis on Friday night where students expressed their anger at the incident, which has gone viral on social media.

The group included the students’ representative council (SRC), the residence house committee and Heemstede residents. The institution was represented by staff members, including Professor Nico Koopman, acting vice-rector for social impact, transformation and personnel, as well as Prof Arnold Schoonwinkel, vice-rector for learning and teaching.

A photo showing the two students smeared in what appears to be black paint or black polish went viral and angered many on social media.

Yesterday the two were suspended from the residence by the university, pending the outcome of an investigation. One of the students has also been relieved of her duties as student mentor.

Simone, spokeswoman of Open Stellenbosch, said students were still unhappy with decision taken by management.

She said many students were demanding harsh disciplinary action and were calling for the two to be expelled.

“We want something to be done about this serious matter and we are planning on reporting the matter to the Anti-Racism Forum,” she said.

Stellenbosch University spokesman Martin Viljoen said: “Management condemns all forms of racism and acknowledges the demeaning effects on its students, staff and members of the public.”

He said the university “is acting swiftly in the matter and a case has been registered with the equality unit, recently established on campus to deal with unfair discrimination and sexual harassment.”

One of the students has apologised on Facebook. “The intention was not to be black or insult the black community.”

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