Activists retract ‘blackface’ apology, call for SU duo to be expelled

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OPEN Stellenbosch (OS) has retracted its “blackface” apology and has once again called for the two students involved to be expelled from Stellenbosch University (SU).

The student activist group initially commended the actions of two SU students who dressed up as aliens and painted themselves dark purple for a fancy dress party at the university’s Heemstede residence. OS called for the students to be expelled, and for the residence head and committee to be “removed” for allowing the incident to take place on Friday night.

On Monday, OS issued an apology, which read: “We wish to retract our statement of Friday, February 5, 2016, with respect to the mistaken incident of blackface that occurred at Heemstede residence.”

Late on Monday night, the movement retracted the apology and issued a new statement, saying that there was a “general consensus” that it was in fact a blackface incident.

“New information surfaced that challenged our understanding of the ‘blackface’ incident and created confusion.

“In response to this new information an apology was quickly released on February 8 in a rush to reconcile our understanding with that information.

“This apology was, however, issued without the consensus of the collective and should not be considered to be the current stance of OS on the ‘blackface’ incident,” the OS statement reads.

“The movement said it recognised that the incident is now not “generally” considered to be blackface.

“We as OS maintain that the fact that the student filtered the photo to appear black and then knowingly continued to upload the photo herself on to social media clearly confirms that this is a blackface incident.

“Hence we retain our stance calling on Stellenbosch University to put an end to blackfacing and to expel the two students involved in this incident with immediate effect, and to remove the residence head and committee which allowed this incident to take place under their watch.”

SU spokesperson Martin Viljoen said university management could not comment on the viewpoints of various stakeholders.

“One the investigation is over, we can comment on the incident,” Viljoen said. carlo.petersen@unl.co.za