

Stellenbosch University, collectively investigating
and transforming institutional racism:

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As an SRC we aim to identify elements of this institution which makes certain student groups feel excluded and unwelcome. We need to take a very critical look at our campus with its statues and buildings in order to determine whether it remains relevant and appropriate in this day and age. The bottom line in which the SRC will not make any compromise is that no student at this university may ever feel unwelcome.

We should, at the same time, guard against transforming only the surface. Institutional racism at Stellenbosch University can be defined as any practice, norm, policy or representation that actively (albeit subtly) endorses one race, custom or culture above the others. Institutional racism goes deeper than statues and the names on buildings. It needs to be removed from our classrooms, our social gatherings, the halls of our residences and from our campus leadership and management bodies. The emphasis needs to be placed on understanding what institutional racism is, how apathy perpetuates it and how understanding and empathy can lead to action that will ultimately eradicate it.

As the SRC of Stellenbosch University we have come to an understanding that action is necessary to achieve what we, as well as our respected late rector, Prof Russel Botman, believed in for this campus: that both the farmer's child as well as the farm worker's child should feel welcome on this campus. We should respect both and ensure that this vision becomes a legacy.

Conscious efforts to promote understanding has already been set in motion through the Critical Engagement portfolio where discussions on racial thinking, overcoming oppression and what it means to be a born free with the responsibilities thereof, have been organised. Only thereafter, will we be able to collectively decide whether such names should be changed or not. No decision can or should be made on issues of such gravity, without the full understanding of everyone that will be affected by its change.



We will collaborate with management to ensure a focus on institutional and systemic transformation (this process has already begun); and we will take hands with students to actively construct a social community that breeds understanding of our neighbour. We call on all students and staff to purposefully attempt to understand the differing perspectives, experiences and backgrounds of one another and to act on these differences respectfully.

It is always easy to come out and pledge unconditional support for a popular cause. It is also easy to precipitate outrage and anger. The challenge lies in getting all constituencies to participate in raising their voices, and more important still – to listen to the voices of others. Tearing down statues and renaming buildings will achieve nothing if transformation stops there. It is ignorance, apathy and hostility that ultimately must fall.