**ALUMNI TRANSFORMATION AUDIO SUMMARY**

The purpose of the interviews was to dive into the consultation survey in greater detail but also to allow respondents an opportunity to express themselves outside of the confinements of the survey. This allowed for enriched conversation and data.

These focused conversations were recorded and covered all areas that arose around transformation. They were able to capture detailed information and perceptions of the alumni, provided a broader range of understanding of the alumni thinking. The respondents used it as a platform and opportunity to speak on issues and even seek for clarification when needed. Of special note, the Grahamstown focused discussion session that had a total of 42 respondents, was where the decision was made to have alumni representation during the transformative summit.

In Port Elizabeth, there were discussions on how students coming to Rhodes University, for the first time, felt alienated. Coming from a rural background and being thrust into a middle class white environment was extremely uncomfortable. There was further discourse on transformation being necessary all the time, in order to ensure that all students are comfortable.

In Cape Town, it was noted by participants that transformation needed to happen at a more rapid pace. One participant described her experience in the 1970s. As a university student it was awful – there were 5 black women on campus and we were informed that they needed to leave Residence, due to apartheid. The VC did not defend them and they were some of the top students. When they arrived back the next year, they were told that there would be separate Residences for whites and blacks. Her experience was not pleasant living in Grahamstown. She could not go to the Movie House, or Restaurants. Security people were allowed on campus to take photographs of students and thereby politicize them. The participant described that due to her lived experiences, she had no respect for Cecil J Rhodes and that things need to be changed. Her experience was traumatic and resistance to change is hurtful. Apartheid was a fact and is distorted nowadays and the truth is not being told. There is a whitewash of the truth and it is not told and it is time for us to say we can’t do this anymore and it is too much for us. One cannot go at a slow pace with issues of race, names need to change.

In Cape Town, it was discussed that the Rhodes Scholarships were often confused with Rhodes University, to the benefit of graduates applying for positions overseas.

Across the board the starting point for the discussions was understanding what was the meaning of “transformation” and if that implied sudden and immediate change of things or “a process that enhances” (Respondent, in Johannesburg). In line with the possibility of changing the name of Rhodes University, there has been consistency amongst the alumni, be it in the survey, email correspondents and focused groups where the name change seen to be a cosmetic change and more importantly a waste of money with regards to rebranding. A respondent in Johannesburg said “If we change the name today, what happens the next day – the next day Mabizela and his staff will start spending money to brand this new name. RU has 10 spaces for students who come from the local community but none of them make it due to the quality of high school education – let’s use the money to support the community of Grahamstown and in increasing the quality of education, rather than spending it on changing a name for the sake of changing the name”.

Another observation in Johannesburg noted that when we look at transformation, an example of Germany was used after 20 years after the war. The VC resisted change at the university and he was too rigid. In SA we live in a new world punching above its weight. We need to change and shape the change that others will follow.

The definition of transformation was discussed. Should it be defined by our, values, ethics and morality which are grounded in our diverse wisdom and traditions as such then, transformation is systematic reordering and re-prioritising in light of those ethics, values and morality.

Another point was that if one went to UK or USA with a degree from Makana University, it would not be known or recognized.

The university has seen to be changed and integrated. Transformation is a process that takes many years, however students seem to be frustrated at the pace. There is a chance that with a name change, we might lose our international students and we might also lose the top students applying at universities.

We are a society of stories and memories that shapes Africa and there is a story and a memory that is associated with the name of Rhodes, which needs to be heard. If there is a resolution to not change the name or to incorporate the name with something else, we need to remember to listen to the story and why the story needs to be told and why people feel the way that they do. If we do not listen we will betray the deeper values and ethics of what shapes our identity as people of this continent.

Another thought was to keep the name, build a statue in order to remember the history and to show that there is peace and reconciliation, after achieving success from insurmountable obstacles. Let us give the name a new meaning.

When discussing issues around the curriculum, alumni in Johannesburg, Durban and Port Elizabeth spoke about the need for the curriculum to be globally relevant. Respondent in Cape town said “instead of transforming the curriculum lets instead broaden it, to avoid losing all the valuable things it brings , but also allowing for it to be better developed and more inclusive”. The respondents from Durban argued that the curriculum needed to adapt to the working world and not just to the university”. Dr Mabizela , more so during the Durban Consultation process spoke towards the issues of demographics and curriculum, he maintained that “Rhodes University was a small university and would stay that”, he further went on to add that the current curriculum was based on a more formative educational approach, we do not educate for a job, we educate for life. If we focus for a job, by the time they graduate, all those jobs will be finished, so we equip them with the skills and knowledge”. When discussing the graduation ceremony, the alumni were satisfied to keep it the way it was, at present. Several respondents compared the Rhodes University Graduation Ceremony today, with the ululations and traditional wear, to other places they had been to, and viewed the Rhodes University graduation ceremony as “excellent”. Alumni felt that it would be even more beneficial to make the graduation process more inclusive for everyone.

Respondents in Perth warned against changing everything to the point of losing the foundation and complete loss of identity. “we must stay away from the process of re-writing history”, the history of this country is written in tragedies and victories.

In Durban, it was noted that colleagues proud themselves on their Rhodes degree due to the academic excellence.