



RHODES UNIVERSITY
EQUITY AND
INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

Launch edition
Quarterly Newsletter
November 2020

INGUQUKO

NEWSLETTER



Silent Protest at Mary Waters (The activity is part of the Equity and Institutional Culture Directorate's schools' outreach programme)

WELCOME NOTE

Dear all

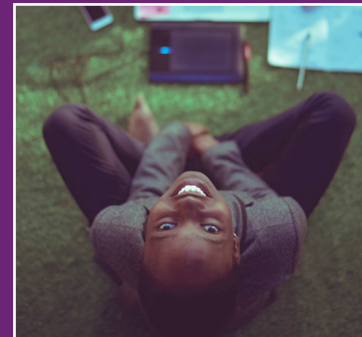
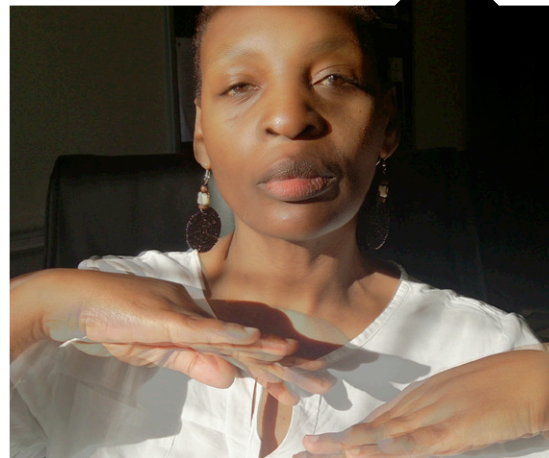
Welcome to the first edition of the Inguquko newsletter. The newsletter is produced by the Equity and Institutional Culture Directorate. Its main purpose is to inform students, staff and other Rhodes University stakeholders about transformation projects, events, activities that are taking place in the institution's departments, faculties, residences and on campus generally and to provide a space for students, staff and other stakeholders to publish short articles and letters that relate to the transformation trajectory of the institution. These articles and letters will, it is hoped, be an indication of how staff, students and other stakeholders experience the broad culture of the institution. The newsletter is published in English and isiXhosa.

The Equity and Institutional Culture Directorate is tasked with facilitating the transformation of the institution towards being an institution whose staff and students' practices are demonstrably informed by a deep appreciation of equity, social justice and redress. The three key activities of the Directorate are awareness raising and advocacy, facilitation of transformation planning and planning implementation and monitoring the impact of the institution's transformation strategies. Inguquko newsletter will therefore also contribute variously towards the achievement of all these key activities.

Students, staff and other stakeholders who would like to have their articles and letters published in Inguquko should send their contributions to the editor.

We do hope that you will find the newsletter not only informative but also useful as a space for sharing information about your transformation related work and your opinions on the institution's transformation trajectory.

Many thanks
Noluxolo Nhlapo



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EDITOR'S NOTE

The E&IC division is happy to bring the launch edition of Inguquko "Transformation".

In this issue we bring you highlights of 2020 and showcase projects from 2019.

We would like to invite RU staff, students and strategic partners/stakeholders to contribute to the Newsletter by writing articles for publishing. The Editorial team will try and publish all articles but reserves the right to edit in consultation with the writer.

As this is a quarterly newsletter, the next issue will be published at the end of March 2021.

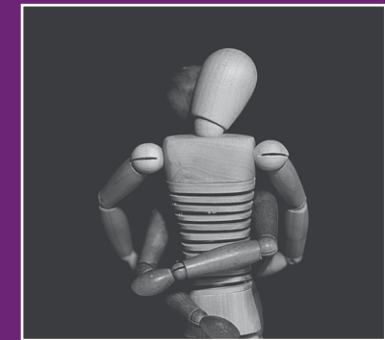
Inputs and articles should be emailed to: n.nhlapo@ru.ac.za



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IS HOME A SAFE SPACE FOR ONLINE LEARNING?

By Phumelele Priscilla Nkomozake

After the corona virus outbreak, many sectors, and people's lives have changed. This included the Higher Education and Training sector, causing University students to pack their bags and go back home. This was the response taken by the University following the strict national shutdown mandate that was placed by President Cyril Ramaphosa in April 2020.

Anxious, and worried about their degrees, whether or not they will complete the academic year, and obtain their qualifications. Students had to leave their residences, and go back home.

The corona virus, being declared a pandemic by the World Health Organisation, has shifted a lot of people's realities.

Studying for your degree at home, has presented a different set of challenges. With university students having to begin grappling with the new technologies of learning online.

For some students, living in the University residences was not a matter of convenience that favoured their degree only, but being on campus, meant having better access to campus facilities such as the library, computer laboratories and the counselling centres. Living in residences on campus was also to intentionally live away from home. Now with the advent of corona virus and students moving back home. Their lives have changed from a life of independence. Some students are now again confronted by their realities of poverty, ageism, discrimination, queerphobia, transphobia and sexual violence.



"Being at home you are not just a student, you are a child, you are someone's sibling. You always play the other roles first, before you say you are a student".
Ntsika Maweni says.

Some students describe the experience of being in University as that of becoming themselves. They understand that self-expression is not something that can be freely exercised at home. Self expression is met with queerphobia, bigotry and ultimately explicit violence. Students who are HIV positive also had better access to their ART's, using their on campus health care clinics. Now, there is a clear barrier between their access to this treatment. The pandemic has also exposed that most sexual violence cases happen at home in South Africa. With students studying back home they are more likely to share the same spaces with their perpetrators.

Maweni describes her experience of learning at home as "negotiating space in relation to learning." Covid-19 erases the assumption of home being a safe spaces. Home, for some students is unsafe, and therefore cannot be read as a conducive environment to participate in the academic project.



FROM THE EYES OF A FIRST YEAR

By Lindeka Namba

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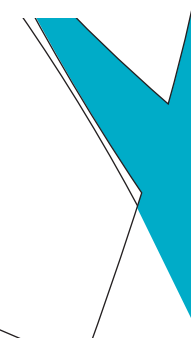
At the beginning of the 2020 academic year, the Equity and Institutional Culture Office took to the streets to find out just how the G20s are finding the culture at Rhodes thus far. In the past few years, various events and dialogues have been promoted and hosted by the office in collaboration with the university stakeholders in an effort to find out issues that require urgent attention and address.

These issues were then captured with the intention of addressing them adequately. The Equity and Institutional Culture Office's main objective is to drive the transformation of the institution towards being an institution whose staff and students' practices are demonstrably informed by a deep appreciation of equality, equity and human rights.

First year Bachelor of Science student, Quinlan Caiger, told us more about his experience of the culture at Rhodes University. "I am finding Rhodes campus life to be very good, much better than high school", says Caiger. Having come to Rhodes from the local Kingswood College, he notes that as a first year, "everything is relatively new". He further explained: "I feel like Rhodes is very progressive in the manner in which it handles and chooses to address issues of transformation in our society". He notes that in comparison to some communities that he has been a part of in the past, the culture at Rhodes is much more different.

For Caiger, coming to an institution like Rhodes has not really changed his personal beliefs on most of the pressing issues of the day such as race, gender and sexuality. This, he notes, is due to the fact that the values upheld here are very closely related to the values upheld in his previous high school. If anything, coming to Rhodes has helped to positively develop and shape some of Caiger's perspectives and opinions with regards to these issues. He explained that being in a space like Rhodes presents the opportunity to meet and interact with people from diverse backgrounds.

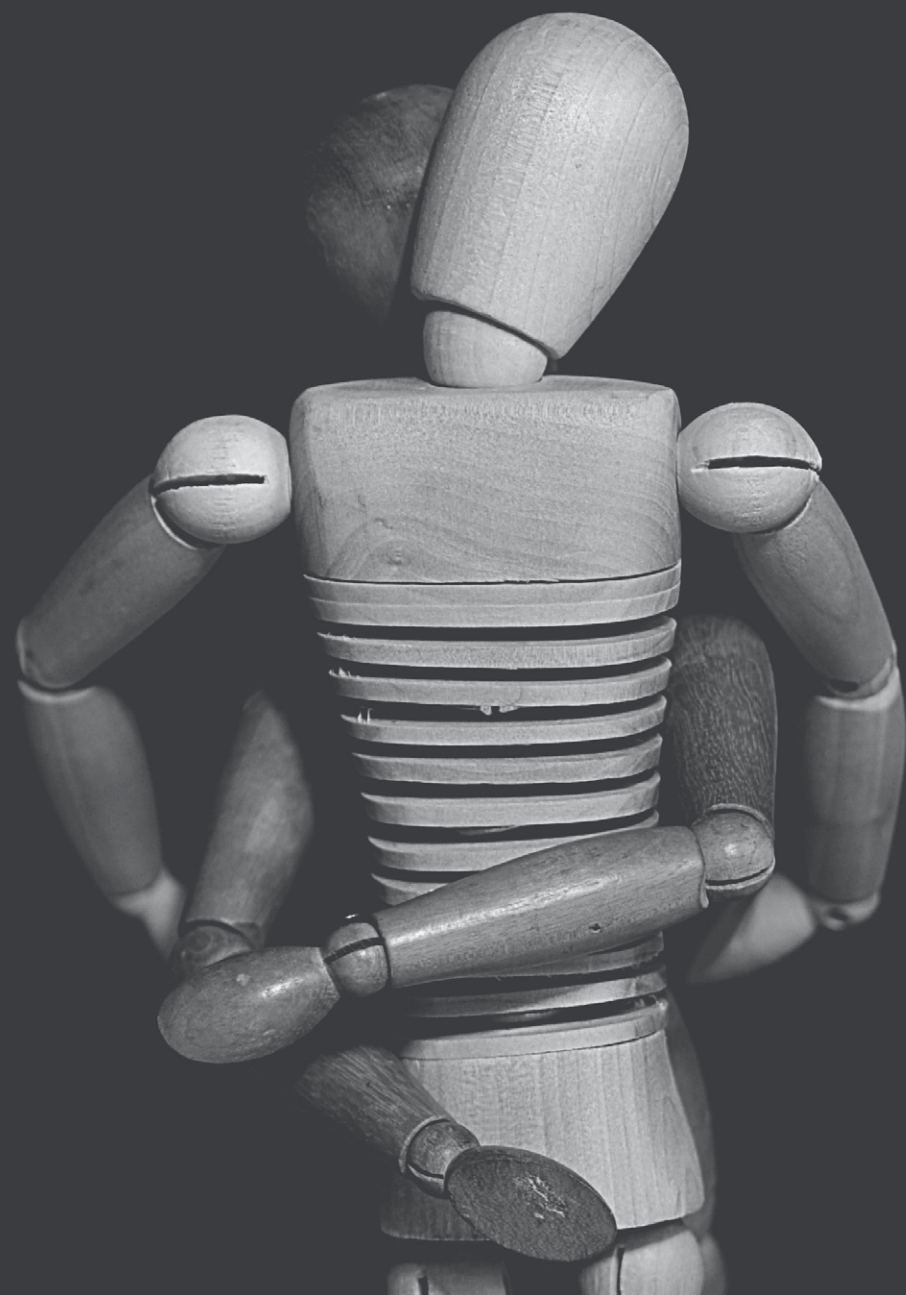
Caiger had also attended the consent talks and has also gotten familiar with the sexual offence policy "what I took away from the talks is that the institution really wanted to make it clear that failure to adhere to the right procedure where consent is concerned will be dealt with harshly." The university has a very strong stance on gender based violence and sexual offences. Caiger planned to attend one of the events hosted by the university's 'Making Men' Society, with hopes that this too will play a positive role in shaping his views.



Navigating **consent** in romantic and sexual relationships

Rape and sexual harassment have been consistently popular topics since before the #RUPreferenclist protests in 2016, but since then they have become a priority issue for the University. Every year during O-week, talks are held where first years are taught about the importance of consent in sexual and romantic relationships.

By Karabo Baloyi



On the 26th of February, Rhodes University sent a campus-wide email announcing the permanent exclusion of a second-year student from the university after being found guilty for rape. Once again, the issue of consent in sexual and romantic relationships became a widely discussed topic for students.

Chishimba Kasanga, an MA student at the university reflected on her knowledge about consent before attending Rhodes University in 2019. "I used to take it for granted and believed that once you were in a relationship, you automatically agreed to get intimate with them, but through the media, mainly books and documentaries, I learnt about what consent was," she explained. She also said that she learnt that consent went beyond sex: "even with holding hands in public, just because I'm your partner doesn't mean I can assume to hold your hand in public, I'm supposed to ask and only when you say yes, can I hold your hand."

Jason Olivier, an MA student at Rhodes University explained how in past relationships, no formal discussions about consent took place, but it did become an issue: "a recent ex would try to leave every time I did not want to have sex, making me feel as though I was pushed into a corner."

Being in a same sex relationship, Jason added that in his experience, consent was not taken as seriously as in heterosexual relationships and was often assumed to always be present, especially in media such as newspaper articles. "If I could speak to first year students about this issue, I would tell them to educate themselves and not take things as they come, they need to recognise their power and their responsibility in the relationships they find themselves in," Jason added.

Both Chishimba and Jason agreed that regardless of which gender in a relationship seeks consent, it needs to be done in a way that respects the partner's autonomy. Both parties need to be on the same page and they both need to understand that consent can be withdrawn at any time.

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**ALL-GENDER
RESTROOMS**



INTERSEX TOILET FACILITIES

By Lindeka Namba

New intersex toilets have been installed at the newly refurbished Biosciences Building at Rhodes University. This comes after careful consideration by the university to start implementing the suggestions that have come up in transformation discussions over recent years. This initiative has been received in different ways by members of the Rhodes community.

A number of students have even taken to social media platforms associated with the university to express their very strong opinions of how they have received the new facilities. First year Bachelor of Science student, Nonkululeko Lukhozi, shared some of her opinions and first impressions with us. "I was surprised at first because I am not at all familiar with this kind of arrangement", says Lukhozi. "However, I think it is very good that the university is trying to be more inclusive and accommodate everyone on campus without any discrimination to sex", she adds. She admits that at first she felt a little uncomfortable with having to share the same bathrooms with men, but applauds the University for taking steps towards eradicating gender/sex based discrimination.

Bachelor of Science student, Loyiso Noguba, also expressed his opinions on the matter. Noguba who attends his Mathematics lectures at the Biosciences building, says that initially the idea of sharing bathrooms with the opposite sex/gender was really new

to him. He stated that it made him feel uncomfortable but was open to change. "I must admit, at first I was very uncomfortable having to wait in the same que as women," says Noguba.

With one of the objectives of the Equity and Institutional Culture being to monitor the implementation of the institutional transformation strategies and policies, the office has tried to identify structural, systemic and other barriers that may be undermining the achievement of the goal of transformation. The conversion of some bathroom facilities and instalment of new intersex bathrooms in some of the university's communal spaces around campus is done in an effort to aid inclusivity in the Rhodes community.

Lab Technician, Lusanda Madiba, who works at the Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology expressed her opinion with regards to the intersex toilets found in the newly renovated building. "Rhodes has done very well in terms of finally implementing what people have been asking for over the years", says Madiba. She further explains that she is very neutral as far as the intersex toilet situation is concerned. "I am for them, I am not against them" she explains. Like many other people asked about the new facilities, Madiba states that her first impression was that of shock. Having to walk into the same door as her male peers in order to use the toilet is not something she is familiar with. However, she also states her satisfaction with regards to the design of the inner cubicles. Having individual cubicles with sinks and mirrors in them has been the positive aspect of things.

DR. QAMBELA FACILITATES DIALOGUES ON MASCULINITIES & GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

By Luvo Mnyobe

The Rhodes University Equity and Transformation office ran a programme to assist male students with critical engagement with masculinity. This was done with male dialogues which sought to create a space for male students to speak freely about gender-based violence.

Jonathan Helleman, warden at Stanley Kidd House, says that it is important that men take up their place in fighting gender-based violence. While he acknowledges that these dialogues will not eradicate the scourge of gender-based violence immediately, he holds that it disrupts the normalised culture of violence in South Africa.

"To even have men talking about these issues together is a great milestone. I have found that most men are able to get together and talk about sports. Such an initiative is a step forward having young men contribute to the resistance of gender-based violence" says Helleman.

The dialogues recognise the importance of engaging in awareness raising campaigns while implementing policy changes to end gender-based violence. Currently, the Department of Higher Education is working on a Comprehensive Policy Framework on Gender Based Violence for all universities in the country.

Dr Gcobani Qambela, a former Rhodes University student and University lecturer is the man tasked with facilitating these male dialogues. Qambela is a researcher whose work focuses on Xhosa boyhood, masculinity and gender. He has worked on TV shows such as SABC 1's show Intersexions, Tsha tsha and 4play Sex Tips for Girls on the eTV.

He says that these dialogues were appreciated by students saying they are part of the university's duty to contribute to learning and development outside the lecture halls. This he says is an example of "organic learning" which happens naturally through dialogue.

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Dr Mkhize, of the office of Equity and Culture says that the changes made in these new male dialogues were meant to create open ended communication. She says they wanted empower male students with an awareness of gender-based violence.

"We wanted to create a free flow of communication, for men to understand that gender-based violence knows no gender. At its core is about an abuse of power and men can be victims of it too" says Mkhize.

She says that in her work as the Anti-Harrasment officer at the university she has encountered many male students who talk to her about their experiences with gender-based violence. However, she adds that many do not report these issues because wide variety of reasons including the stigma associated with male survivors of gender-based violence. Qambela says that one of the interesting things to come from the dialogues is that men recognise the way gender-based violence harms them.

"the issue has been the feeling for many gender-based violence in relation to men is not taken seriously. This reflects largely trends in research that men are harshly judged for when they do report" says Qambela.

Helleman says that the male dialogues are already bearing fruits in Nelson Mandela Dining Hall.

"At a hall committee level we have already started planning around a gender committee which will work on raising awareness about gender inequalities at a hall level for the coming years. We want transformation reps, senior students and leaders to share resources and knowledge to raise awareness on this issue" he says.

The male dialogues were scheduled to take place in two phases mainly, the exploration phase which is open to all male students. In the second phase a select group of students will come up with an action plan for how the Rhodes University student body will deal with gender-based violence.



A group member presenting the groups key points at the gender based violence workshops held in 2019.



Debate teams participating in the inter-res student debate competition facing each other. The competition is designed to encourage debate on social justice issues.



Silent Protest talk with guest speaker Andile Gaelisiwe



Meqoqo dramatising stories of consent as part of the Silent Protest week 2019

THE PROGRESSION OF THE HISTORY OF MAKHANDA

By Prof. Julie Wells

Historians love to deconstruct inherited myths. There are two myths that define Grahamstown and its evolution to become Makhanda. The first is the myth of the empty land which caused five wars culminating in the battle at Grahamstown in 1819. The second myth is that this war was caused by superstition, when Makhanda, its leader, allegedly told his followers that the bullets would turn to water.

Both were attempts on the part of the newly-arriving Europeans to justify their claim to land that was already fully occupied. History shows that people lived in this part of the world for at least 40,000 years into the past. We know the names of the chiefs, the nations and the leaders who were all here long before any Europeans.

The first myth period, from 1780 through 1800, includes three wars fought between Dutch-speaking farmers and Africans about control of the land. The Europeans claim that they drove African people out and claimed victory for themselves. However, further evidence shows that the indigenous people all came back very quickly. The reoccupation of their homes stood as the reasons for further wars. Often it was the

Europeans who left and returned to where they had come from in the western Cape. The first three wars should be seen as African victories.

But when the British took over control of the Cape in 1806 things changed. They brought with them a higher level of military force than ever seen before. Their first contest (but fourth war) over who would control the land started at the close of 1811. When it ended in 1812, the town of Grahamstown was established as the new British army headquarters. With no conquest, there would have been no town.

This one was truly a war of dispossession. The British drove out more than 20,000 African people and declared that they could not set foot in the new British colony. From then on, according to the new rulers, the only people allowed would be those who came to work for them under their firm control. However, the consequences of that war were not accepted by the people who had been dispossessed. The contestation over the land kept escalating for the next seven years until another war started in 1819.

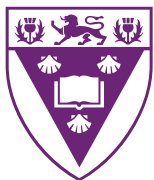
That war is attributed to the leadership of Makhanda and is famous for the very dramatic attack of as many as 10,000 Xhosa warriors on Grahamstown on the 22nd of April 1819. The attackers were defeated by guns and cannons and forced to retreat.

This can honestly be seen as an important pivotal moment in South African history. From then on, force consolidated all European claims to land, and rigid territorial segregation prevailed. So, we could say that the first five wars between Europeans and Africans were fought to contest that myth of the empty land. They were about claims to occupation and ownership. But then a few years after the fifth war, the myth of Makhanda's superstition as the cause of the fighting arose. This was yet another way the winners wanted to claim their superiority and their right to occupy the land. They placed the blame on the victims themselves. This myth has important implications.

The legacy of these myths remains as the defining feature of our town. Conquered people had to accept menial work and second-class citizenship for nearly two centuries to come. At first, the British turned to anyone other than amaXhosa to do their dirty work. This included at times Tswana-speakers (1824) and Zulu-speakers (1835). But eventually Xhosa-speakers filtered back into their former territory, not as land owners, but as labourers. The renaming of the town to Makhanda is an important step toward proclaiming the end of the myths and re-asserting ownership.

Prof. Julie Wells was one of the panelists of the Heritage Series webinars held on the 25th of September 2020. Prof. Julie Wells has published a book on the topic: The name of the book is *"The Return of Makhanda, Exploring the Legend"*, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2012.





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