

18 Jun 2018, 4:15 PM

THERE ARE 2 SIDES TO A STORY: UCT IRTC CONDUCTS ITS 4th ROUND OF HEARINGS

"The most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history"

This George Orwell quote found its way into Professor David Jacob's submission on decolonization at the latest 4th round hearings of the UCT Institutional Reconciliation & Transformation Commission (IRTC), held on 8th and 9th June at UCT.

The proceedings were live streamed on the UCT website and the full video is available on the links below:-

<https://www.news.uct.ac.za/news/debates/irtc/>

<https://www.news.uct.ac.za/article/-2018-06-12-irtc-hearings-were-live-streamed-on-8-june-2018>

The IRTC heard how black members of staff felt marginalised, "like visitors who are accommodated" and not belonging at the University of Cape Town. Professor Jacobs went to great lengths to explain his opinion that Greek science is in fact African science and how the Greeks were not the originators of science but translators of African science.

Indigenous knowledge systems, disability and labour issues and especially outsourcing, were also brought to the fore in the 1st day of the 2 day process in the latest UCT IRTC hearings.

Sarah Henkeman focused on her opinion on and experience of structural violence and

racism and the need to make the effects of invisible violence, visible. She spoke about her journey at UCT from her student years and the victimisation, dehumanisation and brokenness experienced by herself and others. It was Henkeman who brought a sharp focus on the invisible violence that informs visible violence and how in her view "There is no way of codifying this invisible violence but we codify physical violence in reaction to this structural violence."

Points were made and discussions with the commission were had where "blind spots" and a figurative "blindness" became a theme, as "nobody who's an oppressor can do so with open eyes" as well as how doing so, would have to force one to look at self as oppressor and ultimately, if that happens, will have to take responsibility and account for their role in the recurring theme of Institutional violence at UCT and the resultant

visible violence.

However it was Dr Brian Watermeyer, a blind person and academic, in his presentation on disability that Intersectionality - "an analytic framework which attempts to identify how interlocking systems of power impact those who are most marginalized in society" - became a part of the discussion.

In the follow up discussion with the IRTC a member of the commission deepened the conversation further by insisting that struggles are broad and cannot be limited to disability as all struggles and oppressions with other prejudiced groups, are part of the same struggle towards inclusion.

The Business Womxn Association Student Chapter (BWASC) contributed to the Reconciliation & Transformation process with their representative, Tsepang, making a

submission that spoke to housing overallocation - a pertinent theme - as well as decrying the lack of sufficient African language courses at the University. She also spoke of lack of transparency in UCT housing allocation processes. In her discussion with the IRTC, the issue of the need to bring to the fore sexual violence and queer discrimination was also discussed.

Labour representations were also made with Jonathan Grossman speaking to the historical oppression of workers at the University. The history of outsourcing and insourcing was a dominant feature as well as low wages and the "inhumane and unjust" treatment of workers. Grossman went back in history to where "Black workers built UCT with their hands during colonial times" and outlined the struggles of workers through the years. Grossman quoted from pamphlets and previous and present protests where workers

call for insourcing to not just change workers' uniforms, but to change their lives. Low wages, according to Grossman, remain one of the main issues for workers in the UCT community.

Angus Rule, like many others on various platforms, came to seek clarity on the conditions upon which students were granted amnesty. He believes the frustrations of students were real, however according to him it is not UCT which should have been the target, but rather government. Rule emphasised on the need to "show both sides of the story" in the ongoing, sensitive and complex process of fostering Reconciliation and forging a path for Transformation at the University of Cape Town.

In his discussion with the Commission Rule stated that "UCT will never be the same, I don't know if it's changed for the better, but

it's certainly changed." A member of the commission, in this discussion stated that "You have got to use the past to create a new future."

These latest hearings deepened the very important discussions around Decolonization, Reconstruction, Housing, Labour, Gender and Institutional violence at the University.

The hearings continued on 9th June in closed and confidential hearings that ranged from labour relations, gender discrimination and amnesty hearings for 2 clemency students.

The process continues and submissions can be made to candice.amon@uct.ac.za

For media enquiries contact Jacqui Dichabe on [079 782 7451](tel:0797827451).

-Ends.