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UCT Council agrees to change name of Jameson Hall

The University of Cape Town (UCT) Council has resolved that the name of Jameson Hall should be changed. This decision was taken during a Council meeting that took place on 18 June 2016.

The authority to name or rename UCT buildings is vested in Council. Council has agreed with the Naming of Buildings Committee (NOBC) that a careful, extensive, consultative process is required to choose a new name. The NOBC is advised by the Task Team on the Naming of Buildings, Rooms, Spaces and Roads. This task team was established in 2015.

Please see below UCT Vice-Chancellor-Dr Max Price's message to the university community yesterday, 23 June 2016.



23 June 2016

Dear colleagues and students,

I am pleased to report that Council resolved at its meeting on 18 June 2016 that the name of Jameson Hall should be changed and that a new name should be identified. The authority to name or rename University of Cape Town buildings is vested in Council.

Council has agreed with the Naming of Buildings Committee (NOBC) – advised by the Task Team on the Naming of Buildings, Rooms, Spaces and Roads, which was established in 2015 – that a careful, extensive, consultative process is required to choose a new name.

The Task Team had set a deadline of 15 April 2016 to receive submissions on whether or not the name of Jameson Hall should be changed as well as suggestions for alternative names. The invitation to submit

suggestions was open to every student and staff member, as well as members of the wider UCT community, including alumni around the world.

Based on the submissions as well as its own expertise and considerations, the [Task Team's proposal to the NOBC](#) regarding the renaming of Jameson Hall, argued as follows:

The Task Team first obtained legal opinion confirming that there was no legal or heritage reason why the name could not be changed.

The Task Team considered arguments for the retention of the name, expressed as a deep respect for the foundational moment of the University as it is reflected in the names of buildings.

However, the Task Team concluded instead that the "University is a living organism and as time passes successive generations of students, who then become alumnae/i, must also be given the opportunity to reflect on the ethos of the institution and inscribe in turn their interpretation in names given to buildings".

"The naming of buildings is an emotional issue and care should be taken in selecting names that illustrate what is at the heart, and in the name, of a 'university', that is, its 'universality', expressed as a pursuit of equality, social justice, reconciliation and human promotion - a university's space is not merely an assemblage of buildings but a human whole that transcends its components. Naming the Hall should echo this overarching concern."

A joint meeting of the NOBC and the Task Team held on 17 June 2016 concluded that it is clear from the evidence afforded by respected historians that Jameson's ruthless self-interest manifested in a profound lack of respect for other people. Notable in this regard was his decision with a coterie of like-minded doctors deliberately to misdiagnose an outbreak of smallpox in Kimberley in 1883 to prevent the absconding from the mines of black labourers. The infamous Jameson Raid, for which he was imprisoned in England, and the wars against the Matabele in what was to become Rhodesia, are other examples of his ruthlessness and his role in exploiting and oppressing local communities.

The NOBC endorsed the Task Team's conclusion that: (i) the Hall that stands proud at the heart of the University, and being in this respect out of the ordinary, should have a name that would straddle the distinction between a "proper name" and a "functional name" so as to reflect its exceptionality; (ii) a thoughtful change of name would elicit support; (iii) a new name should evoke something easily recognizable, and with which students, academics, staff and parents could identify when they congregate in the Hall; and (iv) such name should evoke what is performed in the Hall, that is, a celebration of togetherness around the communal search for knowledge.

Based on these criteria, the Task Team proposed that the following be considered as possible future names for the Hall:

- Memorial Hall
- One of Imbizo, Lekgotla, Pitso, Kgoro, which all mean a meeting or gathering place, or their Khoisan equivalent
- Others still under discussion

The newly constituted NOBC and the Task Team will meet as soon as possible after 1 July 2016 (the date of the new term of office of all Council and Senate sub-committees) to determine the process whereby a new name could be identified.

I would like to reiterate what I have said before in relation to renaming UCT buildings: such moments are relatively rare and historic, especially with regards to a building as central to campus life as Jameson Hall. This change offers us an opportunity both to make a definitive break with a past that we are not all part of, and to help define a future UCT that is much more inclusive and respectful of our different histories, cultures and aspirations. It is symbolic of a transformation not only on our campus, but more importantly of our attitudes and values.

Please think carefully on this matter and watch for information to come after 1 July about how you can contribute to this historic process of determining a new name.

Sincerely,

Dr Max Price
Vice Chancellor

ENDS

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