



RHODES MUST FALL in Oxford

Email rhodesmustfallox@gmail.com

Twitter @RMF_Oxford

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Rhodes-Must-Fall-In-Oxford/1599672910303410?fref=ts>

Oxford students call for Cecil John Rhodes statue to fall

Key points:

- Hundreds of students will gather at Oxford's **Oriel College** to demand the removal of the statue of Cecil John Rhodes, which adorns a building at Oriel College.
- The protest, organised by Rhodes Must Fall Oxford, will take place on Friday, **06 November at 12:00**
- Students see the statue as “a veneration not only of the crimes of the man himself, but of the racist imperial legacy on which Oxford University has thrived, as well as a metaphor for the racism BME individuals continue to experience at Oxford.”
- Rhodes Must Fall Oxford has also launched a **petition** calling for the statue's removal.
- The petition already has close to **1500 signatures**.
- The movement is also calling for a more diverse curriculum and greater representation of BME communities amongst student and staff.
- An unpublished report produced last year found that 59.3% of BME respondents have in the past felt uncomfortable or unwelcome at Oxford due to their race, with 57.75% viewing racism as a problem in Oxford (versus 39.5% of white students). Of the students surveyed, 71.1% also noted a lack of racial diversity among the University's teaching staff.

OXFORD, 4 NOVEMBER 2015. On Friday 6 November hundreds of students will gather in front of Oriel College in Oxford to call for the statue of Cecil John Rhodes to fall. Rhodes Must Fall Oxford will present Oriel college representatives with a petition demanding the statue's removal. The petition already has close to 1500 signatures.

The statue of Cecil John Rhodes was erected to celebrate, venerate, and commemorate Rhodes, a former student at Oriel College, who left 2% of his estate to Oriel College upon his death. Rhodes is also lauded at Oxford for financial contributions he left to establish the Rhodes scholarships.

Rhodes' fortune was made through the exploitation and death of black Southern African mine workers, his reputation and power secured through devastating imperial wars. Rhodes also introduced racial policies in South Africa, which served as a precursor to apartheid and have led many to dub him the 'father of apartheid'. Rhodes, for instance, introduced legislation like the Glen Grey Act, which saw black people forcibly removed to reserves.

In calling for the Rhodes statue's removal, we take inspiration from the Rhodes Must Fall movement at the University of Cape Town (UCT), which led to the toppling of Rhodes' statue in South Africa earlier this year.

As an organisation RMF Oxford believes the on-going veneration of Rhodes in the form of this statue legitimises the uncritical celebration of white supremacy and ignores the fact that the College is the beneficiary of money generated at the cost of black Africans' lives. The historical narratives and experiences of people of colour are ignored and silenced when a one-sided historical narrative is told in the iconography of the institution.



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RMF Oxford has been accused of wanting to erase history by calling for the statue to be taken down. On the contrary, RMF Oxford's demand that the statue be removed is an attempt to emphasise the history and experiences of those that have been ignored and marginalised for so long. The existence of a statue, which uncritically glorifies colonialism, is in fact a prime example of this erasure - as are other practices at Oriel where Rhodes continues to be commemorated as a Benefactor in Chapel, and toasted at an annual dinner held in his name each year.

The statue of Rhodes is symbolic of all we hope to change at Oxford. As long as the statue stays, it remains a celebration not only of the crimes of Rhodes himself, but of the racist imperial legacy on which Oxford University has thrived, and continues to thrive. The institution's failure to deal with its past fosters an environment where outright racism and colonial apologism persists. BME students encounter this legacy regularly during their lives at Oxford.

This is just the beginning

Our call for the statue to fall is but the first step. What we stand for is something much greater: the transformation of the university, in its physical and intellectual spaces, its colleges and its curricula.

In addition to addressing the symbolism that permeates the university, we are also calling for the decolonisation of the **curricula** at Oxford. There are many people from marginalised groups who have made valuable intellectual contributions and we believe their exclusion reflects an on-going legacy of racist imperialism.

We also call for **greater representation** of marginalised groups at Oxford. Lecturers and students at the university are still predominantly white. These demographics not only alienate people from minority groups, but also allows for racism to thrive unchallenged.

Furthermore, **eradicating oppression in all its manifestations** should be a more critical concern for Oxford University. This is not just about putting symbolic policies and procedures in place that are aimed at minority groups, but also addressing more subtle cultures and attitudes that make people who belong to minority groups feel excluded.

During the General Assembly, held by Rhodes Must Fall Oxford on Friday 24 October, the movement collectively identified twelve concrete demands, which will be publicised in the near future.

Protest event page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/983471398360635/>

Petition: <https://www.gofundme.com/2v7jvves>

Contact us:

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Charlotte Ezaz– 0780 421 6047; charlotte.ezaz@mansfield.ox.ac.uk

See next page for more background information on the movement



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Recent actions

The start of an academic year of action in the RMF Oxford movement began on 17 October with the MatriculAction event, where students supporting the decolonisation of the University donned red ribbons during their induction matriculation ceremonies. Thousands of pieces of ribbon were handed out at the event to both undergraduate and postgraduate students united in their condemnation of the University's colonial relics.

In April this year, the movement received international media coverage for its role in exposing the racist and now infamous "Colonial Comeback" cocktail, which was served at an Oxford Union debate on reparations.

Following the incident Rhodes Must Fall Oxford convened a coalition of liberation movements that managed to convince the Oxford Union, one of Britain's oldest debating societies, to pass a motion acknowledging that the society is institutionally racist.

What inspired the movement?

Rhodes Must Fall Oxford started in solidarity with the Rhodes Must Fall movement at the University of Cape Town (UCT), which has encouraged students across the world to fight institutional racism and call for the decolonisation of education. We believe that despite his statue being pulled down at UCT, Rhodes – and more importantly the culture that inculcated his imperialism in the first place – remains unscathed. Indeed, this culture is alive and well in Oxford.

Media coverage

The Oxford Student:

<http://oxfordstudent.com/2015/10/30/rhodes-remains-a-symbol-of-racism-in-oxford/>

Cherwell

<http://www.cherwell.org/news/topstories/2015/10/24/rhodes-must-fall-protests-at-matriculation>

The Guardian

<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/jun/18/oxford-uni-must-decolonise-its-campus-and-curriculum-say-students>

Daily Vox

<http://www.thedailyvox.co.za/rhodesmustfall-reaches-oxford-university/>

Independent

<http://i100.independent.co.uk/article/how-a-cocktail-helped-ignite-a-racial-equality-movement-at-oxford-university--ZJfx4P2Tlx>

The Telegraph



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<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/11644479/Oxford-Union-admits-it-is-institutionally-racist.html>

Mail & Guardian

<http://mg.co.za/article/2015-06-02-colonial-comeback-poster-ignites-race-debate-at-oxford>

Cherwell

<http://www.cherwell.org/news/uk/2015/06/01/oxford-union-passes-motion-that-it-is-institutionally-racist>

Times Higher Education – CRAE 100 Voices Report

<https://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/content/oxford-needs-cultural-shift-support-bme-students-study-says>

CRAE 100 Voices Report

<http://ousu.org/pageassets/get-involved/campaigns/crae/100-voices-2-FINAL.pdf>