



**FW de Klerk**  
FOUNDATION

**Letter first published by *The Times* of London  
26 December 2015**

Dear Sir

It is regrettable that the “Rhodes Must Fall” folly has spread from South Africa to Oriel College. My people - the Afrikaners - have greater reason to dislike Rhodes than anyone else. He was the architect of the Anglo-Boer War that had a disastrous impact on our people. Yet the National Party government never thought of removing his name from our history.

If political correctness of today were applied consistently very few of Oxford's great figures would pass scrutiny. George Washington - another Oriel alumnus - would certainly not. By the same measure, how many statues would remain in Britain at all?

We do not commemorate historic figures for their ability to measure up to current conceptions of political correctness - but because of their actual impact on history.

Rhodes, for better or for worse, certainly had an impact on history. He has, in particular, had a positive impact on more than 7500 Rhodes scholars from all over the world and on Oriel College to which he bequeathed the then enormous sum of £100 000.

Students have always been full of sound and fury, signifying very little. However, one would have expected an institution as venerable as Oriel to be a little more gracious in its treatment of its most generous benefactor. If Oriel now finds Rhodes so reprehensible would the honourable solution not be to return his bequest, plus interest, to the victims of British imperialism in southern Africa?

Yours sincerely

**FW de Klerk**  
**Former President of South Africa**