DAILYMAVERICK

MAVERICK CITIZEN

COMMUNITY PLEA

'We need to know what happened to the bones' — Tiervlei community wants restitution, decades after bodies were forcefully removed



Ravensmead community members at the Hardekraaltjie cemetery. (Photo: Protouch Photography)

During forced removals in the apartheid era, Stellenbosch University acquired land where

By Joel Ontong

a Bellville cemetery was located. Residents in this area are now engaging with the

19 Jan 2023

university in a restitution process. Listen to this article 0:00 / 8:45

'e need to know what happened to the bones. Because its people, its family members, they buried their people there, and when they went there again,

conducted in the brutal apartheid era.

achieved in our lifetime," said Fortuin.

the people were gone. So how do you explain that to someone who wants to go show their lineage?" These comments from Chefferino Fortuin, community researcher and Tiervlei community member, who is involved in efforts to see justice, decades after bodies were removed from a cemetery when Stellenbosch University (SU) acquired the land during forced removals,

located in Bellville in 1970, explained Fortuin. SU removed a portion of the bodies from the cemetery for reburial, he said. Members of the community from Tiervlei, now known as Ravensmead, were buried there.

The university acquired the land on which the cemetery, known as <u>Hardekraaltjie</u>, was

Read in Daily Maverick: "Ravensmead kids skate the road less travelled" About half a century after the community was uprooted and forcibly removed – including

the removal of the bodies, the community is still seeking restitution and memorialisation in honour of the cemetery. "It becomes this emotional issue, especially for the ageing ones in our community. For me,

they are important because they have laid the groundwork for whatever successes we've

"It is not for us an academic exercise, we still want our ageing population; we want one or two of those people still to be alive to see their dreams coming to fruition. So that they can say: I said it was my people who were laying here," Fortuin explained.

Anne and Bennie Parring are two elderly Ravensmead residents who had siblings buried at

Hardekraaltjie. They recalled how powerless the community was during forced removals. "Back then, you didn't have a say because it was apartheid. The white man talks alone,"

Forced removals

said Anne. At that point, some community members still had their children and family buried at the cemetery, she added. The two elderly residents said they were not informed that the bodies would be moved at the time. They only knew that building developments would take place near the cemetery.



linked to SU's transformation portfolio. As a result "the Tiervlei community was disrupted by forced removals". SU took ownership of the land on which the cemetery was built, next to Tygerberg

He said the cemetery had been decommissioned in the 1940s. The land was transferred to SU in 1974, according to the City of Cape Town. Land cleared when university took ownership

Hospital, to build its faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Fataar told Daily Maverick.

When the university took ownership of the land, they cleared the land and removed about half of the bodies for reburial, said Fataar. "We've anticipated that they've been reburied in

Stikland Cemetery is also located in Bellville. Although the bodies were reburied, no building developments took place on the site of the cemetery itself, according to Fataar.

Due to pressure from the Tiervlei community, the university became aware of the cemetery and the issues around it, circa 2014, Fataar explained. "We received some pressure from individual members [of Tiervlei] to restitute and to restitute properly," he said. SU picked up the restitution and memorialisation project in 2020 and had been

engaging with the community, he added. "The ongoing community participation will involve several stakeholders, including Tygerberg hospital, Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (Prasa), members of local communities and the Tiervlei community, and Heritage Western Cape," according to a

press statement released by SU in 2021. "SU and the Tygerberg Hospital have committed

to a restorative process to decide how the cemetery site and those buried there would be memorialised," read the statement. Hardekraaltjie's sacred rituals According to Fortuin, Hardekraaltjie was not an "uninhabited space". "It was a space that was important to people. It was a place where there were sacred rituals. It was a place of family, it was a place of lineage," Fortuin told Daily Maverick. "There is a lot of history

Hardekraaltjie was established in the early 1900s, said Fortuin. Khoisan communities resided in the area, with Khoisan family members being buried in Hardekraaltjie. Fortuin added that there is limited available information on this topic.

and heritage for us in that space," he added.

the Stikland Cemetery."

During community engagement sessions, Khoisan organisations were also involved, according to Fortuin. Hardekraaltjie, and parts of Ravensmead where residents were displaced, still has Khoisan history, said Fortuin. "The people were displaced, but their memories were never displaced," he explained.

institutional responsibility and apologise for what happened at Hardekraaltjie. The community is working with the university to create a plaque to memorialise Hardekraaltjie. On the plaque, they want to feature the Khoi language, along with other

be referred to the land owner, which is Stellenbosch University.

Ravensmead community members at the cemetery (Photo: Protouch Photography)

community, it's important that the cemetery is being acknowledged."

Restitution process

three languages, said Fortuin.

Hardekraaltjie cemetery.

Visit <u>Daily Maverick's home page</u> for more news, analysis and investigations Fortuin also reached out to the City of Cape Town to be involved in the process. When Daily

Maverick reached out to the City, the response was that enquiries about the cemetery should

The City has planned no engagements with Fortuin or the Tiervlei community, reported

IOL in August 2022. The City was also unaware of the exhumation of human remains at

Fortuin said that the restitution process is a Tiervlei community initiative. "For us as a

concrete restitution, he said. "We don't only want a symbolic gesture, when there were

area – that were removed." The community wants the university to acknowledge, take

actual bones that were disturbed and there were actual bones of our forefathers – in that

It is important that there is memorialisation around the cemetery and that there is

Not only is the cemetery on <u>land</u> owned by SU, but it's also on land owned or controlled by Tygerberg Hospital and Prasa. "Prasa has not been approached by the community regarding the land in question. Should

there be a request received, we will do our utmost to cooperate," said Zinobulali Mihi,

Prasa's acting head of the department of marketing and communication.

Hardekraaltjie Cemetery located at the Tygerberg Hospital and University of Stellenbosch site," said Rozaun Botes, spokesperson for the hospital. "The Steercom (Steering Committee) dealing with this matter is composed of

representatives from the Ravensmead community, Tygerberg Hospital management and

"Tygerberg Hospital is aware of the commencement of a memorialisation process of the

There were many gaps in the Hardekraaltjie story, said Fataar. "A key part of our restitutional process is to do research and the research is now ongoing."

Part of the restitution process involves collecting stories of descendants of those who were

buried at the cemetery. "We've established a community participant process and we are

about 20 months into it," he said. The university has interacted and communicated with

the community and taken guidance from them with regards to the restitution process,

They are trying to tell a full story of what happened for proper restitution, he added.

Fataar added. Anne Parring seemed happy that SU was engaging in the restitution process. "It's a good gesture for the children and families that were buried there," she said. **DM**

to do so.

Stellenbosch University

the University of Stellenbosch."

Gaps in the story

We would like our readers to start paying for Daily Maverick...

news. We have not put it behind a paywall because the truth should not be a luxury.

X

If you appreciate it and want to see us keep going then please consider contributing whatever you can. **Support Daily Maverick**→

...but we are not going to force you to. Over 10 million users come to us each month for the

Instead we ask our readers who can afford to contribute, even a small amount each month,

Hardekraaltjie PRASA Stellenbosch forced removals Ravensmead Restitution cemetery

Tygerberg Hospital

Tiervlei

Comments - share your knowledge and experience Please note you must be a <u>Maverick Insider</u> to comment. <u>Sign up here</u>

Stikland Cemetery

Everybody has an opinion but not everyone has the knowledge and the experience to contribute meaningfully to a discussion. That's what we want from our members. Help us learn with your expertise and insights on articles that we publish. We encourage different, respectful viewpoints to further our understanding of the world. View our comments policy here.

TOP READS IN SECTION **MAVERICK NEWS** 'There is no Zuma law,' says judge warning Mpofu over wasting time

'Unconscionable': Competition Commission says Red Roses Africa marked up hand sanitiser sold to





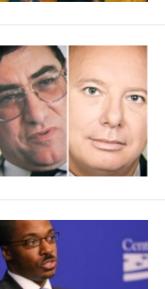


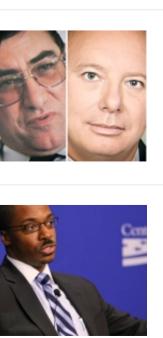






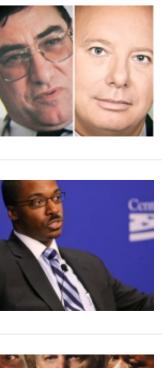


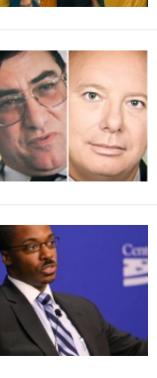


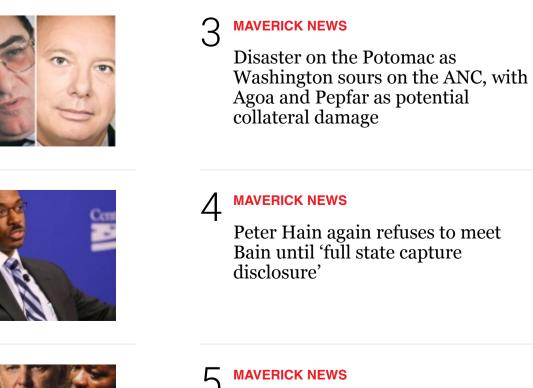


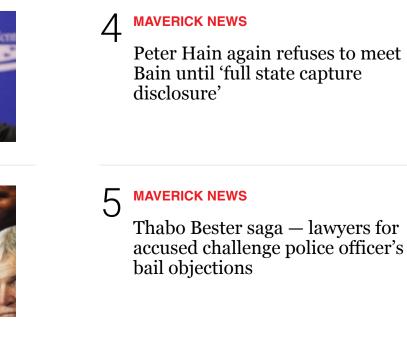








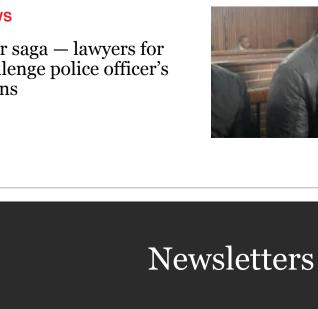


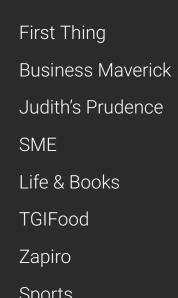


MAVERICK NEWS

Digital gag order — GroundUp told to remove Ramulifho Lottery article

or risk website shutdown





About us Membership

Community

No Comments, yet TOP READS THIS HOUR COVID-19 the SAPS by 236%

SOUTH AFRICA

decline

Investigations

Our Burning Planet

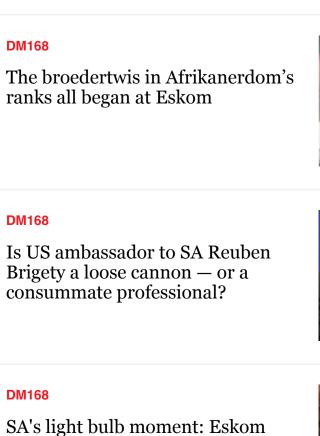
amaBhungane

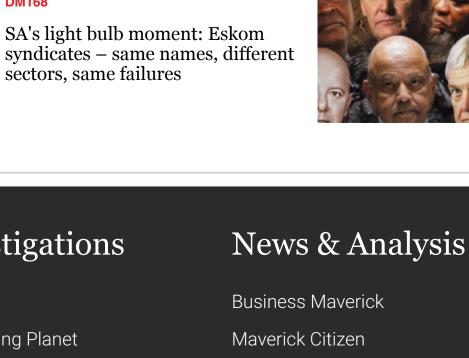
Maverick Citizen

Declassified UK

Contact Us

Scorpio





Maverick Sports

Newsdeck

Contact Us

Features

Daily Maverick © All rights reserved