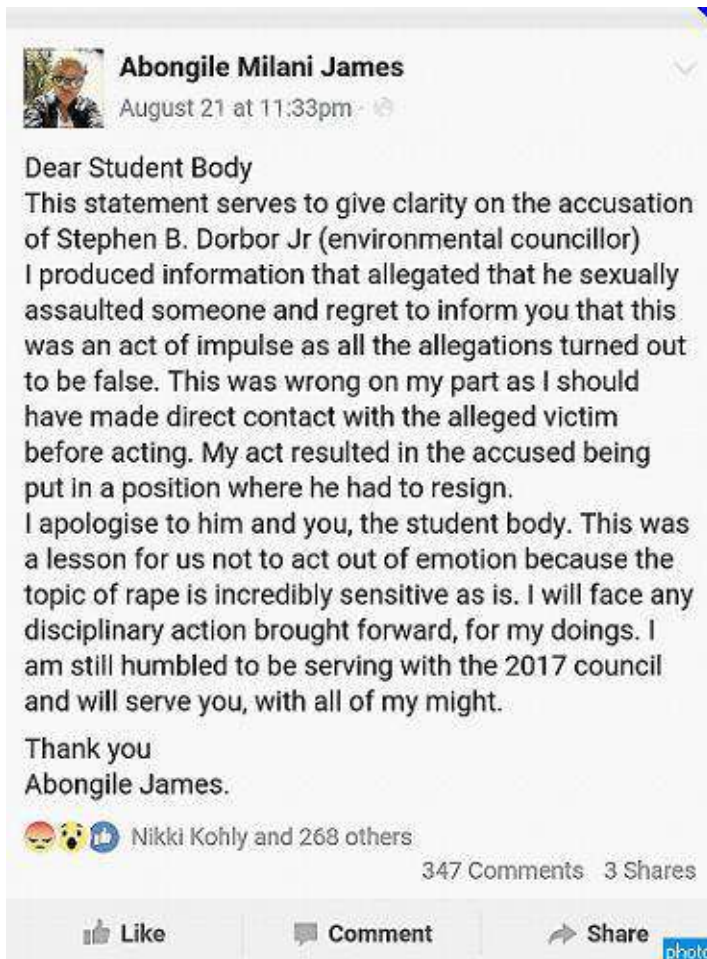


Activist slammed for false sex assault call

By **David Macgregor** - August 24, 2016

A social media storm has erupted after a Rhodes University student leader admitted she falsely accused a Student Representative Council (SRC) councillor of sexual assault.

Incoming activism and transformation councillor Abongile Milani James said in a Facebook post on the University Currently Known as Rhodes (UCKAR) student body page, that she had acted on “impulse” when she accused fellow councillor for 2017, Stephen Dorbor, of sexually assaulting another student.



DAMAGE CONTROL: Abongile James's Facebook post

"All the allegations turned out to be false. This was wrong on my part as I should have made direct contact with the alleged victim before acting."

The sexual assault allegations lead to Dorbor being forced to resign at a recent SRC meeting after some councillors said they were "not comfortable" with the allegations hanging over his head.

An SRC statement posted on the UCKAR page also said a second councillor elect, Yolanda Dyantyi – who has been at the forefront of campus rape culture protests – also resigned at the meeting.

The statement added the information was not true and urged Dorbor to retract his resignation.

James, from Butterworth, said she was stepping down as activism and transformation councillor for 2017 and would also resign from the SRC if asked by the student body.

She apologised in her post to Dorbor and students for the harm she caused and said she would face any disciplinary action. "This was a lesson for us not to act out of emotion because the topic of rape is incredibly sensitive."

Her revelations, and saying she was "still humbled to be serving with the 2017 council and will serve you with all my might", were widely slammed on social media.

Attempts to get comment from James via social media messages late on Monday and yesterday garnered no response.

Dorbor, who is from Liberia, told the Dispatch he was not ready to talk about the issue.

Gender Action Project media officer Chelsea Haith yesterday told the Dispatch: "these kinds of falsely made and vindictive allegations undermine everything we fought for during the protests".

She said they undermined the validity of survivors' and victims' legitimate and traumatic experiences.

"False allegations are extremely hurtful to both the unfairly accused and to other survivors or victims because usually it allows rape apologists to deny the validity of the accusations that are grounded in fact."

She said the actions were sickening and despicable. "Accusations of sexual harassment, regardless of whether they are false or not, can jeopardise a person's work opportunities on top of the psychological damage of such an accusation." —

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