

# Rename, or don't. asher woolf – heritage

[Family](#), [Parents](#)



11C 1772008 Christiaan Barnard Street Ms Sutton Early Adderly Street

Heritage plays an important role in self-identity, and hence the heritage of a country defines it. As a people we learn and improve through our past experiences and our history. This is especially relevant in a country like South Africa; having such an eventful and colourful past, it is essential we recognise all places, buildings, roads and dates that played a role in shaping our country today.

Whereas the history of a given article is the cold, hard happenings of the past, heritage is what one identifies with in their history, and this can be tangible hereditary heritage (skin colour) or cultural heritage and traditional, such as religion and customs. The aim of this report is to explore the concept and importance of heritage, and its impacts on modern Cape Townian reflections of heritage such as street names. Herein the example of Oswald Pirow Street's transformation to Christiaan Barnard Street is discussed as a prime example of correct renaming; however the impacts of name-changing in general shall be discussed as well.

Our birthplace and place of residence forms part of our heritage; it is an identity that helps us place ourselves in the world. The preamble to The National Heritage Resources Act states that: " Our heritage is unique and precious and it cannot be renewed. It helps us to define our cultural identity and therefore lies at the heart of our spiritual well-being and has the power to build our nation. It has the potential to affirm our diverse cultures, and in so doing shape our national character. " This is a statement by our government that understanding and accepting our heritage is at the epicentre of our spiritual well being.

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The preservation of our national heritage sites is of the greatest importance. For many years, Oswald Pirow Street stood in existence in Cape Town. Named after Oswald Pirow, a far right politician and lawyer who was also a staunch Nazi sympathizer. He greatly admired Hitler, and his daughter even controversially stated that Pirow was " More German than South African" It can be stated without much contentiousness that the Nazi ideals are diametrically opposite to the ideals of freedom, acceptance and unified diversity that defines the New South Africa.

That being said, a street named after Oswald Pirow is simply incongruous with our new country and incongruous with the heritage we as a nation chose to identify with. In extreme cases such as this, whereby a figure that is actively negative to unity and acceptance is honoured, I believe that changing street names can be conducive to promotion and celebration of Heritage in South Africa. Oswald Pirow Street was renamed to Christiaan Barnard Street.

Christiaan Barnard actively spoke out against the National Party during Apartheid, and is famous for being the first surgeon in the world to perform a successful heart-transplant. This marvel of medical science was celebrated internationally and is a great symbol of South African pride and achievement. Hence the street was named after Barnard, an ultimately deserving figure of recognition. The above circumstance epitomizes name-changing done right; however there are a number of concerns affecting the issue in general. The issue of Heritage affects name change.

South Africa, like every place on Earth that isn't the Far East or Europe, was conquered and subdued by Europe. This forms a crucial part of South Africa's

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history, in that our culture and the very language we speak was brought by the so called "invaders". This also means that most names of cities and roads prior to 1994 were exclusively in European languages and mostly named after European people. After the fall of Apartheid, the indigenous peoples felt the need to have their heritage acknowledged by renaming cities and streets in the vernacular or based on more deserving people.

The issue becomes contentious as to where the line is drawn. While there are numerous cases of obvious villains of history (i. e. Hendrik Verwoerd) whose memory should not be celebrated, there are many more cases of differing peoples vying for recognition and pride, and it is difficult to insure that renaming remains an act to promote national heritage and not to laud one group over the other. It is for this reason that I believe the only way to approach the issue of renaming is to be practical. While the obvious villains of history and enemies of human rights must be removed, it is a cold hard fact that naming of Cape Town streets and places are largely European, and to try to rename everything to equally distribute pride and self-identity amongst all the peoples of South Africa is simply impractical. In our capitalist country, one must think of the use of money with priority. There are lots of alarming and immediate issues in South Africa (poverty, education, healthcare, etc) that require funding more pressingly than renaming does, and that in itself is the practical outlook of the issue.

Although websites may be less reliable than books on an individual basis, the consensus gained from a multitude of websites is much more accurate. At first the idea for my road came from having lived in Stellenbosch for four years and visiting the shops on Dorp Street. However information on Dorp

Street is hard to find, the recommendation to do Christiaan Barnard Street came from my mother, as she was an admirer of his growing up.

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