

# Wits must be transformed - Mbeki

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Political Staff

African National Congress national executive committee member Govan Mbeki has called on the University of the Witwatersrand, and other universities like it, to "change from its reality as a white university" and become a university which would play a fundamental role in the restructuring of South African society.

Delivering the 23rd Richard Feetham Memorial Lecture at Wits on Wednesday night, Mr Mbeki — the first ANC leader to be unconditionally released from prison in 1987 — said the masses demanded to know what relevance institutions of higher learning such as Wits University had for their lives.

Professor Feetham was a former vice-chancellor of Wits, and during his term of office he fought hard against the ruling National Party's attempts to segregate the university. Despite his brave fight, the Separate University Education Bill was passed in 1959.

Speaking on "Education and the University: The

Challenge of Transformation", the ANC leader said Wits had to cease being a "white" university "and become a university; indeed, it must no longer remain a liberal university but must be transformed into a university."

## Liberal ideology

It had to reflect the kind of South Africa which would characterise a post-apartheid era.

It had to be understood, Mr Mbeki said, that the precepts of a liberal ideology were "not necessarily music to the ears of the masses whom the university must serve".

Wits, Mr Mbeki said, was grossly unrepresentative of the kind of society the ANC sought to build.

It could no longer be accepted that blacks, who had played an important role in the fundamental restructuring of the South African society, continued to be objects of a number of university studies "but are otherwise considered unfit to participate in determining what the university should do".