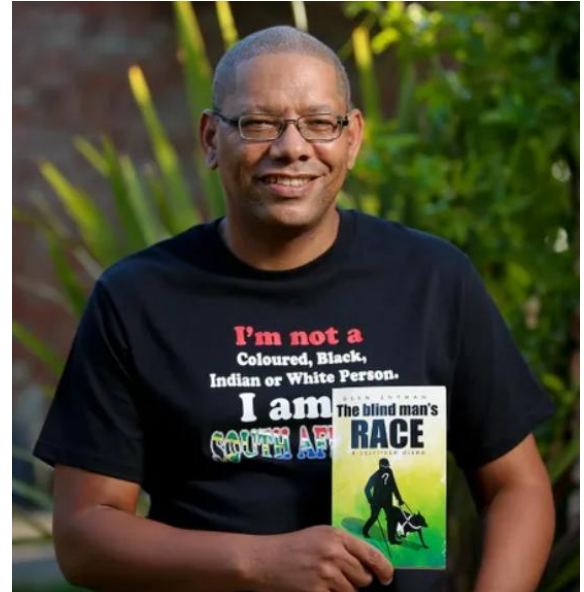
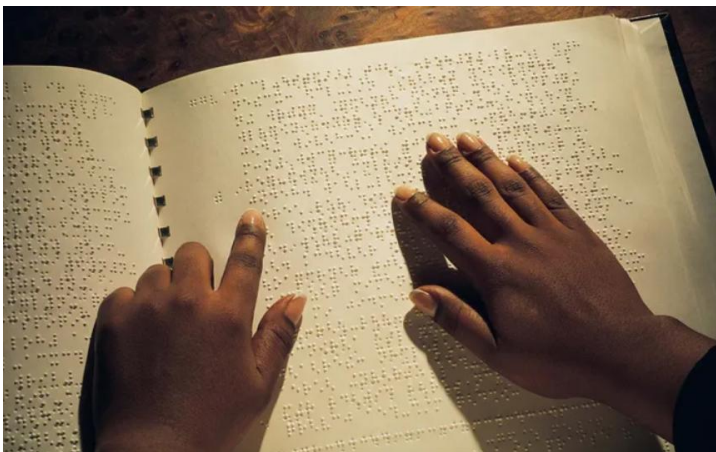


## South African Library for the Blind removes race from membership form



THE South African Library for the Blind (SALB) has removed the requirement for race identification in its membership form following mounting pressure by People Against Race Classification (Parc).

Parc, which also advocates for the rights of blind and visually impaired individuals, has two blind members in its organisation.

When its founder, Glen Snyman attempted to register with the SALB, he was surprised to find that the form required applicants to indicate their race.

This requirement, Snyman said he found both unnecessary and discriminatory in a context where all users are already marginalised by disability. This prompted him to write to the institution in a move for change. "It has come to our attention that the current registration process requires applicants to disclose their race in order to access the services provided by your institution. We submit that this practice raises significant legal, ethical, and practical concerns. The Population Registration Act of 1950, which institutionalised race classification, was repealed by the South African Parliament through the Population Registration Repeal Act of 1991.

"This legislation prohibits the use of traditional, apartheid, racial categories on official forms. Furthermore, many blind and visually impaired individuals are unable to self-identify their race in a visual or physical sense. Requiring such identification may compel reliance on third parties or subjective assumptions, which can be inaccurate, disempowering, unethical, and discriminatory," a June 17, letter read.

Snyman at the time gave the SALB 10 working days to respond to the letter request, threatening to approach the South African Human Rights Commission to escalate the matter if necessary.

However a day later, the SALB responded and agreed to remove race criteria from its registration form immediately.

“Its placement on the registration process was never meant for discriminatory purposes but to ensure alignment of the SALB registration process to the blind community national statistics. It was also informed by queries and questions the entity gets on user categories,” said SALB chief executive, Dr Pateka Ntshuntshe-Matshaya.

Snyman welcomed the decision, as “ meaningful victory” in PARC’s ongoing campaign against racial classification in public institutions and services.

“We welcome this swift and thoughtful decision by the SALB,” said Snyman.

“It is encouraging to see institutions respond positively when challenged on outdated and unnecessary practices. We thank the SALB for their cooperation and commitment to equality.”

pproached for further comment on the matter on Thursday, SALB spokesperson, Vusumzi Mkhetsane confirmed, “ the revised Membership Form race has been totally removed”. An attachment of the revised form also confirmed the section had been removed.

Mkhetsane reiterated the chief’s executive’s sentiments that “its placement on the registration process was never meant for discriminatory purposes but to ensure alignment of the SALB registration process to the blind community national statistics”.

Blind SA chief executive Jace Nair said irrespective of race, all people who are blind or partially blind require services of support.

“ It is unfortunate because of legislation and policy we have to report on our statistics in terms of the beneficiaries we serve. In order to acquire our BBBEE certificate that's the only reason. We keep track of beneficiaries' race but we do not use it in any way to deny or prevent or limit service for persons of different racial groups.

Nair said the only factor that limited their work was financial support.

“We can only offer services to the extent that we have financial support,” he added.

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## RACE CLASSIFICATION VICTORY FOR THE BLIND

Library for the Blind removes race identification requirement from membership form

NICOLA DANIELS

THE South African Library for the Blind (SALB) has removed the requirement for race identification in its membership form following mounting pressure by People Against Race Classification (PARC).

PARC, which also advocates for the rights of blind and visually impaired individuals, has two blind members in its organisation.

When its founder, Glen Strydom, attempted to register with the SALB, he was surprised to find that the form required applicants to indicate their race.

"This requirement, Strydom said, he found both unnecessary and discriminatory in a context where all users are already marginalised by disability. This prompted him to write to the institution in a sense for change."

"It has come to our attention that the current registration process requires applicants to disclose their race in order to access the services provided by your institution. We submit that this practice runs against legal, ethical and practical concerns. The Population Registration Act of 1996, which institutionalised race classification, was repealed by the South African Parliament through the Population Registration Amendment Act of 1998. This legislation prohibits the use of traditional, apartheid, racial categories on official forms. Furthermore, many blind and visually impaired individuals are unable to self-identify their race in a visual or physical sense. Requiring such identification may compound reliance on third parties or subjective assumptions, which can be inaccurate, discriminatory, unethical, and discriminatory," a June 17 letter read.

Strydom said the time given the SALB to working days to respond to the letter request, threatening to approach the South African Human Rights Commission to escalate the matter if necessary.

responded and agreed to remove race identification from its registration forms immediately.

"The placement on the registration process was never meant for discriminatory purposes but to ensure alignment of the SALB registration process to the blind community national statistics. It was also intended by queries and questions the entry goes on our computers," said SALB chief executive, Tin Paula Ndlovu-Mathibane.

Strydom welcomed the decision, an "unmistakable victory" in PARC's ongoing campaign against racial classification in public institutions and services.

"We welcome this swift and thoughtful decision by the SALB," said Strydom.

"It is encouraging to see institutions respond positively when challenged on outdated and unnecessary practices. We thank the SALB for their cooperation and commitment to equality."

Approached for further comment on the matter yesterday, SALB spokesperson, Vanessa Mkhwebane confirmed, "The revised membership form race has been totally removed." An attachment of the revised form also confirmed the action had been removed.

Mkhwebane reiterated the chief executive's sentiments that "the placement on the registration process was never meant for discriminatory purposes but to ensure alignment of the SALB registration process to the blind community national statistics."

Blind SA chief executive Jane Nair said "It is unfortunate because legislation and policy we have to report on our statistics in terms of the beneficiaries we serve. In order to register our THREE certificate that's the only option. We keep track of beneficiaries race but we do not use it in any way to deny or prevent or limit service for persons of different racial groups."

Nair said the only factor that limited their work was financial support.

"We can only offer services to the extent



RAINS WREAK HAVOC

KNOWLEDGE member Beka Gabaevia navigates her way through a flooded informal settlement in the C. Several more continue to wreak havoc in many parts of the Western Cape, leaving thousands of residents homeless. Some Towns residents have found refuge at the Palace The 2 community hall. | **KEVIN M. MAMANE** / Independent Newspapers

SPORT

## Boks, Barbarians promise thrilling encounter

LEIGHTON KOPPELMAN

"IT WILL be an atmosphere that will be hard to forget. I am very excited for the clash."

That's what debutant full back Victor Tshabalala expects when more than 40,000 supporters pack the Cape Town Stadium for the Springboks' thrilling first match of 2025 against the Barbarians tomorrow afternoon.

"Cape Town is very well known for its crowd, and I have no doubt they will be out in their full force despite the weather," he said about the support the world champions are expecting.

The match could be a ready-made affair after rain lashed the Cape this past week, but knowing the international side, they will do everything in their power to play running rugby. And the almost certain crowd will want to see some action.



SPRINGBOK captain Vito Koko and Barbarians counterpart Pinar D'Monty pose with the trophy at a Cape Town Stadium ceremony. | **SA Rugby**

"This is the first occasion we play each other in Africa, and it's going to be a great fixture," D'Monty said.

"Boris [Tshabalala, the Springboks coach] doesn't like losing at the best of times. But we will look to entertain, despite the weather. We want to show how much we value this privilege [playing against the world champions]."

SALB ticket holders will be able to make use of the free MYCOTI shuttle provided by the City of Cape Town, but they will need to show their match-day

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POLITICS

## Fire errant ANC ministers, deputies as well or else... DA tells Ramaphosa

NADHUSU SADRÉ

THE DA has accused President Cyril Ramaphosa of applying a double standard as firing its member Andrew Whitfield as Trade, Industry and Competition deputy minister, citing cases of ANC ministers and deputy ministers implicated in corruption who remain in their positions. A brief statement from the Presidency thanked Whitfield for his service but gave no reason for his removal.

"The Presidency can confirm that in terms of Section 93(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, President Cyril Ramaphosa has removed the Hon. Andrew Whitfield, MP from the position of Deputy Minister for Trade, the statement read. The DA has accused Ramaphosa of a 'selective political assault' on the party and has expressed outrage over Whitfield's removal.