

'Racist' Gandhi must fall, say students

Rosemary Bennett Education Editor

Students at Manchester University want a statue of Mahatma Gandhi scrapped because of his "anti-black racism".

The city council has approved plans for a 9ft bronze statue of the Indian independence figure outside Manchester Cathedral to promote peace after the 2017 Manchester Arena terror attack.

The students say that Gandhi's "well-documented anti-black racism and complicity in the British Empire's action in Africa" mean he should not be honoured.

Launching a "Gandhi Must Fall" campaign, they demanded that the council acknowledge his "racism",

reverse the decision for the statue and use the funds to commemorate a black anti-racism activist.

The protest is being led by Sara Khan, the Students' Union liberation and access officer, who was one of a group that painted over a mural of *If*, the poem by Rudyard Kipling, saying it "dehumanised people of colour".

The students' letter said: "Gandhi referred to Africans as 'savages', 'half-heathen natives', 'uncivilised', 'dirty' and 'like animals', to reference only a few of his vile comments. He saw himself as a 'fellow-colonist', theorising Indians as a superior race, which he called 'Indo-Ayran' in explicit reference to white supremacist logic."

Gandhi Must Fall started in west Africa where his statue was removed

from the University of Ghana. Another statue, in South Africa, was defaced.

UK students have also campaigned against statues and other commemorations of Cecil Rhodes to be removed in the Rhodes Must Fall campaign.

The statue will be a gift to the city from Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur, a non-political, worldwide spiritual movement based in India. It claimed that not a single objection had been raised when the "highly publicised" application was submitted to the council's planning department.

The charity said that the students' letter took an "extreme and limited" interpretation of Gandhi, whose "heroism" helped "unite Indians, South Africans and Americans in their liberation movements".