



RIOTING

& WRITING

DIARIES OF THE WITS FALLISTS

Rioting and writing: Diaries of Wits Fallists

Editorial Collective:

Crispen Chinguno

Morwa Kgoroba

Sello Mashibini

Bafana Nicolas Masilela

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Nhlanhla Moyo

Andile Mthombeni

Hlengiwe Ndlovu

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All the contributors have experienced or were associated with the #Feesmustfall movement at the university of the Witwatersrand in 2015-2016. Their contribution to this volume is informed by this experience.

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Editorial Collective



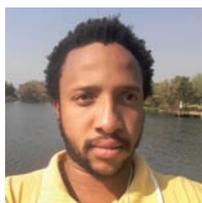
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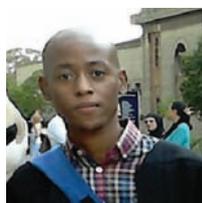
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She currently works as a Research Assistant/Co-coordinator at the Department of Psychology at Wits. She is serving as a Post Graduate Associate Representative, responsible for Research, and is active in the FMF decolonisation projects. She has been nominated to serve at the PHASA Gauteng Committee branch, as the secretary. She also has been appointed as a student representative in the Ministerial Technical Task Team for SGBV in Institutions of Higher Learning.



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Glossary

Azania: The name that was used by nationalist movements during the anti-apartheid struggle to refer to South Africa.

Bakkie: Pickup truck.

Black/Blackness: A socially constructed racial categorisation used to describe persons perceived as dark skinned from Africa or of African origin. In Black Consciousness theory it refers to more than skin colour but the state or quality of being Black.

Black Consciousness theory:

A philosophy that seeks to conscientise Black people about the self and liberate them from cultural, political, economic, linguistic and religious domination.

Black Tax: The financial burden tied to the obligation of taking care of extended family members which is common in Black African societies.

Braamfontein: Part of Johannesburg CBD where the University of the Witwatersrand main campus is located.

Bazwalane: Christian believers.

Decommoditisation: The process of turning or treating certain (perceived) goods and services not just as mere commodities subject to the dictates of the market.

Decolonisation: Is the rejection of white supremacy (racism), heteropatriarchal order and other forms of prejudices that characterise the ongoing colonial project and the quest to redress the socio-economic, political and spiritual depredations of colonial history. It includes the transformation of institutional and academic cultures, epistemological and ontological dimensions, curriculum development and pedagogical practice to that informed by local experiences.

Doek: A head wrap which in the African

context is mainly for women and denotes marriage and in some cases is interpreted as symbolising subordination to patriarchy. The Wits FMF movement *Mbokodos* subverted and appropriated the doek as a symbol of protest, Black womxn power and a rejection of being silenced within the movement.

Dompas: A pass that controlled movement of Blacks outside their homeland or designated areas during apartheid. This was designed to control the movement of Black labour.

Financial Exclusion: The lack of financial services accessible/affordable to the disadvantaged and the low income. In a university context it usually results in lack of access to education.

Freedom Charter: A political document drafted in 1955 by the congress of the people movement outlining the vision for a non-racial South Africa.

Fallist: Is an activist engaged in the struggle to overcome all circumstances of oppression and prejudice and rejects a heteropatriarchal order and advocates for free and decolonised education without exclusion of others.

#FeesMustFall/FeesMustFall: Student movement that began at the University of the Witwatersrand in October 2015 and advocated for free and decolonised education.

Heita: A greeting in township slang in South Africa.

Hippo(s): Special Police riot vehicle(s).

Historically Black University: Universities designated for Black people by the apartheid regime.

Historically white University: Universities that were predominately designated for white people during the apartheid period.

Inequality: Disproportionate or unfair distribution of economic resources.

Intersectionality: A description of how multiple oppressions are interlocked and experienced.

Izwe lethu: A Nguni slogan adopted by freedom fighters simply translated to “our land”.

Luthuli House: The ANC Head office named after one of its former President and anti-apartheid activists Chief Albert Luthuli located in downtown Johannesburg.

#MbokodoLead/Mbokodo: A radical Black feminist group that emerged during the FMF protests at Wits to challenge patriarchy and misogyny within the movement. i.e. the sexism and hetero-sexuality of the movement.

National Development Revolution (NDR): The central ideology of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) and its tripartite allies-COSATU and the South African Communist Party.

Nyaope: An illegal and highly toxic drug taken through inhalation common in some poor townships of South Africa. It's usually composed of multiple concoctions such as (marijuana, rat poison, ARVs etc.).

October 6 movement: A workers' and students solidarity movement that emerged at Wits University on the 6th of October 2015.

#Outsourcingmustfall: Workers movement that pledged solidarity with #FMF movement in 2015.

Oros: A popular South African concentrated beverage.

Pan-Africanism: Is an ideology and movement that calls for global solidarity and cooperation among Africans in order to liberate themselves

from racist oppression and (neo) colonial and imperialist domination. Africa holds a central place in Pan-Africanist thoughts and organising.

Radical Black feminism: A perspective within feminism critical of sexism, class oppression, heteropatriarchal order and white supremacy and is sensitive that they are inextricably bound together. It calls for profound changes in its challenge to these forms of prejudices.

Robert Sobukwe: He was an anti-apartheid activists and founder of the PAN Africanist Congress (PAC) which was a breakaway from the ANC. One of the main buildings at Wits main campus was named after him in 2016 as part of the decolonisation project.

Sawubona: Greeting in IsiZulu.

Solomon Mahlangu: He was an operative of the ANC military wing *Umkhonto we Sizwe* who was sentenced to death by the apartheid regime. One of the main buildings at Wits main campus was named after him in 2016 as part of the decolonisation project.

The Union Buildings: The official seat of the South African government which also house the president located in Pretoria.

Thuto ke Lesedi: A document prepared by the Wits FMF movement with a model of how free education may be realised in South Africa.

Township: Urban settlement that was restricted to Blacks during apartheid.

Toyi-toyi: Protest dance common in Southern Africa which is a sign of defiance.

Tsotsi taal: Township slang.

Vumani bo: isiZulu phrase commonly used by 'Sangomas' (traditional healers) when in a trance, which translates to 'say yes please'.

Wits: University of the Witwatersrand.

Abbreviations

AFFE: Academics for Free Education

ANC: African National Congress

BAC: Black Academic Caucus

BCM: Black Consciousness Movement

EFF: Economic Freedom Fighters

EFFSC: Economic Freedom Fighters Student Command

#FMF: Fees Must Fall

#FMFM: Fees Must Fall Movement

#WFMF: Wits Fees Must Fall

FMF: Fees Must Fall

FMFM: Fees Must Fall Movement

NDR: National Development Revolution

NSFAS: National Student Financial Aid Scheme

PKV: Parktown Knokando Village

LGBTQIA+: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual (community)

PYA: Progressive Youth Alliance

RMFM: Rhodes Must fall movement

SAPS: South African Police Service

SASCO: South African Students Congress

SADC: Southern African Development Community

SMH: Solomon Mahlangu House

SRC: Student Representative Council

SWOP: Society Work and Development Institute (Formerly Sociology Work Programme)

UCT: University of Cape Town

UJ: University of Johannesburg

UP: University of Pretoria

UWC: University of Western Cape

TUT: Tshwane University of Technology

VC: Vice Chancellor

YCLSA: Young Communist League of South Africa.

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Simamkele Dlakavu

Simamkele Dlakavu is a Fallist and a Masters student in African Literature at Wits. She has been an active participant in student movements calling for an intersectional decolonial reality in South Africa. She is the former Media and Communications Manager for Oxfam South Africa. She has also worked as a human rights television producer on one of South Africa's most popular current affairs show: *The Big Debate*.

In 2013, she was one of the producers for BBC's *Question Time* for a special episode on Nelson Mandela. She has co-created and participated in organisations that centre Black rural and township youth like *Sakha Ulutsha Lwethu*.

Simamkele shares her views on current affairs and politics on platforms such as: *City Press*, *The Daily Maverick* and *Independent Newspapers*. In 2015, she was a part of the 22 young women selected to attend the African Women's Development Fund's "*Writing for Social Change Workshop*" in Uganda. In 2014 the Mail and Guardian nominated her as one of South Africa's Top 200 Young South Africans.



C. Anzio Jacobs

C. Anzio Jacobs has been a community activist in the LGBTQIA+ sector in South Africa since 2010. Jacobs has been instrumental in the founding of several LGBTQIA+ projects including a university endorsed student pride parade, the *Safe Zones Project* at Wits, the *Kaleidoscope Youth Network* in South Africa and the *GALA Youth Forum at the Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA)*.

After being financially excluded from Wits, Jacobs worked in the *Transformation and Employment Equity Office* of the university. They have published work on the *Safe Zones* project in South Africa, and have done monitoring and evaluation on that project in San Diego. They conducted research on the exclusion of Queer and LGBTQIA+ womxn commissioned by GALA which will be published in a forthcoming paper tentatively titled *The Exclusion of Queer LGBTQIA+ Individuals from Protest as Result of hetero-patriarchy during #Feesmustfall 2015/16*. Jacobs is currently working for GALA as a Youth Projects Coordinator and facilitates their LGBTQIA+ Youth Forum while completing an undergraduate degree in Anthropology.



Bandile Bertrand Leopeng

Bandile Bertrand Leopeng is a Counselling Psychologist working within a Psychoanalytic framework. His main areas of interest include Psychoanalysis, race, decolonisation, neuroscience, and physics. He completed his postgraduate training at Wits and is seeking to continue further with a PhD research project. He believes in a radical upheaval of existing knowledge systems, questioning normative assumptions, and seeking new ways of interpreting the world.



Nonkululeko Mabaso

Nonkululeko Mabaso is a Masters student in Sociology at Wits University. She is currently an intern at SWOP (Society Work and Development Institute) at the same university. Her Masters research explores the meanings of race (whiteness and blackness) expressed by 'poor white people' who live in "racially diverse" informal settlements. Nonkululeko also works as a junior researcher for the HSRC (Human Sciences Research Council). Her research interests vary from 'Whiteness Studies', Blackness, Post-colonial thought, and student movements. She is grateful to have been part of the #FMF generation because it led to her awakening to the true meaning of the 'black condition' in post-1994 South Africa.



Tebogo Molobyé

Tebogo Molobyé is a graduate of Wits University with a Bachelor of Science in industrial engineering. She hails from Mahikeng, a small town in the North West Province. She currently works in the construction industry for one of South Africa's major multinational project lifecycle groups. Tebogo does, however, also have a strong inclination towards social entrepreneurship which is driven by her desire to make a positive difference to victims of social injustice in South Africa. She is also has a passion for communication and pursues it through written, read, or oratory means.



Ntokozo Moloi

Ntokozo Moloi is a black radical feminist and fallists. She has a Bachelor of Commerce in Economics and Econometrics from the University of Johannesburg (UJ). She has also attended the Johannesburg Bible College and graduated with a certificate in theological studies followed by a BA in theology at Rhema Bible College. She then enrolled at Wits for an LLB degree where she is a student representative and member of the Wits in sourcing task team and the chairperson of *Rethink Africa Wits* and cofounder and director of an NPO called *Rebirth Society*.



Ashley Nyiko Mabasa

Ashley Nyiko Mabasa hails from Limpopo province from a small rural village called Nwa-Mankena. He is a third year student registered for a BA Political studies and Sociology at Wits University. Nyiko is a political activist and former Regional Executive Committee (REC) of Congress of South Africa Congress (COSAS). He is also a Political Education and Ideological Officer of ANC Youth League Wits Dr Mxolisi Majombozi Branch and a Coordinator of the Young Communists League South Africa Wits Branch. In addition he is a #Feesmustfall activist.



Tebogo Radebe

Tebogo Radebe is a drama practitioner with a passion of applying drama in various social contexts with the intention of activating communities. He is a self-starter and experienced development practitioner who's self-motivated, solution driven, critical and creative, analytical in his work ethic. His area of expertise lies within using creative means like the arts for social development and entertainment. He is also a children and youth, drama/theatre performer, director, producer/facilitator with more than 9 years' experience. Tebogo trained as a practicing theatre/creative writer at the *Soyikwa Institute of African theatre* in 2007. He graduated from the University of South Africa in 2012. He is a postgraduate student in Applied Drama at Wits University. Moreover, he has taken up a courses in Marketing in the Arts, Monitoring and Evaluation, Leadership in the Arts facilitated by the Arts and Culture Trust and Wits University. He has co- written, directed, produced and performed in Children's Theatre puppetry production "*Learn to teach*" commissioned by the Read Trust.

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Neo Sambo

Neo Sambo is a final year BSc Mechanical engineering student at the University of the Witwatersrand. He has been involved in various student leadership portfolio within the residence community since 2013. His most recent position being the Deputy Chairperson of the *Wits All Residence Council 2014/15*. He is a member of the South African Students Congress (SASCO) and the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL). He is a proud community activist with a constant drive to effect change for a better society.



Busisiwe Cathrine Seabe

Sibusisiwe Cathrine Seabe is an Activist, Entrepreneur, WitsFeesMustFall student leader, advocate for social justice. She graduated from Wits and has worked for the Department of Basic Education, the United Nations International Children's Fund as well as the Department of Arts and Culture on the *Girls and Boys education movement* (Gem/Bem) as the National Chairperson. She is an ambassador for the *Always Keeping Girls in School Campaign* by Proctor & Gamble and also an ambassador for the *Wildlife Foundation* and *Generation Earth*.

Busisiwe is the Deputy Chairperson of the South African Youth Parliament; and the official African Youth Representative for COP17. She is the former Secretary General of the Southern African Universities Debating Council. Busisiwe is intrigued by the role of media in the pursuit of justice and this inspires her to write for the *Black Republic Publication* under the Fourth International Organisation. She is a former *VowFM radio* News and Current Affairs Reporter. She is currently an *ASRI Future Leaders Fellow for 2017* and the Co-Founder of *PERINE Early Childhood Development Academy*.

FOREWORD

Fallism will pass to history as a major earthquake that moved the foundations of South African consciousness and society, but also as a project that brought back the idea of decolonisation as an incomplete project in full force to South Africa. In this, Fallism is not alone, as decolonisation movements and projects have been growing world-wide. But Fallism has unique contributions that this book helps to identify and make clear.

This book is an extremely valuable and much needed contribution to the emerging literature about Fallism. One of its main virtues is that it is not simply a book about Fallism or about decolonisation written by academics who have remained largely marginal to the movement. Rather, this is a book written by a great majority of student-activists themselves who, as a collective, considered the significance of decolonisation in multiple areas, including in the task of writing itself.

Rioting and Writing: Diaries of the Wits Fallists sheds light on the high degree of complexity and richness in a movement that seeks to transform the bases of South African society by identifying the multiple ways in which apartheid continues in the country. Instead of aiming to represent the entirety of the movement, this book helps to advance the goal of making possible and available more expressions and analyses by student activists themselves from Wits and other universities. The text shows the high degree to which thinking and action often come together in social and epistemic movements like Fallism, leading to a better appreciation of the multi-

layered dimension of this and similar movements. This text is an essential reading for anyone interested in Fees Must Fall, in the transformation and decolonisation of the university, and in decolonial movements today.

Nelson Maldonado-Torres

Professor, Rutgers University, New Brunswick,
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PREFACE

We express gratitude to **David Dickinson**, the head of the Wits Department of Sociology for being the catalyst of the Wits #Feesmustfall 'picket line discussions' which generated a platform where the idea of this volume was conceived. We also thank **Ben Scully** from the same department, who was part of the discussion. Our editor, **Barbara Boswell** from the Wits school of literature, language and media worked tirelessly beyond the call of duty to meet our rather ridiculous deadlines and provided invaluable and constructive insights. She worked pro bono, with the conviction that this is an important intervention in documenting and understanding resistance and the transformation of our society. We are touched by her sacrifice. **Linet Imbosa Muhati-Nyakundi** conducted the KiSwahili translation and editing of one of the chapters with the meticulous eye of a veteran Mwalimu. We express gratitude to our design editor **Sally Dore** for all her effort and going beyond the call of duty. We thank our fellow students who were part of the protests, in particular all the Fallists who took part in the 'picket line conversations' and either did not have time to contribute for this volume or elected not to do so because of ideological or other reasons. We express gratitude to Ford Foundation and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) for providing funding that supported this project.

We also express thanks to the Society, Work and Development Institute (SWOP) at the University of the Witwatersrand and in particular the Director, **Karl Von Holdt**, for taking the risk of acknowledging Black power; as well as the fallists within a neoliberal university which often pays lip service to those perceived as powerless. This provided space for a candid debate and negotiations that sustained the project. It also allowed us as students to take charge and control of both

the process and the trajectory of the project, on our own terms. We are conscious of the bravery shown by SWOP in taking this project to conclusion. We are aware that in a neoliberal university SWOP risks being ostracised within such space for allowing the power of Black students to prevail. We also appreciate the SWOP administration staff for help related to the logistics of this project.

As individuals we did not expect to benefit directly from the funding secured from our sponsors. We used this to meet the running costs related to this project, such as a writing retreat, workshops, cover design, the KiSwahili translation, editing and printing. All the contributors were students in various disciplines at the University of the Witwatersrand at the time when the 2015 #Feesmustfall (FMF) movement emerged, the period when this project was conceived. The exception is a Black academic who elected to align with the student's struggle. The following section is an introduction in which we present our experience with the project and the power dynamics i.e. the conception, history, experience, negotiations, contradictions and power dimensions that characterised the project and a discussion and summary of the themes covered in this volume.

[Editorial Collective](#)

INTRODUCTION:

Reflexivity: Decolonising the process

Crispen Chinguno, Morwa Kgoroba, Sello Mashibini, Bafana Nicolas Masilela, Boikhutso Maubane, Nhlanhla Moyo, Andile Mthombeni and Hlengiwe Ndlovu

The #Feesmustfall (FMF) movement emerged in 2015, more than two decades after the democratic transition and morphed into one of the most dramatic mass actions post 1994. The 'post post-apartheid' order has paradoxically produced the most profound levels of unemployment, poverty and inequality¹. This social order, characterised by racialised social inequality and systemic exclusion of the Blacks/Africans who are the majority in the country, raises a number of pertinent questions. The FMF movement is/was² an attempt from below to disrupt this unequal, racialised social and economic order. It rekindled and questioned the idea about the university in a postcolonial society³. This movement ironically generated unparalleled moments of conflict and solidarity in different contexts. One of its most important contributions is that it produced a new generation of post-apartheid activists and a new form of politics and claim-making driven by social justice and the need to address inequality, poverty, and unemployment in the broader society. It brought together, at its peak, various student formations from different ideological traditions and across diverse academic spaces to critique the state and the socio-economic order. The movement brought back critical student movement to the fore and presented students with an opportunity to reclaim their

position as the protagonists of transformation in society. The FMF movement exposed the ideological variance within and between the students and the state. The state was not convinced that free education was feasible in the South African context; a position highly contested by the students. Furthermore the Wits #FMF movement brought to the surface other covert struggles within the university space. A Black Academic Caucus (BAC) and the Academics for Free Education (AFFE) emerged and aligned to the students struggle.

The #FeesMustFall movement on one hand represents a rejection of the neoliberal education system and has forged new collective identities and an unprecedented process of collective learning. A new collective identity—the 'Fallists' was forged through mobilisation cutting across political and ideological, economic/class difference within the student movement. Drawing from our lived experience in the movement we define a fallist as an activist who rejects a hetero-patriarchal order and all forms of oppression and prejudice, drawing from intersectional lenses to understand resistance, and advocates for free and decolonised education without the exclusion of others.

The FMF movement further raised questions on racial identity, social class, positionality,

¹ Bhorat, Haroon, Karmen Naidoo, and Kavisha Pillay. 2015. *Growth, Poverty and Inequality Interactions in Africa: An Overview of Key Issues*. University of Cape Town, South Africa.

http://www.dpru.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/36/Publications/Other/Growth%2C%20Poverty%20and%20Inequality%20Interactions%20in%20Africa%20%20An%20Overview%20of%20Key%20Issues.pdf

² A number of the fallists believe that the FMF movement is still ongoing and what has only changed is its mode of operation.

³ Similar movements in other post-colonial societies have been noted- DeCarvalho, J.J. and J. Flez-Flez. 2014. *The meeting of knowledges: A project for the decolonisation of the university in Latin America*. *Postcolonial Studies* 17(2): 122-139.

gender, sexuality, the hetero-patriarchal order and the significance of an intersectional paradigm on how to “do” and understand popular struggles and resistance. In the interest of promoting this process of collective learning, David Dickinson, who at the time was a member of the university council, Ben Scully and some of the students who were part of the #FeesMustFall movement initiated an informal group aimed at critically analysing the unfolding of events and how the movement was evolving in situ. This included reviewing some of the strategies adopted by the students and the response by management and unpacking some of the underlying hidden meanings. This took the form of reflections by the activists at the end of each day during the Wits protest. The discussions were open to everyone but initially it were mostly Social Science students who were dominant but this shifted gradually and become more inclusive. The discussions covered broad issues such as the changes and continuities in the context, university governance, leadership and hierarchies, student politics and how this was influencing the movement trajectory and ideological debates. These open discussions usually happened during the breaks from the big mass meetings or after plenary sessions at Solomon Mahlangu House, which was renamed from Senate House as part of the de-colonisation process. Solomon Mahlangu House concourse became the focal site of the struggle. The reflection space became a platform for critical analysis and introspection of the movement by the activists and their sympathisers as events unfolded. The reflections and discussions covered strategies, tactics, intersectionality, and questions on gender, race, class, sexuality, leadership and hierarchy, repertoires of action, solidarity, the insourcing struggle and others. As a group we made use of the new social media and opened a *whatsapp* group which became a forum for the members to share ideas and perspectives as the movement evolved. At the same time, a member was tasked on a rotational basis to appraise and summarise some of the incidents as they unfolded through the *whatsapp* group. This was also shared through emails and was

designed to take the debate forward.

The idea to engage and capture our experiences and practices as student activists into this volume was not considered at the onset but emerged as an *ad hoc* decision in the group discussions. We discussed the importance of the history of the moment and the significance of capturing this in writing for future generations and struggles.

A number of meetings were conducted to define the scope and objectives of this project; who we were writing /speaking for and the position we were writing from. At our first meeting, on the 7th December 2015, we adopted the objectives of the project and the position from which we would write. We took a conscious decision that only Black students would be part of the project, drawing from the Black Consciousness philosophy (Biko1978) that rejects whites from becoming counter-active against a system from which they benefit. White privilege, according to Biko’s (1978) thesis, is intertwined with the racist structures and we felt that the #FeesMustFall movement was about the experience and practices of the Black child and the shared understanding of Black pain. We thus felt that this experience cannot be appropriated. This raises a question of whether those perceived as not oppressed can be part of the resistance and quest for liberation. We do not fully engage this question here. We concluded that our stories would capture narratives from our experiences as African/Black students; the full story of what we witnessed and our intuitions, so as to give an insider voice. The purpose of this volume is to provide a platform for the voices, perspectives, practices and experiences of Black students within what is perceived as a white space.

Moreover, this volume gives a historical account to the full story of the Wits FMF movement from an insider and outsider perspective. It also provides a historical record of the broader #FeesMustFall movement. We are speaking to the general world. Our audiences are fellow students, other movements, the University

community and the general public. In particular we are speaking to both white and Black privilege, the hetero-patriarchal order and to fellow Blacks who were participants and nonparticipants in the movement. We wrote our stories as participant-observers i.e. as Black students who took part in the #Feesmustfall. We agreed that the writing should conform to key principles established in the mass action of the student movement, for example: the significance of drawing from intersectional lenses in understanding grassroots resistance and the challenge to the hetero-patriarchal order.

Negotiating power in a neoliberal and 'white' university

In the meantime, David Dickinson who is also an associate of SWOP had a discussion with Karl Von Holdt, the director, about these 'picket line' informal group discussions and reflections on the movement and how the events were unfolding. SWOP, as an institution with a history of alliance with progressive movements, became interested in the project and was keen in helping and sourcing funding to assist the students in writing and capturing their experiences within #FeesMustFall movement. SWOP was very quick to respond and in no time had secured funding, initially from Ford Foundation, to support the project. SWOP had solicited two funders for the project; Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) and Ford Foundation. FES came on board as a second source of financial support.

After we had decided to pursue the project of writing about our experiences in the movement we met with SWOP to thrash out the details of how the project would unfold - the writing, editing and finally the publishing of the book. We elected a task team from the authors to negotiate these details with SWOP. Tensions, however, emerged between students interested in the project and those who were not when the interests of SWOP and Ford Foundation

was made known by Dickinson. Some of the students strongly objected to SWOP, FES and FORD involvement and decided not to be part of the project. There are many activist students who exited the project as they felt strongly that they were not prepared to compromise with white power within a neoliberal university. They were convinced that there can be never a balance of power between Black students and white administrators within a neoliberal university. The level of trust among us students and between us and SWOP deteriorated because it seemed as if they wanted to bully us into submission because they had sourced the funding. There were strong feelings of insecurity, uncertainty and we were apprehensive that we were falling prey to, and becoming puppets of white power. We felt that SWOP was pushing too hard on meeting the deadlines of the project without resolving the politics of the project. Our first engagement with SWOP also gave us an impression that it was condescending and dictatorial. As a result we decided to be cautious, to have more collective internal discussions and to send more representatives to the negotiation process with them. The negotiating team we selected subsequently became the task team for the project.

The tension centred around some of the student activists who felt that the process and implementation of the project had to be decolonised before taking a step forward. This became one of the key concepts and language of the movement, which constituted part of the claim-making. We define decolonisation as the rejection of white supremacy and hetero-patriarchal order along with other forms of prejudice that characterise the ongoing colonial project, as well as the quest to redress the socio-economic, political and spiritual depredations of colonial history. In our context, at the University of the Witwatersrand, this involves the transformation of institutional and academic cultures, epistemological and ontological dimensions, curriculum development and

4 An email to Wits fallists, 25 November 2015.

pedagogical practise to that informed by our South African and African experiences.

Additionally, issues of transparency and communication within the project were raised. Students questioned the motive behind and the interest of SWOP, Ford Foundation, and later FES. They questioned why FORD Foundation and FES were interested in supporting a book with stories and experiences of Black students with SWOP as their proxy? This was unprecedented and disruptive for the funders as they do not usually get questioned by their recipients as to why they are interested in funding their respective projects.

This triggered a series of protracted negotiations centred on ownership, conceptualisation and delivery of the project; objectives and motives of SWOP and its sponsors before we could reach consensus. The previous meetings and discussions resolved to extend the call to other students in the broader #Feesmustfall movement at Wits. This was done through emails to all the identified entities including the #FeesMustFall mailing list and the Student's Representative Council (SRC) and public announcements at FMF mass meetings. Some of those who were interested in the project and were part of the movement did not want to be aligned overtly to any of the student political formations but elected to remain neutral.

As student activists we resolved that the writing process must be decolonised, but this raised many questions. What does it mean to decolonise the writing process and the language? What are the different ways of narrating our experiences and practices? The process had to be negotiated by the writers and the editor(s). We attempted to address these pertinent questions in our experience in this project.

The project faced many other challenges and was almost aborted several times because of a number of what were, apparently, irreconcilable differences. We initially thought that SWOP wanted to treat this just as any other conventional project, with the usual power relations and expected deliverables and ignoring the

underlying politics. We were not prepared to accept this line of order. We wanted SWOP to take a clear stance on #FMF before proceeding. We raised questions about the involvement of SWOP in the protest and its failure to support the movement. We were informally advised that the project was to be suspended because of the differences between us and SWOP on how it should proceed. This did not surprise us because of the level of trust between us and SWOP became untenable at some point.

We felt that SWOP was seemingly oblivious of its position within a white neoliberal university and that white academics have always capitalised on Black wretchedness and struggles (experiences) for their own gains. They often write the so called 'high rated' books and journals about Black lives and experience while they are literally disengaged from the real Black experience. As students we resolved to set up a committee to lead the project in liaison with SWOP but to remain vigilant and in charge of the whole process as part of asserting our power.

Some of the students were also sceptical of SWOP's erstwhile history and alliance with institutions such as the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) which is an ally of the ruling party - the African National Congress (ANC). We were upset that these were the same institutions that have failed to deal effectively with the problem of outsourcing of workers at Wits University.

The negotiations with SWOP resolved that the project was for students and not for SWOP and its sponsors. In other words we agreed to hold SWOP responsible and accountable for social justice. They always present themselves as a progressive institute, and this was the time to prove that they are indeed progressive. An earlier negotiation meeting between the students and SWOP nominated one of the student activists as the line of communication between the students and SWOP. The students organised their own meetings and discussed how to engage SWOP regarding its motivation and involvement in the project. Two meetings



were conducted between this student and the director of SWOP and two other students had to be part of a second meeting as we felt that our representative was too close to Karl. In the meeting, the students raised the issue of perceived bullying by SWOP and its funders and the need to decolonise the project. The students were concerned by the way SWOP was seemingly pushing forward with the project, oblivious of the tensions and clashes between those students who unconsciously just wanted to write and felt they were being delayed unreasonably and those who felt the need to decolonise the process. These were some of the issues that had to be clarified before the project could go ahead and as students, we insisted that this should not be interpreted as a delay but a make-or-break for the project. The project had to be sensitive to the fact that it is about our experiences as Black students within a white neoliberal university. As a result, we insisted that the project had to be decolonised and sensitive to the fact that Wits, as an institution, represents a space of white power and Black powerlessness. Our aim in this project was to disrupt this and proclaim Black power. We had a series of meetings where we agreed on the terms of engagement and requested SWOP to commit through a memorandum of understanding.

After reaching a working consensus and trust with SWOP, we requested to meet with FES and Ford Foundation because we still did not trust them and their motives. We were curious about why they were keen to fund a project about Black student's experiences. We wanted to understand their motivation. We also wanted to ensure that no one was going to police how we should narrate our experiences as expressed in this volume. The meeting was also to clarify the terms and to ensure that there would be no conflict with their interests and what they aimed to achieve. The meeting with the two funders was significant as this managed to bring into the same room organisations with a different history, tradition and association with Black people. FES is linked to the German social democratic party while

the FORD foundation has a liberal philanthropic tradition.

The question over the editing process was raised from the onset as a potentially contentious issue. The bone of contention was on who was to decide who should be the editor and the level and type of editing. Of concern was the fear that some of the narratives and experiences may be lost in the process. The overarching goal for us as student activists was to try to keep our experiences as organic as possible without the editor(s) imposing their own voices. We noted the power that lies behind the editing process and the danger of losing our voices when an editor is involved. We thus resolved that the role of the editor must be decolonised and clarified and they were to be selected by the students. As students we wanted an editor who could relate to our lived experiences. Moreover, this was to be in two phases. The first phase was to be a peer review process followed by an internal editorial collective that was to edit all the chapters. The second phase involved an external editor carefully selected by the students. The aim was to ensure that students would learn from each other through peer editing and that whatever came out of this process would be true to the person writing. The third phase involved selection of an external editor who understood students' experiences. This editor was not going to edit from an academic perspective and there was to be no hierarchy between them and the students. As students we wanted our experiences and practices to be undiluted. We wanted to outline 'things the way they were' from our perspective; calling a spade a spade. However, this raised questions on what happens, for example, when certain names are involved and how to deal with it, as this could raise case(s) of defamation and other ethical issues.

The project had to deal with internal conflict within the student's movement which at times, and at certain levels, was ideologically driven. We took cognisance of the clashes, differences and divisions between and within the SRC and FMF movement and we resolved that such differences must not adversely affect the project.

The negotiation process resolved other contentious issues, including how the publication was to be distributed, language, style of writing and other pertinent issues. Engaging an independent publisher meant that the book would be sold at a profit. We explored the possibility of self-publishing and the use of the funds we had secured to print copies, depending on the number of authors and the pages of the volume. As students we resolved that the hard copy of the publication was to be free if resources permitted, or otherwise for sale. However, we also agreed that it should be available on online open access and distributed widely electronically. We were clear that what we were to write about was to be decided by us and not SWOP and or its funders. We resolved to desist from unwarranted personal attacks of individuals in the writing. However, it was noted that at times in the writing it was somewhat challenging to distinguish between a critique and an attack.

As student activists we were clear that we were not in this project for financial gain and that we would ensure transparency in terms of budget and all the expenditure.

We were involved in drawing up a budget for the project and how the money was to be utilised. We questioned who was to benefit from the writing project and whether there was to be a writing retreat and workshop. Part of the funding was used to organise workshops and a writing retreat. We resolved that if the project was to raise any funds these would be channelled towards a fund to assist students from disadvantaged backgrounds, including some who may be part of the project.

There was resentment and fear that we may, as is the norm, be exploited as Blacks by white power. In light of this predicament we were confronted by Fanon's stubborn thesis that 'the black man has no ontological resistance

in the eyes of the white man' (Fanon 1986:83). Furthermore, Steve Biko (1978) also engages the same subject. We adopted a sophisticated conception of race and non-racial society, drawing from the Black Consciousness philosophy, which also influenced the ideology of the broader #FMM movement. Biko urges Blacks to take the lead, and fearlessly so. He clearly emphasises that genuine collaboration of whites and Blacks in advancing a Black struggle is nothing but a delusion⁵. Thus, for us, it was and continues to be, a paradox associated with this project. The expected norm was that Black students were to document their experiences, under the direct control of a white scholar who would then package this and turn into a leading authority on Black resistance.

For a long time the burden of receiving funds from whites weighed heavily and raised a number of questions. Are we sellouts? Are we not committed to our ethos as Blacks, and letting our gut down? We wondered if we were making correct decisions. It did not help that SWOP seemed conscious of the student's agency and accepted the process that this project had to take. It appeared as though there was insensitivity to the distrust Black students have towards white authority and white money. We cannot say that these internal dilemmas were fully resolved, nor can we say we take pride in the approach we embarked on in order to sustain this project. We found ourselves, yet again, as empathic Blacks who will always make an effort for whites to understand our concerns, and where our insecurity stems from. We did have the option to reject this project on the basis that it was supported by white money and that accepting this may be interpreted as a reflection of Black powerlessness. We nevertheless acknowledge and own that, yet again, we created an opportunity for corrective therapy with whiteness in order for us to express ourselves. But we did this on our own terms: To own and be the drivers of the project. We did not perceive ourselves as powerless but we

⁵ (Biko1978) viewed the position of whites as hegemonic and argued that they cannot be part of a struggle for Black emancipation.

saw this as an opportunity to challenge white administration and power, along with their establishments and institutions, in a neoliberal university.

This project has been a very emotional journey. As Blacks, it has highlighted the challenges of negotiating with white power, white capital and authorities. We were always reminded of our subordination over and over again. We organised a writing retreat at a lodge outside Johannesburg on the 10-12 September 2016. This experience reminded us that, as Blacks, we are still relegated and treated as sub-humans, yet we are the indigenes. What was supposed to be a writing retreat turned into a scramble for humanity and recognition. We were treated as if we had not paid for the service and chased out of the lodge like animals by a racist white management. After demanding that we receive the services that we paid for, the white management mobilised white customers to attack us. We were heckled and called black savages who must stay clear from white spaces and go back to SOWETO where we belong. We were chased and drenched with water. This experience was an eye opener and a bitter reminder that the #FeesMustFall movement is not isolated from the broader struggle for Black liberation, dignity and a new order.

Through this journey we have forged new alliances and broken some. It is a journey that has brought unlikely allies together to share our experiences as Wits students. No one other than us is better positioned to tell our experience within the #FeesMustFall. This is an exciting project for us, one that seeks to tell the often neglected dimensions of our struggle. This has been for the most part an exhilarating time but it had its turns and twists. Moreover, it has been an enlightening process and has showed us that experiences are not a universal phenomenon. We thus draw on post-colonial theory to disrupt the notion of universality.

Decolonisation, de-commoditisation and re-imagining a new order

The articles we present here ‘speak from the heart’ rather than being framed by academic conversations. The chapters capture what we felt about our position as fallists, the events, thoughts and lessons drawn as activists. Put together, these accounts also provide an overarching account of events from a range of unique perspectives. Over forty-five students who were part of the Wits FMF movement responded and indicated an interest in taking part in this project. Of these only 19 endured the turbulence faced by this project and managed to share their experiences and actions during the FMF movement.

We are a very diverse group in terms of gender, class, sexual orientation, academic disciplines and social background. We come from varied disciplines within Wits, such as Commerce, Law, Humanities and Engineering, and we were all united by the FMF movement. This was ideal, as the best way to engage questions raised by FMF movement demands a trans-disciplinary approach. Our overarching analysis is inevitably influenced by our life experiences as Black student activists, many of whom have a strong working class background. Our social and economic position is thus significant in understanding how we perceive reality.

This book is unique because our analysis is informed by our particular positionalities and perspectives as Black students and activists (fallists) who defended with our bodies what we perceive as a legitimate revolution. The chapters in this volume do not follow the convention of academic articles. We took a conscious decision not to adopt a uniform academic style of presentation. We are aware that as activists our views are not usually conveyed in the mainstream academia because of a number of constraints.

We take cognisance that, in the South African and African context, the academia is a space defined by whiteness that often silences Black voices and that most activists tend to focus more on their activism. This volume is different as it gives the floor to the activists themselves. It is divided into four thematic sections focusing on spaces, tactics and (direct) action; gender, power and identities; student and worker solidarity; solidarities and questions from beyond the frontiers.

This book is about the struggle to challenge power relations. It makes a number of postulations. Its overarching contribution is that FMF movement is/was more than just about a narrow, student's struggle but raises broader society struggles tied to the quest for a new 'post-apartheid' order. The university is presented as a contested space that often reflects and brings to fore these broader societal struggles such as inequality, unemployment and poverty (See *Mashibini*). The narratives presented here show how the FMF was/is a contested terrain ideologically as it contemporaneously embraced many struggles. It presented a demand for the decolonisation and de-commodification of education and articulated this to the abolition of outsourcing of university support staff. This speaks to solidarity and access. It also takes a further step by rejecting the kind of education and the overall idea of what a university in a South African and African context should be like.

There is no doubt that the FMF movement changed the language and re-opened and deepened the debate on decolonisation. It represents a rejection of white supremacy, the hetero-patriarchal order and other forms of prejudices of the colonial project and promotes the quest to redress the socio-economic and political ravages of colonial history. The FMF movement brought to the fore the debate on the idea of an ideal South African and African university, which should be informed by Afrocentric canon drawn from our lived experiences. This embraces overarching change in the institutional and academic culture,

epistemological and ontological dimensions, curriculum development and pedagogical practice.

The FMF movement brought new repertoires and ways of claim-making, including a new language of protest. For example, the language shifted from transformation to the more radical, post-colonial perspective of decolonisation. This represents a call for a more revolutionary approach. Our universities in the current form are alien to us as Blacks/Africans and represents Anglo-Saxon institutions transplanted in Africa. The call for decolonisation by the FMF movement demands a real shift for them to become African and South African universities informed by local experiences. In line with this perspective, one of our contributors (see *Seabe*) rejected writing her chapter in English, as part of the disruption, and dispelling its universalism as a language of knowledge production. Her experience, as outlined in this volume, is captured in KiSwahili, a dominant language in East and Southern Africa. She questions the authenticity of what she initially perceived as a revolution: *Namna Dhahiri za mapinduzi au nini?* Her rejection of English as the medium is meant to assert the disruption that characterises the process of decolonisation and was one of the pillars of the FMF movement ideology.

On another hand, the FMF movement is/was about economic liberation through education. It rejects the free market fundamentalism within the education system and contests the inequalities within the education and the broader society that characterise the post-apartheid order. This is championed by a new generation of activists with little or no experience of apartheid. Our motivation is anchored on the demand for social justice and for a more equal South Africa. As students and a Black academic we are conscious that the commoditisation of education and outsourcing of the university support staff, who ironically are our mothers and fathers, reproduces inequality tied to the apartheid legacy and is catastrophic to social justice. The FMF movement is about social justice and equal oppor-

tunities and a transition towards an egalitarian society. This was a movement built on consensus and engagement at the grass root level. At its onset the FMF movement was sustained by a democratic tradition based on power and collective decisions from below. Decisions were adopted after extensive consultation and consensus-building. The students had no trust of the formal institutions of representation. As a result, they organised outside the formal institutions as a means to counter co-optation (see *Mashibini and Ndlovu*). We have highlighted the democracy adopted in the delivery of this project. Decisions were made collectively through a democratic process aimed at attaining a consensus within the group. There was no hierarchy of power within the group and we ensured that everyone had a voice in determining the course of the project. Our aim was to ensure that no voices were silenced. In exercising this process it has not been easy for us to decide on the image for the cover of this paper as it raised questions of the representation of some and the silencing of others.

The FMF movement was characterised by different forms of contestations of power, ideological frameworks and over the use of different spaces (see *Moyo, Mashibini, Mabasa, and Mthombeni*). A number of articles in this volume articulate that the FMF movement embraced many other struggles within it and brought to the fore other hidden struggles (see *Dlakavu, Mashibini, Canham and Mabaso*). #FeesMustFall movement is much about the questions of gender and sexuality as it is about creating de-colonial reality, de-commodification of education and ending outsourcing. An important theme is how the movement reproduced gender power relations and how the forms of power relations intersect with gender, patriarchy to marginalise and silence the role played by women and other minorities within, as well as how this was challenged (see *Jacobs and Dlakavu*). Moreover, the protests reflected how the problem of a heteropatriarchal order was deeply embedded within the movement and is part of the university



culture (see *Mashibini, Dlakavu and Jacobs*). The participation in the FMF movement propelled and strengthened the emergence of a radical Black feminist movement - *the Mbokodos* - which challenged a heteropatriarchal order and rejected the side-lining of women (see *Dlakavu, Jacobs*). Dlakavu seeks to commemorate and preserve the memory of Black womxn and contribution to the #FMF movement, which she feared could be erased. Jacobs on the other hand identifies the three pillars that defined the Wits # FMF movement: Pan Africanism, Intersectionality and Black radical feminism. Jacobs further reviews the significance of an intersectional approach and how this ensures that no voices are silenced. They argued that an intersectional approach is critical as it puts emphasis on all facets of the protestors and identifies those through which they are oppressed.

Kgoroba and Mabasa looks at FMF movement using different lenses and notes how new sources of power and solidarity were forged between the students and the outsourced workers and the challenges that this presented. The FMF movement offered a platform for the forging of new alliances between workers and

students. Similar efforts were not successful about two decades ago when the universities were in a marketisation drive. This shift to a neoliberal university had also accommodated worker's trade unions and student's unions. The FMF movement presented untapped new source of power for the workers who prior to this had limited power. Their unions had failed to stop the marketisation of the university in the 1990s and had lost all hope of ever turning the tide toward the realisation of decent work for outsourced workers. At the time, the forging of such a strong alliance and solidarity between students and outsourced staff was unthinkable and/or limited (see *Bezuidenhout, and Fakier, 2006*). The majority of the student-body at the time did not relate to the struggles of outsourced workers. This has changed over the years as more working class students have occupied that space and perceive the same workers in a paternalistic mode, as their fathers and mothers. The struggles of students and workers cannot be extricated and the alliance emerged from the history of how workers were treated in the 1990s marketisation project. The demand by the FMF movement to end outsourcing ideologically represents a push towards the de-commodification of labour.

Seabe and Maubane introspect and present critical perspectives on the FMF movement. They expose how inequality and divisions manifested within the movement. The movement exposed inequality within and between universities. The students were unequal and divided by class, race and institutions and had different voices and hierarchies. The university crisis has been with us for some time and this manifested as violent protests in the former Black universities. It seems that nobody, at the time, bothered to listen. The broader society and the state only paid attention when similar protests and violence affected Wits and UCT, which have a legacy of white power. The FMF movement was a conscious-raising moment for Maubane and period of redemption. As Black students, we realised that we have not had the same experience as other Blacks from the erstwhile

Black universities. We realised that we have different privileges and occupied different spaces and that this has an effect on how the broader society responded to our agency. As Wits students we realised, when we met with other students at the Union buildings, how disconnected we were to our fellow comrades and the 'real' Black struggle. However, the media and the state are more receptive to Wits student's protest, perhaps not because of who we are but because of the space we occupy. They listen and are more sympathetic to a Wits protest than the TUT one, for example, because the former is a white space and represents white power and superiority. TUT on the other hand represents Blackness and powerlessness (see *Maubane, Ndlovu*). This in many ways is a manifestation of and reproduction of apartheid hierarchies. One of the main critique of the Wits #Feesmustfall movement was the failure to build and sustain connections with other students and the broader society and as a result, the protests became localised.

Moloi notes and deplores the violent response by the university management to the FMF movement in collaboration with the state. She argues that no amount of violence would extinguish the students demand for decolonisation. She outlines how, as students, they navigated the contentious environment by setting a legal task team that defended the students and the workers within the legal system. Radebe acknowledges the excessive use of violence by the university management and the state, the many facets that this violence took in the #FMF movement and explores the application of arts for healing through reliving real life moments in a fictional context. Moyo's narrative of what was happening at the gates captures the whole story of exclusion, violence and alienation that define the university as a contested space. He highlights the events at the gates as a powerful representation of this contestation and how this defines exclusion and inclusion in the post post-apartheid order.

Chinguno argues that the lack of a clear strategy and position by the FMF movement on the question about those from beyond South Africa

is a fundamental contradiction to the ideological essence of the movement - decolonisation. While the international students were sceptical, Chinguno argues that the Wits FMF movement did not have a clear and unequivocal position on how to deal with the question on international students and their position in the movement. This lack of clarity or indifference in many ways deepened divisions amongst Black students based on citizenship, which is a social construction of the colonial and capitalist project. The failure to challenge this contradiction is a reaffirmation of the colonial project.

Masilela and Moloï explore the similarities and differences of the ideological underpinnings of the 1976 and the FMF student movements. They conclude that the FMF movement draws a number of similarities and parallels from the 1976 student movement but brings to the fore a deeper decolonisation question. Masilela further argues that the #FMF movement raised questions of access but went further and interrogated the kind of education and culture. Masilela, Moloï, Mthombeni, Ndlovu, Mabaso and Sambo drew from their experiences to justify Black anger that imbued the Wits #FMF movement. For Mabaso, the Wits FMS made her rediscover what it means to be Black and womxn in post-apartheid South Africa, while for Masilela it made him realise how, as a Black student, he felt he did not belong at Wits University. Leopeng engages the question on decolonisation and draws a powerful critical response to the public discourses constructed by Adam Habib, the vice-chancellor of Wits University during the early phases of the 2016 (#Asinamali campaign) protests on-campus, using a decolonised psycho-analytical lens. Mthombeni sees the #Feesmustfall as a Black student struggle to be recognised and belong within the university space i.e making Wits our home. Moloï identifies the exclusion of Blacks at the university as a form of violent exclusion and argues that the violent response by the students is meant to disturb the status quo of inequality and that the protests are a form of expressing Black pain in the post-

apartheid context characterised by social injustice. Canham takes us through from his lived experience of what it means to be a Black academic and ally of students engaged in protests.

A number of chapters in this volume draw on introspection from the FMF movement. Kgoroba shows how, at certain moments of the movement, solidarity between the workers and the students dissipated. Seabe, who initially perceived the movement as a means to what she views as real freedom, makes an important critique to the 2015 and 2016 FMF student movement. However, her view changed after 2016. She questions the legitimacy of the movement: *Namna Dhahiri za mapinduzi au nini?* She argues that the movement turned into a pseudo-revolution as it did not challenge the structural base of the capitalist and colonial project and thus the struggle for de-commodification and decolonisation of education is, according to her, yet to be attained. She evaluates whether the 2015 and 2016 FMF movements were genuine or pseudo-revolutions. She draws a rather pessimistic conclusion. She argues that the FMF movement was a pseudo revolution as it allowed a bourgeoisie culture to impose its moral philosophy upon the poor and suffering masses. She maintained that a revolution should reflect the philosophy of the masses and this should determine its direction.

Our experience in this project highlighted a number of important lessons. As the protest intensified in 2016 the university management and the state were apparently not so keen to negotiate. They projected students as recalcitrant and seemingly wanted to force them into submission through the use of violence.

However, SWOP was prepared to negotiate with the same students (fallists) and reach a compromise. The position taken by SWOP

strongly suggests that the students within the FMF movement were very rational and prepared to negotiate and make compromises. The production of this volume is a testimony rejecting the university and state position that became the dominant narrative in the media and beyond. Our experience in this project proved that there was room for a shift in the relationship from antagonism and mistrust to an open and honest relationship between the students and SWOP. This project rejects the thesis on Blackness as powerlessness and asserts the experience of power by Black students and workers. A typical display of power was the march to the Union Buildings. This was an unprecedented show of power by the Black students that forced the president to negotiate and retract the government's earlier position.

Lastly, we are conscious that there are many other important dimensions of the 2015-2016 FMF movement that we have not captured in this volume. Our intention is not to be comprehensive but to share our unique experiences. The methodology we have adopted here limits the scope and themes we can cover. We hope that by sharing our experiences, perspectives, and practices this volume will contribute to, and take the debate on the re-imagining of a new South Africa further, thereby illuminating the role of students in realising this vision.

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When numbers are many, they reflect popular grassroots support and that the cause is a genuine broad social issue that needs urgent redress.



THEME 1: Spaces, tactics and (direct) action

A journey through Wits #FeesMustFall 2015/16

Hlengiwe Ndlovu

On Wednesday, 14th October 2015 I was woken up by Benita Msibi¹, the woman who cleans our block at West Campus student village, university of the Witwatersrand. I heard a loud bang on my door followed by her voice. "Hey baby if you are going to be working off campus you better leave now!" Before I responded, Benita Msibi shouted again "*Phuma kunzima ama gates avaluwe.*"² Still lost in my confusion, I shouted back to Msibi: "I'm not going anywhere today!" The only plan for the day was to attend a lunchtime student march organised by the Student Representative Council (SRC) against a 10.5 percent fee increase for the 2016 academic year.

Msibi is one of the outsourced workers at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). She cleans my residence in one of the university complexes. She cleans a minimum of twenty-four rooms per day. One day, as she cleaned my room, she explained to me how she wakes up around 03:00 to catch the train so that she can arrive at Wits before 07:00 and begin her duties. As an outsourced worker, she did not have a permanent place of work. Msibi had just arrived at our residence, replacing another woman who was moved because students were complaining about her 'attitude'. Msibi explained to me that she had three children and her husband was unemployed. She earned R2 500 per month and spent half of her monthly salary on transport. She relied on *matshonisa*³ to meet her monthly expenses.

Since Msibi narrated her story and the stories of others who shared similar experience, I have struggled to extricate my struggles as a

black poor student from that of black outsourced workers at my university. This chapter is a detailed account of #FeesMustFall movement which captures the period 14 October 2015 to February 2016, drawing from my own experience as a participant in the movement. It does not attempt to narrate all events, but rather, gives an account of some of the major events, including events that capture parallels between the struggles of students and workers.

A night with our management

When #FeesMustFall began in 2015, our Vice Chancellor (VC) Adam Habib was attending a conference on Higher Education in Durban. When students and workers heard that the VC was coming to address protesters we were all excited and looking forward to engage him. This section maps the events of the next 24 hours of that night. These events would define the trajectory of #FeesMustFall movement and how management responded to its demands in 2015 and early 2016. I argue that the events of the day marked the shift of power dynamics both at Wits University and nationally, from the university management to students and workers and from the state to the masses.

As the number of protesters grew, reports from the university management consistently stated that it was a group of about 200 protesters who are making the university ungovernable. This claim was designed to trivialise the issue. A lot of students and workers were angered upon realising that the

¹ Not her real name.

² Get out, it's tough outside and all gates have been locked.

³ Loan sharks.

university was playing a game of numbers. The assumption was that when numbers are many, they reflect popular grassroots support and that the cause is a genuine broad social issue that needs urgent redress. When numbers are few, it translates to selfish individuals who just want to cause havoc and, therefore, do not deserve management's attention.

We gathered adjacent to the Bidvest soccer stadium, blockading the Empire road entrance all looking forward to the VC's address. As the VC was about to address students and workers, we asked the bouncers⁴ who were escorting him to leave, as we felt that we were not posing any threats to the VC therefore should not be addressed by him while surrounded by bouncers. As expected, there was heavy media presence. The media was prepared to have an impromptu press conference with the VC as the event unfolded. Our VC is a media pop star, as evidenced by his public engagement with national questions, and it was not a surprise that he arguably became the most visible VC during the #FeesMustFall movement. On that day, students and workers made it clear that the VC had not returned from Durban to catch the media limelight, but to address a crisis. Some of the students were so angered that they barred him from speaking to the media.

The number of students and workers at the event was estimated at around 5000. When the VC arrived at the gathering some of the students began chanting: "we are 200 now Habib, count us!" This was, in a way, designed to disprove what management was claiming in the media concerning numbers of protesting students and workers.

Wits became the epicentre of the national university crisis.

The contestation at Wits propelled this crisis into the spotlight nationally, even though some of the historically Black universities have

been burning for years and nobody seemed to notice. The crisis had to come to Wits, which is a former white university, for the nation to pay attention (see *Boikhutso Maubane* in this volume). It became apparent from that moment that there were more students and workers who were concerned about the exorbitant fees than what our VC assumed from the media reports while he was in Durban. This became a critical moment that demanded the University Council to convene urgently to consider their decision to raise fees by 10.5 percent

When the VC was finally given a chance to speak he made it clear that the decision to increase the fees was not his and therefore he did not have the power to reverse it. The statement rendered him less relevant to the crisis and was subsequently barred from speaking further. Student and worker speakers took turns on the platform to highlight the plight of the working class and the poor, the implications of increasing fees and outsourcing. The stories that were narrated appealed to the public and highlighted the severity of the struggles faced by both students and outsourced workers.

The VC was ordered to call the University Council - the executive body with the mandate to reconsider the fees increase decision. The VC had initially claimed that it was impossible to call such urgent Council meeting. He argued that this could only be convened in a week's time or so. The VC was then ordered to march with students to occupy Senate House - an act that became an important defining moment in the renaming of that building to Solomon Mahlangu House as part of a broader decolonisation project at Wits. The VC's agreement to come to Solomon Mahlangu House became an important moment that shifted power dynamics. This march and occupation of Solomon House came to define the trajectory of the struggle, at least for the duration of 2015.

⁴ These are private security personnelspecially hired by the university management to force students to comply with their rules and to exert force where necessary.

In this section I argue that the occupation of Solomon Mahlangu House, which later became a revolutionary space, was a defining moment for the movement in many ways. Firstly, it marked what others have called “the capture of the management” and what I call “spending a night with our management” because this was the first time for many students to come face-to-face with those governing our university. This was a trend that was to follow at other universities. The VCs found themselves ‘involuntarily’ sitting with students for long hours, discussing crises specific to each university. I consciously use the word ‘involuntarily’ with inverted commas because of the controversy surrounding presence of the Adam Habib at Solomon Mahlangu House on that particular day. Although he claimed that he was ‘not captured’ or held against his will, he backtracked in 2016 when he used this as an excuse for not addressing students directly, but rather through public and social media - making his argument inconsistent.

Secondly, this was a defining moment that saw power shifting from the university management to students and workers at most of the public universities. This was also a culmination of national dynamics where power shifted from the government to the masses - at least for a moment where the president succumbed to the demand of zero percent fees increase for 2016. It is therefore no surprise that when #FMF resurfaced in 2016, both universities and government were geared to clamp down on the movement. At Wits, that moment of ‘capture’⁵ saw the VC being forced to make a definitive call to convene an urgent meeting. After realising that he had been ‘captured’ he called the Chairperson of the Council. Warning him that he was on loud speaker, he asked the

Chair to urgently contact other Council members and convene an emergency meeting to reconsider the university crisis and review the decision of increasing fees. Anyone who was listening to that conversation would tell that the call to the Chair of the Council was made because of Habib’s fears for his safety, more than anything else. It was clear that the VC had now been ‘captured’ by students, as the Chairperson of the council kept on asking about his safety. The VC pleaded to the Chair of the Council that declining to have a meeting was not an option.

Members of the Council congregated at Wits on this day, demystifying conceptions of power. What the VC claimed was impossible turned into a reality in a matter of hours. At this point at Solomon Mahlangu House the tables were turned and decision making was not only dependent on the Council members imposing their views. The way forward had to be negotiations between the management and the students and workers, hence shifting power dynamics. The other members of the Council realised that they were now ‘captured’ when they were escorted to the bathroom. Before we knew it, we had spent the entire night with our management at the concourse of Solomon Mahlangu House. We all waited at Solomon Mahlangu House while the council locked up discussing the crisis at hand with a student- workers delegation. Although the problem of the fees could not be resolved on that night, this gave students and workers courage to continue with protests, and the process allowed the struggle to be shifted to the national level.

5 The term capture/captured is used here to refer to the physical capture of the Vice Chancellor and later other members of the Council by students and workers. It is consciously used with inverted commas because of the debate on whether the VCs were captured or voluntarily sat down with students. This is in particular reference to Adam Habib’s numerous statements in 2015 arguing that he volunteered to sit with students at Solomon Mahlangu house and later referring to the same case in 2016 arguing that he will not be humiliated by students again.

The march to Luthuli House: a turning moment

Once the University Council had made it clear that the decision of raising fees was not only a university decision but that the government had a greater role to play, it became apparent that the struggle had to be directed to the right places. The first point of power in Johannesburg became Luthuli House, the African National Congress (ANC) headquarters. This section maps the events leading to the march on Luthuli House, and the aftermath of that march. I argue that this was the turning moment of the movement. It is where political cracks within the student movement began to manifest.

It is important to note that since the beginning of #FMFM on 14 October 2015, as students we maintained that we were a united front defined by our common goal of fighting university exclusion due to poor class status and a lack of capacity to pay fees.

We had agreed that we would not be putting on our political regalia and would present ourselves as students and workers in a united movement, and not members of any political parties. Until this point, removing our political hats allowed us to move together, discuss, debate, and make decisions that we were all happy about. It was at Luthuli House where our political hats began to overpower collective decisions; heralding the turning moment of the movement.

Every day of the protest ended with plans of action for the following day. However, when we went home the night before the march to Luthuli House, we had not planned that action. This was decided at the meeting the following morning of the march. However, there was no consensus as some thought it was about time we proceeded to Luthuli House, while others thought we were misdirecting our

pressure. Up until this point, as a movement we had claimed that decisions would be made and adopted democratically and this decision was one of those democratic processes. The first attempt to proceed to Luthuli House was hindered by police who had barricaded the Nelson Mandela Bridge, one of the famous architectural landmarks of Johannesburg. We then decided to march to the University of Johannesburg (UJ) to fetch other comrades, while our leaders were negotiating the route to Luthuli House. On returning from UJ, we were informed that the route had been cleared and that police will be escorting us.

While at Luthuli house, I recall one of the Wits staff members asking how we ended up under the ANC tent. It is important to note that after arriving at Luthuli House an ANC mobile stage vehicle was brought to us to be used as a platform for the speakers and a tent was also provided. I was equally frustrated because I was still battling with the same question of how we got to be served with a stage and a tent while we are protesting to hold the ANC government responsible for the higher education crisis. Our being under the ANC tent was to define the political moment of the time and all proceedings that were to take place at Luthuli House, and possibly the future of the movement. Some students who were angered by the ANC tent started singing at the back of the crowd while our leaders proceeded with the programme of the day. I remember one of the student representatives chanting "Amandla!" more than five times. I hoped the noise would calm down, but the singing continued. Before submitting a memorandum, I recall Vuyani Pambo, one of the #FMFM voices and a member of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) asking Gwede Mantashe, the ANC Secretary General who was to receive the memorandum, to sit down. This was not the first time of calling for such an action; we had done it with our VC and members of the Council. This was meant to symbolise a disruption of power. To the surprise of many, Pambo was interrupted by voices of students shouting that they would

not allow Mantashe to sit down as they saw it as inappropriate for an elder and a senior executive member of the ANC. While we were still waiting, Mcebo Dlamini, also a #FMFM voice, and a member of the ANC, grabbed the microphone from Pambo and proceeded with the agenda. The rest of the proceedings became a ceremonial act of handing over the memorandum.

We left Luthuli House divided. Some students, predominantly black feminists, some members of the EFF and those not politically aligned, remained behind for a real occupation of Luthuli House. Some thought that the whole idea of going to Luthuli House was to occupy it, so that we could put pressure on the ANC. However, as noted earlier, there was no consensus from the outset. The objectives of different members of the student group seemed to have differed. Once the struggle had been taken to the ANC, which is a point of political power, we had to move to the centre of power - the national government. We then resolved to take the march to the Union Buildings⁶.

The Union Buildings

On 23 October 2015, the world watched thousands of students from different universities flocking to the Union Buildings at the City of Tshwane. It had been decided by the movement that the President of the country Jacob Zuma had to intervene, as the fees issue had become a national crisis. Interestingly, before we left for the Union Buildings, the previous night the president had already hinted on the news that fees would not be going up in 2016. This section maps the events at the Union Buildings. I argue that the President's address was an attempt to manage the broader national crisis beyond #FMFM including the demise of the ANC popularity that was later exposed by the 2016 local government elections.

By the time we arrived at the Union Buildings,

the City of Tshwane was already chaotic. Heavily armed police were all over the city as students from different universities made their scores. We were dropped off at Burgers' Park - a walking distance from the Union Buildings. You could see the smoke from fires and smell teargas from a distance. Bangs from stun grenades had been going on for a while. The media was already all over us, broadcasting live from the streets of Tshwane as events were unfolding. We decided to gather outside the entrance of the Union Buildings while waiting for our representatives who had taken the last bus from Wits University.

On arrival, our leaders decided that there was too much chaos at the grounds of the Union Buildings. According to one of the student leaders, it would have been irresponsible of them to bring students all the way from Johannesburg to be shot at and injured by police. They decided that we would march on the streets until the situation calmed down. Clearly the situation was never going to calm down, as our actions were read and understood as one of those famous acts of Wits privilege. We finally decided to enter the Union Buildings after an hour-and-a-half of marching. We marched into the Union Buildings in a highly disciplined manner, as expected of the myth about the Wits student identity.

As we approached the fence that divided students from whatever was happening inside, some students behind us started throwing stones at the police. Later, I learned from some of the students that this was a planned action, as students from other universities were sceptical and resented our actions. They felt that we were there to parade our privilege whilst they were there to fight a violent system. The police started shooting at us; some stun grenades were discharged in our midst and we all fled to take cover. The police cleared the ground with *nyalas*⁷ and by shooting more teargas.

⁶ The official residence and principal workplace of the President of South Africa.

⁷ Special police riot vans.

Media reports blamed students from the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) as the proponents of violence at the Union Buildings. However, although this became a popular belief, it is unfair to hold TUT students responsible for all the violence. This ignores the fact of the matter and continues to perpetuate the stereotypes about students from previously disadvantaged and historically Black universities, while perpetuating the myth about Wits University. In these stereotypes and the myth about Wits students' behaviour, there is an assumption that students from previously disadvantaged and historically black universities do not hail from the same townships where the majority of Wits students come from. It is therefore not an accident that once Wits students began to stone buildings during 2016 #FeesMustFall movement, there was an uproar about them being hooligans who have lost public sympathy. It is a fact that many students from Wits University did participate on the pulling down of the fence and confrontation with police at the Union Buildings. Some comrades very close to me confessed their contribution to the chaos and some even appeared on television stations wearing the Wits rugby vests. The myth of Wits students was exposed during the 2016 #FeesMustFall when the Great Hall was stoned for the first time during the protests, with other analysts arguing that the black child has finally arrived at Wits. The common narrative assumes that Wits students do not engage in violent protests since they are perceived as elite. Stoning of buildings or burning is usually associated with students from previously Black Universities. The assumption is that they are from the poor townships and are used to a certain kind of repertoire of protest i.e. 'violence'.

The march to the Union Buildings became a very important political moment in South

African history. The President had already announced in the media that fees would not be going up in 2016. Nonetheless, the President came to the Union Building to perform a ceremonial ritual, that I argue, was to retain trust and instil confidence in young South African voters. Significantly, this moment was to be followed by a historical defeat of the ANC in the 2016 local government elections when, for the first time, the ANC lost four metro municipalities to opposition parties. Most South Africans had already expressed their discontent with the ANC-led government and the President in particular. There were lots of issues surrounding his term, including the Marikana massacre⁸, the famous Nkandla saga⁹ and the spy tapes scandal¹⁰. Since #FMFM had escalated to a national crisis, the President had to do something about the situation in response to the changing political landscape. The announcement of the zero percent on 2016 fees increment became a buffer zone between the President and disgruntled populace. The continuation of protests, mostly as a struggle against outsourcing in 2015 through the first few months of 2016, was an indication that the president had just swept the issues under the carpet, judging by the re-emergence of #FMF in September 2016. The announcement of the zero percent did not address issues of inequality, corporatisation of the academy, commoditisation of education and exploitation of workers through outsourcing.

Invading the SASCO meeting - the final fall down

The zero percent fees increment announced by the President on the 23rd of October 2015 at the Union Buildings was met with mixed emotions. Some students welcomed and celebrated the announcement, while others felt that it was not going to solve the structural

⁸ <http://www.sahrc.org.za/home/21/files/marikana-report-1.pdf>

⁹ <http://citizen.co.za/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2014/03/Nkandla-Statement-by-Public-Protector-19-March-2014.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://mg.co.za/article/2016-05-23-spy-tapes-timeline-zuma-avoids-his-day-in-court-for-15-years-and-counting>

forms of exclusion from any fee-paying university. Some of us felt that the march did not address the struggle for insourcing that ran parallel to the struggle for free education. When #FeesMustFall resurfaced in September 2016, memories of the invasion of the South African Student Congress (SASCO) meeting were still fresh and had a lot of impact on the first days of the protests across the public universities and Wits in particular.

Since the beginning of #FeesMustFall, outsourced workers stood with us. We used their experience in public platforms to attract public sympathy by demonstrating the effects of exorbitant fees on an average working class household.

It therefore did not make sense for some of us to abandon workers after we had attained our zero percent increase for the 2016 academic year. Furthermore, the year was also coming to end, final-year students needed to finish and graduate, while others needed to progress to the next level of their studies. International students were also worried about their visas and funding opportunities (see *Crispen Chinguno* in this volume). We became divided as students on how to take the struggle forward post Union Buildings.

The weekend after the Union Buildings march was used to reflect and debate the way forward. The Sunday meeting of that weekend was well attended, even by some of the faces that I had never seen at the picket line. I later learnt from other students who were present that students from different faculties had been mobilised by the SRC to come and have 'their voices heard'. They were carrying placards written: *We want to write, #ExamsMustRise*, etc. Although the group that wanted to write was larger than those who wanted to continue with struggle, the meeting concluded that we

were continuing with the protest until we realised insourcing, while also calling for free education.

In taking the struggle forward, we designed task teams that included political education and ideology, national coordination, media, logistics, and others. On that Sunday evening, while we were discussing the ideology of the movement including issues of race and alliances, feminism and strategy and tactics, we learnt that there was an unscrupulous meeting going on at the Anthropology Museum at Wits. This was despite an agreement by the movement that there will be transparency in negotiations and that all planned meetings should be reported to the movement and that the mandate should come from the broader movement. We were informed that members of the national executive of South African Students Congress (SASCO) who were not students at Wits University were also present at the meeting.

We rushed to the Anthropology Museum, where the meeting was in progress. On arrival, we found members of the Students Representative Council (SRC) and SASCO at the meeting. We asked them to explain the purpose of the meeting and the reason why the broader #FeesMustFall movement has not been informed. They tried to explain but clearly levels of frustration were very high, therefore, there was little tolerance for what they were trying to explain.

The invasion of the SASCO meeting was to define the future of #FeesMustFall at Wits at many levels. Firstly, meeting minutes were confiscated from the diary of one of the members. Among other notes there was a note written "Karabo (40 K)"¹¹. It was later alleged by some that this money was offered to buy out the SRC from the protest.¹² It was further stated on the notes that moving on, SASCO members should chair all mass meetings at Wits. Although there was no further

¹¹ <http://www.thedailyvox.co.za/did-the-pya-betray-wits-students/>

¹² http://www.enca.com/south-africa/divisions-appear-among-wits-src-leaders?utm_campaign=Echobox

information on these items, for others the stated points were enough to fuel divisions within the movement and to create an environment of mistrust between the students and workers who remained at the protest and members of the SRC and SASCO.

The invasion of the SASCO meeting was a final blow to the movement, especially when it was resuscitated in September 2016. The presence of the members of the SRC at the SASCO meeting was interpreted as an act of selling-out the 2015 movement. This was confirmed by the heckling of members of the SRC by students and workers when they attended workers' meetings in 2015 and early 2016. Moreover, the SRC released a statement distancing itself from any activities that continued in the name of #FMFM the Monday following the invasion. They encouraged students to go back to class and clarified that they were neither against free education nor the struggle for insourcing.¹³ This created divisions among those who felt that it was a critical moment for advancing the struggle for free education, and those who thought that the goal of the struggle had been attained.

While everyone went back to class, some of us remained at the picket line fighting for insourcing. As already noted, #FeesMustFall is a game of numbers, and only a few students remained with workers. There was increased brutality from private security, who forcefully evicted us from our revolutionary space Solomon Mahlangu House. For the first time, police fired teargas and rubber bullets on campus. Students were arrested and some were suspended. The big glorious movement was an almost-dead and pale shadow of what it was. We lost public sympathy because people did not understand why we continued fighting after the zero percent increase was announced, plus a negative offensive from the media. The struggle became tougher moving to the beginning of 2016. However, a few students

that remained at the picket line with workers managed to put a mark on the struggle for insourcing. Wits University finally committed to insourcing in principle. As I write this paper, the first group of workers were insourced on the 1st of January 2017 and the 2nd group on the 1st of March 2017. There are still serious challenges related to insourcing. Some of the workers who had temporary contracts have not been insourced and some have been dismissed. However, at this point I can argue that insourcing has been one of the major gains for the #FeesMustFall movement, not only at Wits but to other universities too, like the University of Cape Town. A lot still has to be done and the struggle continues, however, as I write, the movement has currently taken a step back to reflect and re-strategise.

Conclusion

The #FeesMustFall movement that emerged in 2015 resurfaced in 2016 and this time with more police brutality and less public support. It is not yet clear on how the movement will progress in 2017 since most of the critical issues pertaining to the commoditisation of education and the decolonisation project have remained unaddressed. In this chapter I have explained the #FeesMustFall movement journey from its evolution on the 14th of October 2015 and some reflection on what happened in 2016. I have focused on some of the major events of 2015 that have left a historic mark on student protests and student activism in South African history. I have discussed the night with our management at Solomon Mahlangu House and argued that this marked a shift in power dynamics from the university management to the students and workers. I have also discussed the march to Luthuli House and argued that this was the turning point of #FeesMustFall as a politically neutral movement. Political fractures began to expose the myths about its neutrality. I have also highlighted the events at the Union Buildings.

¹³ <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2015-10-27-feesmustfall-wits-splits-the-beginning-not-the-end-of-a-chapter/#.WL4ZSrFh3ow>



I argued that the march itself exposed the privilege of Wits students. Above everything, it was a symbolic performance by the government to save the face of both the ANC as a movement, and the President in particular. Finally, I have discussed the invasion of the SASCO meeting during the 2015 #FeesMustFall, and argued that it was the final blow to the movement. The events of that day were to define the future of the movement and the political landscape moving forward. It was the events of the invasion of the SASCO meeting that created the uncertainties and mistrust of the SRC that characterised the movement in 2016.

#FeesMustFall remains an incomplete struggle with many contradictions. However, the

solidarity between students and workers is one of its most important achievements. Although the zero percent fee increase of 2015 did not solve the structural problem of exclusion, the struggle unearthed some important questions on transformation and decolonisation.

While we were waiting for insourcing, workers salaries were increased from R2 500 (what Benita Msibi earned at the beginning of #FeesMustFall) to R6 500 per month as a minimum wage for all workers. Although there are still problems with insourcing, as not all workers will be insourced by 2017, at least some progress has been made.

The University as a Site of Struggle: Contestation of Ideas, Space and Leadership

Sello Mashibini

This paper is a description of my experience of the #FeesMustFall (FMF) and #EndOutsourcing protests at the University of the Witwatersrand. My experience will be written from both the point of view of a participant and observer of the protest action. I was involved in the protest action from the first day it started on 14 October 2015. We were protesting against the proposed 10.5% fee increment and outsourcing of workers at Wits University. This protest action led to a total shutdown of the university and turned the university space into a site of struggle for contestation of ideas, space, and leadership. From the emergence of the protest, there was already a contestation of the ideological framework of the protest emerging from two dominant student political parties on the campus namely: the Progressive Youth Africa (PYA) and the Economic Freedom Fighters' (EFF) Student Command. When the protest started I was a member of the PYA, I since revoked my membership from the alliance in late October 2015.

The contestation for an ideological framework was not divorced from the contestation of space because the debates that went on throughout the first day of the protest, in small groups around campus, were about how to dominate the space. Through my observation, the organisation that will dominate the space will be the one that leads the protest. However, the EFF was disadvantaged because PYA had more numbers, but the EFF dominated the debates on the ideological framework of the protest and wanted to use this domination to crowd the space and guide the protest. The space was contested on more than one level because there was also a racial contestation between Blacks and whites even though this contestation was somewhat downplayed and

covert. Another crucial contestation was the gender struggle, which had the potential to divide us because of the patriarchal practices within the protest.

Spaces and Action

The spaces where most of the action took place were the university gates and Solomon Mahlangu House (SMH), formerly known as Senate House. The traditional practices of protesting such as singing and sloganeering were mainly happening at the gates. From my observation the gates were significant spaces as they symbolised the power of the protest because it was through occupying the gates that we were able to shut down the university. The space in SMH was turned into a vibrant and dynamic area for debates amongst academics and students, tutorial space for the academic programme, a mass meeting area for the protesters, a meeting area for political engagements and a reception area for the Wits #FeesMustFall Movement. Solomon Mahlangu House is an enclosed space with a number of entrances both from Robert Sobukwe (another building, connected to Solomon Mahlangu House) and from outside the university. SMH was one of the most significant spaces for Wits #FeesMustFall, in that it was the space for public contestation on the above mentioned areas, a place for planning and meetings, and it marks the historic negotiation process that lasted an evening between the executive of the university's council and the students on 16 October 2015. Moreover, SMH contains several offices that are important for the functioning of the university such the Vice-Chancellor's office, fees office, financial aid and scholarships office, and student enrolment centre. The protest was populated with a diverse crowd which included academics, student political party leaders, ordinary

students and outsourced workers of the university. Both the gates and SMH were instrumental in forging relations, friendships and alliances.

Contestation for Leadership and Power

The major contestation for power within the movement was between the student leaders, various student political formations and between genders. This contestation was predominantly about the power to dominate leadership positions and influence the direction and nature of the protest. On the other hand, there was contestation for power between management/ the executive of Council and the students. The executive of Council was summoned to SMH by students and were made to sit throughout the evening; this signified one of the biggest disruptions of the power management held over students. Students had forced management to suspend the academic project many times, which is an indication that the power to dictate to the students on the continuation of the academic programme was taken from management.

The first day of the protest (14 October 2015) was somewhat chaotic because there was no clear direction as to what would happen next. It was not clear who was leading the protest because different instructions were coming from different people and this caused a lot of confusion among the students. We had initially planned to open the gates at 17:00 after blockading them for the day. However, after the management sent us an email telling us to open the gates at 17:00 or they would call the police, we decided to retaliate against that instruction because we felt that management was undermining us by instructing us to implement our own plan. Thereafter, we decided to occupy the gates until 21:00. In the evening, around 19:00, three caucuses were held to chart a way forward. The first one was held by Mcebo Dlamini, Vuyani Pambo and a few male comrades from the Wits Economic Freedom Fighters and Wits Young Communist

League, where an alliance between Dlamini and Pambo was forged. The second one was held by a group of PYA members, and the last one was a combination of the two groups to advise the Student Representative Council (SRC) presidents (Shaeera Kalla and Nompandolo Mkhathswa). It was then decided that everyone should move to SMH so that a meeting could be held to chart a way forward collectively. In SMH, the EFF members questioned the credibility of the SRC to lead the protest and proposed the formation of a protest committee that would facilitate the shutdown. PYA members rejected this idea and proposed that the SRC continue to lead the protest because they started the protest. The house agreed to shut down the University on 15 October 2015 at 06:00. However, large numbers in the crowd were not happy with the leadership of the SRC.

The second day of the protest, 15 October 2015, the shutdown continued but in the early hours of the morning Dlamini and Pambo were not at the protest. They later appeared, leading a group of about 500 students. It seemed like, while the closing of gates had started, both Dlamini and Pambo were lobbying support from other students, both as the original instigators of the protest and as the rightful leaders of the protest.

From my observation and conversations with the SRC members, the SRC was very sceptical of this alliance and distanced themselves from it. Dlamini and Pambo were engaged in mass mobilisation as a strategy to assert their authority, while the SRC under the PYA executive were engaged in mobilising at the gates.

The SRC kept on reminding students who the legitimate leaders of the struggle were. Slowly, the SRC started to lose its grip on the crowd as they were moved by the duo (Dlamini and

Pambo). Some of the EFF members started to question the alliance of Dlamini and Pambo as they called it a populist contest. By the end of the day Dlamini and Pambo had ultimately gained legitimacy, and the SRC had lost its command over the masses almost completely. The duo chaired the mass meeting in the evening; the meeting discussed how the Vice-Chancellor (VC) of Wits University, Adam Habib, was going to address the crowd the following day.

On the third day of the protest, 16 October 2015, Dlamini and Pambo went to the Wits Education Campus to collect other students, while at Main Campus the students were waiting for the VC to address them. After Mkhathshwa announced that Adam Habib could not commit to 0% increase the duo arrived and students were cheering at them. They then asked Dlamini, a former SRC president, to address them instead of Mkhathshwa who was the incoming SRC President. It was a clear sign that the SRC had completely lost its command over the masses. The Friday turned into a long day as the executive of Council were held hostage by negotiations between them and students, with Dlamini and Pambo leading the negotiations. Eventually, all parties agreed to have a university assembly on 19 October 2015. On 18 October 2015, an emergency meeting was held at SMH, where Council member David Dickinson gave a briefing about the meeting held by the University Council. Some students at the emergency meeting held the view that Dlamini and Pambo were the people who instigated and lead the shutdown, something that did not sit well with the SRC and some of the students. This led to the formation by feminists of another group in the protest known as “#Mbokodo-Lead”.

On 19 October 2015 we all came prepared for the assembly but it did not happen because management changed the venue in the morning and wanted to dictate to us to have the assembly under the scorching sun on the Piazza in front of the Great Hall stairs. They

had locked all entrances leading to the SMH. There were many different groups signing while Dlamini and Pambo were moving with the larger crowd. With the arrival of the duo, everyone forced their way into Robert Sobukwe Building, after breaking the glass doors at the Great Hall stairs, and made their way to SMH, while the Council escaped and left campus. This day was somewhat eventful and some of the events will be discussed in a different section of this paper.

20 October 2015 was a very emotional and disappointing day for me, because on the previous day we had agreed that we would shut-down Wits Medical School as early as 06:00. However, in the early hours of the morning the ‘fantastic four’ (I will explain later in the paper about this quartet) pulled a no-show. After we had successfully shutdown Wits Medical School campus, the ‘fantastic four’ arrived - at different times and posed for cameras as they were giving interviews. This is after we had collectively agreed not to give interviews to the media because they gave contrasting views. Moreover, the media used these interviews to make an argument that the #FMF protest is a fallacy. For a while, students refrained from giving interviews, but after the ‘fantastic four’ gave interviews, the students flocked to the cameras to give interviews. At this point I was very angry and emotional about the ‘popstarism’ that was being displayed by leadership. To top it off, the ‘fantastic four’ wanted South African popular artists such as Simphiwe Dana and AKA to perform for students as if #FMF was a concert. I was even further angered and disappointed with the leaders.

Gender and Feminism

After we were disappointed by university management and university Council on 19 October, when they ran away instead of having the planned university assembly, we made our way into SMH through Robert Sobukwe Building. It was in this space where gender wars were waged and caused divisions within the movement. A large group of women

students came wearing 'doeks'/head-wraps as a protest and strategy of identification. They also wanted to claim the space and voice within the movement. This move was met with hostility and confusion.

In my conversations with #FMFM comrades, they expressed concerns of patriarchy within the protest and they claimed women's voices were being suppressed; men sought to dominate the space and take credit for all the work that women were doing. They said it was time to confront the stereotypes that men are better leaders than women.

Furthermore, they argued that if these stereotypes were not being dealt with now, they would not be dealt with after the protest. After this contestation for space and recognition, the different groups had a meeting, which resulted in the formation of an alliance that came to be known as the 'fantastic four' made up of Mcebo Dlamini, Shaera Kalla, Nompndulo Mkhathshwa and Vuyani Pambo.

However, the emergence of the 'fantastic four' did not solve the gender problem as anticipated. The feminists within the protest felt that the two women leaders in the power structure were just used as faces, while the real power lay with Dlamini and Pambo. As I observed, I also realised that most of the decisions, interviews, and speeches were done by the Dlamini and Pambo, and they would later pass the microphone to the SRC presidents (Kalla and Mkhathshwa). With the co-option of the women comrades into the male-dominated space, gender antagonisms were silenced in the larger group, but discussions around gender exclusion continued in small groups. At some point on 20 October 2015, the '#Mbokodo-Lead' group locked the food in the Anthropology Museum and refused that it be served until late in the afternoon. One comrade I was 'chilling' with said that

#Mbokodo-Lead is punishing us by keeping the food away because of what transpired on Monday 19 October 2015. The contestation for space and power had now moved from party politics to gender politics.

The fantastic four leadership created new problems within the protest. As I listened to conversations during the protest, students were arguing that the fantastic four were busy building their political careers at the expense of students. With regards to Dlamini, I had a different view; I believed that it was Dlamini's revenge on the SRC for not supporting him when the Wits senior management removed him as SRC president. The reason for this lack of support was because there was a strong anti-Dlamini faction within the PYA, which was part of the outgoing and the incoming SRC. The Branch chairperson of the Wits Young communist League had confirmed that the plan was to take power from the SRC and render them useless as part of their revenge. I speak about how students felt alienated by the leadership because of the barrier that was created with sticks between the students and the leadership. Some of the students I had conversations said they felt like a herd of cattle that was being taken from one place to the next. Through this alienation, students started to develop a distrust of the leaders and were starting to have doubts and suspicions.

Race, Class and the Ideological Framework

In South Africa, race and class are embedded within each other. The majority of the upper class in South Africa is white and the majority of lower class is Black. When the protest started, the whites were not interested. This was argued to be both a class and race issue. Firstly, most white people can afford Wits fees whilst most Black people are unable. Due to this class difference between the races, white people saw the struggle as ridiculous. As one of the people who were closing the gates, I had the privilege to have conversations about participation from both white and Black

students and staff that were against protest. Most Black students who were not interested in the protest were from the upper class and could afford fees. There were a small number of Black people, who are from the upper class but were actively involved in the protest. Secondly, the protest was also racialised. Some white students asked why they should protest with Black students for the benefit of Black students. The class issue also played a strong role at the Union Buildings, where Wits students were referred to as snobs and coconuts by Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) students. This shocked many Wits students because they had been referring to some of the students at Wits as “better Blacks,” and we got the same name calling from TUT. This was a wake-up call to many of the Wits students who were oblivious to their privilege.

The protest was dubbed as the Black struggle and adopted Black Consciousness as the guiding ideology. White students started to demand space for participation and often argued that they were side-lined in the protest. As the contestation for space emerged between white and Black students, whites were told that if they want to make any meaningful contribution to the struggle, they must go lobby other whites using Biko’s narrative of Black Consciousness. To name the protest as a Black struggle was linked to class politics; the argument was that Black students were the most marginalised economically. The contestation for space in the protest was quite fluid and there was no certainty where the next contestation was going to come from.

International Students

I am mostly surrounded by international postgraduate students from the Southern African Development Community (SADC), particularly from Zimbabwe. During the protest, many of the Zimbabwean postgraduate students from the School of Social Sciences were actively involved in the protest, whereas some from other SADC countries only supported the protest. Even though there were few undergraduate students from Zimbabwe,

there was also a good number who did not support the protest. This led to some divisions between international students, not only from Zimbabwe, but from other African countries. However, I want to mention that it was truly comforting to get support from some students from outside the borders of South Africa. It was really amazing that they understood the cause of #FMFM. It should also be noted that international students had genuine concerns about #FMF. They felt that it was exclusionary to them and more importantly postgraduate students were worried about their visas’ expiration dates should the curriculum be extended. Moreover, some simply used these concerns to argue against #FMFM, rather than using them to gain access to #FMFM and fight for these issues to be included. Many contradictions existed amongst international students.

Conclusion

The FMFM served as a wake-up call and has managed to unravel hidden struggles in the university. It opened up a dialogue about decolonisation and exposed how deeply embedded patriarchy is, and that it is part of the university culture. It also exposed the racial tensions that Wits had been trying to hide or pretend did not exist. Even though the university still tries to ignore Black pain and Black marginality, the #FMFM protest was very instrumental in bringing these issues to their attention. The protest also created iconic spaces and pushed the university to change the names of these spaces. Despite these valuable lessons from #FMF, its impact on questioning the idea of a free university education remains unresolved.

A Home away from Home: Tales of ‘Solomon Mahlangu House’ During #FMF

Andile Mthombeni

I once attended a seminar hosting a panel discussion with Grace Khunou, Professor of Sociology at the University of Johannesburg who is one of my role models in academia. She is one of the few Black women in academia that I look up to and aspire to follow in her footsteps. That day the professor said something I thought was very profound, it stuck out for me and I’ve been holding onto it ever since. She remarked *“all of us long for a home in these places, meaning the academy, we want to call these places home because this is where we spend most of our time at, this is where we are 24/7.”* She might not have said it in those exact words but I can relate because even though I have never considered Wits to be “home” I have been spending most of my time here ever since I came to this institution as a first-year student. Even my own mother calls me from time to time to complain, asking why I am no longer coming “home,” because intuitively, even she as an outsider, can see that her child has found a new home. I never considered it to be the case until Khunou said that statement, and it got me thinking about the whole notion of what and where home is; what it looks or even feels like. Without a doubt, the majority of us hold different subjective views and understandings of what

and where “home” is, despite the possibilities of having shared collective experiences and environments at times (Campbell 2004). This highlighting of what a home may or may not be to different individuals is important, as it sets the confines of the experience shared in the chapter below. It aims to demonstrate that even within our collective action we still were individually experiencing this space differently.

The institutional walls have been a home for some more than others; it has been their physical address from the day they step into the university, a home away from home. We not only study and attend classes there, but we also sleep there, bath there, laugh, cry, walk and do pretty much everything within the campus walls. This is the only space we know of, from Sunday to Sunday whilst in our journeys of pursuing careers and so called “better lives.” However, we spend most of our time here for different reasons. It could be that for some of us, it’s by choice and we just want to be closer to the resources, to have access to the computers, easy access to the internet at the labs and easy access to the quiet library space for studying, which is the Main Library offering 24hr study area. Whilst on the other hand some of us want to work with



our friends on our assignments and projects, help and assist one another and the only way to do so is to come and spend time at the campus with the available space for commemorating.

A Home away from Home

For some of us, however, the library, the computer labs, the tutorial rooms serve multiple functions - they are a roof over our heads. When it hits 5pm or whatever the end of business day may be, campus ceases to be school; it becomes a home where you lay your head down. People disperse, some walk to their campus residences, some get into their cars, others catch taxis heading home, and some take the bus to go to their residences. Yet some of us malingering around campus and stay behind because this is where “home” is, where there is the roof over our heads.

Thank God for the warmth of the library and the computer labs, because sometimes that simply means one doesn't have to bring or have much blankets to be able to sleep with as much comfort as you can secure from the chairs.

As much as this may sound like story, it actually is the reality on campus; where chairs are turned into beds, computer labs and the library become shared bedrooms, floors and spaces beneath the desks become the floor we put our bodies down to get some shut eye before we have to wake up early in the morning again to avoid the early birds and their glaring eyes of wonder and disgust. After all we all know the smell of someone that has just woken up and has not taken a bath.

Some of us sign up for gym and swimming at the beginning of the year not because we want to gym or swim but because we want access to the showers, where we can refresh ourselves and start the day again like everybody else. And for this reason alone I strongly believe Wits should have “public bath houses” because not everyone actually can afford to pay or subscribe to gym membership in order to access showers and thus end up relying on bathrooms to freshen up and wipe with tissue and whatever we can find. Our bags carry our whole ‘lives’. For some of us, it's not only carrying the textbooks and laptops but also our bathroom personal care and wardrobes. The black child carries her/his life in a backpack. Whilst whites and those financially privileged may relate as they do it for fun and luxury, when they go backpacking some of us





do it for survival; just to survive Wits and to finish the degrees (Scott 1991, Kiguwa 2006).

Capturing Wits: Making it Our Own Home

#FMF movement brought temporary comfort, ease and relaxation for those that lived under the tables, those that slept at computer labs and libraries. It allowed them to let their guard down for once, seeing that Solomon Mahlangu House became the bedroom for the masses. Not only was it the bedroom at night where students slept, it was also turned into the study rooms, classrooms, kitchens, dining and board rooms where decisions and big meetings were held.

Solomon Mahlangu House became a home for a large number of Black students. We all blended and bonded for a short period of time. Our Blackness brought us together; we relived our childhood some of us, where we used to sleep on the floor, sharing a mattress or the floor itself, sharing blankets when we went to sleep over at *makhulus* house. We as Black children put our differences aside and we co-existed in the home that we had forcefully created for ourselves. Benches, chairs, desks,

stairs were turned into beds. We slept wherever we could. For once those that lived in the labs felt part of the community, like they had a shared experience, even though it was temporary. We ate together, shared plates and cups; there was the sense of community, a sense of shared experience, an intersection and morphing of Black pain (McCall 2005).

Different experience of Black Masculinity during FMF

What stood out for me the most I remember is when we would wake up in the morning and clean the space. I saw Black young men together with Black women hold mops and buckets and clean together. Often the narrative or lived reality is that Black men are against Black women, because men are patriarchal. However, sometimes it's fair to give credit where it's due. I saw young Black men put their egos aside and help break the stereotype that only women clean and prepare the food, or do the household duties, whilst they lead the picket lines. I was so proud of those few young men that stood out and helped out, not only by being the loud voice that leads the front of the masses, but by being the invisible guys behind the scenes that did what is

normally not considered to be a man's job (Shefer and Ratele 2006, Shefer, Stevens, & Clowes, 2010, Ratele 2013). We owned that space, made it our own and we cleaned it, cleaned the bathrooms and made it a home; for once we belonged. Black masculinity manifested itself in a different light from behind the scenes of the protest.

Hidden sacrifices made for the movement

Needless to say, even within this space our poverty, inequality and class differences still manifested within the movement itself, whereby some of the students slept over at Solomon Mahlangu House during the protest, not because they enjoyed or liked to, but because they simply did not have the luxury of getting into their cars in the middle of the night and go home, let alone the privilege of calling a parent who has a car to come "rock you up" and take you home. If you missed taking the taxi back to Soweto at 8pm then you were stuck at school. As women we have the double burden of what Pumla Qgola coins as 'the female fear factory', the fear of walking home alone at night because you may get raped or sexually assaulted, a fear that we experience every day, even when in the libraries, sleeping in the presence of hyper masculinity and fearing for your safety (Bradbury, Kiguwa, Mchunu, Mogopudi & Ngubeni 2012; Gqila, 2015). The streets are not safe, they never loved us as Black women (Bradbury, Kiguwa et al. 2012). These are some of the sacrifices that go and went unnoticed when it comes to these struggles, when meetings are held at night and one does not want to miss out and thus they dedicate their time, and stay late, and sacrifice missing their early ride home, thus end up sleeping at school. Even though we all made sacrifices for the struggle, other sacrifices were viewed or deemed bigger and worth celebrating publicly over others, over those that cleaned the toilets when the cleaners were told to go home (Motsemme 2004). The movement has many heroes and heroines; the only difference is

that other people's sacrifices are celebrated and prioritized over others. It's important thus to always remember and bear in mind that there is no movement without followers, a leader is not a leader without followers.

Continued Conscientisation

Before #FMF I had never really been into the struggle songs. In high school I chose to do science subjects and never did history. I was thus not very informed about the history of our country. It was ignorance at its best. I had been at Wits for 4 years but never once had I participated in a march or protest, I could not be left behind this time around.

When you are a postgraduate student and are no longer under the comfort of NSFAS (a government student loan for poor students); where fees are now your responsibility, it's like a cold slap in the face that awakens you so quickly and there is no going back to bed. You are on your own now and thus have to fight because the struggle hits home.

I did not know much of the struggle songs let alone what was supposed to be done in a mass protest. I always frown and get frustrated at some of the Indian, white or coloured students who claim that they don't participate in protests because they don't know how to protest. They claim that they do not know what the songs mean or how to sing them, as if we as Black children were born with the skill, as if we were born to be protestors. I learned to sing the songs, I immersed myself in them. I went and stood at the gate and became part of the protest. The protest became me, and each and every one of us that participated in the struggle can attest to that (Durrheim & Mtose 2006, Durrheim, Mtose & Brown. 2011). Within that I fell in love with the "*IYOH SOLOMON*" song. It became the



chorus of the protest, the national anthem of the #FMF protest. Mcebo Dlamini who emerged as one of the leaders of the protest became known as the “*IYOH SOLOMON*” guy because over and over again he would lead the movement with it. I fell in love with the song amongst many others, as did many of my fellow cadres. But I began to think and question the meaning behind these songs; what do these songs really mean and the people behind the names etc. For some I knew the message they conveyed because they were much straight forward. They spoke to our struggles just like they did to that of our parents back in the day. But other songs like “*IYOH SOLOMON*” for example, begged the question of who was Solomon? What did this guy do? So I Googled him and after the little that I found about him I understood the love for this struggle song, the fame that he gained amongst the students. The Senate House was renamed to Solomon Mahlangu House partly because of the role of the struggle song during #FMF and the symbolism behind. We sang to reclaim the space as Mahlangu House; our house of struggle.

Tables were turned: big power captured

Solomon Mahlangu House is the first place of contact for most people who come to Wits for the first time. It is where we feel intimidated when we come to submit our application forms and wonder if we will be accepted or not. It is where we spend most of our time solving our problems, at the Fees Office where we cry and stress and wrack our brains, not knowing where the money for fees will come from. It is where we wear our poverty and shame when we stand in the long queues going to the Financial Aid Office begging to be funded and endless follow ups of our NSFAS application status’s, etc. It is the place where our lives and futures are decided by those in power in their offices upstairs, where they decide how much fees will go up and who should and should not be at this university. Hence the need to occupy that space, because that is where the Black child is hanged, lynched and shamed constantly. For once we felt like we owned the space, like we had ceased control of the robotic functioning machine, through occupation of the space we had control, the limited control that we had at the time (Campbell 2004). We felt we had shut down the factory. For once that stressful area where the Financial Aid and Fees Office are located became a place for us to sleep, strategize, where we temporarily forgot about the long

queues and all our problems. We had put a freeze to our struggles and anxieties and depressions and worries.

Needless to say, as much as we thought we had taken control over the place, there were still limits. We knew our boundaries still, where the elevators are; we could not go to the upstairs offices. We could not reach, where the gods lie and have caucuses. This is where we, the powerless, were not allowed. On **19 October 2015**, the day when Habib and Council had to come down in the middle of the night to address the students, when we had felt that we did not need to go to where power is; rather, bring the house down, bring power down to us, and bring their egos down. When members of Council and Habib were made to come in the middle of the night and make decisions in the presence of the students on the ground floor, surrounded by masses; for a moment, we felt in control. Power of the prison was now in the hands of the prisoners (Hook 2004). We came face to face with those who represent and defend white supremacy; with the devil himself. I am not calling white people devils but “white supremacy” and those who defend it. On the panel of those who wore the robes of Council, I remember there was this one Black man, who I assume was brought out to make us feel that members of Council are diverse enough. The expectation was that we would sympathize and understand him better and more because he is Black as we have a shared lived experience. This was all premised on our shared racial skin colour. However, we all know how this works; Blackness does not hold power in the presence of white supremacy. One is just a “house nigger”. We were awakened to how the university is governed and who are behind this; those whom our lives belong to.

‘I can’t afford to lead the movement’

During FMF it became more apparent that even though we as Black students have a shared lived experience, we were well aware

that we are also divided when it comes to these shared experience of black pain and exclusion that we feel, our gender, sexuality and class divides us in our collectivity (Wa Thiongo 1986, McCall 2005). There is a common analysis that the struggle was led by the coconuts, and I agree partially to this half-truth because after all there is a lot of sacrifices that come with being part of the struggle and being fully dedicated to it. It is very difficult to dedicate time from morning till late at night to protesting when you know well enough that if you don’t go to your part time job you won’t pay rent and there will be no food waiting for you when you get home and the struggle is over. As a self-sustaining student myself who has to work and pay for my rent and buy food, I cannot afford to miss work to be protesting all day long. I cannot afford to get in conflict with the police and get arrested when my mother knows no lawyer who can bail me out when things get bad. I cannot tell my employer that I missed work because I was protesting. That’s how some of us got missing in the struggle because we are too busy trying to stay alive, feed and put food on the table for our families whilst our fellow cadres from middle class backgrounds can afford to spend all day challenging the police because at the end of the day or night they can get into their cars and go to their nice apartments (Khunou 2015). After all their parents help them pay.

Conclusion

As a young Black female who grew up in a backyard backroom, moving with my mother from one backroom to another, I can certainly know and understand that for me home is where my mother is. Home can be temporary, but it can also be where you feel comfortable, it can be a space where you spend a lot of your time at or it can be people around you. When I came to Wits I became a settler, an unwanted, uninvited settler. I never imagined I would one day see myself becoming an academic or staying at Wits for this long. The idea for many of us is to get a degree and go out there in the world

get a job and work. I never saw Wits as a potential work environment for a Black child like myself. It was only when I met my mentor (Mzikazi Nduna), a strong Black woman within this violent space, making and marking her territory and winning at it, that is when my mind started to envision the impossible. She made me believe in myself and that I deserve to be in this space as much as the next person. I was very much aware of the class, gender, sexuality and racial divide that exist within the campus. I dream of a day where Wits is home, but I don't know as of yet what that would look or feel like, what a home is supposed to be or do for you. I don't know if I am missing out on anything, because after all how can a person miss something that they never had, right? For now, I can happily settle with what we tried to do during FMF, when we succeeded in turning Senate House into Solomon Mahlangu House and making it our own; making Wits as relatable and close to home as it possibly can be. We are taking it one struggle at a time; eventually the future generations will be able to enter these so-called elite spaces and feel welcome and at home, and not like outsiders like most of us do.

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The Gates

Nhlanhla Moyo

On a Tuesday morning in the month of October 2015, a day that seemed as ordinary as any other, I decided to do my routine check-in at my Department's office. As usual there were a few students who always walk in to air grievances of some sort regarding their coursework, either a mix up in tutorials or they make a complaint about not receiving course material etc., a scene I had become all too familiar with. It did not to even elicit my full attention. In one corner of the room however, a much more absorbing conversation was brewing between two of the administrative staff, Andrea Johnson and Molefi Makola. *"I had problems driving into campus"* Andrea seemed to be complaining, *"I believe this started yesterday at Business School."* *"Me too, I had a torrid time coming in, the gates have been sealed off all around the campus"* Makola replied. *"I think it has to do with the fee increment, the university is planning on increasing the school fees by 10.5 percent next year"* Makola continued.

The statement by Makola silenced the room for a second. I did not quite know what this meant - A staged protest by the students - was this another one of the SRC's frivolous ploys to seek attention from the University's management? At the same time I felt, what if what Makola was saying was really true? It meant reconsidering a long standing principle not to directly involve myself in student politics and rally behind this protest.

For a long time I had felt the university's fees were unjustifiably high and eventually someone had the sense now to do something about it. I personally have never been a fan of student politics but I don't need a second invitation to fight for anything that directly affects my financial well-being. In a flash I had dashed out of the office leaving the dialogue to continue and ran to my residence to offload

some books I had just received from the library. I was left in a state of ambivalence as I made my way back to my residence. A day that had been planned for a drawn out bogging session could now turn out to be a protracted struggle on a different front. I shall reiterate, "without second invitation" I joined in the blockade. This marked my entry into the #FeesMustFall protest in October, 2015.

Background

The events I narrate here occurred at the Wits gates and are writ small of greater society. Since 2004 the country has been plagued with protests from service delivery to protests objecting corrupt political leadership. The key feature of the protests has been the mass participation by a new generation of fighters, youths who are unemployed or underemployed, as well as students. #FeesMustFall or FMF in short and its roaring and raging bonfire has lit up a new era in the South African political landscape and is trying to redress an age old problem; the problem of capitalist structures, which have now re-invented themselves in the guise of neo-liberalism, preaching free-trade and democracy while perpetuating the same old hegemonic practices, the practices of socially eliminating certain groups in society from economic participation through exclusion in education. This is an era where the youth are leading a new revolutionary wave, from Julius Malema's EFF, through #RhodesMustFall movement and, the #OpenStellenbosch movement to #WitsFeesMustFall.

The tone for mobilisation for the students' protests in October, 2015 had, however, already been set by #RhodesMustFall, one may say. It drew attention to the need for transformation within the universities, the initial focus being on the curriculum that does not serve an African University. While we questioned the

purpose and relevance of the syllabi, and the structure and demographics of academics in the university, the announcement of the fee increment could not have come at a more terrible time. The surge of energy against this was felt mainly amongst first and second year undergraduate students, a majority of whom came from the Humanities Faculty (in the case of Wits University), a faculty in which transformation, particularly in the social sciences, had been brewing and had started to take shape. This no doubt could have added a greater impetus to the resentment that a lot of students were already feeling.

At The Gates

On Wednesday morning on 21 October 2015, tension around campus had been high for over a week and you could almost see that thick, dark, dense cloud hovering above the campus. When I arrived at Yale Road gate (next to the Origins Centre) a few students were holding the “fort” while a string of cars could be seen lining up outside wanting to make an entrance, baffled by what was going on. The battle for the power had begun. As though playing referee in a wrestling match, the campus security stood aside and watched the students take over the gate as they tussled with motorists trying to either get on or off campus. More students began to trickle in and by midday a big crowd had gathered in place. Like other spaces within the University, particularly the Senate House (which had now been renamed Solomon Mahlangu House by the students) they occupied the spaces giving them a sense of power even though it was only momentarily. The name “Solomon Mahlangu” bears great significance to some of the students, as a symbol of defiance like the man Solomon from whom it is adopted. He was an *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK) cadre who was executed during the liberation struggle for his defiant militant action against the apartheid regime.

Media was abuzz, vans with satellite dishes, cameras, and microphones could be seen in various corners of the campus. No laid out

plan of action seemed to be in place at that time other than blockading the gates, singing and chanting. It was all well and good for the days to come to repeat this course of action and draw media and management’s attention. But at some point we would need to draw up a memorandum with a list of demands, although that would not be a challenge as the mandate was clear - zero percent increment for 2016 and NO! to outsourcing of service staff on campus. Of course these were just the immediate demands. The protests under the banner #WitsFeesMustFall later came to represent more than just the high fees at the institution, but incorporated the transformation bid and de-colonisation of all former white tertiary institutions like Wits University, the University of Cape Town, Rhodes University and many other institutions and a fight against the general structural violence experienced by workers, the students and youth at large.

A lot happened at the gates, hugs and fights ensued, camaraderie and great relationships were built and in some instances destroyed and torn apart. The space was ours and we owned it, even though it was only momentarily.

During the day the gates served as the assembly points and the hub of the student protests. Here singing and chanting took place when the moment reached fever pitch and, when things were calmer, light banter was passed back and forth and people told their tales and shared their experiences in some instances. One example is the story I got from one of the students Themba, a second year BSc student - I would later regard him as a comrade during the protests. Below I narrate Themba’s story.

I remember very vividly one morning, when even the glow of orange from the morning sun that shone through my window was not inspiration enough to get me up early as it usually did. As I strolled towards the gates

after battling with sleep, if ever I wondered what going on a boxing bout with Mike Tyson felt like, at that particular moment I think I had somewhat of an idea. The back and forth around campus and *toy-toying*, trying to get our voices heard, had taken its toll on my body. In an introspective moment I just asked myself why I was doing what I was doing. I would be lying if I said I had an immediate answer then, but somehow I felt carrying on was the right thing to do.

As I arrived at the picket line at midday, a large crowd had already gathered right by the boom entrance. “Muffins anyone?” a young lady seemed to say as she passed a tray filled with muffins for lunch, together with other refreshments. I reached out for two muffins, one I intended to share with a friend, Themba, whom I had met during the previous days. He seemed to cut a lonely figure. As I approached him we greeted, “*Ola*” I said, “*sho comrade*,” as he responded. He seemed just as knackered as I was. The number of protesting students had increased remarkably at that particular moment. I wondered what kept the people who were there going. A question I had posed to my new found comrade.

Themba: Well, you see Com... growing up in the villages it's every child's dream to go to university. I always imagined how university would be like, coming to Wits in particular was a dream come true, not only for me but for my family. The problem is I can't afford it anymore.

Me: *But aren't you on a bursary or loan or something?*

Themba: *Eish! Unfortunately not.* (He responded with a bit of sadness in his face). The reason why he was not on a loan or bursary has escaped me, but what I remember vividly is his experience of how his maternal grand-

mother raised the first batch of money that got him to university on his first year).

Themba: For the last two years, before I came to university, what people don't know is that my grandmother travelled around selling clothes which she had made, and sometimes she made home-made slippers and brooms. She would leave me and my little sister with my uncle who is not much older than I am, to take care of us.

He related how she walked on foot, door-to-door through the villages of KZN, and how sometimes they went for days without seeing her. That would also mean sometimes going for days without having a decent meal. She would seek refuge in other homesteads, on days when there was either stormy weather or where she thought she had heard of a lucrative market for her items in places far afield. Themba's grandmother was his surviving guardian, a woman of modest means, a member of the underclass. She did not have anything of value to trade for her grandson's education apart from her craft. Being a vendor was her only reprieve.

At times they were not sure she would return, but when she did “*we couldn't be happier*,” he said. “*From Nqutu, Wesbank, Ntunjambili, Manxili, Mhlaba, Ekombe, Cwezi, Hlazakazi, Mgome, Qwabe, Magaga, Masotsheni, Rorke's drift, Kwa-Nyoni she even went as far as, Mabengela, kwaMagwaza, Nkandla. There are so many other places she went to, some unknown, and some I just don't remember*,” Themba said.

Despite his excellent grades Themba battled with language, it was also his first time in an institution that used English almost exclusively as a medium of instruction. His story was elaborate on a lot of challenges around campus and centred particularly on his experience of being out alone in a different world from what he was used to and the culture shock. There is nothing peculiar about Themba's story. It is one of the many stories of rural kids whom government claims to have a paternalistic

obligation to, but whose path into university is never paved properly. Those that do make it, are faced with structural forces that make their survival on campus a torrid task.

Themba resembled a typical student waging a war against the system, the one who felt he/she had probable cause to do so. On the other hand, we had the other students who were either aware of how skewed the system was, but were comfortable, or were just totally oblivious. Informed by their different realities, the gates managed to demonstrate the lines drawn by students with seemingly contrasting ideologies. One such encounter happened just after our chat.

Feeling a little inspired - *“what are we doing today?”* I asked Themba. *“We need to stay here at the big gates because that’s where there’s lots of traffic coming in. If we’re in small numbers they’ll drive over us.”* No sooner had I said that when a car came to a screeching halt right next to us within the campus. *“Guys can you get out of the way I want to go home,”* said a young white lady driving a Toyota Yaris. She spoke in a rather condescending manner. Themba and I looked at each other in amazement, not knowing quite how to respond to what we regarded as her insolence and cheek. *“Well. How did you get in in the first place? Can’t you see we’re protesting?”* I replied. *“Ya! Well I know but I was supposed to have a test today. It looks like it has been cancelled.”* Unsympathetically, we forced her back to the parking lot after a short, heated discussion. With puffy red eyes and close to tears, she complied with very little resistance.

It is such incidents that fuelled anger from the less privileged students whose cause they felt was being undermined by a certain unsympathetic privileged class of academics and students who complied by continuing with the academic program, especially at a time when management had officially cancelled all academic activities. One of the many things we had to grapple with very quickly was the fact that not everyone was on our side. Although the campus seemed to be

divided along racial lines from students to academic staff, it would be inaccurate to simply reduce it to a fight between race; it is also one between the “haves” and the “have not’s.” But then again, the issue of race and class in South Africa cannot be easily divorced. Considering the country’s dark historical past with the apartheid and the colonial legacy, class was generally defined by colour and the economic differential between blacks and whites is as a result of the uneven distribution of wealth and the social exclusion of Black people. It only gets complex in the mid to late 1990s when there was a small rise in the economic upliftment of some black people. In one particular instance a certain young black student was overheard saying *“I wish these strikes could end already, otherwise they’ll mess up my holiday plans.”* Yes, we had amongst us those of the black bourgeois class who had found it a pastime to come and fight alongside the struggling students even though some did it in the genuine spirit of solidarity.

One evening, at Yale Road entrance (near Empire Road), an elderly white lady, smiling from ear to ear, drove towards the exit with a young man in the passenger’s seat of a small silver VW Polo. *“Good evening,”* she said. Too tired to respond, our long faces said it all. *“I came to fetch my son. I understand what you kids are doing and it’s about time. I hope this goes well for you. I’m a pensioner and I look after my boy (she looked at what was supposedly her son), my husband died a while back from a car accident. I struggle to make ends meet but I surely hope you kids win this one.”* Without a word to each other, we just found ourselves paving the way for her car to exit. Despite being portrayed by the media as “barbarians”, “hooligans” and “anarchists” who did not want to learn, we needed that acknowledgement and understanding from the outside world, even as we often told ourselves that we did not. There was no better person to give that affirmation than a parent, one who understood the everyday struggle regardless of colour.



Not all encounters were easily negotiated. There was always an element of egos at play more than ideologies from those that felt they had the right to come in and learn and those that were adamant the university had to shut down to draw the attention of the authorities.

At the same gate one evening a car pulled up with about 4 young men, well-built individuals. I had a bad feeling about this one as my instincts always tend not to disappoint. A sizeable number of students had left the gate, we were no more than six in number. Manning a double carriage entrance was difficult. One may have called us overzealous but we were determined in our endeavours. On that particular day, police had been present in large numbers at the gates but from outside the premises. The booms were open, as they often were during the strikes, and we assumed the

role of guarding the boom gates. In a daring move the driver of a vehicle drove all the way up to the students barricading the gate and gave one of the students a small nudge with his bonnet. In a fit of rage, two of my comrades approached the driver's side door while one went to the other side to confront the passengers. Police were quick to intervene, strangling one of the student protesters and eventually detaining him overnight. This all happened in the presence of some journalists from mainstream media who captured the moment, giving headlines in the press the next day to the effect that "Hooligans were at it again." No one seemed to be on our side, but then again what was new, we were getting used to the bad publicity.

Analysis

This paper focuses on the gates during the student protests as a space of contestation in both the literal and symbolic sense. The gates became the trenches for battle and a lot of fights between the opposing factions happened there. The gates are ordinarily a point of access and this particular case also symbolised power, the power to determine who is allowed in and who is not. Though the fight by both private security and the police - as an extension of the system, was physical, through administrative power the university also used suspensions and expulsions as a form disciplinary power. As dubious as some of the cases might have been, it is one area of authority that the students tended to be disadvantaged in this fight.

These events were writ small of the country's socio-political condition. The students' fight in 2015, on a micro-scale, was about an exclusionary system and an institution that prevents one from entering the gates - so the fight was taken to the gates. In what I call the paradox of the Wits system "exclusion by inclusion". Exclusion is exercised, either through exorbitant fees or through a curriculum that does not speak to the new demographics of the student population, and through an education system and knowledge production

that reinforces the dominant values and practices of a capitalist society. For Themba there were also structures and symbols of a culture that was foreign to him. These tend not only to be intimidating but also lead one to question whether they really belong in that particular space. (Thoughts and feelings one should never have in an African University). On a macro-scale, South African education - especially in universities - still carries knowledge and perspectives that are Eurocentric, hence the unfortunate situation currently happening in our universities. This can be attributed to the so called "necessary compromise" the ruling party made leading to the end of apartheid rule.

Eventually, transformation in education and in society should be shaped by those vested in its betterment and not those interested in self-accumulation. There should be a commitment from government and the corporate sector to see to the ending of practices that create deprivation of knowledge and education for the economically powerless, and not to leave the burden of change to the youth alone.

Government has a moral duty and obligation to protect its people from structural violence. In many a case, governments in developing worlds absolve their powers to powerful hegemonic forces, which dictate the fate of its citizens. Until, and unless, government takes this problem seriously, access to university for all will forever remain an area of heated dispute and its gates a battleground.

Born poor but rich in mind

Neo Sambo

I was born poor but rich in mind. I was promised an education that would empower my mind so I can escape that poverty; the same poverty that is a legacy of decades of colonialism and apartheid. This poverty now limits me when that education is heavily commoditised; priced to be a privilege only for those born rich. So then fighting for that education seems to be the only option I have. This education must be free for my poor self so that I may access my God-given and solution-rich mind. I was born free but always in chains. These chains also entangle the education that is currently accessible to me as a Black child. Education that is meant to serve the interests of neo-colonial governments and corporations; in-tended only to make me a “human resource” for the 21st century white masters. My education must be relevant to me and my society, to South Africa and its problems. An education that informs me of my real history and heritage; a decolonised education.

I took this picture from the walls of a holding cell at the Hillbrow police station on 12 October 2016, just before my first appearance at the Magistrate court. They had just given me back my phone; you get your belongings before you go to court. This message resonated with me and what was happening with the #FeesMustFall movement. It seemed to summarise what I, along with thousands of poor students across the country, were going through at the time.

These are some of my diarised accounts since the movement emerged:

Thursday, 22 October 2015

The Wits Business School protest on the 13th of October is how I first got involved with the #FeesMustFall movement. We were told that the Wits Business School would take over the Parktown Village (Pkv) residence as part of a programme to expand the Business School.



The development plans showed that some of the houses would be demolished in order to make parking space. This was going to take away 144 of the cheapest rooms for post-graduate students and we as the residents were determined to fight against this move. This was simply unacceptable. We marched to the Business School prior to the 13th to hand in a memorandum in which we rejected their plans and demanded further consultation with us on this matter. They never responded. This is why we decided to shut down the Wits Business School on that Tuesday, the busiest day of the week there. We knew that this was going to hit them hard.

The Wits All Residence Council (ARC) also organised students from other residences to be part of this shut down. We blocked both gates of the Business School and we sang struggle songs. Our only demand was that we wanted to speak to the VC and we continued with the shut down until he arrived at around 17:00. We didn't give him the chance to address us. We also didn't give him a chair to sit and,

after having stood for a while, he eventually sat down on the pavement. All students were given the opportunity to address their issues directly to him and a memorandum was drawn up for him to read over and commit to by signing it. The Business School is a very important part of the university and the frustrations caused by our shut down forced the VC to commit to our demands and sign the memorandum. For me, the power dynamics were first reversed at the Business School protest. We first realised the kind of power that we had over management when we got involved in well-planned and well-coordinated protest action; we realised that sometimes our concerns would only be entertained after we caused a big enough disruption.

The way we conducted the Business School shut down set an interesting precedent that I had not witnessed before in my four years of student activism at Wits. I have since witnessed the same style of protest throughout the demonstrations and mass meetings in the last week. Sometimes radical action can be the only effective mode of communicating pressing concerns.

Monday, 02 November 2015

We have gotten our 0% fee increase for next year. This is what we initially demanded when we started the protests. Though some view this as a victory of some sort, most students are divided on this outcome. This protest raised a few concerns that have been frustrating some of us for a while. I am particularly happy with the establishment of a task team to investigate the prospect of insourcing all support services workers at Wits; this is perhaps the most important of our "achievements". As for the fee increase, I am not convinced that this solution is sustainable. It is time we implement free education in this country; it should be the next step in our so-called *National Democratic Revolution*.

Wednesday, 13 October 2016

The past year has been quite an experience

for me and, I believe, many other students from various institutions of higher learning across the country. Exactly a year ago tomorrow, on the 14th, we started our shutdown of the main campus of the University of the Witwatersrand. The weeks and months that followed have shaken up the higher education system and this crisis has remained at the centre of the conversation in the country for the past year. I was arrested on Monday afternoon in Braamfontein while taking pictures of the protests there.

I was detained together with seven other Wits students for two days and we were only released yesterday afternoon. These were the most absurd arrests I have ever witnessed.

Most of the students who were arrested were either walking, standing or taking cover from the rubber bullets that the police were spraying all over Braamfontein that day.

The police were heavily outnumbered by the students and visibly baffled. This made arresting the protesting students difficult and I suspect that this is why they started arresting any student they could find; and obviously those who were not being particularly violent were easier to arrest. Some of the SAPS officers would simply provoke students in desperate attempts to make arrests. I was one of them. They had to make some arrests as proof of a day's work I guess; and it didn't matter how these arrests were made or whether they are even lawful to begin with. The police were shooting at everyone in Braamfontein on Monday. They shot at students, bus commuters, street hawkers - even one of the Anglican priests, who was there as a mediator, was shot. This was basically an act of violence towards the public by the SAPS; something they started inside the main campus when they attacked students and forced them out into public space using stun grenades, water

cannons and rubber bullets. Ironically, we were charged with public violence when we got to the Hillbrow police station that evening.

I was standing next to two white journalists when I was arrested. I was taking pictures and videos of the police hippo as they shot at civilians. I also took pictures of the burning bus. One of the police officers ran up to us and started shouting at me; only me. He swore at me a few times and ordered me to go home. He has no authority to give me that order, so I told him that the street was a public area and that I did not need his approval to be there, especially since I was not committing any crime there. He lost his temper. He grabbed me by the belt and said he was going to teach me a lesson. “*Wa’telela san*” he said, meaning, “You are being disrespectful”. I asked him why he was only arresting me and none of the other journalists I was standing next to. He didn’t answer me. He just told me to keep quiet before he emptied the remaining rubber bullets from his shotgun onto my back. I then submitted myself. I still don’t understand why, exactly, but this is how I was arrested.

Monday, 20 November 2016

I went to a 70 year-old man’s birthday celebration this weekend. The theme of the event was appropriately traditional and this was visible even in the dress code and decorations of the venue. I was particularly interested in how the programme director addressed the crowd there. He would repeat phrases like “*Amen bazalwane*” to call the crowd to order, as if he was addressing a Christian congregation. People would respond with an “*Amen*”, then they would settle down each time. We were not at church, nor was he a pastor. This is simply how formality is maintained in rural gatherings in our communities. Order is perceived to come from, and is associated with, the church. I asked myself if the same order would have been achieved if the programme director had used native phrases to address to crowd; something along the lines of “*vumani bo*”.

Perhaps the most interesting moment came when the old women from the village started singing for the old man whose birthday we were there to celebrate. They initially sang a church song but later started a traditional one called *Malume ngipahlele*, to which they then danced. *Malume ngipahlele* means “Please speak to our ancestors on my behalf our dear uncle”. The crowd had been singing along to the church song before but most people stopped singing along or clapping when this song was started. It was almost like people saw the song as being beneath them, as if to say “we don’t subscribe to such heathen beliefs”.

I noticed a similar thing during the inter-praise religious ceremony that we held during this year’s protests at Solomon Mahlangu House. When the *sangomas* started performing their rituals, most people left the concourse to “wait it out” outside the venue. Black people, most of us were. They only returned after they had concluded *ukupahla* and the burning of “*impepho*”. I noticed that no one left when the Christian priests and pastors, the Muslim imams and the Jewish rabbis conducted their prayers. Somehow people were able to tolerate these foreign religions but not the African one. I asked one of the people who left about this. “People have the right to not associate themselves with the spirit of the *sangomas*,” he said. I was puzzled by this reality; that young Black students and academics are convinced that there is really something wrong and evil with African modes of worship. That *sangomas* have a lower religious status than priests, pastors and rabbis; that they are people not to be tolerated. This is an attitude that many Black people have towards African traditional beliefs and customs. As a people, we are now fully convinced of the inferiority of our creations. We are more comfortable with embracing foreign religions, those that were brought to us as part of the colonial package, over our own original ways of communicating with the Almighty.



Wednesday, 30 November 2016

Today was our third court appearance at the Hillbrow Magistrates Court. The past two months have been almost overwhelming for us. And after all the back and forth, we are still in conflict with the state; they refuse to drop the charges even when it's clear that they have no evidence against us. The fire behind the #FeesMustFall movement has visibly diminished but the struggle continues until free, quality and decolonised education is realised in this country. In my opinion this is the only thing that will bring an end to the current instability within the higher education system.

This photo we took from inside the holding cell. Immediately after this, we were taken to the West Gate Courthouse in downtown Johannesburg, where we were locked up in a holding cell for two hours, along with prisoners from the famous Sun City prison near Diepkloof, Soweto. Here we were harassed, assaulted and robbed of our belongings by the other detainees. Shoes, belts, headphones, wallets, socks, bags etc. were taken. It was part

of the intimidation campaign that the SAPS was waging against students.

My experience with #FeesMustFall is by no means concluded but I have come to learn and appreciate quite a few things from the movement. The debates that I have had with different people about issues of free education and decolonisation have also helped me grow intellectually. I have also had the chance to attend a few talks on these issues. The *Thuto ke Lesedi* document that was produced by Wits students and academics proposes very interesting ways of implementing free education; I believe achieving this objective will actually be the easy part.

What will be more challenging to achieve is the decolonisation part of our education and society in general. Central to this challenge is the lack of consensus or common understanding of what we actually mean by decolonisation. White liberals have already started to define it for us. They have already published books on #FeesMustFall and the call for decolonisation.

The goal must not be to totally and blindly eliminate white presence in our spaces, however. Interacting and engaging each other is also crucial. As a concluding example I will cite an incident at one of the decolonisation symposiums that was held at the Women's Prison in Constitution Hill. One of the panelists, who was the only white person at the venue, was talking about the *Thuto ke Lesedi* document. He was apparently standing in for a Black academic with whom he worked on parts of this very important document (in my view). The problem was that he spoke last, after everyone had spoken against the ills of colonisation and white liberal tactics within the movement. By then there was a feeling of resentment against white people in the room. No one was interested in what he had to say; not even one question after he spoke. I felt like there we lost out on an opportunity of actually discussing the type of funding system for which we are taking to the streets and sacrificing ourselves, thoroughly, so we all understand what we are fighting for. But we didn't, just because the guy was white? Come On!

To me decolonisation simply means introducing African knowledge into the curriculum and focusing more on African experiences in our studies. It means clarifying the fact that science and knowledge are not originally European but from human experience. Africans had science before colonisation and there is proof all over this continent.

Decolonisation also means getting rid of the notion that Africans were improved by European culture, religion and systems of governance. The goal of decolonisation is for the Black child to fully realise that she is well capable of creating and developing herself and the societies in which she finds herself.

"Up, you mighty race, accomplish what you will" - Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Jr (1887-1940).

Organising a legal task team in times of protest

Ntokozo Moloi

Generally, the media has the tendency to compare the #FeesMustFall movement to the 1976 uprising, using the similarity of the youth fighting for access to education. However, if we are to agree that these movements are similar, we have to interrogate the ideology and content of the demands that were made by students from the '76 cohort and the 2015/16 FMF movement. Without going into too much detail on the ideology, it can be said that both struggles were Black-centred and both speak of liberation, including economic liberation through education, borrowing strongly from the Black Consciousness and the Pan Africanist schools of thought. The language policy of 1976 posed a great threat to access to education for Black citizens, just as exorbitant fees continue to exclude poor students, who are Black because of our historical context. However, the difference between the two struggles is that the youth of '76 were convinced that economic freedom would be possible through education, while the #FMF movement shared this conviction it strongly rejected the idea that a colonial education system could liberate anyone in any way. The 76' cohort did not explore the decoloniality question, and therefore did not reject English as a language of instruction; instead Afrikaans was rejected and English was endorsed, as if it was not another language of their oppressors. FMF questioned the kind of education we are receiving and its decomoditisation.

Another similarity that strikes me about these two struggles for education, are the different forms of repression used by the state in order

to deter students from protesting. The images of FMF have haunted the youth of '76 because there are so many similarities between the images of FMF they see on different media platforms, and those of '76. However, the violence was only differentiated by the absence of live bullets during FMF. The excessive force of state ordered violence, accompanied by misrepresentation and selective reporting by the state-paid media and lack of planning on the part of the students, perhaps killed the #FeesMustFall movement. How do we continue with the struggle when we have hundreds¹ of students getting arrested daily, nationally? How do we continue with the struggle when police raid our rooms while we are asleep and assault and rape us? Moreover, they do not allow us to open cases against them. How do we continue with the struggle when the numbers of police are more than those protesting and the amount of force used is disproportionate to the conduct at hand? Who protects you when the university management takes on the face of the state and says everything is under control while the students' rights are being infringed? How can a legal task team respond in this situation?

Part 1: FeesMustFall 2015

From the very first day of FMF at Wits University, management started sending emails and text messages to students. These messages were grossly concerning because they threatened students, who may have chosen to participate in protest action, with heavy disciplinary action. They were sent almost every hour just to ensure that no student forgot that they could be expelled. I

¹ 831 arrests March 2016 Fees Must Fall protest, Aron Hyman Times Live <http://www.timeslive.co.za/local/2016/10/28/831-arrests-mar-2016-Fees-Must-Fall-protests1> accessed 2017/03/04.
567 Fees Must Fall protesters arrested since February, Paul Herman, News24 <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/567-fees-must-fall-protesters-arrested-since-february-20161017> accessed 2017/03/04.

remember that most of the students I interacted with at that time were too scared to protest, even though they wanted to, so they chose to stay away from school in order to avoid getting into trouble. The next morning, only a few students and I made the decision to put our bodies on the line and continue with the shut down in order to ensure that no academic activity continued until we heard a favourable outcome about the proposed fee increase; we made this decision knowing very well that we were exposing ourselves to vulnerability as only few of us would be shutting down. However, our constitutional right to gather and protest had to be protected.² No more than twenty students were standing at the gates preventing people from entering. The police and private security arrived to maintain order.

The police parked their vans just outside the gate, waiting to intervene at the sight of any “illegal activity” and the private security guards stood at the gates with us. We were beaten up, strangled, knocked over by cars, and dangerous weapons, like knives and guns, were wielded against us right in front of the police, and in most cases, they never bothered to intervene.

We shut down the entire university and no student, regardless of their race, was allowed to go to class. It seemed as though most white students were not bothered so much by being prevented from going to class, but what angered them the most was the fact that Black students were the ones shutting down the university. The brutal racist attacks that we faced during this time soon let us know that we were, in fact, on opposite sides and that

what we believed to be the rainbow nation was a lie. White people are not our friends; they will, and they have, thrown us under the bus as soon as we become problematic to them.

By the third day, Wits had turned registered students, who had the right to protest, into trespassers. Management released communication referring students to the old apartheid Trespassing Act,³ and stated that all protesting students were trespassers, thereby effectively excluding us from the Wits community. But none of the students took this lying down; we had by this time been through too much to be intimidated.

When the crowd grew larger, the threats and violence reduced significantly; this to me created a precedent that freedom of assembly only exists when the majority of the interested party is protesting. The next time we saw any violence was at the Union Buildings, where we were tear-gassed, shot with rubber bullets and water cannons, and chased up and down the streets of Pretoria by the police. However, all that was reported was how students of Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) behaved like hooligans. No one bothered to ask why the students were so frustrated. The media focused their attention on the “peaceful” protest at Wits. No one was reporting on police brutality at other universities like the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), TUT and even the University Of Johannesburg (UJ), for example.

Just when we thought we had been through it all, the real struggle began after the protest at the Union Buildings for Wits students. The precedent I referred to above, of freedom of assembly being legitimized by the number of protestors, was proved to be true after the Union Buildings Protest, when only a few students were left. On the first day of protest, post the zero percent increase announcement

² Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, Act No. 108 of 1996 section 17. States that, “Everyone has the right, peacefully and unarmed, to assemble, to demonstrate, to picket and to present petitions.”

³ Trespass Act 6 of 1959.

(what we call “FMF 2.0”), we were met with an interdict, which the university got by arbitrarily charging three students. Two of the students were nowhere near the scene but were accused of starting a fire at a book store on campus. One student was singled out for fighting with another student in an incident unrelated to the protest. There was absolutely no proof that protestors posed a real threat to the university or property thereof, there was no evidence of the protest being violent, except that the protest disrupted the normal activities of the university, which is a consequence inherent in all forms of protests. But because the law values property more than the human dignity enshrined in the Bill of Rights, the court was too quick to grant the interdict. This was followed by the wrongful arrest of a student who was walking past the police and was not even part of the protest. On this day police came onto campus heavily armed with live ammunition and threatened students who were not blocking entrances at this point. They continued on to pepper spray us and use stun grenades to disperse the crowd of students engaged in peaceful protest. Victimization from both the state and the University management continued in many forms; for example, many students would be arrested by the police, and we would have to spend hours looking for them at different police stations because the police who arrested them usually decided arbitrarily to lock them anywhere around Johannesburg. Students would also be beaten up or shot with rubber bullets for speaking back at police or even taking pictures or videos of the victimization. Furthermore, even after bail was granted the police would purposefully delay processing the paper work. They would keep us for hours and at times until the next day in the name of teaching us a lesson. This excuse was also used by private security when they would abduct students and even sexually and physically abuse them. Months later, students who were part of FMF are still being victimized by the university through unfair suspensions, expulsions and loss of bursary funding. Not to mention that

most of our phones were tapped, and we later discovered that there were spies amongst us and that we were being followed to monitor our movements.

The Wits FMF legal task team

The legal task team was made up of 90 percent women and was women-led. All the students in the team were Black and really invested in the struggle. The intriguing thing is that the task team started as a study group for third-year law students during the protests, and as we sat reflecting on the protest before our study sessions we found ways to be useful within the struggle. We allocated different tasks to each other and divided ourselves into the following teams:

a) Legal education

This team was very vocal at mass meetings and also spoke to students on the ground, educating them on their rights and responsibilities and what the law prescribed on protests. We also ensured that people understood university disciplinary procedures and the legal implications of interdicts on the protest. We printed posters and distributed pamphlets and we also hosted legal workshops led by legal professionals.

b) Labour law

This team dealt mostly with worker grievances, as we were also fighting for workers to be insured by the university. We collected a database of all workers and students who were protesting, represented workers in hearings and negotiated with management on the workers’ behalf to ensure that no worker was victimized. We also hosted labour specific workshops and read all contracts with the workers to ensure that they do not sign agreements they did not understand.

c) Research

Being part of the legal task team was a great learning experience on a daily basis. We were constantly calling our lecturers, and other legal professionals for advice. We worked very well with civil society and we even had a

database of all lawyers in Gauteng, prosecutors, courts, police stations and station commanders, and different organizations that offered different legal resources.

d) Jail support

The first rule that was given to this team was, “DON’T get arrested!” This team was the center of the legal task team and perhaps the most visible team. It was this team’s responsibility to speak to the police after arrests to find out where they were taking the victim. The team would then call a lawyer and go to the police station to meet with the lawyer. It was also their responsibility to ensure that the students in holding cells had food, blankets and medical supplies if needed, and while at the police station this team would organize bail (together with the logistics task team). They were meant to stay at the police station until all the students were released. At the release of the students, the jail support team would organize transport to take the students home safely.

In many ways 2015 ended on a high note; we had many victories, such as the agreement to insource workers, and an agreement that allowed students who didn’t have registration money to waiver their registration fees and those owing less than R15000 to be allowed to register (we viewed this as the first step to ending financial exclusion). We also ensured that no student was suspended for participating in the protest. With these small victories in mind, we truly believed in our hearts that we would get free education in 2016, so we used November and December 2015 to organize ourselves as students regionally and nationally.

Part 2: FeesMustFall 2016

It’s a mass meeting on a Sunday afternoon, strategizing for Monday. It is clear from what the crowd is saying that no one is willing to step down; despite traumatic altercations with the police, the students are still adamant that they are going to continue fighting. At this time, we had been protesting for over a month

with absolutely nothing on the table; negotiations with management had failed despite us asking parents and civil society to intervene by acting as mediators. We were exhausted and most of us were injured. We could not march to national key points as we did in the very beginning -- a lot of students were disgruntled and it was clear to everyone that there were divisions among the student leaders. They were all pulling in different directions. Some would encourage students to go back to class to save the academic year, while others would encourage them to continue with the protest until we got what we wanted. At this point we began not to trust each other as some of the leaders had had secret meetings with the management and the state, at hotels or even at people’s private homes. The outcome of these meetings was the suspensions and arrests of students, not to mention the daily growth of intolerance, and use of force by the SAPS.

Incidents of police brutality

It is impossible to name all the incidents of police brutality, but I will just mention a few.

I remember that it was extremely hard to get on campus, whether you were protesting or not. There was no occupation of a particular space or barricading of entrances in 2016 but the rule of thumb was that you got on campus at your own risk; the police would fire stun grenades, teargas and rubber bullets without sparing anyone. People got shot at, whether or not you knew what was going on; being on campus was the biggest crime you could commit and if you ran, they ran after you and arrested you. One morning we were singing at the piazza, when the police came to us and demanded that we stand in twos not in groups. We obeyed and did just as they asked. We were less than thirty students and the police outnumbered us by a ratio of 1:10. We understood very well that we had no bargaining power so we complied. Nevertheless, we were running away from fire twenty minutes later.

I remember another day when we were having a small meeting at Bozolli,⁴ the police came and started shooting without even asking any questions. We ran but I remember that I fell down because the air was too contaminated with teargas and I had an asthma attack.

The introduction of the 22:00 curfew could be a subject on its own, but I will briefly say that it was the most violent decision the university ever took. It gave the police latitude to shoot at any student walking on campus after 22:00.

It gave the police license to go into the residences and assault any student awake, even in their room at the time. The situation got so bad that the police thought they could hunt us down throughout the whole of Braamfontein⁵ and shoot at any person walking on the streets after the curfew. They would walk into private residences or shoot at people who were just walking or driving in Braamfontein. The police were never at any time provoked. Not a single building was burned at Wits. All the broken glass was caused either by our bodies being pushed through it or by retaliating against private security, who had a tendency to throw stones at us. I maintain that students did not initiate the violence, there was no intention of having a violent protest, we always wanted to remain peaceful and be heard. However, the police incited violence and then punished us for running away, so at some point students became so angry that they decided that they were going to fight back.

The students fight back

I was quietly seated on the floor amongst fellow comrades and others, that's the great thing about mass meetings. They are open to

all comrades and others. They are a great way of ensuring that a consultative process takes place and that democratic decisions are taken. There is, however, the negative side of it. Movements that do not have mass meetings find it impossible to organize and create synergy between ideology and plans of action. Thus, the longevity of the movement may not be realised. The strange thing is that even though we were all aware that our mass meeting was in a venue that had cameras around it, and that security would stand on the sides and observe our mass meetings, we spoke freely as though we were not under watch. One comrade addressed the crowd and declared, "we are tired of being beaten up by the police and shot at, we will not run away now, we will not be peaceful. The time of *'ayi hlale phansti imbambe umthetho'*⁶ is over. We need to fight back, with stones, with fire and even knives." The crowd applauded, and there was a growing sense of excitement and anger that filled the atmosphere. The 'others' attending the meeting remained silent as the security agents took down notes so that they could report the planned strategy to their handlers. Before there was any violence, Habib Adam was already reporting to the media about protecting the university and its property from the imminent violence that the students were planning to unleash. The police were called on campus in large numbers, and private security was deployed. Come Monday, the campus was so militarised that the right of freedom of assembly was completely taken away from the students, and there was no room to put into practice the strategies and plans discussed in the presence of 'others' the day before.

I don't think the students had a propensity for violence. All the students did to fight back was to decorate the university with graffiti and leave the taps open overnight to flood the offices. Even when we were really frustrated

⁴ A sport pavilion on the East campus of the University of Witwatersrand.

⁵ A CBD adjoining Wits main campus.

⁶ Traditionally used in gatherings in South Africa, meaning, 'let us all sit down and observe protocol'.

and hopeless we still were law abiding and we acted within certain limits. It's only when the police went into Braamfontein to terrorise residents that we saw cars being burned and a shop being looted, all of which were the result of community frustration where the police kindled such reactions.

Visit to the Public Protector's office

The situation got so bad that the Public Protector, Thuli Madonsela, decided to intervene. She invited students from all universities nationally, and University of South Africa student representatives to her offices to try and create a space for both parties to engage. The Vice Chancellors sat in the room and listened to us. The horrifying incidences of police and private security brutality at our institutions were all narrated and it seemed they had turned into military camps. The VCs admitted this to the public protector, but still held that the academic year should be saved even at the expense of human rights, as parents paid for this education that they alleged we were denying to other students who wanted to write. We asked the Public Protector to intervene and take a radical stance to support us. A couple of days later a media statement reflecting this was released and we also started to see a shift in what the media were reporting. We even gained public support and sympathy. Perhaps, interventions from key strategic institutions is the best strategy that a legal task team could seek as a source of power.

Conclusion

The #FeesMustFall movement had (and still has) legitimate concerns that needed (and still need) to be addressed. However, the management of the different universities and the state chose a very unorthodox approach to deal with FMF. This does not only show that they were out of touch with academics, students,

and workers on the ground, but also that they were actively participating in maintaining the status quo, refusing to detach the education system from colonisation and resisting the need to make tangible differences in the lives of marginalized bodies. The powers that be proved to perpetuate systematic and structural violence and further exposed Black and poor students to different forms of oppression and exclusion. It became very clear at the very beginning of FMF that the powers that be have opted for a police state as a solution to dealing with societal and developmental issues, as opposed to a democracy that allows for public opinion and participation in legislative processes. One can only conclude that there is little difference between the apartheid and the ANC government.

Throughout the apartheid period, our people had a song that later became the first part of the national anthem, "*Nkosi Sikelela iAfrika*". This song has always been a beacon of hope for black people during times of struggle. Nkosi Sikelela was the one voice that all black people spoke in during apartheid as much as it is the voice of hope, of beauty, of anger, of fear and of strength even now in the student struggle nationally, so until we have Free Quality Decolonised Education we will continue to sing the decolonised/ fallist version of "*Nkosi Sikelela iAfrika*".⁷

⁷ This is the first two parts of South Africa's national anthem. During FMF 2016 the students changed the tune of national anthem and the English and Afrikaans were completely omitted every time this song was sung. It was sung at the beginning and at the end of every meeting.

The Embodiment of Social Drama in 2015

#FEESMUSTFALL

Tebogo Radebe

I co-facilitated a Drama / Theatre workshop during the period October /November in 2015 as an Intervention workshop process. The overarching aim of the workshop process was to facilitate a collaborative workshop theatre technique to generate song, poetry, drama and physical expression. The generation of the artistic tools of expression was meant to create a site specific, verbatim theatre or theatre of testimony (The facilitator/playwright interviews people who are connected to the topic that is the play's focus and then uses their **testimony** to construct the play. ... A verbatim (word-for-word) style of **theatre** uses the real words from interviewees to construct the play). The theatre performance was meant to attempt a reciprocal process of shared authorship with participants. This particular intervention comprised of a series of workshops which my co-facilitator and I conducted with the participants, who were mostly Wits University students. The students had a relationship with the Wits Citizenship and Community Outreach (WCCO) office. These students were beneficiaries of the Wits Food Bank and some were part of various student volunteer groups which were running various community development projects. Most of the participants were part of the Global Citizens for Social Justice Project which ran a series of Wits students' community dialogues on social justice.

The objectives of the workshop series were to assist participants to distinguish between borders; being active and passive during #FeesMustFall, and fostering the creation of an enabling environment for the participants to (re)discover innate capacities for creative play. Exploration of the self and the other in the midst of challenges facing students, was another goal. Furthermore, as a drama

facilitator, I intended to facilitate dialogue on the representation around student vulnerability and those in need that are created within and outside of Wits. Moreover, as a drama theatre facilitator, I was seeking to create an experience which enabled the participants to negotiate within and outside of the space of drama facilitation. This required being sensitive to each individual's circumstances, and using approaches and culturally appropriate techniques that are relevant to the group, such as story-telling in the workshop theatre.

The Workshop Theatre session

This theatre facilitation session took place on Friday, 30 November 2015, during the Wits #FeesMustFall student protest action. The student protest action was affecting every member of the Wits community. Most of the Wits community members were first hand witnesses, whether being actively involved in the militant resistance/protest as leaders, followers or just as passersby. This meant that the majority of the Wits community members, who are mostly students, who were affected by #FeesMustFall had stories /narratives which were located in their bodies as first-hand participants. They articulated these stories verbally and non-verbally as a way of seeking and making meaning of their experiences of the moment.

Together with my co-facilitator, we felt it necessary to create a theatre/drama workshop within which Wits students, who were mainly patrons of the Wits Citizenship and Community Outreach (WCCO) office, could participate. This allowed them to have a safe and contained space through which they could process their experiences of the #FeesMustFall moment when memories were still fresh. We

felt that it was critical to use art, more specifically drama/ theatre (storytelling and improvisation, role play) which is a culturally appropriate tool to assist the participants to process the memories that signify their engagement and involvement with the #FeesMustFall movement. This method allows participants to use the aesthetic distance in drama/theatre to experience the moment differently in a facilitation space that allows for peer witnessing/validation of the participant's experiences.

We came up with this idea to use position and individual narratives within the movement. The objectives of the theatre/drama workshop were to create a space where dialogue happens, to process what participants are experiencing as first hand witnesses. It also uses the movement as a source in introducing and exploring Theatre of Testimony/Narrative Theatre (a kind of workshop theatre in which the participants use their personal stories to generate a theatre piece) especially in the context of the #FeesMustFall movement, as most participants had stories to tell about it as first hand witnesses.

Description

During the facilitation, we started with a warm up exercise, whereby I requested the participants to introduce themselves by saying their name while using a chant or war cry. This was meant to instil a sense of ownership of one's name and the power that it contains among the participants. Subsequently, my co-facilitator continued with what I had introduced by asking the participants to create a vocal sound, and a beat, and embody their war cry\chant, trying different variations of the war cry\chant. This exercise had the intention of establishing the use of the body and voice as interconnected, one needing the other, and enhancing the use of song and rhythm as a form of expression.

Then we got into a storytelling exercise in which the participants were asked to walk around the space at various rhythms and intensities. Questions were then posed to the

participants and they responded (as storytellers) through voice and gesture as they moved around the space. For example, participants were asked: "What was the moment that stood out for you? Any moments where you felt conflicted during the #FeesMustFall movement?" The aim was for the participants to retell their own narratives within the context of the #FeesMustFall in a way that is not critiqued by others. This also established the principles of Theatre of Testimony.

Theatre of Testimony/Narrative Theatre became a cultural tool of reflection of their experiences and various narratives during the protest.

Participants were asked to draw an image to represent their experience of the #FeesMustFall movement and share with their peers. They were then asked to respond through embodiment on someone else's image. Participants were then asked to shape other participants bodies into a tableau representing their drawn image. This was meant to allow the participants to establish various methods of representing an experience, while further exploring the use of body and visual means of expression and representation, which allowed participants to control and take ownership of their narratives.

As part of doing a group performance, the participants combined all that had been explored during the session. Participants were asked to create a short scene exploring their narratives within the #FeesMustFall protest. This was done with the aim of highlighting how creative tasks can be used to create performance. The task gave a reflective view of what the group was interested in exploring, and seeing how group dynamics worked as they went about creating these scenes.

The exercise explored various voices of testimony. Eventually, participants and facilitators created a song together to build a

bond between all involved, as the representation of each individual within the group.

Reflection

Looking back at the facilitation session, as a drama facilitator who applied an art (drama) technique in the facilitation, I would say the application of the arts in the moment was meant for healing through reliving real life moments in a fictional context. This was done through creative imaginative play which creates an aesthetic distance which allows participants to experience a real life event differently by projecting their feelings and emotions through drawing, role-playing and singing. For example, I remember one role-playing exercise I facilitated and participated in. We had to symbolically represent, through an embodied experience, the journey of #FeesMustFall as a social drama (a drama about people and the place where they live; a drama that deals with the way people get along with others). In this exercise, we enacted the stages of social drama namely breach, crisis, redressive action and integration stage.

The breach stage is where there's a disruption or an interruption of a social norm in the broader society. The announcement, in 2015, that universities would increase fees by 10%, was a moment of a breach, resulting in the normal academic programme being disrupted or interrupted across various universities in South Africa by student militant resistance. That moment marked the beginning of student's militant resistance, or the widely so-called "protest action", which ran into weeks and weeks of us as students doing the shutdown of all the South African universities until fees had fallen. The prolonged protest moment was called the crisis stage, which is characterised by intense difficulty or conflict that prolongs in society. This, in turn, calls for redressive action. The redressive action stage as part of social drama is the stage whereby there's an intervention that is meant to calm things down during the moment of conflict or to mitigate the intense difficulty that is plaguing the society or community at a



particular moment in time. For example, during #FeesMustFall 2015, the militant student resistance or the so called "protest action" moment, there was a time when we, as the students, were called to the Union Buildings by the President of South Africa. This occasion, in which the President called all the students from across the country, is an act of redressive action, as it calmed the so-called "protest action" down, in an attempt to seek to integrate us back into society as 'normal citizens'.

As part of social drama the redressive action is normally followed by the integration stage. This is a stage whereby the moment of intense difficulty or protest action is appeased satisfactorily, with the intention of reintegrating society into normal relations. For example, during #FeesMustFall 2015, after the president of South Africa called students from

various universities to a mass rally at the Union Buildings, in which he announced that the fees would be increased by zero percent, the majority of the students, who were mostly from historically white universities like Wits University and the University Of Pretoria, who were at the Union Buildings at the time of the announcement, felt that it was a fair deal from government. This meant that they could go back to their respective universities and continue with the completion of the academic programme. This signalled a moment of integration as far as the theory of social drama is concerned.

The embodiment of social drama through role-play was guided by the narratives or stories that the participants, including myself as a facilitator/participant, had generated in writing or during a drawing exercise. Those particular narratives in writing or drawing resulted in a culturally symbolic testimony of our lived experience during the #FeesMustFall protest. I remember myself with two other participants starting our role-play of # FeesMustFall with a song, “*Iyoh Solomon*” as we were jumping and chanting as a symbol of a breach. Then we all fell as a group, to signal a moment of crisis. Subsequently, the redressive action happened as we physically picked each other up as a group in the role-play showcase. Lastly, the integration stage of social drama was embodied in the improvised role play through us doing a shoulder huddle, then chanting that fees have fallen. This is how I experienced what narrative theatre (a kind of theatre whereby the actors or performers generate a theatre performance from their own personal stories) and Theatre of Testimony (Theatre that uses the word-for-word stories of those represented in a theatre production) is all about.

Working with the narratives or stories of the participants allowed me and the co-facilitator to draw on theatre as a necessary tool to intervene in a community of

students who might have initially divergent views and opinions. Through the facilitation process they were able to come together and listen to each other empathetically. This allowed a communal sense of belonging, as the participants were able to witness and validate each other's journey of #FeesMustFall.

For example, I remember that, although I was a facilitator/participant of the workshop, I came in with my preconceived feelings of disappointment and sadness, as most Wits students seemed very cowardly and complacent; reluctant, not wanting to take direct action during the #FeesMustFall protest. This was especially true of those students from more affluent backgrounds. However, during this particular workshop I was able to learn and heal as I was able to listen to some of the participants' stories with empathy, which allowed me to be open to alternate realities of how different people from across Wits were able to show protest through whatever means possible to them.

The experience shifted my perspective and posed various alternatives to dealing with the current reality of #FeesMustFall protest action. Again, through the application of theatre in a non-theatrical setting like the Wits Citizenship and Community Outreach Office (WCCO) with the intention of helping the audience or the participants confront or deal with a social issue or an event (#FeesMustFall), we were able to raise awareness about access to higher education, along with the politics surrounding that, through the participants telling each other stories.

The main reason we started with storytelling techniques in the process is that we had begun building a person-to-person relationship with each participant, through regular communication before our first workshop. The one

thing that resonated with all participants was “let me tell my story.” Some participants did not want to perform in the final production but would rather write the script, so that their voices could be heard through others. This allowed the voices of the so-called “Silent Voices” to be heard in the process, as Theatre of Testimony allowed some of the participants to sit outside the theatre action in the workshop and allowed others, through embodiment, to play out and reflect back the stories they had just told. Through the witnessing of the embodiment of stories, we were able to find a moment of projecting our deep-seated fears and anxieties, along with our hopes and aspirations, through reflection exercises which allowed us to echo words or sounds while performing the actions. This projection provided for myself and others’ an immediate setting for the perspectives of the transformation process.

The process of transformation enabled a process for challenging the dominant perceptions, which were mostly stereotypical, of the anti-#FeesMustFall protest. For instance, as a participant/facilitator in the workshop, I was able to showcase and voice my vulnerability as someone who is pro-#FeesMustFall militant student resistance or protest action. I was able to tell my side of the story about why I had an inclination to be physically confrontational during the students protest action. For example, a case in point was when, as Wits students, we had a physical confrontation with a white student from the University of Johannesburg who had decided to run us over with his white bakkie on a Monday afternoon on Empire Road.

Although the media had reported it as Wits University students going on an unnecessary violent rampage on the street, in the workshop role-play exercise I was able to challenge that mainstream discourse of a “violent student” as I portrayed and narrated my version of what had happened as a first hand witness of the event. Through this, other participants who had mainly stayed at home or were not directly involved in the protest action, were able to learn and experience the different versions of

events which was counter to the public’s perception and which was painted by the mainstream media.

A walk in the shoes of '76: Perceptions of #FeesMustFall

Bafana Nicolas Masilela

Tertiary education in South Africa has always disadvantaged Black people who are largely from disadvantaged backgrounds because of a variety of factors such as; under-development in their communities, poor infrastructure and the lack of access to both financial and cultural resources. This is largely a result of the apartheid policies of the South African government, which saw Black people receive a different and poor education because of the Bantu Education Act (Agar, 1990; Lidds & Fiske, 2004). Even after 22 years of democracy, the effects of this apartheid legacy still bleed into the present. However, the problem of the South African education system cannot only be attributed to the legacy of apartheid while paying lip service to the impact of corruption and abuse of government funds.

The government of the people, which was promised in 1994, is responsible for this and a plethora of other issues and ailments in the country, more especially affecting children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The government, together with historically White universities (exclusively white institutions, meant for whites during apartheid) that are not willing to transform or address the issues of exclusionary practices and injustices of the past by engaging with and helping redress factors that impede on a Black child's progress at University, should be held responsible.

In my conversations with colleagues and friends, it was clear that the issue of fee increments in #FeesMustFall protests was reflective of the gatekeeping function implemented by the historically white universities. As I thought about this, participating in the protest from my ivory tower, behind a desktop, I realised that this was a way of excluding Black children again. So when the entrances to the university were

barricaded, students lay down on the ground at the car entrances and blocked entry at every possible gate to signify their own exclusion from higher education.

It was interesting to see the symbolism in barricading the entrances and the meaning it took; more so as a young Black man from a disadvantaged background, always victim to economic exclusion practices of white universities. Barricading entrances meant that we, Black children, were gate keepers (both literally and figuratively) to these historically white universities that exclude us from the economic, social and cultural development.

Our exclusion from these institutions is a colonial vehicle for oppression of the Black community. The time is now that these exclusionary practices that aim to train a Black child to be a working class citizen should be challenged.

I could not help but think how the #FeesMustFall movement was reflective of the apartheid past and its exclusionary practices. In light of this, I reflect on what kind of narrative was constructed in relation to Black society under apartheid, and how the current narrative is reflective of, or a repetition of, the historical past of June 1976.

Anger is justified

The issues reflected by the protest are real issues, faced by real people, especially the

Black and economically disadvantaged, that government and historically white universities refuse to engage with. If and when they do, it's always from their ivory towers. If not, they do not have room for engaging with the emotions and feelings; they want the Black child to engage them in fruitless discussions aimed at maintaining the *status quo* and to control our responses to the atrocities. The protest was an anger provoking situation, not only for the Blacks (African, Coloured, and Indian) but also for the whites that looked at it as barbaric, unnecessary and that it could be done in a calm and non-disruptive manner. The white community, including Habib, Wits executive committee and the ANC, with their security on these premises, implied that we do not belong but they cannot dictate how we protest and what we do with our anger in the process. Oh, but they attempted to, and militarized the campus with Black bodies to police Black bodies. The presence of the police made me realise how, as a Black child, I do not belong at this historically white university. We never belong; we are but temporary tenants, tolerated with pretence to serve our

function, fattening their pockets and as exploitable degree-holding cheap labour. I think, for the second time in my life, I was continually made to feel Black - not just any Black but the unwelcome and dangerous kind of Black. The first time I felt uneasy about the colour of my skin was when, for the first time in my life, I visited a white middle- to upper-class suburban area and I was walking along the street with a few white people I passed on the road looking at me with suspicion and fear. As if to ask, "what is this Black guy doing in our neighbourhood?" As if to say: You do not belong here.

This was infuriating because it was Black bodies which were policing other Black bodies. These were Black bodies; I am too ashamed to call them our fathers, not their oppressors, as in '76. These Black men were there to actually police our emotions, police how we got angry and how we expressed our frustration. They had the nerve to suggest that we march and demonstrate peacefully. Our university placed disadvantaged cheap Black labour to protect their investments and make sure we did not



destroy or taint their precious institution. By policing our Black bodies and indirectly policing our anger, this only benefits historically white institutions because for them, it is business as usual and for us, the victims, we are made to feel like the perpetrators. We were policed as to how we expressed the anger.

The point is that the anger and frustration as a result of the protests, and those feelings that sparked the fire that became the protest, are justified. The anger justified the shape of the #FeesMustFall movement. These are feelings not to be handled through increased police presence or in an intellectual manner as I am doing now. These conversations and debates are not for your office and for the coffee shop that on some morning you will discuss and then you feel as if you are part of the solution.

We cannot be neutral and calm in this situation, in the face of these injustices done to us. You (the University of the Witwatersrand) cannot provoke the Black child and then want to dictate how we should respond to the provocation. You cannot expect us to be reasonable and play your game of table negotiation and for us not to raise the demons of the past in the process. That time is gone and actually should have never been given a platform on these stages. As I write this, a line from a verse of song comes into mind, painfully so, “funny when you are dead how people start listening” (Band Perry - If I die young, 2010). This line is so sad but unfortunately true. True for the youth of '76 and true for the massacred miners of Marikana. Only when blood was shed, did government or institutions start listening. So I wonder, is that what they are waiting for? Our death?

They threatened us with the presence of the armed Black fathers whose children are

fighting in the protest or whose children we were fighting for. Is our death what they want for them to start noticing our struggle? So that the armed, pissed off, unhappy policeman who earns peanuts, to come make sure, that I, a student armed with knowledge, a mouth that cannot be silenced and naturally big lungs to sing songs to, that will crack through the rib cage and pierce the heart, that I am under control? To make sure that those policemen, soon after they see the misery of their lives or their children's lives in our faces and cry out in frustration, that they would shoot and gun down the Black child that marched peacefully to say “enough is enough!” Will they start listening then, like they listened when the scared, shaking-through-his-tall-knees Mbuyisa Makhubu carried the bullet pierced, blood soaked and soil covered Hector Peterson?

The ghosts of the injustices of the past

40 years after the June 1976 youth protest, it seems not much has changed; there is still the same stink of dissatisfaction. And the smell of greedy “historically white universities,” whose very breath smells like the inferno of hell, still practicing colonial economic and social exclusionary practices to disadvantage Black children through education. These are still the same monsters in different clothing. We refuse to recognize these monsters and injustices for what they are. Unjust and oppressive to the most disadvantaged, in our instance the Black bodies that are continually seeking to better themselves through the same system that oppresses them. These universities are a violation of our human rights. The injustices that are the outcry of the #FeesMust Fall movement are nothing new. Think of the 1976 youth march, our brothers and sisters said, “enough is enough”. These issues were and are still prevalent. I say this because tackling Afrikaans as the medium of instruction was, not to treat their struggle dispassionately, symbolic or the symptom or most evident form of injustice they could tackle.

The deeper underlying, subtle and often ignored issues, were not addressed. Even up to this day, those issues of poor black education, lack of infrastructure and the lack of all forms of capital (social, economic and cultural) pertaining to education, are still problematic.

Even with the celebrations of Youth Day in honour of 1976, these issues are swept under the rug in the hopes that they will not come back to haunt us. Our government and institutions fail to reflect and engage on these institutional and structural exclusions of the Black child in the education system. Currently, they treat these injustices against students or the issues of the Black child's education with distaste and an intellectual pretence, and like dust, we sweep them under the rug. Interesting enough, like dust, we will always find a way to resurface and taint the pretentious furniture that you display for the public to fool them that everything is ok.

As I marched from Braamfontein to the University of Johannesburg campus in Auckland Park and back to Luthuli House, I felt like I knew what the youth of '76 went through. We owned the stories belonging to those of '76, yet we were rewriting those stories to be our own. Yet, this was not an easy and comfortable position to be in, especially for me. I felt the fear of how my active participation, now that I am in my final year of study, would impact my chances of employment. This made me feel, as if I was not part of the #FeesMustFall movement, a bystander at times, from my ivory tower. At times I felt like a traitor of the movement, especially when I was not participating in the protests inside the university premises.

The lost generation rose in arms to fight

The conversations I would hear in the taxi from the older generations during this time of the protest were interesting. I would hear them say: "these children do not know what they want; we fought for this freedom they

are abusing by shutting down the university." I would hear them compare us to the youth of '76; saying that we are ungrateful; that we are wasting an opportunity they would grab with both hands if they were us. I would hear talks about how the pants-below-the-ass and baggy-clothing-wearing young men, and the short-skimpy-skirts, naked-legging-wearing young women, are hopeless. I would hear the older generation marvel at the youth of '76 and flash a hint of disappointment and disgust at the current youth. They would lament and exclaim, this country has no future in this current youth. That these born free and hinge generation youth, in this Black struggle, were counted out and called narcissist and self-obsessed with how we look, more interested in where we were going this weekend, not where we were going as a young generation. We were labelled and cast off and compared to the '76 impactful youth.

Drawing from the '76 generation, I would like to say to those elders and public transport-using gossipers, disgusted by the youth: we have our own struggle; we cannot be and are not trying to be the youth of '76. We have fought a good fight; we marched and we protested and where were you? Because compared to June 1976, on 16 March there was an absence of our elders or those of the '76 generation supporting the #FeesMustFall movement. I want to say to all the comrades that marched at every protest, marched to Luthuli House and to the Union Buildings, that us students, the written-off hinge and born free generation -- we are not ahistorical and hopeless. But it is not my job to convince you or justify our belief in this cause. We, the so-called ahistorical hinge generation, are fighting this one without the support of our parents or patrons of the struggles. I hear them in these taxi 'gossip' conversations, saying that we should be grateful that we have access to higher education, which they fought long and hard for; that we should not to be boycotting education. Consequently they ask, "when is this strike ending, its unnecessary now?" I felt rage and anger at that moment, but with the

respect I was taught to muster for an elder, I took a deep breath to calm down.

Concluding thoughts

I think it is time for both generations, that of '76 and those of #FeesMustFall, to come together, reflect on the past and present, and find a way forward. Ours is a responsibility to teach and develop the conscience of the community because it is not well, while the Black child still feels the need to rise up in arms, sing out loud and echo the screams and frustrations of the past. We cannot and should not ignore the works of Steve Bantu Biko in this struggle because to dismantle and decolonize these traditionally exclusionary institutions, we as Black bodies had to revive and regenerate ourselves psychologically. We had to be consciously aware of our Blackness and be aware that these injustices and exclusions of the Black child, whether real or imagined, take nothing away from you as a Black person. They are difficult to deal with because they bring about discomfort about oneself. However I believe that we need to always revert to Biko in order to understand ourselves as a people. This is, please do not get me wrong, not the first step, but one of the steps to building and strengthening a resilience of the Black children against these monstrous injustices. So then I pose a question, why is the Black child, who will inevitably be a victim of circumstance, injustices of society and historically white universities and all forms of exclusions, not taught Biko's Black Consciousness? Why are they not taught and made to engage in and discuss the very concepts that will empower them from a pre-adolescent age in their schools? Why doesn't every black child own a copy of Biko's writing? Robert Sobukwe's writings? Why, why, why?

Free education

Bafana Nicolas Masilela

Free education you capitalist pigs
 Free education the shackles of your
 fat mine shaft deep pockets
 Making us feel like we are illegally
 mining success through education
 We have no hope for an escape like
 the miners of Lily Mine
 We are stuck in the rubble of your
 stupidity, lies and greed
 While you feed your piglets with
 luxury cars, food and bonuses

Free education from your chains of your
 unsatisfied and always hungry pockets
 That plan to feed from the scraps and
 bread crumbs that our parents earn
 The same scraps and bread you
 kick down to our parents
 In the hope that one day we too can
 put bread on our tables
 So you dine and feast on large chunks of the
 fruits of our labour.
 Unlike in the story of Adam and Eve, these
 fruits will not get you
 kicked out of the beautiful garden that is our
 country that you have corrupted
 But I hope you choke on these fruits

Free education you capitalist pigs
 Free education from depths of your
 solitary confinement of the prison that are
 your bank accounts
 It's been 20 years with no hope for freedom
 You tell us to be grateful that you
 brought us freedom
 We should be grateful that we are
 now able to attend
 Historically white university
 And you keep feeding us pipeline rotten
 dreams from our cells
 So like well-fed dogs, you expect us to have

nothing to bark at or about
 So when we bark you call us ungrateful savages
 I am sure *ngabe nginemphepho, ngabe
 ngiyaguqa ngiyaphahla*
*Ngibize ogogo, omkhulu nezinyanya
 zomzabalazo*
Ngibacenge ngibanxuse
 I know these elders and ancestors
 do not grant wishes of ill will unto others
 But I would beg and plead with them
 that they strike you down you
 Capitalist pigs
 So we, the sons and daughter of
 struggle heroes who envisioned the
 Black liberated through education
 Can also eat bacon
 That they strike your banks accounts and
 greedy fat hands
 I know our ancestors are not of that belief
 But I'm sure with y'all they would understand
 and strike you down
 Capitalist pigs
 So that we too can eat

Bafana Masilela, 2016

This has been one piece that has taken me forever to finish. All because of the anger and frustration that cannot be articulated on paper. Yes, it is a call for free education but not just a free education that trains us to aspire to be a mere number, a statistic in the capitalist system. An education that will liberate the Black child from the shackles of poverty. A free(r) education, a decolonized education, and an education independent of the capitalist system.

I remember from the meetings at Solomon Mahlangu House and marching to Luthuli House that songs were sung, pleading to the ghosts of the past in and around us. Songs echoed frustration, fears, and a hope for change. The same change we were taught comes about

at the end of marches and protests. We carried banners and placards voicing our thoughts and feelings that have been suppressed because we were taught we that must be grateful for the half-eaten fruits of the struggle. Just because we are or were privileged enough to enter the premises of a historically white university, where we would get a good education to secure a future. We should be grateful and silent about our struggles and appreciate the very opportunity of this supposedly life-changing education. We were expected to just shut up and be grateful for the opportunity. After all, we are Black bodies (I believe that is how the white capitalist society thinks of us, not as human beings), whose parents were excluded educationally in the past, so now we had no right to scream the echoes that carry our frustrations. Should we be feeling lucky because we have been provided with an alternative way to escape poverty? I do not think so. Should we be grateful to suffer in silence and feel the economic and social exclusionary pressures of the capitalist system? After all, universities are now run as businesses, not for the public benefit, and now form the very fibre of the capitalist system that we are part of, whether we are grateful or not.

I remember placards on which were written “our parents were made promises, we are just here for a refund.” Yes, we were there to collect on the promises the current ANC government made in order to get votes (the same promises they put on the Freedom Charter). The banners read “too rich for NSFAS but too poor to afford university.” The pride I felt when we marched and stamped on the street, burning *impepho sibiza abaphansi* and those of the 1976 uprising. Marching in song as if we were possessed by these spirits of old, we arrived at Luthuli house. In the midst of this, from the barricading, to the meetings at Solomon Mahlangu House, I was rattled and disturbed by questions with no answers that were swirling in my head. In hindsight, as part this publication, these were the Voices within Wits, but stuck in my head. I questioned and wondered, what lies beyond the protest? What will the unintended

consequences of the protest be? More importantly, linked to these questions, was what were we fighting for? I mean what were we fighting for beyond our fight for a zero percent fee increment and what some called the second movement, free education? Were we aware of the unintended consequences of these movements? Were we fighting the correct structures or rather tackling the real issues that were affecting and excluding black bodies beyond the movement?

In this paper I attempt to answer those questions and in the process I’ll leave you with the discomfort I felt and still carry up to this day. But first I think I should make a disclaimer: this paper is in no way an attempt to undermine the movement, or the Wits (South African Universities) #FeesMustFall protest. It is an opinion piece aimed at exposing the underbelly of the unintended or unthought-of consequences of the movement and protest. Firstly, the movement threatened the capitalist system. The same capitalist system that I believe is beneficial only to those that stand to gain from it, except for the Black child it oppresses. I mean, I have failed to fully grasp the concept of capitalism to its core but from the little I understood in my undergraduate years, it was simple. That the capitalist system simply means that the rich get richer, the poor get poorer.

Stuck in the capitalist system

I call for a ‘freer’ education because the current one we bravely fought for, in my belief, is not different from that of the Bantu Education Act, which meant Blacks received a lower and different standard of education. This Act, by the apartheid government in 1953, restricted Black education, and limited Black people to occupying menial and mediocre positions, for example, as labourers or domestic workers. Positions our grand-parents and some of our parents slave-laboured in just to put food on the table. Working just to earn a living or make a life, as some would say. A mechanism of the capitalist system is to have what they perceive to be a lower class of people to help keep the system running though labouring just to make

a living. I believe we are in the same position through this so called higher education, attaining degrees to merely work for other people. I say this because up to this day, there are opportunities for Blacks to be entrepreneurs, but there is no training or skills imparted early on for these professional graduates who are fighting for free education to do so.

I believe that the students, in their efforts in the fight for no fee increment in the #FeesMustFall movement, were fighting just to stay in the capitalist system and maintain the *status quo*. We are, by virtue of being at these historically white institutions, hoping to be absorbed into the capitalist system post qualification by occupying positions that will buy us acceptance. Fighting for no fee increment was about being co-opted into the system after completing the degrees. This is a great thing for a large number of previously disadvantaged Black families. I speak as a First Generation university student, the first to attend a higher education institution in my family. It speaks volumes and I mean for many of the Black children attaining a degree marks social mobility and perhaps, an attainment of economic capital necessary to push us to the aspired-to middle class position. Yes, indeed, that is a better position to be in than minding a cashier's machine or attending to a petrol pump somewhere. This not only promises a greater future for you but for your family and offspring. This presents a change in the history of a Black child who might be a first generation university student in their families.

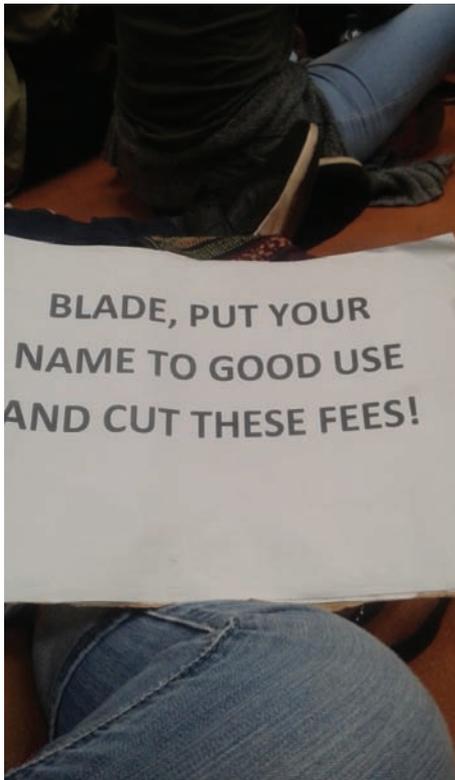
However, to get here you must buy in first, pay your dues, to a capitalist system that excludes and oppresses you. The capitalist system requires that we be in debt or that we pay our way in at these institutions as a way of buying in to belong to them. The capitalist system operates on debt that we must incur while at university or through payments we must make to attain the status and positions our degrees will buy us. However, the movement to fight for free education threatened this system. The students demanded to join the system without

paying their dues- without paying anything. Imagine the capitalist system as a pie, of which everyone wants a piece. But to get a piece of the pie one must pay or promise to pay through debt, to enjoy and get the taste. What the students were doing was wanting a piece of the pie and they wanted to eat it, without paying for the pie or the ingredients to make the pie. The capitalist system cannot have that because this threatened its future.

More so the students threatening the capitalist system by demanding free education and no fee increment, was like asking to come into a house and once we are in we want to bring that house down by getting rid of fees and decolonizing it. The capitalist system cannot have this.

I believe that the capitalist system through its economic exclusionary practices is oppressive to the Black child and also because it holds on to all the resources that you need. I do not mean to come up with some conspiracy theory but I believe the denial of access to education is a strategic tool of the capitalist system to keep it going. They deny blacks education and this is not the first time, we saw it during the apartheid era. Let me elaborate what I mean when I say, restriction of access is strategic. The white capitalists restrict access in the hope that you will fight for entry and once you have won the fight for entry, you have no choice but to stay because you believe you deserve what you fought for and you will continue to fight even when you are in the system. But what exactly are you fighting for?

Fight we did, marched from pillar to post with scars of the burden of the past on our backs until we reached the Union Buildings. Most people rejoiced when the zero percent fee increment for 2016 was announced. I could not, as many of us were still in debt or going to continue to be in debt going forward. Beyond owing the government large sums of cash,



which a majority must start paying, we are still disadvantaged after attaining those degrees. So, effectively, we fought only to be in a disadvantaged position with large sums of debt and pending debts that we will incur once we start being employed-- unlike the benefactors of the capitalist system who will exploit you with your degree while you are forced to earn a living. Earning a living or a salary will keep you bound and indebted to the system, so that even with your degree, you are literally fighting to make a living. What I mean by this is that the salary, which is a ticket out of poverty, as a promise, is barely enough to afford the lifestyle promised by the education; rather life will be lived from hand to mouth. This education we bravely fought for promises only illusions of financial freedom.

Institutional and structural exclusion

The #FeesMustFall movement was not only reflective of the structural and institutional exclusion and racism of the capitalist system where the rich, who happen to be white and some Indian, are more advantaged than the disadvantaged poor Black bodies. This exists in these historically white universities. Not to say that currently these institutions are not white-owned and promote western capitalist system ideologies that do not benefit the Black child. But these protests reflected the blindness of these historically white institutions, together with some of the white bodies they contain. They look at race and racism in these institutions with the mentality that Black bodies need to stop playing victim and just get over it. Because after all, according to the distaste they show for these racial issues and structural and institutions oppression bestowed on the black bodies, we are to them, a post-racial, democratic rainbow nation. By that logic, these should not be issues of discussion about race anymore; we should all be happy.

These protests were more than a mere reflection of the institutional and structural racism and exclusion that black bodies suffer. They were a reflection of the often ignored economic exclusion that is not only experienced in these institutions but one that will persist post university, even with the looming prospect of being a potential middle class capitalist system commodity. I say this because a majority of the Blacks that do manage to complete their degrees at these exclusionary institutions, struggle to get employment or find suitable employment prospects for a number of reasons, such as the lack of experience and the effects of structural unemployment in this country. This may be true but the economic exclusion of the Black child and denial to partake in the accumulation of capital to develop Black communities is also as a result of the institutional and structural settings of the university and will extend beyond the walls of the academic institution.

As part of this capitalist system, we are valuable, as potential middle class candidates. We are the capitalist system's economic commodities. Despite this, being potential middle class and capitalist system commodities, we are still to the white economic capitalist mere Black bodies for exploitation to help maintain the *status quo*. As disadvantaged Black children who are targets of racism and exclusion of the capitalist system.

In conversations about the economic exclusion or economic slavery that Blacks are subjected to, there is too often neglect about how to ensure that students, after getting their degrees, are liberated economically and are not subjected to debt. Some of the protest placards read: “education should not be a DEBT sentence”.

In addition to that education, I believe there should not be a race-based economic struggle post degree. To ensure that the call for a free education is answered we should focus not only on how students can afford university but also on how they can afford their lives after completing their degrees. Our talks should be of how to ensure that these young minds, that fought so bravely for their education, are freed from the shackles of debt and a life of earning a living pre- and post- their qualifications. To a life where they would be in a position to build and attain sustainable economic, cultural and social capital. We should firstly explore alternatives (not offered by this current system) on how graduates will not be victims of unemployment; how they can develop skills that can make them more employable or how they can economically free.

Namna Dhahiri za mapinduzi au nini?

Busisiwe Cathrine Seabe

Fikra za wengi katika vyyo vikuu nchini zimeendelea kuonyesha Wanafunzi wenye Asili ya Kiafrika kuwa tatizo kubwa sawa na hasa jinsi jambo hili lilivyoshughulikiwa kwenye makala ya *Souls of Black Folks* na WEB du Bois mwaka wa 1903. Sasa hawa wanafunzi wana-tambua, kuwa, baada ya miaka 21 ya kile kinachojulikana kuwa uhuru, mradi wa utangamano uliojulikana kama 'rainbow' haujafua dafu. Bado kuna ukandadamizaji kupitia misingi ya kiakademia/elimu na hata katika maisha yao ya kila siku. Miaka miwili iliyopita, kumekuwepo na michipuko ya vuguvugu za wanafunzi wa asili ya kiafrika katika vyyo vyetu vikuu kudhihirisha ukandamizaji huu na kule kutokuwepo kwa maridhiano ya kusawazisha hali ilivyo sasa ikilinganishwa na nyakati za serikali kongwe ya ubaguzi wa rangi. Katika mazingira haya ya kujieleza, kuna hamu kuu ya kuimarisha sio tu mjadala dhahiri baina ya wasomi bali pia, katika jamii nzima kwa ujumla.

Lengo moja la kimsingi la vuguvugu za #FeesMustFall yaani #AdaLazimalShuke ni kupendekeza njia muafaka za ubunifu wa kumbukumbu, kujikomboa na pia jinsi watu wa asili ya Kiafrika vanavyoonyeshwa katika mijadala ya katika jamii ya kisasa nchini Afrika Kusini. Ukweli ni kwamba, vijana wengi wa Afrika kusini walio katika vyyo vyetu vikuu wanalazimishwa kuamini kwamba, ukoloni ulikuwa bora kwa Afrika nyakati zile na hata sasa. Hili jambo linazidi kuwa tatizo. Katika tafiti zangu za kisiasa, kule kuamini na pia kushikilia imani potovu kuwa ubaguzi wa rangi ulifaa kwa demokrasia na kwa waafrika kwa sababu walikubali ukandamizaji na hata kifo; ni njia mojawapo inayoinawezesha kuelewa na kujua jinsi tulivyo, na hasa jamii zetu. Sasa ninaelewa kuwa, mwafrika kutohachangia pakubwa kile kinachofunzwa katika vyyo vikuu ni tatizo kubwa. Kwamba wanafunzi masikinini na wanyonge wanaweza

kufukuzwa kwa sababu ya kuweza kutambua matatizo haya na kuwa na mtazamo mbadala kwa swala hili, na pia kuchangia vuguvugu kubwa la mabadiliko, ni tatizo. Jambo la kimsingi ni kuwa, hatuwezi kutulia. Hata hivyo, utelekezi, ukoloni na ubaguzi wa rangi kamwe haukubuniwa na wanafunzi wa asili ya kiafrika, bali unaimarishwa na watu wa asili ya kizungu katika halmashauri za vyyo vikuu, seneti na wahadhiri.

Sisi kama wanafunzi wa asili ya kiafrika, tunapokabiliwa na uwazi wa ubaguzi wa rangi katika taasisi zetu za elimu ya juu, tunashangaa ni kwa nini, hasa baada ya miaka zaidi ya 350 ya usamehevu wa ukandamizaji na kutendewa vitendo vya kinyama. tunatambua kwamba, tumesalitiwa hivyo peupe. Kuna wakati ambapo kukimya ni usaliti, nami nakataa kujisaliti mwenyewe. Badala yake, nilichagua kusaliti umoja wa bandia ambao ume-lazimishwa katika nafsi yangu. Niliamua kuchangia vuguvugu la #AdaLazimalShuke kama njia ya uthabiti wangu na ilio na uwazi kwa uhuru halisi. Ndio maana naamini kuwa, vuguvugu la #AdaLazimalShuke linavuka harakati zote zinazozingatia tu nyongeza za ada za masomo pekee, bali linashirikisha mapambano ya wafanyakazi na wazazi wetu. Na hivyo, naamini kuwa, ukombozi wowote au ushindi wa wanafunzi ni batili bila mabadiliko ya wafanyakazi kuwa vibarua na kukosa ajira. Vuguvugu la #AdaLazimalShuke ni upanuzi wa vuguvugu la #RhodesLazima-Angolewe. Ni chimbuko linalotokana na mkanganyo unaoanza na mfumo mzima wa Elimu nchini Afrika Kusini. Ukweli kwamba, Afrika Kusini inatumia asili mia 0.75% ya mapato yake kwa elimu ya juu, ambayo ni chini ya wastani unaokubalika katika Afrika au dunia nzima, ni jambo ambalo sisi kama wanafunzi, hasa kwangu mwenyewe halikubaliki. Elimu katika nchi hii imekuwa, na inazidi kuwa chombo cha kufanyia biashara;

nikimaanisha kuwa, ni wachache tu walio na uwezo wa kupata elimu bora ya msingi na sekondari hadi vyuo vikuu.

Nikirejelea hisia za maandamano katika chuo kikuu cha Wits mwaka 1995 na katika vuguvugu la #RhodeLazimaAngolewe, Vuguvugu la #AdaLazimalshuke pia ni wito wa ukombozi wa kimawazo na wa lazima. Ninataka kushughulikia swala la ukombozi wa kijamii na mabadiliko, na kwa upana uinuaji wa kiuchumi na ukosefu wa usawa katika jamii za asili tofauti. Vuguvugu la #AdaLazimalshuke ni wajibu wa kizazi chetu na ni jambo ambalo tunakusudia kulitetea kadri ya uwezo wetu. Vuguvugu la #AdaLazimalshuke linaangazia utambulisho na nafasi tunazopewa nchini, barani na hata duniani. Vuguvugu hili ni jaribio la kimuundo na kitaratibu likitazamia kuangamiza historia potovu za utambulisho, kijamii na uchumi wa kikoloni nchini, unaoendelezwa kwa njia za kuvutia. Linatazamia kusongesha Afrika Kusini mbali na nyakati za ubaguzi wa rangi na badala yake kuiweka katika Uhuru halisi na ukombozi halisi kupitia Elimu. Hii imekuwa tafsiri yangu ya harakati lakini mbali na hayo, harakati kuhusu elimu, ni kujitafuta kwa ajili ya utambulisho, na kujithamini zaidi.

Tarehe 6 mwezi wa Oktoba ilikuwa tarehe rasmi iliyotengwa kusudi kuhalalisha migomo iliyoanzishwa na wafanyikazi na iliyowapa wanafunzi motisha ya kuchanganua maswala ya chuki, mapendeleo vya uoni; na zaidi ya hayo, unyonyaji na ukiritimba wa kikoloni. Nilikuwa katika mkoa wa Limpopo nikishughulikia swala la kuchangia kugawa vifaa bure kwa usafi wa wasichana katika jamii mbalimbali mashinani na vijijini. Hapo ndipo nilipoelewa kwa kina kwamba, tarehe 6 mwezi wa Oktoba ilikuwa hatua moja ya mapambano ya kweli kuelekeza elema ya bure, yenye ubora na isiyoyana misingi ya kikoloni. Nilirudi kwa haraka jijini Johannesburg na kukutana na wanafunzi wenzangu nje ya Jumba la Solomon House, lilivyojulikana kama Jumba la Senate House. Punde tu nilipofika Chuo kikuu cha Wits, nilifikiria kwanza nipitie mahali pa mapum-

ziko yaani Mickey's, katikati mwa sehemu ya Braam kujistarehesha na chupaa kadhaa za bia, na pia kunyakua misokoto michache ya bangi ili nipatia wanafunzi wenzangu. Kupitia matangazo ya radio nilibaini kwamba, wenzangu walikuwa na siku ngumu na walihitaji kustareheshwa kwanza ili waweze kunielezea siyo tu matukio ya siku hiyo, bali pia kutoa msongo na kujiimarisha ipaswavyo. Nikiwa na chupa za bia aina ya Black Label kwenye mkoba wangu na misokoto kadhaa ya bangi mkononi, nilielekea chuoni. Hali ilikuwa umechacha. Kulikuwa na kiwango fulani cha mvuto wa kupagawa hewani. Ilikuwa ni kama kwamba vilio vya mababu zangu waliofia katika migodi ya Witwatersrand walikuwa wameandaa sherehe ya ibada kwa ajili yetu. Nilihisi kana kwamba hatimaye tulikuwa tunajiweka kwenye upeo uliosawa, huku tukibarikiwa na mababu zetu. Nilijihisi mtulivu, kama kwamba naandaliwa kwa ajili ya mapambano ya muda mrefu mbeleni. Niliwaona wenzangu wamejikunyata pembeni nje ya jumba la Solomon House, wakiimba nyimbo za mapinduzi kwa nguvu huku wakijifaharia. Nakumbuka nikiwazia wakati ambapo tutahitajika kurudi milimani na mabondeni, sehemu za uzawa wetu. Nakumbuka vizuri jinsi tulivyopiga magoti kuimba 'Emaweni weMama noBaba ... sohLalemaweni amabunu siwaqqibile'. Bila kung'amua wazi, nilijikuta nimenatwa katikati ya nafsi yangu ya kiroho na kiwiliwili, huku nikibingirika sakafuni. Kulikuwa na kiwango fulani cha utengano kati ya hali ya kawaida, kama tunavyoifahamu na tunavyoiishi. Hali ilivyokuwa ni kama kwamba inyani Zamu (mababu zangu) walikuwa wameniantalia karamu. Sikukumbuki wakati mwingine nikiwa na furaha jinsi nilivyofurahia siku hiyo ya kwanza ya 'mapinduzi'.

Siku zilizofuata zilikuwa ngumu na zilizojaa mikondo mingi ya kubadili nguzo, au tuseme kuandamano kutoka Braamfontein jijini Johannesburg chini ya uongozi maarufu wa Vuyani Pambo, Nomphendulo Mkhathshwa na Mcebo Dlamini. Jukumu langu lilikuwa rahisi, kutumikia na kujitoa mhangano, lakini hasa zaidi

ya hayo kupata mwamko mpya. Nilijikuta katika nafasi ya kutoa huduma, kama mmojawapo wa akina mama wa mapinduzi. Yule wa kulisha na wakati mwingine kuwakosha wenzangu. Nikajikuta ninashikilia jukumu la kupanga na kuaanda mikutano ya faragani. Hata hivyo, moja kwa moja nilipuuza jukumu la mchango wangu katika jopo kazi Hili jopo liliwajibika kushughulikia jambo lolote ambalo halikuhalalisha kisheria, hata ingawa tulidai kuwa siyo haki. Nakumbuka wazi nikitwa usiku wa manane saa tisa asubuhi kwa sababu maandalizi ya kifungua kinywa kwa wanafunzi waliokeshwa katika jumba la *Solomon House* usiku kucha hayakupangwa. Nikajikuta nikituma wito wa dharura kwa mashirika yasiyo ya kiserikali na hata Makao ya wanyonge ili kuomba misaada ya kulisha wanafunzi. Nikajikuta kwenye vyombo vya habari vya mitandao ya kijamii nikiomba chakula na mahitaji mengine ya usafi. Huo ndio wakati nilipofahamu, na hasa, kukataa majukumu wanaopewa wanawake, na zaidi wanawake weusi ya kusawazishwa moja kwa moja na mama mzazi. Nilijua nafasi yangu katika vuguvugu hili ilikuwa kubwa zaidi kuliko majukumu niliyokuwa nimejichagulia ya kutafuta vyakula. Nithibitisha haya tulipoenda majengo ya *Union Buildings jijini Pretoria*. Ulikuwa wakati wanafunzi, wafanyakazi, wazazi na wale waliotunga mkono walijitokeza katika kuuigiza tawala za bandia; na hapo nikapata fursa ya kujitathimini mwenyewe. Nilipata fursa ya kuona sio tu ile imani tuliyoiweka katika mapambano yetu, bali pia kile nilikusudia kuchangia ili kufanikisha ushindi wa mapambano haya. Majengo ya *Union Buildings* yalikuwa hatua nyingine katika mapambano haya. Ulikuwa wakati wa kutenga wale wasio wazungu na watu weusi, waliotajiri na wale maskini. Wakati tangazo lilipotolewa kwamba haku-takuwa na nyongeza kwa ada ya masomo mwaka wa 2016, nilitambua kwamba mapambano ya kutetea elimu ya bure iliyobora na isiyo na kasumba ya kikoloni ilikuwa imaenza kufana katika uhalisia wake. Nikielekea chuoni baada ya 'viongozi' wetu kutushughulisha

katika vuguvugu linalojukana kwa umarufu kama *#AdaLazimaIshuke*, kukwamisha shughuli zote katika jiji la *Tswane* na fujo za kukimbizana, -nilijikuta nikihangaika katika mitaa ya *Pretoria* kuwinda wanafunzi wa *Wits* katika jaribio la kuwapa chakula kilichokuwa kimejazwa ndani mwa mabasi yetu ya kisasa yaliyokuwa matulivu na hewa safi. Nilikuwa na msukumo wa kuwarudisha katika ufahari wa mapambano yetu. Ni wakati huo nilipogundua kuwa wengi wa wanafunzi hawakungamua uhalisia wa mapambano hayo. Badala yake, walikuwa na wasiwasi kuhusu nyongeza ya ada ya masomo hali ambayo ingetatiza mipango ya ulipaji wa mikopo waliokuwa nayo ya elimu. Tulirudi *Braamfontein* wanafunzi wakiimba nyimbo na itikadi za ushindi, huku tukiamini kwa hakika kuwa, sisi, akina *Daudi* tulikuwa tumemshinda *Goliathi* wetu. Ilisalia tu wachache wetu wenye ushujaa kujua kwamba mapambano yalikuwa yameanza, huku wengi wa wanafunzi wakiama kurudi madarasa na kukamilisha masomo ya muhula wa mwaka huo. Giza lilitughubika. Mbali na vitisho dhidi yangu kurudi darasani kusoma, nilikabiliwa na uhasama kutoka kwa wanafunzi na viongozi wenzangu tuliokuwa nao katika harakati hizi zilizonikoshesha usafi wa kiwiliwili, na hata chakula. Hawa wenzangu walikuwa ni madada tuliosetiriana. Ilinibidi nichagua kuwa mwaminifu kwa yale niliyoaamini pamoja na kuwajibika kwa kizazi changu, au kukisaliti. Kwa hivyo, tulipovuka kuanza mwaka wa 2016 huku wengi wetu walikuwa wametumia likizo ya Desemba kwa maandalazi ya mwaka huo, unaweza kuona ni jinsi gani tulivyotamaushwa na tuliposhindwa kuona katika mwezi wa Januari kuwa, maelfu ya wengi wetu walikuwa wameingiwa na ubaridi. Tukasalia mia chache katika mapambano tulipoanza muhula wa mwaka huo. Kutokana na haya, wengi wetu walijitoma katika sherehe za bustanini za kilevi, na idadi yetu ikapunguka zaidi hadi kufikia 50. Ni wale 50 tu waliokuwa wamedhamiria kuendeleza utetezi kana kwamba, tulikuwa tumekula kiapo kikali kuendeleza kupambana bila kujali matokeo yake. Amini

usiamini kulikuwa na madhara. Kwani wengi wetu hawakuruhusiwa kujisajili chuoni; hata tukanyimwa nafasi za malazi na ikatubidi kuotea makazi ya wakufunzi wetu. Kila tulikokwenda, tulichunguzwa kwa kina na walinda usalama na hata kunyimwa ruhusa za kuzuru maeneo mengine ya chuo kikuu. Kimsingi, tulikuwa tumetupwa nje, huku tukiwa wafungwa ndani ya chuo. Tulijipata tukiwa na uhusiano mbaya sana na sio tu miongoni mwetu, bali na chuo kikuu. Hasira zikatupotosha na malengo yetu yalionekana kutoafiki. Hata hivyo, jinsi tulivyohamasishwa na nyimbo tukitaka ada ipunguzwe mwaka 2015, ni nyimbo zilezile zilizotuvuta kutoka ulingo wa hasira na kutamaushwa. Sasa ninatambua kuwa, ilitibi tufike kile kiwango kikubwa cha hasira ndiposa tukaamua kuelekezwa na hasira za *Lauryn Hills* zinazojulikana kama *Hasira za Mtu Mweusi*.

“Hasira ya mtu mweusi ni theluthi mbili ya nafsi yake

Daima kumbakwa, kupigwa na kuteswa vibaya
Mtu mweusi ni mfunzwa wa minyororo
Hasira ya mweusi hutokana na vyote hivi.

Hasira ya mweusi ni kunyimwa wazi,
Utamu wa kiuchumi, mahitaji ya kawaida,
Kunyamazisha na kudhibiti jamii,
Hasira ya mweusi i rohoni,

Mbwa anapouuma, nyuki anapodunga, wakati
ninasikitika,
Ninapokumbuka mateso haya, woga hutoweka

Hasira ya mwesi ni kwa wale walotufunza
kuchukua nafsi zetu -
Uongo na unyanyasaji tukisubiri na kusubiri
usaliti wa kiroho
Utando huu wote na hata viziwi
Hasira ya mweusi i ndani ya yote haya

Hasira ya mweusi inawashwa na ndoto na
kuchoshwa
Kutishia uhuru wako
Kufunga kinywa chako
Kusumisha maji yako

Wakisema kunanyesha
Huku wakikuwa wazimu
Kwa kukufungua kinywa, kulalamika
Kasumba za kikale
Kuleweshwa vijana
Hasira ya mweusi i ndani ya kuficha ukweli

Mauaji na uhalifu
Usaliti na uongo
kafara, kafara
Nani anafaidi?
Ufisadi, kuitwa maendeleo
Vielelezo hivi vya binadamu
Hasira ya mweusi i ndani ya mambo haya

Kwa hivyo mbwa akiumwa
Na nyuki kudunga
Ninahisia za wendawazimu
Na kukumbuka haya yote
Na siogopi

Biashara huru
Hadithi au uongo
Kusudi kukulazimu kuingia machafuko
Biashara za utumwa
Au kunyonywa damu
Hasira ya mweusi i ndani ya mambo haya

Wahasiiri wa michafuko
Akilini na kiwiliwili
Maisha nje ya uhalisia ni kuishi kikafiri
Siasa, siasa
Ubahili uloi utajiri
Hasira ya mweusi i ndani ya kujinyima

Mzigo wa mweusi
Ni kuishi kiasi cha haja
Kuhalalisha uhai wako
Jaribu tena ukiweza
Kamwe huwezi, nyakua roho yangu
Hasira ya mweusi i ndani ya udhibiti wa kiovu

Kwa hivyo mbwa akiuma Na hayo mapigo
Na masikitiko makubwa
Hukukumbuka aina zote hizi
Kisha sikuhi mbaya sana”- (Nukuu ya Luaryn Hill, mw. 2013)

Ni uneni tamu-chungu kama huu na kwa uhakika wa kishindo tunapong'amua umuhimu wa nyakati hizi. Tuligundua kwamba, vuguvugu la #AdaLazimalShuke la mwaka wa 2015 lilikuwa mkusanyiko wa nyakati mbalimbali na sio mapinduzi, mapambano, na zaidi sio vita. Badala yake, wakati ndio uliamua yaliyotokea na jinsi mambo yavyotendeka kwa wakati huo. Kulikuwa na msongo mwingi wa kisaikolojia na hisia uliosababishwa na rabsha za #AdaLazimalShuke, na pia uhakika wa fahamu zetu. Ninakumbuka kwa kina mwanzoni mwa mwaka wa 2016, ndani ya machafuko yale yote, sisi ni miongoni mwa wale waliopigwa risasi tukiwa katika makazi yetu na hata kutiwa mbaroni kwa mujibu wa kufukuzana uwanjani wa soka. Ninakumbuka nikitiwa pingu mikononi na kutupwa ndani mwa gari la polisi na kujikuta katika kituo cha polisi cha *Hillbrow*. Nakumbuka mama mkongwe akiaangua kilio sakafuni mwa ofisi ya afisa aliyenikamata, akiomba atambuliwe, na kusikilizwa. Nakumbuka baadaye akitoka nje akilia na akanikabidhi kikaratasi kilichoandikwa neno 'TAFADHALI'. Ni kile kikaratasi nichokibebea mfukoni mwangu kwa miezi kadha baadaye - kama kumbukumbu huku nikidai nafasi yangu halali katika harakati zetu. Nafasi yangu kama kiongozi wa mstari wa mbele na sio kubaki nyuma. Nafasi yangu kama mzawa wa kuongoza kama nilivyofanya kwa muda mrefu, na hata kutambuliwa na wengi wa wanafunzi wenzangu; na siyo kama Nomphendulo. Nilichaguliwa na wanafunzi katika nafasi hiyo na sio kuchaguliwa na wanasiasa ili niwe kibaraka chao. Kwangu, hiyo nafasi ilikuwa halisi, ya kindani na wazi kwa kila mtu. Huu ulikuwa wakati mwafaka katika vuguvugu hili.

Lakini nafasi hii ilijia baada ya muda mrefu ulioonekana mfupi; wenye shida za uraibu wa pombe nikidhanja ni 'Mapinduzi'. Kitabu - nilichokisoma kama mwanafunzi katika mwaka wa kwanza chuoni kijulikanacho kama *Frantz Fanon na Saikolojia ya Ukandamizaji* kilichoandikwa na *Hussein Bulhan* mwaka 1985, kilinjia akilini, baada ya sisi kufukuzwa chuoni. Hasa nilipokosa mahali pa kulala na

hata kukosa chakula. Wakati huo wote sikumbuki nikikosa pombe wala msokoto wa bangi kwani daima hivi vyote vilikuweco kwa wingi. Kutizama nyuma, ninakumbuka kwa kina vile kitabu kile kilivyoangazia jinsi pombe hushinikiza utumwa na ukoloni kama mambo ya kuzingatiwa zaidi. Wakati huo, kama mwanafunzi wa mwaka wa kwanza nikiwa 'mbichi' chuoni kwa kila namna, nilikuwa sijawahi kushiriki katika uraibu wa vitu 'haramu' kama vile bangi; sikumbuki kutumia aina mbalimbali za vileo kwa namna vilivyotengenezwa kwa ajili ya Ulaya kusherehekea nyakuzi za nchi na nafsi za watu wake. Nakumbuka tu nikiwa na mjadala na wenzangu kuhusu uhusiano kati ya pombe na ukandamizaji, na jinsi ilivyokuwa wazi na ya kutisha zaidi, kama ilivyokuwa nyakati zote. Ukweli ni kwamba, Serikali ya kibaguzi ya Afrika Kusini haikuona ugumu wowote kuficha jinsi ilivyotumia pombe kwa udhibiti wa jamii na kukandamia watu weusi, jambo ambalo lilinihangaisha hasa nilipowaza kuhusu vuguvugu la tatu la #AdaLazimalShuke. Kwa mfano, Bodi ya Usimamizi ya *West Rand*, inayoshughulikia utawala katika eneo la *Soweto*, ilikuwa na ukiritimba wa mauzo yote ya pombe katika kitongoji vyote vikubwa kisheria. Ndani mwa *Soweto* peke yake, mauzo ya pombe yalizidi mapipa milioni 160 ya bia kwa mwaka. Ni vigumu kubaini damu na machozi yaliyomwagika kutokana na kiwango hiki kikubwa cha mshawasha na udhibiti wa matumizi ya pombe. Idadi ya watu waliopoteza maisha yao, ndoa kuvunjika, imani kuharibiwa; yote huhadithia njama ile ile iliyoandaliwa kwa uharibifu. Ubunifu huu wa maksudi na serikali ya kibaguzi unafahamu vizuri udhaifu na maumivu yanayotokana na kutoshibisha kiu cha ulevi kwa wengi wa Watu wenye Asili ya Kiafrika. Kwa hivyo, katika kulipiza kisasi cha harakati za uasi wa mwaka wa 1976 katika *Soweto*, serikali kwa makusudi walipiga marufuku kumbi nyingi za starehe za bia na maduka ya kuuza pombe (Nukuu ya Harsch, Mwaka 1980, uk. 19). Sasa ukiangalia hali yetu ilivyokuwa wakati huo tukiwa kwa *Mickey's*, huku tukichovya chupa za bia, nilijuliza kama

kweli tulikuwa tumeshindwa na sasa tulikuwa tunafutiliwa mbali na mvinyo wa *Rum*, Utumwa na Vileo haramu! (Makala ya West, mwaka 1776). Hata hivyo pombe na raibu wa vitu vingine pekee havikutosha kutuingiza katika utumwa wa vitisho bila silaha hatari na uwezo mkubwa. Baadaye tulikuja kugundua kuwa, silaha hizo ni mama na baba zetu waliohudumu kama walinda usalama chuoni, swala ambalo tulikuwa nalo na bado tunalifanyia utetezi. Kunyamazishwa na mvinyo wa *Rum*, Utumwa na pombe haramu ni jambo wengi wa wanafunzi na watu wenye Asili ya Kiafrika kwa ujumla hawezi kupuuzwa katika taasisi za elimu zinazopambana na watu weusi. Wanafunzi wenye asili ya weusi hawathaminiwi nchini Afrika Kusini. Hawahitajiki. Nami nimechoka kupiga mayowe ya kindani. Nataka kupiga makelele na vilio na na kuyatoa haya yote nje, Ninanastahili kufanikisha #AdaLazimalshuke.

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A response to Habib

Bandile Bertrand Leopeng

The following article is somewhat of a personal narrative in nature. It acts as a critical response to the public discourses constructed by Adam Habib, vice-chancellor of Wits University, during the early stages of the 2016 #Asinamali on-campus protests. This article utilises a public statement issued by Habib as a justification for the use and presence of private security in academic spaces. It is a challenge to direct engagement between us (as students) and Habib (as a representation of management)

Dear Colleagues

I write to you in my capacity as Vice-Chancellor and Principal, with the full support of the Senior Executive Team (SET).

In the past week, some of you have bluntly expressed concerns in public and directly to me about the decision of the Senior Executive Team to bring private security onto campus. For those of you who have raised these concerns, please allow me the privilege of being as bold and blunt in my response, in the interests of identifying the options that are available to us as a university community. Please also forgive me for the length of my reply, but I do think that it is necessary for everyone to comprehensively understand from where we are coming.

One of you has suggested that you cannot understand why we would have brought private security and police to the university. It would have been useful - perhaps even necessary - for this person to have determined this before pronouncing so categorically on our decision, and attempting to begin a global campaign on the issue. Nevertheless, let me provide some details. On Monday this past week a small group of students were not simply peacefully protesting and dissenting. Instead, they were actively preventing registration from taking place. They were abusive of people, threatening them, and in some cases people were locked up

in their offices. There was one male protester who told a female staff member that he knows where she lives and will take her out. In addition, I received a number of written requests, including one from a student leader expressing fear about being violently targeted by the protesters. These actions represented 'violations of rights' and the abuse of other members of our university community. These actions and countless others by the protesters forced us to bring an end to face-to-face registration.

Consequences of postponement of registration
Let me explain the net effect of stopping the registration process. We have two forms of registration, online and face-to-face, with telephone registration as a back-up to be instituted when required. Forcing us to cancel face-to-face registration adversely affected the poorest of those who wanted to register. Online registration enabled the middle and upper middle classes to continue with the process. They have online facilities and they have credit cards. They were not adversely affected, even if some may have been slightly inconvenienced. But the old man from Limpopo, who scraped whatever monies he could raise from family, friends and his community to ensure that his grandson registered, was severely impacted. He and his grandson travelled for hours, only to be told that he could not register because some group of activists had decided that they would shut down registration unless all historic debt had been cancelled and free education immediately granted. There were many such people on that day, and there were many more throughout the week. All attempts to get protesters to allow the registration to proceed came to naught.

Protecting the rights of all

Were this grandfather and his grandson, as well as the countless others, not victims? Do they not require our sympathy and outrage?

Do they not require our best institutional support to register and embark on an academic career? I have heard some academics express unhappiness at our use of private security both now and at the end of last year, but I have never heard any of these same academics express public outrage at the violation of the rights of others - whether those be the staff member whose life is threatened, the ill staff member who could not make a doctor's appointment to obtain medication for a life threatening disease, or other student leaders who have been threatened and now feel silenced and unsafe. Are these not also members of our University community? Do we decide to ignore them simply because they do not carry the correct ideological line? Maybe it has to do with the fact that these individuals do not figure prominently within our networks or community, from whom we draw political affirmation. Is this why some of us are not concerned about their rights?

For those who have raised the security concerns, the challenge that we believe you need to consider is: how would you have enabled the grandfather from Limpopo to register his grandson? How else would you have protected the staff members and students that were being harassed and threatened? In fact, we are aware that some concluded in private conversations that took place regarding the security arrangements that they did not know what should be done and had no alternatives to suggest. Nevertheless, they still remain opposed to the security arrangements that have been made. The net effect of this position is that the poor student must be denied the right to register, and that the interests of staff and students who have been threatened should be ignored.

We are aware that this view is reflected by a minority of our academic colleagues only. The vast majority of our academic and professional and administrative staff have expressed support for our actions and we have the emails and correspondence to prove this. We know the typical response to this: they are seen as con-

servatives, opposed to the transformation of the University. Is this response not a tad arrogant? Should we allocate ourselves the right to label all those we disagree with as conservatives? And even if they are conservatives, why should their rights not be protected by the university like those of all others?

Decisions around security arrangements

I want to assure you that we did not make the security arrangements lightly. I understand the disempowerment that one experiences from security arrangements that are outside of one's control. I probably understand this more than many colleagues because I personally experienced what it meant to be imprisoned under state of emergency conditions. I experienced what it meant to be in solitary confinement, to be interrogated and to feel the fear that you may not see your loved ones again. I understand what it means to be deported by a foreign government without any just cause, or to be strip-searched in an airport in another country. I understand about being disempowered by arbitrary security actions. Other colleagues on the executive have had similar harsh experiences. Professor Tawana Kupe lived in Zimbabwe and has an acute understanding of the arbitrary use of power. Professor Zeblon Vilakazi grew up in Katshehlong and has very real personal experiences of arbitrary violence. This is why we collectively would not make decisions like this lightly.

I also want to assure those who are concerned that claims that security assaulted students are untrue. We have viewed the video footage of last week's events and we have not found anything that supports these claims. On the contrary, there is video footage in which students can be seen to be engaging in threatening activities against security.

Many have asked why private security was brought in and not public order policing? The answer is simple: public order police would have immediately required a court order to become operational on campus. More importantly, once they are invited onto campus, one is not allowed

to limit their operations or influence their tactics and strategies. With private security, such limitations can be imposed. We have insisted that no guns must be used in any operations. We therefore decided to deploy private security on campus, with public order police on standby. For those who were worried about this arrangement, would they have preferred that we brought the public order police onto campus immediately? Would that not have allowed for the use of rubber bullets and other actions as have happened in other university settings in recent weeks? Or would they have preferred that we simply have no one, and deny protection to both the staff members and students who were threatened and the grandfather from Limpopo who wanted to register his grandson?

Some may ask why we did not use our own campus security? This answer is also simple: they are not sufficiently trained for this scale of protest. We could bring in a more adequately trained campus security team but do we truly want a 'militarised' campus all year round when this scale of security and protection is not required? Does it not make sense to use the campus security that we have - perhaps more efficient and better trained - and bring in the enhanced security arrangements as and when they are required? This was the case this week and given this, we simply cannot accede to the request of some to remove our security arrangements, at least until we are guaranteed that registration will continue without disruption and that the safety and security of all staff and students will not be threatened.

Some of you have also requested that we should publish the contracts with the security companies, including the associated financial costs. We are not averse to making these contracts available at the appropriate time given that we are a public university. This information should be received bearing in mind that we have to balance our expenses on security with the academic, financial and reputational consequences of not having had any. It is also worth noting that a significant portion of the associated costs of our security arrangements

may be covered by our insurance cover.

Complacency around violence

I should perhaps sign off now that I have responded to the immediate issues, but I beg your indulgence to also raise some related matters. Many academics, now and before, have been involved in solidarity actions around the student and worker protests. This is legitimate and should be respected and valued at a university such as Wits. All of these individuals have also been critical of the executive's decisions around the management of this protest and our willingness to accede to the demands. Again this is their right. At some point we need to engage on how we understand social action and how social outcomes are realised; the balance to be struck between protest and institutional engagement; the necessity of trade-offs and who should be responsible for these; and our response on the rise of racial essentialism within the midst of the protesting community. But those are debates for another time.

More immediately, I want to engage all of you on the complacency of some regarding violence or the threat of it within our protesting communities, and the political project of some actors to delegitimise institutional structures and replace them with revolutionary alternatives.

Many have stood firm against the presence of private security and public order police on campus, but have been shockingly sanguine about violence within the community of protesters. Many have simply turned a blind eye to violence or threats thereof, and some have even advocated violence as a legitimate means in a revolutionary moment. Really? At a university? In this moment, in a democratic era, whatever our criticisms of it? Is there not a romanticising of violence by middle class activists and academics? Have we truly considered the consequences of allowing violence to prevail within our community?

I worked in the townships around Pietermaritzburg - Mphomeni, Sobantu, Imbali and Edendale - at the height of the ANC-Inkatha wars in the 1980s. The near civil war decimated the communities and undermined the possibility of any egalitarian project. If this is true of communities under economic pressure, how much more is it true of the University itself which is meant to be a free and safe space for all ideas? Can we truly extrapolate that because of the presence of structural violence as a result of neoliberalism and racial exclusion, personal violence can now be justified both within and outside of a university community? Even if one holds this view, is one not in violation of one's implicit and explicit social compact with the University community to protect all within it, and its broader project of learning?

For many, these protests are a struggle for free education for the poor. This is a legitimate struggle, as I and many of the Wits executive have so often argued. But many are also aware that for some, this struggle is more than that. It is a means to achieve other political ends, whether those are constructed around the upcoming elections, or to create a systemic crisis that collapses the Zuma administration. Again, those agendas are legitimate and allowed in a democratic environment dependent on how they are undertaken. I have personally also been publicly critical of this government, probably more than most have. However, as Vice-Chancellor of this institution, it is my responsibility to ensure that this University survives intellectually and is not a casualty in a broader political struggle within the society. Our individual social contracts with the University and with the broader academy are to protect the academic community and the learning project itself, whatever our other political agendas. We cannot sacrifice this institution or this academic project to the vagaries of our other political agendas. This is what governs our actions as an executive.

The need to learn from past mistakes

Some may know that I worked at UDW in the 1990s. I was a general secretary of the union

movement and an integral member of the concerned academic group. I, like some of you today, took positions against private security on campus, and to be fair, I too was sanguine about the violence perpetrated by the protesters and dissidents with whom I associated. Then too, a moment emerged when some believed that they could replace the university structures with revolutionary alternatives, where non-violence was a bourgeois distraction, and where the university could be sacrificed to the broader political project for egalitarianism. Then too, colleagues ignored the capability and legitimacy of the state to respond. I did not believe in and was not comfortable with the tactics used, although I must say that I did share (and still do) the commitment to the broader project of egalitarianism and free education for the poor.

However, even though I was uncomfortable with the strategies and tactics, I was complacent about the violence and did not firmly enough register my opposition. Eventually the protesters did bring the university to a standstill through violence or the threat thereof. They did try to replace its statutory structures - the SRC, management, Senate and Council - with revolutionary alternatives. In the end, the state did move in, acted against the protesters and brought back stability to the campus. But the damage had been done. The university was intellectually decimated as its top students and academics had abandoned it. The middle and upper middle class student and academic activists, some with trust funds, slunk away. Some of the academics with second passports simply moved back to their home countries. By the time I left, the Faculty of Humanities had a single professor, who served as dean. The real casualties of this experiment were not the activists and academics who had romanticised violence, even though some of them individually suffered. It was the poor black students who had no other alternative but to continue to go to that university.

This is the real fear I have. I vowed then never to repeat that mistake. I will never remain silent and allow a culture of violence and ungov-

ernability to prevail within an institution of learning. I will never remain silent when a university and its learning project is being sacrificed to broader political goals, however attractive they may be. I learnt then, through hard experience, the real responsibility of the academic in a transforming university.

Preventing an egalitarianism of poverty

I urge you to consider one other point. Many of us had the privilege to study in the universities of North America or Western Europe, some even in the Ivy leagues like Chicago and Yale. But if we are to address the inequalities of our world, including those in the academy, then it is essential that we establish our own research intensive universities. Wits should be one of these, not only because of our strong intellectual legacy, but also because of the fact that we are far more demographically representative than any of our research intensive peers. For us to succeed in our research intensive goals, however, we need to protect this institution as we navigate the current turbulent political times. We need to ensure that we make decisions and undertake trade-offs that do not unravel the foundations of our research intensive capabilities. We must not pursue a strategy of realising an egalitarianism of poverty for it would reinforce the very inequalities of our world. To avoid this, it is important to know our history, especially in higher education. It is important to learn about our experiments, failed and successful, at transformation and institutional reform. It is important to know this simply so that we can collectively learn from the mistakes of our past. I have seen some of the proposals recommending institutional reform, and I was struck by how often they seemed ignorant of our past experiments and de-contextualized from our realities.

Finally, the issues facing the entire university system are access and funding. These cannot be resolved immediately and independently by Wits as an institution. We do not have the resources to do so. The issue needs to be dealt with in a coordinated way - involving students and management and other actors in the

national system. The current strategy of shutting down the University is, in our view, detrimental to the task of building a transformed and academically excellent institution. While we support the overall aims and want to build a powerful alliance, the current strategy is not one that the University management can support. While we respect and will protect the right to protest, at the same time we have to ensure that the University is able to continue with its core activities. This is our responsibility. There will be times when protesters embark on actions that challenge the functioning of the University in ways that have far-reaching effects. We then have the unenviable task of making difficult decisions in order to protect the rights of ALL students but particularly the poorest students who cannot afford the loss of the academic calendar. We have to facilitate access of all students to the University, even while protest unfolds.

I urge you to think through some of these issues, and I would be happy to engage further with any of you should you want to do so.

Sincerely

Professor Adam Habib on behalf of the Senior Executive Team of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

17 January 2016

The above statement was issued by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand Adam Habib, as a justification for the use and on-campus presence of private security forces during the 2016 student registration week. What follows is a critical response by a graduate student.

Dear Adam,

I write to you in my capacity as a post-graduate student at the University of the Witwatersrand.

I have a few well-formed thoughts too on this matter and while it may not be as wordy as your letter, my own is also wordy, and I write in the capacity of a student registered at the university.

It is clear from the beginning of this communication that you are making an emotional appeal to the reader, most likely fuelled by your own sense of frustration at the continuing protests taking place at the University of the Witwatersrand. You have sought to assuage your (literal) feelings of insecurity with the physical presence of brute force at our learning institution. The resulting climate has been tense and untenable, even before the official commencement of the 2016 learning program. Needless to say, emotions are already running high at this early stage of the year.

Lambs to the slaughter

The #Asinamali sub-category of the #FeesMustFall campaign represents some of the more subversive elements of the student protests. These are not simply students who are calling for the zero percent increment, but ones who are advocating a complete overhaul in education. Yet, education as a standalone institution in society is not only valued for its own sake but also for the society in which it is embedded. I am not going to explicate an entire commentary of the philosophy of education, but it may be worth reading Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in order to appreciate some of the emancipating effects of the didactic process. Some of the students protesting on registration day in Solomon House came from similar contexts as the old man from Limpopo. In a very evocative sense, they were the mirror of their emergent circumstances. Despite the initial waiving of the registration fee, the permutations of the waiver will have to be fulfilled at a later date. Furthermore, students with historical debt are still suffering the consequences of this. A waiving of the upfront payment seems to be simply delaying the inevitable.

Dompas referendum

The decision from management has been a reactionary enactment predicated on fear and anxiety. The neo-fascist enforcement of court interdicts has transformed the image of the student in public discourse. The university is

now not only excluding students academically and financially, but physically too. Although the more pertinent observation is the symbolic nature of restricted entry. A learning institution that is meant to serve the enterprise of academic enrichment is now, instead, being put under surveillance at every corner. "Students will not be allowed entry in Senate House," the enforcers stare suspiciously at you while they demand to see your institutional identification. Their mandate is to keep students out of the building that we have an academic right to access. Imagine the conflict of interest when an active student protester with a disability is denied access into Solomon Mahlangu House despite needing to visit the Disability Unit? This is not a hypothetical situation. Do our fees cover the harassment received from these mindless thugs? Or are they employed under the auspices of some unknown fund that we are not privy too? And are they employed to protect students or staff members? Surely, the answer cannot be "both" as there is a blatant discriminatory action in their halting the freedom of movement. Or like apartheid, do the ends justify the means?

Orwellian Doublethink

There is a "discourse of danger" surrounding the walls of Wits that has infiltrated public consciousness and has inexplicably become the solitary narrative. In *Animal Farm* (1945) Napoleon would recreate memories post-hoc and stage elaborate public trials forcing his victims to profess their constructed guilt. Adam, the steadfast emotional appeal you use continues to defy some of the real experiences of abuse suffered at the hands of your professional thugs. They are not here to critically engage with the issue at hand -- financial exclusion -- they are here to clamp down on dissent with blind fury. It reaches a pinnacle whereby violence is the result of dealing with an impatient and irascible vice-chancellor. Any reaction against their forcible presence is assumed to be an admission of guilt- plain and simple, protest will not be tolerated.

The past is not history

De Klerk came into power when the country had no economic recourse and was facing monetary collapse. In some sense, the National Party was brought to its knees (this I concede is controversial). Students forced you to eat samosas from the floor of Solomon House while you frantically made phone calls to the Executive Committee of Council for an emergency meeting. These scenes were beamed across innumerable media outlets last year. It seems as though you are determined to not let the situation get out of your control once again, but the manner in which you have approached this has been authoritarian to say the least. The imbalances of the past still reveal themselves in our present circumstances. Consequent generations have had to deal with these issues in various ways. During times of unrest, the actions of our leaders set the tone for how interactions are likely to go. To attempt to discipline is not to listen.

Maintaining the *status quo*

How honoured are we to be considered a “world-class” institution operating from the dark continent? Our learning modules seldom address the need for an academic overhaul and instead reinforce material my parents learned during their time in the apartheid era. Yet there seems to be an almost pathological resistance to change, lest the institution is no longer considered “world-class”. Any auspices of change are pre-empted with the suffix “of Africa”, or... “within the South African context.” Our modules are not integrated, they are ancillary.

Both sides, now

I do concede that the emotional weaponry is often utilised by “both” sides. I use “both” in quotes to highlight the fractious nature of whatever we may call leadership in this movement. I recall you mentioning the political grandstanding of the more vocal leaders in this project, and I do agree that often times it feels as though one or more of them are pre-consciously performing for an audience of

spectators and followers. This notwithstanding, I feel that there is something very serious that needs to be taken into account about the veracity and phenomenology of these emotions and the meaning behind them. The outpouring suggests that there is a psychic mechanism underlying them, and it is also brought about by socio-economic circumstance. Arguably, there are psychic mechanisms underlying all human action, but I feel we need to pay attention to the ways they are made manifest in human behaviour. The grey area lies in interpreting the appropriateness of emotional response to a situation, and it is here that I maintain the disproportionate use of force by Wits Management is unnecessary to achieve their aims. Dialogue would be a far better suited recourse.

Freedom without distinction

When I say that students are being physically excluded, this is not a misnomer. Despite the fact that our Constitution upholds the inalienable right to one’s own body, this is being literally violated by thuggish security, and later justified as ‘protection for all’. I believe that their presence only raises more problems and they should be removed immediately, in order to propagate a sense that an academic institution is a place for academic discourse and academic development, and not a closely-monitored state.

When students block entry into the institution or impede registration, these are not meant to be understood as literal acts for their own sake. It will be far more helpful to understand these as symbolic actions reflective of a deeper meaning. Inasmuch as you dislike hermeneutics within the social sciences, if we are to speak about discourse (which is something that we both seem to accept exists in one way or another) then this branch of study, or certain elements thereof, are useful to us. The symbolism of denying entry or impeding registration both respectively represent another process that students may be feeling about being/not being in the university. Once we move past the “hard” literal perception of

these acts, we can begin to have more of a conversation about what else they represent.

Whatever this is

I am not in objection to the situation being qualitatively different now than what it was last year. It seemed to start largely with one goal in mind, before extending into vistas that are beyond immediate reach. We have spoken about this at length but two points that are relevant here:

- (a) There are no definable goals, and;
- (b) The goals are not immediately attainable

The first point is most likely the reason that the protests seemed to fizzle out before re-emerging again in this subversive form. It is probably also worth mentioning that there are no agreeable goals, which causes inevitable discrepancies when decisions are made and actions are taken. Despite all this, the message of black student unhappiness should still be taken seriously and prompt more than colloquiums on how to address the matter of education in South Africa.

Status Qua Status

This moves me onto my final point about educational reforms in our country. The Humanities, as a whole, fosters debate and reflection on the core social issues of society. This is where I reject that “decolonising Wits” is a generalisation or insubstantial myth. Yes, curricula are developed along certain guidelines with the goal of obtaining qualification in whichever field at the end of it. However, this does not preclude diversified didactic methods, yet only a homogeneous curriculum seems to prevail. Fields such as psychology, philosophy, and law need to integrate diversified elements in order to add to the richness of the subjects. It should not merely be “in the South African context,” or “as applied to Africa;” these still foster the implicit assumption that they are merely alternate ways of understanding. As to how this can be done is still a deeper issue, but I do maintain that the “sequel” or the “second instalment” of the

protests will attempt to highlight these issues.

Regarding validity

Both sides are well within their rights to feel some type of emotional response to this entire situation; it is, after all, what makes us human. I believe that there are differing reasons for each evocative sense, as this is where I still maintain that the issue of legitimacy is paramount. The students have more legitimate reasons to be feeling angry, and this is further compounded by the stronghold reactionary techniques employed by Wits Management. It is not the case that students are angry at the presence of the security forces, but rather the reason behind their presence. Unpacking this leads to the more complicated wider issues of society, which cannot be solved by Wits Management alone. But, the implication has been to criminalise and attempt to dissuade protest from occurring, as any sign of dissent is struck down with impunity. This is not only unfair, it is unjust. I disagree with the conclusion that it is because you used force, dialogue was able to take place. If we accept these then we have to be willing to accept that that force is not only a necessary means to an end, it is preferably the first choice. I tend to agree with the former, but the latter is controversial and seems to have more perverse implications.

There are many ways to facilitate dialogue, but we are also assuming that all things are equal; which they are not. Political factionalism can impede the process from the very beginning, and make this a dead-end option. It is unfortunate, but it does not necessarily preclude the proposition from justification.

Regarding reliability

This point relates mainly to the criticism of me not applying the critique of “emotional weaponry” fairly, and consistently. I think I have addressed the issue of consistency above, but I feel that I need to clearly state the caveat of the slippery slope that one risks falling on if one is to accept the critique for one, but not all.

This is not what I'm strictly adhering to, but I believe that given the circumstances, it is more harmful for you to utilise the same tactic than it is for the students to employ it. In the former case, there is a clear agenda to present the version of events that would be broadcast to the public. In the latter case, there are serious unheard voices and stories that we need to be taken into consideration. Political agendas aside, people are really struggling to cope with these financial pressures and this may be enough motivation for them to feel as harassed as they do. The opposite seems to be true of you, Adam, rather than having due right to feel harassed, you harass and harangue on the virtues of freedom. The double-standard here, is unjustifiable, and we should be quick to call you on this as it quickly diminishes the issue at hand.

Freedom, as a distinction

I am attempting to make a point about the link between the literal physical exclusion, and also what it symbolically represents. The two do not necessarily have to be mutually exclusive, and this is where I believe interpretation can be useful. But, we must be responsible in the interpretations we make lest we do more harm by making the wrong types of interpretations, especially-interpretations of behaviour. Reactions against behaviour has been a strong theme in these protests, and one which I believe Wits management grossly misinterpreted. Thus, physical harm was committed when it could have been reasonably avoided.

However, this is not to ignore the issues of socio-economic (none) freedoms that the #FMF protesters endure outside of Wits, but they do impact on the entry into such an institution. In sum, the question we should begin by asking ourselves is: What does this behaviour mean? Once the answer can be coherently structured, we can begin to facilitate the necessary dialogue needed.

The task of the future

I will acknowledge that all disciplines have sub-disciplines that are more difficult to diversify than others. Philosophy per se, is not a homogeneous field with the same applicability across all sub-disciplines. Neither is Psychology for that matter, but problems still do exist irrespective of their heterogeneous qualifiers. For instance, as an allegory of justice why not teach first/second year students Achebe's magnum opus *Things Fall Apart* rather than "The Republic" by Plato? This is not exhaustive of the list of texts readily available but an example of what I mean by decolonizing the curriculum. Afrocentric praxis and critiques thereof should be part and parcel of the curriculum. We do not learn about the philosophers of antiquity as objects of historical analysis, but actively distribute their texts every year. This is not to say that their impact is insubstantial, but it does set the course for how the rest of the years are likely to go.

In Psychology too, one need only look at the history of apartheid to see the "justifiable" use of psychometric measures to classify races, and the constituents of their intelligence. These barometers have not been discarded, but rather expanded into "norms" across different race groups. This is inherently problematic and in itself discriminatory. Yet, it persists. This is why I believe that the decolonizing project needs to have a level of immediacy and urgency about it.

The harder sciences will be more difficult to do this with, as they follow strict rules that govern the functioning of the universe. I have no disputes here, just the suggestion that we value more research done by African scientists.

Ultimately, let us continue to embolden our intellectual virtues, both for the sake of themselves and for the development of society as a whole. I do agree with you that for any side to adopt a "hard-line" position is inhibiting to efficacious discussion, as well as just being unnecessary. I believe that the future of education in our country will no doubt change

this century, and rightly so. There is a certain sense of disillusionment that many black students are feeling with what we are learning, and how we are applying it. This is not to say that we do not understand the content, but the processes behind the delivery of this content are still poorly understood, or not mentioned at all.

We must make the unconscious conscious.



“I felt the oppression and discipline of patriarchy within the movement itself“



THEME 2: Gender, Power & Identities

Being Black Inside #WFMF

Nonkululeko Mabaso

FeesMustFall was not just an event that shook the tertiary and state institutions of our country: it was, for people like me a life-changing experience. I will never forget 15 October 2015- it was on the second day of what then became the #WitsFeesMust Fall movement. To be honest, I initially had no interest in protesting, I just wanted to attend my lecture but the venue was locked. So, when a friend suggested that we observe the protesters who were demonstrating close by, I had no problem especially when she promised that we would leave after a few minutes. However, everything I witnessed on the day; the conversations I had with the comrades, the presence of the police and private security, the conspicuous absence of white skins, the emotions in the struggle songs we sang from the heart, and the vigour and fire of everyone who was present, was the reason that for the first time in my twenty two years of existence I felt the skin covering my bones, like a rubber band, snap my black consciousness back to life. The liberal universe that constituted my existence, which embraced the principles of rationality, individualism, justice, and hard work, instantly melted away. This was because for the first time, the brown skin I had been struggling to define and identify with for over a decade, finally made sense. I realised that I am one with the oppressed, therefore black. The two seem to be synonymous, and the evidence to support this has always been in my face and finally I recognised it.

These encounters reminded me of the first day I realised the meaning of the colour of my skin. I like to refer to it as “the pre-amnesia phase.” I was eight years old, in Gauteng, at the Alberton Shopping Mall with my grandmother when I saw a beautifully customised bicycle

nearby. Like any other curious child I ran towards it to get a closer look. Unfortunately, the owner of the bicycle saw me and he, a huge Afrikaner man, started to speak to me in Afrikaans, and even though I could not understand a word of what came out of his mouth, I could tell from the tone of his voice and his body language that he was reprimanding me. Thankfully my grandmother was nearby and she came to my rescue. As we walked away I was confused because this particular white person was not smiling at me, I could not understand what caused his aggressive reaction. My grandmother responded by recalling the terrible oppression, repression and abuse she and her family had endured in her early years during apartheid. From this moment onwards, I began to understand why, in our community, blackness was invariably translated into a state of “non-whiteness” from which one could graduate to being “almost white” by aspiring towards white norms, values and lifestyle.

Over thirteen years later, this scene was replaying itself at Wits University: that bicycle incident is analogous to my current experiences. The bicycle represents education and the aggressive man is the deeply entrenched colonial system, which perpetuates and reinforces white supremacy through capitalism and the commoditisation of knowledge. The problem is that I was socialised into believing that this bicycle of education is my basic human right.

I still remember the slogan beneath our school emblem reading: “Education is the Key to Success.” They trained us to be diligent in

order for us to attain the highest degree of education, which they assured us would help us to escape the pitfalls of poverty.

The school syllabus and the motivational talks should have included a disclaimer, informing us of inflation rates and economic crises and how these would present an inevitable impediment. I got a huge slap of reality in the face during #WitsFeesMustFall when I understood that this bicycle called education was never mine, and that the majority of people who have my socio-economic and racial background have little to no chance of attaining it. This moment propelled me to what I like to refer to as my “anamnesis phase”.

The system of the prestigious University of the Witwatersrand, and other similar institutions of higher education, is not designed with consideration for the demographic profile of the people who constitute the large majority of #WitsFeesMustFall participants. Hailing from a lineage of slaves, the fourth generation of landless people, born to low-class migrant workers, the sons and daughters of truck drivers and domestic workers; they were “born free” yet they have been shackled by poverty and misfortune from the moment they breathed their first. They were raised in crammed, four-roomed houses, which in most cases were home to more relatives than could be fed.

They walked long distances to school on winter mornings, wearing torn school shoes and threadbare school uniforms, which were handed down to them from relatives. Arriving at the school gate, they dreaded the possibility that someone might have probably stolen their desk or chair -- this was common practice because of the dire shortage of school furniture. Ironically, lunch time was an unpleasant moment for most of them because they had to stand in that long queue at the feeding scheme office, where frequent fights broke out over line-cutting as the children were aware of the shortage of food. Moreover, they had to bear the shame of being mocked by fellow

learners for not having a lunch box. In this school playground, a mere lunch box is a mark of privilege. After school, most returned home to an empty fridge and bread tin, and only a small portion had a relative who could help them with their homework because, commonly, the adults are either “illiterate” or working an extra shift in order to put food on the table for the family.

However, these tales of normalised black poverty are omitted when politicians address the nation on great podiums and media. They are concealed by recollections of “the great stories we have to tell” about the great strides which have been made by the government towards development: the millions of RDP houses built, the hundreds of job opportunities for the poor, the millions of Rands that NSFAS spends on tertiary education, and many more. These are all justifiable claims and they are celebration-worthy; however, how long will the poor continue to wait for the scraps to fall from the masters table. The truth is “democracy” did not result in their lives being materially changed, they have just transcended from one level of poverty into another, while their former oppressors continue to glory in their wealth, power and privilege.

In reality, the neo-liberal economic system of this country was designed with the precise intention of reproducing a different type of black slave through the higher education system. Reduced to a non-being: alienated through the institutional culture, the tuition fees and curriculum which serve as a constant reminder that they do not belong. They carry not only the weight of their books, but also the weight of “black tax,” including the weight of the mountain of student loans which they have to repay. The new age Black slaves are “mis-educated,” shackled by debt, and in constant pursuit of freedom, which is synonymous assimilating and embodying whiteness (white spirituality, white cultural norms and values, white aesthetics, white language, white knowledge/theory) in order to be ascribed a sense of “being”.

This realisation of the contemporary condition of “Blackness” and the meaning of the colour of my skin, *vis-a-vis* the meaning of whiteness in my generation, shook me to the core. If I were a white young woman during #WitsFeesMustFall I could have been either one of two people: Ms A or Ms B. As Ms A: there is a great probability that I would not have participated in the protest. In fact, I would most probably be going to endorse the online petition that was in circulation to express my condemnation for the protesters violent and barbaric acts. *“How dare they block the entrances and intimidate me when I tried to drive out of campus the other day? Do they not understand that the inflation rate has increased, therefore there is nothing that the government or higher education institutions can do to prevent the ripples of the economic crisis?”* My tuition fees would be paid up and I would have positive work prospects because I have been groomed for a position in my family’s company since the day I was born. My parents and I would have been a zealous supporter of the #KeepWitsOpen campaign to advocate for the completion of the academic programme and write exams before December because my family and I would have already finalised our summer holiday plans.

However, if I were Ms B: My fees would have been paid up too, because my parents would be financially stable, but I would have supported the #WitsFeesMustFall protests because I believe in radicalism. In fact, I would have participated, and reposted and retweeted in order to raise public awareness about this issue. I would have been aware of the socio-economic injustices that most Black people suffer as well as the colonial roots of those injustices. However, I would still be sceptical about the possibility of “free education in our lifetime” because that would result in the possible collapse of our economy. So maybe the best solution for now would be for the government to increase its funding for financial aid in order to accommodate more people. I would have been one of the targets at the end of the firearms in the hands of police officers,

forming a wall of protection around my Black brothers and sisters. This is because, although no one taught us this, we are all aware that we live in a world that privileges white skins over dark skins. Therefore, we would have been confident that our safety was guaranteed.

I, and the black majority of participants in the #WitsFeesMustFall protests, am neither Ms A nor B, and the men were not Mr A or B. The truth is that when comparing our common reality to theirs, it feels like we are in a separate universe. I remember on one of the days we were gathered in a circle by the South Yale Road entrance, just reminiscing about our common struggles, although we did not all have the same economic background we all had one common enemy, which goes by the name of Black tax. If, or when, this fee increment comes into effect we will be in deep trouble because even if we go on to get well-paying jobs, we have the burden of taking care of our families financially and putting our siblings through university, while simultaneously paying off our student loans.

These daily interactions in our gatherings with the comrades not only taught me lessons about the “Black condition” but I also got further enlightenment about the “Black female condition.”

Prior to the rise of #MbokodoLead, (that is, the moment when the women of #WitsFeesMustFall came to the forefront by asserting the legitimacy of femininity within the movement) I felt the oppression and discipline of patriarchy within the movement itself. I had to discipline my body by dressing as “unfeminine” as possible in order to assimilate and to avoid exposing my body while we were moving around. I also had to discipline my tongue, and to teach it the proper grammatical rules of “comrade speak”, which is basically a variant of *tsotsi taal* predominantly used by working class black males in the township. Thirdly, I had to discipline my

movement, to forbid my feet from ever carrying me to the front or to the centre where I could lead a song or an address because as many said, that is a man's job. So as a Black woman, in that moment and time, I was subject to double jeopardy.

Sitting on the roads, blocking entrances, running around and protesting, made me wonder about the mining riots of the Witwatersrand in 1913. My black ancestors were probably chanting similar struggle songs, on this same ground and area. The systems of oppressions are supposedly different. However, we have a common enemy -- institutionalised racism and white supremacy. My mind went further back in history, before the skyscrapers that beautify Johannesburg were erected. I thought about the black hands that built the foundations of all these magnificent buildings, those who laid each brick on top of the other. I thought about all the blood that was shed, the men and women who died trying to assert their humanity.

Black people are still oppressed: we remain subject to a myriad of structural violences. This was no more evident than in the 2016 wave of #FeesMustFall; the nation watched in awe as black students were brutalised and unjustly arrested by the state police. The events of the Marikana massacre, and of the youth protest of 16 June 1976, were replayed. The police have been turned into ferocious watch dogs. They are used to repress marginalised masses standing up to assert their human rights. The police are deployed in order to protect the economic interests of the invisible masters.

It is greatly troubling to realise that some of the masters now also have the same skin as the slaves. However, Fanon (1963) rightly predicted that the greatest obstacle to the national revolution after the liberation struggle has been successful would be the native political and economic elite. Biko (1982) could never have foreseen that the second most dangerous impediment to the realisation of the liberation of the consciousness of black people, after white liberals, would be black people who are

allegedly black-conscious, and who have been co-opted by whiteness. The youth, as well as the majority of black South Africans, have reached a place of disillusionment for their black leaders have proven to be unreliable and unsympathetic. #FeesMustFall and the increasing community protests are an indication of this. These moments of violence, fear, uncertainty, injustice, brutality and dire poverty, while they continue to shake the structures of society, will also awaken the many black people who are not conscious of their state of being in this white world, as I was.

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Moving between spaces of the “barbaric and the bourgeoisie” student protests

Boikhutso Maubane

So near but yet so far.

I often refer to Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) Soshanguve Campus as my neighbour, given that we share a fence. I pass by the main gate each time I travel to my home. On a few occasions over the past few years I witnessed the protests lead by TUT students, which at times escalated to features of violence. In my reflections, which were sparked by the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) #FeesMustFall protest, I revisited my interpretation of the TUT student protests from as early as when I registered at a higher learning institution. I reckon my reaction to the manifestations of TUT student violent protests reflected my obliviousness. I did not question or engage in conversations about the damaged infrastructure that came to my attention. During that time, my father worked long hours to pay my tuition. I hardly spent father-daughter quality time with him. However, I committed to produce satisfactory results from my registered course. It was my goal to affirm to my father that his sweat and backaches were rewarding. Anything else, such as the TUT student protests or any other student political activities, ceased to occupy my consciousness. It was all about bringing that degree home!

In 2010, I commenced with my higher education studies at the University of Pretoria (UP), situated in the East of Pretoria. My family, relatives and friends assured me that I had done well by being registered at a seemingly good institution; my maternal grandmother, on the other hand, was not pleased. She repeatedly asked with a frown: “*Goreng o kgethile sekolo*

se se tletseng maburu!”¹ My motivation remained consistent, and I explained to her that I intended to complete my degree. I could not relate to her. I thought, “This is post-apartheid. *Koko*”² need not project her apartheid experiences into the current South Africa, and whether UP is predominately white, black, purple or orange, *go a tshwana*³, as long as I complete my studies. I then kept my eyes on the degree and making *Ntate le Mme Maubane*⁴ proud. Ironically, in the midst of my defence, I did not consider applying to further my education at TUT; indeed it would have been convenient, and less costly. This was not because the institution did not offer my preferred course, as I was not aware of this during my higher education application process period. I just remember clearly that a childhood friend who was enrolled at TUT praised me for being a UP student. She motivated that TUT student protests become a nuisance when one is eager to attain a qualification. Although I did not express this in response to my friend’s displeasure, I was aware that I did not wish to associate with the masses of TUT student protests, irrespective of them being my neighbours. Anyway, I was not baptised by Bantu Biko’s work on the importance of solidarity. Thus, on many occasions, I lacked empathy. I would rather sip on my orange-flavoured *Oros* and watch the *Jerry Springer* show. I could not be bothered. I simply reacted with irritation and annoyance to their manner of approach in addressing student related grievances. I must confess that I did not take the initiative to develop an analytical lens to gain understanding of those grievances during

¹ Why did you choose a University that is Afrikaner dominated?

² Grandmother.

³ It is all the same.

⁴ Mr and Mrs Maubane.

that time. I only had the audacity to assume that TUT students place no value in their learning institution. I ‘othered’ them. A conclusion could be drawn that I had embodied the culture of UP. Moreover, the piercing discourse revolved around how my non-alliance with TUT Soshanguve Campus was a privilege, as it is faced with frequent violent protests that create discord in one’s academic progress. Although I was modest about it in their presence, this boosted my confidence and reinforced my “othering” of my neighbours, whom I understood to be irrational.

At this moment in time I still revisit a vivid memory: I was travelling home from Pretoria Central by taxi, and we passed by the TUT gate as our usual route. There were burnt tyres, the TUT fence was dismantled and rocks were placed on the road, making it difficult for vehicles to make their way through - the common tactics that one would expect in a Black township. What is more appealing when I dwell on this memory, are the talks that surfaced when the taxi driver manoeuvred on the rocky road. With a tone of rage, one of the elders commented, “*Mara bana ba, ba startile ka go senya...*”⁵. The main theme in the elders’ apparent displeasure was that TUT students must study and stop with this protest business. It was not only a perceived inconvenience for travelling through the usual route, but it was also the behaviour of students. They were being demonised and seen as nonsensical by the elders. Of course, I refrained from responding, partly because I am shy but mainly because there was nothing to contest. I was in sync with the roaming frustration in the taxi. My interpretation of the violent incidents remained that TUT students were compromising themselves, their property, and their reputation - which some of my black acquaintances at UP claimed they did not have. Being near, yet so far, from the TUT Soshanguve campus, and taking the position of an “outsider,” the best advice I could have given in those times was for students to partake in dialogue pertaining

to their institutional affairs with relevant stakeholders, and thus #Violencemustfall. I figured I was concerned about the image of infrastructure. I maintained this attitude with so much confidence until I registered at Wits in 2015. Early in the year my brother became irritated with me for my superficial argument regarding our fellow Black brothers and sisters’ challenges at TUT. He took it upon himself to introduce me to the Bantu Biko - this was followed by lengthy, heated arguments. I had learned that my brother has mastered the art of winning an argument. Even if he had to convince you that an apple is a pear, he would not rest. My psyche was bound to transform.

I can say that the rise of #FeesMustFall 2015 further served as a catalyst toward the redemption of a young Black female, although this is a gradual process. My brother’s indoctrination then became parallel with my need to participate in the 2015 #Feesmustfall protest. Our engagement, based on the perception of TUT students’ demonstrations, shifted from arguments and too much pride to give in, to calm conversations and development of mutual understanding on matters of student protests in the context of a Black township. We understood that the tuition fees were exclusionary, as we know of bright black minds in our community who are deterred from reaching self-actualization as a result of financial constraints. We reckoned that day after day, digesting such circumstances in Black townships, only leads to acceptance, normalisation and continuing to rationalise that Blacks are resilient: “at least you have a matric certificate to get a job,” we say.

I emphasized to my brother that I am not the one to claim to understand this experience. However, it is safe to assume that one’s youth days are a critical transition into sensing one’s position in society. I cannot imagine the internal psyche of a young person when they meet the requirements to pursue a degree or qualification they desire, and yet they cannot

⁵ These children have yet again started to cause damage.

register because of financial implications. Being an outsider in this particular predicament, I could be wrong, but I take it that it is a sensitive experience to suppress one's ambitions, and reach a state of despair and helplessness. At least this is how my brother and I came to draw a hypothesis that perhaps it should not surprise us that some of our childhood friends, with whom we played *dithini*⁶, have come to befriend *nyaope*. This proved that indeed the system has become an enemy.

It was further appealing to my brother when we witnessed how the very young Black people, affected by tuition fees, rejected the narrative that links the challenges faced in the townships to the apartheid legacy.

On a few occasions, my childhood friends insisted that our failure to divorce our past from our present is no longer justifiable at this stage. But, same as my brother, I resonated more with Hoffman's (2004) concept of the hinge generation, in that the current youth, or so called "born frees" of South Africa, did not experience the regulations of the apartheid government. However, the effects of the past persist and are evident in our present. Thus, without seeking for facts, there was confidence in the belief that the fee increment was bound to be significantly detrimental to the previously disadvantaged, to those black people who are still trying to independently address and break through the cycle of poverty that was systematised by apartheid regulations. The ongoing conversations with my brother further confirmed that indeed the financial exclusion of the majority symbolised the intentions of the apartheid system and this is too close to home for the current Black youth. Therefore, the surfacing repressed trauma, and what I have come to understand as Black anger, are

only symptoms of the brutality experienced during apartheid, a time which others are so eager to bury. My brother's talk made me understand that the current neurosis from Black anger was destined. The development of my belief and the need for participation in the protest against higher education fees, could no longer be a dilemma, it had really become a one-plus-one-is-equal-to-two situation.

I wish to speak to events or observations that pierced my thought processes during the #FeesMustFall protest. On the day of the march to the Union Buildings, the 23rd of October 2016, there was an emergence of introspection. This was particularly when I read through my colleagues' and family *WhatsApp* groups, and the common theme across both conversations was that Wits student protesters had been maintaining a peaceful demonstration, but then TUT students came and instigated the violence. When I shared this with my well respected Comrade X, she narrated that in the midst of solidarity at the Union buildings, she witnessed Wits students being advised to distance themselves from the violence, as that was not part of the plan. The impression from those two *WhatsApp* groups was that TUT students were perceived as "too violent" and "they messed up a peaceful protest." My thought processes were as such: perhaps these young Black people from TUT identified more with the youth during the apartheid era; perhaps they faced more intense frustrations within their learning space. Arguably, their "barbarism" is a symptom of their deeply embedded issues, such as not being responded to by high profile stakeholders that attended to the "sophisticated" and impactful protest lead by Wits students. In this paper I attempt to translate my thought processes of the barbaric protest and the bourgeoisie protest, and the self that is versatile between both spaces of TUT and Wits contexts.

⁶ Tins game.

Bourgeoisie and Barbaric student protests

Monday, August 13, 2012

Anonymous

August 18, 2012 at 9:09 AM

<http://journaltau.blogspot.co.za/2012/08/tut-students-on-strike-photo-wilson.html>



"u moron its our money...stop bein 2 black an act lyk civilised people..."- Anonymous

October, 25, 2015

Feeding Students at Wits

<http://www.giftofthegivers.org/projects/bursaries-scholarships/1028-food-aid-to-students>



"Gift of the Givers fed 2000 hungry students at Wits"

I wish to echo that the intention is not to contest Wits student #FeesMustFall protest, nor to speak of it superficially. My discomfort in my reflections however is directed at my observation of the reception of the Wits student protest by the public. It was the kind of protest that was relatively radical, even Uncle Habib was held for interrogation by students. Black anger was fuelling it, and it gained international recognition. It kept the stakeholders involved on their toes. It was a ripple effect of disruption that infiltrated other higher learning institutions in some parts of South Africa. I also call it the bourgeoisie protest. In the midst of all of this, the Wits student protest was also the kind to be served with refreshments. Students were provided with sandwiches, juice, fruit and bottled water. My other well respected Comrade Y tells me that she received and stored Woolworth's food for the protest. Fairly fancy, right? What I also learned was that there were monetary donations. Celebrities and religious organisations were also on the premises to be in solidarity. I found that sister and brotherhood, or rather Black love, was profound during that time. Although victory is not yet attained, the Wits #FeesMustFall protest was a proud moment to experience. This is in line with Bantu Biko's emphasis in the book *I write what I like*, that solidarity results in superiority, and thus has significant effect.

I need not write lengthily about such. The purpose is to demonstrate how well the Wits student protest was mobilized. I was highly impressed that the Black youth is awakening and taking the initiative to disrupt the *status quo*.

But in being for #FeesMustFall, I see a problem in the nation's response to what was initially the Wits student protest, in comparison to historical protests, echoing student's grievances, at other higher learning institutions. I take it back home that, TUT is black dominated, located in a lower- to middle-class area. Time and again the area makes headlines beyond students violent protests. It is apparent that

Soshanguve is known as a “no go zone” due to its social ills. It falls within the realms of developing townships as a result of the apartheid system. But of course, Wits is a relatively higher class institution, and as one would expect, it is Wits this, Wits that. Thus, my perspective was that class disparity between the two higher learning institutions was mirrored by one student protest being mobilised effectively in comparison to the other.

It should be acknowledged that this may be explained by the argument that the mandate of some of the historical TUT student protests did not coincide or identify with that of Wits #FeesMustFall protest. However, it is not rocket science that the privilege of Wits students served as a catalyst in gaining consistent recognition and significant support. I even participated in the protest fearlessly. I figured my participation was not solely based on my beliefs about the #FeesMustFall protest, because radical as it may have been, it was a much safer and more tolerant space. Even students were credited for maintaining this because they inflicted relatively minimal violence.

Grappling with my hypocrisy

I reflected in retrospect on why I rejected TUT student protests at home, and yet perceived the Wits student protest as a necessity. I revisited my initial mental state and stereotypes towards TUT student protests back at home. I needed to understand my tendencies of ‘othering’ TUT students during that time when they needed to be heard and recognised. I needed to make sense of why I did not preach about the necessity of solidarity, like I maintained to my other brothers and sisters here at Wits during the protest. Furthermore, according to whose yardstick is protest justified? And what is a legitimate reason to protest? Perhaps, I had embodied what I often refer to as the “UP as well as Wits arrogance.” I wondered if we, as young Black scholars in predominantly white institutions, should tolerate a sense of superiority and prestige attached to Wits student protesters and

stigmatisation that captured TUT student protesters, followed by “us and them.”

The talks with comrades and colleagues persisted that TUT students are extremely violent, such that they were detrimental to the #FeesMustFall protest during the march to the Union Buildings. I did not bear witness to this, but some of my brothers and sisters from Wits shared their conversations in that Wits students were *twanging* and expressing their irritation of the violence that was escalated mostly by TUT students. It then became a point of agency to understand the TUT students rationale for resorting to violence as a means of communication to the African National Congress (ANC) government, and thus associated with barbarism, which was rejected with an attitude of the Wits arrogance.

There was also a need to question the significance of class disparities between institutions. As it stands, historically white Universities like Wits carry relatively more institutional capital in comparison to Black institutions like TUT.

I pondered if Wits students would demand buses to be hired to travel down to TUT to be in solidarity with our brothers and sisters whenever they need their voices heard, albeit that their grievances are unique or common to that of Wits. Clearly, the TUT student protests have not, to my knowledge, been responded to in the public domain in comparison to the Wits bourgeoisie student protest. Can celebrities like AKA also be present at TUT Soshanguve campus and share the space with student protesters? Perhaps I am blowing this out of proportion, but I fail to identify the difference between the arrogance that is embodied in bourgeoisie environments like Wits and that of the famous Penny Sparrow. The question at hand is: how is it expected for TUT students to be “sophisticated” in their approach to challenging management, and demanding to be serviced appropriately

without being addressed by agency? Is it not that their violence only symbolises their agony, for which redress is long overdue? When I shared these sentiments with my cousin, she indicated that it seems like Black students in these bourgeoisie higher learning institutions show empathy to Black students in institutions like TUT only when these very prestigious spaces are in crises. She reckons that should a TUT student protest attract public interest, it will be overshadowed by the likes of Wits.

During the process of compiling this book with my fellow brothers and sisters, my friend and colleague Bertrand Leopeng shared his analysis of my reflections, and I quote him because he seemed to have framed my introspection clearer, “I believe, on a personal level, there was an attempt at redemption by participating in Wits #FeesMustFall protest; yet there is still a need to self-identify with the students who shared your physical context, even though you were “fortunate” to be at Wits.”

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#FeesMustFall: Black Women, Building a Movement and the Refusal to be erased

Simamkele Dlakavu

Participating in the #FeesMustFall movement at Wits has been personally and politically fulfilling and yet, equally disheartening. I was a senior student when the #FeesMustFall movement began, a Masters student in African Literature. It was the culmination of years of struggle for Black dignity at Wits, including some moments of struggle, which I was part of, that never garnered the same mass student mobilisation. In this chapter I choose to focus on three movements of Black feminist revolt at Wits which were: #MbokodoLead, #OccupyLuthuli-House and #EndOutsourcing movement. In these moments, we saw Black women claiming their political agency and voice. My intention is to address the negation of Black women's contributions to FeesMustFall as a collective, not just the individual women who have gotten the media's glare. I seek to memorialise their collective political agency, efforts and victories that I fear will be masked. Some of the tensions and contradictions that I will speak to in this chapter are yet to be resolved. I put forward that #FeesMustFall was as much about gender as it was about creating a decolonised reality, a de-commodification of education, and ending outsourcing; whether the people committed to maintaining patriarchy liked it or not. My participation in the #FeesMustFall and #EndOutsourcing movement strengthened my Black feminism.

First few days of Wits Fees Must Fall: #MbokodoLead

"I have come to believe over and over again that what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood. That

speaking profits me, beyond any other effect"-
(Lorde 1984:40).

One of the most important principles of Black feminist thought is the value of Black women freely speaking and claiming their voices. This principle is emphasised by Black feminist poet and activist, Audre Lorde, in the above quote. During the #FeesMustFall movement that swept across university campuses in South Africa, we saw Black women, queer and trans-women claiming space and raising their voices loudly. They refused to allow a space where their voices and experiences of oppression could be silenced or side-lined. These actions of revolt often resulted in internal conflict in different Fallist movements across the country.

In the first few days of #FeesMustFall in 2015, a few of us Black women at Wits started seeing how men were dominating the space. This was reflected in basic things like how men would lead songs; how their voices were louder and legitimatised while engaged in protest during the day, as well as in the evening mass meetings at Solomon House. Furthermore, we saw how it was demanded that Black women do "women's work" caring for the movement, which meant in some cases, being in the kitchen and feeding the movement. Many Black women and Queer persons who participated in catering for the movement enjoyed doing this work; however they found it disrespectful when certain demands were made upon them without the recognition or appreciation for the constraints they were working under. "When is the food coming?"; "why is the food so dry?" were some of the comments made by the cis-het men of our movement. In mass meetings, when a woman

¹ Cishet describes a person who is both cisgender and heterosexual. Cisgender is a person who identifies with their assigned-at-birth gender.

#MbokodoLead demonstration at Senate House



began to speak, few would listen. When a woman would lead a song, she would be dismissed, and a man would start another and everyone would follow. This environment of patriarchal domination ignited the emergence of #MbokodoLead.

We wanted to create safer spaces where Black women's ideas, political agency and being would be valued. We started the hashtag #MbokodoLead on 17 October 2015, three days after the first Wits shutdown.

It began from a *WhatsApp* group, where the aim was to add as many Black women as possible to the group to brainstorm how to dismantle the tyranny of patriarchy in the movement while affirming each other. We spoke to each other; Black women from different political parties, Black women who were not politically affiliated, Black women at different levels of their studies.

That night on the group, we decided that we would first populate social media with images

of Black woman at Wits participating in the movement. We would affirm the incoming and outgoing SRC presidents, which were both Black women. We would detail the work Black women were doing for the movement, such as in the logistics and direct actions sub-committees. #MbokodoLead began trending nationwide on Twitter; Black women from other universities also joined in the conversation and profiled Black women at their university. We decided that we were going to stage an action the following day; we would sing under one banner. We decided that we would wear African print *doeks* and Danai Mupotsa, a lecturer in African Literature, offered to go buy materials that morning in downtown Johannesburg. We contributed funds and agreed that women who had extra *doeks* would bring extra for others. We also decided to let go of our political regalia and we would wear white t-shirts with our *doeks*. The following day, we sang, we made sure that the microphones were given to Black women to sing. Black women would claim the microphone also to provide political direction, and their ideas to advance the movement. That evening of these deliberations, I felt the unity among Black women.

After these and other actions, we started seeing a shift in narrative of the #FeesMustFall coverage in the media. I wrote a piece in 2015 profiling this effort by Black women in the movement. I argued: “If one analyses the images portrayed in the media and social media during the first few days of the #WitsFeesMustFall protests, you notice that these have men [Vuyani Pambo and Mcebo Dlamini] at their centre. However, as the week progressed, we started seeing the images of Wits SRC leaders Nompandolo Mkhathshwa and Shaera Kalla elevated in the media, as the women leading the movement. The narrative and faces of #WitsFeesMustFall started changing, and the whole country knew their names, saw their faces and heard the voices of these young women”. However, as always, patriarchy responded by defending itself through violent and misogynistic ways. For many Black women who participated in #MbokodoLead, it would have been easier to keep quiet, to be in the shadows outside of the patriarchal view that would label you “a counter-revolutionary” and “a feminist agent.” Or men singing “I smell pussy” when ridiculing the faces of women who participated in #MbokodoLead. These heterosexual men used feminism as a swear word. Feminism was also despised by some Black women in the movement, who lamented, “these feminists are dividing the movement” and “Blackness is not gendered,” therefore we must stop this crusade. In the *WhatsApp* group, an ANC affiliated Black woman said that Black women in the ANC should be careful of “anti-ANC” people who would “use feminism against the ANC.” Through these contractions and tensions, our efforts quickly resulted in the diversifying of the image of #FeesMustFall leaders in public discourse, and highlighted the efforts of Black women who were leading this struggle.

Fees Must Fall will always be known as having been led by Black women, particularly at Wits because of the solidarity Black women showed to each other. However, this Black feminist solidarity did not last long. As a member of the Economic Freedom Fighter (EFF) and a

Black feminist activist in other spaces, I saw how the individualisation of collective Black feminist activism was occurring. Furthermore, we started seeing more direct and severe political interference in the movement from the governing party- the ANC -- which culminated in the private ANC meeting which I named the #ANCCapture on social media. This was an unscrupulous meeting that discussed ways to collapse the movement after Jacob Zuma’s announcement of a zero percent fee increase of university fees for the 2016 academic year. This deceitful meeting was attended by one of Jacob Zuma’s daughters and some of the Black women we sought to defend and affirm. During #MbokodoLead, I tweeted:



However, I was no longer singing that message, neither were other Black woman who participated in #MbokodoLead. This was due to the decision taken by these women, their fellow comrades and their political affiliations to disband the movement and go #BackToClass as the PYA poster said.

Black women putting their bodies on the line: #OccupyLuthuliHouse

On the 22nd of October 2015 students agreed that we would be marching to Luthuli House, the ANC’s national headquarters, in order to place pressure on the ruling party to provide #FreeEducation. Many who have written about this moment of #FeesMustFall fail to acknowledge that some members of the PYA,

including some of the leaders of the movement, were against this move. However, they were outnumbered by the high number of students who wanted to march to their headquarters. The hashtag circulating on social-media that day was #OccupyLuthuliHouse. However, no occupation was conducted by the majority of the student population. That day seemed like a well-orchestrated theatre piece and we were the audience. At the time, the majority of the student population had no idea that one of their leaders, Nompandolo Mkhathshwa, was working at the same building whose power and non-delivery of #FreeEducation we were trying to challenge. “We are not insulting the ANC,” Mcebo Dlamini said, while Vuyani Pambo and students in the front indicated that the ANC’s Secretary General, Gwede Mantashe, should sit on the floor with the students, as we made Adam Habib sit. Our fellow students in the ANC refused to make Mantashe sit down. Mantashe was not “humbled” as it was intended. Furthermore, a memorandum was read that students did not deliberate on or approve in plenary; we were shocked by its existence. In her beginning chant, Shaera Kalla noted: “Forward with zero percent forward!” and began reading a memorandum that stated that students wanted a zero percent fee increase, a demand not agreed upon by Wits or the student movement nationally. Some of us thought we were putting our bodies on the line for free education (*SABC Digital News*, 2015). (News, 2015).

The ANC had rolled down their road show truck, which they use at their political rallies, and this is where Mantashe and other ANC leaders perched and gazed at the crowd. Seeing the show, the political theatre that was unfolding, Black women started chanting “this is not a rally!” “this is not a rally!” We highlighted that we are not here to endorse an ANC script, nor were we at an ANC rally, we were there to hold accountable a party that had led a government that perpetuated a commoditised university space, which has locked out millions of Black youth. Black women stayed behind to #OccupyLuthuliHouse after the march, with

less than 30 of us occupying the entrances to the building. The media left along with the students. We sang songs about the Black justice that had been denied two decades into democracy. We chanted about how they sold us out. We chanted about their failed promises. We reaffirmed the memory of the 34 miners who were shot dead in Marikana by the ANC government. We continued for hours and they could not leave their offices. Their fancy cars could not leave the parking lot. They unleashed the police on us: tear gas and police man-handling. We were physically defeated but our political message was clear and it was delivered. We saw through the political theatre. It is important to highlight that it was Black women who saw through the political theatre that others later reflected on after the #ANCCapture meeting. It was Black women who put their bodies on the line without media cameras present, to send a political statement.

#EndOutsourcing Movement at Wits

After the zero percent fee increase was announced by Jacob Zuma at the Union Buildings, students were told to #GoBackTo Class by the PYA. Nonetheless, Black women continued mobilising, protesting and organising for the #EndOutsourcing movement at Wits after the #FeesMustFall protest ended.

As argued by Pumla Gqola (2016), we often study the exclusion and marginalisation of Black women in Black led movements after it has occurred. We are always responding to the silencing of our voices. What is not often detailed is how Black women have actively contributed and in most instances, carried movements fighting for Black justice and an end to racialized inequality. We don’t highlight their physical and intellectual labour; this erasure furthers the perception that Black women are always the ones complaining and dividing Black libratory movement spaces instead of building them. Therefore, in this paper, it is important that I highlight how Black women at Wits constituted the #FeesMustFall

movement to secure the victory of #EndOutsourcing because patriarchy pretends that Black women do not constitute spaces, that they are not building structures nor providing logistical leadership that carries movements.

When #FeesMustFall ended at Wits, when the majority of the identified leaders of the movement left, besides Vuyani Pambo, less than 50 students continued protesting and putting pressure to #EndOutsourcing at Wits University.

When we began protesting, the movement made it clear that we were not only fighting for fees to literally fall, but we were also fighting for an end to an exploitative working regime. Wits outsourced workers engaged in protest alongside the students.

However, after the announcement by Zuma at the Union Buildings, the majority of the students who participated in #FeesMustFall went back to class. We stayed behind as students, continued occupying and putting pressure on the university alongside the workers. A genuine student and worker alliance was built and after days of on-going action, the university announced that it would end outsourcing. We were all incredibly proud because there were times we felt defeated because we did not have the mass power. We felt defeated when it was said that we were continuing protesting against outsourcing for “regime change” by the state and for personal interests. We continued, even when we were criminalized. We felt defeated when the university sent in private security and disempowered us through violence. We also felt defeated when the media had abandoned the campus and failed to report on the ongoing efforts. However our spirit persisted and a long-standing battle to #EndOutsourcing was won, by the efforts of a few students.

Black women were at the centre of this victory and it is important that we acknowledge their role. It’s an important Black feminist project because, historically, Black women’s political agency and efforts were easily erased in public memory. Within the #EndOutsourcing movement we recognised that we had to operate effectively in order to achieve political results with a few numbers of students. We created task teams which included: insourcing; logistics; legal; direct action; media and political education. Black women were the driving engines of these task teams. Black women like Zukiswa White made sure that our logistics team was always in motion. She constantly made sure meetings were held on time and sent out minutes of meetings, even to students who had left the movement. I do not know how many students Ntokozo Moloai bailed out of jail or provided legal assistance to. I do not know how many student activists have returned to university today because of her tireless work within the legal task-team. We elected Moloai to represent us in the insourcing university task-team, chaired by Dali Mpofu, in recognition of her hard work and commitment, along with Vuyani Pambo. As I write this Wits workers in maintenance are the first group to be insourced because of this collective effort and many more workers are in the process of being insourced. Ayabulela Mhlapho not only drafted our movement’s manifesto, but also provided intellectual direction drawing from the Black Consciousness theory. She also participated in the direct action and education task team. In a conversation, Thobile Ndimande, who was a part of the direct action task-team explained: “there was a point in time where I was on the ground, I would be on campus at 6am. I would be on campus all day and all night... I’ll be in meetings.” When we felt demotivated, I and Nyiko Lebo gang Shikwambane, created an artistic space called #FreeEducationLive for us to enjoy Black decolonised music and to be in conversation with each other outside of the university space while fundraising for the movement. Shikwambane explained: “I realised my strength and my contribution to the movement

was organising in a different way.” For her, that strength comes in using art for political organising and consciousness raising. Keitumetse Fatima Moutloatse, who chaired meetings, took up every task that needed a hand. These and many other Black women cannot be erased from the victory of #EndOutsourcing, as was my fear. While working with them in the movement, political solidarity between Black women became a reality. Black Feminism was in practice.

As Black women, we continued mobilizing after the #EndOutsourcing victory. Mobilising for the continuation of #FeesMustFall, mobilizing to #BringBackOurCadres who were suspended or expelled for their political activities, as well as mobilizing against rape culture with our naked protest titled: #IAmOneInThree.

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The Outcasts: No Retreat, No Surrender!

C. Anzio Jacobs

“An intersectional¹ approach to our blackness takes into account that we are not only defined by our blackness, but that some of us are also defined by our gender, our sexuality, our able-bodiedness, our mental health, and our class, among other things. We all have certain oppressions and certain privileges and this must inform our organising so that we do not silence groups among us and so that no one should have to choose between their struggles”.

UCT #RhodesMustFall Mission Statement, 25 March 2015

How does one capture the essence of over a year’s worth of persistent struggle in the #FeesMustFall movement? How do we begin to rationalise the need for a Queer revolution to take place within a protest which suggests that this is not its place, despite such protest being centred on various forms of oppression? How do we begin to learn from the past, hallucinating² all the while a new future?

It is important to speak to the issue of silencing, more so of silence, because there is so much said in silence. #FeesMustFall (#FMF) has come a long way since it’s unfolding, #Rhodes-MustFall (#RMF) paved the way for new and critical ways of engaging the conversation of protest. On the 23rd of March 2015 students at the University of Cape Town issued a statement quoted above. It captured the

essence of a conversation which ensued around that time of the three pillars of the #FMF protests. Pan-Africanism, Intersectionality and Black Radical Feminism were seen as core to what has now been dubbed the #FeesMustFall movement. In this chapter I am concerned with the role of hetero-patriarchy within the movement, and how it has affected students who self-identify as Queer/ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Asexual (LGBTIA+). As I have limited space in which to write of oppression guised as a desire to keep on track the business of #FMF, the quotation articulates where the desire for Azania comes from, with the catchphrase *Izwe lethu* capturing a need for all voices to be heard - our voices. I write from this perspective, one which yearns for freedom, but knows that such freedom would be worthless if it came without an intersectional approach to attaining it. In 2016 the Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA) commissioned a Queer Oral History project which I undertook to conduct. I self-identify as a Queer person, but take stock of my positionality, in that I often present as a man, no less a Coloured man who enjoys privileges of being read as male in a space which so readily oppresses those who are no cis-presenting. It is in the conversation of intersectionality that my identity as a Queer gender non-conforming person afforded me the opportunity to engage with Queer/LGBTIA+ activists from around the country, myself having been an activist/fallist³ during the protests of 2015/16.

- 1 A term coined by Kimberle Crenshaw, who formulated the theory of intersectionality 1989 in her essay *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*.
- 2 Term used by Leigh-Ann Naidoo, in her presentation at the Ruth First Lecture at the University of the Witwatersrand in 2016, used to describe “the project of *historical dissonance* [during #FeesMustFall], of clarifying the untenable *status quo* of the present by forcing an awareness of a time when things are not this way. They have seen things many have yet to see. They have been experimenting with hallucinating a new time”.
- 3 Term coined by activists in the movement for those who were advocating for the falling of all oppressions, at least as far as I understood it.

The work commissioned allowed me to conduct interviews and focus groups in order to collect narratives of self-identifying Queer/LGBTQIA+ fallists with the hope of them, at very least being recorded in the archive so that their stories could be told, either anonymously, or in some cases making use of their identities.

It took a while for me to understand, holistically, the positionality from which the fallists I interviewed came, despite my own identity and positionality within the movement. When I listened to Leigh-Ann Naidoo present her paper, entitled “Hallucinations”, at the Ruth First lecture in 2016, I revisited many of the moments I had experienced. They were jarring but laid the foundation for the work we attempt to do, still. Naidoo asserted that the movement was made of students and young people operating across the same temporalities and different geo-locations, but who were hallucinating an alternative to institutions that they experienced as violent, in a country in which they did not feel comfortable. I questioned the rationale behind such hallucinations for weeks after that presentation and through the project got to interview fallists in both the Western Cape and Gauteng, who experienced discomfort during their hallucinations of a better place; if you will, Azania. The discomfort seemed to be two-sided; on the one hand, there was a desire to fashion a reality in which all were equal, juxtaposed with the marginalisation of certain bodies. The movement calling for free quality and decolonised education seemed preoccupied with achieving this goal, that it was willing to achieve this through the overt exclusion of others. This contradicts two of the pillars of the movement. Calling for a Pan-African society implies a desire to achieve “global solidarity and cooperation among Africans in order to liberate [us as Africans] from racist oppression and (neo) colonial and imperialist domination” (Nangwaya, 2016), but part of the project of oppression through colonisation, was to exclude certain kinds of bodies on the basis that they were lesser than others. While this

may appear to be a harsh criticism, the insistence, particularly by hetero-patriarchs in the space of #FMF on punting intersectionality, was deeply discouraging - through interviews as I witnessed it become praxis in the movement that the term was flung around in front of the media, but then quickly forgotten in collective spaces such as mass meetings. It was a farce. These contradictions required work to be done in order to address them, for the process of (un)learning to begin. They required marginalised bodies to once again speak out against their marginalisation, but worse yet, to carry the yoke of educating those who were **unwilling** to learn. As a researcher and activist within the #FeesMustFall movement, mine is certainly not to discredit the work of **men** in the movement, but rather to articulate for future generations that this mistake has been and continues to be made; we have learnt very little from *herstory*. Because of a warped understanding of African traditions (which I understand to be a generational set of values instilled and distilled in an African context, influenced by colonisation, but equally open to change), such traditions understood as hetero-patriarchal. This causes tensions, as it is hetero-patriarchy that dictates a divine social order or Great Chain of Being.

For the purpose of this essay, I define cisgender people as people who identify as their assigned gender. At the University of the Western Cape (UWC), some of the most violent moments in the 2015 protests went viral when heavily armed police and private security attacked the student protesters. While cisgender male leaders appeared on the frontlines and were highly visible in the media, it was womxn (transgender, gender non-conforming and Queer) students who played the role of treating those who were tear gassed, hiding materials used during protests and assisting with logistics fundamental to the continuation of such protest. Some of those womxn, in reflections on the movement, posed jarring questions, such as “If people of our age as well can’t acknowledge our Queerness how are they going to write us down...? [Are we] not here

in the trenches fighting with [them], how invisible [are we as a Queer people] that [they] don't see the work that [we've] done" (1, n.d.)?

The narrative was quite similar at UCT by April 2016, when frustrated Queer/LGBTQIA+ students met to discuss their frustrations. Their discussion resulted in the formation of the Trans Collective as a direct response to omnipresent hetero-patriarchy - which, for purposes of this essay, I define as a socio-political construct that privileges men who behave in a heteronormative way - in that movement. It became evident that despite the supposed solidarity in the movement that particularly black Trans and Queer people, more especially women/womxn were being treated differently. The Trans Collective sought acknowledgement of their work in the movement, and to be treated with dignity and respect, as their peers were. After being informed that an exhibition would be opened with images from the protests, and that less than 5% of those images reflected womxn, the collective stripped and staged a protest at the exhibition opening. When asked about the violence in the space, and what resulted in the formation of the Trans Collective, one of the founders of the Trans Collective responded that "the biggest fail in terms of black, cis-het men and patriarchy and cis-normativity and hetero-normativity has been the unwillingness to learn, the unwillingness to unlearn" (*sic*) (1, n.d.). This appears to be the crux of the matter at hand.

On the frontlines of protests across the country, and in particularly elite institutions, here read as historically white, these Queer and LGBTQIA+ students are quite visible, whereas their counterparts at historically black institutions are not in a context which allows for them to be as visible. There was urgency in the interviews to address the critical issues that arose numerous times during the protests. Those issues included but were not limited to; the role of hetero-patriarchy in the silencing of women (cisgender) and womxn and radical black feminists in the space, particularly at UWC; the role of academic language as a barrier

in building ideological bridges in the movement; the role of women in perpetuating normative behaviours which appeared to be in favour of a patriarchal movement. There were other issues such as the contextualisation of race, language, place, space and time, which have all played major roles in the production of particular prejudices in the context of #FMF and operate as regimes of power that permeate throughout institutions across the country. Misogyny and heteropatriarchy in the space of #FMF often resulted in the erasure of the stories of those who identified as Queer and LGBTQIA+ in the movement.

Those concerns were echoed in interviews, which indicated a repression of difference in the #FMF movement, as well as a blatant disregard for work that appeared 'personal' in a political space. Activists felt that this caused the movement to shrink as many of their peers, particularly women/womxn felt isolated in the space by their male counterparts and disengaged from the movement. It was also evident that the gesture of trying to understand the importance of intersectionality in protest space, in the case of #FMF was not a genuine one, and resulted in frustration in numerous attempts at engaging the larger #FMF community in a process of (un)learning. Many times over, in a focus group that I conducted during the project, it was mentioned that the source of frustration was also in identifying women leaders who appeared initially to be speaking for many who were feeling oppressed in the space but who ultimately also appeared to share hetero-patriarchal views. At UCT, Queer and LGBTQIA+ students ended up disrupting #FMF protests after numerous attempts to educate their peers on the importance of intersectionality in the space. Many felt silenced and used because their bodies were often on the frontline of the protest, with little recognition of the work they had done. After a rape in Azania House at the University of Cape Town, a space claimed by the #RMF/#FMF collective, the Trans Collective sought to bring the issue of intersectionality, and those of marginalized bodies, to the fore when they



made their concerns heard. This group was often accused of derailing the movement and its common cause, what Hooks and Fleetwood would conclude was due to their bodies not being legible as commodity or because they were not just excess and therefore contesting patriarchy. But the Trans Collective ruptured a movement that was not concerned with issues affecting a huge part of its constituency in women/womxn alike.

At the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), several attempts were made from 2015-2016 to bring the issue of intersectionality to the fore. These attempts were often linked to the #Oct6 group which was concerned not only with the issue of exorbitant fees, but also of the plight of the poor black family in the context of the movement. It was in this group and the #WFMMarginalizedBodies group that hundreds of women/womxn persistently vocalized the necessity for an intersectional approach to the work being done in the movement and directly rejected heteropatriarchy. This was done through collaborative work between black workers, students and

staff alike. Initially these groups used a similar approach to UWC and UCT, where various attempts to bring these issues to the fore were made through workshops and dialogue. However, after numerous attempts had failed, it was those groups who took matters into their own hands during a counter-protest in April 2016, where they marched against #FMF protesters at Wits who had gathered from various institutions, and were led by men who were overtly against both Queer and LGBTIA+ students and an intersectional approach to protest, claiming that they were fighting against the broader movement. What becomes crucial to understand is **who** is legible as a legitimate voice in protest. It appears that legitimacy in these spaces is intrinsically linked to heteropatriarchy, to men.

On several occasions in 2015, during the #FMF occupation of Solomon Mahlangu House at Wits, I watched as men spoke. They were given attention by the masses with their thundering calls for high discipline in the space. Seldom did a man go up to address the crowd and struggle to garner its attention. This surprised

me, because while it was not immediately articulated as such, it appeared that men exercised a certain level of control over the space, and their women/womxn counterparts dared not take up any semblance of leadership in their presence. I noted how, during meetings, I didn't struggle to keep the attention of the masses. I became acutely aware of my **privilege**. At several intervals, while women/womxn rallied the crowds through song, many times over a man would silence them. This was in stark contradiction of the intersectional approach which the movement purported to be in favour of. During the first few weeks of the protests at Wits, calls were made for women/womxn to be more visible in the space; supposedly they were at the helm of leadership, and yet that did not appear to be the case. Tensions on the issue of intersectionality remained high in the #FMF space; it was towards the end of 2015 where the dissent became most clear.

It was during the Neville Alexander memorial lecture where activists involved in #FMF from around the northern region of the country gathered to discuss #FMF in more detail, as well as plan for how the movement was to proceed in the year ahead. A fight broke out, once again at the call for an intersectional approach. Insults were flung around and what became even more concerning was the blatant rejection of an intersectional approach, using the rhetoric that it was an ideological stance attempting to derail the broader movement. This to many of us, was far from true. For self-identifying Queer/LGBTIA+/feminist student activists, the purpose of highlighting an intersectional approach to protest is vital: it is a call which puts urgent emphasis on all facets of protestors identities through which they are oppressed. But more so, it insists that if this battle for free quality and decolonised education is to be won, it can only be achieved once all protestors alike adopt an approach to protest which is **nuanced**, more thoughtful, and considerate even of others. It is a moment in protest where those who lead are equally able to follow and those who follow are afforded

an opportunity to lead. Numerous attempts at implementing a flat structure in protests were underscored by a desire for protests that would have meaningful outcomes for all people from different classes, ages, genders, sex, sexual orientations, and even cultures. An intersectional approach, simplistically put, was one in which we understand, as Audre Lorde (1982) put it, that "[t]here is no thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives". Thus far we have simply been the outcasts, but we cannot retreat, nor will we surrender.

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Violence: Beyond What the Skin Feels

Tebogo Moloby

I have just opened my eyes and awoken in a state of utter panic from what was barely enough sleep. I reach for my phone to check the time. It's 02:00am - I'm an hour late! My heart sinks but I still have a bit of time. I at least didn't wake up to the chirping of the birds, or just as the sun was rising. This would have meant I'd lost an entire morning of doing my school work. I continue to lie quietly still on the bed under the substantial weight of the blankets, calming myself from the panic of oversleeping. I recall my list of things to study and work to complete before 4:30am. I'm meant to leave at this time in order make it in time to catch the bus. I am somewhat reluctant to get out of bed as this implies that I'll have to face the cold, for which I have an unusually low threshold. The corrugated iron roof does nothing to insulate against whatever weather I'm presented with. This room, my humble abode, is much smaller than the smallest of any of the tutorial rooms that exist on campus, yet it functions as a bedroom, a bathroom, a closet, a kitchen - basically, a house compressed into a single small room. It's an indescribably uncomfortable space, which is about as conducive to studying as standing while doing your school work by candlelight inside an old clothing-filled wardrobe with the doors shut. I've been invited to sleepovers at friends' houses and noticed how their bedrooms are even larger than this "house" of mine. Some have bedrooms that are comfortable for studying and others have designated study rooms with Wi-Fi for easy internet access. It's impossible that I don't notice, that I don't wish I had similar comforts to make my university studies easier.

Inevitably, thinking about this hurts. What most people fail to recognise is that in the backdrop of recent university protests and beyond, rubber bullets, batons and rocks are not the only things that inflict violence in

university spaces. My room, the place I go to after an exhausting day on campus, is the source of my psychological pain. This is where the violence begins and ends for me each day.

I finally rise from my makeshift bed. Its base is elevated from the floor by bricks to make space for shoes. It has a mattress half my age or older, supported by old planks and springs that jab at my pelvis as I turn over to get out of bed. My back aches; I note this, but the pain is not new as I wake up feeling like this most mornings. Buying a new bed is not very high on my mother's priority list and I dare not ask her about this. It stands to reason considering our financial situation. There's a lot we can't afford: my exorbitant university tuition fees are no exception. This year, my mother bears the burden of paying my fees through a study loan. I am an engineering student at the prestigious Wits University by day, and a pauper after hours. How I wish I could go to school for "free"...

"If the ANC does to you what the apartheid government did to you, then you must do to the ANC what you did to the apartheid government." - Nelson Mandela

Sounds easy, doesn't it? Most can attest that these widely-quoted words by the former president of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, are undoubtedly inspirational and proving to be more relevant with each protest that erupts in South Africa. As an aside though, I imagine that if I pleaded ignorance and claimed not to have known anything about Mr Mandela or Catholic doctrine until only after his passing, I suspect I could be forgiven for thinking he was in line for being canonised. I say this from the observation that saints are generally quoted, regardless of the degree to which their supposed pearls of wisdom are practical.

Unpacking this is probably more appropriate for another anthology, so for now I shall merely centre this chapter on Mr Mandela's quote.

Protests in South Africa are a serious bone of contention. They polarise the nation and are known to be characterised by the disruptiveness with which they are inseparably interwoven. That is how the objective of a protest is reached. They are meant to disturb the *status quo*. However, somewhere along the line, the word disruptive gets replaced by "destructive" when protests are associated with a certain group of people who are characterised by a specific race and class - Black and poor. In an ideal South Africa where we all speak fluent Rainbow Nation, Mr Mandela's quote might have been something to which adherence is relatively simple -- perhaps even an algorithm may have been developed for its application, but sadly, South Africa is no utopia.

There is an important yet subtle nuance missed by Mr Mandela in his aforementioned advice. I cannot fault him entirely for this as I know not of any prophetic gift that he possessed. What he missed is that if the government or any other institution of authority did indeed repeat the wrongs of the apartheid era, this would occur at a time when the violence it meted out on the Black population has morphed itself into something against which resistance is difficult to stage. Alas, the people to whom this new fight against oppression is left (the youth in particular), have no solid point of reference. We hardly have any experience from which to draw, no pre-written "algorithm" to follow, and a sparse supply of credible mentors. So, what alternative remains when reasoning has been exhausted? Protests - a major means, if not the only means, through which many Black South Africans express the pain they experience from the violence that has its roots in social injustice. We have been sold the illusion of a South Africa in which all are "free," however, in reality, my reality, which is the only reality of which I can authoritatively speak, we are still far from freedom in its truest sense. This is the reality of which I will speak.

It was the beginning of 2015 and I was anticipating an exciting year. I had just switched degrees and was about to start with a career that I knew I would find myself enjoying with every fibre of my being, a career with which my personality is fully compatible. My mother and I had just secured a study loan as there was no alternative means of paying for my fees (I don't qualify to receive funding from NSFAS). My previous sponsor claimed to have been in financial turmoil, so my scholarship was unceremoniously discontinued. Despite her Wits degree, life has not been very kind to my mother so my heart aches every time she must pay for anything school related - actually, anything at all. Fortunately, since high school, scholarships have been my saving grace, putting me through decent schools, delivering me from the shame of not hailing from an affluent family, thereby strengthening my acting skills. I did after all have to keep up appearances lest anyone discover that my parents were not financially established. In terms of my sponsorship trend, 2015 was an anomaly. Having a sponsor had become my state of equilibrium so I was determined to restore it by securing a bursary for 2016, my final year of studies.

I started searching desperately and applying for bursaries and this required that I request a pro-forma invoice from the Wits Fees Office. I found that my fees for 2016 would amount to approximately R66000 excluding accommodation, food, books, stationery, etc. With the proposed 10.5% fee increase this would escalate to R72930. My mother is single and widowed and does not earn enough to pay my fees without incurring some sort of debt. She is already paying off my study loan and other expenses associated with my studies including transport, books and food. I cannot afford to stay in Braamfontein. This is why I resided in that small room in Soweto and had to commute to campus every day. A single trip took just under two hours, so I would spend a total of four hours travelling to and from school each day, which means I would get home at around 19:00. I would sleep immediately when I got



home so I could wake up at 01:00 to do some work. The room in which I lived was not conducive to studying, so I was really better off spending my nights on campus in computer labs working through the night (this saved on bus fare too). On those nights, whenever I could no longer bear the drowsiness, I would place my arms on the computer desk and use them as a pillow while I slept.

My bursary searches were not yielding positive results and I was out of alternatives. Ultimately, I had to tell my mother. I broke the news to her one morning when she was getting ready for work. When I did, she kept silent for a few seconds and with a despondently pensive look on her face she sighed and responded, “*Ngabe sizoyitholaphi...*” (“I wonder where we will get it from.”) Seeing her reaction broke me. I knew she was doing everything in her power to ensure that I graduate. Needless to say, concentrating in class that morning felt like an insurmountable obstacle. I had taken an emotional and psychological beating.

Poverty is violent and I cannot, for many reasons, afford to defend myself against it. How I wish I could go to school for “free”...

Cue #FeesMustFall 2015 - an attempt at eliminating funding difficulties like mine. Commencement of the protests coincided with the passing of my grandfather, to whom I’ve been very close from early childhood. I had to stay home to assist with the funeral preparations. I could only follow the protests from social media and occasionally through the news. Naturally, the objectives of the protests resonated with me. I thought of all those long, tiring walks from the Wits main campus South West Engineering building to the Empire Road exit after a long day. I’d be carrying heavy books, with sore feet and an aching back. As I walked I would mentally prepare myself for standing in a very full bus for more than an hour as I travelled back to Soweto. I always noticed the expensive German and Swiss cars with which some students would travel to and from Wits. I always wondered how they managed to buy meals consistently from that exorbitantly priced café at Solomon Mahlangu House, pay car instalments, buy petrol, plan overseas vacations, AND pay their university tuition. Admittedly, thinking about this was taxing. So I’d often ask myself, “Things won’t always be this way, right?” and my response never failed to be “Yes.” Although these yeses were harder to utter on some days. To retain

my sanity, I'd have to reassure myself that all I needed was my qualification and things would be fine. Realistically, however, here I was, clueless on how my tuition would be paid so I could complete my final year. How I wish I could go to school for "free" ...

A number of students found themselves having to divulge (just as I am doing in this book) the intimate details of the difficulties they face in their personal lives in order to justify their support for or participation in the #FeesMust-Fall protests. This fact in itself is indicative of something that is profoundly wrong with South African society. I wonder: Is it right for us to have to justify our participation in a protest that is meant to help us claim our right to be educated? This was unequivocally promised by our government. Does divulging personal information to structures like NSFAS -- which requires us to exhibit our poverty for them to view and award the best performer with debt -- does this preserve our right to human dignity? What happens to those of us who do not qualify- the so called missing middle? We essentially humiliate ourselves to a group of strangers with money and usually it is all for naught. A number of students opened up and continue to do so regardless of this quiet form of violence, the violence that Mr Mandela either failed to foresee or did not know how to advise about in preparation for its post-apartheid prevalence.

Some say that people like my mother should know better than to send their children to institutions that they cannot afford. However, education is meant to be a means for me to obtain and generate knowledge that will equip me with the skills required to facilitate my contribution to progressive change in a field of my choice, for the betterment of my country.

One may argue that obtaining university education is not the only route to a successful career, and this may be true. However, no one should decide this for me. My choice of institution of higher education should not be based on what it will cost for me to study there. Unfortunately, the *status quo* in South Africa is such that students who cannot afford to pay for higher education have even less of a choice and are therefore at an immediate disadvantage. It can thus be said that the social structures in South Africa dictate that if they cannot afford it, students - "incidentally" a majority of whom are Black - should not attend university. It is mostly the case that through persistent use of agency, that myself and other students whose parents cannot afford to pay for university education, can obtain sponsors.

I have since managed to obtain my degree, but it would be an injustice not to mention that had it not been for the protests in 2015, I would not have been able to register in 2016. However, of the entire Black South African population, how many of us are "persistent enough?" Why should the odds be stacked so heavily against the Black majority? Most importantly, if not those who have made it past the university gates, those who already have access, who then, should fight on behalf of those outside the university trying desperately to enter so they can better their lives? The bitter truth is that we cannot do to those in power what was done to the apartheid government. That's just overly simplistic.



“The government is at the heart of the problem at hand alongside university management with regards to the #FeesMustFall and #EndOutsourcing protests.”



THEME 3: Student and worker solidarity

The #EndOutsourcing protest: outsourced workers and students vs Wits University

Morwa Kgoroba

I was not fully engaged in the #FeesMustFall protest when it started in 2015 due to work commitments. I was studying for my Honours degree in Development Studies while also working full time. While many students were on campus or in the streets marching, I was at work. I could only be on campus in the evenings where I would hear about what had happened during the day from my classmates and take note of what I could see in Solomon Mahlangu House, formerly known as Senate House.

It was very interesting to see the stark differences between what the media was reporting on and what was happening on campus. I remember arriving one evening to see Wits alumni and other charity organisations providing supper to students who stayed in university residence and other students sweeping and clearing out the garbage. There were also study groups formed where students would sit and study after supper and others bringing out mattresses for people to sleep on. This was not the Wits University that was portrayed by some news agencies.

Two weeks after the #FeesMustFall protest started, government announced that there would be no tuition fee increase for the 2016 academic year and lectures were to resume on Wednesday, 28th October 2015. As I approached campus that Wednesday morning, gates were blocked by a small group of students, a significantly smaller number in comparison to earlier weeks. At one of the main gates, the South African Police Service (SAPS) was visibly present and police cars were parked outside campus. There were also private security guards dressed in black near the SAPS; both watching the protesting group at the gates. I was confused

by the commotion at the gates because “fees had fallen” and exams had to be written “or the 2015 academic year would have been a waste”; so what was this commotion about?

I soon learned as I followed a small group of workers and students that although #FeesMustFall appeared to be about tuition fee increments, another pertinent issue within the movement was the outsourcing of the university’s cleaning and maintenance staff. Since I was already on campus to study, I decided to follow this second protest which I had initially thought began on the 28th October 2015. I discovered as I was writing this paper that Wits students and outsourced workers have had a long relationship in fighting towards the unequal and discriminatory environment created by university management when they began outsourcing over a decade ago. I will be referring to this protest as the #EndOutsourcing protest. This paper explores my observation of the struggle of outsourced workers at Wits, and their participation in the #Feesmustfall movement, an issue that came to my attention on the 28th October 2015.

The #FeesMustFall and #EndOutsourcing protests

#FeesMustFall was student led and focused mainly on their demands for free education; the protest was initially against the annual tuition fee increase and the financial exclusion of particularly Black students in public universities because they could not afford the fees.

The #EndOutsourcing protest was within a broader movement and was more focused on

outsourced workers” demand to be insourced. Workers were calling for an end to outsourcing at the university. This had been a protracted struggle for over a decade between workers and university management. Before I followed this protest, I knew nothing about the insourcing struggle at Wits nor had I paid much attention to previous protests that took place on campus during my undergraduate years.

That Wednesday morning I decided to follow a group of about 60 workers who were disrupting lectures on West campus after most students had returned to class following the 0% fees announcement by the government. The group walked around singing struggle songs from building to building and this frustrated some students who had to exit lecture halls only to return after the group of workers had moved to another area. I overheard one student complaining on the phone saying: “Class has been disrupted, there are no buses; the protest is still going on”. It was clear that the two week break from school was starting to get some students on edge over whether or not they would finish the academic year. This *fear* of wasting the academic year had been drilled over and over again by university management in the media and was designed to divide the students.

It became evident as the day progressed that the protesting workers had no interest in disrupting academic activities *per se*; some workers even referred to lectures as “the students’ concern and not ours”. This meant that they were not disrupting lectures only for the sake of being disruptive, all they were seeking was to be heard and their concerns taken seriously as the students’ concerns had.

Differing group interests

From what I observed, many of the students

who weren’t marching with the workers were not keen to take part in the #EndOutsourcing protest because they had already lost two weeks of lectures to the #FeesMustFall protest. To some students this other protest was between workers and the university. I overheard a comment from a passing student asking another student if he was also a cleaner. That morning, many students simply watched the singing crowd before heading off to their respective lectures. However, some students remained protesting in solidarity with the workers. It was only after the police fired a stun grenade at a group of unarmed students who were protesting at one of the gates that more students joined the crowd and paid attention to what was going on.

The students taking part in #EndOutsourcing appeared to be a splinter group from the #FeesMustFall who did not trust the Wits SRC and were disgruntled with how the protest was managed and subsequently ended. These students felt that the workers’ demands had been pushed aside and that Wits management had overlooked the issue of insourcing.

Outsourced workers had not seen any concrete decisions being taken on the issue of insourcing for over a decade at Wits and felt that management continued to exploit and mistreat them. In the late afternoon, Wits Vice-chancellor Adam Habib was called to listen to why workers were protesting that day. Workers told the Vice-chancellor: “We are victimised, our dignity is not respected¹. We continue to get paid in brown envelopes²,” “Our jobs are not secured. This is not fair”.

Workers were demanding a decent wage, with many of them talking about the abject poverty their families are meant to live with because they are not earning enough money. Another heavy sentiment from them was that the students they had been supporting during

1 In an interview with Thembi Luckett (2016), Ms. Deliwe Mzobe, a ‘shop steward’ and one of the outsourced worker leaders mentioned how outsourced workers felt like outsiders on campus, they were only allowed access through one entrance and the use of designated toilets. They were not allowed to sit on the university lawns.

2 Workers received their monthly wages in physical hard cash that was placed in brown envelopes.

#FeesMustFall, had now abandoned them after their demands had been met by the university. One worker told the crowd, “We are alone, the students have abandoned us. But it is okay, we will fight for our own rights!” This was followed by a loud applause from the crowd³.

Whose transformation? Public institutions of higher learning and the commoditisation of university spaces

It is very easy to rationalise and understand arguments when they are full of facts and *logic*. For example the university marketing drive was based on the claim that outsourcing non-core services will reduce expenses at public universities with continuing decreases in funds from government. However at what point do we need to challenge this *logic* when it is clearly for the benefit of a few?

The term “transformation” has been thrown around quite frequently since 1994; two decades later and snail-paced work has been done to transform our country. And it is some of that work (for example, since 1994 more Black households have access to electricity and water) that gets thrown in our faces whenever we question government on when land distribution and actual curriculum changes will take place in our education system. We have been told to wait. However, this is difficult when we can see that, while there are a few Black executives and board members in business and industry, none of the neoliberal rhetoric of “wealth trickling down” to the masses has taken place.

The government is at the heart of the problem at hand alongside university management with regards to the #FeesMustFall and #End-

Outsourcing protests. The ANC government’s adoption of neo-liberal policies has had detrimental implications for Black students and Black workers at public universities. Government funding to all higher learning institutions began to decrease from the late 1990s. By 2013, government funding to tertiary education was less than 1% of the country’s GDP. Universities have positioned themselves as profitable companies “which should be run according to the managerial principles and profit-making imperatives of the private sector” (Habib, A and Parekh A, 2001: 8). This means that universities are run like private companies that sell well-packaged knowledge through training and research. This commercialisation of knowledge has resulted in institutions separating work done at the institution into “core” services (i.e. “the reason we exist”- to sell knowledge and conduct research) and “non-core” services. Non-core services would be outsourced to private companies so that universities could effectively and efficiently focus on “core” activities.

Instead of transforming themselves to reflect the South African landscape with increases in Black academics and adopting a de-colonised curriculum, our universities transformed into market oriented entities that favour a small but highly-paid management team and a large but highly-underpaid support staff.

Outsourcing is a common phenomenon in democratic South Africa, not only in universities but in many corporate entities, too.

3 During the writing up of this paper, I was told by student activists that although it may have appeared that there was no student solidarity with the workers when I was observing the protests (because I came after hours on most days); there were many instances where both workers and students exhibited immense solidarity. For example, during the #EndOutsourcing protest, some student leaders stood side-by-side with workers in negotiating and speaking to Wits management. After Wits agreed to insourcing *in principle*, a few student leaders formed part of the Insourcing Task Team alongside workers. The task team was established to consider ways in which the university would phase out outsourcing and introduce insourcing that would benefit all stakeholders.

People's livelihoods have been stripped down to simple cost calculations forgetting the social impact these economic arguments have on millions of Black lives.

Outsourcing began in 2000 at Wits with over 600 staff in "support services" such as cleaning, maintenance and gardening being retrenched by the university. At that time this was justified as a cost-cutting mechanism from the already 'cash-strapped' university due to decreasing government subsidies. Similar financial arguments are thrown on the table when discussing the annual tuition fee increase and reasons for outsourcing, while Vice-chancellors receive total salary packages ranging in the millions of Rands (<http://businesstech.co.za>). In 2000, over 90% of the people retrenched were Black workers (Kenny and Clarke, 2000). Those who were hired by outsourcing companies earned a third less than their pay while they were university staff and received no benefits such as pension, medical aid or free tertiary education for their dependents. From the beginning these structural changes at Wits were met with hostility from workers, students and academics.

Seventeen years later and tension still exists; it was hard to listen to workers telling their stories of how they struggle to live on R2000 a month. It seems ludicrous that we live in a society where people have to fight for their right to earn a dignified salary. In the transformation of the university into a profitable institution, which now has a private company, it is the outsourced workers and their families who made the sacrifice in 2000 and who still continue to sacrifice.

In recent years, students and outsourced workers have worked together to form a strong solidarity. For example: The Wits Workers Solidarity Committee, which is comprised of students, workers and academics. This committee has been fighting to end outsourcing for years. For example in 2011, Wits students from the Wits Workers Solidarity Committee went on several protests against the university unfairly dismissing workers and hiring an

outsourcing company to clean the university when outsourced workers went on strike. Before the #FeesMustFall protest began; students, workers and some academics held a protest under the banner of the October 6th Movement. They presented the University Workers Charter to UJ and Wits management demanding an end to outsourcing.

I felt uneasy listening to the workers' testimonies at the mass meetings that were convened until November 1st (when the university agreed to insourcing in principle) for a number of reasons. One being a question of dignity, workers had to justify reasons for the protest and why they need a decent salary. The other is difficult to describe. It is something along the lines of what kind of rational human being would ever think that R2000 is enough to live on and provide for a family and who would sign off on such a ridiculous amount?

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Life of Ideas in the #FeesMustFall 2015

Ashley Nyiko Mabasa¹

On 6 October 2016, a group of resilient students and workers under the movement called the “Workers Solidarity,” gathered at Matrix cafeteria mall at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). The students and workers started a massive protest heading to the Senate House (renamed Solomon Mahlangu House) to face the veranda of the Vice-Councillor’s office. These events occurred after the relentless and long resistant project against the outsourcing of the University’s labour service, and sub-contracting and ill-treating of the workers as precariat. In this chapter I will reflect on student and worker alliances during the struggle to end outsourcing of services at the University of the Witwatersrand, drawing on my experience and position within the student movement i.e. political subjectivity, consciousness and ideology.

The students started to organise themselves under their respective political formations, namely the Progressive Youth Alliance (PYA), which is the ally of the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL), the Young Communist League of South Africa (YCLSA), and the South African Students Movement (SASCO). Unaligned to the ANC group was the Economic Freedom Fighters Students Command (EFFSC). Students started organising along these lines on the 14th of October 2015, a week after the 6 October 2015 protest. On 14 October, they barricaded Wits Main campus early in the morning and consolidated their mass support base and blocked the Wits Main campus entrances. The

University was subsequently shut-down and all academic programmes were cancelled.

The #FeesMustFall movement, was inspired by the emergence of the #RhodeMustFall at the University of Cape Town but was a different social group and student movement. The demands by the #FeesMustFall movement predates the current activism, but how this was articulated has changed over the past years. The struggle for free education was informed by three categories of ideologies-the Black consciousness, radical black feminism and Marxist activists¹. Looking the way these different strength of ideologies prevailed I argue that at the centre of the students demands was a rejection of neo-liberal capitalism.

The students and the workers viewed the fee increment and outsourcing of the predominantly black workers as ethically reprehensible. Henceforth, they aligned with the workers, mainly because the University, without cleaning services would be un-governable, and automatically the University administration would be dysfunctional. In other words, the notorious actions of the protesters disrupted the normal operating of the University system, which resulted in a shutdown.

Political reflection: Students and workers’ alliance

The students and workers alliance emerged from a history tied to the way the workers were treated, since the University made a U-

¹ Black Consciousness according to Steve Biko is to “end of the process real black people, who do not regard themselves as appendages to white society. Some will charge that we are racist but these people are using exactly the values we reject. We do not have the power to subjugate anyone. Racism does not only imply exclusion of one race by another-it always presupposes that exclusion is for purposes of subjugation. Blacks have had enough experience as objects of racism not to wish to turn the tables (Leatt, James & Kniel, Theo and Nurnberger, Klaus, 1986).

turn in 1999 when it outsourced cleaning staff (Bezuidenhout, and Fakier, 2006). I view the struggle of the workers as intertwined with our struggle for free education, hence #FeesMustFall merged the workers' demands and our demands as students. Early in 2015 the workers of one of the university contractors, MJL Electrical, were dismissed after months of not being paid, and this raised the alarm within the university community at large. This dismissal culminated into the October 6 movement, where students at various universities nationally marched in solidarity with outsourced workers (Wits University, University of Pretoria, University of Cape Town and Rhodes University).

Again the workers and students' alliance was consolidated on the ground of three different strength of ideologies which are Black consciousness, Black feminism and Marxism.

The alliance was formed at the behest of workers and students fighting for a decent wage, the abolition of tuition fees, University transformation, and the insourcing of all university labour services. This made these three different ideologies to converge.

The #FeesMustFall protest emerged as a broad front which encompassed many ideological perspectives. The protest expressed the broad interests of the students and workers. A militant Black feminist group emerged during the protest and assumed *Mbokodos* as its name. It will articulate a number of issues on gender and tackle head on the marginalisation of women within the movement. Those who constituted the *Mbokodo* group were drawn from different political allegiances subverted and appropriated *doeks* as a symbol of protest and a rejection of being silenced. The *doek* has a history symbolising women subordination to patriarchy in many African contexts. The feminists group contested power and asserted sisterhood and the position of women

within the movement. This group became a natural ally of the workers who are in the majority cleaners and women. Student viewed as their mothers.

Another group of students within the movement was attached to the Marxist tradition and attributed high tuition fees to neo-liberalism. This group advocated for the decommodification of education to address the tuition fees crisis. On the other hand there was a group inclined to Black radical thought which advanced the demand for free education, decolonisation and the ending of outsourcing. This group paid lip service to some of the issues raised by the *Mbokodos*. Notwithstanding the ideological differences, these groups contested social and political space and the leadership of the #FeesMustFall protest. The emergence of a radical feminist movement marked a shift of the politics and claim making by the student movement particularly at the former white Universities such as University of the Witwatersrand and University of Cape Town. Previous campaigns have confined the gender issue to representation and composition of political leadership whilst the feminist elevated the debate to gender relations within and outside University for example gendered experiences of exploitation etc.

As an activist, I have seen how the EFFSC attempt to drive the ideological perspective of the #FeesMustFall movement. In one of the #FeesMustFall movement debriefings they raised the issues which were central to decolonization, such as changing the university building names, as well as decolonizing pedagogy and the curriculum. The EFFSC over-emphasized race domination whereas the PYA-led Students Representative Council, which espoused Marxist ideas, emphasised that inequality and poverty as the main challenges in the post-apartheid dispensation and that this was racialized and gendered. The University represented one such space where this inequality prevailed. The ideological perspective adopted by the #FeesMustFall

protest lacked a coherent political programme to guide the movement because of divisions expressed by the political formations, the EFFSC and South African Student Congress (SASCO).

Although driven by different ideological perspectives, the black radical thought and Marxist inclined perspective the students' adopted the same conclusion following a different trajectory. The demand of free quality education, university transformation, insourcing of the labour service and lowering of the tuition fees became the overarching demands. This later evolved to free quality decolonised education. However, I argue that the shortcoming of Black radical thought perspective is that it is vacuous and nationalist and is not amenable to the cessation of exploitation of the workers. They demanded the restoration of workers dignity through 'expropriation of the land'. Their main limitation was that they viewed the University bureaucracy as the main enemy instead of the system driven by a hegemonic socio-economic structure of neo-liberalism. Looking at the ideological contestation between the EFFSC and PYA was an integral part of the political struggle over the future students' politics-reconfiguring the #FeesMustFall victory, winning of the workers and students support including winning Student Representative Council (SRC) elections.

Race discourse was at the forefront; students understood University red tape and bureaucracy as systematic financial exclusion of the majority of Black students in the neo-liberal University. At the same time, they understood inequality as an intersection of race and gender. They contended that majority of students faced with financial and academic challenges were Black and female. Meaning that material condition of students and workers cemented the alliance.

As I have seen, the majority of the protestors were not informed by social theory. They were not driven by revolutionary literature such as Marxism², Black radical thought or feminist literature, to understand the material relations between their oppression as Black students and students from working class backgrounds. However, this posed a limitation to the protest, for example, the failure to adequately understand the struggle of the workers by some of the students. Some of the students distanced themselves from any political formation or labour movement. This may be explained by the lack of a clear coherent political programme and ideology within the movement. However, the participation of academic staff largely from the Social Science and the post-graduate students cemented the student leadership's understanding of outsourcing labour services and the strategy to overcome it.

Ideology and collective subjectivity and strategy: students and worker alliance

The reality is that the #FeesMustFall movement ideological strengths produced the political strategy and consciousness. The #FeesMustFall was predominated by Black students and Black workers, this means that the movement's ideologies and workers material conditions culminated in the adoption of different political strategies. Hence, students and workers started the dialogue on the basis of their material condition as black workers and most of them women. The #FeesMustFall movement needed the direct support of workers whilst the workers required #FeesMustFall as the vehicle of fighting for insourcing and free education.

The consolidation of different strength of ideologies shaped the movement collective political subjectivity and strengthened workers

² Marxism "is that form of socialism which draws inspiration for its analysis and strategy from the thought of Karl Marx. All Marxist are socialists, but not all socialists are Marxists" (Leatt, James & Kniel, Theo and Nurnberger, Klaus. 1986).

and students' alliance. Not every students read the political literature or revolutionary theories on how to guide protest strategies and tactics. The PYA and EFF student formation were able to influence the movement to be inclusive in fighting the decolonisation of education, decommodification and insourcing of all support staff although they had different ideological orientation.

I will try to explain this by drawing from the debate in the late 1970's between Archie Mafeje and Ruth First on the aftermath of the 1976 student uprisings in South Africa. Archie Mafeje was a great intellectual who, in 1968, was unfairly denied a senior lectureship position at the University of Cape Town because of apartheid discrimination laws. Ruth First was an organic intellectual and truly committed activist in the struggle against apartheid-she also served as the National Secretary of the Young Communist League of South Africa (YCLSA). There are a number of issues raised by Mafeje and First in this debate. The debate raises a number of issues such as student-worker alliances; Black consciousness; the two-stage revolution theory, to questions on strategy and tactics. I find this debate even more relevant in the current phase of our revolution in terms of decolonisation, transformation, gender equality and free education.

Nevertheless, I will put my focus on the aspects of strategy and tactics as these are more relevant to the #FeesMustFall movement in context to Wits workers and students' alliance. The practical approach to political tactics within the #FeesMustFall movement vindicates Ruth First on this debate. She argues that you do not have to understand the literature in order to understand the struggle. The consciousness will develop through the experience during the struggle. On the other hand Mafeje's (1978) argument sounds simple. He argues that any revolutionary practice requires a guiding theory, a coherent political programme, and a clear strategy. He expected student movements to have a perfect and clear plan before embarking on political action.

It is important to engage in this scholarly debate without dismissing a need for a theory to guide political action. It is not always necessary to have a tight and clearly outlined political programme to engage in a political action. In other words, there is no such a thing as a perfect revolution with a predetermined destiny. As First (1978) puts it: "every revolution begins by asserting often fairly minimalist, immediate demands" and the full confrontation with state power gradually expands to a full-scale (First, 1978).

My experience in the #FeesMustFall protest clearly show that in practice protesters under-stood Ruth First very well: one does not need a perfect strategy and tactics to engage in a political action.

My experience with PYA student's mass protests is that of a real leaders of the student movement who despise politics of abstinence, always reflect theory. The #FeesMustFall leaders did not care much about finding any right theory to guide the organising of the workers and students alliance. They understood that the minimalist and immediate demands for student financial aid formed part of the broader struggle against the outsourced labour service. The protesters did not crack their heads in attempts to theorise the dialectical links between students struggle and how these were part of the broader struggle against the outsourcing of the workers.

The #FeesMustFall protesters, in a practical way, rejected Mafeje's conceptualisation of successful revolution. First (1978) terms Mafeje's approach 'abstract theoreticist reservations' as advocated by arm-chair revolutionary intellectuals like Archie Mafeje'. Without reading First students understood her when she said: "revolutionary programmes have to be won not only in the head, but in the streets, towns, factories and countryside [and campuses], and by engaging in the struggle, not abstaining from it because it does not start with perfected long-term programme" (First, 1978) Students

and the workers understood Ruth First well some even without reading her. The workers and students' alliance was forged on the basis of collective political subjectivity.

The reality is that we cannot avoid the significance of the workers' contribution in the #FeesMustFall movement, whereby they were not passive observers of the redress of University systems led by student movements. They consolidated their struggles against fee increments and outsourcing of University labour service. Ultimately Wits University, the University of Cape Town, Rhodes University and the University of Pretoria reached an agreement with the students and workers in principle to insource all outsourced workers in 2016.



The students and workers' alliance showed commitment in combating the social injustice posed by the University system. In other words, the workers and students are not passive observers of transformation discourse. #Fees-MustFall movement opened debate about the higher education funding crisis. However, the student movement did not dismiss the working class participation in its transformation agenda. Moreover, #FeesMmustffall movement ideology jumble rendered the protest [Fees-mustfall] organisational and political handicapped and this weakened serious dialogue and solidarity with the workers.

Notwithstanding, the ongoing debates among activists that #Feesmustfall was failure pose a challenge to the structures of a neoliberal (marketised) university system which is tied to the colonial legacy.

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#FeesMustFall

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THEME 4: Solidarities from beyond

A comrade from beyond the frontier

Crispen Chinguno

South Africa experienced an unprecedented university student uprising in the second half of 2015. This followed the pronouncement of a fees increase for the 2016 academic year that was endorsed by the government. The University of the Witwatersrand had announced a 10.5 percent fee increase for 2016 after a university Council resolution. This was challenged by students through a protest which culminated in a shutdown and subsequently spread to other universities nationally. The students' demands consolidated to free education and decolonisation of the epistemologies, knowledge systems and the broader system of education. The questions raised by the students are important in understanding the broader socio-economic and political structure of post-apartheid South African society. Universities, as spaces of learning and knowledge production, are contested and usually reflect the inequalities and prejudices in the broader society. Inequality in the South African context is racialized because of the apartheid legacy.

The #FeesMustFall movement unfolded at a time when South African higher education was in a massive drive to increase the proportion of students from beyond its borders, to improve both knowledge sharing and the international ranking of local universities. At the beginning of this millennium, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) signed a protocol on education and training in Blantyre, Malawi. This protocol compels member countries to reserve five percent of the higher education vacancy for students from the region at the same rate of fees as for locals. At the same time, this promotes the internationalisation of the South African higher education system. The internationalisation of higher

education is also important as it is argued that this enhances the quality of the South African education system and allows benchmarking with other countries. Moreover, education and research cannot thrive if disconnected from tapping from other experiences. As a result, a number of South African universities have been on a massive drive to attract international students. South Africa is one of the top ten countries in the world with the highest proportion of international students. The number of foreign students in South African universities increased from 12 600 in 1994 to 72 875 in 2012 (Kwaramba 2012). The University of the Witwatersrand, for example, set a vision to increase its proportion of international students to 18 percent by 2022, its centenary anniversary. In 2015 Wits University had 3441 international students and this constituted about 10.2 percent of the total number of the student's population (Wits, 2015). The majority of international students in South African universities are from regional countries, for a number of reasons. Students from SADC region constitute about two-thirds of international students in South Africa. The expansion in the internationalisation of higher education happened at a time when South Africa is yet to address its own education challenges from the apartheid legacy. Firstly, there are limited numbers of students coming out high school who get access to university education. At the same time, university students face a funding crisis. Many of the students from Black, poor backgrounds cannot afford university education. South Africa thus has to balance its internal demands and international obligations on higher education with the SADC protocol.

This chapter critically examines the position and role of students from beyond the borders

of South Africa during the 2015-2016 #FeesMustFall movement at the University of the Witwatersrand. This is drawn from my ethnographic experience as an international student and participant-observer during that period, supplemented with some interviews and discussions with a number of international students and others before, during and after the protest. I was actively involved in the protest and took part in most of the *toyi-toyis* as an ordinary and concerned student.

It is important to note that the 2015 #FeesMustFall protest at Wits University was a culmination of events which, amongst others, resulted in the forging of worker and student struggles.

One important event, as outlined in the introduction to this volume, was the 6 October movement. This movement emerged from a meeting held on 6 October 2015 that looked into how students and workers could collaborate and articulate their struggles. At the time this happened, I was not in the country. I missed the October 6 meeting as I was attending a Global Labour university conference in Washington DC in the United States. I returned the following week.

My first encounter with the #FeesMustFall movement was on 14 October 2015, soon after my return from the USA. I faced the protest as I attempted to enter the University of the Witwatersrand East Campus through the Station Street turnstile. I was confronted by two protesters who were using their bodies to block the entrance. They explained that they were forcing the shutdown of the university as a protest to the fees increase proposed for the 2016 academic year. They indicated that the shutdown was more than just symbolic. It was meant to show everyone within the Wits community, and beyond, what it is like to be shut out of the system and be financially excluded because you are born poor and cannot afford the fees. The two young women who

blocked the entrance explained that they were not going to allow anyone onto campus. They declared that the alternative was for us to join them to ensure that the shutdown was effective. They were, in a way, using violence to forge collective solidarity, what I call in my other work a 'violent solidarity' (Chinguno 2015). At the time, the demands from the students were not that well consolidated. Before I could decide whether to join and support the protest I went through a form of "free political education" from the two protestors. They lamented how access to the university was racialized, classed and reproduced the inequality that characterized the South African society. They explained that the only way to deal with this persistence of inequality, poverty and unemployment was through universal access to education for all South Africans. This, indeed, they claimed was part of the promise of Mandela's rainbow nation. I was inspired by the level of their political consciousness and this resonated with my own experience. As the movement gained momentum the demands became even more sophisticated. Questions about the disconnection from the society lived experience of the epistemologies and knowledge systems of the South African universities were raised and the call to decolonise the university space gained traction.

Although at the time I was an international postgraduate student, I have work experience and had been active in the trade union movement in Zimbabwe. This erstwhile experience connected me to the struggles of the poor and the working class. My personal life history and experience affected how I evaluated the protest. My perspective did not conform to the positivist tradition of value-neutral objectivity in research. My approach was determined by my personal position as a working class student with a history of activism in the trade union movement. Thus I had to deploy a reflexive sociology in analyzing how this protest unfolded, drawing from my experience as an international student. I had to be conscious of my personal circumstances and was aware that I was not neutral and had

to free myself from such prejudices. Therefore, as a researcher-activist, I became part of the solution to the problem (Bourdieu 1990). The sociological inquiry of this protest and experiences of international students I narrate in this chapter were thus influenced by my values, interests and personal life experience. My position as a Black “foreign” student with an ability to speak at least one of the main local South African languages was critical in understanding the underlying dynamics and meanings related to the experiences of international students.

As the movement evolved, one question that came up in many discussions was the position of international students in the #FeesMustFall movement. I always raise eyebrows when such questions pop up. On one of the *toyo-toyis* from Wits University to Luthuli House (the ANC Headquarters) in downtown Johannesburg, one of my fellow protestors claimed that international students were not so keen to take part in the protest. She suggested that we must find ways to deal with the problem as this undermined the struggle. My proficiency in *isiZulu*, which is one of the main local languages, unintentionally disguised the fact that I was an international student. This helped me to understand, intimately and critically, the concerns raised by the protestors regarding international students and the protest. I took a serious reflection after this was raised and observed that indeed the number of students from beyond South Africa was not so conspicuous during protests.

We went on another *toyi-toyi* when the movement was facing a decline, to canvass the support of fellow students at the University of Johannesburg. This was at a moment when the movement, at the time, was losing currency within the Wits community and beyond. At that time we felt we were losing support from a number of constituencies, including that of the so called progressive white and non-white academics. At the beginning of the protest in 2015, a group of academics, mostly whites and Indians, had formed a human shield to prevent the police from shooting the protesting

students who were mainly Black. The students also had support from the university’s auxiliary staff. They had in fact consolidated their struggle for free and decolonised education to that of ‘de-casualisation’ of the outsourced support staff. For this and many other reasons the struggle gained public sympathy as it also involved the demand for a partial de-commodification of labour and ending of the exploitation of vulnerable workers who often were alienated by the unions. As I was trying to gain breath in the midst of the *toyi-toyi* to the University of Johannesburg, a fellow student started a conversation. She firstly complained that the academics, who were mainly white and non-whites, were no longer keen to support the movement as shown by their absence in the march. She explained:

“This is a Black struggle. We are now on our own but no regrets. Those academics who at the onset purported to be on our side are no longer with us. They have abandoned us. We are now on our own as Black children. This is now our own struggle.”

I agreed with her analysis of how the protest was unfolding, the importance of solidarity and the need for us as students to remain strong and united. As we continued with the *toyi-toyi* she switched her critique to international students. She lamented that international students were indifferent to the struggle for a free and decolonized education and disapproved of them as disingenuous. She was oblivious that she was in a conversation with an international student as we switched from English to *isiZulu*. She deplored the indifference of international students to the struggle and how this undermined their cause for a free and decolonised education. At the time I concurred and did not challenge her views.



The movement, at the onset, was built through consensus and engagement at the grassroots level. Mass meetings were conducted in Solomon Mahlangu House; a space that defined the rhythm of the movement. The mass meetings served a number of purposes. They constituted part of the students' protest repertoire and tradition of resistance in the South African context. In a similar way as workers (at Marikana) organize strikes, mass meetings are critical as they present a platform for the selection of the leadership of the movement, formulation and/or consolidation of grievances and determining the course of action (Chinguno 2015). Mass meetings also helped in preparing the students for the confrontation. It was thus at the mass meetings that a number of decisions were adopted through a democratic process where ordinary

students gave feedback and inputs on the way forward. Mass meetings also worked as a symbol of collective power and solidarity amongst the students.

I addressed one of the mass meetings and explained why the struggle was important from a Pan-African perspective and why, as students, we had to maintain unity and solidarity. After this meeting I was confronted by a number of fellow international students who expressed surprise at my level of activism; yet according to them I was not a South African. They did not understand my motivation and reminded me that I did not belong here. They also dismissed my stance of taking this as a Pan-African struggle. Their position implied that the struggle had nothing to do with non-South African students. I however, rejected this perspective. My experience in the movement prompted me to investigate the position, experiences, responses and perspectives of international students as the movement progressed. Politically I was very conscious that this struggle was important for all the students, including international students. As a result, my aim was to understand and at the same time appeal to the conscience of international students, motivating them to be actively involved in the struggle and not to be left out. In the following section I will outline some of the reasons, drawing from my interviews and experience, why some international students were indifferent or perceived as such and conclude with a critical reflection.

The problem of integration

A number of international students that I interacted with cited the problem of poor integration within the university and the broader society. According to these interviews, international students arrive in South Africa and face a number of shocks. These range from language, culture, religion, differing gender and sexuality norms, and others. South Africa has 11 official languages and international students have to navigate these variations and fit into the society. Although South Africa is very cosmopolitan and a circular state, many

international students face a number of shocks and have to adjust from their norms. Following the 2008 xenophobic attacks, many international students have a deep rooted perception that South Africans are generally not comfortable with foreigners, particularly Black, from other parts of Africa. As a result, international students tend to have their own networks on and off campus. These are often linked to nationality, race, origin, ethnicity, religion and language. The university has an International Office that is dedicated to serve students from beyond the borders to ensure that they settle smoothly and integrate within the university community and society at large. However, the students I interviewed lamented that the International Office was of very limited help in assisting them with the integration process on and off campus. One of the students sarcastically argued that the role of the International Office was merely an extension of the Home Affairs Department. She described its role as “an extension of Home Affairs.” She argued that “they are only worried in verifying if students have the required permit to be in the country and that’s where it ends.”

As a result, when the 2015 #FeeMustFall protest unfolded, most international students opted to be indifferent to the struggle. A number of them felt that this was not their struggle. Although more than 10 percent of the students at the University of the Witwatersrand are international, there was at the time no properly constituted body to represent their direct collective interests. The SRC has a secretary responsible for international affairs but the problem is that those who have occupied this position were from within the country and hence did not fully understand what it meant to be an international student. This limited their understanding of the issues that affect international students on and off campus.

During the 2015 #FeesMustFall protest, the SRC secretary of international affairs called a meeting with international students to explain why they should support the movement. Most of the students raised the question around

extension of their visas in case the academic year was to be extended because of the protest and the potential to be deported for taking part in the protest. They raised this as one of the major reasons why they could not overtly and actively support the movement. The international students also raised concerns that the movement was not very clear on its position regarding international students. For example, although one of the main demands raised was a call for free and decolonised education, one of the Wits #FeesMustFall consolidated list of demands to the university management, which was also posted on campus public spaces read: “African students (International students) within the borders of Africa should not pay upfront payment of 75 percent but rather it should be pushed down to 20 percent.” This in many ways suggested that the call for free and decolonised education was profiled and only limited to South African nationals. This ambivalence by the #FMF movement on the question of international students in many ways undermined the support of the movement by international students. Moreover, international students did not have a clear structure to articulate their demands.

A fellow international student from Zimbabwe explained that he was not keen to be active in the protests because of his precarious position as a foreign student. He argued that his fear was that if the protest were to turn violent and if he was arrested, he may be deported and risk not completing his degree. He raised concern that most of the police officers in the South African Police Service have what he called the ‘xenophobia syndrome’.

A significant number of international students are on government scholarships and other bursaries. In addition, many are also from upper middle-class backgrounds and not so

attuned to the language of protest. As a result, some of them could not easily relate to the struggles of the poor in a country that is not their own. We should also note that not all South African students supported this struggle across class, race, gender and other divisions. This also was the case with international students. There are many who did not believe in the cause and ideology of this struggle. International students are thus heterogeneous in the same ways as are the locals. Their response to the protests may be driven by other structural factors such as race, class, gender and sexuality.

Becoming invisible

There is a high representation of students from SADC (Zimbabwe, Namibia, Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana etc.) in South African universities. About two thirds of the international students in South Africa are from the SADC region. Many of these regional and neighbouring countries share many things in common such as the language, culture and history. Drawing from my personal experience, I argue that one of the reasons that influenced the perception that international students were not supportive of the struggle is that some of them were too integrated into the South African society and became invisible. Although many other international students were intimately part of the movement, not many could identify us as our status, as international students, became invisible. There are a number of reasons why this became the case.

Firstly, proficiency in the local language was one of the factors that made many international students invisible. Many international students from Zimbabwe, Botswana, Swaziland, and Lesotho are fluent in isiZulu, Sotho and Tswana, which are some of the local languages. In addition, some of the surnames and names in these regional countries are also common in South Africa. I know four other key activists of the movement who are also international students and their status had become invisible. They become embedded in the struggle and questions about their nationality became

irrelevant. International students thus become assimilated in the local society and invisible so as to avoid covert and overt discrimination. The reality is that foreigners, especially Black Africans, face various forms of discrimination and prejudices, especially in the broader South African society, which ironically, reinforces the colonial project.

The paradox of decolonisation

The #FMF movement presented an opportunity for collective learning but at the same time exposed a number of contradictions. One of the key pillars of the #FMF movement was Pan-Africanism. I helped in organizing a series of breakfast seminars at the University of the Witwatersrand at the beginning of 2016 as part of a conversation to unpack the rise of this new form of student movement and claim-making that articulated the demand for the decolonisation of the South African universities. On one of the panels we invited student leaders and former leaders from Egypt and Zimbabwe to share their experience. We invited these activists from Africa to draw on their experience. However, it was surprising that many of the local students and activists were not so keen to learn from this African experience. Many of them did not see the connections and were sceptical and believed that this was not significant.

The structure of South African higher education has gradually been changing since the democratic elections of 1994. The student body has been changing over the years in terms of race, gender and nationality. However, as highlighted in this chapter, student politics has largely remained tied to the national state and failed to effectively respond to the changes. Conversely, South African universities are in a drive to internationalise, yet student movement politics is yet to move beyond the arena of the national state. Despite an increase in the proportion of international students in South African universities, the activism is relatively limited towards the national state because of a number of constraints brought by the colonial frontiers. In conclusion, the failure of the #FMF

movement, and many international students to see the struggle for education and decolonisation beyond the national state, presents a fatal contradiction and dismal defeat to the pillar of Pan-Africanism. This unfortunately reaffirms the colonial project, which socially constructed the frontiers that continue to undermine the forging of a broader African solidarity. Finally, a decolonisation project, in an African context that does not challenge, reject and deconstruct the borders that were socially forged by our colonial masters for their exigencies and to divide us, is a futile exercise.

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Reflections of an Ally

Hugo Canham

The position that I occupy and write from is one that is slightly out of place. I don't belong neatly in this volume of student essays about their protests against commoditised education. I cannot claim the position of one fighting for decolonisation of higher education because in many ways, as one who teaches here, I am complicit in educating from the 'colonial' canon. I responded to the call for contributions because the voices of those that are out of place (both students and academics) may be generative in thinking about the African university at this moment.

This piece captures three time periods. It is written in three parts, each reflecting the time in which it was written. The first part is written at the height of the 2015 Fees Must Fall protest after the gathering at the lawns of the Union Buildings. It is written as a letter to a friend and was my attempt to think through what it meant to be a Black academic and an ally to students engaged in protest action. The second part of this piece is my reflection on the security presence on the University of the Witwatersrand campuses at the end of 2015 and the beginning of 2016. The last part of the essay is written from the vantage point of the middle of 2016 when the protests were ostensibly over and the security presence had moved to being 'on call'. This moment was before the September to November 2016 protests. Finally, I reflect on my hopes for the future by arguing that the pre-2016 protest's internal discourse on trade-offs may scupper the vision of students for a fundamental reimagining of access to the university system.

Dear Friend

I am having a reaction to all of this academic organising. My refusal to be part of the academics' union and to join the academics' Whatsapp or email lists might be part of my discomfort with organisations in general.

I have a visceral reaction to white academics representing my interests in academic unions and ally movements. I may be misinterpreting things but I really think the saviour approach by academics is problematic. The students do not need our saving or chaperoning. They have been taking care of and thinking for themselves. This is what makes this an important rebellion for them. It allows them to lead themselves to a space that is theirs. Also, I am under no illusions that while students and academics have overlapping interests, their interests are largely discordant. We occupy different places and we cannot expect total overlap. My students tussled with me about the due date of a project during the protest. Our positions in relation to what is "reasonable" differed. They thought I was counter-revolutionary. History has shown this between older and younger generations and social movements across the world. We as academics and allies come with tons of baggage, including co-option which comes with age, class, managerialism (or managerial aspirations), hegemonic identities and conservatism. We want the students to protest calmly, to keep things non-violent, and to keep the place clean and free from fire and graffiti. This is in our interests. They want disruption because their lives are untenable and already disrupted. Sleeping in the library is an everyday disruption. Silent hunger is disruptive.

I was in Pretoria on that hot and smoking historic day when hundreds of toilets were burned in minutes. We ran and swarmed under the purple blooms of the Jacaranda trees, scared for our middle class lives and afraid for the students who had gathered in their thousands. But driven to the precipice on the edge of the seat of government at the Union Buildings as we all were, like the

arsonists, it was apparent that something would have to give. History was made that day on the student's terms. But perhaps Wits students cannot be at the forefront of claiming that short-lived victory of a non-fee increase in 2016. Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) students and their political allies saw the street-cleaning by Wits, the University of Pretoria and the University of Johannesburg students as middle class wilfulness. An instinct of the privileged to maintain order, to be seen as responsible and to differentiate themselves from the "barbarians". TUT voices are hoarse from screaming in the wind, unheard for years. Their echo reverberates and returns to them unheard by the media, society, university and government authorities. Their institutions are so dysfunctional that they have nothing to lose. "Fire, fire," they chant. "Burn every last toilet because our lives are seen as less valuable than the toilets we burn."

Perhaps I have been paralyzed by the inability to throw myself into the protests. When I attended the student protests, I was there as an individual largely indistinguishable from the students. I was not one of them but I was also not coming with an academic constituency lens that would then return and report activities. I just walked behind the marchers. I think the students have shown how capable they are of articulating their own struggles without contributions from elsewhere.

You will observe that many Black academics appear absent from the organizing by academic bodies. This is due to our own alienation, which makes it impossible to sit at the table of liberal white academics. Some of the discourse is that Black academics are not supportive of students. I think we are supportive but on the students' terms. In fact, we are excited by their radicalism because it allows us to live vicariously through their bravery. We find it untenable to participate under the academic umbrella

though. So we lose our public voice and fade into the background. But I think this 'backgrounding' in the context of what is and should remain a student-led movement is necessary. So when there are calls for academic responses or organising, we need to be clear about which academics are being referred to. Black academics cannot be part of the academic rubric because in truth, they are not. They are left out from the beginning. They are led by force. So in an act of alienation and disobedience, they do not participate in organised structures. In part, it is those very structures that ensure their alienation. I admire the University of Cape Town's (UCT) Black Academic Caucus (BAC) because its very existence illustrates that they cannot be part of the broad academic umbrella. It keeps the issue of voice and representation top of mind. The BAC keeps those that are on the inside (academic elites and (Black) management), outside of the space that black people fashion on their own. That way, they always have a position. At Wits (a space that is ostensibly more progressive than UCT) and elsewhere, at the moment, Black academics do not have a public voice. The spaces that I am occasionally let into illustrate that we actually do have a voice but it is a private voice. Alienated conversations happen at the periphery. The two voices cannot meet under conditions of inequality.

So I cannot be part of discussions which strategize about an academic position. I will walk behind the students as an ally, taking direction from them, helping when they ask and trusting that they have a strategy that works for them because they know their conditions far better than anyone else can ever know.

Perhaps we can talk about this letter and some of your own thoughts.

Your friend.

Thinking about private security as the henchmen of privilege

We nod at each other as black men. “I see you,” the nod says. *Sawubona*. I learned this much more keenly in the anti-Black streets of the USA where black and brown life languishes under the threat of violent, state-sponsored death. There, Black men’s eyes lock. “Brother,” they say. “We are in this. We are the hunted.” The look and ever so slight nod is recognition and affirmation among the hunted.

In South Africa, the gaze and whispered “heita” has its own history of affirmation and swag.

I stopped looking at the beginning of 2016. I resorted to studious avoidance when black men entered our campuses, not as students but as henchmen. The henchmen of privilege. I can’t meet their glazed eyes. As an academic, I work under guard when I should be working with free ideas. I avert my gaze because I withhold the recognition of my brotherhood with the Black men who “guard” our campuses. I can’t meet their gaze because of the shame that I imagine they feel at what they are required to do. I imagine that they grapple with the irony of being used to hold back the rage of the barbarians when they themselves are cast as raging barbarians. They are the imagined killers lurking in the shadows of Oscar Pistorius’ bathroom. Those against whom we build our security halls and close our windows. Black men hired to violently guard against the violence of Black men and women. The irony does not escape them. They know this because they are the fathers of young Black men and women as they once were the sons of black men. Their fathers had to carry passes to regulate their movement in space. We carry staff and student cards to enter Central Block and our places of work.

I cannot nod at the Black men who patrol my campus because I am complicit in their presence. My privilege is responsible for their lack of choice. Black men line the streets hoping for any kind of job. Their dignity depends on it. The Black and white elite suck at the teat

of a system that perpetuates the growing chasm between the poor and themselves. This system means that education is a commodity assured to graduate the wealthy while it excretes those without money. Plop. Into the ghetto gutter. Plop. Into the mortuaries. It means we have more Black people eligible to be security guards and cleaners than we do to be creators of employment. They have become a surplus, excess, more than we need. The guards stand sentry at our universities to protect us against ourselves. Our inequality needs policing. Black men police us against Black rage.

Violence meted out at poor students by security guards, on behalf of university authorities and wealthy students, is proliferating and will leave a scar on yet another generation of traumatised youth. Black men disciplining Black bodied for societal elites.

My refusal to meet the gaze of my brothers is futile, I know. I have entrusted my decision-making power to management because I cannot think for myself. I am on the inside of the Great Wall/Hall (now known as Robert Sobukwe House) protected by Black men against the raging barbarians who look just like me. What the fuck?

Struggle is our lot because even for those of us who feed at the trough of privilege, ejection hangs like a noose. These universities were not built for us. We stalk the corridors like ghosts. Coloniality cannot save us. Our citizenship behind the hallowed halls is tenuous. We were never members, not really. Our lot is really with the raging barbarians.

What about tomorrow?

The 2016 protests have occurred and they are writ large on the landscape of South Africa. Their intensity and the escalation of violence will haunt the bodies of students and the fabric of our collective memory for years to come.

An additional trauma has been added to extant deep colonial and apartheid wounds. This is an unfolding story and it is difficult to pin down both in terms of temporality and interpretation. The stakes are high. In order to not be overtaken by time and the spectacular protests of 2016, I want to pause in the moment just before the protests. This is because I believe that the atmosphere and institutional decision-making and posturing can shed some light on the actual protests that others cover in this volume.

The protests of 2015 illustrated that today is tenuous and tomorrow is uncertain. There was an atmosphere of uncertainty as the anniversary of the 2015 protests drew near. It was unclear if student fees would remain constant for another year or if they would increase. What seemed clear was that they would not “fall” and education would not be free. There was an eerie silence among the students while the university management and academics began talk of austerity measures. Some of the discussion centred on some of the following questions. Should we as academics forfeit our annual increment? Should we teach after hours to raise income? The language of trade-offs jumped from the 11th floor of Senate House into the corridors of academic departments. There was at once something honourable here and something potentially sinister. On the one hand we were exploring ways of taking the heat off our students while also subtly saying, “your irresponsible demands and actions have forced us into a corner”. Our trade-offs discourse did not engage with the conversation of systemic change that is at the core of the student demands. Discussions suggested that we wanted to keep the broken system ticking on as before. As an ally that had listened to the debates by students, my understanding was that an overhaul of the higher education funding system must occur. This would mean that government would allocate higher education a substantive increase in funding to reflect a philosophical shift in the value of education in our society. The protests at the Union Buildings in the summer of 2015 had

not been about internal trade-offs but a societal call by the youth to place more value on education by making it accessible to them. It was against the rampant commoditisation of learning. As a core societal constituency, the youth were calling for a reprioritisation and recalibration of the fiscus. This had not happened. Our trade-offs betrayed their call as they took the pressure of responsibility away from government. At face value, trade-offs appeared supportive but they were not really about building alliances with students. Trade-offs would thwart the birth of something new.

In the run up to the 2016 protests, the relative silence among the students appeared to belie the investigations, court cases, court orders, disciplinary hearings, bannings, and private security on campuses. While some students returned to class to secure their individual and familial futures, aware of the historical moment, others were trying to sustain the pressure. They knew that removing the foot from the accelerator and losing momentum would allow the century-old education system to snap back into place. But increasingly isolated and facing the wrath of management through court orders on their own was a sure way of stalling the sweeping change that the 2015 protestors had been rallying for. And so the singing of Solomon Mahlangu which reverberated through the corridors had become a whimper in the middle of 2016. During the lunch hour, outsourced workers and their allies had taken the place of students' chants.

The silence was not peaceful. It was ominous. It increased the anxiety of those that have drunk at the trough of privilege. There was tension in the corridors and people were more tentative. The strained silence continued to hold the promise of change in the same way that rain clouds are weighed down by the expectation of rain. The future was unclear. As an ally, I was anxious and excited by what the downpour would come with. But as Black academics we must remember that we are out of place anyway. We must think about what it would mean if graduating was not an

exceptional event but a common occurrence for those who come from rural parts of the country and whose parents have not seen a university. We must think beyond ourselves and about our debt to Robert Sobukwe, whose out of place presence at this university and painful death opened the way for us.

AFTERWORD

A courageous meditation that makes difficult demands on readers, with its painful truths, inspiring insights and disruptions of our assumptions, and ultimately provocative invitation to map different futures for education, and broadly, dignified life in South Africa.

This uncompromising tapestry of voices, experiences and perspectives refuse to abide by perceived categories of what is sayable, legible, respectable, legitimate; and the terms of these legitimacies.

It is fitting that the one student-authored meditation on the Wits chapter of #FeesMustFall should be an honest embrace of the paradoxes, tensions, challenges and victories of both the movement and the very writing process. This essay collection's candid acknowledgement of the frictions, negotiations, failures and triumphs that marked the journey to its publication embodies the movement's commitment to articulating and facing difficult questions head on; and to embracing discomfort as a site of possibility in the pursuit of social justice.

A searing reminder of our collective responsibility to the pursuit, sustenance and protection of the basic tenets of social justice; epistemic justice and dignified life for the excluded majority.

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RIOTING & WRITING

DIARIES OF THE WITS FALLISTS

The 2015-2016 #FMF movement presented an important moment that questioned the South African social order. *'Rioting and writing: Diaries of Wits Fallists'* presents unique insights as it is written and grounded on the particular positionalities, experiences and perspectives of the #FMF movement activists. The volume is based on an open and collective process driven by the student activists. The #FMF movement challenged the power relations within a

neoliberal university in a post-colonial context and brought to the fore other struggles within the broader society. The book provides a critical analysis of the movement, drawing from its key pillars of Pan Africanism, intersectionality, Black radical feminism and student-worker solidarity. It explores how the movement reopened and deepened (redefined) the call for decolonised and decommunitised education.

*At last, in **Rioting and Writing: Diaries of Wits Fallists**, we witness a young cohort of brilliant and engaged student editorial collective in full revolutionary decolonial activist flight, propelled by a rare 'self-writing' mode, challenging the long-standing patronizing and matronizing tradition of 'writing for them' and 'speaking for them,' publishing twenty engaging diaries of their activities, thinking, sacrifices, frustrations, betrayal, and heroism in the recent decolonization struggle that engulfed South Africa in 2015. The result is a genuine, novel and long-awaited 'student archive' that is equally eye-opening to all of us and particularly educative to those who are still stuck in denialism of neo-apartheid racist coloniality. I have nothing but praise and admiration for this decolonial revolutionary work.*

Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Professor and Director of Scholarship, Change Management Unit, Vice-Chancellor's Office, University of South Africa and founder and coordinator of Africa Decolonial Research Network (ADERN).

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