#Hashtag

An analysis of the **#FeesMustFall** Movement at South African universities

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Violence and Reconciliation

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
ANCYL	African National Congress Youth League
BAC	Black Academic Caucus
BSM	Black Students' Movement
CGE	Commission for Gender Equality
CPUT	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
DASO	Democratic Alliance Student Organisation
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters
EFFSC	Economic Freedom Fighters Student Command
NEHAWU	National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
PASMA	Pan Africanist Student Movement of Azania
PMB	Pietermaritzburg
PYA	Progressive Youth Alliance
SASCO	South African Student Congress
SCA	Supreme Court of Appeal
SCO	Students' Christian Organisation
SERI	Socio-Economic Rights Institute
SETT	special executive task team
SRC	Student Representative Council
TNG	Technikon Northern Gauteng
TRC	truth and reconciliation commission
TUT	Tshwane University of Technology
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UCT	University of Cape Town
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UL	University of Limpopo
Unizulu	University of Zululand
UWC	University of the Western Cape
Wits	University of the Witwatersrand
YCL	Young Communists League

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Researching the #FeesMustFall movement.

Malose Langa

Introduction

Students' protests against fees are not new in post-apartheid South Africa, especially in historically black universities. However, many of these protests were not widely covered in the mainstream media, raising questions in this report about who is worth media coverage. Jane Duncan (2016) argues that the media's coverage of protests depends on who is involved and whether or not the protest is violent. Duncan (2015: 142) asserts that the media tends to focus mainly on violent protests, 'creating the impression that the protests in South Africa are inherently violent, and that police action against them is warranted to protect property and public safety'.

Student-led protests gained momentum in 2015/16 and spread across the country. The #FeesMustFall movement sparked heated debates on fee increases in universities. Other demands by students included the decolonisation of the educational system, transformation of universities to address racial and gender inequalities in terms of staff composition, as well as insourcing of general workers. The protests generally started peacefully within various universities, supported by academics and other concerned stakeholders. The message was clear that the costs of higher education were too high and unaffordable for the majority of poor black students. The #FeesMustFall movement was widely supported but things changed, especially when protests started turning violent. What form(s) did the violence take during #FeesMustFall? Why and how did it happen? What were the triggers of violence or the sequence of events leading to protests turning violent? Did the lack of positive response from broader university management structures and the state contribute to violence during the protests? How did the #FeesMustFall movement start at each university? Who were the key figures involved? What were the gender dynamics within the movement? How exactly did things start in 2015? What changed between 2015 and 2016? What were the sources of divisions within the movement? When did protests turn violent for each university? Did the actions of the police provoke violence? What are the lessons that can be learned from these protests, especially ways in which they can be managed and contained in future in order to prevent violence? These questions motivated the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation to undertake the current study to explore the dynamics of students' protests in order to understand the manifestations of violence and the sequence of events within each university during #FeesMustFall.

This report provides analyses of the #FeesMustFall protests in nine universities: the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), University of Zululand, Rhodes University, University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus), Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), University of Cape Town (UCT), University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and the University of the Western Cape (UWC). Student researchers were recruited to conduct research and write a report for each university. Some of the researchers were studying at these universities; others were not. Recruiting researchers who were students at the universities facilitated gaining access to key informants, especially protesting students who were highly paranoid about being interviewed by individuals whom they did not know. Some of the researchers were also actively involved in the protests, which helped them to provide an insider perspective. These student researchers were encouraged to be highly reflective about their own subjectivity, biases and lived experiences of being #FeesMustFall activists, while simultaneously researching the movement. However, not all researchers were students at these universities, and this initially posed challenges in gaining entry to key potential participants. Some interviewees were deeply suspicious about being interviewed, suspecting that the researchers might be informers due to

perceived militarisation of campuses which resulted in many student leaders being arrested. The researchers used their networks within their own universities to connect with other key informants from other universities. The process then snowballed into connecting with other protesting and non-protesting students as well as with informants such as general workers and union representatives.

Individual and group interviews were conducted with student protest movement leaders, Student Representative Council (SRC) members, and protesting and non-protesting students. The majority of the participants interviewed were students, although there were also interviews with academic staff members, general workers and security officials. University management officials were not interviewed as the focus of this study was only students' reflections and accounts of their participation or non-participation in the protests. Archival information such as official social media accounts, news articles and academic sources were also consulted in order to understand how the media was reporting on the protests. The main aim of each report was to prioritise the voices of the students and to uncover their views about politics, decolonisation, the violence, the tensions and contradictions that emerged out of the #FeesMustFall movement.

Student protests are not new but an extension of the unresolved past

One of the key arguments in this report is that student protests are not new in post-apartheid South Africa. Over the years, historically black universities have been characterised by multiple and violent student protests, well before the #FeesMustFall movement in 2015 and 2016. The chapters by Marcia Vilakazi and Musawenkosi Malabela demonstrate the long history of violent student protests against financial exclusion at TUT and at Turfloop (University of Limpopo). Problems with these historically black universities can be traced back to the politics of higher education funding post-1994 and the decision by the state to reduce higher education institutions from 36 to 21 through the mechanism of mergers (Jansen 2003a). One of the key reasons for the merger of institutions of higher learning was to facilitate transformation and improve (especially black) students' access to higher education and financial support (National Commission on Higher Education 1996). However, it appears that many of these ideals were not achieved post the mergers because many universities are still marked by differences based on the material, cultural and social positions of their separate histories (Jansen 2003b). For example, TUT (Soshanguve campus) appears to have been negatively affected by its merger with Technikon Pretoria, a historically white institution. Sandile Ndelu provides a similar analysis with regards to CPUT, in that its merger with Cape Technikon, a former white institution, has resulted in inequalities between campuses along class and racial lines. For Marcia Vilakazi and Sandile Ndelu, these differences provide some insight into why protests at these universities tended to be more violent than on other campuses. Levels of violence appear to be rooted in the historical context of the universities of technology, supporting Mamdani's (2003) view that violence needs to be understood within its genealogy rather than its symptomology. This form of analysis is often lacking when we try to make sense of violence in postcolonial Africa because the focus is only on the here and now rather than on the genealogy of the violence itself. It is important to take take these genealogies into account when attempting to make sense of the violence that affected universities in 2015 and 2016.

This report raises questions around why protests in historically white universities such as Wits and UCT caught the public imagination in ways that violent protests that have been taking place in historically black universities such as TUT, CPUT, UWC and Turfloop never did. Why these differences in terms of the reaction? Is it because Wits and UCT are historically white universities? Is it because UCT and Wits are the centres of white capital? Protesting students in both universities were quoted as saying that there has not been a 'real' transformation at these institutions (see Sandile Ndelu's and Musawenkosi Malabela's chapters). For the protesting students, disrupting academic activities at these universities was a way to disrupt colonial structures, including the demand at UCT for the removal of Cecil John Rhodes' statue as well as the demand to decolonise the curricula at these universities. For Langa and Kiguwa (2016), the unresolved legacies of colonisation appear to be implicated in the violence and disruptions witnessed, especially at historically white universities where black students demanded to be treated with respect and dignity. From a Fanonian perspective, the students' violent reaction can be understood as the rejection of a colonised mentality in order to free and liberate the spirit from the shackles of oppression, (Fanon 1963). Fanon (1963: 27) argues that 'decolonization is always a violent

phenomenon'. The rupture of these violent protests needs to be seen and interpreted as the failure of the postcolony to address the inequalities of the past and effect a 'real' transformation and decolonised project. Students' argument about their reassertion of blackness and the return to the work of scholars such as Biko, Fanon, bell hooks and various feminist writers was an attempt to make sense of their positionality in a world characterised by the exclusion and marginalisation of black bodies on the basis of class, race and gender. The notion of intersectionality as theorised by Crenshaw (1989) was also important in how the issues of class, race and gender intersected with each other, but also in terms of how this intersection created divisions within the movement as illustrated in the UCT, Rhodes and Wits case studies in the report.

Is violence physical or symbolic or both?

The right to protest is enshrined in and protected by the South African Constitution because this right is 'recognized as [an] essential form of democratic expression rather than viewing it as a threat to democracy' (Duncan 2016: 3). The question is, why did protests become violent? Is violence a physical or symbolic act, or both? What are the limitations of the right to protest, especially when this right infringes on others' rights?

> *Firstly, it is important to acknowledge that protests are disruptive in nature but not always violent. Duncan (2016: 1) puts this aptly when she argues that protests are*
>
> *acts that communicate grievances through disruption of existing societal arrangements, and bring problems in society to public attention. Because protests are inherently disruptive, they can wake society up from its complacent slumber, make it realize that there are problems that need to be addressed urgently and hasten social change.*

The #FeesMustFall movement, through its protests across all South African universities, managed to raise public awareness about the shortage of funding for higher education. This awareness would not have occurred if protests had not been organised. The state was put under pressure and in response President Jacob Zuma announced a 0% fee increment for the 2016 academic year, Since the protests, the government has also committed to putting additional funding into the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) to financially support university students. It could be argued that some of these changes would not have happened if the students had not organised protests. It is evident that the protests served as an effective tool of communication, but questions have been raised about the violent acts associated with the protests. All nine chapters in this report blamed the police for instigating the protesters' violence, although there were instances where some protesting students were also responsible for fuelling violence. Although the violence engulfing the university protests cannot be blamed solely on the police, the dominant feeling among key informants was that the police too easily resorted to shooting protesters with rubber bullets and stun grenades without any attempt at negotiating or engaging with them. Students described their destruction of property as retaliation for the university management deploying police and private security officials in response to their demands. As noted in *The Smoke that Calls* (Von Holdt *et al*. 2011), the deployment of police often leads to more violence as police represent the state's symbolic power (Bourdieu 1979) and repression in the eyes of protestors (McKinley & Veriava 2005). All nine chapters in this report show that violence increased when the police were called and stationed within university grounds. The university management justified calling the police and hiring private security companies by saying that the aim was to protect university property. Von Holdt (2013) argues that our democracy is not only physically violent but also symbolically violent, especially against the poorest of the poor who live in abject poverty with no access to basic services. Protests for some students represented their quest to restore their dignity through free, decolonised education.

Unresponsive and aloof university management

In all nine chapters in this report, key informants asserted that university management was highly unresponsive to their demands. This involved vice-chancellors refusing to engage with student leaders or not coming to scheduled meetings. In her chapter, Sandile Ndelu narrates how the failure of the vice-chancellor at CPUT to arrive at a meeting made students

angry, resulting in them rioting and burning university property. Similar stories were shared about TUT management being aloof and distant in their engagement with student leaders. However, some vice-chancellors, such as those at Rhodes and UCT, tried their level best to actively engage with student leaders. However, divisions and splinter groups within the #FeesMustFall movement negatively affected some of these engagements.

It appears that a common response by the university management in all the case studies was to get court interdicts against the protesting students. The law was therefore used to silence voices of dissent as many students were arrested for contravening court interdicts. What is the impact of these court interdicts? Are these interdicts not stifling protesters' right to protest? It is important to acknowledge that rights are characterised by tensions – when a group of people gather to protest, they disrupt the rights of those who are not protesting. We need to learn to live with some of these contradictions, especially in our nascent democracy characterised by inequalities in terms of class and race. Universities often use the services of senior advocates to get these court interdicts while protesting students do not have the financial resources to afford such services and have to rely on civil society organisations and lawyers willing to provide pro-bono services. How fair is this? Are these court interdicts not making things worse by polarising the situation as one of 'us' and 'them'? Is it necessary for university management to get these court interdicts in the first place? What is their function and do they really work? Are there options that university management could explore instead of relying on court interdicts? Many of the interdicts appeared to be too broad, as demonstrated by Oliver Meth's chapter. He shows that at Rhodes University, the university management sought an interdict which was not specific about its limitations. This was a common practice at all the universities.

These interdicts exposed the apparent contradiction in university management's claimed commitment to negotiations, while simultaneously using the interdicts as a pretext to justify calling the police and private security officials to stop protests. These actions – getting court interdicts and calling the police – created a sense of anxiety and uncertainty on the university campuses. Is this securitisation and militarisation of universities not limiting the rights of students to freedom of expression? What are the limitations of this freedom, especially when some students unnecessarily resort to violence and the destruction of public property? The case studies in this report show the universities' failure in dealing with these tensions and contradictions by prioritising some rights over others without any attempt to strike a balance – this is part of the problem. However, protesting students need to be held accountable for their failure to reflect on their strategies, especially the use of violence as a tactic to advance their demands. I agree with the analysis given in all the chapters that violence is not always bad but can be productive in bringing change and transformation. However, the use of violence can also be counterproductive, and in this case it exposed the darker side of the #FeesMustFall movement.

Some positive and negative aspects of #FeesMustFall

On the whole, the #FeesMustFall movement was lauded for its achievement in raising awareness about the funding crisis in higher education in South Africa. This is a long-standing problem that universities have been battling for years but the #FeesMustFall movement brought the crisis to public attention within a period of two to three weeks. The movement achieved a number of positive things at various universities, including the renaming of university buildings, curriculum transformation and the insourcing of general workers. The state has also been pushed to explore other options and models to fund higher education, although the progress has been slow so far.

However, it is also important to reflect on the darker side of the #FeesMustFall movement, including the domination of male students within the movement (see Wits chapter), rape incidents (see Rhodes chapter), the exclusion of gender non-conforming activists (see UCT chapter) and the party-political power dynamics and battles for leadership positions within the movement (all chapters). These observations suggest that the movement was not homogeneous and was characterised by tensions and contradictions. Some of these tensions led to the emergence of splinter groups, and to divisions and ruptures within the movement which made it difficult for all those involved to speak with one voice. These darker aspects of #FeesMustFall need to be analysed critically to assess how they may have contributed to the collapse and divisions within the movement in various universities.

The demand for free, decolonised education: what does this mean?

The need for free education was at the heart of the #FeesMustFall protests. Students in all the chapters argued that education must not be treated as a commodity but as a right that students are entitled to enjoy. On the other hand, university management argued that it was not possible for universities to offer free education as there was insufficient funding from government. The government argued that it was still awaiting the findings of the Commission of Inquiry into Higher Education and Training led by Justice Jonathan Arthur Heher to provide feedback on the feasibility and affordability of free higher education in South Africa. At the time this report was completed, there was still no clarity around whether the call for free education would be realised or not. So far the government has given an undertaking to provide universities with additional funding but there are conflicting reports about whether this obligation has been met or not. Various university management structures still maintain that funding provided by the state is not enough for universities to meet their financial obligations, including services such as subscriptions to online journals, updating of libraries and buying of chemicals for laboratories. However, the chapters by Musawenkosi (Turfloop) and Yingi Edwin (University of Zululand) argue that the NSFAS provision has been sufficient for students to pay for their university fees. Students from these two universities asserted that 'they are already getting free education through NSFAS'. This raises the question of whether there are differences between historically white and black universities when it comes to NSFAS. It appears that students at the universities of Limpopo and Zululand, both historically black universities, are satisfied with NSFAS while students at historically white universities feel that NSFAS is insufficient in meeting their exorbitant fees. Are these differences in response to NSFAS related to the fact that fees are not the same for all universities? Are fees at historically white universities higher than those at historically black universities? Does the state need to intervene in how universities structure their fees? What are the implications of this for universities' autonomy and independence? What are the powers and limits of university councils in dealing with these matters? Should these decisions be left to the university councils or is it necessary for the government to interfere to a certain extent without undermining the autonomy of universities?

Students argued in all the chapters in the report that they do not simply require free education but a free education that is decolonised. It appears that students at different universities attached different meanings to the notion of a 'decolonised' education. For example, the students at the University of Limpopo argued that decolonised education means getting the same quality of education as students at historically white universities like Wits. Students at historically white universities (Wits, UCT, Rhodes and UKZN) argued that decolonised education means that the curriculum needs to be transformed to reflect the lived experiences of African people, including recognition of their scholarly work which is often on the periphery or taught as additional modules. It was argued that decolonised education means recentring the work of these scholars in the curriculum. Some universities have already started the process of transforming their curricula, given the concerns raised by the students during #FeesMustFall.

Way forward: concluding remarks

The #FeesMustFall movement has highlighted a number of issues, including the decommodification of higher education, outsourcing of general workers, lack of transformation in terms of staffing and curriculum change. There are key lessons that need to be learned out of the student protests over the last two years:

- The university management needs to be more open to discussion without getting court interdicts at the first sign of student protests. It appears that universities tend to use courts as the first point of call in order to justify summoning the police to maintain law and order within university premises. The university

management needs to be more tolerant in their dealings with the students and understand the political dynamics and power struggles associated with these student structures, which at times can make it difficult for negotiations to take place.

- As centres of academic excellent university need to provide leadership and a template to communities around issues of transformation, equality and equity

- The university management needs to be committed to issues of transformation rather than merely paying lip service to it, including the insourcing of general workers (which has already started in some universities), curriculum change and the recruitment of senior black academics.

- The student protest leaders need to know about their responsibilities and duties when organising protests within the university, including the responsibility to manage protesting students so that they don't turn violent, even in the face of provocation. It is important that protests are used as a means of communication, especially when university management is not prepared to engage with students in a fair and transparent manner. Student leaders also need to be more reflective about the feasibility of their demands and approach negotiations with an open mind. It is also important for student leaders and all those involved to reflect on their own practices of exclusion and marginalisation of others, such as female student leaders and gender non-conforming people, as well as on their use of violence to communicate their messages.

- It is important for student leaders and all those involved to reflect on their own practices of exclusion and marginalisation of others, such as female student leaders and gender non-conforming people, as well as on their use of violence to communicate their messages.

- Peace and reconciliation initiatives need to be explored to repair relations post the student protests in universities. It appears that some universities are highly polarised since the protests. Genuine dialogues between university management, staff and students need to take place to ensure that existing hostilities are resolved.

- The police need to know that the right to protest forms a cornerstone of South Africa's constitutional democracy. It is important that police manage protests without the use of force. It has been proven in this report and in other studies (e.g. Alexander, 2010; Von Holdt, et al., 2011) on this topic that this creates cycles of violence when protesters retaliate. Police need to apply certain basic principles of public policing, including containment, holding the line, facilitation and negotiation. These principles have been found to be effective in de-escalating and managing protests as well as in maintaining public order.

- The government needs to be more proactive in dealing with the issue of funding higher education. Currently, there is a view that the funding support provided by government is not enough to meet the financial needs of poor black students.

- The media also needs to reflect on its reporting of protests in general. It appears that the media largely focuses on violent incidents, without telling the whole story about the sources and grievances of the protesters. It is important that peaceful protests are also covered in the media as it seems that non-violent protests are not given the same coverage as those that are violent.

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‘A Rebellion of the Poor’:[1] Fallism at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology

Sandile Ndelu [2]

Background

Students from South African institutions of higher learning have been engaged in the largest student-led movement ever, calling for the radical reimagination of the higher education space. Under the banner of #FeesMustFall, protesting students are calling for, amongst others demands, the decommodification of higher education; racial, gender and class justice; the destabilising of western epistemologies and pedagogies; the reversal of the damage caused by South Africa’s neoliberal economy; and the elevation of the self-reliance and self-determination of the black working classes.

The Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) has not been able to avoid the ongoing ‘fallist student protests’ of 2015/16. In 2015, fiery protests erupted at the university, resulting in the complete shutdown of all university operations for weeks during the latter part of that year. In 2016, students at CPUT took to the streets once again. Their demands remained: #FreeDecolonisedEducation! #EndOutsourcing! #FreeRegistration! Their protest modus operandi remained the same: disrupting university operations, chanting and singing historic struggle songs and destroying property. Similarly, the responses from the university remained the same: sanctioning the use of force by the police, commissioning the use of force by private security offices, securing interdicts and instituting disciplinary procedures against protesters.

The research

While predictions that the fallist protests will continue into 2017, this study pauses to investigate the matrix between the protesting students, workers, academics and university executives involved in fallism at CPUT during 2015 and 2016. Specifically, the study interrogates how, inter alia, the structural make-up of the university, the waging of a racialised anti-capitalist struggle, the use of structural and sociocultural violence, and sociopolitical subjectivities have led to and sustained the fallist protests at CPUT.

The study used qualitative research methodologies on a total of 15 participants from the Bellville, Cape Town and Mowbray campuses of CPUT. The participants were sampled through a snowballing technique, where secured participants were asked to recommend other participants for the study.

At the time of completing the fieldwork, CPUT was still heavily militarised. This limited our ability to access the various stakeholders working and studying beyond the campus gates. Some of the workers that

[1] Peter Alexander and Peter Pfaffe (2014: 207) have described the generalised uprisings in postapartheid South Africa: ‘Many black people, including some workers, prospered, but most did not. Unemployment and inequality increased, and indicators for both are among the highest in the world…The early 2000s witnessed a brief flowering of social movements based largely in poor communities, and as these began to subside, around 2004, the township revolt picked up pace (Beinart & Dawson, 2010; Dawson & Sinwell, 2012).’

[2] Sandile Ndelu is a final-year LLB student at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Ndelu has been an organiser within the fallist movement at UCT since its start in 2015. He was part of the group of transgender students who created the UCT Trans Collective and who went on to disrupt the #RhodesMustFall exhibition on 9 March 2016. In 2016, Ndelu was amongst the 12 fallists who were either interdicted, suspended or expelled following the #Shackville protests on 16 February 2016. Following a university disciplinary hearing, Ndelu was sentenced to a suspended expulsion and a rustication (suspension) until the beginning of the 2017 academic year.

were approached to participate were distrustful of the study's intention.[3] Additionally, CPUT management was generally inaccessible for participation. The stakeholder profile of the participants is detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Stakeholder profile of participants

Stakeholder category	
Workers	2
Academics	4
Protesting students	5
Non-protesting student	1
Student leaders	3

Note: Participants will remain anonymous to protect them against victimisation.

The data was collected using semi-structured interviews and, where convenient, focus groups. The testimonies were then transcribed, and in some cases translated, for analysis. To supplement the data from the primary research, secondary research in the form of archival materials (e.g. news articles, official statements, videos) was used to answer the research questions.

The protests, disruptions, resistance and responses

Contrary to the narrative that has dominated the public archive, the fallist student movement did not 'erupt' on 9 March 2015 at the University of Cape Town (UCT), as some versions suggest, or on 14 October 2015 at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), as others suggest. Students from predominantly black universities and universities of technology have been consistently waging battles against the infrastructural conditions at their universities, the effectiveness of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) and the payment of university registration fees (Godsell & Chikane 2016: 60) – often resulting in harsh consequences for both the protesting students and the university (Mama & Feni 2012). CPUT has been no exception:

> *For years, there has been a long history of students fighting against exclusion. For debt to be scrapped, academic exclusion…The management at CPUT has a history of being quite brutal in terms of expulsions [when it comes to] student movements over the years – a lot of them have been expelled, suspended. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

> *The thing is that protests have been going on at CPUT for years before. It just wasn't taken that seriously until #FeesMustFall happened. So people always talk about it as though it happened after the fact here. It didn't. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*

Thus, the sequence of events that unfolded during the 2015/16 student protests at CPUT, bracketed within the #FeesMustFall campaign must be construed as a continuation of student efforts at that university and not as an explosion of student resistance as has been understood regarding the protests at institutions such as UCT and Wits.

In October 2015, following an announcement by the minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande declaring a 6% cap on university fee increments for 2016, predominantly black students at CPUT joined students from UCT, the University of the Western Cape (UWC) and Stellenbosch University in a march to Parliament in Cape Town to demand that the Minister declare a 0% increase in fees for 2016 (Nicolson, 2015; Petersen 2015). What followed at CPUT

[3] They feared victimisation. One worker at the Cape Town campus confessed to being afraid to answer our questions. She was uncomfortable because she was not sure whether we were sent to spy or to incriminate her. Added to this, the workers were facing a lot of anxiety as outsourcing was on the horizon at CPUT and they were thus worried that the study could jeopardise their chances of being insourced.

was a sequence of student led protesters which continued through the latter parts of 2015 and resumed during the latter part of 2016. The main demands of the protesting included:

- Free, decolonised education for all.
- The immediate clearance of historical debt.
- #EndOutsourcing of allied workers.

These protests (which often took a violent turn) where characterised by clashes between protesting students, the police and the private security officers; the burning of university property; the disruption of university exams and other university operations; and the arrests and suspension of student leaders. In November 2016, following days of negotiations, engagement and mutual compromise, CPUT student activists; Student Representative Council (SRC) members; the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union; the Cape Peninsula University Employees' Union (CPUEU); #EndOutsourcing representatives and management reached an agreement on, amongst other things, the introduction of insourcing and the erasure of all student debt history. The agreement was generally seen as a breakthrough after more than a year of failed negotiations, damaging violence, victimisation and trauma.

> *I think there is a difference this year. I think there was some response this year and we saw some results from the protests. I did see a difference that brought us to this current position. We are still on probation because we have now been insourced. Last year there was no difference. (Individual interview, outsourced worker, 2016)*

This agreement is similar to the agreement between UCT and its #BringBackOurCadres campaigners (see the UCT case study in this report). Management at CPUT agreed to demilitarise the campuses and in return the students committed to allowing exams to go ahead uninterrupted, although there were a few incidents of violence. As per the agreement signed on 14 November 2016, CPUT officially invited the thousands of graduates who had been barred from receiving their certificates due to outstanding fees, to collect their qualifications. Moreover, the university took several steps towards the progressive insourcing of all allied workers such as security guards, maintenance staff and cleaning staff. Although seen as important victories, protesting students have committed to continue mobilising for the demand for free decolonised education and will see out the completion of insourcing.

History of CPUT as a university: lenses to understand the present situation

> *It's a school. It's designed for people to come in, get instruction and then leave. It's not designed to foster and create comfortability in the space. I think the reality is that at a lot of black institutions that is the case. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

The protests at CPUT did not emerge out of a vacuum, but emerged out of a legacy of student resistance post-1994. The current student protests must be understood within the sociostructural, historical and institutional make-up of this university. CPUT is the only university of technology in the Western Cape. It is also the largest university in the province, housing more than 32 000 students, spread over six campuses (Athlone, Bellville, Cape Town, Granger Bay, Mowbray, Wellington) and six faculties (Applied Sciences, Business and Management, Education, Engineering, Health and Wellness Sciences, Information and Design) (CPUT, 2015).

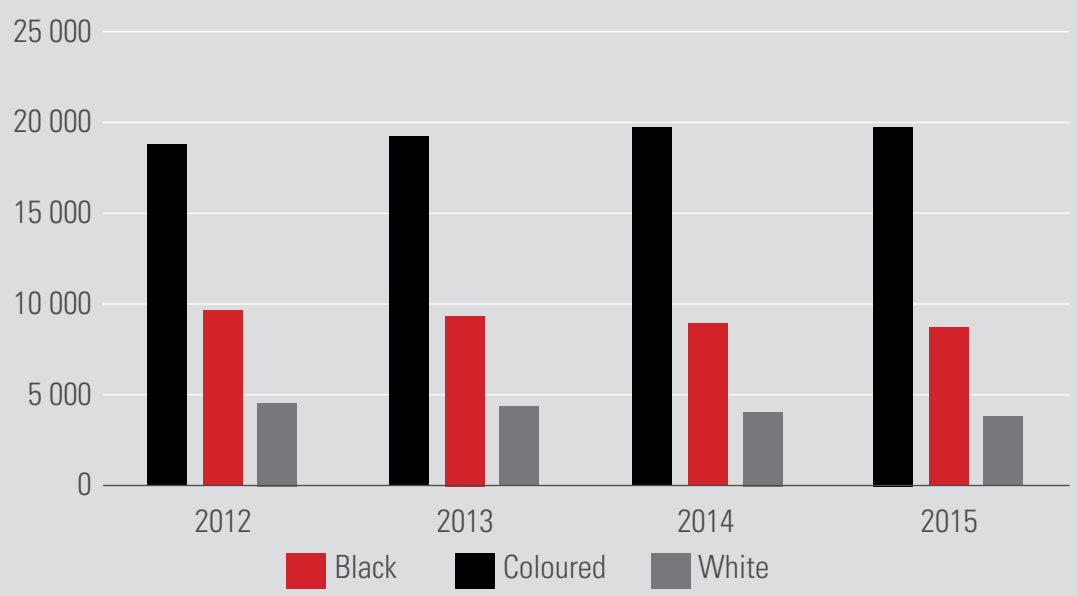
The university was officially opened on 1 January 2005, following a statutory merger of the Cape Technikon (now CPUT Cape Town Campus), a previously predominantly white institution founded in 1920, and the Peninsula Technikon (now CPUT Bellville Campus), an institution previously demarcated to serve the coloured community, founded in 1962 (CPUT, 2015).

The merger followed a national intervention led by the then minister of education, Kader Asmal, aimed at transforming higher education in South Africa from the structures of apartheid's segregationist programme. Central to this transformation

was the restructuring of the higher education system into a single nationally coordinated system as opposed to one segregated along racial categories (Jansen 2003).

Although Cape Tech had a predominantly white student population, CPUT is largely black and coloured. In 2015, a total of 32 887 students enrolled at the university. Of these, 19 892 (60.5%) were black and 8 787 (26.7%) were coloured (Figure 1), while 1.1% of the enrolments where categorised as Indian. White students constituted only 3 858 (11.7%) of CPUT's student population that year. The majority of CPUT students are at the Cape Town and Bellville campuses – 27 042 (82.2%) of the 32 887 students that enrolled in 2015.

Figure 1: CPUT enrolments by population group, 2012–2015



Source: Data accessed at bi.cput.ac.za

Although the dominant proportion of black students may be slightly skewed due to CPUT's relatively large proportion of international students (2 336 or 7.1% of the student population in 2015 was from other African countries), the high representation of black and coloured students at CPUT is not a coincidence.

The reorganisation of South Africa's higher education landscape at the turn of the millennium stratified higher education into three tiers: traditional universities, such as UCT, UWC and Rhodes University; universities of technology, such as the Mangosuthu University of Technology, Vaal University of Technology and Tshwane University of Technology; and technical and vocational education and training colleges, such as Berea Technical College and the College of Cape Town (Jansen 2003). CPUT falls within the second grouping of institutions of higher learning, constructed to build and nurture the social mobility of a large (predominantly black) highly skilled labour force. However, instead of transforming the South African higher education landscape, this policy vision has reproduced racial, class and institutional hierarchies. Awareness of these inequities emerges strongly from the subjective testimonies of the various stakeholders involved in the student protests at CPUT:

> *African students who go to UCT are going to be knowledge producers. African students that go to CPUT or a comprehensive university [like Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and the University of Johannesburg]*

are going to go into the labour market at the bottom end of higher education. It's social stratification in a different kind of way. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)

UCT students predominantly go in the upper end of the market place. CPUT [students] predominantly go into what they call the white-collar employment – banks, industries. They have knowledge. But their knowledge is applied knowledge and not theoretical. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)

Our education system neatly positions the learners to go to particular institutions – so [if you come from] ex-model C schools you get immediately into UCT; [if you go to a school in] Khayelitsha, Langa, Mitchell's Plain, you are going to come to CPUT for two reasons: 1) Your schooling system, the subjects you did and how well you did, and 2) because of the money: you don't have the money to go to UCT…I know lots of students that got into UWC but the parents chose to send their child to CPUT. Why? Because the fees [at CPUT] were half [those at UWC]. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)

The fact that the university attracts predominantly black and coloured students; the geopolitical divides between the campuses in Cape Town (nestled between whitening/gentrifying suburbia and the CBD) and Bellville (a historical working-class white and coloured urban settlement); and the curricula, which are geared towards developing hard skills for the markets, all contributed to the fallist student movement taking root within the institution.

I wouldn't say this is a very good campus for students. It's very top down. Very hierarchical. Very much like a school. Doesn't really encourage critical thinking. It's very much, do as we say, sit up and shut up. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)

There is so much intellectual development that is being lost at CPUT – this division that we make between a university of technology and a university is a misnomer. University of technology should be equipping you for more practical stuff, but it shouldn't deny the fact that you have an intellect and that you have the capability of engaging with ideas. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)

The grievances

The grievances voiced by fallists at CPUT are coloured by the sociostructural difficulties faced by the predominantly black student population. Former deputy vice-chancellor for transformation at UCT, Professor Crain Soudien, dissects the preoccupation with the transformation of the higher education space as necessarily implicating both the 'structural' (the rigid relationships between the various personnel and objects within the university) and the 'ideological' – the learned 'beliefs and assumptions' which orientate one's understanding of a problem and its solutions (Soudien 2010: 883). Similarly, Godsell and Chikane (2016: 57) argue that 'while previous protests focused only on structure, the debate among students and academics has progressed to a point at which ideology of the university becomes the new area of protests'. However, the demands tabled by the students at CPUT point to a student and worker mass primarily aggrieved by the structural configuration, rather than by the ideological positions, of the university.

Free decolonised education

CPUT shares the demand for free decolonised education with the rest of the national fallist student movement. The demand is bifurcated in nature. Firstly, it includes a fiscal dimension: the state must make available enough sustainable funding to make the canon that has established education or knowledge sharing as a transactional commodity obsolete. Secondly it has a political dimension: the university must critically revaluate the epistemological and pedagogical foundations of its knowledge-creating and knowledge-sharing functions. Both dimensions have been the subjects of much research, thought and debate during the last two years, with various tax models, fiscal redistribution models and a Presidential Fees Commission deliberating over the economics of the former and various postcolonial thinkers commenting

on how to travel towards the latter. As a contribution to this debate, Professor Achille Mbembe (2015) comments in 'Decolonizing Knowledge and the Question of the Archive':

> *In Ngugi's terms, decolonisation is a project of're-centering'. It is about rejecting the assumption that the modern West is the central root of Africa's consciousness and cultural heritage. It is about rejecting the notion that Africa is merely an extension of the west.*

Some of the participants in this study added that:

> *The university just doesn't give them [the students] enough academic support. I've been working in academic development and I think they need more support and encouragement. I think particularly the students from the rural areas – rural black students that get here are incredibly powerful potential students. So much potential. I don't see that being developed. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

> *[We should] decolonise all curriculum. If you studying hospitality, why are you being taught how to cook European food and Asian food? Why aren't you taught to cook African food? Why are you taught to give hospitality in a European way in Africa? (Focus group, student leader, 2016)*

The need to transform curricula was raised by students across the country. Students at CPUT claimed that their curricula are out of touch with the reality of what is happening in many African communities. It appears that the curricula are designed to teach students how to be professionals in a European world, including how to cook European and Asian food when doing a Diploma in Hospitality. Such qualifications were berated for alienating black students from their own lived experiences. Although the students calls for knowledge to be decolonised, he provides no details of what an ideal curricula would look like.

Image by Francois Swanepoel

Image by Shaun Swingler

Insourcing of workers

Like their counterparts at Wits and UCT, CPUT students supported workers in their protests to be insourced. The practice of outsourcing was seen as a form of re-colonisation and re-enslavement of poor black workers, who were exploited and dehumanised through this policy.

> *Sometimes you find that your wages do not tally up. And there would be queries, etc. But the pay query would take time. They must launch a long investigation about when and where you worked. But even that money was not satisfactory to us. We are grade C security officers but here we are paid grade D level wages. The seniors get paid at grade B level. (Individual interview, outsourced worker, 2016)*

The insourcing demand requires CPUT to terminate all contracts with private companies that act as agents/labour brokers between the university and the personnel who perform key services - such as campus security, residence catering, campus cleaning and campus maintenance - and to hire these workers directly. This intervention will create a direct employment relationship between the university and the workers, mandating the former to make all employee conditions and benefits available to them, amongst other legal requirements.

Neutralising the effects of student debt

At CPUT, as is the case at most institutions of higher learning that rely on student fees to meet their overhead costs, unsettled fees are heavily penalised. Indebted students are barred from progressing with their studies the following year. Similarly, indebted students due to graduate are prevented from receiving their qualification certificates until they have settled their fee debt, making it difficult to find work and build careers in their chosen fields.

Image by Francois Swanepoel

> *I know people like X, she used to work in our unit and she is in the situation because she can't graduate because of her student debt. Which means she can't get a good job to pay off her student debt. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

The students at CPUT demanded that these penalties, which are most disadvantageous to black and poor students, be done away with and that students who have been disallowed from continuing with their studies or from graduating due to their fee debts be reinstated or granted their qualifications. Following months of protests, the university decided to allow students with historical debt to get their qualifications.

National Student Financial Aid Scheme

NSFAS[4] is a state institution set up to provide financial support to indigent students from public institutions of higher learning and training. NSFAS provides students with loans (repayable once the student has been awarded their qualification and is employed) or bursaries (to those who qualify). Further support includes food and transport stipends and a living honorarium in addition to the cost of tuition and accommodation. However, fallists at CPUT have grown frustrated with NSFAS and are now demanding its reform:

> *The problem with NSFAS is one of the reasons why students want free education. Once a previously disadvantaged student is not accepted for NSFAS, obviously they will want free education because their debt is increasing – and once you have a lot of debt, you cannot register in the following year. You can't proceed with your studies. You cannot buy your books. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

> *I feel like every student has the right to be funded by NSFAS, but they have a lot of problems. They give out book vouchers late, they give out the food vouchers late. That's why some people get angry as well – because obviously, you want to study but you don't have your books and stuff. It's a struggle. (Focus group, non-protesting student, 2016)*

> *I'm a first-year student and this is my first year being funded by NSFAS. I never got a food voucher this whole year. I went to the offices and they told me I need to send another email – the same email to the same person again – they will start processing again later on this week. This year my mother has been paying for my groceries. They are only giving me the money now – what am I going to do with it? Me applying for NSFAS meant that my mother struggles with things like this, so NSFAS must up their game. (Focus group, protesting student, 2016)*

The testimonies from the participants highlight NSFAS's failure to provide timeous financial relief to indigent students. The students are aggrieved by the slow pace of stipend payments, which are sometimes delayed by months at a time. The students are also suspicious of the process that NSFAS uses to select its beneficiaries. Moreover, they suspect that the state institution has been captured by corruption and general incompetence. Important to flag is that the NSFAS grievance surfaces deep political disagreements both within and outside of the national fallist student movement: the difference between #FreeEducationForAll and #FreeEducationForThePoor. Although the student movement has done much work to create consensus on the plausibility of the former position, some stakeholders, including the state and various universities, have endorsed the latter position.

These grievances ought to be understood within the context of the far-reaching changes that occurred within South Africa's higher education system during the first 10 years after the official demise of apartheid as articulated by Professor Jonathan Jansen (2003). Amongst these were changes, was the change in the size and shape of several universities, technikons and colleges following a 2001 report by a national ministerial working group. The group recommended that the number of universities and technikons be reduced from 36 to 21 through various restructuring mechanisms (Jansen 2003: 297). One such mechanism was the merger of Cape Technikon and Peninsula Technikon to form CPUT. Coupled with this

[4] See the website at http://www.nsfas.org.za/content/mission.html, accessed 28 January 2017.

was an upward curve of black student enrolments at both historically black technikons (such as Peninsula Technikon) and historically white technikons (such as Cape Technikon) (Jansen 2003). Jansen goes on to write:

> *Against this backdrop, the problem for South African higher education will not be race…**The new problems will be the background, class and regional character**… (2003: 300, emphasis added)*

More than a decade later, this holds true for the many students and workers at CPUT. As discussed, CPUT is an urban institution with a majority black student population. Many hail from homes built on the earnings of unskilled or semi-skilled workers from the black and coloured townships of the Western Cape and the former 'homelands' of the Eastern Cape. Their acceptance into university is a lifeline for their families. These students enter the university space on the strength of the promise of becoming socially mobile, highly skilled workers who will advance to the ranks of the upper working classes. However, the ever-rising cost of higher education in South Africa frequently arrests these aspirations, whether through students' inability to settle exorbitant tuition and residence costs, deferred academic progression and graduation due to debt or being barred from registering for a new academic year. #FeesMustFall and #EndOutsourcing at CPUT are therefore proxies for an ongoing struggle against historical deprivation and the brutality of a neoliberal capitalist state order creating 'new problems' of 'class and regional character', as prophesied by Jansen.

> *The magnitude of the sacrifices that people make just to get here on a daily basis – I don't understand how anyone could say we don't care about education. People are literally spending two or three hours travelling just so that they can come to class. But for what? Just to come to university and be treated like crap by lecturers who think you're not invested in your education. It's such an arrogant thing to say or think. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*

The fallist demands directly interrogate the structure of CPUT and its effects on student and worker agency and their 'survival politics'. The visceral nature of the CPUT students' demands only indirectly implicates decolonisation, as a theory. This marks a political difference from the fallist student movement in its manifestations at traditional, historically white universities such as UCT and Wits.

> *The things that were tabled were as much in line with the intellectual questions, decolonisation of knowledge, as they were with issues of survival. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*

At universities like UCT and Wits, fallism is a discursive tool to rattle the ideological complacency of the postapartheid university. Here a theorisation of decolonisation lays the groundwork for the student demands and acts as a justification for the actions the students take to actualise those demands. Conversely, at CPUT, a common lived experience of continuing deprivation is the basis for the demands. The frustration and helplessness that accompany this experience are then used to justify the means employed to realise their demands. Essentially, the formation and articulation of student and worker demands at CPUT is primarily coloured by a sophisticated understanding of their lived realities rather than by a theoretical understanding of de/colonisation.

Joining a movement, organising for change

> *We now understand that #FeesMustFall isn't just about fees. It's the face of a national revolution that will tackle the mistakes made by our forefathers, the generation of 1976 and the generation of the Freedom Charter. This is the means of steering the wheel towards eradicating the mental chains of the masters. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

As will become clearer below, fallists at CPUT have located the struggle for nursing their grievances and attaining their demands as part of a larger struggle against the globalised system of racist capitalism.The aggrieved students appreciate the significance of the current moment. They are part of a group of young people being groomed to become the next generation of

technocrats and bureaucrats but have rejected the white supremacist, capitalist and patriarchal status quo they are expected to administer. They also appreciate that the project is a large one; one whose logical conclusion will require a complete disruption of the current racial, classed and gendered racial order through mass action. This will require entering partnerships and extending solidarity across the working classes. In 'Student Politics and Activism in Zimbabwe', Leo Zeilig (2008: 222) notes a similar preoccupation within student movements and student organising in Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe:

> *Students were no longer lone activists fighting on behalf of a voiceless civil society. They became intimately involved in a tumultuous period of strikes, demonstrations and political arguments about an alternative to the ruling party. This period, marking a new phase in student activism, saw the convergence of student activism with the wider movement for democratic and social change across Zimbabwe.*

At CPUT, building an intra-university movement of poor black students began with reorganising the party-political landscape within the university. The students renegotiated the relationship between the three most significant political actors at the university: the Pan Africanist Student Movement of Azania (PASMA), the Economic Freedom Fighters Student Command (EFFSC) and the South African Student Congress (SASCO). Importantly, the relationship does not entail a bracketing of the partisanship dominating the CPUT political space, but rather foregrounds their familiar experiences, shared objectives and egalitarianism. In doing so, the students at CPUT forged (at least for some time) a democracy of cooperation, tolerance, integrity and trust across party-political lines.

> *In one year they would vote for SASCO, the next year they would vote for PASMA, they would give each one a chance. The rivalry is strong but it's never been to the extent that there has been severe violence between students. There has never been a tradition like that. There has always been a tradition of strong engagement and tolerance of difference. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

Furthermore, the years-long partnership and community between the CPUT Bellville Campus and UWC was reaffirmed during the student protests in 2015/16. The comradeship between CPUT and UWC can be understood to be due partly to their geographic proximity and partly to an overlap in politics. Students from each university often extend tactical and physical support to each other during protests and interventions. Students seek refuge on each other's campuses, away from the brutal clashes between protesters and police on their home campuses. Students collaborate and host healing spaces and tactic-building spaces together. These inter-university partnerships also extend to the elite universities in the province, such as UCT and Stellenbosch University. Fallist student activists within these universities, understanding the contextual discrepancies between their universities and CPUT, demonstrate solidarity through acts of redistribution: redistribution of the disproportionate media attention that elite universities attract; redistribution of the disproportionate financial assistance that elite universities enjoy from sympathisers; redistribution of resources such as bottled water, food, medical supplies and bail money.

After reorganising the party-political landscape, the CPUT student protesters aligned themselves to the workers' plight within the university. Godsell and Chikane (2016) speculate that the student movements' deliberate solidarity with outsourced workers may be one of the ideological dynamics differentiating the movement from similar student uprisings elsewhere in the world. They go on to draw a link between the aspirations for social mobility and agency embodied by poor, black, first-generation university students and the aspirations for economic security, self-determination and dignity pursued by outsourced workers (Godsell & Chikane 2016). Through connecting the plight of the workers with the plight of their own family members employed within the same sector, the students harbour 'a deep personal understanding of, and revulsion for, the abuses endured by this category of worker' (Godsell & Chikane 2016: 62). As part of the construction of kinship, the protesting students, understanding that being in higher education afforded them institutional and sociocultural power over the workers, invoked alternative patterns of power between themselves and the workers to those created by the university's structure. For example, the student protesters referred to the workers as 'mama' or 'tata', as a means of communicating respect, affirming the workers' ages and interpellating the workers into positions empowered with wisdom, authority and deference.

> *And there has always been a very strong element of unity between the students and the workers. That has always been there. The students have always taken up the case of insourcing – up to last year they have never management to quite succeed, to push management to the point of insourcing. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

> *I won't lie, the relationship between the workers and the students was a very good one. We worked together very well. We would communicate everything with each other and our programme would be taken forward in a way that we are happy with. We fought together for insourcing and #FeesMustFall. Because these are also our children who are studying. They are fighting for us and we are fighting for them. We must support them. In everything that they do, we must be on their side and they must be on our side in everything that we do. (Individual interview, outsourced worker, 2016)*

> *Us as securities were at our posts, and as part of the protests the students decided to remove us from our posts to join them. Because they are also fighting for us to be insourced. Because they could relate to us because their parents also work hard and are also underpaid while they are paying a lot of fees. (Individual interview, outsourced worker, 2016)*

The kinship-like relationship between the protesting students and the workers is part of an extended programme of consolidating popular consensus to wage a mass class struggle against neoliberalism and the continued binds of socioeconomic deprivation. The plans to forge cross-sectoral solidarity with school learners, parents, the clergy, public servants and taxi drivers speak to the long-term and cumulative goal of the student movement: the end of capitalism and the attainment of socioeconomic freedom.

> *[We must] take the fight for free decolonised education forward. It's a political fight. We need everybody involved. We need to go to the schools, workplaces, we need to mobilise broader forces in order to win that demand. (Focus group, student leader, 2016)*

Violating the violent, punishing the punisher

> *This is the expression of a generation's experience of deprivation and loss and [the] constant assault of whiteness; of economic frustration. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*

Violence, denoted by destruction of or damage to property or bodily integrity, found expression both within how fallists advanced their cause and how the university, through the police and private security companies, responded to fallist demands. Acts of public violence during conflict are historical facts that have spilt over into the new democratic dispensation in South Africa (Alexander 2010). Records of the colonial conquests of Southern Africa reveal that bloody violence was used to both forcefully acquire and defend land and natural resources. Similarly, archives of apartheid reveal that apartheid was both enforced and resisted through bloody and fiery violence. Postapartheid, the South African public has witnessed modes of disruption and destruction that burn schools and hospitals, shut down the production of goods, block roads, loot shops and claim lives in ways strikingly similar to those seen during the tumultuous years of resistance against apartheid (Alexander 2010). These historical patterns indicate that the predominantly black and working-class majority is tired of waiting in line for an uncertain future attainment of (mainly) economic freedom, as promised by the postapartheid state and the Constitution that founded it. Public service protests, primary sector workers' protests and protests against specific political actors are recurrent events in our young democracy.

The student protests at CPUT, flanked by the student–worker demands anchored in the class struggle and coloured by police brutality, carry on the continuum of generalised uprisings that we have witnessed in South Africa and beyond. Testimonies from the participants in this study, some of whom were onlookers and others active participants, reveal that

the repertoires of violence from both the protesters and the police/private security alliance were triggered by, amongst other things, unresponsive management, the presence of armed forces and the performance of toxic masculinity. These repertoires included setting fire to university infrastructure, using rubber bullets, violent arrests, raiding residences, setting up barricades, damaging property and causing damage to bodily integrity.

Unresponsive management

Frustrations with unresponsive or unsatisfactorily responding university decision makers emerged frequently. The student protesters at CPUT began by invoking non-violent modes of protest. Two moments illustrate how acts of diversion, avoidance and dismissal triggered violence in the form of destruction to property and bodily integrity. On both occasions the protesters had gathered peacefully, singing struggle songs and dancing. On the first occasion, which took place on 22 October 2015, the vice-chancellor made a brief appearance that left the protesters, who had been expecting a thoughtful response to their demands, underwhelmed and frustrated. On the second occasion, on 13 November 2015, the vice-chancellor failed to arrive and account to the protesters. What followed immediately on both occasions were high levels of violence across all major campuses.

> *The most important aspect of #FeesMustFall is that it comes with a lot of urgency – where students are proposing different ways and methods of engaging. It's no longer important to go through the structures that we have, etc. There are very much immediate demands where people want tangible answers. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

> *The failure to engage the students at their level and to recognise the dynamic approach that students have to problem solving was not conducive to good relations – partly because it escalated issues and made students more determined to use methods which people call violent. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

> *The VC [vice-chancellor] is arrogant and incapable of resolving the dispute. He had no intention of meeting any of the demands – made no attempt to creatively deal with the argument. There were weeks on weeks on end where not a single window was broken. In fact, even now. The latter front part of Bellville was burnt, the control room was burnt. Only the question is why? Because the students are not violent. There are many flammable places on campus; we are a technical university – if the students wanted to, the place would be flat already by now. Why was the control room targeted? They set up cameras, and the cameras were going to be used to identify people and used to victimise people. So, it's quite possible that the reason why it was targeted and the cameras broken was a defensive violence. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

Unsympathetic management

In addition to be being unresponsive, CPUT management was accused of being detached from the sensitivities of the protesters and unsympathetic to their cause. This laid the groundwork for the festering of sharp oppositional positions, even on issues where compromises could be reached. Protesting participants gave testimonies of feeling disrespected and taken for granted. They were infuriated and felt that management was the biggest obstacle to the attainment of their demands. These frustrations often manifested themselves in violence on all CPUT campuses. One student leader recalled an incident where the vice-chancellor, Dr Prins Nevhutalu, unable to 'read' the sensitivities of the crowd, made comments and gestures that antagonised the crowds, abruptly ending a dialogue and igniting violence. The incident occurred directly after the students had elected their leadership and after the elected leadership had spent several hours deliberating on an amicable way forward with management.

> *We said VC must also address the mass. He stood up and addressed us on the Freedom Charter – we told him to stop right there. When we got to the meeting we said, 'Amandla! Izwe Lethu! Sizowfunda Ngenkani!' This*

thing is not [party] political, making sure that we are not divided – we are united. He was politicising it by only saying Amandla! The students started howling at him and threw him with water bottles, etc. (Focus group, student leader, 2016)

It was very badly handled last year and it was a very divisive thing on campus…It was actually very horrible and I'm very glad the VC is gone now actually, because I don't think he was doing a good job at all. And he was very disrespectful to the students. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)

Another thing which makes people burn is the fact that management doesn't listen to us. We students say if you do this we will retaliate – then shouldn't carry on with classes. Keeping on trying to restart classes or starting exams makes the students feel like they are not being listened to. Then students use extreme means like burning. Like they burned a minibus taxi that belonged to private security – that is an extreme, they are showing that if you don't listen we will go to extremes as retaliation against management. The thing of burning goes together with management not listening to us as students. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)

Governance trouble

In his account of some of the key changes that occurred within higher education in the first decade after the official end of apartheid, Jonathan Jansen (2003: 301) notes a shift in the relationship between university management and councils:

The expansion of the functions of councils of universities and Technikons as they became much more involved in the management of institutions, compared to their traditional governance role with respect to institutional policies…created considerable conflict in many institutions as the line between management and governance became blurred through the activism of otherwise distant councils.

At CPUT, the council was a key feature in both years of the fallist student protests. Although theoretically giving students direct access to the governance structure primarily responsible for the institutional direction of the university, the involvement of the council obstructed the ability of the executive to meaningfully address the student–worker demands.

The problem in South Africa we would like to see VCs having a certain level of autonomy that would allow them to make decisions. So, on the one hand, you have your council and they will tell you what to do – because that's who the VC is legally responsible to and in terms of the subsidy?…VCs are stuck with very different kinds of problems. In terms of bad faith, their starting position is that they didn't have a starting position that they could negotiate in the first place. On the one hand their councils are telling them what to do, and on the other hand Blade [Nzimande] is telling them what to do. And the government hasn't even taken a position of what the universities can and cannot do. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)

Police and private security as new management

Management responded with calling the police and hiring private security to shoot the students because they are 'damaging buildings'. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)

The question is not whether they should have or not have. As an education institution, it boggles the mind that any institution or state reverts to militarisation before engagement. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)

One of the university management's first responses to the escalating student protests at CPUT was to involve the police. The police were called in to control the protests in order to allow for university operations to continue. They used stun grenades, water cannons and teargas to disperse crowds of protesters, and arrested those resisting their

control. Moreover, police were deployed onto CPUT campuses to enforce the terms of the several interdicts that had been ordered against the protests and protesters. The police were roundly condemned for using excessive and disproportionate amounts of force to fend off protesters. One interviewee claimed that the police used rubber bullets, sometimes at close range, when 'these students [were] not armed with anything, except rocks'. Following violent clashes between protesters and the police at Parliament in October 2016, the Legal Resources Centre applied for an interdict against the excessive use of force by the police (ANA 2015). The interdict prohibited the police from going beyond the powers attributed to them by law. However, the police continued to effect unlawful arrests, raid residences and use force without restraint or adequate notice. As a response to the criticism, CPUT, together with most universities affected by fallism, commissioned the services of private security companies to assist the police in 'managing' the protests. Again, the primary objective was to use forceful means to prevent any further damage to university property and disruptions to university operations. And with more resources redirected to the militarisation of campus, less were directed towards engaging with and making progress on the student–worker demands.

> *When universities used the military to engage students, they were not concerned about the students…What they were concerned about was their private properties. Their first response is to protect that building. And whether the student gets hurt in the process doesn't matter. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

> *The sheer intimidation of police coming onto campus! I counted at least 18 police cars with water cannons and police wearing their crowd control things. With Marikana in mind, of course you always imagine that something bad will happen like at any minute. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

> *The police had already identified the ring leaders and when there were protests they came straight for the ring leaders; arrested them even though they were peaceful. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

The private security companies used elevated forms of violence against the students, often exacerbating the damage caused to both the physical structures and the social relations on the campuses. They shot at protesters; used stun grenades to disperse crowds of protesters, including within enclosed residences; physically assaulted protesters; effected citizens' arrests; raided student residences and maintained strict access restrictions on CPUT campuses. The extended presence and use of force by the private security personnel and police normalised uncompromising militancy as part of the terms of engagement on CPUT campuses. Their interventions were not aimed at de-escalating the eruptions of violence on campus, but rather at participating in them. One of the participants gave an account of how the police, determined to quash a protest by arresting students, entered a residence at CPUT Bellville and arrested a student who was showering, without asking questions. It was later discovered that the student had not been participating in the protests and most certainly not in the violent protests on that particular morning.

> *The people who push the students to violence are the toy soldiers [private security]. They shot them with rubber bullets. These people were no longer even asking questions. They would just shoot…It didn't have to get to the point where things get burnt. Had they sat down with students and listened to what they wanted, then we would be speaking about a whole different context. (Individual interview, outsourced worker, 2016)*

> *The toy soldiers also caused damage to property because they had a lot of anger. They would run into the building trying to remove protesters who would run into them [the buildings] to seek refuge. They were chasing students in residences. They would enter, spray teargas, shoot, etc. With rubber bullets, etc. That's how the buildings became so damaged. (Individual interview, outsourced worker, 2016)*

> *At night, these securities would go around and harass the students. Students walk around at night. You are a student. You go and visit your friend. These guys harass them and because of that a lot of students who were not activists were also caught in the crossfire by these people. That led to a cycle of violence on its own. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

Violence as defence

> *I hold a very firm belief that if there are two opposing sides, one exerts violence and the other responds to the violence. That cannot have the same definition of what violence is. In South Africa, we know that historically, black people have been excluded, silenced, have been erased to a point [that] when they raise their voices that is seen as violence. Because they disrupt the order and the definition of what constitutes violence. Because all of a sudden, these people are wanting to respond to the kind of brutalities that they experience daily. And when that happens, you always hear that that is violence. Returning violence is not violence. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

Unresponsive management and the threatening presence of police and private security companies, as well as the frustrations of how to attain their demands, created a volatile political space where student–worker protesters had to invoke violence as a defence (rather than offence) of both their bodily integrity and their cause.

> *Right now, the students feel like violence is the best way for us to get attention. So, if we do not do violent things, management will not take us seriously. Yes, there are less violent ways – but everyone knows they won't take us seriously if we do that. And they do take note when we burn buildings. If they open the university and say we must get back to normal – if a building is burnt, the university is closed again. (Focus group, student leader, 2016)*

The student–worker alliance at CPUT used a repertoire of violence: blockading roads, disrupting classes, forcefully mobilising students from residences, throwing rocks to ward off police or private security personnel, constructing barricades, burning materials and confronting police and private security. These measures are by no means unique or distinct. Shauna Mottiar and Patrick Bond (2013: 290), after closely investigating the trajectories of social movements and protest culture in South Africa, found that protests led by workers or students employ distinct forms of violence:

> *Workers favour strike action, marching, demonstrating and picketing. Likewise, student protest utilises tactics of strike and boycott, as well as marching, demonstrating and picketing but also destroying property and vandalism, as well as intimidation and disruptions.*

Violence as masculine performance

Raewyn Connell (1995: 77) describes hegemonic masculinities as

> *the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted **answer** to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women and other men who are considered to be weak.*

In *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, Robert Morrell (2001) points out the fluid and adaptive nature of hegemonic masculinities, particularly in rapidly transitioning societies such as South Africa. His analysis shows how the value of particular masculinities shifts according to sociopolitical, socioeconomic and geopolitical circumstances (Morrell, 2001). In contexts of popular civil disobedience, militarised masculinities performed by young black men, and that draw inspiration from anti-apartheid iconography, are encouraged and celebrated (Langa & Kiguwa 2013: 21).

At CPUT, performances of militant, combative and anti-oppression hyper-masculinity enjoyed high rank within the student movement. Young men led songs and chants of struggle songs originating from the underground armed operations of the African National Congress's Umkhonto we Sizwe and the Pan African Congress's Poqo. The songs are encoded with messages that romanticise armed struggle and death while fighting for liberation and the toppling of oppression through

violent means. Lyrics such as 'iAzania Izwe Lethu, sizolithatha nge Bhazuka' (Azania is our land, we will take it back through the barrel of a gun), 'Emakhaya kuzokhala isibhamu, xha sithath' izwe lethu iAzania' (Gun shots will be heard at home, when we take back our land Azania) and 'Dubula, dubula, dubula nges'bhamu' (Shoot, shoot, shoot with a gun) were sung with confidence and determination. However, although competing for masculinist dominance amongst themselves, the protesting male students at CPUT also experienced a sense of community, safety and solidarity when undertaking violent acts. Langa and Kiguwa (2013) demonstrate how militant young masculinities involved in protests enact community through the use of language:

> *The construct of 'comradeship' became intertwined with 'legitimising' violence against state institutions, such as burning of municipality buildings and cars. Many participants…called each other 'comrade' which gave them a sense of group identity, togetherness and oneness.*

The names of heroes involved in the struggle against the apartheid regime, such as Chris Hani, Mangaliso Sobukwe and Bantu Biko, were chanted into the protest space and their militant energies re-enacted. These verbal messages of romanticised violence were repeated through physical acts during both mobilisation and protests. Protesters entered residences and demanded that non-protesting students join their ranks, broke and burned university property and used physical violence against the police and private security officers.

> *They…enter and take out the students, vandalise inside. Students fear being in their rooms so the best option is to come out and join the strike, whether they want to or not. (Focus group, non-protesting student, 2016)*

Moreover, protesters used elevated forms of violence during protests, including setting fire to buildings and other materials, breaking windows and physically intimidating non-protesting students and academics.

> *Saying actually that universities and university property must be burnt. That's where it's coming from. So, it's not something which is coming from the student movement – it's being implanted into the student movement and unfortunately some people were swept along. Their false bravado or false radicalism makes you scared. You don't want to speak against them because you sell out, etc. That type of bullying was happening within the movement. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

While enacting militant masculinities was common praxis during protests, harnessing femininity was used to pacify police and private security responses to protesters. Moreover, performances of masculinity were rewarded, but those of femininity were discouraged.

> *Because being masculine, being militant, being this very macho man is seen as a leader. If a leader is considered to be soft, other people will raise objections. And sometimes you see these very problematic positions where people get frustrated when women speak. Because in the history of movements it's only [when] a woman takes on particular masculinities that they are seen as a leader. And for me, it's a very problematic thing. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*

The following exchange between women protesters explores this dynamic:

> Interviewer: *What did you hear was happening around women and gay and lesbian and queer students? Was there any, like, any homophobia, any sexism that you heard of?*
>
> Protesting student 1: *There is this chick. I don't know her name…when we marched to Parliament and then the lady wanted to address the people. But when she stood up and spoke people didn't pay attention to her – they just asked her – who are you? We don't know you. We just want our leaders…She wanted to stand up and tell them what should be done, where are we going, but they said that we don't recognise you. Who are you?*

The whole perspective of the thing is that she is a woman. She was being judged because she is a woman. So she can't address people if she is a woman.

Protesting student 2: *I also feel like in the strikes it's always the guys that are always in the front, right, and then there was a lot of speculation around the women that kind of stand back and they are supposed to be in front so that the police can somehow feel sorry for us – so they won't shoot at us too much because the women are in front. So we need to play a bigger role within the strike and be in front of the guys…so that we can distract. It's a whole strategy thing.*

Protesting student 1: *Like there was this whole thing where women should be behind as well and the guys should be in front so that when things go wrong we can be able to run because, apparently, we are regarded as people who can't run as fast as guys.*

Violence as competition

Punctuating the repertoires of violence on CPUT campuses was the sustained rivalry between the party-political student platforms. Within the context of elevated young black militant masculinities and party-political aspirations for power, party-aligned students enacted violence as a means of competing for political power and advancement.

At CPUT, the importance afforded to partisanship, on the one hand, and the dominance of masculinised militancy, on the other, was often exploited for political point scoring. Protesters ascribing to party politics were cited as using elevated levels of violence to increase their party-political rapport within the student movement. Several moments turned from being non-violent to violent due to party-political disagreements. A student protester recalled an incident where partisan politics was at play during a fallist protest at CPUT:

For instance, they took us out of library, classes and everywhere else and held us on the piazza. Then there were SASCO members shouting from one side and EFF members shouting from another. It was chaotic. They didn't have unity between the leadership of the different formations. All the divisions and no unity comes from the division within the political structures. They ended up working together. But we still had those things at the back of our minds. They fight amongst themselves. (Focus group, protesting student, 2016)

Reflecting on a way forward

The reality then being that the movement has never been able to get back on its feet. I don't think that the momentum that we gained last year, we can build it up – but we didn't take stock, we didn't consolidate, we didn't build on the knowledge. (Focus group, protesting student, 2016)

The last two years of student protests have forced all stakeholders at CPUT to reflect on the state of their university, of higher education and of South Africa generally. Some feel that the movement failed to develop a nuanced theory and praxis around gender and sexuality.

We shut down dissent, and not necessarily dissent which is problematic. We are shutting down positive and constructive dissent that can actually make us better as a movement and help us grow. And deal with the issues of gender. Deal with the issues of sexuality that we have ignored. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)

Others believe that protesters failed to internalise the knowledge they created and the constructive advice they were offered. They hold that the protesters missed out on the chance to institutionalise political education in the same way that they institutionalised violent protests.

> *Knowledge was produced in the protests of last year. Knowledge that is important not only to keep us safe in the context of protests but also important for developing the intellectual tools necessary to table these ideas on a regular basis. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*

Yet others argue that protesters should have been warier of valorising personalities within their ranks and suspicious of the mass media, which centred on 'chosen' individuals.

> *Throughout the history of black resistance you find that movements get given leaders by the media. By taking certain faces and elevating them. I think there is a conscious effort to build faces of the movement. You find that leaders are then portrayed in a bad light. This creates distrust. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

Some think that the movement should have understood that being arrested or injured was not a badge of honour and instead demobilised the movement:

> *That [arrests] also kills the momentum of #FeesMustFall. Now we must attend court cases. We have to mobilise money for bail. We find lawyers. It also shifts the focus to court cases. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*

Members of the student–worker alliance at CPUT have been pondering the future:

> *The way I see it, #FeesMustFall will happen every year now, because fees have been increased again. And Blade Nzimande doesn't care. Last year the fees were increased by 6% and he saw what damage that did at institutions. This year they decide to increase fees by 8%. Next year they will raise it by 10% and it will keep getting worse. I don't see the point of them continuing to increase the fees when they see so much damage being done. We understand that the economy is bad, but it's going to get worse. Now they must repair these institutions; they have to purchase new police vans because others have been burnt. It's pointless so keep on increasing fees when that just creates more problems following the increase of fees. (Focus group, protesting student, 2016)*

Some of the questions the various stakeholders have raised include:

> *Which direction should they take now, when some of their key demands have been met and CPUT has committed to addressing the rest, when the state continues to sanction fee increments and when the trauma of fires, rubber bullets and stun grenades can be read on the walls of damaged buildings?*

Is the reformation of NSFAS the appropriate frontier for demanding #FreeDecolonised-EducationNow?

So NFSAS is a problem. Create a loan department where you give all students access to loans that you don't expect them to pay back – but you find creative ways to get them to pay back. The way you do it is through creating taxpayers. If they can show in the first two years that they do have a job and are a taxpayer, then you have your money back. Over time you will have your money back. When you create employed university graduates you are not getting your money back. Your money is well paid. You have created a tax base. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)

What could be the form and nature of partnerships between students, workers and university executive for # FreeDecolonisedEducationNow?

Management is meant to side with students. If management at CPUT sided with students, then the message would be delivered to Blade Nzimande. If the management decided that we are officially shutting down the university and the other universities decided that, the message would reach Blade Nzimande. Blade doesn't care. And the reason he doesn't care is because students are doing these things. Management is doing the opposite. When management is not with us, then why would he listen? (Individual interview, academic, 2016)

How is a national movement of students and workers to be forged when universities are faced with such diverse circumstances?

The numbers are so big [at CPUT] that when they say one thing, like we will do no fees increase this year, they [are] talking about the loss of 100 million as opposed to Stellenbosch that will say no fee increase this year for those who can't afford it – they talking about [a] 10 million base. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)

Going into the third wave of student–worker protests, what tactics are to be employed in order to make gains against the state without having students and workers become causalities of the state's machinery?

The other problem is that we have finite resources as a movement and the state has endless. And the state can crush us. And in the political moment that we are in right now the state can crush us and no one will bat an eye. Because our society has become so depoliticised and desensitised to these issues. And have taken on this narrative of violent student protesters so easily that they don't take it seriously when something happens to people. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)

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Being Black' in #FeesMustFall and #FreeDecolonisedEducation: Student Protests at the University of the Western Cape

Godfrey Maringira and Simbarashe Gukurume

Introduction

This paper examines the political ideologies of the #FeesMustFall movement and how they shifted to a call for free decolonised Afrocentric education in South Africa. Based on our fieldwork at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), we argue that the call for free decolonised education is a racialised movement which speaks to black South Africans.[5] Hence, to understand the call for reduced fees and, importantly, for decolonised education, we have to understand the notion of blackness in South Africa. We assert that it is highly problematic to separate decolonised education from the notion of 'being black' in South Africa. In this paper, 'being black' is about access to resources and ownership, in particular of land, which remains an unattainable dream for most black people in South Africa. So the notion of a decolonised Afrocentric education goes beyond 'fees falling'; it speaks to genuine inclusivity, such as access to and utilisation of land. In a social and political context of student protests, 'being black' is considered a threat and thus a target for state violence. In this paper, we hope to contribute to an understanding of student movements in contemporary South Africa and posit that #FeesMustFall is a social and political space in which we can begin to engage with and understand issues of race, dispossession and repossession as re-emerging struggles in South Africa.

We highlight the distinct challenges that students face in a postapartheid country, as articulated by the student movement. These challenges include a continuation of racial oppression and the perpetuation of inequality, which is reified through institutions like universities. In this regard, we demonstrate how the call for zero fees is linked to broader structural issues in the country, as well as being indicative of an oppressive and violent state. We start by providing a brief background history of UWC before discussing the way in which the #RhodesMustFall movement ignited the #FeesMustFall movement in various universities in South Africa. This later shifted to the #FreeDecolonisedEducation campaign. We demonstrate how these student protests were characterised by state violence and detail the ways in which students resisted this violence.

University for the marginalised

UWC was established in 1960 through the Extension of University Education Act of 1959, and was intended for the disadvantaged coloured population of South Africa. In the first 15 years the university staff complement was dominated by whites who supported the apartheid regime. Those few who sympathised with the Black Consciousness Movement were dismissed from the university. In the following years, the university became widely engaged in the anti-apartheid struggle and established a pirate radio station, 'bush radio', which reported on 'black struggles'. Post-1994, UWC became a majority black institution. Currently, there are more than 20 000 students, of whom more than 80% are black. However, over the past six years, the majority of lecturers have been coloured, white and Indian, with few black lecturers. As one student questioned:

> *Where are black lecturers, black non-academic staff? You move from one office to another, from one class to another, all you find is either a white or coloured lecturer. They don't understand our situation as black students,*

[5] In this context, by 'black' we mean African, coloured and Indian. In the remainder of the paper we refer to the race groups as follows: black (designating African), coloured, Indian and white.

> *they don't represent us, and this is part of the struggle in decolonised education… (Individual interview, protesting student, PASMA, 2016)*

The issue of representation, especially in terms of staff, is embedded within the struggle for #FreeDecolonisedEducation, which speaks to broad issues of representation in both public and private institutions in South Africa. The struggle for free education at UWC is a struggle to deracialise the institution and promote inclusivity. It is not surprising that most of the current student movements have a membership that is largely black, with few members who are white or coloured.

The student groups at UWC include the Pan-African Student Movement of Azania (PASMA), affiliated to the Pan African Congress; the South African Student Congress (SASCO), affiliated to the African National Congress (ANC); the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) Student Command, affiliated to the EFF; the Democratic Alliance Student Organisation (DASO), affiliated to the DA; and the so-called non-partisan 'feminist group'. Those participating in the #FeesMustFall movement and other active groups are primarily led by black students.

SASCO, which was dominant over the years, was voted out of power and PASMA became an alternative, especially during the #FeesMustFall movement. Part of the decision to vote out SASCO and vote in PASMA was centred around the ideological differences between the two groups. SASCO was identified with the ANC, which was widely considered to have betrayed black students' demands for free education. PASMA, on the other hand, spoke to the black student population, not only around 'fees falling' but more broadly around issues such as access to land and free decolonised quality education to emancipate black people. The EFF also addressed the resource imbalances in South Africa between blacks and whites. However, despite moments of unity, there were tensions between these student movements. The unifying component was the shared ideology that blacks are marginalised and need to redress this through struggle. The tension arose as to who would lead the struggle. That said, not all groups participated in the black movement for decolonised education, DASO being a case in point. DASO's minimal participation should be understood within the context of their political ideology and their connection to the DA, a political party perceived to be white-dominated. DASO's ideology, widely characterised as racist, is viewed as an extension of a white party at odds with the black movement for free decolonised education.

[A]Getting in touch with protesters

The research took place in a context where violence had been enacted by the state, armed police and private security personnel. When the research began, the violence was still visible. When we initially began to think about doing the research, we wondered how we were going to access the students who were participating in the protests. Even though we are students ourselves,[6] we had not participated and hence thought of ourselves as both outsiders and insiders. Like many others, we had only read about or watched the student protests on television and listened to news of the protests over the radio. Researching black students within the university's spaces of violence was therefore a challenge. Our research was also driven by a zeal to understand what exactly was happening from an insiders' perspective.

At the time we began the research, the university was closed. Only students who were living in the university residences were allowed on campus. So our first challenge was to gain entry to the university campus in order to access the students who had organised the protests. The security was tight at all five university entrances. At one main gate there were at least eight to ten armed private security guards. It was difficult to gain entry as both of us stay outside campus. This meant that we had to devise innovative ways of gaining entry and accessing the students for interviews. We spoke to a close friend who stayed on campus and who was a leading figure in the #FeesMustFall movement. He agreed to link us up with other participants in the movement, as well as to help us gain access to the university residences to meet with the students. He thus became our focal point.

While on our way to the residences, we met the armed state police. It was as if we were in enemy territory. The space ceased to be a university. It became a war terrain, one in which the enemy is sniffed out. We felt that the armed police and private security were doing spatial violence to the university landscape and to the people who lived within it (Woodward

[6] The first author is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of the Western Cape and the second author is a doctoral fellow at the University of Cape Town.

2013). This was a different, an emotional experience of being at 'our' university. It was now a space for the armed police and private security personnel, who intimidated us by carrying guns around the university and patrolling in warlike formations. The familiar landscape of the university became unfamiliar (Woodward 2013). It was a landscape imbued with militarised identities (see Maringira 2015; Langa & Eagle, 2008). The university had turned into a ghost space – we could see hardly anyone milling around, as we had been accustomed to. It was only a space for patrolling armed police. They had imprinted violence on a space that had hitherto belonged to students.

On getting to the university residence, we were introduced to members of the #FeesMustFall and #FreeDecolonisedEducation movements. We explained that we were also students and wanted to do research on recent student protests at UWC. However, we had not met any of these members before and their facial expressions revealed that they were not convinced that we were students. We had to produce our student cards and they slowly nodded their heads, although we could see that they were not entirely convinced. They asked us about the purpose of the research, to which we responded that we wanted to understand student protests and the ways in which students engage with management. They then asked us about our position on student protests, which was unsurprising given the continued physical presence of the police and intelligence operatives on the campus, as well as the fear of informers infiltrating the movement. We responded and they seemed convinced by our response.

It would have been impossible to do the research if we had not at all times been accompanied by one of the student protesters. We relied on a snowballing technique and asked questions about the extent of their knowledge about #FeesMustFall, as well as how and why they were involved. The students were very worried about our position and intention in doing the research at a time when some of them were getting arrested, detained, prosecuted and sentenced. They were concerned that we might be spies, either for the private security companies or the state. We negotiated recording the conversations and promised to anonymise the students' identities. As a way to protect their names, we did not ask for them in the first place. Hence, we use pseudonyms in our report.

We interviewed the leaders of the Student Representative Council (SRC) and student movement groups. Both male and female students participated in group interviews. We had follow-up interviews with some students. After interviewing 28 students, the data were transcribed and manually coded and categorised as part of the analysis.

How #FeesMustFall started

In 2015, South African universities experienced a new wave of protests. The students demanded that the government stop a proposed increase in fees. The call received wide student participation. In terms of class, students from different backgrounds were involved. Similarly, in terms of race, black, white and coloured students came together to fight for reduced fees at UWC. However, the #FeesMustFall movement started as an offshoot of the University of Cape Town's (UCT) #RhodesMustFall movement. As noted by Mandla, a student leader:

> *[The] fight for free education has been there since long time ago. But #RhodesMustFall movement had an impact on #FeesMustFall movement. UCT started it on how to fight against a colonial education. (Group interview, PASMA student leadership, 2016)*

Thus, while the #RhodesMustFall movement was specific to UCT – students demanded that the statue of Cecil John Rhodes be removed[7] from their campus – students at UWC claim that UCT sparked the #FeesMustFall movement. The UCT protests were centred more on the statue falling than on the broad question of #FeesMustFall, which later morphed into #FreeDecolonisedEducation. The state was not as sensitive to #FeesMustFall as it had been to #RhodesMustFall. In a way, the fall of Rhodes did not threaten state power as it was only about dismantling colonial symbols. This differed from #FeesMustFall, which directly confronted the ANC government. Luescher and Klemenč ič (2017) note that students at other universities watched in awe as Rhodes fell at UCT and asked themselves what could fall at their own universities. Consequently, many students began to confront their university administrations to transform the racial institutional culture

[7] A 19th-century leading British imperialist in Africa.

around white privilege, language politics and inclusivity (see Evans 2015; Nicolson 2015). These demands were particularly pronounced at historically Afrikaans universities like Stellenbosch, Free State and Pretoria.

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At UWC, the newly built university residence administration block was burnt. The walls were defaced and graffitied: 'BEING BLACK IS SHIT!!!' For Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013), this is an internalisation of racism to the extent that blacks hate themselves for being black. A university residence at UWC had the words 'BIKO LIVES' graffitied on the walls. What was interesting is the ways in which students communicated through the wall. For Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013), writing on university building walls and on placards constitutes part of what he refers to as the 'rich student archive' of songs and dances, placards, graffiti, speeches, tweets and memoranda. For us, the ideas written and inscribed on the wall became a space to engage with the ruthless state.

Many activists throughout the country who championed the #RhodesMustFall campaign seamlessly transitioned into leading the #FeesMustFall protests (see Bosch 2017). However, students in different universities did not embark on #FeesMustFall at the same time. The University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) was way ahead on #FeesMustFall; UWC students joined later. While UWC fees had not yet been increased, joining #FeesMustFall was a signal to the university management and the state. As noted by Sobuza,

> *Students from different groups came together to respond to a national question on fees. In other universities fees were already increased. Ours was in solidarity with other students, ours was not yet increased, but we were sending a message to management to say if you think about increasing fees, here we are. (Group interview, PASMA, 2016)*

On a YouTube clip titled '#FeesMustFall', the message conveyed was that students were adamant about their objective.

> *Let's not allow them [to] change the subject or else we will accept defeat. The topic is FREE EDUCATION not 0 %. (YouTube 2016)* [8]

'Sending a message' to the university management was generally viewed as an important issue at UWC. However, the #FeesMustFall movement was fragmented:

> *Students from different groups such as ALUTA continua, PASMA, EFF, organised themselves to have a meeting to demonstrate; SASCO was not involved, but it was leading the SRC. Students viewed SASCO as a sell-out. We later unite with SASCO, but their role was not clear. But later on again, SASCO pulled out of #FeesMustFall movement. (Group interview with SRC leadership, PASMA, 2016)*

The non-participation of groups like SASCO and DASO should be understood within the context of their political orientation and socioeconomic background. For instance, the majority of DASO students are from affluent backgrounds. As noted by one student, Thabo, 'the majority of DASO members live in suburbs and we live in townships'. Because of

[8] https://www.youtube.com/results?sp=SBTqAwA%253D&q=%23Fees+Must+Fall

SASCO's affiliation to the ANC, members were conflicted about criticising the government in #FeesMustFall protests and supporting the voices of the majority of the black students. Many felt that they could not bite the hand that fed them, which would endanger both their funding and the legitimacy of the ANC government. SASCO's withdrawal from the #FeesMustFall movement had major impacts on the 2016 SRC election, which they lost. Most students saw the SASCO members as cowards whose agenda was to thwart the students' movement. Indeed, many believed that SASCO students were working with the state security to sabotage the movement and spy on protesting students. Students noted that although they had decided to write exams and complete the semester, the struggle for fees continues. For these students, even in the absence of visible protests on campuses, #FeesMustFall is an ongoing process.

> *#FeesMustFall never died out, students just calmed down. #FeesMustFall is not an annual event but a continuous process. #FeesMustFall is a space for us to change this society. (Group interview, PASMA members and feminist groups, protesting students, 2016)*

The #FeesMustFall movement responded to the call for black students to organise themselves, which they initially did peacefully. As noted, the movement is not only about fees, but also about being black and poor. Indeed, #FeesMustFall stimulated fascinating debates and conversations around discourses of 'privilege', 'entitlement', 'inequality', 'race' and 'citizenship'. The student movement speaks to the community that it knows and resides in.

> *We live in the townships, we live in shacks. Do you think this is what freedom means? We need decent housing, decent life and decent way of living. (PASMA member, protesting student, 2016)*

For the students, the movement is not only about the present, but also about the past and the future of blacks in South Africa. At the peak of the protests, a trending picture on social media was a placard reading 'Our parents were sold a dream in 1994…and so we are here for a refund'. Most black students' living conditions have hardly changed since the introduction of political modernity and democracy. The idea of living with dignity and in a decent place remains largely elusive for the majority of black people. The townships are not only physical spaces where the apartheid regime forced most black South Africans to live. Rather, we argue that they are in a way memorial sites for the living. Thus with the adverse inequalities exibited in the townships, we assert that they invoke memories of being black, i.e. living at the margins in post-apartheid era. They invoke a struggle, a never-ending revolution against the elite coloniser. Similarly, an increase in fees and the persistence of colonial education perpetuate the violation against blackness. A rise in fees would exacerbate the barriers confronted by many poor black students in accessing higher education, so accentuating the widespread racialised poverty and inequality in the postapartheid order. Black students questioned:

> *Who is going to liberate the black man, to fight for her? It is us blacks. This is Africa for us. If we don't fight it will be business as usual – our suffering will only continue, if not worsen, like this wanton increase in fees. (PASMA ground interview with students, interview, 2016)*

#FeesMustFall can be seen as a manifestation of deep-seated disaffection with structural racial inequalities and the endemic poverty associated with blackness. Participants in the study openly expressed their disillusionment with the lack of funding of higher education for poor black students at universities. Scholars note that South African higher education is extremely underfunded (Badat 2009, 2015; Calitz & Fourie 2016; Jagarnath 2016; Molefe 2016). In part, this is due to the country's adoption of neoliberal policies soon after the dawn of democracy. This led to the commoditisation and privatisation of education, operating through the marginalising dynamics of the free market. As Fanon (1964:105) contends, 'neo-colonialism…only…do[es] justice to…the middle class and intellectuals of the colonial country, while the ordinary people no longer feel their bellies at peace'. Without meaningful state funding, black students and universities like UWC have thus become more vulnerable in the absence of safety nets to fall back on. Consequently, #FeesMustFall should be seen as a manifestation of a broader structural crisis, one which pervades the social fabric of the postapartheid order. For scholars like Nyamnjoh (2016), and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) student movements in South Africa are not only engaging with a crisis restricted to higher education. Instead, the higher education crisis represents the enduring forms

of marginality and exclusion inherited from colonialism and apartheid. These structural fault lines partly explain the transmutation of #FeesMustFall into a demand for free and decolonised education. We discuss these shifts in greater detail in the following section.

Shifting #FeesMustFall to #FreeDecolonisedEducation

Many students revealed that, in as much as the issue of #FeesMustFall was important, just as important were the existing racial issues in South Africa, most notably the social and political-ideological distinctions between blacks and whites. Students' protests at their lack of ability to pay the current fees morphed into an interest in broader issues, including land. In their narratives they spoke about dispossession, repossession and the restoration of their lost African-ness. Their construction of African-ness was not an abstraction but rather integrally connected to the means of production, especially land. They believed that they were 'sons and daughters of the soil'. The question they asked was how they could restore their African-ness without access to and ownership of land. As such, discourses of decoloniality and African-ness were strongly tied to the curriculum and land.

> *In 2015 it was just about fees falling, but now it is about subscribing to certain political ideologies of land access for the majority of blacks. Now we are calling for FREE DECOLONISED INTERSECTIONALITY EDUCATION. This is uncontaminated education which speaks to blacks. (Group interview, with PASMA and feminist group, 2016)*

Another prong of the struggle was evidenced in graffiti on the wall of a new residence building at UWC: 'End Outsourcing!' In addition, during protests students carried #OutsourcingMustFall placards. The positions previously filled by university staff in catering, gardening and cleaning were transferred to the private sector. As a result, the costs of these services increased and were unaffordable to the majority of black students. Students contended in this regard that,

> *The WORKERS struggle is OUR struggle. (Group interview, PASMA, 2016)*

The #FeesMustFall movement thus created a social and political space which allowed students to unpack many of the issues affecting them. #FeesMustFall became a space where they could articulate grievances about broader social and structural transformation, as well as raise issues around being black and about racial inequality. Indeed, for many students, the movement is a space where they can shake the very foundations of the perceived supremacy of whites. A Facebook quote from an active #FeesMustFall participant is illustrative:

> *We are not going to be intimidated…it must be known that we are prepared to push the boundaries of power; for us there is no turning, beside death. We will usher into this country an attitude of black rage, black liberation, an attitude that will threaten the foundation of whiteness…*

The quote raises a number of interesting issues besides the 'falling of fees' within university spaces, and reveals deep-seated disaffection and frustrations on the part of black activists. Furthermore, the quote implies that blackness is still subjugated and subordinated, hence the need for black liberation as articulated through #FeesMustFall. For the writer, the ubiquitousness of the #FeesMustFall movement throughout South African universities was not just about the need for fees to fall. Rather, it was a manifestation of shared black pain and rage. Indicating that only death will stop the fight against white supremacy and privilege highlights that issues of black struggle and revolution are not an event but a process of engagement with the achitectures of power. In order to understand issues of being black, Fanon (1952: 82) notes that 'not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man'. It follows that to understand blackness and whiteness, the power dynamics of subjugation and control need to be understood as well. Consequently, we argue that #FeesMustFall has multilayered agendas, one of which is a focus on 'being black' and the ultimate liberation from whiteness. Bosch (2017: 225) noted that the #RhodesMustFall movement enabled activists to engage in broader discussions pertinent to the contemporary southern African society, for example around racial identity. Indeed, narratives from our participants are illuminating:

> *We are not here to speak about fees, but free decolonised, intersectional education. We will continue concientising people about our movement. Issues of free decolonised education are for us black students. (Group interview, PASMA-affiliated student, 2016)*

Issues of intersectionality speak to a kind of education which is inclusive of blacks; an education which empowers the black person to be independent in terms of thinking and doing (see Crenshaw [1989] on the conceptualisation of intersectionality). On probing what students meant by free decolonised education, they emphasised that it included renaming the university buildings, using the names of black South African heroes such as Steve Biko and Chris Hani. Furthermore, students asserted that decolonisation was not only about the curriculum but also about the composition of the academy – the university architecture and symbols. Consequently, the movement's demands for decolonised and intersectional education could be construed as a communal project of resistance to Eurocentric knowledge production and consumption. Students called for knowledge embedded in local and contextual epistemologies. This is what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013: 46) calls an 'epistemic rupture', in which previously dominant epistemics are slowly replaced by emerging ones. As illustrated by one student:

> *We want to rename these buildings, we have to feel at home, it has to represent us as blacks, and Great Hall must be named Steve Biko, heroes of our history. The emotions of #FeesMustFall are visible. Specifically at UWC, it is a black student university. (PASMA, group interview with participating students, 2016)*

Thus, decolonisation has to do with the physical and social reconstruction of the university space. This includes the ways in which students learn. Issues of language and institutional culture dominated the students' decolonisation narratives. Language politics are particularly pronounced at historically Afrikaans institutions (see Luescher, et al., 2016; Nicolson 2015). Our interviewees noted that 'the use of Afrikaans language disadvantages black students and gives an unfair advantage to white Afrikaner students'. Fanon (1964: 105) notes that 'true liberation is not that pseudo-independence…in which an economy is dominated by the colonial pact…, but is the total destruction of the colonial system…language…customs and images of the colonialist'. For these students, learning in colonial languages, especially Afrikaans, institutionalises racism and the exclusion of black students. Language is central in the decolonisation project, as student activists asserted:

> *When we speak about decolonisation, we speak about the curriculum speaking to us, not to white people. Let's learn in Xhosa, Sociology in Xhosa, and Psychology in Xhosa. (Group interview, PASMA and feminist participating students, 2016)*

Before coming to the university, many students had believed in the ANC. However, the university space highlighted the shortcomings of the ANC and many blamed the ANC government for failing to spearhead meaningful transformation after 1994. They expressed disappointment that the ANC failed to promote local languages and yet made foreign languages like Chinese Mandarin compulsory in primary schools. As noted by Xoliwe,

> *I come from a family that has been fed by the ANC for long, but coming to UWC has allowed me to see that black people have become conscientised of their lives. I relate to PASMA because it speaks to the black person. It allowed me to question: why as black Africans have to beg what belongs to them. What I want is free decolonised education, as an African. (Group interview, feminist student, 2016)*

For Xoliwe, the ANC's failure to invest in black education to redress the racial inequalities in access to and affordability of tertiary education is a betrayal of their promises during the struggle for democracy. Xoliwe was disappointed that the ANC had adopted neoliberal policies in education, which accentuated racial inequalities and poverty among the black population. Xoliwe asserted that her participation in the student movement is motivated by the desire to dismantle racial inequalities and the hegemony of western knowledge in tertiary institutions. For Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013), western imperial

knowledge is about the mind and religious colonialism works on the soul. Thus, dismantling the two is the beginning of a decolonial project. Xoliwe's participation went beyond the need for fees to fall and encapsulated the quest for free decolonised education. As another student noted, 'free education is a tool which we are using to speak to the bigger national question of land':

> *If you go to England, is English land, China is Chinese land, but in Africa, it is not African. #FeesMustFall has moved from education to the broad question about land. Education without land is useless and meaningless. (Group interview, participating feminist students, 2016)*

Langa and Kiguwa (2016: 6) contend that we need to understand 'relations of subjection and black subjectivity' to reveal oppression and liberation in the current context. Drawing from these scholars, reflection on what emancipation is considered to be is paramount. For Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013), mentally colonised Africans commonly say that colonialism is over and encourage others to forget about it. He notes, however, that while some Africans may feel ashamed of talking about and criticising the evil of colonialism, coloniality will not tire of subjugating and oppressing Africans. For students,

> *#FeesMustFall is a decolonial project; we are here to learn and unlearn. You begin to learn how the political system functions. How you view society, etc. We cannot continue to learn to work for the white people. (Group interview, PASMA participating students, 2016)*

Many students stated that the current colonial form of education is preserving biased Eurocentric epistemological traditions, white privilege and supremacy over blackness (Nyamnjoh 2016; Holeta 2016; Le Grange 2016; Chemhuru 2016; Molefe 2016). These students experienced blackness in South Africa as a site of perpetual suffering, oppression and dispossession, and understood a decolonised education as being about a struggle to repossess what has been taken from the majority of blacks. The understanding here goes beyond Fanon's (1952) conceptualisation of the destiny for a black man. For Fanon, the black man's destiny is to be white. But for these students, repossessing the lost resources will not only reposition them in an impoverished context, but will also set new pathways. It is a way in which student activisim become political, creating spaces for them to engage with the state in profound ways (Zeilig & Ansell 2008). Andile notes,

> *#FeesMustFall is a revolution. It is a struggle, to spearhead Black Consciousness. It is about the land too, that the land belongs not to everyone who live in it but to the majority of black people disposed from it. Pan-Africanism is about black people coming together to fight for what belongs to them. (PASMA, participating students, 2016)*

Indeed, the movement is inspired by discourses of Black Consciousness, that is, a call for blacks to understand their situation and fight white domination (see Biko 2015). Black Consciousness is about Steve Biko's 'black is beautiful' and his call for black people to unlearn their inferiority complex and to mentally liberate themselves. Psychological liberation for Biko is the beginning of the decolonisation project. Scholars like Altbach (1966) remind us that protests that may start as limited and emanating from disaffection with very specific and isolated issues may easily morph into sustained movements with multiple concerns that extend to broader societal problems (see also Bond, 2015; Luescher et al., 2016; Naicker, 2016). This observation succinctly explains the dynamics and trajectory of the #FeesMustFall movement. Indeed, Altbach's (1966) observation resonates with our interlocutors in the #FeesMustFall movement at UWC, who asserted:

> *We are right here, sitting close to Robert Sobukwe Road, our hero, so we need to respond to the demands of what our heroes fought for. I don't care about what Stellenbosch, UCT, Wits does but I care about what UWC does. We are pan-Africanists, we fight for bigger issues, and land is one of the major questions. (PASMA group interview, participating students, 2016)*

The #FeesMustFall movement is not a homogeneous movement, however. As noted, there are different sets of drivers and ideologies behind it:

> *This year we are divided because we differ in political ideology of #FeesMustFall. There are certain people who don't want to learn and understand what we are fighting for. It is more than fees falling. (PASMA student leadership, interview, 2016)*

> *Students' demands are very much different: fees falling, free education and land access, etc. These cause divisions. The distinct ideologies. Some students are trying to take/hijack the ownership of #FeesMustFall. That causes divisions. (PASMA student leadership, interview, 2016)*

> *We understand that students subscribe to certain political ideologies, and because of this, there have been divisions in fulfilling such ideologies. (PASMA, student leadership, group interview, 2016)*

For these students, decolonised education is education that speaks to local struggles – education that creates space for the production of counterhegemonic discourses and alternative memories of historical realities of dispossession and injustice (see Bosch 2017; Mitchell 2013). The students see no distinction between the ANC-led government and whites. In their view, the ANC is not concerned about the general black population. They noted that the ANC is serving the interests of the white minority and, in so doing, preserving white supremacy and privilege.

> *The ANC era is over. They have lied to us and that's enough. Black people have been violated enough. This is not a rainbow nation, but a divided nation. Black people have now realised their call. The rainbow nation is not working; we have to move ahead with the struggle. The struggle must continue; we will continue fighting. Black people are tired of the ANC, tired of white capitalist monopolism. Black people continue to live in townships and white people are living in poshy suburbs and that means violence is still going on. (Participating student, mixed group of feminists, PASMA group interview, 2016)*

The quote above makes clear that students' issues extend beyond being only about the university space, and also include their places of residence, the townships. The notion of being black seems to trouble many of the students. Blackness is understood within the context in which they live. In the words of one of student,

> *[In the] townships we live with poverty, we live with poo; when we protest we use poo so that people can have a glimpse of what we live with, our everyday realities, that's being black in a postapartheid South Africa. (PASMA group interview, participating students, 2016)*

We argue that the #FeesMustFall movement challenged the silences around being black and opened the space for protesters to speak about their blackness, and ways to redress issues facing black people. However, where there is struggle there is violence. In this case, the students, those fighting for their rights, suffered the brunt of state violence.

Students as victims of violence

The question of violence is not new for the majority of black students in South Africa. To understand how violence is experienced by these students, we have to move beyond the university as the space where students protesting against the state and their respective institutions experienced the violence. We need to understand where these students come from, where they stay, what they eat in their everyday lives, their journey to and from the university campus. For a long time, these students have had ongoing and outstanding demands which neither the university nor the state has addressed. Initially, students fought for an increase in the buying power of grocery vouchers as part of their National Student Financial Aid Scheme grants. As noted,

> *Black students who sleep with hunger everyday – it's violence on its own; for students distributed substandard condoms – it's violence on its own. Students using overcrowded trains to campus, it's violence. Students hanging*

> *on the doors of the train – it's violence, risking death. And we are hanging on trains going to a violent place, the townships. Students robbed on their way to campus, it's violence. (PASMA, group interview, participating students, 2016)*

The townships are spaces of violence, not only in terms of criminal activities, but also in terms of the labels applied by the colonisers to township residents, including students. Townships are spaces in which young black South Africans are often seen as criminals, without any acknowledgement that being black does not automatically imply being a nuisance and that black people can also be productive citizens (see Langa & Kiguwa 2016; Langa, Kotze & Malabela 2016). #FeesMustFall became a terrain in which black students could fight against these labels, the labels of the coloniser. According to Fanon (1964), 'Negro' labels such as 'Nigger' dismiss black Africans as 'Dunderheads'.

The ways in which students protested, and the manner in which the state and the university – through the police and private security – responded to their demands, were also violent. Students claimed that the state fought against defenceless students.

> *The way we are being shot on this campus is a violation of human rights. Police presence here, and nobody is defending us. The state is violent to us. So who will protect us? (PASMA, group interview, protesting students, 2016)*

The quote reveals that in situations where the state feels threatened, it resorts to defending itself rather than its citizens. The deployment of heavily armed state police and private security personnel indicated that the state was not only protecting the university and its management, but also sending a clear message to those who threatened it. So the university space is one in which we can begin to think about the state's response to and treatment of the students as a microcosm of its response to black people more generally. Our analysis reveals that being black is a metaphor for marginality in South Africa, where the 'black voice' is negated and dismantled from the mainstream.

Police deployed on campus, dehumanising students' problems. The students felt provoked because they view this as a ploy to take students for granted. Institutional violence by the state to the students happens every day on campuses. (PASMA student leadership, group interview, 2016)

Deploying armed police to the university can be perceived in at least two ways: it is a threat but, as importantly, it 'dehumanises' the black student and views blackness as a problem to the institution and the state. Fanon (1964: 105) contends that 'colonialism will not commit suicide…hence it is altogether logical for it to defend itself fanatically'. This is what Torpey (1998) calls the legitimate use of violence by the modern state. In this regard, institutional violence is about the ways in which the state responds to black students' concerns, criminalising and delegitimising the protests. The state responds to resistance in a military way.

Hence, we can begin to unpack the ways in which South African universities have become spaces in which masculine and militant identities (see Langa & Eagle 2008) are produced but also challenged by the state security. This 'militarisation of universities' is testified to not only by the deployment of armed state police, but also by the ways in which the university became a police camp, a state camp and a site of surveillance.

> *The campus security building became a police base. I was shot here on my leg and my hip by the police. (Feminist female student, group interview, 2016)*

Students contend that police shooting was not random. Rather, it was controlled and had a specified target: black students. As noted by one victim,

> *I was shot by the police outside campus gate, just walking. By the mere fact that I am black and other blacks*

> *like me were also shot. Being a black person is a target of violence on its own. (Feminist female student, group interview, 2016*)

The question of being black remains central in students' narrative. Black students are perceived to be not only targets, but also a threat to the political system. It is their perceived threat to the state which makes the state deploy armed police onto the campus. According to students, any threats to white interests and privileges were violently crushed. Students noted the strong 'unholy alliance' between the ANC and white capital:

> *You don't need a rocket scientist to tell you how the ANC government is preserving white wealth, privilege and supremacy. Look at what happened at Marikana and look at what is happening on campus – they deploy armed police to suppress black grievances. (Mixed Focus Group Interview: Feminists, individual students, and PASMA, 2016)*

Students were particularly angered by the armed police firing live ammunition at defenceless black students. One student complained:

> *The deployment of police is ridiculous; we have not shot any live ammunition, only throwing stones, and they respond with guns fighting unarmed students. (PASMA group interview, participating students, 2016)*

The binary of armed versus unarmed speaks to questions of power over blacks. It also denotes the vulnerability of being black, unarmed and powerless. At the same time, however, being black represents a threat. Thus, in responding to a political threat, the state and the university found ways to deal with students by instituting surveillance mechanisms:

> *#FeesMustFall movement is now under surveillance, deploying spies and intelligence personnel. Cameras, etc. are in each and every corner of the university, spending millions in surveillance of students on campus. (Group interview, participating students, 2016)*

Surveillance was a response to student protests and sought to discipline the perceived undisciplined students. The cameras, placed to deal with and monitor threats, are in themselves violent. The threat of the cameras became real when students understood that their academic spaces were saturated with state intelligence personnel. The university became a barrack, a prison in which the security men viewed students with a military gaze, one which sought to control and discipline the 'wayward'. Drawing from Foucault (1977), university spaces became 'artificial cities', politically constructed spaces to suit the constructor ideology. However, this heavy investment in surveillance and security only exacerbated the rage of poor black students. In the words of one student,

> *We hear that they are spending millions on surveillance but how many students would have benefited from that money? This is why we are fighting because for them black lives don't matter – black students are lesser beings but we will not accept that. (Mixed Group of Feminists, Inddividual interviews, and PASMA, 2016)*

At the peak of the protests, the clashes between the students and the security staff mirrored a war. The police and private security fired stun grenades and rubber bullets at students. In response, students used waste bins and mattresses to protect themselves. Shielding themselves with these items, students advanced on their enemy – the armed police and private security guards – throwing stones and burning tyres to obstruct the visibility of the armed police shooting at them. After one group interview with eight students, one of the black female students asked if we had a smart phone with a good camera, which we did. She took the phone, went into the bathroom and returned to show us photographs of her wounded buttocks. She then showed us the black rubber bullets which she had picked up the previous day from the 'battlefield' at the university's main gate. The wound was fresh, deep and rounded like the rubber bullet. She was very emotional about what she referred to as 'black bodies' (her body) being targets of violence. Similar scenarios in other South African protests are outlined in *The Smoke that Calls* (*Von Holdt* et al. 2011).

The encounters with the police represented a 'scorched earth tactic'. When asked what the deployment of armed police and private security did to the movement, students noted that,

> *It made things worse because students were saying you are militarising our campuses. They started to fight against private security rather than #FeesMustFall. So the deployment of private security ignited the fight at UWC, so students decided to fight back. (Group interview, participating students, 2016)*

The fact that students diverted their attention from the administration to dealing with a reinforced enemy raises the question of whether police on campuses are there for peace or to perpetuate violence. In the words of one of the protesters:

> *When we started the protests we were peaceful and then came the police and private security. They ignited the violence; they shot at us and violently prevented us from marching, so we had to fight back. (PASMA Group interview, 2016)*

> *If you push a mouse into a corner it will jump or even bite you. So students have been pushed into the corner, and they are jumping and fighting back. This is black pan-Africanism; we are going to fight for this revolution to happen. We come from townships and big politicians have been lying to us. (PASMA group interview, participating students, 2016)*

To return to where the students come from, as noted, the townships are viewed as spaces where violence is produced and enacted; spaces which have the capacity to invoke more violence. Molefe (2016: 33) notes that students imagine themselves as a powerful generation that cannot afford to compromise on black liberation as their predecessors did. Many of our interviewees noted that they are prepared to abandon the conciliatory approach of Nelson Mandela for a more militant approach to black liberty. The students believe that revolution will bring 'genuine democracy'. Students made claims for social justice, land, restitution and dignified ways of being 'black' (see Nyamnjoh 2016; Nyawasha 2016). Hence, students demand that,

> *UWC belongs to us students not to management and police. If someone does violence then I must respond to it violently. Fanon viewed decolonisation as a violent project. (PASMA group interview, participating students, 2016)*

If students are claiming UWC to be theirs, this has to be understood broadly as a claim not only to the university but also to its resources. It is a claim to the space lost through violence. Nevertheless, the state always responds through violence. However, the ways in which the state and the university responded to students protests has to be understood within the history of violence in South Africa and how that violence is racialised.

> *Remember the university here is an institution within a violent society. Hence the university becomes part of that violence to the students. (Interview, individual participating student, 2016)*

So what the university does, perpetrating violence on its own students, is somehow expected because it is intertwined with the state, which is known to be violent. For these students,

> *An irresponsible university is one which runs away from the students' needs, staff needs, etc., and try to respond by employing private security and the police. (PASMA group interview, participating students, 2016)*

The idea behind deploying the armed state police was to dispossess the black students. For these students, apartheid is still alive, as the black body is targeted and victimised. It is this violent targeting of 'black bodies' which vindicates the students' claim that the ANC is in cahoots with whites to accentuate and propagate black marginality, oppression and servitude. For the students, deploying the repressive state apparatus simply means the state wants black people and black students in particular to remain silent on continued injustices, oppression and inequalities. This is tantamount to

reproducing apartheid under the veiled smokescreen of democracy. In explaining why they felt apartheid is still alive, one student noted:

> *As blacks we are getting food leftovers, not the food. If you see during violence by the police if you are black protesting, then you become a target but white students were protected, they were not shot. We are still in apartheid. (PASMA, group interview, participating students, 2016)*

The food metaphor references black exclusion from the mainstream economy. The symbol of 'food leftovers' speaks to black education, not only in universities but in primary and secondary schools as well. In addition, the symbol of food speaks to black South Africans' marginalised way of life. Students believe that the state has a strong interest and presence in the operation of universities in South Africa, both in terms of their administration and in terms of who is allowed in and who is allowed to write and speak in them. For Thandaza,

> *The deployment of the armed police and private security guards was not by the university per se, but it was the state. The state is much aware that campus security personnel live with us and they suffer like us, hence they cannot fight us to the extremes. In a way we were also fighting for all workers and students. (PASMA, group interview, participating students, 2016)*

The state is viewed as the source of violence and is also defining itself as an intolerant state, one which is only interested in keeping a certain section of the population happy, while locking black voices out. This is a prime example of the ANC doing what Fanon (1952: 8) refers to as self-division, when the black person is torn between representing blackness and whiteness. The heavy presence of armed police on the university campus testified to the ways in which the state dealt with students through arrests, detention and prosecution.

> *Students who were arrested and appeared in court most of them were acquitted, but there are two students who are still appearing in court because their case has been said to be attempted murder. But some of the students were found guilty and are doing community service. They are doing community service in children's homes, three hours a week for six months. Those who were arrested this year they were 21, and six of them were arrested by the security but they were all acquitted because police could not find their dockets. There is currently one SRC member who was arrested by the campus security service because he threw a stone a nd damaged the security vehicle. He was doing it alone. (PASMA, group interview, participating students, 2016)*

The detention, prosecution and sentencing of the students represents the major role played by the South African state in trying to thwart a movement and struggle for resources. This is the struggle of the unarmed, where response to the legitimated state violence meets hefty punishment – what Foucault (1977: 8, 93) refers to as the 'art of inflicting pain' and 'art of effects'. These hefty punishments imposed on dissenting students are meant to instil control and discipline. For Foucault (1977: 139), discipline is a 'political investment'. It is political in the sense that it organises and rearranges an individual to fit within the political system in power. However, students bemoaned that the state is criminalising their demands for what was promised and is their constitutional right. By so doing, students portrayed the state as an enemy which is comfortable with what Molefe (2016) refers to as the 'normalisation of structural exclusion of black students', or the institutionalisation of racism (see Nyamnjoh 2016).

However, despite the students' resistance in response to state violence, they indicated that they wanted peace. Peace, however, must not be an unjust peace, but rather one which speaks to each of them.

> *None of us is happy with violence; we are human and we want to end violence. But peace must not be peace based on injustice. But these problems must be addressed in a meaningful manner. (PASMA, group interview, participating students, 2016)*

If peace is to be achieved, then it has to be a peace which has the capacity to address the students' plights. It has to address education, access to land and other resources, as well as 'being black'. This is what Galtung (1969) called 'positive peace'. Peace should not only be about absence of war, conflict and/or violence but should include justice for all, despite colour or physical appearance.

> *Right to education is for us. African children are denied of their education while the wealthy of this land are shifted out of the country and we are told there are no resources for free educations. The resources of the state must be distributed equally, to all of us who must access these resources. (PASMA, group interview, participating students, 2016)*

The resources have to be resources for all, and especially for blacks. So, if we are to think about addressing #FeesMustFall then we also have to think about many other issues affecting black South Africans today. It is not only about fees but about the accumulative oppressiveness of the state.

Conclusion

#FeesMustFall movement is a racialised movement in which being black has become a threat and a target of state violence. The paper revealed the ways in which the #FeesMustFall movement shifted to #FreeDecolonisedEducation. The latter is also a racialised movement, imbued with a particular political ideology which speaks to 'blackness'. The question of student protest has to be understood within a broader framework of being black, which is perceived as both a threat and a source of change in South Africa.

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Tshwane University of Technology: Soshanguve Campus Protests Cannot Be Reduced to #FeesMustFall

Marcia Vilakazi

Introduction

This chapter is based on fieldwork done at Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), with a specific focus on Soshanguve campus. The township of Soshanguve is situated about 25 km north of Pretoria, Gauteng, in South Africa. It was established in 1974 as part of the [Soshanguvehomeland under the apartheid regime (Nkwonta & Ochieng 2009). Post-1994, the township of Soshanguve was incorporated into the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. Soshanguve is one of the homes of TUT, previously known as Technikon Northern Gauteng (TNG). TUT has campuses in Tshwane (Pretoria, Soshanguve and Ga-Rankuwa), Mbombela (Nelspruit), eMalahleni (Witbank) and Polokwane (Pietersburg). TUT is a higher education institution that came into being through a merger of three technikons in 2004: TNG, Technikon North-West and Technikon Pretoria.

Post-1994, the new democratic government encouraged the idea of transforming and restructuring the education system. One of the strategies included merging historically white and black universities. However, these mergers deepened the inequalities between universities, as multitudes of students chose to enrol at better-resourced, historically white institutions rather than at historically black universities (Fiske & Ladd 2004). Fewer students at a university meant less money, according to the South African government's funding formula, which subsidises tertiary institutions based on student enrolments and graduation rates (Fiske & Ladd 2004). The pressure was then on universities to balance their accounting books and to manage themselves as profitable businesses. This meant students had to pay exorbitant fees and those who were not able to pay their fees were financially excluded or made to sign loan repayment arrangements (Letseka & Maile 2008). It was hoped that the merger of historically white and black universities would help to deal with some of these problems and improve historically black universities' research and graduate output and give them access to better infrastructure and systems (Fiske & Ladd 2004). The process of transforming past inequalities instead had the effect of entrenching them. This is the case for historically black universities such as TUT Soshanguve campus, the focus of this chapter, which has been characterised by student protests over the years, long before the #FeesMustFall movement began in 2015.

Methodology

The study was conducted at TUT Soshanguve campus as it has been characterised by violent protests as compared to other TUT campuses. The study was aimed at understanding the dynamics of the violent patterns in interaction between students and university management which contribute to high levels of conflict in student protests.

Individual and group interviews were conducted with student protest movement leaders, Student Representative Council (SRC) members, and protesting and non-protesting students. In total, 48 participants were interviewed. Student leaders were interviewed off campus as they were suspended during the course of the research in November 2016. The researcher managed to connect with two student leaders and then the process snowballed in connecting with other student leaders. Some interviewees were initially not comfortable being interviewed, suspecting that the researcher

might be an informer or a spy. It took almost a week before the researcher was able to gain the full trust of all key informants. Table 1 provides details of the participants interviewed in this study.

Table 1: Participants interviewed in the study	
Suspended student protest movement leaders	9
Student representative council members	4
Protesting students	15
Non-protesting students	16
Student political party representatives	4
Student leaders	3

Interviews were conducted in both English and other local languages, such as Sesotho, Setswana and isiZulu. Detailed notes were written after each interview, as many interviewees were not comfortable being recorded. For ethical reasons, names and other identifying details are withheld. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identities of the interviewees.

Protests are not new at TUT Soshanguve campus

Over the years, TUT Soshanguve has been characterised by multiple, violent protests around financial and academic exclusion, well before the #FeesMustFall movement in 2015 and 2016. These protests over fees or financial exclusion at TUT Soshanguve campus date as far back as 2004. One of the major grievances raised in 2004 by TUT Soshanguve campus students was the lack of transparency regarding how the university was being managed, especially with regards to fee hikes which were highly unaffordable for the majority of poor black students. It was therefore recommended that financial assistance to students be increased through bursaries and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme. Despite this, TUT continues to be rocked by student protests. Student leaders were quoted as saying:

> *During this period, students with unpaid fees were not allowed to register. As a result, many students quit studying; they were faced with the discomfort of student debt handed over to attorneys for collection and frequent demands made for payment. Examination results of indebted students were withheld and students were not allowed to graduate until a settlement agreement had been reached. These university practices continue today. (SRC member student 3, individual interview, November 2016)*

> *Without fail, every year TUT students protest against their peers being excluded for not being able to pay the previous year's fees or the new year's increased fees. There are full-blown strikes at the institution over fees at least twice a year. (SRC member student 2, individual interview, November 2016)*

Some of the key informants estimated that from 2005 to 2010, TUT Soshanguve campus had about 28 student protests on access to basic services, financial exclusion, insufficient funding and academic exclusion. TUT students interviewed for this study asserted that protests have been a yearly feature at their university since 2004.

> *Protests here at TUT cannot be reduced to #FeesMustFall. We have had #FeesMustFall over the last 10 years. (Protest student 5, individual interview, November 2016)*

> *Let me tell [you] that since 2003/04, TUT students have been embarking on protests over fee increases, financial*

> *exclusion and lack of sufficient funding. (Non-protesting student 3, individual interview, November 2016)*
> *We have been protesting here at Soshas before all these hashtags or #FeesMustFall but we were never taken seriously. (Protest student 2, individual interview, November 2016)*
>
> *It started long time ago. When I was at TNG [now TUT Soshanguve] in 2002 we had similar protest. (Protest student 8, individual interview, November 2016)*

It is important to note that these protests at TUT Soshanguve did not capture the same public attention as the #FeesMustFall movement at historically white universities, such as the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), the University of Cape Town (UCT) and the universities of Pretoria and Stellenbosch. This raises questions as to why protests at TUT were not covered in the media to the extent that they were at Wits and other white universities. This point was raised by many interviewees at TUT Soshanguve:

> *There was a shootout between the police and the students at TUT Soshanguve, but why this side is given less attention than Wits and all predominantly white universities? (Protest student 4, group interview, November 2016)*
>
> *TUT Soshanguve kids are never listened to because of their perceived lower class. (Non-protesting student 7, individual interview, November 2016)*
>
> *Wits university enjoys the realisation that it took them eight days of protest to achieve what Tshwane University of Technology students have been fighting over for years. TUT students have been protesting for years over exorbitant fees. (Protest student 11, focus group, November 2016)*
>
> *I was annoyed that the only time our cries were heard was when universities like Wits, UCT and Stellenbosch started protesting over fees. This got me asking, what is so special about them? Are we not important enough in the government's eyes to be heard on our own without support from Wits, Stellenbosch and UCT? (Protest student 13, individual interview, November 2016)*

The quotes raise questions about race, class and the status of the university, all of which play a role in who is worth the media coverage. This links with Duncan's (2003) argument that the media is not neutral in reporting protests but serves the interests of certain privileged groups. The key informants at TUT Soshanguve asserted that their protests were never covered in the mainstream media because of their poor economic class status. Their main argument was that when protests are covered in the media at TUT, only violent scenes are shown but nothing is said about the causes of these protests.

> *Someone ran over a student at TUT Soshanguve during the protest there yesterday and he died but the media was quiet about this incident. They are just waiting for fire and that will be on the news. (Non-protesting student 6, individual interview, November 2016)*
>
> *The only time the 'biggest' media houses are interested in TUT Soshanguve is when we are being violent. (Protest student 3, individual interview, November 2016)*

A concern was raised that showing only violent images portrays student protesters at TUT, who are mainly black, as violent and aggressive. According to one student leader at TUT, 'this is more likely to play into existing racist stereotypes of black people as violent and all that' (SRC member 10, individual interview, November 2016). It was argued that the media must reflect on its own practices, especially the manner in which protests are covered, to ensure that inaccurate impressions are not created without delving deeper into what drives the protesters to resort to violence (Duncan 2013).

Sources of protests at TUT: Financial, but also about access to basic services

University protests are not homogeneous, although the #FeesMustFall campaign has created the perception that protests are the same across all universities. Interviews with students at TUT Soshanguve revealed other causes of protests beyond the issue of fees, and including lack of access to basic services and facilities:

> *Our residences here are so bad. Some buildings are falling apart and the showers are broken. Some will get fixed but most will be left like that for the whole year. (Non-protesting student 5, focus group, November 2016)*

> *Majority of the students that I'm leading in this university don't have running water [in accommodation they rent around Soshanguve], they don't have access to electricity and they don't have the basic comforts that people in the cities take for granted. Those are the students we are serving. (Student protest leader 4, focus group, November 2016)*

> *When we pay our residence fees we pay for transport, cleaning services, we pay for security ... but you find that there is no security in the residences. (Protesting student 3, focus group, November 2016)*

> *We pay for laundry services, but you find that Soshanguve campus does not have even one [washing] machine in any of the residences. (Protesting student 9, focus group, November 2016)*

The quotes highlight the economic position of TUT, especially that of Soshanguve campus. It appears that some of the difficulties for TUT Soshanguve campus are rooted within its history as a black technikon before it merged with Technikon North-West and Technikon Pretoria. Despite this merger, the legacies of inequality between various campuses still exist, with students at TUT Soshanguve lacking access to basic services on campus. It was asserted that TUT students struggle with accommodation because their parents cannot afford to pay for the university residences. Many students rent rooms

Image by Paul Saad

in the township of Soshanguve next to campus, with no access to university labs and the internet after hours. These are some of the factors that contribute to protests at the TUT Soshanguve campus.

> *The residences [in Soshanguve] don't even have security, especially in female residences. The buildings themselves are not in a condition in which students can live. (SRC member 2, individual interview, November 2016)*

> *Zuma came to TUT months ago. He saw how bad the Soshanguve campuses are. He saw how bad the residences are. Nothing much has changed still. (SRC member 4, individual interview, November 2016)*

> *A church in Soshanguve, near Pretoria, was battling to accommodate an influx of destitute students, who can't afford to pay for hostel accommodation on campus. The local bishop said his little makeshift church had been housing impoverished students from TUT Sosha for the past nine years. (SRC member 15, individual interview)*

The TUT Soshanguve campus is historically highly underresourced compared to other campuses (Baloyi 2007). These inequalities have been a source of violent protests on this campus. Given that the university still grapples with deep infrastructure disparities between its township-based campuses and the former Pretoria Technikon, it was reported in 2015 that TUT's neglected campuses were going to get facelifts. A prime example of the inequities is that students in residences at the campuses in Soshanguve and Ga-Rankuwa, both townships north of Pretoria, still wash their clothes by hand in communal basins, while those at the erstwhile Pretoria Technikon site have always enjoyed laundromats.[9]

University management and student leadership at TUT

Historically, it appears that the relationship between the TUT management and student leadership has always been conflictual. Student leaders interviewed described the university management as aloof and distant.

[9] See mg.co.za/article/2015-02-11.

> *Every year we try and raise our concerns with the university but they don't listen to us as the SRC. (Student representative council 3, individual interview, November 2016)*
>
> *The university management is arrogant. They hardly listen to us, the students of this university. (Protesting student 10, individual interview, November 2016)*
>
> *TUT Sosha students lock lecturers inside lecture hall because management is not doing their job properly. (Non-protesting student 8, individual interview, November 2016)*

One of the major complaints by the students interviewed was that the TUT university management always responds to students' grievances by calling the police, even when students are protesting peacefully.

> *You know the police, they simply come and start firing rubber bullets, teargases and water cannons to disperse students. This is what makes things worse because the university is not interested in talking to us. (Protest student 15, individual interview, November 2016)*

Below is a copy of the letter that one SRC member shared during fieldwork to highlight their view that the executive management committee is not interested in talking to them as the student leadership.

> *We advise the vice chancellor [VC] to stop responding to us with force when demanding to meet him. We are still available to meet him and resolve all the issues. You and EMC [Executive Management Committee) members are advised to stop playing hide and seek with legitimate elected student leadership. We declare that there will be no peace in Soshanguve campus until the University management decides to swallow pride and meet with us. We have received mandate from structures that deployed us on the SRC. If the University decides to silence us and further expel us, the masses will mobilise themselves and continue with a revolution. Our structures in a meeting we had with them yesterday have pledged to take the protest forward shall the VC continue to exclude us. The EMC has declared that today is the last day of registration for Soshanguve Students, while students have been told to go home. We are with thousands of students who are not registered at the moment due to financial exclusion. We wish to make it clear that if the registration date is not extended so to allow those who have not registered to register there will be no peace on Soshanguve campus. We are not begging the Vice Chancellor nor the University Registrar to extend the dates but we are demanding. Our students with historic debts must be allowed to pay what they can afford and be allowed to register. We are ready to die for a black child to be granted his or her right to education by the arrogant TUT management. This right was fought by Tsietsi Mashinini. Hector Peterson also died for this right. Therefore there is no man or white man that can deny us this right. We are reflecting on all events which took place and we are not discouraged by suspensions nor arrests. We won't cool off the protest while the demands of our students are not met. In closure we advise the VC and his EMC members to stop the tendency of excluding us. There is nothing about us without us.*
>
> *Hector Peterson also died for this right. Therefore there is no man or white man that can deny us this right. We are reflecting on all events which took place and we are not discouraged by suspensions nor arrests. We won't cool off the protest while the demands of our students are not met. In closure we advise the VC and his EMC members to stop the tendency of excluding us. There is nothing about us without us.*

The above letter was written to the TUT university management in March 2015, before the #FeesMustFall movement started late that same year. It is clear that the student leaders are not happy that the university management always responds to their demands with force, which entails calling the police and private security officers to quell any form of protest. The demand in the letter is that the university management must engage with them as the legitimate SRC to address issues that affect the university, including the financial exclusion of students who are not able to pay university

fees. Calling the police and suspending or arresting student leaders does not solve the problem, as this further antagonises the students and renders the relationship between the university management and the student leaders more conflictual and antagonistic. It is therefore important that initiatives are undertaken at TUT to repair the management–student-leadership relationship for effective and constructive dialogues aimed at dealing with the challenges facing the TUT Soshanguve campus.

Political power struggle among student leaders at TUT

It emerged during fieldwork that the struggle for political power among student leaders at TUT also contributes to some of the difficulties that the university faces. Over the years, the Progressive Youth Alliance (PYA), which comprises the Young Communists League (YCL), the South African Student Congress (SASCO) and the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL), has been the dominant student organisation representing students in the SRC. In a gesture of goodwill, the PYA adopted a policy of rotating leadership every year to create equality in the alliance, and stated that both the YCL and the ANCYL would be under the umbrella of SASCO. However, the ANCYL felt marginalised and accused SASCO of ruling with an iron fist. Furthermore, the ANCYL felt that SASCO only deployed its members to strategic positions and undermined their leaders. As a result, the ANCYL TUT Soshanguve campus branch broke away from the PYA after a fierce leadership battle in 2012. SASCO was accused of imposing its leaders on the PYA:

> *SASCO imposes leadership. It does not allow students to vote for the people they want. Comrades of the ANCYL do not find space in governance as SASCO only elects its members. (Student political party representative 3, individual interview, November 2016)*

> *It [SASCO] does not allow students to vote for the people they want. Comrades of the ANCYL did not find space in governance as SASCO only elected its members. (Student political party representative 1, individual interview, November 2016)*

It is reported that due to some of its internal leadership squabbles in 2012, the PYA lost the SRC elections to the Pan Africanist Student Movement of Azania (PASMA), which has been one of the dominant student organisations on campus. SASCO leaders were blamed for the loss to PASMA:

> *SASCO executives dented the PYA's image as SASCO executives come to meetings intoxicated and then insult opposition and internal alliance party members. (Student political party representative, individual interview, November 2016)*

However, SASCO rejected these claims and launched a scathing attack that the Branch Executive Council did not understand the principles of the existence of the ANCYL on the campus. One SASCO member asserted that 'the role of the ANCYL on campus is to support SASCO and groom leaders for the ANCYL outside campus to mobilise the youth in general'(Individual interview, SASCO member). Other student leaders narrated that the rivalry between SASCO and the ANCYL was about power mongering and nothing else.

> *Their fights are not about students' interests but their own political power and access to privileges that come with being an SRC member. It is purely politics of power. (Student political party representative 1, individual interview, November 2016)*

Besides those already mentioned, other student political parties at TUT include the South African Democratic Students' Movement and the Students' Christian Organisation (SCO). However, these parties were described as small and less influential. However, the arrival of the Economic Freedom Fighters' Student Command (EFFSC) has changed the political dynamics on TUT's Soshanguve campus. The EFFSC has been a major threat to SASCO and its alliance partners. This was evident when SASCO and its alliance disrupted Julius Malema's address at a rally organised by EFFSC on TUT campus. In

the elections held in 2015 across TUT's six campuses, SASCO received 5 671 votes (three seats on the central SRC), while the EFF had 4 220 votes (two seats). The SCO had 1 603 votes and PASMA had 1 319 votes, both gaining one seat.

It is reported that some of these political power struggles among student leaders affected the #FeesMustFall movement and that students at TUT were not able to organise a cohesive group due to divisions among student leaders and the struggle for political power.

> *SRC and other political cabals have allowed their party battles to affect the purpose of the student protest movements. (Non-protesting student 7, individual interview, November 2016)*

> *Some political parties like to party, others are militant and radical, others use the protest unrest to push their agenda, and some want to rein in the protest movement. (Student political party representative, individual interview 2, November 2016)*

It appears that various student movements at TUT were trying to outdo each other in terms of who was more militant and radical. Other new student movements, such as Black First Land First, also emerged during #FeesMustFall. They defined themselves as outside of the politics of the SRC and considered themselves to be more independent of political parties off campus, such as the African National Congress, the EFF and the Democratic Alliance. Some of these political dynamics contributed to a situation where it was difficult for the university management to negotiate with any party as there were so many student leaders involved (all claiming to be the 'real' student leaders). The situation became so violent in 2016 that on several occasions the TUT Soshanguve campus was closed due to student unrest. The university vice-chancellor, Professor Lourens van Staden, was quoted as saying that the 'campus was closed to protect students and facilities as the violence, intimidation and threats to students and staff were getting out of hand' (Van Staden 2016). Later the university was reopened for the end-of-year examinations.

Conclusion

The TUT management announced that there would not be fee increases for students enrolled at the institution in 2017. Despite this announcement, the student leaders interviewed asserted that protests are likely to continue at TUT as many other structural issues affecting students at the university have not yet been resolved.

It is clear from this paper that protests at TUT go beyond the #FeesMustFall movement. Many issues raised by the students are rooted in the history of the merger between TNG, Technikon North-West and Technikon Pretoria in 2004. It is important that some of the structural inequalities between campuses are resolved to foster a long-lasting and peaceful solution at TUT Soshanguve campus.

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‘Liberation Is a Falsehood’: Fallism at the University of Cape Town

Sandile Ndelu [10]

Introduction

The University of Cape Town (UCT) has been one of several South African institutions of higher learning that have been shaken by recurrent ‘fallist’ student protests over the last two years. In early 2015, administrative operations at the university were brought to a standstill when a group of predominantly black students successfully lobbied for the removal of a statue of Cecil John Rhodes. What followed over the next two years was a line of protest calling for a decolonised university. Specifically, the protesting students demanded, amongst other things, that the university facilitate the decommodification of higher education, accelerate the insourcing of all workers, strengthen its responses to the sexual offences that occur on its campuses, recommission all artworks on its campuses, reform curricula across all disciplines and fast-track the advancement of black faculty members.

As a result of these protests, UCT has begun phasing out outsourcing, set up working groups to recommission the artwork on all its campuses and to add content to decolonised curricula, set up a task team to respond to sexual offences on campus, and most recently, entered into a novel ceasefire agreement with student protesters aimed at facilitating a truth and reconciliation commission to assist in mending relations on campus.

At the same time, the student protests have resulted in a campus deeply divided along race, class, age and professional lines; in numerous students being arrested and charged with criminal offences; in several students being expelled, and suspended from participating in university activities; in millions of rands being lost in damaged property; in serious physical injuries; and in collective trauma.

The research

A qualitative study of the thoughts and experiences of various stakeholders within the university was undertaken as an exercise to reflect on the political climates preceding and succeeding the ongoing fallist student protests at UCT. Through semi-structured interviews and focus groups, non-protesting students, protesting students, an expelled student and academic staff were asked to discuss their rage, fears, passion, conflicts, politics, the violence, the victories, the failures and the contradictions that emerged out of the student movements. Archival information such as official social media accounts, news articles and academic resources were also consulted in order to deepen understandings of the issues arising from the qualitative data.

The study captures the testimonies of 11 participants (six of whom were in two separate focus groups) collected over a period of five days. A breakdown of the participants into university stakeholder groups is shown in Table 1.

[10] Sandile Ndelu is a final year LLB student at the University of Cape Town. Ndelu has been an organiser within the fallist movement at UCT since its start in 2015. He was part of the group of transgender students who created the UCT Trans Collective and who went on to disrupt the #RhodesMustFall exhibition on 9 March 2016. In 2016, Ndelu was amongst the 12 fallists who were either interdicted, suspended or expelled following the #Shackville protests on 16 February 2016. Following a university disciplinary hearing, Ndelu was sentenced to a suspended expulsion and a rustication until the beginning of the 2017 academic year.

Table 1: Stakeholder profile of participants	
Stakeholder group	**Number**
Protesting students	4
Non-protesting students	2
Academic staff members	2
Management (special executive task team [SETT])	2
Interdicted and expelled protesting student	1
Note: Participants will remain anonymous to protect them against victimisation.	

Participants were sampled through a snowballing technique. However, this was constrained by the commencement of examinations, which preoccupied many of the students and academics who were approached to participate. Additionally, no workers consented to participate in the study. Although they were assured anonymity and confidentiality, many cited fear of victimisation and anxiety about their uncertain futures as reasons for denying consent.

The university

> ***The university is a microcosm of what's happening in society. (Individual interview, interdicted and expelled student, 2016)***

UCT is the oldest tertiary institution in South Africa, having been founded as part of the South African College in 1829, and formally established as a university in 1918 (Phillips & Robertson 1995). The formalisation of UCT as a government-funded university followed the increased need for skills to sustain the gold and diamond boom in the northern regions of the Union of South Africa (Phillips & Robertson 1995.)

Today, the university has six faculties – Commerce, Engineering and the Built Environment, Law, Health Sciences, Humanities, Science – and a Centre for Higher Education Development catering to more than 27 000 students. Table 2 presents the racialised demographic composition of the student population at UCT from 2010 to 2015.

Table 2: UCT student enrolments by population group, 2010–2015							
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014		
SA African (n)	5 323	5 744	6 012	6 256	6 247	6 341	19.1
% of total including international	23.3	23.0	24.0	25.0	25.0	23.3	
% of total excluding international	25.5	27.0	28.2	29.0	28.9	27.9	
SA coloured (n)	3 653	3 687	3 530	3 608	3 620	3 919	-0.9
% of total including international	14.6	14.5	13.6	13.7	13.7	13.0	
% of total excluding international	17.5	17.4	16.6	16.7	16.7	15.9	

SA Indian (n)	1 681	1 671	1 701	1 731	1 819	1 845	9.8
% of total including international	6.7	6.6	6.5	6.6	6.9	6.6	
% of total excluding international	8.1	7.9	8.0	8.0	8.4	8.1	
SA white (n)	9 183	8 992	8 814	8 483	8 141	8 148	-11.3
% of total including international	36.7	35.3	33.8	32.1	30.9	29.3	
% of total excluding international	44.1	42.3	41.4	39.3	37.6	35.8	
Unknown/other (n)	1 003	1 191	1 191	1 962	1 820	2 809	190.1
% of total including international	4.0	4.5	4.8	5.7	6.9	10.1	
% of total excluding international	4.8	5.4	5.8	6.9	8.4	12.3	
International (n)	4 171	4 268	4 802	4 290	4 686	5 028	20.5
% of total including international	16.7	16.7	18.2	18.1	17.6	18.1	
Total excluding international (n)	20 843	21 240	21 297	21 577	21 647	22 762	
Total including international (n)	24 772	25 301	25 805	26 118	26 333	27 790	11.1

Source: UCT (2015a)

Although UCT set out to enrol 36% black, 15% coloured, 9% Indian and 40% white students in the 2015 academic year, Table 2 reveals the university's failure to transform the demographic make-up of its student body (UCT 2015a). In 2015, more than 20 years after South Africa's transition to a representative democracy, white students, although on the decline, constituted most of the university's student populace. In that year, white students constituted 8 148 or 35.8% of the total number of South African students at UCT and over 29.3% of the total number of all students (including international students). This is notwithstanding Census 2011's indication that white South Africans constitute only 8% of a total South African population of 51 770 560 people and 15.7% of a total of 5 822 734 people in the Western Cape (Statistics South Africa 2012).[11] At the opposite end of the scale, the number of coloured students enrolled at UCT has remained low over the last two decades. The (negative) percentage change in the enrolment numbers of coloured students between the 2010 enrolment year and the 2015 enrolment year was –0.9%. In 2015, this historically disenfranchised demography group constituted only 13.0% of the total student population at UCT. This is despite the fact that the university is located in the Western Cape, where, according to Census 2011, coloured people make up almost half (48.8%) of the province's population and are the largest demographic group (Statistics South Africa 2012). Moreover, coloured South Africans constitute just over 8% of the country's total population – 28 563 people more than the total number of white South Africans (Statistics South Africa 2012).

Similarly, an analysis of throughput rates exposes a picture of the pervasiveness of historical racial inequalities and UCT's failure to reverse them. A sample of the undergraduate success rates by population group and course level is revealing. While only 77% of the black students who enrolled for their first year in 2012 were successful, 89% of the white students enrolled in the same year and at the same level were successful. This inequity is sustained throughout all year levels as only 85% of the black finalists in 2012 were successful while 98% of the white finalists in the same year were awarded their degrees (Table 3).

[11] Find interactive results of the 2011 Census here: http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=964

Table 3: UCT undergraduate success rates by population group and course level, 2012				
	1st YEAR	2nd YEAR	3rd YEAR	4th YEAR
Black (%)	77	76	80	85
Coloured (%)	80	84	89	93
Indian (%)	80	84	89	95
White (%)	89	91	94	98
International (%)	82	84	89	94
All students (%)	83	84	89	93
Source: UCT Evaluation of the Strategic Plan, 2010–2014				

Similar patterns of racialised inequities emerge from the data on the teaching and research staff at UCT. Table 4 organises data on the number of South African academic and research staff by race. Although considerable strides are being made to rectify the underrepresentation of historically disadvantaged population groups within the academy, the upward change does not seem to be closing the gaps fast enough. While South African black academics are on the rise (from 44 in 2008 to 58 in 2012), and with a cumulative percentage change of 31.8%, this population group still only occupies 5% of the total of academic positions at UCT. South African white academics remain on the increase (from 511 in 2008 to 589 in 2012), with a cumulative percentage increase of 15.2%. This population group still occupies the majority (55%) of the academic positions at UCT.

Table 4: South African academic and research staff at UCT, by race, 2008–2012						
Permanent staff	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	% change
Black	44	48	53	56	58	31.8
	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	
Coloured	82	84	86	98	104	26.8
	9%	9%	9%	9%	10%	
Indian	50	54	59	63	60	20.0
	5%	6%	6%	6%	6%	
White	511	538	537	579	589	15.2
	55%	56%	55%	55%	55%	
No information	21	10	13	15	5	-71.1
	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%	
South African total	708	734	748	811	816	15.2
	76%	76%	76%	77%	76%	
Total	937	966	982	1 055	1 078	15.0
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Source: UCT Evaluation of the Strategic Plan, 2010–2014						

These patterns in the South African staff composition of UCT have prompted some black academics to organise under various lobby groups to elevate black academics within the institution, the most notable group being the Black Academic Caucus (BAC). The BAC was formed in 2011 as a support structure for black academics to navigate the university space. The growing group of black academics then preoccupied itself with lobbying the vice- chancellor, Dr Max Price, and the chancellor, Graça Machel, to reform the curricula, facilitate the advancement of black academic staff and support the success of more black postgraduate students. Other staff groupings have been the Marikana Solidarity Forum and the Scholars for Social Justice and Equality, based in the Health Sciences Faculty.

In addition to academic staff, UCT makes use of workers who perform essential services such as cleaning, operating cafeterias, maintenance, security and catering. The majority of these workers are outsourced from private companies that operate as agents between the workers and UCT (FitzGerald & Seale 2016). These workers are not considered to be UCT employees and are bound to employment contracts with the agent, who details their pay and conditions of employment (FitzGerald & Seale 2016). The final round of outsourcing at UCT took place in 1999, under the leadership of the then vice chancellor, Dr Mamphele Ramphele. The university rationalised the introduction of outsourcing by citing the need to focus on its core teaching and research functions, to increase productivity and to decrease costs (Maree & Le Roux 2014). However, in recent years, positions on outsourcing have shifted and workers have begun demanding that UCT's outsourcing policies be reviewed, that their wages be raised to at least R10 000 per month and that they be afforded increased job security. According to a National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union press statement in 2015,

> *Privatisation puts money into business profits and cheats workers out of decent and quality jobs and wages within the University. Privatisation cheats the University Community out of services they need and deserve. We end up funding profits, not services!!!!!! Profiteering leads to reduced access, service cuts, inequality, poverty wages and bad working conditions for workers.*[12]

The student, staff and worker demography of the university is spread across six campuses. Upper Campus is the main campus and is situated on the Rhodes Estate on the slopes of Devil's Peak. The land was gifted to the university by the union government through a bequest made by former prime minister of the Cape Colony, mining magnate and businessman Cecil John Rhodes in his final will and testament:

> *13. I give my property following that is to say my residence known as 'De Groote Schuur' situate near Mowbray in the Cape Division in the said Colony…and all other land belonging to me situated under Table Mountain including my property known as 'Mosterts' to my trustees hereinbefore named…subject to the conditions following –*
>
> *(i) The said property shall not nor shall any portion thereof at any time be sold let or otherwise alienated.*
> *(ii) No buildings for suburban residences shall at any time be erected on the said property and any buildings which may be erected thereon shall be used exclusively for public purposes and shall be in a style of architecture similar to or in harmony with my said residence.*[13]

The grievances

The aforementioned demographic data reveal that the pace of transformation at UCT, as is the case in most state institutions, has struggled to keep up with the promises of equity, retribution and justice as espoused by the spirit of the South African Constitution (Alexander & Pfaffe 2014). Consequently, as black students, staff and workers have become increasingly disillusioned by South Africa's young democratic dispensation, so too have they become increasingly impatient with UCT, culminating in a string of ongoing student-led protests (Alexander & Pfaffe 2014).

> *Post-1994, we have been brainwashed with the idea of the 'rainbow nation'. What is clear is that we live in a* postapartheid South Africa where inequality, racism, white supremacist capitalist patriarchy continues to

[12] See https://www.facebook.com/RhodesMustFall/posts/1634181033524055.
[13] See http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/Act9of1910.pdf.

> oppress black people in the country…The movement comes out of feeling desperate, angry and frustrated by the state of things in this country. (Individual interview, interdicted and expelled student, 2016)

To address their disillusionment, the fallists have developed an extensive network of demands, all anchored in the ideal of decoloniality. These demands are not static. Many, such as reformulating the admissions policy and ending outsourcing, have carried over from years of black and worker resistance at various universities. Others, such as free education and curriculum reform, are developing in sync with the current wave of advocacy. Some of the demands, such as #PatriarchyMustFall and #EndRapeCulture, are the offspring of specific internal and external moments.

However, 'black pain' or the 'reality of being black at UCT' has been the common thread running through all the demands. Students, staff and workers testified to the unwelcoming, alienating and antagonistic institutional culture at UCT:

> *At the root of this struggle is the dehumanisation of black people at UCT. This dehumanisation is a violence exacted only against black people by a system that privileges whiteness. Our definition of black includes all racially oppressed people of colour. We adopt this political identity not to disregard the huge differences that exist between us, but precisely to interrogate them, identify their roots in the divide-and-conquer tactics of white supremacy, and act in unity to bring about our collective liberation. It is, therefore, crucial that this movement flows from the black voices and black pain that have been continuously ignored and silenced. (#RhodesMustFall mission statement, 2015)*

> *Black people in this country have always had to fight; that's what we have inherited. It is not the first or last time black people are picking up stones, burning tires, etc. (Individual interview, interdicted and expelled student, 2016)*

In its Strategic Plan for 2010 to 2014, UCT admits to being an alienating and antagonistic institution to black and women students, staff and workers:

> *3. Inclusiveness: UCT as a place that is 'owned' by all its staff and students, and by the community*
> *Black students, staff and many women experience UCT's culture as alienating, closed to transformation and they feel like visitors in a white male club. Dissatisfaction also arises between academic and Professional, Administrative and Support Staff (PASS). Only if we succeed in creating an affirming, positive environment for all will we be able to retain our staff and create the vibrant, diverse body of people that we need to be a truly great university. Central to the task is being mindful of UCT's diversity of views and to promote an ethos of mutual respect. We need to focus on treating people equally, overcoming deep beliefs and conditioning that some are better than others, overcoming the stereotypes we hold, and valuing diversity and difference.*

The protests, their implications and the aftermath

The fallist protests were not a sudden eruption. Universities in South Africa, particularly those previously demarcated as black universities, have a long history of challenging the infrastructural and institutional make-up of the postapartheid university (Franklin 2003). UCT is a university with a complicated history of both co-option by the apartheid powers (see Hendricks [2008] and Ntsebeza [2014] on the Archie Mafeje affair that took place in 1968) and resistance against those same powers (see Phillips [2002] on the End Conscription Campaign). Postapartheid, students, staff and workers have periodically organised around the acceleration of transformation and institutional reform within the university but also within broader society. Regarding the former, the most notable is the ongoing debate on affirmative action and the admissions policy, with one side arguing for race to be used as a proxy for disadvantage when admitting students into the university, and the other arguing that class is a more accurate way to mark disadvantage for the purpose of admissions.[14] Also notable is what has become known as the 'Mamdani Affair', which threw into contestation the university's curricula

[14] For a record of UCT's admissions policy debate, see https://www.uct.ac.za/news/admissions_debate/archive/2013/.

and whom the university empowers to decide what is taught and how it is taught (Mamdani 2002). The most important of the latter was the 'We Say Enough!' mass demonstration in February 2013. At the time described as the 'largest protest march in the University of Cape Town's history' (Rousseau 2013), the march was organised by the university itself and aimed to raise a collective student and staff voice against the pervasive social tyranny of violent crimes, including murder, assault and rape. Another mass protest was a rally where the Palestinian Solidarity Forum and the UCT Students' Representative Council (SRC) called on UCT management to take an official position, on behalf of UCT, in solidarity with the Palestinians in the Gaza conflict (Price 2014).

These events were not isolated. According to Alexander and Pfaffe (2014), civil protest actions in postapartheid South Africa have been triggered by increasing disillusionment with the new dispensation's promise to radically transform the quality and standard of living of the black majority, who have endured generations of institutionalised dispossession and deprivation under colonialism and apartheid. They write:

> *South Africa's first democratic government, elected in 1994, was brought into being through the unification of worker and community struggles. For a moment, the hinge had closed. This was a major victory, but the structure of capitalism changed little (and, in some respects, for the worse). Many black people, including some workers, prospered, but most did not. Unemployment and inequality increased, and indicators for both are among the highest in the world. (Alexander & Pfaffe 2014: 207)*

This 'rebellion of the poor' has penetrated almost all sites of public life, including universities (Alexander & Pfaffe 2014).

Sequence of events at UCT

9 March 2015

Chumani Maxwele, a student at UCT, threw human faeces on the statue of Cecil John Rhodes. Rhodes was a British businessman, mining boss and former governor of the Cape Colony who bequeathed the land on which UCT is currently built. To honour Rhodes for his generosity, the university erected a large human-sized brass statue in 1934. For 80 years, the statue enjoyed a prominent position in the centre of the university's Upper Campus, facing outwards onto the landscape of the southern suburbs. To explain his intervention against the memorial, Maxwele said:

> *As black students we are disgusted by the fact that this statue still stands here today as it is a symbol of white supremacy. How we can be living in a time of transformation when this statue still stands and our hall is named after [Leander Starr] Jameson, who was a brutal lieutenant under Rhodes. (in Bester 2015)*

When quizzed further on his use of human faeces to protest, Maxwele's response was:

> *This poo that we are throwing on the statue represents the shame of black people. By throwing it on the statue we are throwing our shame to whites' affluence.*

Although this study begins the sequence of events for the student protests at UCT with the Maxwele incident, it is worthwhile to flag that the origins of the #RhodesMustFall movement are contentious. While news reports and academic writings tend to reference Chumani Maxwele throwing human faeces on the Rhodes statue as the 'catalyst' for #RhodesMustFall and the subsequent generalised student protests across the country, some actors within the movement have located the origins of the movement elsewhere. Some place the origins of the student movement within the mass meeting which took place the day after Maxwele's protest. Others locate the movement's start within the numerous micro-conversations amongst students and staff, where positions on the university space were developed and shared. Yet others contend that the real beginning of the movement at UCT was during the meeting of a small group of activists soon after Maxwele's protest but before the mass meeting on 12 March 2015. Contentions about the origins of the movement were also evidenced in the views of some of the interviewees in this study:

> *The student protests were sparked by a student throwing poo on the Rhodes statue. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

> *I think it started with…a small feminist group [that] raised a lot of points about racial inequality within the university and symbolic oppression and how there's too many black workers and a majority of white lecturers and that was a sign of racial inequality. Then the other movements started joining in and it became a whole unified movement. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*

> *The meeting after the mass meeting, where we decided how to move forward, calling it #RhodesMustFall, creating a Facebook page and creating the follow-up actions that happened is what sustained and built the movement. (Individual interview, interdicted and expelled student, 2016)*

This contestation is important as it foregrounds the internal fractions that emerged later in the student movement at UCT, particularly those that emerged at the crossroads of gender and sexual orientation. The lack of consensus on the catalyst or ignition point for the movement at UCT appears to be a push-and-pull for power, ownership and representation rather than a mere dispute of facts. The underlying fears fuelling the contest are that those who can claim to have sparked the movement can also claim dominion (at least at a symbolic level) over the movement. This would, in turn, legitimise their monopoly over the agenda and the historical narrative of the movement. In a movement deeply fractured along class, gender, sexuality and ideological lines, this poses the risk of under/misrepresentation, distortions and the erasure of marginal fractions.

> *People are seeking relevance and want to claim things… people are writing about history based on hearsay. They have a selective memory, want to locate themselves at the forefront [of the movement]. The archives can show [the truth]. (Individual interview, interdicted and expelled student, 2016)*

This endangers the 'intersectional approach' identified by #RhodesMustFall as necessary for their cause. The politics of intersectionality, as conceived by the movement, connoted a multiplicity of identities, struggles and narratives receiving equitable political space.

> *An intersectional 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. Our movement endeavours to make this a reality in our struggle for decolonisation. (#RhodesMustFall mission statement, 2015)* [15]

The stakes become exceedingly high when an individual activist, such as Maxwele, is centred as the catalyst for the movement rather than the dynamic and multiple experiences and identities of the collective that have shaped the theory and praxis of the student movement. As will be unpacked below, the 'intersectional' centre of fallism at UCT did not hold and women, queer, trans and disabled fallists frequently have had to find themselves within a space that is centred around cisgender, heterosexual, able-bodied men and their performances of militant masculinities.

12 March 2015

A mass of students met on the Jammie Plaza of UCT Upper Campus. The mass meeting was attended by a broad spectrum of the university community, transcending racial, gender, professional, party-political and age lines. The agenda of the meeting centred around the statue of Cecil John Rhodes and the events of 9 March 2015. Although the meeting was originally called by the SRC, other actors emerged as dominant in the space, including the African National Congress-aligned student formation, the South African Student Congress (SASCO), student leaders as well as prominent academics. These actors were all given space and time to address the masses. Collectively, their testimonies began

[15] See http://jwtc.org.za/resources/docs/salon-volume-9/RMF_Combined.pdf.

introducing black pain, institutional alienation, 'violence' and the slow pace of transformation at UCT as themes for the events to follow.

On the same afternoon, a group of students caucused to coordinate a way forward. This group of students went on to steer the following days of organising, protesting and mobilising.

20 March 2015

Following days of meetings and protests on campus, students broke into and occupied the Bremner Building, the administrative base of the university. It houses the offices of the vice-chancellor and the registrar. The students renamed the building 'Azania House' and turned the historical Archie Mafeje Room, named after the first black academic at UCT, into the movement's domicile. By this time, the status of being a 'student movement' named '#RhodesMustFall' was accepted and embraced.

The students' central demand, at that point, was the non-negotiable removal of the Rhodes statue. The students coupled the call for the removal of Rhodes's statue with demands for the decolonisation of the university. This process, according to the students, would be effected through, amongst other things, radically changing the curricula and how they are taught, eradicating colonial-era labour-brokering systems, empowering the emergence of a black professoriate and altering the admissions policy. They professed that meeting these demands would transform, and reverse, the effects of the colonially sanctioned alienation that black students, workers and staff face at the institution. In a statement released a few days after their occupation, #RhodesMustFall wrote:

> *The statue has great symbolic power; it glorifies a mass-murderer who exploited black labour and stole land from indigenous people. Its presence erases black history and is an act of violence against black students, workers and staff – by 'black' we refer to all people of colour. The statue was therefore the natural starting point of this movement. Its removal will not mark the end but the beginning of the long overdue process of decolonising this university. (#RhodesMustFall mission statement, 2015)*

Image by Shaun Swingler

Image by Shaun Swingler

The occupation attracted considerable public and media interest. The students soon picked up on the attention and its importance for the success of their cause. As a means of maximising on the momentum of the movement within the public sphere, the students organised themselves into committees for media, radical strategy, intersectionality and education. Simultaneously, academics and other thought leaders were frequently invited to facilitate political education on topics ranging from intersectionality and decolonised curricula to pan-Africanism. A makeshift kitchen, sleeping dorms and study rooms were improvised as per the needs of the occupants.

A deliberate effort to develop the politics of the space was cultivated by regular plenaries held in the Mafeje Room, where the following was decided: the movement was to be instructed by three pillars, namely pan-Africanism, Black Consciousness and black radical feminism; white people were incorporated into the space as mere allies and were frequently reminded that they ought to be aware of their positionality when engaging in the space and should anticipate being asked to leave the space from time to time; the movement had no 'leaders' or, more accurately, the movement was 'leaderful'. However, whether the student movement at UCT lived up to these politics is contestable.

> *Where to from here in a movement that has become completely fragmented, where we cannot hold true to our politics. (Individual interview, interdicted and expelled student, 2016)*

For example, closer scrutiny reveals that de facto leadership did emerge at the Azania House occupation. As occupants organised themselves into committees, some arranged themselves into a 'strategic committee' which decided on, amongst other things, the direction of the movement. This committee also had the power to enter into negotiations with management. Members of this committee were also (strategically) identified as the leadership of the movement by both management, the mass media and, later, by private security:

> *The idea of a flat, leaderless structure is complicated. When you go beyond, and certain members of the student movement get arrested and jailed, everything comes to a standstill. Because the structure is unable to*

Image by Shaun Swingler

carry on the programme of action. De facto leadership being removed demobilises the movement. (Focus group, senior executive task team member, 2016)

26 March 2015

UCT held a university assembly, where members of the university community (including students, academics, workers, university management and alumni) attended a multi-stakeholder engagement on the Rhodes statue and the intensifying calls to have it removed from the university, or at least removed from its current location.

Notably, the students organising for the removal of the statue under the #RhodesMustFall movement arrived in a large contingent, wearing black and with tape over their mouths. Although these symbols could easily have been conceived as an impending disruption of the university assembly, a physical disruption did not happen that evening. Instead, a more symbolic disruption was effected through the activists successfully demanding that one of the co-chairs of the assembly, Barney Pityana, the chairperson of the university's Convocation, be replaced with a student activist. The activists justified this by asserting that Pityana had been particularly antagonistic towards their cause and would chair the assembly in a manner that would cause damage to the cause.

The effect was that the assembly was effectively 'captured' by the movement with two sympathisers as co-chairs: one a #RhodesMustFall-aligned member of the SRC and the other a #RhodesMustFall-selected representative.

Members of the university community were invited to motivate their positions on whether the statue should stay or be removed. Many, save for a couple of outliers, including Max Price, agreed that the statue ought to be removed from its current location on Upper Campus. Convocation, senate and council agreed and eventually authorised the statue's indefinite removal.

Subsequent to this, UCT fallists effected various programmes aimed at advancing the decolonisation of UCT. This included protests and art installations on 16 August 2015 to mark the third anniversary of the Marikana massacre, demonstration under #PatriarchyMustFall, which confronted UCT's institutionalised misogyny, queerphobia and transphobia as well as demands for the insourcing of outsourced workers.

In late 2015, students at UCT also joined the #FeesMustFall protests to echo a call that had first been made by students at Wits for a mass rejection of fee increases at all campuses. This call quickly shifted to a demand for education to be wholly decommodified and for the university to be free to all. Various student-led political formations, including the UCT Trans Collective, the Left Students' Forum, #RhodesMustFall, SASCO and the Pan Africanist Student Movement of Azania, met in the early morning of 19 October 2015 and barricaded the entrances to the Upper, Middle and Lower campuses of UCT. With many students and staff unable to gain access to the campus, the university was forced to cancel all operations. Police were called and used teargas and stun grenades to evict the protesters. This marked the first time since the formation of #RhodesMustFall that the police used coercive means to quell a protest at the university. It is also the first time that the police arrested protesters, albeit for a short period.

21 October 2015

A diverse delegation of students and staff from UCT joined protesters from UWC, Stellenbosch University and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in an unprecedented march outside Parliament. The mass of protesters demanded to see the minister of higher education and training, Dr Blade Nzimande, for engagement on the demand for free education.

However, the afternoon turned into chaos as the parliamentary police made use of stun grenades, rubber bullets, teargas and water cannons to keep the large crowd clear from the parliamentary precinct. Following the march to Parliament, several students were arrested, some of which were charged with high treason - but all these charges were later dropped. The Legal Resources Centre successfully secured an interdict against police brutality. The interdict enjoined the police to follow due

protocol, including exercising restraint when responding to #FeesMustFall protests in the Western Cape, failing which there would be grounds to prosecute the provincial commissioners for police. Interestingly, there is no evidence of this interdict being successfully invoked over the the police's use of excessive force during the protests that followed that year.

The vice-chancellor, Dr Price, was heavily criticised for allowing the state, through the police, to interfere with the safety at the university during the #FeesMustFall protests. He was criticised for calling the police and for commissioning an interdict against protest action on the campus, which gave the police open discretion to intervene in protests happening on campus property.

The protests at UCT continued for the remainder of the 2015 academic year. The fallists demands temporarily shifted from free, decolonised education to #EndOutsourcing after the 0% fee increment was announced by President Jacob Zuma. Subsequently, UCT has started the process of phasing out outsourcing, with the last group of workers set to be insourced in 2019.

2016: protests continue

On the first day of the 2016 academic year, fallists at UCT resumed their #FeesMustFall campaign by erecting a structure made from corrugated iron, wood and iron nails in the centre of the UCT Upper Campus and called it #Shackville. Firstly, making a shack at the centre of the university premises was symbolic and highlighted the financial exclusion of poor, black students at the university. Secondly, the shack was a symbol of homelessness, which is a direct consequence of the university's inability to provide enough student housing to all those who need it – leaving many students homeless while at the university. The protesters felt that in both cases, black students were prejudiced the most.

In what has been described as a (negatively) defining moment for the student movement at UCT, students set alight millions of rands worth of historical paintings and photography, burnt a vehicle and forcibly entered residences that they were not permitted to enter after the UCT management attempted to remove the #Shackville Structure. Private security and the police demolished #Shackville, fired stun grenades, teargassed protesters and arrested some students. Moreover, several students were suspended, expelled and interdicted from being on university property and participating in university activities.

These measures prompted a) extended legal battles between the university and implicated students and b) there re-emergence of student protests during the last quarter of 2016.

Regarding the former, UCT's interdict against protesting was made final by the Western Cape High Court, but the students appealed this ruling at the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA) on 11 May 2016. On 20 October 2016, the SCA handed down a judgment dismissing the student activists' appeal to have this interdict set aside. Instead, the Court altered the wording of the interdict so that it no longer prohibited interdicted students from being on the university's property. In an order handed down by Judge Malcolm Wallis, the SCA held that:

> *[79] It follows that the university was entitled to a final interdict. However, in my view it was not entitled to an order in the broad terms that it sought and was granted by the high court. The core problem with that order, as I see it, was that it effectively excluded the appellants from the university campus, which is, as I have pointed out, traversed by public roads and constitutes a public place, unless they had written consent from the Vice-Chancellor or his delegate to be there.*
>
> *[80] That order plainly infringed their right of freedom of movement guaranteed in s 21(1) of the Constitution. It also restricted their right to exercise their right of freedom of association with others who shared their view of the problems facing the university in particular, but more generally all universities in South Africa as well as broader social issues. And it constituted a substantial intervention in their social lives. If permission*

> *were given for one of them to attend a lecture, they would not be able to join their fellow students for coffee afterwards without obtaining express permission. They could not decide on the spur of the moment to attend an interesting talk or event on campus. Without permission they could not attend a sporting function or meet a friend or collect someone from a residence before going out on a social occasion. The fifth appellant, who had made complaints about sexual abuse she had suffered on campus, unconnected with the protests, would be unable to ascertain directly whether anything was being done in regard to her complaints.*[16]

The students subsequently appealed the SCA decision and the case is to be heard by the Constitutional Court in 2017.

Regarding the latter, the punitive measures employed by the state and the university against students involved in #Shackville prompted the start of the #BringBackOurCadres campaign where students and workers demanded that the university lift all the interdicts, suspensions, expulsions and other punitive measures that the university had instituted in a bid to quell the protests over the last two years. As an alternative, the protesters proposed a truth and reconciliation commission (TRC) to neutralise the tensions amongst students and to begin rebuilding the relationship between students and university management. After weeks of mediation, management and the student representatives entered into a ceasefire agreement. The agreement committed both parties to ensuring the continuation of the 2016/17 examinations in a peaceful and accommodating environment, and to collaboratively forging a way forward for a TRC at UCT.

This agreement was a breakthrough for UCT. Various attempts at mediation in 2015/16 collapsed due to a breakdown in communication, a lack of trust, the taking of hard lines during negotiations or defaults on the terms of agreement. For instance, following the turbulence of the protests during the latter part of 2015, the students entered into negotiations with management to ensure that no students would be academically or financially excluded, but the students allege that the university reneged on these agreements, which led to the continuation of protests.

The new agreement included various resolutions, such as granting clemency to all suspended, interdicted and expelled students; establishing a TRC process to consider the institutional culture of the university; and instituting a moratorium on any cases pending against students, staff members or workers that had participated in the protests. Independent mediators were appointed to act as intermediaries between the parties and to facilitate compromise, problem solving, and the rebuilding of trust during discussions and to ensure that all agreements were codified and officiated.

Unsurprisingly, the agreement between management and the students received a mixed reaction from stakeholders within the university:

> *I think it was necessary because we don't really have what it takes to deal with the kind of violence that we were attracting and that they were threatening to continue using. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*

> *This is our shot for dialogue and to stop the violence. That is something many campuses don't have. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

> *Any negotiation means finding each other. And in order to find each other, you have to give something up. Certain compromises need to be made. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

However, some senior academics and staff members were not happy with this agreement and accused the UCT vice-chancellor, Dr Price, of comprising the university's integrity by entering into any agreement with the students. Emeritus Professor Timothy Crowe tabled a motion of no confidence against Dr Price. Gwen Ngwenya (2016), one of the members of the UCT Convocation who endorsed the motion, in an article titled 'Price Has "Bartered Away" UCT's Core Values', described the motivation for the motion as follows:

[16] Hotz and others v University of Cape Town (730/2016) [2016] ZASCA 159; [2016] 4 all SA 723 (SCA) (20 October 2016).

> *It follows a series of decisions by the executive, grounded in the appeasement of student lawbreakers and ideologues who have not been able to articulate their philosophy in any manner as to result in its common comprehension. The straw which has broken the camel's back is the 6th of November agreement reached by the executive with the Shackville TRC to form an Institutional Reconciliation and Transformation Commission (IRTC)/Shackville TRC.*

Ngwenya (2016) went on to elucidate at least four reasons why the motion against the vice-chancellor should succeed: 'The executive have come to a broad agreement with unelected and unrepresentative students', 'Lawbreakers who have been party to violence on campus are party to their own disciplinary process', 'There is no agreed definition from the university on what decolonisation entails' and 'The university has not asserted its own values in the agreement'.

Although the motion was not successful, some have interpreted this motion against the university management as a move by the conservative members of the university to slow down the pace of change and transformation at the university and the gains made by the student movement:

> *We are also in a context which is very polarised. We come into certain positions and there is a lot of push backs from academics, who suddenly may feel that they are becoming less powerful and less relevant in the institution because they no longer have access to certain people that they used to have access to in Bremner, for example. As the tables turn, sometimes, the polarisation gets worse. (Focus group, SETT member, 2016)*

'The centre does not hold'

The student movement at UCT can be categorised into two distinct but related 'moments', namely the emergence of #RhodesMustFall and the adoption of #FeesMustFall, punctuated by several smaller moments in between. This is a distinct characteristic of the student movement at UCT. While most institutions of higher learning only joined the call for free education during the latter part of 2015, political organising at UCT had already been resuscitated by #RhodesMustFall seven months before. Paying attention to the divide between ##RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall is important to understand the changes in demands, the compositions of the crowds, the make-up of the leaders and the trajectory of the violence.

First, there were significant changes in personnel, both leaders and crowds, involved in organising under the #RhodesMustFall movement in 2015 and under the #FeesMustFall campaign in 2015/16. Participants commented on the changes in faces, bodies and voices at the plenary sessions:

> *#FeesMustFall at one point involved many white people, and then at some point again it began to close. (Focus group, non-protesting student, 2016)*

> *Last year was a bit open. There were a lot more side voices that started to emerge, like the trans collective, disrupting whiteness, patriarchy must fall. (Focus group, non-protesting student, 2016)*

Secondly, other participants noted an overt ideological shift away from being 'leaderless' to having an organised structure of leaders responsible for coordinating the spirit and direction of the movement. Additionally, some claimed that the initial de facto leadership of the movement changed from having a visible feminist leadership to having a leadership dominated by cisgender and heterosexual men.

> *I think this year…the dynamics have been different because the SRC candidates were the leaders. This was not like #Shackville where there were no leaders. (Focus group, protesting student, 2016)*

> *This year…it's a whole different leadership from the one that started [in #RhodesMustFall]. They are not on the same level. This year there was a lot of black female leadership missing – and no one questioned that. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*

The reasons for this dramatic reorganisation of the student movement at UCT are varied, ranging from protest fatigue and loss of interest to disillusionment with the theory or praxis of the movement. However, what is clear is that experiences of erasure, exclusion and abuse caused a considerable membership of minority groups within the student movement to at first resist and later on to leave the movement.

For instance, ruptures within the movement at UCT emerged when #RhodesMustFall attempted to host an exhibition of images of the first year of the movement exactly one year after Chumani Maxwele threw faeces on the Rhodes statue. The UCT Trans Collective, a grouping of gender-diverse organisers from within the student movement, staged a dramatic nude protest that disrupted the event and prevented the exhibition from being opened to the public. In a press statement explaining their intervention, the UCT Trans Collective wrote:

> *It is disingenuous to include trans people in a public gallery when you have made no effort to include them in the private. It is a lie to include trans people when the world is watching, but to erase and antagonise them when the world no longer cares. We have reached the peak of our disillusionment with #RhodesMustFall's trans exclusion and erasure. We are done with the arrogant cis hetero patriarchy of black men. We will no longer tolerate the complicity of black cis womxn in our erasure. We are fed up with #RhodesMustFall being 'intersectional' being used as public persuasion rhetoric. We are saying down with faux inclusivity – #RhodesMustFall make it clear, to the world, that we are not welcome here. #RhodesMustFall will not tokenise our presence as if they ever treasured us as part of their movement. We will not have our bodies, faces, names and voices used as bait for public applause. We are tired of being expected to put our bodies on the line for people who refuse to do the same for us.*[17]

This event, described as the 'trans capture', marked an additional rupture point within the student movement at UCT. The action raised deep, cutting issues around representation, inclusivity and diversity within the movement. This was received with antagonism by some, who accused the UCT Trans Collective of privileging their own needs and sensitivities over those of the collective movement. Others, fearing that the movement would fail to extract valuable lessons on the principle of intersectionality from the intervention, lobbied for movement activities to be suspended until it meaningfully addressed the issues raised by the UCT Trans Collective.

The change in personnel has resulted in a loss of ideological diversity within the student movement. Particularly, movement actors have referenced the dwindling 'radical black feminism' prong of the movement. The assumption here is that when female, queer, trans and disabled people leave the movement en masse, they take with them the richness of the political nuances they brought to the space.

> *I think that representation matters. I think who is present in the conversation matters. And I also think the numbers matter. I think that if it's just one woman in a space dominated by men, then it's more difficult for issues of gender or sexuality to get onto the table. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

> *This year, issues around sexuality, gender and patriarchy kind of fell out of the conversation in comparison to last year, where they were much more present. More young people who identified as men or male were leading actions this year. The visibility of women leaders at UCT was less this year than last year. The same is true for queer leaders – they were less present this year. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

This decline in the intersectional ideological terrain in the latter days of the student movement has not been met with increased efforts to bridge the ideological deficit through political education. In fact, the converse is true. Several

[17] See https://www.facebook.com/transfeministcollective/posts/1132209633512418.

participants indicated a decline in the political, educational and intellectual rigour that characterised the early days of the #RhodesMustFall movement:

> *Political education has been taken for granted this year. We start attracting numbers and start protesting but people do not know what they are doing. All you know is that you are a black person and the system is working against you. (Focus group, protesting student, 2016)*

> *We have become complacent. Last year there were so many avenues for us to develop. People were chatting, people were calling each other out, people were mobilising against other people, etc. (Focus group, protesting student, 2016)*

> *Political education [has] suffered in order to keep momentum and to keep a buzz and hype so that there could continuously be a big group that would drive the shutdown, at the expense of our minds. (Focus group, non-protesting student, 2016)*

A second-year protester illustrated this lack of rigour by referring to an incident during a confrontation between protesters and private security personnel. During the squabble, a student apparently called the private security officers 'Amakwerekwere'[18] and ordered them to go back to 'their own countries'. Besides the deep contradiction of being a movement that purports to have a pan-Africanist politics, this incident illustrates the infiltration of xenophobic sentiment into the movement. Furthermore, the movement's collective (non)reaction to this slur would have been dealt with differently in 2015.

However, some took a more sympathetic view of the decline in intellectual politics in the UCT student movement. One participant held that one ought to consider the physical and emotional fatigue associated with the violence, as well as the time spent sourcing bail money, writing new and emerging demands and dealing with arrests rather than political education.

> *It's difficult to have high-level discussions when you were just chased and threatened with violence by the police or private security. Our attention has been redirected to the arrests, bail, etc. and we have forgotten about who we are as a movement and what we want. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

Violence as theory, violence as praxis

At UCT, 'black pain' not only constructs the grievances of the students but also constructs their collective responses to the institution. Study participants indicated that they consider violence as both a 'constructor' and a 'deconstructor' of the status quo at UCT. Student protesters indicated that, as a 'constructor', the university performs acts of violence on black students, faculty members and workers through its infrastructure, use of armed forces to contain protests, curricula, policies, pedagogy, etc.

> *[The statue] glorifies a mass-murderer who exploited black labour and stole land from indigenous people. Its presence erases black history and is an act of violence against black students, workers and staff – by 'black' we refer to all people of colour…This movement is not just about the removal of a statue. The statue has great symbolic power – it is a glorifying monument to a man who was undeniably a racist, imperialist, colonialist, and misogynist. It stands at the centre of what supposedly is the 'greatest university in Africa'. This presence, which represents South Africa's history of dispossession and exploitation of black people, is an* ***act of violence*** *[emphasis added] against black students, workers and staff. The statue is, therefore, the perfect embodiment of black alienation and disempowerment at the hands of UCT's institutional culture and was the natural starting point of this movement. (#RhodesMustFall mission statement, 2015)*

[18] A derogatory term referring to foreign nationals from the rest of Africa.

> *Management…do not understand how racism and sexism are a lived experience every day on campus. They don't understand just how alienating UCT can be on a human level. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

Some participants asserted that 'violence' is a necessary means to 'deconstruct' and decolonise the status quo. Violence here is used loosely and expansively to denote an open list of various forms of resistance, defences, agitations, disruptions, counter-epistemologies and physical actions that are directed at responding to and uprooting colonially entrenched oppression. For this, the movement borrowed largely from the pronunciations of political philosopher Frantz Fanon in his 'Concerning Violence' chapter in The Wretched of the Earth:

> *The naked truth of decolonization evokes for us the searing bullets and bloodstained knives which emanate from it. For if the last shall be first, this will only come to pass after a murderous and decisive struggle between the two protagonists. That affirmed intention to place the last at the head of things, and to make them climb at a pace (too quickly, some say) the well-known steps which characterise an organised society, can only triumph if we use all means to turn the scale, including, of course, that of violence. (Fanon 1963: 35)*

> *I don't disagree with protest. Protest action is necessary to dismantle the deep-seated problems in the institution. History has shown us that the privileged don't give away their power. (Focus group, SETT member, 2016)*

Co-constructive violence

> *There can be no comparison between state violence and the type of violence the students are accused of [destruction of property, throwing of stones]. (Individual interview, interdicted and expelled student, 2016)*

Violence during the student protests at UCT over the 2015/16 period was co-constructive. Violence reproduced violence in a game of disruption and destruction between the students and the university, the latter through the security apparatus of the police services as well as private security.

The trajectory of the violence – including acts of coercion, sabotage and disruptions as well as tangible damage to property and bodily integrity– changed in sync with the shifts in the personnel, demands and political space of the student movement. The students used symbolism, damage to property, art installations and the disruption of physical space as modalities of protests. These unique performances of collective violence were punctuated with modes of protest that have become traditional in protest action in South Africa, such as mass toyi-toying animated by dancing and the singing of struggle songs (Bond & Mottiar 2013).

Under the ideological home of #RhodesMustFall, the movement located its 'violence' in response to the institutional violence inflicted by the university within a paradigm of disruption and disorientation. The student protesters first invoked this paradigm during their occupation of the Bremner Building on 20 March 2015. The significance of this occupation was twofold: the students physically took up space that, according to the UCT status quo, they were not entitled to occupy, and they shut down the day-to-day activities that take place in that space – Bremner houses the office of the vice-chancellor and is the main administrative centre of the university. Through this act, the students were communicating that the university cannot function as normal while its fundamentally oppressive foundations remain intact. This tradition of disruption was reproduced several times during the 2015 wave of protests, with occupations occurring at Avenue House and a longer one taking place at Avenue Hall. This was also repeated in 2016 during #BringBackOurCadres, when the students occupied the SRC offices in the Steve Biko Building.

As a further rejection of the university's business-as-usual coping mechanism, the students regularly disrupted any organisation of the university and its management, whether meetings, public engagements or press conferences. In this regard, two events come to mind. The first was a university discussion on the #RhodesMustFall movement chaired by the then deputy vice-chancellor for transformation, Professor Crain Soudien. Some of the student leaders were invited to

participate on the panel. The students entered late, and singing, causing the public discussion to pause. They then waited for one of their representatives, who was speaking on the panel, to have the final word before leaving abruptly and in song. The remaining attendees were left with nothing to discuss, as the custodians of the discussion on institutional culture and the Rhodes statue had rejected the public engagement and left the venue en masse. Eventually, the remaining attendees left the room due to a crisis of (il)legitimacy. The second example was when the university council, the institution's highest decision-making body, met to decide on whether the statue of Cecil John Rhodes should be removed from its location at the university. The student protesters stormed that meeting and turned it on its head. Their argument was that the university and its council had no business a) debating whether it was permissible for the Rhodes Statue to fall - this was non-negotiable and b) closing the council meeting to students, who were directly responsible for the meeting occurring in the first place. The students had council in a corner as they rejected old forms of mediated democracy and demanded new modes of direct democracy and accountability. Despite the hostile takeover of the space, the university council was able to continue with the voting and voted in favour of removing the statue.

Interfering with the 'normal' functions of the university also became characteristic of – and arguably the main switch point in – the #FeesMustFall wave of the student protests. The modus operandi of 'shutting down' was picked up by student protesters at UCT the day after Wits student protesters successfully prevented their university from operating. This new-found power of being able to completely shut down the operations of the university instead of merely obscuring some of the university's functions seemed to be addictive to the students. They used barricades made from rocks, stones, burning tires, benches and other materials to prevent cars and workers, staff and students not involved in the protests from making their way onto the university grounds. So effective was this strategy that the students audaciously coordinated a national shutdown, where all the universities that were participating in the #FeesMustFall protests shut down their respective universities for close to a week.

However, this new method of protest raised the stakes for the university, prompting the introduction of court interdicts and physical security through the South African Police Services and, later, private security forces. The court interdicts and the use of physical violence by the police at UCT were closely related. When students acted in ways that were in contravention of a court interdict, the police were legally required to intervene as a means of enforcing the interdict. A key moment where the university's reliance on interdicts and police violence crossed paths was the first day of #FeesMustFall, when police used teargas, stun grenades and their bare hands to forcibly remove students from the Bremner Building which they had attempted to reoccupy. These scenes of provocative police brutality and protester retaliation are a familiar characteristic of protests in South Africa. In a study of eight community protests conducted in 2008 and distilled in The Smoke that Calls, Von Holdt et al. (2011: 3) write that a commonality between all eight of the community protests they studied was how 'police actions escalated confrontation and tensions which rapidly took the form of running street battles between protesters and police officers'.

This incident set the tone and was replicated at various places on UCT campuses where students were demonstrating. The university received widespread criticism:

> *It kind of reminds me of how the police were used during the apartheid era to silence dissent…and for me it is interesting to look at…how we have not looked at our policies, and how we have not looked at how we police public protests. (Focus group, non-protesting student, 2016)*

> *State/university violence was a disproportionate response to the student's demands. It became very clear that the state-sanctioned violence was being exercised to protect certain interests and certain kinds of bodies. I felt that it was an exercise in displaying systematic disregard for black lives and black concerns. (Focus group, non-protesting student, 2016)*

> *That is not to say that the students were blameless. But…if you have the greater power, then you have to exercise some kind of restraint…When you have the power to decide whether a not a person continues with*

their education, whether or not a person goes to prison. (Focus group, non-protesting student, 2016)

If the state responds [to your concerns] with violence….how are you not going to internalise that violence and act it out? Why are we surprised when victims become violent? (Individual interview, academic, 2016)

On the strength of the generalised condemnation of their sanctioning of police brutality against students, UCT management introduced private security to control the protests. They used the same methodologies utilised by the police, but with more stringent control by management. Private security was only permitted to act within the mandate that they received from relevant personnel from the university's management. However, the trajectory of violence did not necessarily look any different. In fact, the situation on campus worsened when private security officers were accused of sexual assault, physical assault, racially profiling students, impunity and using excessive and disproportionate physical violence.

For me, the biggest takeaway is how much power private security has to influence and interfere with constitutionally protected rights. How are they allowed to have that amount of power? (Focus group, non-protesting student, 2016)

Private security training on how to crush a strike: 1. Do not try and stop a protest. You must let it build up to a particular point and then you send the police. 2. Identify ringleaders, get them arrested and be as brutal to them as possible so that they never return. (Focus group, non-protesting student, 2016)

Private security want things to escalate. They are almost hungry for it because that is how they make their money. They are contracted. We do not know how these people are paid. What if it is shifted [changes] depending [on] outcome, or whether it's dependent on commission? (Focus group, protesting student, 2016)

Private security is not trained to deal with protest action. They have been trained to protect property, protect personnel and to control big crowds. (Individual interview, interdicted and expelled student, 2016)

In the 2016 iteration of the movement, private security personnel also began effecting citizens' arrests by (racially) profiling, arresting and then reporting protesters for committing crimes. One participant narrated his ordeal of being arrested by private security, resulting in him spending two consecutive nights in a jail cell and then being sent home without any charges being laid. Others told similar stories:

Private security has been effecting unlawful arrests. Arrests with no charges. Where there is no evidence and where what happened is fabricated. Students end up spending nights in a cell. (Focus group, protesting student, 2016)

Two private security guards wrote a statement at the police station, but the person who was writing the statement was not the private security officer who arrested me. And because of him, I had five charges. One of the charges is an assault on him, theft of stones from the war memorial. We were scapegoated for all the activities that happened that day because we were the only ones who were arrested on that day. (Focus group, protesting student, 2016)

If you are black on campus, whether you are staff or student, automatically you are treated with suspicion. If you are seen as black, automatically you are seen as violent. Automatically you are seen as a threat. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)

Moreover, private security officers and the police at UCT appear to have partnered to pool resources and to support one another in executing their task of 'bringing order back onto the campuses'. Examples of these partnerships could be

seen in how private security regularly used police vehicles to travel across campus and to apprehend protesting students; how both shared a single base on UCT campus, where they remained on standby for any protest action arising on campus; and how they coordinated and supported one another when effecting student protester arrests.

> *Both [private security and the police] have had a year to collude and prepare and have masses of resources behind them. (Individual interview, interdicted and expelled student, 2016)*

> *On one occasion when private security was attempting to evict us from Steve Biko, the police came, complaining about private security's conduct. But they never bothered to arrest private security or hold them accountable in any way. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*

In response to the escalating university-commissioned physical violence, the students responded by physically assaulting individuals and burning property. The most memorable incident of student violence occurred during the #Shackville protest. Students erected a shack on a prime spot on the campus, burned paintings and historical university figureheads and allegedly set the vice-chancellor's office alight. Private security and the police retaliated by working as a team to destroy the shack, stun-grenade and teargas students, physically assault students and search for students to arrest on campus. In October 2016, a private security officer was seriously injured when students dropped a rock on his head from an elevated position. Vice-chancellor Price was physically assaulted by students on two occasions. The first was in 2015 during a senate meeting, when a student threw a bottle filled with water that hit Price on the forehead. The second was in 2016 outside the Bremner Building, when a student allegedly struck Price on his abdomen while the latter was addressing the students' demands. These acts by members of the movement received widespread condemnation, including from within their own ranks:

> *We should not be antagonising Max Price. This is not about Price. This is about neoliberal economics that operates in ways that are unable to provide for us. Not only free education but also water, healthcare, etc. (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

The movement's use of physical violence has been critiqued for not being contextually intelligent and tactfully sound. In a context where both the police and private security have more numbers and are better armed, is physical violence the answer?

> *In the context of the university, when police and private security were brought in, we were always under the threat of the state taking over, then it became almost like difficult to protect the students because it's out of our hands. There was a limit and we could not protect them anymore. (Focus group, SETT member, 2016)*

> *[I am] frustrated by how some of the strategies they use, worked against them. Also, [I am] frustrated by the agreement that was reached in the end, partly due to their tactics. (Focus group, SETT member, 2016)*

> *#Shackville was not just about insufficient student housing; it was about what students experience within those residences. It was about the violence, the sexual violence, the epistemic violence, institutional patriarchal culture, cisnormativity that students go through, forms of violence every single day. I don't think burning paintings and buildings will necessarily change that because that does not necessarily change people's attitude. (Focus group, SETT member, 2016)*

However, it is important to note that in some instances students attempted to use modalities of protest that are to be understood as civil disobedience. These interventions usually involved constructing visual symbols to communicate dissent and contempt. For example, #Shackville, although culminating in unprecedented damage to both university property and the bodily integrity of the student protesters, initially started off as an artistic installation aimed at raising awareness of UCT's housing crisis.

> *#Shackville was a real shame – the way that it ended. To think what a powerful message it would be if that shack was still on campus… (Focus group, SETT member, 2016)*

Similarly, a lesser-known precursor to the #BringBackOurCadres line of protests was another art installation titled #DeathOfDream. Students created human figurines, wrapped them in body bags and scattered them all over Jammie Plaza – the focal point of the university. Students then sat and sang morbid struggle songs mourning the 'death of their dreams'. The installation was intended to make visible the 'social death' that black students at the university are subjected to generally, as well as the specific untimely death of the academic futures of those students who were subject to legal or quasi-judicial proceedings following the tumultuous #Shackville protest in February 2016.

Additionally, Umhlangano, 'the meeting', was an alternative protest space convened by #FeesMustFall-aligned Arts students on UCT's Hiddingh Campus. Instead of enacting the popular militarised protests that were seen across the country, the space explored different modes of protest by taking over the campus and recreating it to serve their own needs:

> *The aim of Umhlangano was not a shutdown [of the campus] even though it effectively became a shutdown. The main aim was appropriating the campus and making it a safe space. The emphasis was on humanising people who are feeling dehumanised. We did not disrupt overtly. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*

> *We did not call it an occupation – we called it an intervention. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*

The students created art installations around the campus. Even the barricades preventing vehicles from entering the campus were artistic. There was music. The students used the space to experiment with healing and self-care techniques. Interestingly, the reimagination of protest repertoires at Umhlangano doubled up as a strategy to expose the disproportionate and biased police brutality.

> *If you [are] wearing bunny ears and holding a balloon and a cop shoots at you – the state's repression becomes clear. The disproportionality of the state's reaction becomes clear. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*

Violence as culture

The aforementioned trajectories of protest action dominated the modes of engagement between university management and protesters at UCT. However, as noted, the repertoires of violence on that campus were not always characterised by fires and stun grenades, or by teargas and arrests. As more and more students get arrested, injured, interdicted and disciplined by the university, it becomes necessary to ask questions about what triggers and feeds the physical violence that has been witnessed.

First, there has been a rise in militarised, often violent, masculinities in both the students and the university management. *In Changing Men in Southern Africa*, Robert Morrell (2001) introduces the dynamic nature of the network of masculinities rooted in South Africa post the transition to democracy. These masculinities, often in competition and contestation with one another, are affirmed through the use of force or other mechanisms of dominance to exert power over other men and over women (Langa & Kiguwa 2013).

At UCT, the militarised environment and the hostile terms of engagement between the students and the university created opportunities for student, police, security and management masculinities to compete for space, time and dominance and to attempt to outstage one another through the use of violence. Young male students called on revolutionary masculinities aligned to revered idols such as Mangaliso Sobukwe, Bantu Biko and Chris Hani to assert their dominance over the space, while the police and private security invoked paramilitary, warlike masculinities to overpower the students. As a modus operandi, the students invoked singing and chanting struggle songs, burning, destroying property, creating barricades

and using their bodies as barricades to communicate tacit and direct messages of masculine power and courage. The police and private security used paramilitary wear, rifles, ammunition and bodily presence to communicate their express messages of masculine dominance. As argued by Whitehead (2005), violence, or dominance through violence, is affirming to the construct of 'manhood'. He who is able to violate the other ('lesser') is a courageous victor worthy of dominance, deference and subordination. This has also been documented in several feminist critiques of the student protests and the violence that has come to characterise them:

> *We need to unpack how hyper-masculinity and militarisation impacts the way in which we respond to our universities. (Individual interview, interdicted and expelled student, 2016)*

> *Some of that footage around A* and around his performance in this retaliation against private security was very much a performance of masculinity. (Focus group, SETT member, 2016)*

> *The display of a particular kind of black masculinity intersects with other political formations. The escalation of the protests served a purpose beyond the student body. Something else at play. (Focus group, SETT member, 2016)*

However, what has been spoken about to a lesser degree is the violent masculinity emerging within the ranks of the predominantly white and upper-middle-class management and the executives of the university. This perspective has been silenced in the mass media and within the university's internal communications, which have constructed the students and at times the private security officers as irrational, violent and dangerous. Less has been said about how management has enacted similarly oriented tropes of masculinity.

> *But [hyper-masculinity] goes both ways: suddenly our meetings shifted from Bremner to this place called the JOC [the police and private security operating base]. You should have seen those guys! [in management] They were so excited and happy. It was interesting to see how excited they were that we were going to protect our university – and creating a police strategy for this and for that. To me, that was totally a performance of masculinity. (Focus group, SETT member, 2016)*

Second, and related to toxic militarised masculinity, was the emergence of charismatic leadership within the student movement at UCT. This leadership, empowered by the Afro-pessimist rhetoric espoused by thinkers such as Frank B. Wilderson and Frantz Fanon, was able to arouse the emotions of crowds and lead them to violent encounters, often to the advancement of their own interests.

> *What worried me was how entire black lives were seen as casualties…many black students were arrested and sent to Pollsmoor…to what extent are we willing to sacrifice black bodies? (Focus group, non-protesting student, 2016)*

> *These individuals do what they do to derail the struggle and cost the bigger revolution. Why is it that the individual who commits arson is not caught and not taken to task? Why is it that the system does not offer an award or something? Maybe someone knows that in order [to] demobilise, you must create a negative spectacle to delegitimise the struggle. (Focus group, SETT member, 2016)*

> *We have to negotiate various interests/agendas within the student movement, and you need to know who to trust and not trust, where to be suspicious, where to have alliances. (Focus group, SETT member, 2016)*

> *Why are you willing [to go] through all that trauma in order to have an escalation? (Focus group, protesting student, 2016)*

Violent masculinity and misleading charismatic leaders contribute to a volatile environment where crowds can be 'caught up in the moment' and participate in violence.

> *The group dynamic. The singing. The chanting. It's contagious. A lot of people would tell you about how a protest escalated and they don't even know how. And they would tell you that they don't even know how. They were singing and then all of a sudden – violence erupted. (Focus group, protesting student, 2016)*

> *Wanting revenge is human nature. We saw how a student beat up a private security officer as revenge. Why don't we think police or private security may have a similar appetite for revenge? (Individual interview, academic, 2016)*

Third, many participants cited the media as triggering police violence against black students through their representations of protesters as irrational, dangerous, violent and as threats to the university. Others pointed to the university's own communications machinery as being responsible for misrepresenting the student protesters and exonerating itself from the escalating violence on its campuses. This was coupled with the protesters' failure to construct a counternarrative through self-creating media for public consumption.

> *There is already a way to respond to people who are represented as dangerous and irrational. This is to such an extent that a violent reaction almost becomes reflexive on the part of the police/state. (Focus group, protesting student, 2016)*

Fourth, management's role in escalating the violence on UCT campuses was often correlated with their insistence on calling the police and private security and using interdicts to quash protests. This demonstrated a lack of good faith from management as opposed to engaging with protesters. The presence of police is inherently hostile and confrontational, leading to an equally antagonistic and hostile response from protesters. Such a hostile environment creates fertile ground for violence to be the only language between various parties. Bad faith also has the tendency to collapse negotiations between protesting students and management, creating an environment where the co-construction of violence is inevitable.

> *The relationship with management is always one of suspicion. You never know. You could sit in a meeting and you could come to a decision and the next day something has changed and you were not aware of it. (Focus group, protesting student, 2016)*

> *Management always acts in bad faith. What they have done to our psyche! They are willing to destroy our lives in order to uphold power and the status quo. (Individual interview, interdicted and expelled student, 2016)*

Conclusion and recommendations

The student protests at UCT have gone on for close to two years, and will probably go into the third. The past two years (2015/16) have made the fast-tracking of a project of transformation at the university non-negotiable. As a result, important changes are being made. However, attaining the ideal of a holistically decolonised university education remains in the far distance and relies on cooperation between students and the university in order to minimise any further damage to human life and to infrastructure.

The university has a public responsibility to use its disproportionate amount of power for the benefit of the public. The university ought to open the avenues for conversation and engagement rather than resorting to the use of force at any sign of student protest. The university ought also to commit itself fully not only to decolonising

itself in collaboration with student protesters, but also to the national cause for free education. This would require providing support to the state and other institutions of higher learning.

> *Management could have joined students in the shutdown of the university until free education is achieved. (Individual interview, interdicted and expelled student, 2016)*

UCT management should invest more in charting a way forward in terms of effecting long-lasting institutional change within the university. It should stop applying 'quick fixes' in reaction to unfolding events.

> *You can't have a task team which [is] there for the long term. This means that the people whose job it is to run UCT remain unconcerned. Then what is their job meant to be? This means that you are still stuck on this, preoccupied on this goal of getting back to business as usual. (Focus group, SETT member, 2016)*

Management ought to have used its media platforms, which have a wide reach, to give an unbiased and responsible account of the student movement when updating the university community. An institution committed to reaching its goals of decolonisation should not use its media to vilify the very cause it has committed to and to demonise the group of people who have lobbied it for this commitment.

> *The university does not want to use 'decolonisation'. They insist on using 'transformation'. Because they understand that this is an ideological battle that we are winning. (Individual interview, interdicted and expelled student, 2016)*

Finally, in the lead-up to coming years, students, workers and staff members, while consolidating their cause, ought to carefully reflect on and account for the state of the movement and its visions for not only a decolonised university, but a decolonised continent.

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Violence and the #FeesMustFall Movement at the University of KwaZulu-Natal

Muneinazvo Kujeke [19]

Background

The #FeesMustFall movement has fast become one of South Africa's most significant student uprisings since 1994. From protests over outsourcing of critical services, to the removal of colonial statues, decolonisation of the curriculum and free higher education, this movement has started a revolution in universities nationwide.

The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) has been active in the #FeesMustFall movement of South Africa since late 2015. UKZN is one of the top universities in South Africa. It is ranked fourth in the country in terms of a Times Higher Education (2017) survey that assessed the teaching, research, knowledge output and international outlook of universities all over the globe.

This paper provides an analysis of the underlying causes which gave rise to the #FeesMustFall movement at UKZN, its development, power dynamics and violence within the movement. It also looks at the police's violent response which culminated in students being arrested and detained, as well as at the university management's response to students' demands for free, quality education.

Methodology

With fieldwork conducted on three of UKZN's five campuses – Howard College, Pietermaritzburg (PMB) and Westville – the study utilised qualitative research methods to understand the history of the #FeesMustFall movement and the dynamics associated with the movement at UKZN. The three campuses were chosen mainly because of the different dynamics at play on each one. Howard College Campus, located in the city of Durban, has a colonial heritage. The PMB campus, hidden in the Natal Midlands, also has a rich colonial history that is still evident in its architecture and racial composition. Westville campus, with its multicultural history, was therefore vital to the study, as well as being the seat of the vice-chancellor of the institution. All three campuses have a complex student history that contributes to the way in which each functions. Media articles and reports from credible online newsrooms, published as the protests occurred on the campuses, were also utilised.

Individual, focus group and telephonic interviews were conducted with international students, Student Representative Council (SRC) members who participated in the protests, non-protesting students, staff members and campus security.

Table 1: Profile of the participants

Participant group	Number
SRC members	2 focus groups and 6 individual interviews
Non-protesting students	3 focus groups
Staff	1 focus group with members of the administration; 2 individual interviews with staff
International students	1 focus group
Campus security	4 individual interviews

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The participants were drawn from the three campuses as follows: Howard (SRC, members of staff, international students, non-protesting students), Westville (SRC, non-protesting students) and PMB (SRC, campus security, members of staff, international students, non-protesting students). Participants were keen to participate in the study, which made interaction easier. As part of the UKZN institution, most participants felt that they needed to talk about the movement, which they had watched grow at their campuses. Though an interview guide was used, participants willingly added additional valuable information. Focus groups turned into debates, with participants airing their differing views.

UKZN: history and current status

UKZN formed from a merger between the University of Durban-Westville (campus in Durban) and the University of Natal (campus in PMB) in 2004. This was not an easy merger as the university traditions, cultures and histories differed markedly. In the early years of the merger there was a lot of tension, albeit subtle, as students and staff tried to find each other.

> *The University of Durban-Westville was established in the 1960s as the University College for Indians on Salisbury Island in Durban Bay. Student numbers throughout the 1960s were low as a result of the Congress Alliances' policy of shunning apartheid structures. This policy gave way in the 1980s to a strategy of 'education under protest' which sought to transform apartheid institutions into sites of struggle. Student numbers grew rapidly and in 1971, the College was granted University status. The following year, the newly named University of Durban-Westville moved into its modern campus in Westville and was a site of major anti-apartheid struggle. UDW became an autonomous institution in 1984, opening up to students of all races.*
>
> *Founded in 1910 in Pietermaritzburg, the University of Natal was granted independent status in 1949 owing to its rapid growth in numbers, range of courses and its achievements in research. The distinctive Howard College was opened in 1931;In 1946, the government approved a Faculty of Agriculture in Pietermaritzburg and, in 1947, a Medical School for African, Indian and Coloured students. (UKZN n.d.)*

The merger of the two universities was part of a government strategy to integrate historically underresourced public universities with better-resourced ones. This was also government's attempt to resolve the impending university funding crisis. The protests surrounding #FeesMustFall clearly demonstrate that this strategy has not worked, as many universities are not adequately funded by the state.

Since the end of apartheid, thousands of students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds have been educated at this institution. In the past, race, financial resources and social status prevented the majority of black South Africans from attaining tertiary education within their country. Due to its foundation as an institution of merged colleges, the racial and social make-up of the university is diverse. Africans and Indians make up a large part of the student body, with a minority of white students. According to research conducted by Mike Murray (2014), at least 51% of students at UKZN campuses are black with at least 40% of those being Indian.

On the other hand, the staff profile is made up of white personnel in academia and mostly black administrative personnel, though changes can be noted (UKZN 2014). For instance, the media has reported that UKZN is one of only two formerly white South African universities – the other being the University of Johannesburg – that has more than 10% black South African-born professors (City Press 2014).

With a transformation charter in place, the university has seen some forms of positive transformation regarding its student body and racial make-up. More black South Africans are enrolled and they also form a growing portion of the staff at the university (Mail & Guardian 2015).

The various campuses, though merged, have differing paces of growth and infrastructural development. These differences existed before the merger. Howard College, situated at the harbour in Durban, is viewed as more developed

than the others, probably owing to its location. In the past, the Howard College campus had well-developed infrastructure, mostly owing to the apartheid funding system which provided a lot of funding to historically white universities. This was already a fault line during the merger. Students notice the differences in the quality of the campuses at UKZN. A good example is one of the demands of the 2016 #FeesMustFall movement at the PMB campus:

> *As students of UKZN-PMB, we demand that the Big Chill be renovated and be a conducive space for students, just like the Quad in Westville. We reject the double standards of student facilities. (UKZN 2016: 2)*

It also appears that protests were more violent at specific campuses, such as PMB and Westville. In the case of PMB, this was attributed to the fact that many students are in the Faculty of Humanities (including subjects such as Sociology, Anthropology, International Relations, Social Work, Psychology and Political Science). A reflection from interviews with the staff highlighted that the social sciences and humanities contribute to raising awareness about social conditions, including inequalities on campus and in society at large. Students from these disciplines were thus more likely to be actively involved in the protests due to their political consciousness, compared, for example, with the students at the medical school campus. Classes at the latter campus were not disrupted as they were at the PMB and Durban-Westville campuses, which were described as the most violent. Medical students, who mainly attend classes at King Edward Hospital and the Science Block, are generally not integrated with the rest of the student population.

Durban-Westville's violent protests were linked to its history as a historically black university. A strong feeling among students interviewed at Durban-Westville is that resources allocated to their campus are inferior compared to those allocated to the Howard College campus, which historically is a former white campus under the University of Natal. Students find campus life difficult due to the lack of updated resources for their student life. They are not happy with the state of hostel residences and other amenities. It appears the inequalities of the past still play a role in some of these protests despite the merger. This is in line with Robus and Macleod s' (2006) argument that the merger between former white and black universities has not resolved the racial and class inequalities that existed prior to 1994. Some of the inequalities are still highly entrenched and resistant to transformative initiatives.

The formation of the #FeesMustFall movement

In March 2015, a movement was born at the University of Cape Town. This movement became known as #RhodesMustFall and advocated for the removal of a statue of Cecil John Rhodes from the university's main campus. To those in the movement, the statue was a symbol of oppression and colonisation. Although it was eventually removed, Achille Mbembe concludes that the movement was not about the statue being brought down but about why it took so long to do so, 20 years after the country gained its freedom. He noted during a lecture on the issue that:

> *The debate therefore should have never been about whether or not it should be brought down. All along, the debate should have been about why did it take so long to do so. (Mbembe 2016)*

The statue's removal, having gained national and international attention, led to a wider movement in South African universities to 'decolonise' the tertiary education system.

In March 2015, UKZN students vandalised the King George V statue at Howard campus in Durban after calls by Economic Freedom Fighter (EFF) leader Julius Malema to take down colonial and apartheid symbols all over the country. Many people did not understand the need for a symbol that did not relate to the current socioeconomic and political circumstances of post-apartheid South Africa. Students took the opportunity to air their views on how they felt about their role in crafting curricula at the university where they were attaining their education. At that point, the notion of decolonising tertiary education spread to all five UKZN campuses: Howard, Westville, PMB, Edgewood and Nelson Mandela. Students rallied behind the SRC for protest marches as they questioned the racial make-up of the university's academic staff, the quality of education they were receiving and the future of black students who passed through the institution. One student explained:

> *These are white lecturers, teaching us through a white curriculum…how does this equip a black student who is supposed to be an integral part of the 'Rainbow Nation'? (Focus group interview, SRC, 2016)*

Some were more critical:

> *Why is Afrikaans still too common in our universities? We want UKZN to lead by example in making Zulu a medium of instruction in lectures. (Focus group interview, SRC, 2016)*

On 22 October 2015, protests began again because students felt that an increase in fees the following academic year would be unreasonable as they believed education in South Africa was meant to be free. These protest marches were led by the UKZN SRC, which was composed of a majority of South African Student Congress (SASCO) elected leaders and a minority of Democratic Alliance Student Organisation leaders. Together, they led the non-violent march and named the protest #FeesMustFall. At least 400 students marched to the provincial legislature in PMB demanding that the premier, Senzo Mchunu, address them. This peaceful protest was complemented by similar protests at Howard and Westville campuses. The Citizen reported that:

> *Initially a small group of about 100 converged on the university's Westville campus before marching through the campus and entering lecture halls to urge students to join them in their protest. Gradually as the protesting students made their way through the campus the crowd of marchers grew to about 800…they danced and sung, closely watched by the university security. (African News Agency 2015)*

The article also quoted a Westville SRC member expressing his views on the situation:

> *Only once students from the universities of Cape Town and Witwatersrand decided to protest did the government take heed of the grievances…Those universities were 'predominantly white' and the government had not*

Image by Kierran Allen

Image by Kierran Allen

> *reacted to the protests that started at UKZN because it was a 'predominantly black' university…Students would continue to protest until the university's vice chancellor Dr Albert van Jaarsveld met with students. 'He is not taking us seriously because we are black.' (African News Agency 2015)*

Members of SASCO urged white and Indian students to join in the protest, stating that they too were affected by increasing fees. At that point, the protest became multiracial.

The government of South Africa underestimated the complexity of the protests, which soon turned violent. There is a bigger debate to be drawn from the factors surrounding the reaction by government and society as a whole to the protest as it grew at UKZN. Saleem Badat (2016: 24) argues:

> *It is critical to avoid seeking to find and see in the student protest movement what are the political hopes of socially committed scholars and activists for South African universities and higher education, and society. The purpose of scholarship has to be to illuminate and convey understanding of the protests in all their richness and complexity.*

The lack of understanding of the 'richness and complexity' that Badat refers to led to the protests turning violent in 2016.

The re-emergence of #FeesMustFall at UKZN in 2016

A nation-wide tertiary education fee increment proposal culminated in a wave of #FeesMustFall protests at UKZN. According to protesting students, it became clearer to them that despite the end of apartheid, black students were not an integral part of the post-1994 educational system. The education system had become unaffordable to them and had alienated them.

Image Unknown

A memorandum by the UKZN SRC listing a set of demands was produced in August 2016 (UKZN 2016). The memorandum was a result of the SRC realising that without written input, little would change. The memorandum revealed particular grievances around student life at UKZN and included the following demands:

- Rejection of the new National Student Financial Aid Scheme online application system.
- Rejection of the proposed fee increment of 6% for the year 2017.
- Cancellation of all student debts.
- The construction of proper infrastructure and facilities for students living with disabilities, for example, disability friendly computer labs.
- That racist lecturers leave with immediate effect. The students gave the university a 72-hour ultimatum to fire all racist staff.
- Reports of all rape cases that had occurred on campus in the last three years. The university had to furnish evidence of how this was dealt with and provide a clear way of protecting students against rape and other gender-based violence.

It was evident from the memorandum that the movement was no longer limited to the fees must fall agenda. Other pertinent issues were also added to the list of demands. All these issues reveal that universities are not yet transformed in terms of dealing with the legacies of the past. The SRC at UKZN raised concern that many building names, such as the TB Davis and Shepstone buildings, celebrated a colonial heritage while reminding black students of their trauma and suffering under apartheid:

> *How do I, in today's South Africa, learn inside a building named after the very people who suppressed our freedom? (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*

There was a strong feeling among students interviewed that names of some buildings had to change with immediate effect. They were also concerned about the colonial nature of the curriculum, which they felt did not represent the experiences of black students and their aspirations. Many respondents said that it appeared that the university simply paid lip service to transformation. Godsell and Chikane (2016: 68) argue that:

> *The protests are part of an on-going battle to decide who has the power to shape the 21st century South African University and what the nature of the university should be.*

From a peaceful movement to violent protest

In 2016, the #FeesMustFall movement turned into a violent uprising at UKZN campuses as students felt their voices were not being heard. This led to the shutdown of academic programmes in September 2016 for a period of four weeks. A Daily Vox article on 6 September 2016 captured the frustrations of the students:

> *Throughout the morning, students were frustrated by the fact that their repeated calls for a line of communication to university management were met with silence. Instead, management circulated a statement claiming that all was calm on all campuses and that they had 'beefed up' security. The effect of this 'beefing up' was palpable when several police vans, including a Nyala [armoured personnel carrier], pulled onto campus. Students reacted with both fear and anger. The strategy, on the part of university management, of 'showing strength' and intimidation signalled to students that their concerns were dismissed and that they would be brought 'in line' by force. (Engh & Settler 2016)*

The article went on to state that:

> *This type of action signals a particular attitude towards black students, especially at smaller provincial university*

> *campuses such as PMB, MUT [Mangosuthu University of Technology], UniZulu [University of Zululand] and WSU [Walter Sisulu University], where intimidation and violence are used to force students into submission. All the while demanding that they be grateful for the chance to be at university in the first place. Many students have lamented the fact that the kind of brutality they have experienced would never have been inflicted on their white counterparts in South Africa. Precisely because black students are reported as criminal and violent, their claims and concerns are easily dismissed and obscured – all the hallmarks of a future Marikana?*

Their feelings of not being heard led to widespread agreement among students that action to attract the media was needed. They felt this would highlight and publicise the injustice of the university management and force them to act on their demands.

However, the violent turn of events brought a new dynamic to the movement. Although aimed at fighting fee increments at tertiary institutions and at creating a 'decolonised' university setting, today the movement has become a symbol of police brutality targeted at the youth.

As a result of the police presence on campus and their clashes with students, the protests changed from peaceful marches to violent incidents where university property was torched. In September 2016, after a series of protests which students alleged were because the police had used live ammunition on crowds, sections of the UKZN Howard College library were set alight and some vehicles were torched at the Westville Campus (Photo 2).

The combination of the students' anger at the lack of response to their demands and the police intervention created an environment conducive to collective violence. In detailing the conditions necessary for collective violence to occur, Nomfundo Mogapi argues that structural conditions include the availability of the means (weapons), the target (the municipal leader, policemen) and the opportunity (mass meeting) for collective violence (in Von Holdt et al. 2011). All this was in place and the protesters intensified the movement. Campus security interviewees stated that they became powerless over the multitude of young people threatening to vandalise the property that they were employed to protect. The state police were thus called in to calm the situation but it appears that police actions, especially firing rubber bullets and teargas at protesting students, made things worse.

When asked why these protests became violent, most respondents attributed it to the involvement of law enforcement:

> *If students were deemed to be violent, it is only because they needed to shield themselves from the police and their guns. (Focus group interview, non-protesting student, 2016)*

> *If the police had not stepped in, the peaceful protest would have continued and the university would have maintained its integrity! (Focus group interview, SRC member, 2016)*

In *Clandestine Political Violence,* social movement theorist Donatella della Porta (2013) argues that there are two factors that cause protests to become violent: the escalation of policing and competitiveness. If police use violence too early within a protest, reciprocal violence could result from the protesters. Some of the videos of the UKZN protests show police carrying guns and chasing students, with students retaliating by throwing stones. Both parties were highly competitive about their power and authority. It appears that calling the police provoked students to be wilder and more violent. The police started using violent methods that led to students dispersing and throwing stones at the police.

In talking to security guards at the PMB campus gate, it was clear that students were angry at the level of excessive force used by the police. It appears that many students were prepared to fight back even though they did not have weapons. There were fears that if the protests continued to be as violent, some students would have been tempted to get weapons and fight back. Campus security guards were scared and shocked by the violent turnout from the young people. One security guard was quoted as saying:

> *We must never underestimate the power of an angry young South African, never! (Individual interview, campus security, 2016)*

Mixed views about police violence and violent protests at UKZN

Police violence and the protests

Police involvement in the movement at UKZN represented a turning point in the grievances that the students wished to have addressed. In a short space of time, the movement shifted from a call for free quality education to include a loud call against police brutality towards the protesting students. Sociologist William Gamson (2013) describes the outcome of police interference in social movements as situations that create what he calls an 'injustice frame'. This means that some in society will unmistakably view the state as being extremely unjust, but others may see the state's actions through the police as justified. This was the case at UKZN.

The majority of protesting students deemed the presence of the police to be uncalled for. SRC respondents felt that the police had never been on their side and that they were:

> *Agents of the same governance system that is maintaining 'colonial' standards in South African universities. (Individual interview, SRC member, 2016)*

Some respondents vowed to continue to advocate for the exclusion of the police during protests, as they saw them as an unnecessary barrier that was slowing the progress of the movement:

> *They come here to protect the government and try to silence the voices of the students. They are not here to keep order but to brutalise us and we are going to put an end to this. (Individual interview, SRC member, 2016)*

Some students recalled the police raids on their halls of residence, claiming that they were smoked out of their rooms with teargas and were ill for a while. Respondents were particularly worried about the lack of media attention to the injustices perpetrated by the police:

> *They [the media] are not making much effort to show people what they [the police] are doing to us. It's as if they do not care. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*

Despite numerous recordings and photographs of police clashes with students circulating on campus and on the Internet, most protesting students felt the police were not there to maintain peace and order but to brutalise students.

On the other hand, members of the university staff that were interviewed had different responses. It seems that members of staff who are not alumni of the university felt the students were 'radical' and that the police presence was needed. However, others, mostly black academics, were sympathetic to the students. They argued that it was unjustifiable for police to use maximum force against the students. However, most staff members interviewed, mainly Indian and white, did not relate to the movement. One of them argued:

> *I can never condone the use of violence to achieve positive results for anything in this modern time that we live in. (Individual interview, staff member, 2016)*

International students, mostly female, felt that law enforcement was necessary during the protests. International students from outside the Southern African Development Community region were very disapproving of what they saw as the protesting students' violent behaviour. They felt that:

> *The burden of tertiary fees cannot be fully carried by the government as it is the duty of all citizens to contribute towards service delivery. (Focus group interview, international students, 2016)*

They condemned the violence but felt that law enforcement was merely attempting to maintain peace and order among students who had unfortunately turned violent. They expressed grave concern for their own safety if the police had not been involved. A couple of international students felt that:

> *A day will come when the protest will target the postgraduate international students at UKZN, who receive the same fee remission as South African postgraduate students. (Focus group interview, international students, 2016)*

In September, an unusually high number of protesting students were arrested. When asked about the circumstances leading to the arrests, university staff members argued that the arrests were prompted by the need to enhance the safety of students and staff given the violence that was taking place. As one lecturer stated:

> *Violent students or those who incite violence have to be separated from those that are seeking better development from the school through peaceful means. (Individual interview, staff member, 2016)*

These arrests were widely viewed by protesting students as unlawful and insulting. An SRC member explained why they were against the arrests:

> *As students of the university, we cannot be prosecuted for attempting to defend the rights that we deserve as part of the school. Are they also going to arrest the police who were victimising us? (Focus group interview, SRC, 2016)*

Police involvement gave momentum to another rising movement within the #FeesMustFall campaign. The #RapeMustFall movement was born out of #FeesMustFall when female students began demonstrating against the alleged rape of a female student by a police officer. Most of the protesting students interviewed for this study stated that the allegations were true, citing that it was common for police to be brutal regardless of gender. However, interviews with management and campus law enforcement did not confirm or support the allegations. The circumstances surrounding police involvement in the protests at UKZN are vital in the debate around police brutality towards protesters in South Africa. However, the term 'police brutality' is itself debatable. David Bruce (2002) argues that brutality occurs when members of a police service use force unlawfully. He goes on to state that by implication, police brutality is generally deliberate unlawful violence but actions which amount to criminally negligent uses of force should also be considered as acts of police brutality. One thing is for sure, the protesting students were deemed to be on the wrong side of the law, and hence the police continue to deny allegations of brutality at UKZN.

Academics and #FeesMustFall at UKZN

Academics at UKZN were suspected of fuelling some of the students' protest activity. Though they denied the allegations, a *Mail & Guardian* article published on 30 September 2016 included an interview with UKZN spokesperson Lesiba Seshoka on his thoughts on the matter. He confirmed that the university had received information about academics and students working together to protest, and was investigating the matter.

> *Impeccable sources at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) said they had first-hand knowledge of a group of academics calling meetings with students to organise protest action for the week ahead…'They [academics] are part of the problem. They are definitely assisting students to destabilise the institution,' one source said. A UKZN academic is said to have arranged with the university's administration staff to hire a lecture hall so that students could use it to plan their protests. (Govender 2016)*

In a 7 October response to the article, some concerned academics at the university wrote a letter addressing the allegations. They are quoted as saying:

> *We, the so-called 'Professors of Protest' at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in Pietermaritzburg, find the article and its front-page presentation in last week's* **Mail & Guardian** *offensive and defamatory. As we see it, the article was clearly written by a journalist seeking sensationalist attention, one who lacks understanding of the knowledge industry of post-school education. The suggestion that we, as academic and professional staff, sought to coach students in protest tactics with the aim of destabilising universities is ludicrous. On the contrary, members of our group have on several occasions helped to avert or de-escalate potentially violent interactions through mediation with security forces and the securing of commitments to peaceful actions by students. Quoting 'impeccable sources' so as to paint our role as one of secrecy and subterfuge is disingenuous to staff who have put their bodies on the line to keep students safe from the security and police forces who have militarised our campus over the past few weeks. The article amounts to a metaphorical waterboarding of our reputations as academics. We also posed critical questions to the #FeesMustFall Movement about its reliance on patriarchal regimes of knowledge and power, all the while aiming to produce and imagine the university as a place where black students don't experience alienation, hostility and violence…Although we find the article untrue and full of spurious claims, we embrace the designation 'Professors of Protest', despite the slanderous intent. If it means that we offer a space for free and critical dialogue about academic and financial exclusion; if it means decolonising the curriculum; if it means fighting, teaching and writing for social justice; if it means we put our bodies between students and security services to defend the right of our students to register their dissatisfaction, alienation and marginalisation; and, finally, if it means we defend the public university as a space for critical dialogue and exchange, then we are, proudly, Professors of Protest. (Settler* **et al.** *2016)*

As is evident, the academics at UKZN defended their stance in relation to the student protests and berated the media for attempting to crucify them for being educators. External actors such as the EFF were also accused of fuelling student radicalisation.

University management and the protests at UKZN

In a press statement on 9 September 2016, the UKZN vice-chancellor, Albert van Jaarsveld, stated that the university had been conducting talks on the protests with concerned parties. He mentioned that two main issues were on the agenda: the demand to withdraw all charges against arrested students and student representation on the executive management committee.

His proposed approach was to put a moratorium on the disciplinary action against protesting students until neutral legal personnel could be found, and to invite five student representatives to meet the executive management committee to discuss the issue of student representation. When asked about the rape allegations against a policeman on campus, he maintained that he knew about the incident but that it had occurred off campus.

Van Jaarsveld became vice-chancellor in 2015, taking over the reins from Professor Malegapuru Makgoba. Although Makgoba's term in office was not smooth, Van Jaarsveld seems to have a particularly rough road ahead of him owing to the eruption of student protests in the year in which he began his tenure. Furthermore, he joined an institution lacking racial equality within its staff component. It is an issue that his predecessor attempted to tackle by encouraging academic staff to acquire PhDs and by promoting the recruitment of African alumni of the institution.

A recent unfortunate incident was Van Jaarsveld's failure to show up before a gender inquiry that had subpoenaed vice-chancellors from South African universities to advocate for improved gender transformation.

In September 2016, the SRC called for the resignation of the vice-chancellor and senior management of the university, citing lack of effective leadership (Ngcobo 2016). The exclusion of students in the executive management was one of the grievances in the 2016 protests. Students' exclusion under the new vice-chancellor had already been noted in a 2015 Mail & Guardian article, which commented on the fact that students were not honoured during the vice-chancellor's swearing in ceremony. The article referred to the

> *near-total invisibility of any current UKZN students during...the formal ceremony that installed Dr Albert van Jaarsveld as vice-chancellor of the University. (MacFarlane 2015)*

Race and #FeesMustFall at UKZN

The province of KwaZulu-Natal has South Africa's largest Indian population. Although they view themselves as a minority that was also negatively affected by apartheid, this study uncovered some interesting findings about their interaction with the movement. Indian members of the SRC protested and were able to gather a few of their fellow students to protest during the movement at Howard and PMB campuses. They identified with the grievances and felt the colonial set-up of the university was not to be tolerated. Some of those interviewed were proud to have been involved and looked forward to actively continuing to participate in the movement. However, the majority of this racial group did not participate. Some interviewees from this racial group felt that as they were not 'black' they could not sympathise with the movement. This suggests that different groups on campus had different understandings of whom the movement was for and what it was about. One Indian non-protesting student argued:

> *This is not what I am here to do. I just want to study, graduate and leave, not protest! (Individual interview, non-protesting student, 2016)*

Both protesting and non-protesting black students agreed that this movement was the beginning of irreversible change at the university. At least 88% of interviewed students were black and although some did not protest, they all felt that the university staff and management were yet to fully recognise that they were capable of aiding in the redesigning of a modern curriculum.

Racial grievances also sprang up during the movement. UKZN-PMB students cited racism from members of staff and called for their resignation:

> *As students of UKZN-PMB, we demand that Trevor Hills and all the other racist lecturers leave our institution with immediate effect. Failure to do, we as students shall make him leave. We are giving the University 72 hours notice to fire ALL the racist staff. (UKZN 2016)*

Such demands served as a warning to the academic authorities that students were aware of the racism and were not prepared to tolerate it going forth. Racial tensions at the university have been further exacerbated by funding cuts, which affect black students the most.

> *As the numbers of African students admitted into former University of Natal residences increased, management changed their funding and staffing policies. They decided that the residences must be self-sufficient and discontinued subsidies. Most African students in these residences survive on a government loan system. This has led to reduced building maintenance, safety and security costs, and a decline in the social and academic life in the residences. (Mail & Guardian 2008)*

Protesting black students felt that the police brutality on campus was aimed at them because of the colour of their skin. They felt that the mostly white management wanted to silence them harshly in order to continue exploiting them.

One student believed that it was unlikely that force would have been used on a white group of protesters. However, white respondents, mostly members of staff, felt that police force was necessary regardless of race and that force would also have been used on white protesters.

The future of #FeesMustFall at UKZN

A new SRC was voted into power at UKZN end of 2016 to serve a new term. The new SRC shares the same grievances and goals as the former one. They are committed to achieving every demand that is part of the August 2016 memorandum. Threats of fresh protests remain in the 2017 academic year. The failure of the state to protect its citizens from police brutality will still be on the agenda and protesting students wish to continue pressurising legislative representatives to take action.

As this study has highlighted, the #FeesMustFall movement revealed many underlying grievances within the university circles in South Africa since 1994. In writing of the 'black freedom struggles in the Republic of South Africa in the 1960s', Franklin (2003:204) commented that the 'launching of protests by black students also marked a turning point and the phase of the larger anti-apartheid movement'. One can only wonder if the #FeesMustFall movement is a stepping stone to an even bigger and more revolutionary movement by the youth in postapartheid South Africa.

Nkinyangi (1991), writing about student protests in sub-Saharan Africa, states that the likely future role of African students is critical since students are a politically articulate and uniquely mobilisable group in society. Coquery-Vidrovitch (1985: 311) asks:

> *Could not some of these students, fired with an ideology of revolt against the state apparatus and the oligarchy in power, transcend their individual grievances and create a collective movement full of revolutionary potential?*

This movement, if not addressed timeously by the state and the higher education authorities, might be carried forward by future generations of students who will be as eager to see a revolution for the betterment of their educational opportunities in South Africa.

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#FeesMustFall at Rhodes University: Exploring the dynamics of student protests and manifestations of violence

Oliver Meth

It's like cops and robbers – police firing, students retaliating. (Senior Academic, November 2016)

The state just adopted a military approach instead of listening to us – they think we are trying to get a regime change. We are not; we just want free education. (Student activist, November 2016)

Introduction

This paper explores the dynamics of Rhodes University's student protests in order to understand the manifestations of violence and the sequence of events in the lead-up to and during the #FeesMustFall movement at this university in 2015 and 2016.

The main research questions are: How did the violence originate and develop at Rhodes University? What were the triggers? What was the sequence of events? What were the different kinds of violence (for example, burning of public facilities such as the library, barricading roads and lecture disruptions)? How did the police respond to these events? Did their response make the situation better or worse? Who were the victims or targets of violence? What was the role of formal and informal structures and political organisations in these protests? How did the protest move from the fee protests to protests against sexual violence on campus? On the whole, the paper reveals the intersectionality of race, class and gender in the protests at Rhodes University.

The Research

The research interviews were conducted in Grahamstown – in and around the Rhodes University campus – with academics, protesting and non-protesting students, members of the National Education and Health Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU) , Student Representative Council (SRC) members, Asinamali,[20] #RUReferenceList members[21] and the Black Students' Movement (BSM). Interviews took place in the second week of November 2016 with follow-up interviews into December 2016. The researcher immersed himself in the participants' worlds in order to gain their trust and used a mixed-methods approach in collecting data, namely, individual interviews, media reports, university statements, Facebook chats, pub drinks and lunch with individuals, court proceedings, email discussions, telephone calls and participant observation through attending meetings and rallies.

The process of identifying key informants was not an easy task due to the sensitive nature of the research topic. Many participants were reluctant to be interviewed until they were given an assurance that I was not a staff member of the university, a court official or a police officer.

In many cases the protesting students were very cautious about relating their protest tactics and strategies, and referred to incidents that had occurred in the third person.

[20] A national Student Activist organisation, with branches across South African universities, advocating for free decolonised education

[21] #RUReferenceList is a list of names of those accused of rape or sexual assault on campus that was published online.

Moreover, the difficulty of accessing a diverse group of students was compounded by the fact that many students had started writing exams, some had returned home after successfully having their exams deferred until January 2017 and others were jailed, suspended from campus or in hiding.

Due to the sensitive nature of the #FeesMustFall violence, I use pseudonyms in this report to protect the participants' identities.

Timeline of protests at Rhodes University

It is important to understand the context in which students protested at Rhodes University in 2015. The timeline that follows is by no means exhaustive but gives a sense of the situation prior to the Monday 19 October 2015 start of the national #FeesMustFall movement.

9 March 2015

Chumani Maxwele threw human faeces onto the statue of Cecil John Rhodes on the University of Cape Town (UCT) campus and protested with approximately a dozen others for the removal of Rhodes' statue from UCT (see the UCT case study in this report for more details about this protest). The #RhodesMustFall movement at UCT inspired students at Rhodes University to also organise themselves. It is during this period that other protests at the university were calling for the university's name, 'Rhodes', to be changed but to date the name has not yet changed.

17 March 2015

The BSM at Rhodes held its first public meeting to discuss their solidarity with #RhodesMustFall at UCT. The BSM is a group of students concerned about the institutional culture of Rhodes University, which they claim is racist and exclusionary against poor black students. This movement developed out of conversations among the students about their marginalised experiences at the university:

> *We are not able to cope because of the structural, class-based and intellectual oppression of the Rhodes environment. There are students suffering due to the inequalities and injustices they face daily. We formed the Black Student Movement to take the responsibility of eradicating this structural, class-based and intellectual oppression. (BSM student activist, November 2016)*

It was asserted in the interviews that the BSM was inspired by Black Consciousness philosophy and the writings of Steve Biko, Frantz Fanon and other African writers. As noted, during this period, students at Rhodes University were appealing to the university management to consider changing the name of the university. The vice-chancellor, Dr Sizwe Mabizela, said the name should only change if the majority of the university's community wanted it to change. He explained:

> *The name of Rhodes has now become synonymous with advancement of education. You think of the Mandela-Rhodes scholarship and you can think of Rhodes University. It's about excellence in academics. (Koyana 2015)*

As is evident, the name 'Rhodes' evokes different emotions and reactions from different people. For Mabizela, 'Rhodes' represents academic success and development, while for others it represents racism, oppression and colonisation:

> *Rhodes University's colonial name is certainly* **not** *arbitrary. Cecil John Rhodes would have locked those excluded today out of the University. Although Rhodes University prides itself on being a liberal, diverse, universal and accepting space, for many students Rhodes is not. It is rather a home for those who are white and middle class, or those who are prepared to* **assimilate** *into whiteness and the middle class, and thus Cecil John Rhodes is a fitting namesake. (Alasow 2015a, emphasis in original)*

> *The colonial legacy must go and the untransformed institutions which it safeguards must move very quickly towards becoming useful and meaningful in the South Africa of today. Two themes are prevalent in these protests. Firstly, the legacy of Cecil John Rhodes. Secondly, the issue of meaningful transformation. These important themes are particularly pertinent here at Rhodes University where Cecil John Rhodes lends his name to the institution. (Alasow 2015b)*

> *Rhodes University has hardly transformed from the institution it was in 1994. By transformation I do* **not** *mean the cop-out version where white minds in white skins are allowed to be replaced by white minds in black skins – the version of transformation that is widely supported by the elite public sphere in South Africa. By using the term 'transformation' I am rather referring to the radical process of including methods, people and ideas where they have been systematically excluded. (Alasow 2015b, emphasis in original)*

> *We must be very careful that Rhodes University does not rightly become Stephen Bantu Biko University whilst continuing to be an institution of which Cecil John Rhodes would be p*roud. (Alasow 2015a)

Despite a number of meetings to discuss the issue, the official process of renaming Rhodes University has not yet started, due to a lack of what some key informants call 'meaningful transformation'. However, Hilltop Females Residence has been informally renamed Albertina Sisulu House and Jan Smuts has been renamed Robert Sobukwe House. However, formal processes to officially rename these residences have yet to occur. The proposed names represent students' assertiveness in terms of their identity politics, as captured in the quote below:

> *Our history of African heroes and heroines must also be remembered and celebrated through renaming some of these buildings after them. We cannot have all these colonial names. (Student activist, November 2016)*

For the students interviewed, the proposal to rename some of the buildings represented the beginning of the 'real' transformation work of decolonising the university from its colonial heritage and embracing the spirit of democracy based on humanity, dignity and respect for all. Issues of fairness, equity and justice featured in many of the student discussions.

16 October 2015

The Rhodes SRC called an emergency meeting to discuss fee hikes. Mabizela addressed students about financial exclusion. A small group of students set up a barricade onto campus, in solidarity with those who had been financially excluded.

21 October 2015

Rhodes University joined the nationwide protests against hikes in tertiary education fees. The march was peaceful, non-violent and inclusive. Deans and other staff members joined hands with the students to act as marshals. Members of the university management walked alongside students in solidarity with their protest over the increasing costs of higher education and the lack of government subsidies. In a communiqué sent out after this protest by the Rhodes University Communication and Advancement Division, Catherine Deiner said,

> *The peaceful and disciplined march, which took place without incident, was a commendable display of unity by the University community. (Haith n.d.)*

On the whole, it appears that the protests at Rhodes University during this period in 2015 were not openly violent, as they were at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), UCT, the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) and North-West University's Mafikeng campus. After two weeks of protests, President Jacob Zuma announced that there would be no increase in tertiary education fees in 2016, to the jubilation of the protesting students. This victory was also celebrated at Rhodes University.

Honeymoon is over as protests turn violent at Rhodes University in 2016

Protests against sexual violence on campus

In his welcome-back address at the beginning of 2016, Vice-Chancellor Mabizela said:

> *The momentous events of 2015 have forced us to stop and reflect on some of the social and economic injustices that continue to be a blight on our society. As an institution 'Where leaders learn' and with our motto of Vis Veritus Veritas (Truth, Virtue and Strength), we encourage our students and staff to raise critical, complex and uncomfortable issues that face our society and humankind in a manner that helps us advance the greater good for all. (Haith n.d.)*

One of the 'critical, complex and uncomfortable issues' that the students and staff members raised at Rhodes University was the issue of rape on campus. On 11 April 2016, the names of 11 individuals allegedly accused of rape were circulated on social media. Following the publication of this list, which became known as #RUReferencelist, a crowd of students gathered at the student centre and marched to the male students' residences with the intention of rounding up the listed students. Three of the students on the list were apparently rounded up by the crowd of students, who threatened to take matters into their own hands. Protests were organised and classes were disrupted during the course of the week. The protesting students demanded that the university act against all the allegations of rape on campus. There was a strong feeling among the protesting students and staff members who joined the students that the university was 'failing to deal with the problem of rape on campus head on' (#RUReferenceList student activist, 16 November 2016). This view was based on the university management's response to the #RUReferencelist. It appeared that the university was protecting the perpetrators, especially in raising questions around the need to balance the rights of the accused versus the rights of the victims. With regard to #RUReferencelist, Mabizela was quoted as saying:

> *It is extremely damaging, and we are of the view that it is unconstitutional. Rhodes University cannot condone the sharing of such information, which is a complete violation of another's rights. It destroys the presumption of innocence. (Whittles 2016)*

He continued:

> *A call was made for students to gather in front of the Steve Biko building. A big group of students started to march from residence to residence, taking them to the whole group. That was a huge violation of their rights and we disapprove of that.*

Given this response, the protesting students felt that the university was failing to meet their demand that the alleged perpetrators be expelled from the university. The protests then intensified and the university was totally shut down. The police were called in to quell the protests by firing rubber bullets and stun grenades. In addition, the university applied for an interim court interdict against the protesting students. Some students were arrested. Corinne Knowles, an academic who was supporting the students, was served with a letter instructing her to desist from inciting students to disrupt academic activities on campus. These interventions by the university management – calling the police and interdicting the protesters – made things worse and increased the levels of violence. The protesting students interpreted these actions as an attempt by the university to silence them. Some female protesters, refusing to be silenced, angrily protested half-naked as a symbol of defiance. Their slogan 'We will not be silenced', on a banner outside the library, was later removed by university security officials. Many student activists felt that the manner in which the university responded to the allegations of sexual violence was in favour of the perpetrators rather than the victims.

> *As a community, it was #RUReferenceList that broke the university community. Hours were spent with the university management speaking about the rights of the people on the #RUReferenceList itself without them*

> *mentioning the rights of the people who have been sexually assaulted. Similarly, hours would be spent berating the management about the manner in which women, particularly black women, were treated without even a moment being spent on giving constructive input on how this can be changed. Insults cut too deep and the community of victims was abandoned. (#RUReferenceList student activist, 16 November 2016)*

The Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) has since requested the university to provide details about gender transformation and the culture of rape on campus and the steps it is taking to deal with these problems in the future. In Business Day (30 November 2016), the CGE reported that Rhodes University is 'lagging on gender transformation' and in addressing sexual violence on campus.

38 concerned staff members opposed the interim court interdict against the protesting students from being made permanent. Deborah Seddon, an academic at Rhodes University, pointed out the irony of the court interdict, stating that the 'same university management who kept the police at bay during the #FeesMustFall protests in 2015 has now repeatedly called police unto campus' (Academic, November 2016) to arrest students protesting against sexual violence. For Seddon, this exposed how the university had been paying lip service to the need to end sexual violence on campus, as the same university was now using courts and the police to stop protests against sexual violence.

Following these protests, the university established a Sexual Violence Task Team, which included both students and staff members, to discuss ways and strategies in which the problem of sexual violence could be dealt with on campus. Seddon described the formation of the Task Team as 'the best forum that this university has ever had for tackling rape culture long term. It took defiant, unceasing actions of student protestors to get us to this point' (Academic, November 2016).

It is worth noting that some male students took to signing petitions to get students on the #RUReferencelist removed from their residences. This is an indication that these male students were not prepared to be complicit in seeing the problem of sexual violence as a problem for women only. Through signing petitions, these male students wanted to challenge patriarchal attitudes associated with sexual violence. Scholars like Morrell (1998) have pointed out the existence of multiple masculinities and their different responses to changes in gender relations. Men such as the male students at Rhodes University are illustrative of those who challenge patriarchy and its treatment of women as sex objects, which perpetuates rape attitudes.

Many studies have looked at rape in South Africa. These include studies of patriarchal norms that permit sexual assaults to occur (Claassens & Gouws 2014; Kottler & Long 1997), as well as studies that have looked into risk influences of young girls and the conditions that render them vulnerable to sexual assault (Petersen, Bhana & McKay 2005). Yet others have looked at more 'extreme' forms of male violence, including the rape of infants (Posel 2005; Praeg & Baillie 2011). The objectification of women and the harmful prevailing notion that males are entitled to sex have raised concerns and calls from various sectors, such as #RUReferenceList at Rhodes University, for boys and men to engage more deeply in issues around the rape culture in this country.

In the context of Rhodes University, one female student described the protests against sexual violence 'as an achievement of feminism against patriarchy' (Group interview with Student activists, November 2016). The feminist lens emphasises the interconnectedness and intersectionality of race, class, gender, sexual orientation and other factors. Pumla Gqola (2015) defines feminism as a way to dismantle patriarchy. Patriarchy, she says, positions women as docile and as objects. It positions men as dominant, aggressive, violent and holding the associated assumptions of superiority (Gqola 2015). The work of feminism, then, is to liberate women from these positions as part of bringing equality. Fittingly, then, the key slogan during #RUReferenceList was #PatriachyMustFall.

From sexual violence protests to #FeesMustFall

Following weeks of protests against sexual violence, the image of Rhodes University as a peaceful university had completely changed. On 22 July 2016, students marched to the university's administration building to demand the release of the mid-term academic results, which had been withheld, of students with outstanding fees. On the whole, the protest was peaceful.

Students protested again following Higher Education and Training Minister Blade Nzimande's announcement on 19 September 2016 of an 8% fee increment. The protests continued for a week until the university was shut down. On 28 September 2016, the police were called in during a peaceful protest to disperse the protesting students. It is on this date that the police started firing rubber bullets at the students. At least eight students were reportedly arrested that day.

Violent clashes between the police and students at Rhodes University

All the students interviewed asserted that their protests were generally peaceful at Rhodes until the police were called.

> *Our protests were peaceful. They involved singing and [lecture] disruptions – not in a violent manner – nothing breaking and no one hurt. Until the day came when police started shooting at us. It was after the first shooting that things became violent. We started to fight back. (Student activist, December 2016)*

> *Police would just shoot at protesters just singing and that was described as violent – no one ever told us the rules of engagement. The police misconduct led to the violence. There was a time when we started focusing more on police brutality than our actual call – they sparked the violence. Our only violence was to retaliate against the brutality. (Student activist, December 2016)*

> *Lack of communication from management is what sparked the violence and police misconduct, as they did not discuss the rules of engagement. (Student activist, November 2016)*

Findings at Rhodes confirm those of many other studies (e.g. Alexander & Pfaffe, 2014; Von Holdt et al. 2011) that calling the police during protests does not make things better. Rather, things often get more violent. The police generally do not try to negotiate with the protesters, but simply fire rubber bullets, teargas and stun grenades. In return, students retaliate by throwing stones and destroying public property. This open show of confrontation between the police and the students made things worse at Rhodes University. It is alleged that the police used heavy handed methods such as firing rubber bullets indiscriminately and arresting more than 50 students and holding them at Grahamstown police station. Some university staff members tried to intervene in this confrontation between the police and the students:

> *I had been negotiating between police and protesters to try and avoid people being shot or arrested (something which got me openly and aggressively targeted by the university management, I might add...). For several days at the beginning we had been trying to diffuse situations and the police were very happy to discuss with us. It was clear that they didn't want to arrest people or shoot and I found the local SAPS [South African Police Service] to be very accommodating. They recognise that they need to maintain a relationship with students at Rhodes. The same could not be said of POPS [Public Order Policing Service], who are out of town and have no need to maintain relationships, nor do they have an understanding of the dynamics of the town. Most of the trouble was caused by POPS. In the first week, before any rubber bullets were fired and nobody had been arrested, whenever there was a standoff I would approach the Station Commander and Operations Commander, an enormous man called Peter.[22] I recall a standoff outside the admin building. I spoke to Peter and he said that there was a report of someone being held hostage inside. I thought that was a very strong word for it. It was very tense though and we negotiated that I would go inside with one student leader and a group of his police. The protesters would stand still, singing and dancing, but not moving towards the police even a foot. We would clear out admin, then*

[22] Pseudonym to protect the identity of the person. As noted, this applies to all names used in the report.

> *the students would move back away from the police. At that point, the legal advisor to the VC [vice-chancellor] and director of special projects (I think that's her job) walked up to Peter (with me standing next to him) and said 'Peter, they're clearly in breach of the interdict. End this now and arrest them all.' She was furious. Peter turned to me, in front of her, and said, 'Are we still willing to negotiate?' I said 'yes'; we carried out the initial plan and all ended peacefully. A few days later an almost identical process played out, except this time she presented Peter with a copy of the interdict as she spoke to him. His whole posture changed as he was handed it and he called his people around to get an operational plan together. I walked up to him and he said, 'Sometimes you have to know when you've done all you can.' I said, 'Which station?' and he replied 'Grahamstown Station'. That was the day of the first arrests and shooting on the Drostdy Lawn. (#FeesMustFall student activist, 2016)*

Police allegedly shot Malose, a student, six times with rubber bullets as he tried to get them to stop shooting in the residence. Before he was shot, he used his cellphone to video-record two policemen shooting into one of the residences. Another student at Rhodes posted a video on Youtube[23] showing the wounds on Malose's legs and back inflicted by the rubber bullets. The post was accompanied by the following caption:

> *My friend was shot six times for taking a video of the police brutality that has been occurring on campus. He was not even protesting but look [at] what has happened. This is a clear example of the excessive force by the police. This is disgusting. How are we supposed to study and pass when campus is a warzone?*

Sinzi, a student and resident at Allan Gray House, recalled her traumatic ordeal with the police on 25 October 2016. She said, 'I felt what a rubber bullet feels like. Trust me it is very painful. Worst of all, I was inside my res trying to close the door' (Interview with Sinzi, a student, 2016). She explained that the male officer shooting at her did so from the driveway and in the middle of the street. Sinzi also mentioned that the officer was not dressed in police regalia but rather in normal civilian clothing. Sinzi says that she was shot between her armpit and breast.

Sinzi commented on university management: 'Management will forever take the side of the police even though clearly they are hurting us and being brutal, using excessive force.' She went on to speak about the mental and emotional well-being of her peers and herself by questioning whether students would be able to proceed with their examinations. According to her, management is adamant about continuing with the examination programme despite opposing cries from the students:

> *I don't understand how we are meant to be sane and well for the exams…mentally and physically we are not okay. We have been shot at, sworn at and ridiculed by both management and police.*

A student leader asserted that police should have deployed crowd control protocols.

> *They were supposed to warn or tell us to move – they just started shooting before and despite anything been done. (Vuyisani Sigingqi, 14 November 2016)*

However, the police did not do this but instead increased their violence. It is reported that students were attacked in their residences. The military crackdown on the protests forced the students to retreat. After four weeks of demonstrations and fierce confrontation with the police, many students began to desert their residences after successfully having their exams deferred. They returned home or went to neighbouring towns. It was only towards the beginning of November 2016 that protest action calmed down and peace was restored. A major consequence of the #FeesMustFall protests at Rhodes University was the instatement of a 10pm (unofficial) curfew on students, which created an even wider rift between the administration and the student body.

As appears clear, instead of communicating with the students, the university management relied on courts and the issuing of interdicts against the protesters, which exacerbated the hostility between those involved.

[23] https://www.facebook.com/tinashe.marufu.35/videos/vb.1437402816/10211557819327899/?type=2&theater

Do court interdicts create stability or further polarise the university population?

Rhodes, like other universities, resorted to using courts interdicts against the protesting students. However, a major concern raised by the students and staff members was the vagueness of these interdicts. Furthermore, the students who embarked upon peaceful protest to raise awareness of rape and sexual violence at Rhodes University were interdicted from continuing their protest without any notice that proceedings were being brought against them. Rhodes University's application for the interim interdict was essentially ex parte: none of the concerned parties received notice of the application before the interim interdict was granted.

The students and staff believe that interdicts that restrain lawful picketing and assembly, like those sought by Rhodes University, are inappropriate and ought not to be granted.

On 1 December 2016, the Grahamstown High Court dismissed Rhodes University's application for an order regulating student protest on its campus. The university wanted to finalise the interim order it was granted in April 2016 against the more than 200 students who had spontaneously led what became known as the #RUReferenceList protest, and sought a wide-ranging final order clamping down on protests against rape and sexual violence, despite admitting their 'prevalence' on campus. The interim order effectively prohibited any attempt to picket on campus, banned any comment that might unlawfully damage the university's reputation and restrained any conduct that might affect the 'psychological and mental well-being' of the university's staff and students. Rhodes obtained the interim order against an unidentifiable group of people, including anyone 'associated with' these activities on its campus (SERI 2016).[24]

Acting on behalf of three Rhodes University students and a group of concerned academic staff, the Socio-Economic Rights Institute (SERI) opposed the finalisation of the order. The High Court substantially upheld SERI's contentions. It held that 'mass protest continues to be an important form of political engagement', playing an essential role in any democracy. The Court also held that the interim order clearly infringed constitutional rights, and described aspects of the interim order as 'patently inappropriate'. The general interdict was not made permanent but specific charges remain, including a clause preventing the 'disruption' of lectures.

Many student activists feel courts are now being used to intimidate and instil fear into protesting students.

Student activists who continue to call for decolonisation, gender equality and free quality education under the new banner of fallism have been interdicted and are facing suspension from the institution.

Other student leaders were arrested during the protests at Rhodes University. It appears these arrests are also compounding students' anger and defianceA student activist at Rhodes, said:

> *They may have arrested the leaders, but they will never arrest the struggle. (Student activist Novmeber 2016)*

He went on to say that the arrests had merely 'added fuel to the fire'. In short, students asserted that the main aim of calling the police was not to disperse or end the protests but to instil fear and to make the protesters afraid of protesting, especially when their leaders were arrested and denied bail.

Ruptures of solidarity within #FeesMustFall at Rhodes University

According to Tish, a student leader at Rhodes University, the institution's call for equal access to education was done in solidarity with other campuses across the country that were agitating to shut down universities 'until free, decolonised, quality education is afforded to all' (Tish, 17 November 2016). However, the dynamics of the #FeesMustFall movement at Rhodes kept on shifting and changing due to 'racial differences' among the student body. It appears that racial tensions contributed to the rupture of the movement. Initially, the movement was reportedly supported by everyone across racial

[24] See also http://www.seri-sa.org/images/HCJudgment.pdf.

lines but got divided along racial lines within a few weeks of its inception. Key informants attribute the rupture to the fact that the movement was too political for some white academics and students, who wanted the movement to be apolitical and not raise class and racial issues.

> *#FeesMustFall nationally resounds with calls for Black unity, it's widely seen as a means of securing a full share of South Africa's promised freedom and equality. Yet many would argue that Black solidarity is unnecessary, irrational, rooted in illusion of 'racial' difference, at odds with the goal of integration and incompatible with liberal ideals and democracy. (Shelby, T,* We Who Are Dark*, 2007)*

Lily, a white student, claimed she stopped supporting the #FeesMustFall movement because she was 'attacked for being white'. She said:

> *There's classism, racism – we cannot claim to be an intersectional movement if we don't address these issues, they play out at a larger scale but it does feel uncomfortable to be attacked for being white. (#RURefrenceList student activist, November 2016)*

Critical issues such as the decolonisation, deracialisation, degendering and demasculinisation of the institutional structures and cultures at Rhodes University played out differently among the different student (racial) groupings. 'The significant threats to the flowering of ideas, discourse, discovery, and scholarship' at Rhodes University, a historically white university, highlighted 'a deeply embedded culture of whiteness, that has yet to yield to substantive respect for an affirmation of difference and creation of inclusive cultures' (Badat n.d.: 7). Ahmed (2012: 36) takes this point further to 'talk about whiteness as an institutional problem…[and] institutional spaces are shaped by the proximity of some bodies and not others'. It is arguable whether there has been any significant opening up of spaces at Rhodes for the flowering of epistemologies, ontologies, theories and questions other than those that have long been hegemonic and that have exercised dominance. Student leaders of #FeesMustFall maintained that the movement raised difficult questions around white privilege which made some white people uncomfortable about supporting the movement. It is reported that only progressive white academics and students continued to support the movement over time and to show solidarity because they understood the philosophical mission behind the movement, which went beyond changing buildings' names to addressing issues of economic transformation.

Political tensions between the SRC and other political formations also contributed to the rupture of the movement at Rhodes University. There was a clear distrust of the SRC by the #FeesMustFall, Asinamali and #RUReferenceList movements:

> *Members of the #RUReferenceList and #FessMustFall says they do not recognise the SRC. The SRC is paid by university and he [SRC president] has a full scholarship by management – there's no autonomy. The SRC is there to spit management's rhetoric (#RURefrenceList student activist, November 2016).*

A major event that led to the rupture of the movement was the #RUReferenceList, which contained the names of SRC student leaders who were accused of sexual violence against female students. #RUReferenceList played a large part in the divisions within the student body. The inability for both the #RUReferenceList grouping and the university management to talk to each other, the sheer level of anger in the negotiations following the #RUReferenceList protests and the total breakdown of relationships. #RUReferenceList strongly believes that the SRC is dominated by chauvinism and patriarchy, which keeps issues around the rape culture on campus 'on the margins'. Evidently, class, race and gender became the main lenses through which selected oppressions were addressed, and other forms of oppression silenced, at Rhodes University

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Concluding remarks

Prior to the protests at Rhodes University, there had been few critical voices raising issues of epistemology, curriculum, rape culture, access to higher education and the like. However, even since #FeesMustFall, these issues have gained little traction and have remained largely marginal concerns. There has been an unwillingness, at best, and no effort at all, at worst, to tackle colonial, racist, patriarchal discourses and the culture of whiteness at the university. For reasons that are important to understand, protests at Rhodes University have to date yet to succeed in uprooting inherited cultures and practices and bringing about the far-reaching transformations that are necessary and long overdue.

Class, gender and racial issues were at the centre of the #FeesMustFall movement at Rhodes, and also led to the rupture of the movement. However, the main event that led to the total rupture of the movement was the #RUReferenceList. The violent protests, the calls for transformation and the anti-sexual-violence marches showed how race, class and gender intersect in the liberatory politics of marginalised groups. Protesters at Rhodes University are legitimately fighting not only for financial inclusion but also for equality and justice in terms of the curriculum, language, employment, race, class and gender. There is no easy solution. But it would be a start if patriarchy were dismantled, which would require all sides to truly listen to each other as equals in order to negotiate a satisfactory timeline for demands to be met. This would be in keeping with author and theorist bell hook's (2000: p11) assertion that:

Radical visionary feminism encourages all of us to courageously examine our lives from the standpoint of gender, race, and class so that we can accurately understand our position within the imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy.

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We are already enjoying free education: Protests at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop)

Musawenkosi Malabela

Introduction

#FeesMustFall will go into history as one of the most influential student protest movements in post-apartheid South Africa. It started as the #RhodesMustFall movement at the University of Cape Town (UCT) and was transformed into #FeesMustFall by the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in Johannesburg. This movement soon became a nationwide phenomenon and spread across almost all university campuses, forcing the government in 2015 to announce a 0% fee increase in higher education institutions. This report is part of a major project that seeks to understand the dynamics of this movement and document the experiences of students within each university. Furthermore, this report details the sequence of events that led to violence and the destruction of public property on each university campus. The report is based on field research conducted at the University of Limpopo (UL), formerly known as Turfloop.[25]

This report will also show how the student protests of 2015 and 2016, specifically the #FeesMustFall movement, have shaped the nature of student protest in South Africa. Given what it achieved, the movement is likely to go down in history and will be talked about in the same breath as the 1976 student uprising. As Adam Habib (2016) notes, 'the students achieved in 10 days what vice-chancellors had been trying to do for 10 years'. The #FeesMustFall movement has managed to force government to listen and act on the call for free decolonised higher education and the results are evident that South Africa is indeed on the road to free higher education. This report narrates the events at UL and the role it played in the broader #FeesMustFall movement.

Methodology

A qualitative research methodology was employed, including in-depth individual interviews and semi-structured interviews to capture the experiences of students, student leaders and lecturers. Focus groups with students, student leaders from all the political parties on campus and lecturers were also employed in this study. Furthermore, informal discussions were held to gather information, especially in the case of participants who were not comfortable participating in an in-depth interview or who didn't want to be voice-recorded. In total, 39 participants were interviewed for the purposes of this case study. Archival and academic articles were also used. The sensitive nature of the #FeesMustFall topic made it difficult for the researcher to arrange interviews with members of staff, especially the security personnel on campus and some academic staff, even after assuring them that anonymity would be guaranteed. Non-protesting students were also not keen on participating for fear of victimisation, even after being assured that their participation in the study would not prejudice them and that their anonymity was assured.

Background: the call for free education at UL

The struggle for free education is not new at UL – students have always struggled and challenged university management and the state about increasing fees. In recent years they have won major gains, especially for poor students who make up the majority of the student population at UL (+90%, according to student leaders). Poor students now have access to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), which provides funding for tuition and residence, as well as food. Most students at Turfloop are fully funded through this government loan scheme, which explains why students from UL were

[25] But Medunsa is no longer part of UL it is now the Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) and formed 1 January 2015.

missing in action or joined the #FeesMustFall protests late in both 2015 and 2016. The fight for free decolonised education at UL took a different form to that taken at previously white universities like Wits and UCT. Decolonisation, in particular, was understood differently. At UL, the decolonisation agenda sought to normalise the curriculum and standardise the higher education sector; students want to learn and be taught what is being taught at Wits and UCT. This highlights the fact that the decolonisation project is not homogeneous but varies from campus to campus, as well as between previously white and previously black universities.[26]

Power dynamics of #FeesMustFall at Turfloop

As noted, the call for free education is not something new in post-apartheid South Africa and has been prevalent at UL for a long time.

> *Some of us believe that the media decided to take the struggle for quality free education and contextualise it in the way they know it and even elevate it into movement with other people accepting that thing and putting it into practice and saying 'now is no longer about fees must fall campaign is a fees must fall movement'. (Individual interview, Economic Freedom Fighters [EFF] student leader, 2016)*

> *[In the past] students waged heighten student mass actions to pressurise the government and not only the government but also the private sector to come on board in trying to remove the price tag in the entire sector. (Individual interview, Progressive Youth Alliance [PYA] member, 2016)*

The fight for the decommodification of education comes from the state's neoliberal agenda that has put a price tag on university education. As argued by Badat (2016: 7), 'the notion of higher education as a tradable service and a private good that primarily benefits students has influenced public financing, which in turn has impacted on the structure and nature of higher education'. Jansen (2004:307) elaborates: 'There is a powerful view emanating across the world that higher education should be regarded as simply another form of economic trade.' The neoliberal agenda sees education as linked to economic growth in that the individual recipient uses it for personal advancement; hence, it is no longer seen as a public good. This may well have informed government's reduced subsidies to public universities. The drop in government subsidies means universities have to look for third-stream funding, including raising their fees to make up for the shortfall. To quote Badat (2016: 3),

> *…the proportion of the budgets of universities that is funded by the state has declined considerably since 1994. Universities have generally made up the shortfall in state funding through significantly increasing tuition fees, seeking third-stream income (alumni and donor contributions, and income from consultancies, research contracts, short courses, and hiring out facilities) and reducing costs through mechanisms such as outsourcing.*

This has had a major impact on students as they now have to make up the funding gap left by the state. As a result, protests against fee increments have been happening year in and year out, especially with respect to the double-digit increases, which are usually above inflation. Turfloop students have always been at the centre of these struggles, despite their depiction in the media as absent or missing in action.

An argument put forward by participants in this study was that #FeesMustFall was popularised by the media because the violent protests started taking place at historically white universities like Wits and UCT. Many interviewees argued that students at UL and Tshwane University of Technology(TUT) had been waging violent protests for years but that their protests didn't get the same attention as the #FeesMustFall movement. It was further argued that the development of social media contributed to the attention that #FeesMustFall got. What is significant for the purposes of this analysis is that students at UL argued that their reluctance to actively participate in #FeesMustFall was informed by the fact that 'when Wits coughs we must all get the flu' (Focus group, PYA protesting student, 2016). In other words, students from UL, a previously black university, held back from participating in #FeesMustFall because of the perceived arrogance of

[26] These black universities were originally charged with the responsibility of winning students intellectually and politically to the separate development programme of apartheid, and generating the administrative and political staff needed for the separate development bureaucracies (Badat 2016).

previously white universities like Wits, which have the power to capture news headlines. It is important also to flag that the struggles waged in previously black universities do not grab headlines unless there is a death or something of that nature.

One student leader gave an example of an incident that happened in 2007 which was not reported in the media:

> *Turfloop must not be undermined by people who say it sold out and back down…Because around 2007 there was a huge strike here and there was a lady who was shot with live ammunition and now she is crippled and that lady is not even a hero today because she was not televised like other people who are televised in various campuses like Wits. So, they must understand that geographical problems affected us because we were not covered by the media because the media is focusing that side because it is constituted that side so they must not undermine Turfloop in any sense and we will forever protect Turfloop. (Individual interview, EFF and Student Representative Council [SRC] member, 2016)*

Turfloop's physical distance from the large mainstream media houses partly explains why UL protests have largely not been covered. Media houses instead focused on institutions like Wits, and especially on violent scenes of protest between students and the police. Habib (2016) notes that

> *But there have also been instances of what was simply bad journalism. In a few extreme cases, we observed that coverage of the student protest at other institutions was accompanied by video footage of Wits. Essentially, these broadcasting houses were too apathetic to send camera crews to where the protests were actually happening. We had to write to some editors of the broadcasting houses and threaten to sue if they did not stop this practice.*

This clearly shows that the media is to be blamed for not covering other institutions adequately, especially those on the periphery. This could be one of the reasons why they were apathetic about sending news crews to institutions like Turfloop, but had TV crews camping at Wits. It is hence important to understand the frustrations of students from UL. They feel that they were portrayed as sell-outs by the media – of not having participated in the movement merely because they were not captured by the media, which did not appear to be interested in them. However, it is also important to try to understand the role of the media in this movement and the narrative that they wanted to sell.

Although Turfloop participated in the protests, there was also a feeling among many students that the #FeesMustFall movement didn't speak to their daily lived experiences because they were NSFAS recipients. Students reiterated that they didn't see any reason to join #FeesMustFall 'now when Wits finally decides to fight' (Interview, PYA member, 2016). It was further explained that NSFAS is a product of the violent protests that students at Turfloop waged over the years:

> *There were countless protests, countless shut downs and countless efforts but were not given the same space like what you call #FeesMustFall movement, which is given attention by the media. You can't dissociate the fact that there used to be TEFSA [Tertiary Education Fund for South Africa] now there is NSFAS and now you even have the NSFAS saying that final students who have passed their entire course, their loan must be changed into a bursary. These are victories of relentless struggles and violent protests that have been waged by students and generations of student leaders at Turfloop and other black universities. (Focus group, PYA protesting students, 2016)*

In short, the #FeesMustFall protests did take place at Turfloop but not to the same scale that they did at institutions like Wits and UCT. As noted, various reasons were given for this, including power struggles between the student political parties at Turfloop. This made it very difficult for them to unite and wage a massive #FeesMustFall campaign. These divisions were more visible in 2016 than they were in 2015:

> *The difference between the campaigns that took place last year and this year, the difference is huge because last year you had a campaign that was led by students, students were at the forefront. The student political organisations were chased out. We told them [student political organisations] to stay away and students took to the streets themselves and they themselves led themselves. But this year if you look at this, it is more of a political war between the political parties because you will have your opposition PASMA [Pan Africanist Student Movement of Azania] and SASCO [South African Student Congress] leaders and the ruling party EFF fighting each other during that #FeesMustFall thing. (Individual interview, EFF student leader, 2016)*

The infighting between different political parties on campus made it impossible for the 2016 protest to be effective. It removed the focus from galvanising students and instead turned students against each other along party-political lines. Unity across political parties is a cornerstone of the #FeesMustFall movement. One student leader argued that the success of the movement was dependent on its unity but that the Turfloop university management was at the centre of creating divisions within the movement. The upcoming SRC elections were also cited as a divisive issue.

> *Management at UL realised that unity is the cornerstone of the movement hence they worked hard to divide the students and…[went to] great lengths and even bought students as means to divide them. The main thing that made this thing to stop was unity; it was not there from the start. At least last year we made sure that every structure is united before we start, but if PASMA starts, EFF goes; SASCO goes that means DASO [Democratic Alliance Student Organisation] must go, SASCO must go as well and all these structures had political agendas; it was the mere fact of SRC elections and nothing else. Everyone was using #FeesMustFall as a campaign to get votes. (Individual interview, EFF student leader, 2016)*

> *The focus was on SRC elections and not on #FeesMustFall. #FeesMustFall was used to help you gain the hegemony of the people so that you can win [the SRC elections]. It was different…the movement was divided but last year it was better; it was divided later when SASCO nationally calling for students to go back to class, that's what happened. (Individual interview, EFF and SRC member, 2016)*

> *This year [2016] there was totally no coordination of structures. It was just an individual battle were individuals wanted to be seen that, they wanted heroism and individualism can never benefit the entire student body because one acts in isolation. When people want to be champions of the student struggles and they don't want to be convened and engaged, they easily get isolated from the actual struggle but this year there was no coordination. Many leaders were more concerned about winning SRC elections. (Focus group, PYA protesting students, 2016)*

The preoccupation with SRC elections at Turfloop during #FeesMustFall protests in 2016 affected the unity amongst students and weakened the movement. Each student leader wanted to lead the movement, but for their own narrow political gains. Hence, timing is clearly everything in struggle, especially one like the #FeesMustFall movement which was built on unity. University management used this to their advantage. They succeeded in dividing the students even though the students had already started fighting amongst themselves along party-political lines.

Unity in the movement was also encouraged by the fact that the movement didn't allow for elected leaders, working on the assumption that elected leaders would divide the movement. It was felt that if a leader came from a political party or structure on campus, some students might feel that they were not represented because the leader might not be aligned to their political party. A student leader explained the rationale behind not having leaders:

> *It must be a flat structure and should not be politicised because the moment it is, it creates 'political celebrities' which then creates political cults. Political celebrities at the end create jealousy amongst ourselves. (Individual interview, EFF student leader, 2016)*

Worth noting is the fact that there is some level of envy and jealously in all politics and this movement was no different. The decision not to have leaders was an attempt to deal with this issue. Despite this, 'political celebrities' were nonetheless created in the movement but on a much smaller scale than would have been the case if elected leaders had been chosen to be the face of the movement on each campus. This would have made it easier for management and some in the state to corrupt and capture such leaders. This would in turn have weakened the movement and it would probably not have achieved what it did. It was argued that having leaders would divide the movement and hence the movement should be non-political.

> *We need to unity and take our political affiliation aside and say this call is the call of the future and for our next generation whereby we need to unite and fight whoever is going to come on our way. That way we can go far and no one will ever defeat us…I remember last year in 2015 we even burnt t-shirts. We said that we don't want political t-shirts in this thing; come with your own, you are a student and you must be treated as a student in this revolution of the students. Because if you are EFF when you speak there are others who like EFF and when you speak they cheer for you and when SASCO comes the EFF boo that one, because once you start to have political identities the movement is likely to die. (Individual interview, EFF student leader, 2016)*

> *Coming to this year like I was saying, that immediately you take #FeesMustFall as a political structure to say that you are going to champion it you are not going to succeed because when you are in a political structure you are still bound to the principles of a certain structure and still take a mandate from your leaders. But when you start defining yourself outside the organisation and say 'now I am a student, I want to lead' no one will stop you because you are not taking any mandate. You are just sitting with what you believe that 'I want free education I am not listening to anyone I just want free education that's my agenda and that's it and no one must tell me anything about that'. (Individual interview, EFF and SRC member, 2016)*

The view about political identities killing the #FeesMustFall movement was shared by 36 of the 39 interviewees, who felt that it was important for students to be united across political lines in the fight for free, quality, decolonised education. Key informants argued that the politicisation of #FeesMustFall, which was used for electioneering for the 2016 SRC elections (they never took place), contributed to the movement's collapse at Turfloop.

We are already enjoying free education

Many students at Turfloop argued that they were already enjoying free education through NSFAS:

> *We are already enjoying free education. (Individual interview, non-protesting student, 2016)*

> *Here majority of the students, 93% are direct beneficiaries of NSFAS and they all covered in their majority and the rest of students are on government-sponsored degrees like teaching, nursing and social work, hence the students are reluctant to participate in the call for free education. (Individual interview, PYA leader, 2016)*

For many students at Turfloop, it was pointless to actively participate in the #FeesMustFall movement as they were satisfied with the funds received through the NSFAS at their university. They also argued that many students at historically white universities misunderstood the announcement made by the minister of higher education, Dr Blade Nzimande, for fees to be capped at 8% for the 2017 academic year.

> *It seems like people didn't understand the statement of Blade Nzimande as to what exactly is he talking about when he is talking about middle class and all that being covered and R600 000 threshold and so on; they didn't understand that. Because if you are going to understand that one, you will understand that there is a backdoor free education that will be given to students, especially some of us in these institutions who are disadvantaged – we are not going to pay. (Focus group, PYA protesting students, 2016)*

This was a view that Prof David Dickinson, a Wits Council member elected by academic staff who have been critical of the way management handled the whole issue around fees, also held:

> *I still wonder if things might have gone differently if Dr Nzimande had structured his message differently. He could have said that there would be no fee increase for any student whose families earned less than R600 000 a year. What he said was that here would be a maximum eight percent fee increase, but that this would not apply to students whose families earned less than R600 000 a year as universities would be given the increase directly from the state. It seems like a subtle difference, but in Solomon House the narrative was that fees were to be increased by eight percent. Which was true, if not the full picture. (David Dickinson: Report to Academics FMF 2016)*

He further argued that:

> *I, and many other academics, thought the students should take the Minister's statement as a win: a step towards free education for the poor and the missing middle (since they would be paying 2014 fees whose real value had been eroded by inflation).*

A PYA focus group member elaborated on the minister's statement, saying:

> *The statement of the minister needed to be articulated different and emphasise the fact that there would be 0% fee increment for certain groups of students, especially those below the R600 000, and that the increase was meant for the rich. (Focus group, PYA protesting student, 2016)*

> *Even the missing middle students were going to be covered and we are the majority of them here [at UL] but then the mandate [from the EFF] was that management must release a communiqué of 0%, and 0% is the same as the 8% if you look at it because no one is paying [at UL]; the department is giving us a subsidy of that and is not going to form part of our loan. (Individual interview, EFF student leader, 2016)*

It appears that there are different interpretations of the announcement made by the minister of higher education. Students at historically black universities such as Turfloop and the University of Zululand (see the report in this publication) were satisfied with the announcement, as it covered their need for free education. As argued by the student cited above, the announcement of the 8% cap amounted to free education as there would be no fee increment for students whose parents earn below R600 000 per annum. Other interviewees mentioned that it is important for the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) to communicate its message clearly to all universities as there appeared to be confusion about its 8% fee increment.

The students at UL understood that the 2016 announcement was a victory for them because the majority, who are from poor households, would not be paying the proposed 8% cap on the fee increase. Instead, they would still be paying 2014 fees. This is very important in understanding protests at UL. If student leaders took this as a victory, it explains why they didn't see the need to continue with the protest. Therefore, rather than the students at UL being reluctant to participate in the movement, they instead understood the minister's announcement and knew that they had achieved their goal. As argued by some students, continuing with the protest would have meant marching for the rich to have free education, which they were averse to. Any participation on their part was thus about solidarity with other institutions that had students above the R600 000 threshold, which was not the case for them.

Meaning of decolonisation at UL: 'We want to learn what is being taught at Wits'

It appears that the meaning of a free, decolonised, quality education differs from one university to another. For students at Turfloop, decolonised education means getting a good-quality education, like that taught at Wits:

> *When we talk of decolonised education we are saying that the current education system that we are using is not favouring us as black people, especially South Africans; [it] is still a colonial education system. We need to have education that will uplift us from our poor backgrounds into a level that we are going to be equal with the white kids, you understand? White privileged institution…You come here and have a degree which has nothing to do with the current economic system. You study it and when you go to corporate you are not competent. The curriculum being used is old fashion and has nothing to do with black people; is the same thing that people make jokes and say that in primary or high school we were taught to study a grasshopper – where are you taking a grasshopper? It has nothing to do with your future. We need education that will prepare us and equip us to be competent when we approach the corporate world. (Individual interview, PYA student leader, 2016)*

For most UL students, decolonisation of education means changing their current curriculum, which they say does not prepare them well enough for the workplace. They want the curriculum to be engineered towards addressing the needs of the modern economy rather than perpetuating the apartheid legacy, where black universities were designed to produce black bureaucrats to work for the homeland governments, and to be teachers and nurses in their communities. They feel that curriculum change will empower them academically and intellectually. They also expressed the need to be taught by more experienced lecturers and esteemed professors. Many interviewees complained that they are mainly taught by junior lecturers, as senior lecturers apparently leave to teach at historically white universities:

> *They [junior lecturers] were not experienced enough, one even making an example of a new graduate who gets offered a junior lecturing post and then asks where does he gets the experience and the understanding of that particular degree or module that you are giving him to teach? We have a lot of them here. How is that person going to equip me with more knowledge, because that person just graduated? We have a lot of them here – a person just graduated this year, next year that person is a junior lecturer. Those kinds of things need to change and we need a lot of people that are more experienced people who can contribute to changing the curriculum. (Individual interview, EFF student leader, 2016)*

In sum, students felt that some of their lecturers lack experience due to their junior levels within the academy. Their call for decolonisation of the academy includes changing the curriculum and attracting more experienced lecturers, which will change what is taught. Furthermore, decolonisation for the students at Turfloop means standardisation and uniformity with what is taught at institutions like Wits.

> *Exactly we must be on par…The curriculum at Wits and the level of teaching at Wits must be the same so that when we go to interviews we must be able to compete with these people. (Focus group, PYA protesting students, 2016)*

Many students in former black universities feel that their education is inferior to that of students in former white universities. For them, decolonisation therefore means receiving the same quality of education as their counterparts at universities like Wits, including improved infrastructure and quality academic staff. It is interesting to note that these students are crying for assimilation into the white university pedagogies, the very ones that are rejected by black students at historically white universities like UCT and Wits (see the reports in this publication). Black students at historically white universities experience their curriculum as colonial and alienating. Their call for decolonisation is thus different to that of the Turfloop students. Decolonisation for Wits and UCT students is about changing the curriculum to include the African experience; changing the university culture, which remains white and alienating to black students and academics; and introducing scholarship which challenges the Eurocentric nature of the historically white universities.

> *it's no surprise that student movements are shutting down university campuses all over South Africa. More than two decades have passed since the advent of democracy and change in higher education appears to be stuttering. Students and many academics are fed up with high fees, a teaching body that remains stubbornly white and male, and a curriculum that needs more relevance in an African country. (in Badat 2016: 21)*

As Jansen (2004: 311) highlights:

> *Institutions still bear their racial birthmarks in terms of dominant traditions, symbols and patterns of behavior that remain distinctive despite the broader changes sweeping the higher education landscape.*

It is clear that decolonisation in the #FeesMustFall movement is not homogeneous and means different things on different campuses. The different decolonisation projects are informed by the racial birthmarks of the respective institutions. Students at UL are fighting against these racial birthmarks and challenging the status quo of black universities being associated with inferior education for poor black students and white institutions being associated with quality education aimed at whites and the middle classes.

#FeesMustFall at Turfloop: the violence unravels

Police on campus

The violence at Turfloop started when management called on the security personnel on campus to disperse students who had gathered at Thami Square for a night vigil around #FeesMustFall. The security personnel then called the police, who, on arrival on campus, arrested the student leaders. The students started being violent as they wanted their leaders to be released. The police responded with violence and started firing rubber bullets at the protesting students. *Eyewitness News* reported the following morning that:

> *Police are on high alert outside the university following overnight running battles between officers and protesters. At least six students were arrested for public violence. Police had to intervene when protesters vandalized property and attempted to burn down a building. (Brandt 2016)*

Jacob Dlamini (2011, in Von Holdt et al. 2011)[27] argues that people burn things in order to get those in positions of power to listen to their demands. This was the beginning of the violence in the 2016 #FeesMustFall protests at Turfloop. The university management responded by issuing a statement on 28 September 2016 that the university was to be closed down for two weeks and all academic activities suspended with immediate effect (discussed later). Students living in residents were asked to vacate their residence by 5pm that afternoon. The university management justified the decision as being in the interests of protecting university property. As noted in the quote above, students had become violent and 'vandalized property and attempted to burn down a building'. However, according to one student leader, the police were the ones that caused the violence at the university:

> *The moment you have police who begin not to engage students but commence by shooting then it becomes a game; students will run around and you will shoot and they will run around and the next thing is becoming one game for police chasing and students running all over and then the next thing violence begin or erupts. (Individual interview, EFF student leader, 2016)*

Of significance is that the violence was caused by the arrival of the police on campus. Rather than engaging with the students, the police instead started shooting at them to disperse them. The South African police have often been accused of not knowing how to deal effectively with crowds or public order, as was seen in Marikana when 34 mineworkers were massacred by the police. The Farlam Commission of Inquiry into the killings of the miners at Marikana raised concerns about the police's ability to manage riots and mass protests. Specific recommendations were made in this regard, including the need to train the police in how to deal with protests in a way that is within the ambit of democratic policing.

The #FeesMustFall movement once again showed that the police are inadequately trained to deal with crowds. Their reaction tends to be violent, which in turn leads to peaceful or disruptive protests turning violent. Note that there is an important distinction between a violent protest and a disruptive one. Protests by their nature are disruptive. To be

[27] Jacob Dlamini (2011: 44), in what he terms 'the smoke that calls', argues that 'The violence had generated a response from distant and uncaring officials and, in this sense, the burning of property and the "thick, black smoke which billowed over the townships" was "the smoke that calls"'. The experience in 'Voortrekker suggests that collective violence is a means of forcing the powerful to acknowledge the dignity and legitimacy of the powerless and to hear collective demands'.

effective, they need to disrupt the status quo. Consequently, when students protest, they disrupt lectures, threaten those attending lectures and force universities to shut down, but most of the time this is not done violently. The #FeesMustFall movement was built on the ethos of maximum discipline and non-violence. Interviewees stressed that calling the police onto the campus did not help but made things more violent – the violent reaction of the police led to reciprocal violence.

> *The protest didn't turn violent because students wanted to be violent, no. Students were at Times Square saying that 'don't arrest our leaders'…The securities started shooting students and remember that students love excitement; when they excited they do things, you shoot them, they will retaliate. And when they see hippos [armoured vehicles] running around they will get excited and you will find them throwing stones and all that. Students don't just get violent; if you have realised, in all instances they get provoked by either SAPS [South African Police Service] or securities and once you start shooting at them they want to fight back and they get excited and they will want to defend themselves. (Focus group, PYA protesting students, 2016)*

> *These windows, student don't just break windows; there is no student who will throw a stone in his own room. Imagine I stay in that room and I throw a stone in that window in my room. Those are rubber bullets being shoot in that thing, they shoot rubber bullets all over and they break windows and they say that 'students vandalised the property but nothing gets said about the police who shoot the students'. (Individual interview, EFF student leader, 2016)*

During violent confrontations, especially when police start shooting rubber bullets, property is liable to be damaged, as it was during the violent protests between students and police. However, student leaders claimed that the blame cannot be put solely on students and that the security forces were also responsible for the damage, which was a direct consequence of the police being called to the campus, which led to violent confrontations.

> *Students never started violence. The moment you bring securities that is not much educated or trained to deal with riots, you are going to have a very serious and violent protest. (Individual interview, PYA student leader, 2016)*

Asked why else they resorted to violence, the students argued that the university management was not always willing to negotiate with them and simply decided to close down the university.

> *The vice-chancellor called a staff meeting and they went and he addressed the staff that he is shutting down the campus until further notice and everyone is supposed to vacate the university by 5h00. Eh, we couldn't believe and some staff people working with us started sending us text saying 'the university is being closed until further notice'. (Individual interview, EFF student leader, 2016)*

It was asserted that the university management at Turfloop did not create any space for engagement or negotiation with students. Management unilaterally decided to close down the university and, as a result of the university's stance of non-engagement, the students started protesting violently to get management's attention. The non-engagement style of management is problematic because it leaves students with no choice other than protest to force management to listen to and engage with them.

What needs to happen?

The general consensus among student leaders across the country was that free education is possible but that political will is needed:

> *Free education is attainable but the main problem that we have is just the political will. (Individual interview, EFF student leader, 2016)*

The student leaders further argued that the arrogance of the government is a barrier to free or state-funded education:

> *The government is just arrogant to listen to its young people. (Individual interview, EFF and SRC member, 2016)*

Questions were raised about the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Higher Education, established by President Jacob Zuma, which includes many ministers working within the security cluster.[28] For many students, this was an indication that the government regards #FeesMustFall as a threat to national security rather than as a legitimate quest for free, quality education.

> *Zuma was told to establish an inter-ministerial, but what did he do? He pumped it with security forces into that thing and you didn't have a minister of finance and then you see that this person is not prepared to give free education. He is forever fighting. (Individual interview, EFF student leader, 2016)*

The government was also accused of shifting the blame from one minister to another and not taking responsibility. Students interpreted this as the government not taking their plight seriously, which is why they resorted to taking their fight to the streets. According to students, the government's failure over the years to deal with the issue of fees and free education led to the student revolts in 2015 and 2016. Thus, students felt that the African National Congress government, not only the DHET, had to address the issue of providing free, quality education to avoid more #FeesMustFall protests. Student activists were sympathetic to the minister of DHET, arguing that his department had nothing to do with the funding of universities but that the National Treasury was responsible for the decreasing subsidy allocated to universities.

> *In my view, Blade [Nzimande] he has nothing to do with free education; he must be treated the same as universities. We need [Jacob] Zuma and his people to take a decision. Zuma is forever shifting blame on Blade. (Individual interview, EFF student leader, 2016)*

> *The reality is that government is spending less on higher education at 0.75% and the argument put forward is that this should be increased to at least 3% of Gross Domestic Product. (Individual interview, EFF student leader, 2016)*

Students interviewed at Turfloop asserted that government 'should get its priorities right and higher education should be priorities' (Focus group, PYA protesting students, 2016). Another proposal was that the private sector should also come on board and contribute towards free higher education in South Africa. The students believe strongly that free education should be provided by the state and argue that universities shouldn't stand in the way of their fight with the state. The state needs to devise strategies and plans around how free education will be attained. The 2016 agreement which exempts families earning less than R600 000 per annum is a victory for the poor and a step in the right direction to progressively introduce free education, including for the 'missing middle'. As Habib (2016) asserts, 'free education for the poor…is widely supported by multiple stakeholders in society', and will benefit poor students, who are mostly concentrated in previously black universities like UL.

The #FeesMustFall movement has thus achieved significant gains, especially for students from poor households. What is clear is that free education can be attained but the government will need the help of the private sector, which is in any case the major beneficiary of the graduates produced in public universities.

Role of the private sector: capital has a role to play in #FeesMustFall

The Thuto ke Lesedi (2016: 4) report argues that the private sector should be taxed more to fund free education:

> *Increase in corporate taxes. The effective corporate tax rate has decreased from 36.89% over the last decade to an effective tax rate of 28%. An increase of 2% to 30% is justifiable and is not too far off comparative*

[28] The ministers of Finance and Social Development were later included in the Committee.

> *economies around the world. It is recommended that the increase be applied exclusively for the benefit of [the] tertiary education system.*

Students interviewed at Turfloop supported the idea of increasing corporate tax and ring-fencing it for higher education. They argued that the government has other pressing social issues besides higher education which it must address, and hence this proposed education tax makes sense.

> *Capital has a huge role to play because we are aware that they making a lot of money and not contributing enough to actually fund or assist government in this thing of free education. We made submissions [to the Commission of Free Higher Education] showing that we want a certain percentage from these guys of corporate with this thing we call it education tax to assist government to fund this new thing called free education through the educational tax. (Individual interview, PYA student leader, 2016)*

Students at Turf loop argued that the private sector was highly selective in funding universities in South Africa. One student argued that the private sector favours historically white universities over black universities in the provision of funding and bursaries:

> *You have big companies that just decide to go and fund a certain institution alone, forgetting about other institutions. You had ABSA [a bank] funding Wits with R10 million; the same lady who is the CEO [Maria Ramos] of ABSA is a former graduate of Wits, so us as UL we don't have someone leading Standard Bank, we must not get funded, why? Why then don't you take the money and give NSFAS because you are helping government and you are injecting and making sure that young people are covered and distributed across campuses. (Focus group, PYA protesting students, 2016)*

In 2016, ABSA donated R10 million to Wits (Petersen 2016). Students at Turfloop believe that money received from the private sector should be put into a pool fund and distributed equally among all the universities as part of funding higher education. This is a valid point and would deal with the issue of inequality among universities. Those that are struggling should be allocated a fair share so that they can improve their infrastructure in order to catch up with the privileged institutions. Currently, it seems funding from the private sector is skewed in favour of former white universities

> *You see by doing this you are creating more divisions than assisting, you are just creating more divisions between universities. (Focus group, PYA protesting students, 2016)*

The key argument among students interviewed was that the private sector had a role to play in supporting the state to provide free quality education:

> *Free education is a national call; we cannot only depend on the state to provide it. Some of us are saying that let the private sector come in but others are saying 'no, government'. No, it cannot be government alone, no. All structures, actually all sectors, must contribute. The private sector is the major beneficiary because they come and benefit from the graduates who are products of public institutions. So the moment they are not contributing but they want to benefit then it raises a lot of things. At least when government says this is the call, then the private sector must come in and subsidise and then government will be at a point of achieving free decolonised high education. (Focus group, PYA protesting students, 2016)*

Conclusion

It is clear from this paper that the #FeesMustFall movement is not homogeneous across all universities. At Turfloop, the movement was not able to organise massive protests, as occurred at Wits and UCT. The students'

main argument was that education was already free for them through NSFAS and other sources of funding from the government. They saw #FeesMustFall as an elitist event popularised by the media because historically white universities were affected, while their violent protests in the past over the same problem were not given the same publicity. Despite this view of #FeesMustFall as an elitist movement, some protests were organised at Turfloop but the movement was highly divided along political lines between the EFF Student Command, PASMA and SASCO. It is alleged that leaders of different student organisations wanted to use the #FeesMustFall movement as a campaign tool to pursue their own political interests.

When protests were organised, the university management responded by calling the police, who then started firing rubber bullets and stun grenades and arresting student leaders. According to all the students interviewed, this contributed to the violence and the destruction of university property. It was argued that university management across all the universities needs to explore ways of engaging with students without calling the police or private security officials, as this often escalates the levels of violence on campus. These engagements could be through negotiations. If the negotiations between the two parties break down, a neutral mediation team agreed on by both parties could be initiated. Both parties should also be willing to compromise on their demands and not seek to achieve maximum gains. University management in particular should be willing to listen to students because most of the time student leaders are of the view that university management is arrogant and does not listen to them, hence they are left with no choice but to protest. Students also noted that the fight for free decolonised education is not a fight against universities. Students are aware that universities are in no position to provide this and therefore the university management should not act as a buffer between the students and the state. Instead, management should look at ways in which they could facilitate the conversation between the two. Engagement with student leaders must be a priority in order for these issues to be resolved without violence. However, this is difficult given that the #FeesMustFall movement is divided along political and ideological lines, which makes it difficult for the university management to negotiate with such as a divided structure.

In conclusion, it is recommended that the state, the private sector and all other stakeholders need to play a constructive role to support and fund free, quality education in South Africa.

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South African higher education at a crossroads: The Unizulu case study

Yingi Edwin

Introduction

The year 2015 will go down in the annals of the history of South Africa's higher education as the year that sparked profound and unprecedented student protests in higher institutions of learning. An increase in university fees and the groundswell of resentment which it engenders among students is not a challenge peculiar to South Africa. Within the last five years, fee-induced protests have hit universities in Australia, Brazil, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, as well as other parts of the globe (Calitz & Fourie 2016). This is testimony to a new emerging global phenomenon highlighting the unaffordability of higher education, not only in South Africa but across the world. The country was hit by violent student protests in late 2015, with historical roots harking back to about 2000. If the demands of the striking students are met, they will result in seismic changes to the domain of higher education.

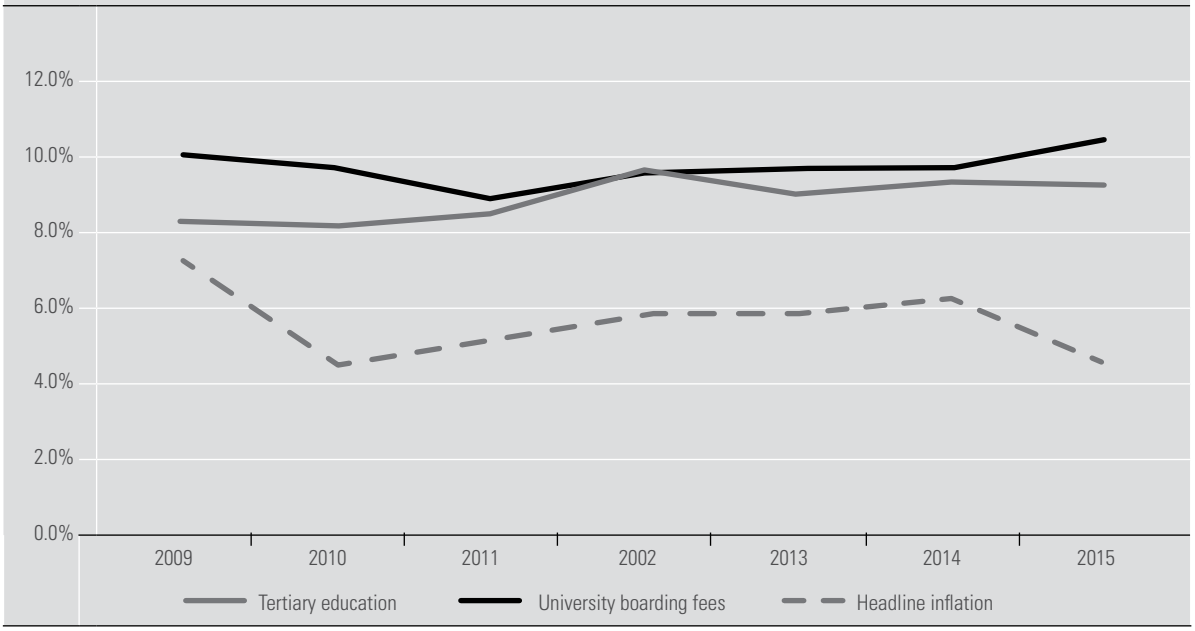
What prompted the protests were envisaged hikes of 10–12% in tuition fees in the forthcoming 2016 academic year. This awakened a generic problem that had been in stupor for over two decades – that is, the superficial transformation of the South African higher education system (Gumede 2016). Needless to say, the protests which commenced in October 2015 at the University of the Witwatersrand, which has a reputation for student protests, rapidly spread to the University of Cape Town and Rhodes University before being embraced by other universities across the country. The protests lasted for several weeks and eventually pressured the government and concerned universities to offer concessions to the striking students. Protesting students demanded a raft of transformation policies, including the scrapping of university fees and the decolonisation of curricula. It should be noted, however, that violent protests against rising tuition fees are not novel in the higher education terrain in South Africa. Davids and Waghid (2016) point out that students at historically poor universities designated for blacks have protested against soaring fees and the cost of higher education since 1994.

Figure 1 illustrates the annual tuition hikes in tertiary education and accommodation or boarding fees for the last seven years vis-à-vis the headline inflation rate. Interestingly, tertiary education and accommodation costs significantly outpaced prices of other commodities in the economy for the entire seven-year period (Calitz & Fourie 2016). These trends come against a background of forebodings by some scholars of the astronomical rise of university tuition in South Africa (Wangenge-Ouma 2012).

According to Calitz and Fourie (2016), the ever-rising cost of higher education in South Africa has been ascribed to government's dwindling funding of universities over the last two decades. For example, between 1996 and 2013, government's share of total expenditure on higher education dropped by 0.2 percentage points, from 4.9% to 4.7%. According to Van de Berg (2014), this was due to the pressing need to provide affordable basic education to correct the imbalances of the apartheid past. This, coupled with a number of other demands, saddled the fiscus at the dawn of democracy and ushered in a rise in university fees. The economic blizzard that hit the world economies in late 2007 did not spare South Africa. Economic growth stagnated but inflation in university fees did not and consequently outpaced incomes, thereby compromising students' ability to afford university fees (Calitz & Fourie 2016).

What is noteworthy about the student protests is the way in which they challenged contemporary ideologies of managerialism, neoliberalism and commodification within universities (Gonzalez 2012), and which South Africa adopted

Figure 1: Consumer price increase for university tuition, boarding fees and total



at independence in 1994. The protests therefore sought not only to transform the South African higher education terrain, but also to shake the very foundations of society. The protests differed from previous ones in that they fostered solidarity among students, workers and academics on many university campuses. This mass mobilisation of the diverse stakeholders, rallying them towards a common goal of transformation, made the 2015/2016 student protests unique (Godsell & Chikane 2016).

Like the rest of Africa, South Africa's education system is a by-product of its colonial past. Across Africa, colonial higher education policy has striking similarities, including limited access to education, freedom, and curriculum. Teferra and Altbach (2004), in studying the impact of colonialism on the nature of higher education in Africa, argue that colonial authorities feared and loathed widespread access to higher education by the native African population and only afforded a handful of Africans the opportunity for higher education in order to meet the administrative requirements of the colony. The language policy of many African states was imposed by the colonial power and that became the medium of instruction for learning in schools and universities. In some countries, existing forms of local languages used in 'higher forms of education' were replaced by the language of the colonisers. The legacy of colonialism remains a central factor in African higher education. Independence has been the national reality for most of Africa for less than four decades, and the ties to the former colonisers have, in general, remained strong. The fact that no African country has changed the language of instruction from the colonial language is significant. The impact of the colonial past and the continuing impact of the former colonial powers remain crucial in any analysis of African higher education.

The situation described above obtains in South Africa. Issues of the accessibility of higher education, decolonisation and academic freedom featured prominently in the student protests in the country, known as the #FeesMustFall movement. The violent slant which the protests assumed across the spectrum of universities is reminiscent of the service delivery protests that have plagued South Africa since 2004, with a dramatic upsurge since 2009 (Von Holdt et al. 2011). A myriad of explanations are available to unravel the violence which characterises protests in post-apartheid South Africa. The legacy of violence inherited from the apartheid past has resulted in a violent culture among the populace in general (Seedat, Lau & Suffla 2010). This means that an analysis of the challenges gripping higher education in the country cannot be done in isolation, but needs to be a holistic undertaking that places society at large in perspective. Protests for free education are

a microcosm of the whole. Education is a public good that has to be rendered to the populace by the central government, so the student protests can be loosely viewed as service delivery protests.

Methodology

Semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted with a wide range of students (across disciplines, gender, age and year of study). Preference was given to the leadership of the Students Representative Council (SRC) for information on the students' involvement in the #FeesMustFall protests and how these impacted the university. Bearing in mind that not all students were actively involved in the movement and knew about the ins and outs of the protests, I first informally tried to find out the backgrounds and level of involvement of those who participated. Selected student leaders were then interviewed to get insight into their strategies and orientations on different issues.

The data were collected from the University of Zululand (Unizulu) between 20 November and 10 December 2016. Twenty-three interviews and informal focus group discussions were conducted to collect the data. The focus group discussions were done in taxis or buses used by students as transport to and from campus. The study did not target a wide range of students because the main concern was data quality rather than quantity. The focus was on female voices and perspectives on the student protests, hence their overrepresentation. The study was delayed owing to unforeseen hiccups and some of the interviews had to be done over the phone since some of the students had finished examinations and were away for the vacation. The data were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis.

History of student protests at Unizulu

Unizulu was established in 1960 as an affiliate college of the University of South Africa and is located in the Umhlathuze Municipality in the Mpangeni area. In the context of separate development, the university was initially designated for Zulu-speaking students only. Owing to this historic, geopolitical arrangement, the university remains predominantly Zulu speaking and the majority of students come from rural and disadvantaged areas of that part of KwaZulu-Natal. A smaller proportion (around 15%) hail from urban centres and other parts of the country (Council for Higher Education 2014). The university has seen a steady increase in enrolment, from a total of 9 318 students in 2007 to 16 506 in 2013, of which approximately 10 426 are female students. Included in this number is a negligible percentage of international students, ostensibly coming from within the region. The KwaDlangezwa campus is the administrative seat of the university, with one other campus at Richards Bay. Across these two campuses, the university offers approximately 252 accredited degrees, diplomas and certificates in eight faculties.

Violence and destruction of university property run deep into the history of student protests at Unizulu. Over the years, the political rivalries between the African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) have resulted in deep divisions among students. This has led to violently contested SRC elections. The years 2005–2010 saw student violence and vandalism of university property at the Unizulu. These incidents of violent protests have been most commonly attributed to tensions between the IFP-aligned South African Democratic Students' Union (Sadesmo) and the ANC-aligned South African Students Congress (SASCO), and often occur around the time of SRC elections.

Elections to choose a new SRC for 2017 were no different. They were rocked by inter-party bickering, which resulted in some factions resorting to legal recourse with the view of bringing finality to the contestations. Given the fading popularity of the IFP and the inroads being made by the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) into mainstream student politics, the power dynamics in the SRC are very complex. Suffice to mention that in the midst of this mayhem and pending a court ruling on the disputed elections, SASCO is currently in charge of the SRC. Though all the parties are in agreement on the need for free education, they hold divergent and diametrically opposed views on how this should be attained. The EFF justifies the violence in the #FeesMustFall protests. They argue that violence for a justified cause is not destructive, and condemning it is akin to perpetuating the status quo:

> *this democracy which we have now would have remained a pipe dream had violence not been unleashed against the apartheid regime. The very means (violence) which brought us political freedom should be used to bring us academic independence. (Interview, 2 December 2016)*

The above view, however, is countered by ANC-aligned SRC members who view violence as retrogressive.

> *we are destroying the very thing we are fighting for. If this [#FeesMustFall protests] is about free education, what is the reason for burning down libraries, lecture halls and halls of residence. (Interview, 2 December 2016)*

The impasse in the SRC has resulted in some students claiming that there is a power vacuum. Unizulu has been here before. The outgoing SRC was elected in 2015 after an interim period of three years without a legally constituted SRC.

Protests which never were: Unizulu and #FeesMustFall

The anti-fees protests, which were arguably initiated by Wits and took higher education by storm in 2015, were given a generalised narrative in the media. However, South African universities are unique and should be put in their respective historical boxes for analysis. What was reported in the media as ubiquitous student protests to fight a ubiquitous challenge was not in fact such. Though some of the tenets of the protests are applicable to the student body in many universities, the question of fees took precedence – to the point that the movement derived its name from it. Fees are a major issue of concern for former white universities, which historically were the preserve of those who could afford them. Notwithstanding the general euphoria which the #FeesMustFall movement generated, Unizulu remained unscathed by the protests and is a notable exception, along with Turfloop (see the Turfloop report in this publication). Unizulu found itself outside the main argument that the 'fallists' pushed – that is, the abolition of university tuition fees.

The National Student Financial Aid Scheme and Unizulu

Upon the collapse of apartheid, South Africa embarked on a transformative trajectory in higher education, which, among other things, included a student financial aid scheme (the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, or NSFAS). This followed on the inadequacies of the apartheid regime policies on higher education, 'which did not regard equity of access as an important higher education funding consideration' (Wangenge-Ouma 2010: 484). The demise of apartheid in 1994 was followed by deliberate attempts by the incoming ANC to ameliorate and/or eradicate the legacy of inequality in higher education. To this end, the government put in place NSFAS in 1996. Owing to the introduction of this new funding strategy and other transformative gestures, enrolments by race across universities changed significantly between 1986 and 2005. The percentage share of whites declined from 60% in 1986 to 25% in 2005, while that of blacks rose from 27% in 1986 to 62% in 2005 (Wangenge-Ouma 2012: 832).

Between 75 and 80% of the student population at Unizulu are recipients of NSFAS. Another approximately 10% receive private bursaries. The historical and geographical location of the university makes it different from the former white universities in the country. Established in 1960 to serve the apartheid policy of separate development, the university was and continues to be populated by students coming from the rural areas around that part of KwaZulu-Natal. Dominated by students from impoverished rural backgrounds, whose family incomes fall below the R600 000/annum threshold pronounced by government as eligible for funding, makes the university a recipient of a sizeable chunk not only of NSFAS funds but of other private bursaries. The financial aid office at Unizulu administers over 200 private bursaries offered by government departments, non-governmental organisations, trusts and private organisations. NSFAS considers the number of disadvantaged students enrolled at a given higher education institution, and that suggests the level of financial support the institution might need. Table 1 shows the number of students at Unizulu receiving NSFAS funding between 2005 and 2007.

Table 1: NSFAS support, 2005–2007, by gender				
		Women	**Men**	**Total**
2005	Received	2 869	1 641	4 510
	Did not apply	3 915	1 973	5 888
	Total	**6 784**	**3 614**	**10 398**
2006	Does not have	10	2	12
	Received	1 910	993	2 903
	Did not apply	5 022	2 654	7 676
	Total	**6 942**	**3 649**	**10 591**
2007	Not eligible	4	2	6
	Received	2 436	1 244	3 680
	Did not apply	3 508	2 124	5 632
	Total	**5 948**	**3 370**	**9 318**
Council for Higher Education (2010).				

Table 1 shows that between 2005 and 2007, the proportion of students on NSFAS grants decreased from 43% to 39%. This was partly due to the increasing number of students who did not apply for the grant in each year. In 2005, 2006 and 2007, 57%, 72% and 60% of students, respectively, did not apply for NSFAS. That this institution is in an area where students are undoubtedly in need of financial assistance poses the question as to why so many did not apply for NSFAS funding over the period depicted in Table 1. This might have to do with logistical issues in the application process. Since the institution is required to filter students as part of this process, there may be a lack of capacity at the institution. However, the situation has changed over the years. Of the approximately 16 000 students enrolled at Unizulu in 2016, 12 000 were under NSFAS funding. This can be attributed to the improved application process and the assistance which the university, through the SRC, gives to students who apply.

The #FeesMustFall protests were the product of the anticipated fee hikes in the 2015 academic year. The issue of university tuition fees has always generated much acrimony in former white universities. Tuition fees at Unizulu, however, have not been significantly reviewed over the last number of years.

> *We found no reason to take part in the protests, which had nothing to do with our cause here. The question of university fees is not a challenge to us. Our fees have not been reviewed upwards for 2016 and we found no reason to protest for fees which, after all, we are not paying. (Interview, 29 November 2016)*

> *Though we wanted to take part in the protests in solidarity with other universities, the majority of the students displayed a non-committal attitude. With the majority of us on NSFAS funding, the mood was negative and there was no motivation to take part in the protests. (Interview, 29 November 2016)*

These sentiments were echoed by many students at Unizulu. Additionally, a sizeable number professed ignorance of the reasons for the #FeesMustFall protests.

> *I have heard about this #FeesMustFall but I have no interest on finding out what it is all about. I just thought it has all to do with universities in the cities and it doesn't concern us here. (Interview, 29 November 2016)*

The above views suggest that the higher education funding mechanism (NSFAS) does not sufficiently address the financial grievances of students in diverse universities. Though the funding seems to be adequate to address the needs of students in former black and rural universities like Unizulu, it falls short of addressing the needs of those in former white universities, whose fees far exceed those of students in former black universities. According to Wangenge-Ouma (2012), the demand for free higher education is testimony, inter alia, to the fact that the funding mechanism in operation falls short of addressing the financial barriers besetting students in higher education.

The resolution by NSFAS that all students who meet the NSFAS means test and have been enrolled at any university or TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) college would not be required to pay upfront payments or registration fees for the 2016 academic year is another measure to address the ongoing crisis. NSFAS acknowledged payment to universities and TVET colleges funds of R1.8 billion for registration fees for 2016 for all NSFAS-qualifying students (NSFAS 2016).

NSFAS paid off students' 'historic debts' and those who still owed the university were allowed to register. This followed a historic meeting between NSFAS and all the stakeholders in the higher education sector. Students who qualified for NSFAS funding between 2013 and 2015 but did not get the funding or were underfunded were to have their debt paid off by NSFAS. The extra R2 543 billion allocated to NSFAS by government for the 2016 academic year was meant to assist 71 753 students with loans – those who qualified for NSFAS funding but were either partially or not funded at all over the past three academic years (NSFAS 2016). The money meant for the cancellation of the historic debt was disbursed to students in the form of loans that could be converted into bursaries in terms of the NSFAS rules. The rules have to do with students' performance in their registered courses (NSFAS 2016).

The question of debts has been a hotly contested issue in the protests between university management and students. Students who were either underfunded or did not qualify for NSFAS accrued enormous debts and university management did not allow them to register until the debt was cleared. What eased tensions between students and university management was the arrangement for students on NSFAS to get cash for their daily needs. Students on NSFAS got R1 000 per month to use in retail shops, R4 000 for food in the dining halls and R5 000 for electronic devices.

> *The arrangement of getting some cash to pay for my clothes, food and electronic learning devices is so helpful. At least I have some cash at the end of every month to use for my basic necessities. (Interview, 30 November 2016)*

> *The money I get for food, computers and to use in the retail shops is not enough but help me to cover some of the basic things. We need more money because we should have some fun during our time at university. (Interview, 30 November 2016)*

The above views illustrate that NSFAS funding is doing a great deal for the students at Unizulu. Given the rural setting of the university and its background, catering services at Unizulu are not as expensive as those at universities in urban centres. The accommodation, built during colonial times for black people, is by today's standards substandard. This makes accommodation affordable although students are not happy with the standard of the residences.

> *Catering services are cheap here, especially accommodation. But some of the rooms are old and of low standard. The university should do something to address this. (Interview, 2 December 2016)*

That the fee structure at Unizulu and other former black universities is below that of former white universities is no secret. This is why the money that students in former black universities get from NSFAS is sufficient to cover their tuition.

While the students at Unizulu support and are sympathetic to the cause of #FeesMustFall, they expressed concerns about the genuineness of the movement.

> *There are signs of capture of the #FeesMustFall movement by people with ulterior motives. The protests have taken too long to be sustained by resources of students alone; the question is, who is funding these protests and why? The movement leaders are trotting across the country coordinating the protests and staying in hotels and we wonder how they are offsetting the costs incurred. (Interview, 6 December 2016)*

What started as a genuine student fight for the acceleration of the transformational agenda in higher education later turned out to be a fight against the established order. The burning of university property, the violence and the masculine nature of the protests connoted capture of the movement. According to the minister of higher education and training, Blade Nzimande,

> *while the protests have raised legitimate student demands for access to higher education, 'they have also shown a darker side'. Nzimande accused political parties with an ideology different from that of the governing ANC [African National Congress] of hijacking #FeesMustFall...Nzimande also claimed business people were fuelling the student protests for their own interests. (Nkosi 2017)*

An interviewee concurred, stating that

> *We want free education but I don't see the relationship between the burning of university buildings and the demand for free education. If the fight for free education is a struggle that will take us years, it means by the time we will get it we will no longer have universities to talk about any longer. We therefore don't support the burning of university infrastructure in the name of the fight for the fall of fees. (Interview, 8 December 2016)*

These sentiments were shared by many respondents, who argued that the outbreak of violence in the protests was a result of the violent disposition of the striking students. The smouldering smoke coming from many university campuses forced the hand of university management to engage the services of private security and the police to protect university property.

NSFAS: A loan or a bursary?

At Unizulu, the number of students under NSFAS funding increased following the unleashing of the #FeesMustFall protests in 2015. However, students appear to be unclear about whether NSFAS funding is a student loan or a grant. When asked if they know how the loan will be repaid, the majority of students professed ignorance:

> *What we are not sure of is whether NSFAS is a loan which we will have to pay back in full upon completion of our university education, or if it's a grant that we will not be required to pay back. (Interview, 26 November 2016)*

The confusion has been exacerbated by NSFAS' inability to recover the loaned money from graduating students. In an attempt to transform NSFAS, the minister of higher education and training curtailed the powers of NSFAS to collect debt, which resulted in a dramatic drop in loan recovery (Cloete 2015). This is despite the increase in the government's contribution to NSFAS. This combination of decapacitating the organisation by reducing its debt-collecting powers while at the same time flooding it with new money is evidence of bad business management (Cloete 2015). Under such circumstances, the management of NSFAS funds is shrouded in inefficiencies bordering on mismanagement.

However, on paper the scheme is both a loan and a grant. The loan can be converted into a bursary depending on the academic aptitude of the student. Additionally, the student has to pass 50% of the registered modules to remain eligible for NSFAS funding. The loan is then paid back upon graduation. However, given the rising rate of unemployment, especially

among the youth, NSFAS has found this process extremely difficult to enforce. This has in turn made the administration of the scheme inefficient. NSFAS has not provided clear answers to students' queries about repayment.

However, there are concerns about students not doing well at the university while being funded by the state. Thabo Mbeki (2016) raised some of these concerns in an interactive session with students at UNISA. He intimated that the challenges bedevilling higher education should be viewed from a broader perspective. He pointed out that 30% of students drop out in the first year, despite being funded by NSFAS. Existing literature affirms that 35% of first-year university students drop out (Sapa 2008), and a further 20% drop out after their second and third years (Breier & Mabizela 2007). This is despite the majority of these students being funded by NSFAS and other private bursaries. Though underfunding of higher education is a challenge in South Africa, there are other challenges which have nothing to do with funding. Some students drop out because they need to find work early and provide for their families. Furthermore, basic education continues to churn out learners who are not ready for university education and who fail modules and drop out at the end of their first or second year. Though beyond the scope of this discussion, suffice to mention that the increasing number of university dropouts is not linked to funding alone.

Challenges of NSFAS at Unizulu

NSFAS funding does have its own share of problems at Unizulu. The process is fraught with allegations of corruption and abuse of the funding system.

> *There are some years where the student funding office returned some money to NSFAS. This happened despite the fact that some students went on without funding. There are reports that the officers in the student funding office award themselves soft loans with the money meant for students funding. (Interview, 7 December 2016)*

Though this information was difficult to confirm, suspicion is rife that funds meant for students are misappropriated and put to other uses by officials in the funding office. Moreover, the vetting system for qualifying and non-qualifying students is subject to manipulation by unscrupulous students. Students who do not qualify for NSFAS funding apparently misrepresent facts in order to obtain funding.

Tensions between union staff members and the university management

There was no strike related to #FeesMustFall at Unizulu. However, a strike by union staff members was at times misconstrued by the media as a #FeesMustFall protest. The strike in August 2016 was a result of a stand-off between the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU) and the university management. The industrial action which ensued resulted in the closure of the university for eight weeks. The stand-off between NEHAWU and the university dated back to January 2015 following NEHAWU's presentation of a raft of demands, including salary reviews of university lecturers, insourcing and employment contracts of some university workers.

> *Our presentations we gave them 19 months ago are still to be resolved. During the 2015/16 salary negotiations, university management decided to give us a once-off 7% payment in lieu of the progression tool. They claimed they will develop the progression tool at a later stage. Most of the agreements had a deadline of October 2015, but management has not honoured them. (Interview, 7 December 2016)*

> *Salary progression has been on the negotiation table since 2013. (Interview, 7 December 2016)*

Negotiations in the intervening period (January 2015–August 2016) yielded little, with each side entrenching its position. Disillusioned by the slow progress of the negotiations, NEHAWU decided to embark on industrial action. The situation was exacerbated when students joined the strike in solidarity with the university workers. Violence ensued and the university suspended academic activities for eight weeks.

> *Nine university vehicles, as well as three buses belonging to the university, were torched at the KwaDlengezwa Campus. (Interview, 8 December 2016)*

This violence was caused by a number of factors, chief among them the non-attendance of classes by the striking lecturers.

> *We were very unhappy as students. We were not attending classes since our return from the holidays because lecturers were on strike. Even postgraduate students were being supervised because supervisors were afraid to come to campus. Consequently, the core business of the institution, which is teaching and learning, was not taking place. (Interview, 8 December 2016)*

How the Unizulu university management handled this strike by workers should be interpreted in the broader context of university funding in South Africa and Africa. Governments in Africa have struggled to fund higher education owing to other pressing issues. The percentage of expenditure on higher education oscillates between 0.5% and 1% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) among member states in the southern African region (Mounton & Wildschutt 2015). Though South Africa's contribution to higher education has been steadily increasing since the end of apartheid – from R11 billion in 2006 to R26 billion in 2013 – this has not matched government's budget or the GDP. Spending declined from 0.76% of GDP in 2000 to 0.69% in 2009 (Hesa 2014; Mouton 2014).

In the face of this reduced state funding, universities – including Unizulu – have attempted to manage costs by increasing tuition fees, outsourcing, suppressing salaries and not filling available vacancies. Such courses of action often invoked resistance from concerned stakeholders at Unizulu, notably workers' unions and the SRC. The non-accreditation of the university's Bachelor of Education by the Council on Higher Education was one immediate result indirectly linked to understaffing. This resulted in contestations between the SRC and university management, leading to student protests. That these developments unfolded at a time when the university management was accused of ill-advised spending did not help the situation. The university was accused of spending money on luxurious housing when lecturers and other workers were suffering. This was seen as a misappropriation of funds and was a prominent narrative during the workers' strike. The benefits of outsourcing as a cost-reduction measure were and continue to be questioned, especially by workers' unions.

> *They should stop their extravagant spending if they want to cut costs. The university is in these financial doldrums because of the unwise spending of the management. (Interview, 8 December 2016)*

It has to be pointed out that outsourcing was not only prompted by the quest to cut costs but also by other imperatives, like the improved services provided by specialist and expert providers (Maree & Le Roux 2014).

Is free education possible?

The question of the feasibility of free education is a subject of robust and animated debate within the #FeesMustFall discourse in particular and the country in general. What commenced as opposition to proposed fees hikes in the 2016 academic year later metamorphosed into radicalised demands for free, quality and decolonised education. Students denounced the higher education system, which they described as antiquated and colonial. They burnt many perceived artefacts of colonialism found on university campuses. Protesting students stormed president Zuma's Union Building office on 23 October 2015, demanding an audience with him. The president acceded to a zero percent increment in tuition fees, as demanded by the protesting students. But this was a secondary demand; their primary demand was still outstanding – the total scrapping of university fees. According to the minister of higher education and training's office, the implementation of free education would require an estimated R100 billion a year. However, this is contested by the official opposition in parliament, who estimate that free tertiary education would cost the country R35 billion per annum (Bozzoli 2015). Given these estimated costs, the question is whether the government can afford free and quality education.

South African higher education has followed the cost-sharing funding model. Cost-sharing in higher education has been defined as 'a shift in the burden of higher education costs from being borne exclusively or predominantly by government, or taxpayers, to being shared with parents and students' (Johnstone 2003: 351). This suggests that governments adopt a cost-sharing approach to funding higher education because they find the challenge insurmountable. This system of cost-sharing is in operation in many European universities and in a number in Africa as well. The dawn of democracy in South Africa witnessed the massification of universities but without a corresponding upsurge in government funding to those universities. Consequently, universities resorted to hiking tuition fees to keep pace with cost demands.

Universities in both developed and developing countries adopt various forms of cost sharing (Johnstone 2003, 2004). These include charging university tuition fees where before there were none; where fees already exist, constantly hiking them; reducing student grants or scholarships; and increasing the efficiency of recovering student loans. Tuition fees in public higher education, as Johnstone (2003) argues, are especially important when there is an urgent need to upgrade quality and expand capacity. The massification of university education in South Africa resulted in the need to upgrade the quality and capacity of university education. Given that this could not occur in the context of reduced government funding, universities resorted to hiking tuition fees to keep pace with the skyrocketing costs of providing university education.

Given the prevailing circumstances, free, quality education in South Africa as demanded by the 'fallists' is not feasible. Arguments about the unsustainability of the system have been given. Many countries in Africa, from Uganda to Zimbabwe, adopted the 'populist' policy of free higher education at independence. This was, however, abandoned at various stages into independence after these governments could no longer afford to sustain it in the face of dwindling fiscal resources. The South African scenario is no exception. With economic stagnation eating into the sinews of the government fiscus, the provision of free higher education is a tall order. In the majority of cases, countries cited as giving free higher education have very few parallels with South Africa.

Conclusion

The #FeesMustFall protests which gripped virtually all universities in the country, with Unizulu being a notable exception, were and continue to be a topical issue in the domain of higher education in South Africa. Unizulu, located deep in the rural areas of northern KwaZulu-Natal province, is a university which receives significant funding in terms of NSFAS and other private bursaries. This is as a result of its location and also its historical background. Because it draws the bulk of its student population from the impoverished rural areas, this makes it a target for funding by both NSFAS and other funders. With the majority of its student body receiving NSFAS funding, the #FeesMustFall protests did not find currency at this institution. The fee structure at this former black university is very different to the fee structures of former white universities. The understanding that former black universities were disadvantaged by the apartheid past has seen efforts by government to promote these universities.

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We are not violent but just demanding free decolonized education: University of the Witwatersrand

Musawenkosi Malabela

Introduction

Student protests against fee increments have been happening sporadically over the years, especially at historically black universities (Badat: 2016)),[29] but 2015 saw a wave of renewed student protests under the banner of #FeesMustFall. At the centre of these protests were the previously white University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and the University of Cape Town (UCT). This chapter traces what led to the formation of #FeesMustFall at Wits by providing a timeline with key events from 2015 to 2016, including the call for transformation within the university; the struggle for free, quality, decolonised education; and how the university management responded to these issues. Individual and groups interviews were conducted with protesting and non-protesting students as well as with academic staff in the quest to understand the meanings behind the events that took place over the last two years at Wits. Reports in the media were also used as a source of information, as was correspondence written by the university to update students and staff about the students' protests.

FeesMustFall 2015: background to the struggle at Wits

The issue of fees has been an ongoing struggle in universities, with students protesting year in and year out against rising fees. The #FeesMustFall movement is the culmination of a long period of unhappiness about exorbitant university fee increases. According to Badat (2016), student protests against increased fees are a result of cuts in government subsidies to universities. Cloete, cited in Badat (2016: 3), notes that South Africa's higher education sector is inadequately funded, arguing that:

One way of measuring the state's contribution is to consider the percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that is allocated to higher education. The percentage increased between 2004/2005 and 2015/2016, from 0.68% to 0.72%, and from some R9.8 billion to R30.3 billion. However, this level of funding is low in comparison with a number of other countries: in 2012, Brazil allocated 0.95% of GDP to higher education, Senegal and Ghana 1.4%, Norway and Finland over 2% and Cuba 4.5%. If the state was to spend 1% of GDP on higher education, this would amount to R41 billion – an additional R11 billion.

Wits vice-chancellor, Adam Habib, details the decline in government subsidies to universities:

Famously, the portion of funding universities receive from government has declined from 49% to 40% over the course of the past decade, while student fees have risen from 24% to 31% in order to cover the shortfall. Meanwhile, tertiary education inflation is about 4% higher than the regular rate of inflation, sitting now at around 6% per annum. (in Poplak 2016)

This decline in government subsidies leaves the universities with no option but to increase fees, which in turn results in the exclusion of poor, black, academically deserving students.

> *Fee increases were occasioned by a declining per capita subsidy to universities, and in an effort to retain quality, most higher education institutions annually increased fees, often in double digits. This priced university education outside the affordability of not only the working but also the middle classes. (Habib 2016b)*

[29] The emergence of a democratic government in 1994 threw student organisations into considerable disarray. For example, the focus of student organisations in historically black institutions shifted from protest action against an illegitimate government to demands for unrestricted access to higher education, expanded financial aid to needy students and relief from personal debt to higher education institutions (Jansen 2004).

In February 2015, the Wits Student Representative Council (SRC) launched the '1 month 1 million' campaign to raise funds for students who were not able to pay their fees (this was prior to #FeesMustFall, which developed later in the year). Booysen and Bandama (2016) argue that this campaign by Wits students helped to raise public awareness that there was something wrong with the funding of higher education. Shaeera Kalla, the SRC president at that time, noted that the campaign was important in foregrounding the crisis in university funding. She said that:

> *The 1 Million 1 Month campaign we ran in the beginning of the year led to us raising close to R5 million and was in itself a form of protest. This once again highlighted the inadequate funding of higher education that has become normalized in South Africa and 5 million was a drop in the ocean. This normalization is only a further perpetuation of the race based inequality in South Africa inherent in our universities. [Thomas] Sankara said the hand that feeds you controls you, we want systematic and structural change, we cannot treat poor students as charity cases, fundraising helps us survive but it does not enable structural change and cannot be done alone. (SAHO 2016)*

Despite the campaign successfully raising more than five million, it was not enough to cover the outstanding student fees at Wits. Critical points were raised that this was not just a campaign but a form of peaceful protest against the status quo remaining the same and reducing poor students to charity cases. Shaeera Kalla and her fellow students argued during this campaign that there was a need for 'systematic and structural change' to deal with the lack of funding for higher education as a means to transform our society and address the race-based inequalities in South Africa. As noted, the campaign's aims were multifaceted: to raise funds for poor students who couldn't afford fees; to highlight the fact that fees are unaffordable and that something needed to be done; and to alert the public, policy makers and politicians to the looming crisis in the higher education sector. Why, then, did their call for free education not capture the public imagination? Is it because the campaign was peaceful and non-violent? Nothing much was said about this campaign in the media, which only really started paying attention when the #FeesMustFall movement was born later in the year and started becoming violent. One student leader argued that the '1 month 1 million' campaign by Wits students highlighted the fact that students have always been invested in being part of the solution, in contrast to the manner in which they are represented in the media as violent and destructive:

> *Our fight did not start with #FeesMustFall at Wits. Every year early in the year we silently fight university systems not to exclude students due to unpaid fees. I can tell you so many students were excluded at Wits due to financial reasons and continue to be excluded. In 2015 we decided to come up with that campaign and managed to raise more than five million. So this media discourse that we are violent and want to burn the university is not true. We want to access education so that the cycle of poverty can be broken. We can't continue to have a situation where a black poor child is made to suffer or excluded from university because his or her parents are poor. We are not violent. The media tells a lot of lies about student protests. (Individual interview, SRC member, 2016)*

The '1 month 1 million' campaign at Wits was followed by #RhodesMustFall, which started at UCT (see the UCT case study in this report). #RhodesMustFall gained momentum and spread to other universities, notably Rhodes University and Wits, which joined under the banner of #TransformWits (Booysen & Bandama 2016). Organised by Wits Politics postgraduate students, #TransformWits met on 26 March 2015 to discuss five main issues (Pilane 2015):

- the need for more black academic staff to be recruited within the university;
- a more Afrocentric curriculum;
- questions and debates about Adam Habib's 'cosmopolitan university' vision;
- university support for poor students;
- broader transformation.

The main aim of #TransformWits was to discuss transformation at Wits and 'the meeting ended with a mini march to the stairs of Great Hall, where students demonstrated solidarity with the other transformation protests and campaigns currently taking place at the UCT, Rhodes and UKZN [University of KwaZulu-Natal]' (Pilane 2015). Worth noting is that there had already been talks between universities, especially around the issue of decolonisation. One student noted that there was a WhatsApp group which included people from different universities discussing issues around decolonisation and transformation of universities. Black students had started rejecting the institutional cultures of these universities, especially previously white universities, which they found alienating. As Jansen (2004: 301) notes:

> *The problem for urban institutions [predominantly white universities]. . . will be the complex task of transforming institutional cultures in ways that are more inclusive and accommodating of the statistical diversity of the student populations.*

Students at UCT and Rhodes had already started the conversation of what needs to be done for universities to transform. In April 2015, the #TransformWits movement launched its manifesto and resolved to deal with the six issues below as part of the transformation at Wits:

1. Africanisation of university symbolism and institutional memory (The students argued that the curriculum was too Eurocentric and that they wanted to read African scholars, who currently find little expression in the curriculum);
2. Radical revision and Africanisation of all university curricula;
3. Fast-track Africanisation of academic staff contingency;
4. An end to worker discrimination and outsourcing;
5. An end to financial exclusion of students;
6. Revision of the departmental academic structures that impede the output of black students (Zidepa 2015).

In sum, the key focus of the movement was on transformation, including decolonisation of the curriculum, support for black academics and an end to worker discrimination and the financial exclusion of students. At the centre of the struggle

Image by Kierran Allen

Image by Kierran Allen

was the marginalisation of black people at Wits, whether students, academics or workers (e.g., cleaning staff and other general workers). For example, from 27 to 29 March, a group of students and workers joined hands and 'peacefully occupied Wits' Vice Chancellor's office in protest against the lack of response by university management in the dismissal of the outsourced MJL electric workers. Wits settled by paying these workers outstanding wages, but refused to insource them' (Booysen & Bandama 2016: 319 page). There was a general acceptance that the fight for outsourced workers was linked with students' struggle against financial exclusion.

The reason why we joined with the outsourced workers is because these [are] our mothers and fathers, hence their struggle is our struggle. (Individual interview, Economic Freedom Fighters Student Command [EFFSC] member, 2016)

For a more detailed explanation of how workers and students collaborated in their protests against the dismissal of workers and the financial exclusion of students at Wits, see the work of Satgar (2016). Satgar critically explains how new struggles are re-emerging post-1994 in which students as the future middle class are involved in a liberatory and complicated class relationship with outsourced workers within universities. These new protests have also recentred Black Consciousness and Africanist politics in the struggle, which is not only about class but also about race and the emancipation of black people from the shackles of poverty and deprivation. Vuyani Pambo, who later became a prominent leader in the #FeesMustFall movement, was quoted as saying:

Wits had been brutal to the black students, workers and lecturers. (Booysen & Bandama 2016: 319)

The main argument by Pambo and other student leaders was that Wits alienates black people within the university, especially students, outsourced workers and lecturers who are not promoted to full professorship level. Another student activist claimed that

On the political side, yes, we have democracy and everything and when you look at Wits we have managed to decolonise when you look at the student demographics. We have managed to decolonise by the fact that

Image by SAHO

> *we now have more black students than white students but we have not been successful when it comes to the academic staff. The fact that we only have [a] few black professors in the whole school of social science, for an example. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*

Current student leaders have used various forums to raise pertinent issues – since 1994 and especially when services started being outsourced in 2000 – which staff and worker unions have failed to deal with over the years. Note that these issues were all raised prior to the start of #FeesMustFall in October 2015.

> *This is one of the key narratives that miss when the protests are being spoken about that it was nothing about violence and destruction of university property. We were raising structural issues of oppression and marginalisation of poor black people at Wits. (Individual interview, student leader, 2016)*

These events led to a growing class and race consciousness among the student population at Wits, and they challenged the university management to deal with the issues of transformation, outsourcing and the financial exclusion of black students. However, there was a strong feeling among student leaders interviewed for this study that Wits management did not fully engage with some of their issues, especially when the university decided to increase fees in 2015, which then led to the formation of the Wits #FeesMustFall movement. In the next section, Shaeera Kalla, the SRC president at that time, discusses the university's decision to increase fees despite their reservations about the affordability of such a decision.

Wits #FeesMustFall is born

South African History Online (SAHO 2015) narrates that SRC president Shaeera Kalla attended a Wits Council meeting on 8 October 2015 date accompanied by Nompendulo Mkhatshwa (the incoming president), who was given observer status. The issue of fee increases was discussed at this meeting. It is reported that after some deliberations and disagreements, the chairperson asked Council members to vote for or against a fee increment. Apart from one academic, Professor David Dickinson, the SRC president, and the only other student representative present (a member of the Post Graduate Association), everyone else voted for the fee increment (SAHO 2015). Nompendulo Mkhatshwa reflected on this Council meeting in an interview with *Destiny Magazine* (December 2015: 22):

> *Before we went into that meeting, she [Shaeera Kalla] told me that while it was going to be very difficult, she thought we should attend and see how far we got. When I arrived, I realized just how much voices of students were completely undermined by the lily-white council. We were just as good as pictures on the walls of that boardroom. Student's discussions are generally held in 20 minutes and taken to a vote very quickly. But discussion that's in the interests of that council can take up to an hour and everyone can offer input – so there's that kind of undermining.*

The view that student leaders are undermined in university Council meetings was shared by many student leaders interviewed in this study. They commented about how agenda items which pertain to students' well-being are discussed within a short space of time and are always subjected to voting, which students automatically lose because they form a minority in the Council. The university power structures are so alienating to student leaders that they feel disempowered in what they regard as their pseudo-participation. Hence, in their decolonisation agenda, students are also calling for the Council and Senate to have 50/50 representation of students and other university stakeholders. This feeling of disempowerment leads students to use protest as a form of engagement and as the only bargaining tool that they have. This, according to Shaeera Kalla, is what led them to feel that the only option they had was to protest.

> *This [was] a turning point towards protest being the only viable option left to deal with unfair exclusionary fee increases. (SAHO 2015)*

Shaeera went on to explain her feelings of anger about the Council meeting to increase fees:

> *I left council determined to do something – we had lost the battle within the university structures and the one thing left was protest – I made the decision, alerted my deputy president Omhle Ntshingila and the rest of the SRC and alerted the incoming SRC through Nompendulo. (SAHO 2016)*

It is important to note that the 2015 protest was initiated by the SRC, which led it throughout, even though figures like Vuyani Pambo and Mcebo Dlamini emerged later during the protest. The SRC led the protest under its banner and took full responsibility for it. We return later to this point to discuss the political power struggles that rocked #FeesMustFall at Wits, including the fall of Nompendulo Mkatshwa, largely due to her interview with *Destiny Magazine* and her strong association with the African National Congress (ANC).[30]

Peaceful disruption of university activities

Following the university's decision to increase fees, the SRC immediately released a communiqué to all students expressing their unhappiness about the fee increment for 2016. A decision to shut down the university was taken by a group of students with the support of the SRC. The university entrances were blocked and Senate House was occupied and renamed Solomon Mahlangu House,[31] a point we return to later in the chapter in terms of the decolonisation of university spaces. The occupation of Senate House, the administrative building of Wits, was symbolic, and students demanded that management come down and address them. They demanded that the university reverse the decision to increase fees. These protests were peaceful but disruptive of university academic activities, in line with Jane Duncan's (2016) argument that not all protests are violent but protests are generally disruptive in nature. However, the #FeesMustFall movement did employ violent tactics to achieve its goal even though that tended to alienate non-protesting students and lost the movement public sympathy. As one parent argued, 'their fight [for free education] is genuine but the violence, hhayi mani' (Informal discussion with parent, 2016). That said, Duncan (2016) contends that people often conflate protests with violence, especially the media. The peaceful disruption of university academic activities was a symbolic expression by Wits students:

> They just occupy the strategic entrances and make sure that no one comes in and there is no one going out…They then stopped everything to a standstill and it started as a symbolism to say 'we want you to feel what it means if you can't get into the university', what it means for some of us who are excluded because we don't have funding. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)

Shaeera reinforced that 'the shutdown was…symbolic in that it physically depicted the inaccessibility of higher education in South Africa' (SAHO 2016). The university responded to the shutdown by approaching the court to seek an interdict. The university succeeded with its court process and '[t]he South Gauteng High Court grant[ed] Wits an interim interdict for police to interfere on campus, if requested, to assist with regulating protests' (Booysen & Bandama 2016: 321). This interdict put the police at the hands of the university management in that they could be called at any time to restore order. Worth noting is that up to this point the protests had been non-violent, with only the disruption of classes. Most interviewees argued that the university's response of calling the police onto campus was the genesis of the violence, as police used excessive force and provoked the students into retaliating violently.

Habib, the Wits vice-chancellor, countered that the university was forced to act because the protesting students threatened non-protesting students and workers and in some instances attempted arson. They were thus forced to bring in private security and the police. Habib argued that the violence was not caused by the presence of the police and private security; rather, they were brought in in response to the violence of the protesting students.

> *The fact to note, however, is that none of this happened as a result of the presence of private security, or for that matter the police. In fact, neither private security nor police were present. Instead, they were brought in as a result of the arson or disruptions of the academic programme. (Habib 2016b)*

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[30] After her appearance on the cover of Destiny Magazine, Mkhatshwa was rejected by #FeesMustFall at Wits and fell from glory. She was accused of wanting to steal the movement and use it for her own political ambitions; of being a populist seeking media attention; of being a sell-out; of dividing the movement and wanting to crush it; and of taking orders from Luthuli House (ANC) to kill the movement.

[31] The decision to rename Senate House Solomon Mahlangu House was linked to a song that students were singing about the struggle icon, who was hanged by the apartheid regime.

He explained why they opted for private security instead of the police:

> *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. (Habib 2016a)*

The use of private security on campus was problematic because many did not have any form of identification and there were allegations of sexual harassment perpetrated by private security officials. Thereafter the university insisted that each security official wear a name tag. On the whole, the students during this period continued to protest peacefully without destroying any university property. They would meet at Solomon Mahlangu House to discuss their plans for the peaceful disruption of university academic activities. On 16 October 2015, Habib left the Higher Education Summit in Durban to address the protesting students. The students insisted that he call a Council meeting with immediate effect to address students' demands. Habib describes what transpired:

> *This faction, essentially taking instructions from an outside political party which called for the complete shutdown of universities, was not in a position to accede to a resolution. In fact, given that it was a very small minority (it had not won a single seat in a recent student leadership election), it served its strategic interest to effectively play a politics of spectacle. This involved insisting that all decisions were made in the mass meeting, where rational and pragmatic voices were silenced by accusing them of selling out. (Habib 2016b)*

However, for students it was a symbolic victory that the Executive Committee of the Council had taken place in front of them. Habib argued in an article in the Daily Maverick that there was no democracy within the student movement and that those who opposed the dominant narrative were often called sell-outs for voicing views which were against those that were pushing for continued protests. Wits students were not prepared to go to class without achieving their goal of free education. #FeesMustFall then spread to other universities. The fact that the movement was now nationwide was a positive development for student leaders at Wits, especially the SRC president. She narrated how she felt when the movement spread throughout the country to other campuses and explained how the movement was coordinated:

> *It was remarkably inspiring to see how quickly protests spread to other universities around the country. We were not shocked because these issues are not limited to one university – there is a fissure in the education system. There was a national communication WhatsApp group and various other groups where we kept updating each other on the developments at our various universities. The days were extremely busy; we had to be on the move. Students would come and ask us about various issues – suggest ideas; we had debates and discussions and study sessions inside Solomon Mahlangu House, formerly known as Senate House. The most challenging moment for me was controlling crowds – I eventually did figure it out but it did not help that I could not sing the way in which Mcebo, Ulo and Vuyani could. I remember being so overwhelmed and humbled on Friday when we had our mass meeting and the Executive Committee of Council (EXCO) was present – it was the same meeting where an agreement was signed between myself and the Chair of Council Dr Randal Carollisson, and when we began to address students they got up and sang 'u Shaeera lo My President' that moment gave me so much strength and made me proud that students had so much faith in their elected leadership. (SAHO 2016)*

The support from the students and the national coordination of the movement gave strength to the leadership of the movement, which at Wits now included Mcebo Dlamini, Nompendulo Mkhatshwa and Vuyani Pambo.

The students at Wits, joined by students from the University of Johannesburg, decided to march to Luthuli House, the headquarters of the governing ANC. Students now understood that the fight was not with the university, which was not

in a position to offer free education, but rather with the ANC-led government, whose responsibility it was. Shaeera Kalla explained the significance of this march:

> *Students at Wits collectively decided that we would take a memorandum to Luthuli House in preparation for the meeting at Union Buildings which we had taken a decision not to attend, the reason for this being that our demands were clear, there was no need to discuss them over tea. Furthermore we wanted to again radically change the power relationships that exist, between Council and students for example and the State and its people. We wanted the President to address the issues directly, with reasonable plans and timeframes given in response to our very reasonable and legitimate demands. (SAHO 2016)*

The students wanted a commitment from the ANC that, as the governing party, it would take action and talk to the relevant ministers in government to respond to students' demands.

> *The march was simple; we just wanted Gwede [Mantashe] to call his ministers and say 'do something maCom'. He has that power and it was also symbolic in that we [were] showing those in government that we know where the power lies. They all report to Luthuli House so we were going to their bosses before we meet them as government ministers deployed by Luthuli House. (Individual interview, EFFSC member, 2016)*
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> .

The march was an important moment in the movement in that it highlighted what the students wanted from the ANC as the ruling party. Ultimately, the announcement was made that there would be no fee increment for all universities throughout the country for 2016. However, some students continued to protest at Wits despite the announcement of a 0% fee increase. Many student activists argued that the 0% fee increment was the first step towards free education, but it did not address the issues of outsourcing, the exploitation of workers and the decolonisation of university spaces and the curriculum. Worth noting is that from the outset the EFFSC wanted the struggle to focus on the insourcing of workers and free education, while the Progressive Youth Alliance (PYA) wanted the university management to delay the proposed fee increases. Thus, after the 0% increase announcement, the PYA wanted to go back to class while the EFFSC wanted to continue the struggle of the outsourced workers, which led to divisions within the movement. The EFFSC continued with its support of workers until the university made the decision for them to be insourced. The first workers were insourced in early January 2017 and the process is set to continue until all general workers are insourced.

Free, decolonised education

Some activists, especially those from the EFFSC, argued that their demand was not for a 0% fee increment but for free, quality, decolonised education. One student activist explained the importance of this call for free, decolonised education:

> *This is an important call which is rather coming too late, especially 24 years after the attainment of democracy in South Africa. [It] is something that really was supposed to have been addressed way long [ago]…And once again it shows, like in any other society, that it is up to the youth of any given society and time – [they are] always at the centre of articulating some of the problems that might be bedevilling any given society. This talks to some of the issue that was not resolved post the transition in 1994 and is the question around education, access and not only just about access but also around the curriculum, the decolonisation of that curriculum. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*

Many interviewees asserted that the current curriculum was alienating to black students as it didn't include the African experience and was more about the Western or European experience. Hence, #FeesMustFall focused not only on fees but also on decolonising the curriculum:

> *It is in a way challenging the current curriculum that in a way must accept African culture. And the African experience [must] become the centre when it comes to education because as it stands now the system is*

> *designed to alienate the African experience…If you coming from rural village in the Eastern Cape or Limpopo, when you come to this space you have to learn to exist and to survive in this space and to become a new person because the culture that is here is not South African or African; it doesn't accommodate the black child. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*

Hence the decolonisation of education is necessary in order for the African child to 'exist' and not feel marginalised within academia. As Godsell and Chikane (2016: 60) note:

> *[t]he other level is the problem of students who are now ostensibly welcomed on HWI [historically white institution] campuses, but discover that they still have no agency or identity. Their delight at getting through the gate changed to despair and anger as they realized that their outsider status and inability to change things, or even to act, remained unaltered.*

The current system requires black students to assimilate into a system that is alien to them. They have to learn:

> *The language that is used here, the values, the dressing and the culture even before you get into the classroom. And when it comes to the classroom, the teachers who are there in the classroom, what they teach in the class and how they evaluate the student is just not designed to accept the African experience or experience of that black child. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*

It is for these reasons that (especially) black students at Wits challenged this colonial educational system that requires them to assume new identities in order to be recognised by the system. Even though black students have access to these previously white universities, they cannot lay claim to them and call them home. As Mbembe (2015:6) notes, 'when we say access, we are also talking about the creation of those conditions that will allow the black staff and student to say [about] the university: "This is my home. I am not an outsider here. I do not have to beg or to apologize to be here. I belong here"'. The opposite, however, is what is happening in these universities, as blacks always have to beg and apologise to be in these spaces. They don't have a feeling of belonging because the structure hasn't changed.

> *You have to die for you to live; you have to lose everything about yourself and learn to socialise yourself again into the culture here. Most of us who have come out tops here, we have lost ourselves as a black child because we are trying to be something we are not; we all trying to be white. We are all trying to learn another culture that is alien to us, because of the system. That is why is easy for you to move from here to Oxford and you fit in straight away, there is no problem…because you have now assimilated…That is how the system is like right now, that as an African child you have to lose yourself to make it. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*

These feelings of discrimination and alienation were shared by many of the students. The #FeesMustFall movement appears to have provided a space that is not ordinarily available for students to talk freely about their pain and suffering within former white universities. Students' renaming of Senate House to Solomon Mahlangu House was a symbolic action to decolonise university spaces to also reflect their own history:

> *We have Wartenweiler Library. We have Cullen Library. We have Oliver Schreiner Library. All these places are named after white men. There is nothing African here at Wits. We decided through our meetings that we will call Senate House Solomon Mahlangu as we see him as someone who has died for the liberation of this country. (Individual interview, SRC member, 2016)*

> *They [black students] find universities to be intellectually hostile environments accessorized with statues of mass murderers. (Poplak 2016)*

Solomon Mahlangu was an Umkhonto we Sizwe (ANC armed wing) soldier who was hanged by the apartheid regime when he was 22 years old. He is a symbol of struggle for protesting students at Wits and other universities across the country, along with Steve Biko and other struggle heroes and heroines. The students today believe that, 23 years into democracy, they are still fighting the same fight that was fought by those activists. This links with Satgar's (2016) argument that the student protesters of today are drawing on Black Consciousness and Africanist politics to make sense of their struggle post-1994.

Patriarchy and male dominance in the #FeesMustFall movement

#FeesMustFall was able to push the universities and the state to make certain concessions aimed at achieving free, quality, decolonised education. Despite its successes, the movement at Wits was also characterised by patriarchal attitudes and male domination at the leadership level. The march to Luthuli House sparked a debate about the dominance of males in the leadership of the movement and raised issues around patriarchy. Women started to question the dominance of male figures in the movement when Mcebo Dlamini and Vuyani Pambo dominated the march to Luthuli House and the female leaders, Nompendulo Mkhatshwa and Shaeera Kalla, were sidelined. An SRC member observed that female students were not happy with how things panned out in the march to Luthuli House.

> *I remember the following day we were just going to disrupt the status quo of the university, those women came with doeks and sjamboks in numbers; they came from the OLS gate to say 'we are here to protect our fellow females, they must be given the platform'. I remember we had a mass meeting in the Senate House, by then it was not yet Solomon Mahlangu House. Vuyane and Mcebo attempted to co-chair a meeting with Shaeera and Nompendulo and the women said 'not today'; sadly the meeting collapsed and they ended up going back to seek the guidance and the leadership of the two comrades. (Individual interview, SRC member, 2016)*

The female protesters were protecting their own after they felt that at Luthuli House Vuyani and Mcebo had undermined the elected female leaders. At the time Nompendulo was the incoming president and Shaeera the outgoing president. Mcebo and Vuyani didn't have any official status in the student leadership, especially in the SRC, which initiated #FeesMustFall at Wits. Hence the female protesters felt that they were being undermined by male student leaders. Female protesters lamented that female students needed to take steps to reclaim their positions within the movement. They also commented that the male domination within the movement was connected to the politics of patriarchy at the students' university residences:

> *You see the active participants of the Men's Hall of Residence, I think [they] are the largest participant in this movement…They [are] inducted in a way that a…female person is below you most of the times; they disagree to be led by a woman. In the beginning of the year you are inducted that you are a Raider, you lead Jubilee Female Res and Sunnyside and they are below you…that is why women don't find that sort of expression in this movement. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*

In short, the domination of male leaders (Vuyani and Mcebo) was not incidental but was linked with patriarchal practices within the university. Male students are told at the male residences that they are superior to female students. In commenting on this male domination, one female activist said:

> *The tasks that women were assigned, which were mostly gendered like organising food for the protesters and other related tasks, and the male leaders would speak at the meetings and lead. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*

It is reported that queer students were also not tolerated within the movement. An incident was reported at Wits in which a lesbian activist student was pushed around by fellow male students. The incident was allegedly driven by feelings of homophobia and intolerance of queer students within the movement. However, it is important to note that

female protesters were not simply passive victims of patriarchy – they asserted their positions within the movement. Activists such as Simamkele Dlakavu, Busisiwe Katherine Seabi, Sarah Ulv Mokwebo and others defied elements of male domination within #FeesMustFall. These female leaders asserted their positions through writing media articles, conducting interviews and participating in the leadership structures of the movement.

**Power struggle within #FeesMustFall at Wits **

The #FeesMustFall movement was started by the Wits SRC leadership. However, some students allege that once the movement gained its momentum, there was interference from political organisations outside campus. The PYA, which included the South African Student Congress (SASCO), the ANC Youth League (ANCYL) and the Muslim Student Association, was the leading SRC student organisation at Wits. It is alleged that the PYA-led SRC was instructed by the ANC to suspend its protest after the president announced a 0% fee increment. However, this created tension with the EFF-aligned student movement, which wanted the protest to continue until free, quality and decolonised education was achieved. The EFF-aligned student movement also wanted the protest to continue in support of outsourced workers. One PYA leader had this to say:

> *You know we went to Union Buildings if you recall quite clearly the intention of the #FeesMustFall last year was that we are demanding a 0% fee increment. The university failed, the DHET [Department of Higher Education and Training] failed and Treasury failed and eventually the Presidency gave us that demand. Now when we got that, the perception of our political party and its alliance youth wings was that we are going to go back to class and write exams and stop protesting; that was also my perception as a person. When we came back there was a view, from the EFF to be quite precise, to say, 'What about workers? Let us start a new struggle of insourcing. Actually, even that 0% must not be celebrated – we want free education now. If the president can give us 0%, why can't he give us free education?' I remember last year, I can't remember the actual day, the NEC [National Executive Committee] of YCL [Young Communist League], SASCO, ANCYL and Cosas [Congress of South African Students] called us and said, 'Comrades, as our deployees, can we please meet you' and we*

Image by Francois Swanepoel

said 'yes we can'. They said we are on our way and discussed the issue of going back to classes. (Individual interview, SRC member, 2016)

It is at this point that divisions started to emerge within #FeesMustFall at Wits. The EFF-aligned student movement led by Vuyani Pambo continued to protest to demand that outsourced workers be insourced. As noted, in early 2017 the university started the process of insourcing general workers as a result of the struggle of these students. The PYA was accused of selling out the workers and lambasted for their decision to return to classes after the 0% fee increment. Some respondents asserted that the leadership of Nompendulo started to be compromised at this point. She allegedly stopped attending the protests for insourcing although Shaeera continued to attend workers' protests. It is further alleged that Nompendulo's leadership as the SRC president was compromised by her strong association with the ANC.

As a student leader [it] is not wrong to be politically aligned but the moment you participate actively in active politics of governance, in ANC councils and all those things, it led to her downfall because students started saying, 'Nompendulo is not our president' and there was nothing that we could do about that and eventually she was nowhere to be found. (Individual interview, SRC member, 2016)

The fact that she was in the spotlight didn't sit well with other people and the way she is still active in the ANC at national level worried a lot of people and I think that led to her downfall. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)

Later in the year, Nompendulo appeared on the cover of *Destiny Magazine* Photo 3

Following the publication of this magazine, Nompendulo was accused of using the #FeesMustFall movement to advance her political ambitions, with allegations that she was hired by the ANC during this period. Was the fall of Nompendulo also a result of the politics of patriarchy within the #FeesMustFall movement? It is possible that her leadership as a female disrupted the dominant script of men as leaders within student movements and politics in general.

Image by Kierran Allen

Vuyani Pambo and Mcebo Dlamini also became dominant faces of #FeesMustFall at Wits but there were no allegations of them using the movement to advance their own political ambitions. Is it because it is the norm in politics for men to occupy positions of power? Did the gender of Nompendulo as a black female activist play a role in these allegations? It is common cause that female political leaders are often not given the same political respect as their male counterparts. It is thus important to read criticisms levelled against Nompendulo with some scepticism. Even though she made political blunders, like her appearance on the Destiny Magazine cover wearing an ANC doek, which then branded her and the #FeesMustFall movement which was supposedly apolitical. This branding of the movement and interventions by political parties weakened the movement and caused divisions.

The leadership of the #FeesMustFall movement across different universities is dominated by male students. It is therefore important that female student leaders such as Nompendulo, Shaeera and others emerge and re-emerge within the movement to assert a politics of black Africanist feminism that is liberatory and emancipatory.

Wits management

Students interviewed asserted that the university management had not been supportive of their demands, evident in its decision to increase fees in 2015 and 2017. Students claimed that it is unfair for the university to be raising fees when the majority of students are unable to pay them.

> *University management seems to be anti-poor because these decisions to increase fees affect poor black students. (Individual interview, SRC member, 2016)*

> *Many poor black students get excluded financially here at Wits because some are not able to pay for these expensive fees. How does the university expect us to pay for all these increases? (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*

Students said that protesting was the only option they had as the university management often didn't listen to them. They narrated how they tried to engage with management around the issue of increasing fees but the university went ahead anyway and increased the fees.

> *An honours accounting student came up with some projections for us and we also consulted other stakeholders within the university – this period of consultations really opened my eyes to the complete lack of transparency within the university. In our meeting with the CFO [Chief Financial Officer] Linda Jarvis and Accountant Daniel Gozo, we were arrogantly dismissed when we asked for this information, with Daniel saying it would be impossible to give projections. We felt that the entire consultation process was a means to keep us busy and not really engage on an intellectual level on how unsustainable these fee hikes are – it was very clear that the university saw poor students as only a liability and really did not care about the accessibility and financial burden these increases were causing. (SAHO 2016)*

The students added that the university management did not engage with them in 'good faith', especially when fee increments were discussed. This sense of not being heard is what prompted the formation of #FeesMustFall and other protests that have taken place since then.

> *The fact that you bring police against someone who is unarmed you are already trying to show that…'I am prepared to crush you' and also shows that you are not interested in giving a chance for negotiations. You are only prepared to have your own way and…only your own way and your way is only sustainable through violence. (Individual interview, PYA member, 2016)*

Another complaint raised against the university management was the use of and overreliance on court interdicts to

silence students.

You know as a result of this court order we could not gather in groups, nor sing or take any form of protest on campus. The protest dies, but the students continue the conversations and organise events for the movement to keep the momentum going in and outside campus. (Individual interview, PYA member, 2016)

> *Wits management gets a court interdict to prevent further disruption of registration and bring in additional private campus security. The court order outlaws (in the words used in the order): 'unlawfully occupying "Senate House" or any other offices, buildings, facilities or lecture halls, disrupting normal activities including registration, classes, lectures, tutorials, abstracting or preventing any person from entering or leaving the university or any Wits buildings and facilities; causing damage to property; participating in, calling for, inciting or encouraging unlawful behaviour, harassing, intimidating, threatening or assaulting any person on campus and being in possession of any dangerous weapon including knives, sticks or the like'. The order enables management to bring police onto campus. (Booysen & Bandama 2016: 324)*

Student leaders were suspended for violating these court interdicts. The court orders were also used by the university to justify bringing police onto campus, which led to violence. Students made numerous allegations of police brutality:

> *Yoh! The police hit us. They hit me, my hand were so swollen I was even scared that my fingers were broken (Individual interview, PYA member, 2016)*

> *The violence just went downhill; from there on it was just a lot because literally every 10 minutes we were getting shot at, teargassed and stun-grenaded so it was getting too much. (Individual interview, PYA member, 2016)*

> *The [2016] movement was a peaceful movement if you go to the first three weeks when campus was shut down – there were no incidents of violence or whatsoever. But the fourth week when the university forced to reopen that's where ruptures started to emanate from because we would for an example ask to have a mass meeting at Solomon Mahlangu House. Because we viewed that thing as our national key point, it has meaning to us, so the university will disagree to say you can only have access after five. So, students will be agitated and start throwing stones at bouncers and police and they will start shooting and that's where the violence essentially came from. (Individual interview, PYA member, 2016)*

> *The police were here and you didn't have a chance to negotiate with them they were told that 'just shoot everything that is moving on two legs and everything just gets chaotic and the students become frustrated and they end up by responding with violence. And you see this when the students were also violent on the security the security responded with violence and throwing back the stones to the students and in a way it becomes and cycle of violence and then it cannot be resolved. (Individual interview, PYA member, 2016)*

In response to the police brutality, students resorted to looting and damaging property both on and off campus, which derailed the movement because these acts lost them the public sympathy which they needed to achieve their cause. It is hence important for students to refrain from these actions and to consider other ways of dealing with police brutality.

This cycle of violence affected the movement and it started shedding huge numbers because some students couldn't stand the police violence that they were facing on campus:

> *Because you must admit that you can't defeat the state in terms of violence; they possess the monopoly of violence. (Individual interview, EFFSC member, 2016)*

During this period Mcebo Dlamini, one of the leaders, was arrested and remanded in custody for a month until he was

released on bail. Some students claimed that the arrest of Mcebo and other student leaders was aimed at instilling fear and intimidating them.

> *Yes, after Mcebo was arrested we were all living in fear. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*
>
> *I know of many student leaders who stopped sleeping at res due to fears of being arrested. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*
>
> *The arrest of Mcebo did affect the movement as many leaders were scared of being arrested themselves. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*

The arrest of the student leaders had an impact on the number of protesters. The message was clear from the state that they wanted to crush the protest and the arrest of Mcebo was especially important and symbolic in this regard. He was arrested at his place of residence in the early hours of the morning and not in the picket line. As one student activist argued, the way they arrested him made it even more difficult to keep the momentum of the protest going as people were generally scared and didn't want to be seen in the picket lines because they didn't know what would happen to them at night.

Students blamed the increased level of violence on the university management. However, the university defended its decision by arguing that it had no choice but to call the police to bring law and order.

> *If the majority of students and staff support the reopening on Monday, the University will call upon government and the police to meet their obligations to protect the University's property and to safeguard the lives of students and staff. (Wits communiqué 26 September 2016)*

Students also spoke about the relationship between the violence on campus and the neoliberal agenda of the state and the higher education sector, as well as of the collusion between the state and the university:

> *There is a relationship between politics and economics, the political ideology that they subscribe to is a neoliberal and doesn't accommodate anything to deal with anything free or whatever and free education. So, they do not have a solution to the demands that the students are presenting on the table so the only way is to suppress it. And how do you suppress it? You use violence. (Individual interview, protesting student, 2016)*
> *Violence is used as means of controlling and putting everyone to line and to order but it didn't work because we all know that that problem was not resolved and we [are] waiting for part 3. (Individual interview, PYA member, 2016)*
> *We will ask them [police] to escort us to Hillbrow police station and they will refuse and they will start shooting at us and students will start doing unholy things and looting and damaging property but we are where we are. We can't win a battle against the state and the university all at once and their conniving. You know if the other was backing us up, for an example if we were fighting the university without the state interference, it would be a different story. Or if we were fighting the state without the interference of the university, we would be able to shut down the university and go to the state (Individual interview, SRC member, 2016).*

The state ultimately succeeded in demobilising the students because the protests declined in numbers and the university was able to open. However, no one has won because the violence didn't solve the problems that both parties have. Student leaders claim that the violence will almost certainly re-emerge in 2017.

Conclusion

#FeesMustFall at Wits was at the centre of the whole movement and in 2015 major gains were achieved, with the highlight being the 0% fee increase. The movement also brought to the table the debate around free higher

education. The 2016 movement at Wits, although not as successful as it was in 2015, was more about challenging the status quo and was centred around the decolonisation of the university rather than on fees. The decolonisation project that the movement has started at Wits is an important one, as it seeks to highlight some of the structural issues at the university, most notably the marginalisation of black and African experiences in the curriculum and in how things are done at the university. Black students are forced to assimilate rather than being included in the university. Decolonisation will not be realised in a day but the fact that it is back on the table has ushered in a new era in terms of how the university does things. Changing the demographics of the student body alone does not mean that the university is decolonised. More needs to be done to ensure that black students and staff feel that they are a part of the university.

The most important thing about the #FeesMustFall movement is that it has brought the issues of decolonisation and transformation back into the South African discourse. The rainbow nation promised by Mandela in 1994 has been questioned, given the increasing inequalities between the rich and the poor. The #FeesMustFall movement has forced South Africans to ask hard questions about what the 1994 democratic breakthrough really meant and the gains that it has brought for poor black people. The conversation needs to continue dealing with issues of transformation and access to decolonised, free, quality higher education.

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