

FEEES MUST FALL

Student Revolt, Decolonisation
and Governance in South Africa

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PRIMARY VOICES – 'THE ROOTS OF THE REVOLUTION'

THE ROOTS OF THE REVOLUTION

Gillian Godsell and Rekgotsofetse Chikane

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the roots of the 2015 and ongoing protests in South Africa across three areas. The first area is that of the views, beliefs and experiences of current students. The voice here is chiefly that of Rekgotsofetse Chikane, who was centrally involved in the Fallist movement.¹ Chikane's primary voice brings a particular insight into the philosophies that shaped and grew out of the protests at the University of Cape Town (UCT) and elsewhere. The other two areas are the social and political roots of the protests, and those roots as found in South African university management practices.

STUDENT ROOTS

In public discussions, the Fallist movement and the academic project are often presented as incompatible. This chapter argues that decolonisation is the necessary road towards inclusive academic excellence. Pro-democracy and anti-fee protests worldwide have located themselves within the discourse about the role and purpose of a university for students and society. Across the globe, students

are re-imagining the functioning of a university. They are rejecting the dominant ideologies of managerialism, neoliberalism and commodification within universities (Gonzalez 2012).

The South African protests of 2015 were driven by the same process of radical re-imagining. Set within the rapidly changing context of race, class, gender and various intersectional relations on campus, the protests were one facet of a new discussion regarding the role of South African universities in the development of their students. Malia Bouattia (2015: 26), describing the need for radical action to decolonise higher education in the United Kingdom, writes that as '... minor reforms are not working, we require alternatives to structures which mainly benefit straight white middle-class men'. The students in South Africa similarly require, not minor reforms of their institutions, but revolutionary change.

Noor Nieftagodien, chair of the History Workshop and active member of the October 6 movement at the University of the Witwatersrand, explains that this protest is not just about incorporating more black students into the status quo. It is about deep change within the university (Noor Nieftagodien, personal communication, 10 November 2015). South African students are seeking a university where workers, academics and students all feel welcome: a postcolonial university where they 'recognise themselves' and feel at home. As Nqobile Malaza, lecturer at Wits, put it in a Facebook post of 19 October 2015: 'The dream for a transformed society that breathes fairness, equality, equity and social justice is one whose time has undeniably come' (Nqobile Malaza, personal communication, 10 June 2016).

What differentiates the protests of 2015 from other access-related protests that have taken place across campuses over the past decade has been the (sometimes temporary and fluid) ideological solidarity among the various political and non-political student organisations and actors. The dedicated solidarity with workers may be one of the issues that sets South Africa 2015 apart from other student revolutions – stretching from China to Mexico (Castells 2015) – in the twenty-first century.

The root of the student protests of 2015 can be found within the nexus between the efforts of students, workers and academics to change the transformation discourse on university campuses across the country. This discourse has, in the past, often been reduced to what Nicola Rollock (2015), referring to academia in the United Kingdom, calls 'racial gesture politics ... which appear to offer serious engagement with the issue of race inequality but in reality do very little'. The mass mobilisation of these varied stakeholders under a single

issue was made possible by convergence of their beliefs regarding their roles in achieving transformation within their sectors. Crain Soudien (2010) reminds us that an understanding of the structural and ideological characteristics of the university is necessary if we are to unlock the transformation puzzle.

'Structural' refers to the ordered sociological relations among actors within the university; 'ideological' pertains to the 'beliefs and assumptions which define and articulate understandings of what the nature of the problem and its solutions are' (Soudien 2010: 883). The structural and the ideological have to be understood together. Where previous protests focused only on structural issues within the university, the debate among students and academics has progressed to a point at which the ideology of the university becomes the new area of protest.

Where Soudien sees ideology as a set of beliefs and assumptions, students have begun to understand it in a way similar to Peter Ekeh's interpretation of ideologies in African politics in the 1970s. Ekeh (1975: 94) argues that ideology can be considered as a set of theories based on interests and used both deliberately and unconsciously by intellectuals to distort or pervert the truth in order to advance points or ideas that favour or benefit their own interest groups. The ideological protest of students should be seen as an attempt to speak on behalf of their own sets of beliefs where their interests are not recognised by or within the university.

At UCT, the emergence of #RhodesMustFall and the philosophy of Fallism is a result of discussions and events challenging the transformation discourse on campus over the previous two decades. At Wits, managerialism and outsourcing have been opposed actively since 2000 (Kenny and Clarke 2000; Bezuidenhout and Fakier 2006).

The words of Mahmood Mamdani in 1997 encapsulate the rationale behind the student uprisings: '[T]he university is one of the most racialised institutions in South African society – as racialised as big business. The only difference is that while big business is sensitive to this fact, universities are not. The university is proud of its exclusivity, considering it an inevitable consequence of the pursuit of excellence' (Mamdani 1997: 2). In the pursuit of excellence, universities in South Africa, in particular historically white universities, failed in the role of intellectual arbiter of socioeconomic transformative change in a newly democratic country.

Mamdani's own controversial departure from UCT in 1996 entrenched the belief among students at UCT and other universities that a re-imagining of the university structure was not possible without the re-imagining of the ideological

identity of the university beyond the search for excellence. As Isaac Kamola (2012: 149) explains, 'Mamdani's 1998 public demand that a post-apartheid university defines excellence in terms of how well it encourages students to critically engage South Africa's apartheid history directly conflicted with UCT's stated aspirations of presenting itself as a "world-class" university; one that trains skilled workers in a "global knowledge economy" ... "excellence" should be conceptualised within the immediate politics of the postcolonial university, and shaped by its constituency, rather than simply imported from external sources'.

In 2011, UCT's student representative council (SRC) hosted a series of discussions called 'To whom does UCT belong?' The purpose was to question and examine the institutional culture of the university, particularly the belief that UCT, as an institution, was inherently anti-black. In 2012, a seminar organised by Mpumi Tshabalala, 'Is UCT Racist?' took the discussions further. During the course of the seminar, a student asked: 'If UCT is not racist, why is Cecil John Rhodes's statue still there?' This statement challenged the university for failing to acknowledge the culture it had created, and in this moment the terms of the conversation about race relations on campus and their broader impact on society began to change. The terms of previous conversations had never been balanced. This imbalance – caused primarily by the role that 'whiteness' has played in tempering discussions – has placed a lid on volatile conversation, which is seemingly only for the few.

The university unrest of 2015 can be traced to the continued use of tempered discussions as proxy conversations for transformation. These conversations maintained the status quo. For students, the proxy conversations took the form of race discussions or workshops, university admissions policy debates and the nature of SRC and management interactions. For academic staff, the discussions took the proxy of employment equity targets, academic tenure and the ever present argument about quantity versus quality. For workers on campus, the discussions were about negotiating outsourcing agreements.

A key moment of the 2015 protests was the ability of #RhodesMustFall to bring the various stakeholders – all engaged in their own proxy wars with university transformation – into discussions that no longer focused on the role the university should play in transformation but, rather, the role the stakeholders had to play in transforming the university.

On 9 March 2015, Chumani Maxwele held a protest at the site of the Cecil John Rhodes statue. This began a week of events eventually leading to the occupation of Bremner Building, the administrative head office of UCT and the

formation of #RhodesMustFall, defined on its Facebook page as a '... student, staff and worker movement mobilising against institutional white supremacist capitalist patriarchy for the complete decolonisation of UCT'. But as Christina Pather (2015: 1) notes, the student-led protest was not about Rhodes or his fall but, rather, a 'symbolic physical representation of all that is wrong with our universities and the country'.

In a memo to the University of Nairobi's English Department demanding its abolition, Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1995: 438) wrote:

... if the basic assumption that the English tradition and the emergence of the modern West is the central root of our consciousness and cultural heritage ... Here then, is our main question: If there is a need for a 'study of the historic continuity of a single culture', why can't this be African? Why can't African literature be at the centre so that we can view other cultures in relationship to it?

In a similar way, the efforts of the #RhodesMustFall movement were refocused on placing, at the centre, the experience and consciousness of young black adults within a white institution. This meant that other cultures and values (in particular, whiteness) were viewed and experienced in relation to black experience. This act of re-centering began to change both the nature and the manner of the interactions between students and management.

DECOLONISATION, NOT TRANSFORMATION

Driven by Frantz Fanon's belief that '... decolonisation, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder' (Fanon 1963: 36), #RhodesMustFall changed the nature of transformation discourse to a broader discussion of access and the success of black students in an institution seen as a colonial/apartheid artefact disrupting their progress. If this institution was seen as a remnant of the colonial situation, then 'decolonisation ... is therefore the need of a complete calling in question of the colonial situation' (Fanon, 1963: 36). Through the acts of #RhodesMustFall – that eventually led to the fall of the Rhodes statue on 9 April 2015 – the philosophy of Fallism began.

Fallism should be understood as the reinvigorated process in which the decolonisation project has been renewed in the higher education system and

in society at large. #RhodesMustFall revived the decolonial project started by James Ngugi, Henry Owuor-Anyumba and Taban Lo Liyong at the University of Nairobi in 1968 and by Mahmood Mamdani during the 1990s (Garuba 2015; Kamola 2012). Though Fallism as a philosophical construction among students is not yet aligned across campuses, there have been attempts to aggregate its understanding with Fallism utilising black consciousness in conjunction with intersectionality as a way of understanding the logic of the movements (Smith 2015: 43). What can be assumed for the time being is that the basic foundations of Fallism reside within the ambit of the decolonisation project of the African university as described by Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013): the radical transformation of the curriculum and institutional frameworks of the university including the values that distinguish and underpin it. It is this radical change in values that has created the space for students to critically link issues of race, intersectionality, radical black feminism, black consciousness, pan-Africanism, gender and sexuality with discussions about access and success within a university. It is in the context of these conversations and discussions that the structural issues of the institution have been questioned.

Fallism locates black consciousness and radical black feminism as integral aspects of the decolonial project. Through the use of intersectionality, Fallism engages and deconstructs what Anibal Quijano describes as the colonial matrix of power which speaks to the control and coloniality of four interrelated domains: the economy, gender and sexuality, knowledge and subjectivity, and authority (Quijano, cited in Mignolo 2007: 156). The work of #RhodesMustFall at UCT, and the emergence of Fallism, have created the space for students on university campuses across the country to begin questioning the manner in which they engage with each other and with management and society.

Through organisations such as Open Stellenbosch, the Black Student Movement at the university currently known as Rhodes University,² the Black Student Stokvel at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Transform Wits and also the October 6 Movement at Wits, the influence of Fallism was extended. Coalitions these organisations created on campuses proved pivotal during the #FeesMustFall protests. Questions of access and success within the university system became entwined with the decolonisation project, examining the deeper issues affecting student throughput rates. The roots of the revolution are constantly fertilised by the growing resentment at the current embodiment of transformation in a post-1994 society. Resentment grew against the use of transformation as a functional response to a deeply ideological problem.

Fallism brought a discussion that had existed exclusively at historically black institutions (HBIs) of higher learning into the context of historically white institutions (HWIs). #FeesMustFall's origins can be traced to the growing discontent among students in HBIs and their relations with the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) (among other financial issues) (South African Press Association 2014; Mama and Feni 2012; Mokoena 2014). Discussions and actions on HWI campuses took on a form and content not previously seen there.

ROOTS WITHIN SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY

What brought about this change? Massification brings previously excluded problems onto campus. As Madalena Fonseca (2012: 385) writes about higher education in Portugal after 1974, 'growth in size and diversity ... [brought] into higher education many of the conflicts and contradictions that once flourished in society beyond the university and in the world outside'. In South Africa, two levels of problems, permanent throughout the history of HBIs, began to be reflected on HWI campuses. One level was the problems of poverty: students lacking food, transport, housing and books, on campuses where many staff still expected students to have middle-class resources. The other level is the problem of students who are now ostensibly welcomed on HWI 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 realised that their outsider status and inability to change things, or even to act, remained unaltered.

Ferial Haffajee (2015) recognises this pattern in another context, and describes it as the need for black people, even at senior corporate level, to 'check their blackness at the door' in order to succeed. The political commentator Steven Friedman (personal communication, 7 March 2016) describes the frustration and rage of senior black employees who feel that although they have opportunities denied to their parents and grandparents, race prejudice has not changed since 1994. According to Friedman, these employees feel that they have been invited into the club, only to discover that this club has an A and a B membership, and they are not A members.

The problems of both poverty and exclusion are personified on South African campuses by first-generation students – students who battled to pay fees, who felt alienated on campus and who identified closely with workers. First-generation students come from families in which no one has been to university. Servaas van

der Berg (2013) suggests that the best way of estimating first-generation students is simply to count the number of NSFAS bursaries. That is probably an underestimate. Anecdotally, it seems that first-generation students make up a majority of students across South African campuses, although not on every campus.

Increasing numbers of first-generation students in a developing country are not a given. Tadit Kundu (2015) argues that differences in educational levels can persist for generations, and suggests that the correlation of educational attainment between fathers and sons has, in India, been steady between fathers and sons born between 1949 and 1985.

It is a marker of some post-apartheid success that significant numbers of black students are achieving well enough in high school to enter university, and that they are present in large numbers on all South African campuses. Unexpectedly, the changes resulting from educating these new students are not just a hope for the future but are already apparent in the current protests.

STUDENTS, RELATIVES, WORKERS, ACADEMICS: ALL PRECARIOUS

Although fees and outsourcing may seem unconnected, they are linked by an apartheid past and a precarious present. Employment and education are perceived as the highways out of poverty. Fees that prevent students from entering university, debt that bars them from graduating, and precarious employment are roadblocks on these highways.

Joseba Gonzalez (2012: 172–175) warns that it is not only low-level workers who are precarious, but students themselves, and even employees with degrees. He suggests that the function of the modern, economically-oriented university is to train and provide precarious workers for the knowledge economy. He refers to the students as 'the precarious in training ... for flexible production', and labels the university 'a factory of precariousness'. That two precarious groups, students and outsourced workers (see also Chapter 4 in this volume) encountered these impediments to an individual and a group flight from poverty at the same place and time does not yet account for their degree of solidarity. To explain this, we need to look at who the students are. A characteristic of the student/worker interaction in 2015 was that the workers were addressed as 'our mothers and our fathers'. Student Mpho Sithole tweeted: 'These workers are our mothers, they suffered through apartheid and continue to suffer through "democracy"' (Sithole 2015). This is partially a form of respect, but also reflects the life circumstances

of many first-generation students for whom a mother, sister, grandmother or aunt may well be in domestic service – a particular form of precariousness. There is a deep personal understanding of, and revulsion for, the abuses endured by this category of worker. Student Simamkele Dlakavu tweeted: ‘The joy in our mothers and fathers faces! Thixo wam! what a moment! Wits gets insourcing! #EndOutsourcing’ (Dlakavu 2015)

Personal student identification with the experiences of the poorest is not unique to South Africa. The Indian student leader Kanhaiya Kumar, just released from jail, told an audience that as he comes from Bihar state, ‘the farmer who works in the fields is my father. It is my brother who joins the army ... the policeman, like me, comes from an ordinary family; like me, wanted to pursue studies, yet is working as a policeman’ (Kumar 2016).

This sympathy is not an inevitable part of a working-class experience on campus. The explicit connection is in stark contrast to Rose’s (2001: 462) account of the contempt of middle-class students in England in the 1960s for a ‘culturally conservative working class ... porters, cleaning ladies and the kitchen staff ... were quite often treated shamefully and with derision’. On South African campuses, specifically the Wits/UJ alliance, the sympathy extended to students taking considerable personal risks – from arrest to expulsion – to support workers’ demands. Workers reciprocated, not only demonstrating with students (see Chapter 5 in this volume), but also by contributing money for food for occupying students, and money for bail when UJ students were arrested (Noor Nieftagodien, personal communication, 16 January 2016). This pattern of solidarity is not limited to campuses. Haffajee (2015) describes how solidarity with extended family in dire circumstances affects the way in which middle-class black South Africans describe their own well-being. While uncles still live in shacks, cousins in townhouses do not see themselves as having achieved financial stability.

Debt is an acute form of precariousness. Indebtedness is a growing problem, globally (Kowzan 2010) and locally (James 2014). Student debt is a significant sub-section of this problem. High university fees and unbearable levels of debt are an international concern (Marshall 2012; Hill 2015; Smelzer and Hearn 2015). Debt makes the lives of students particularly precarious. Indebted students have no leeway; their post-graduation choices are constrained by the need to repay. These debt-vulnerable students incur even greater risks through any form of campus activism, which could be an obstacle to graduating or limit post-graduation job opportunities, which may impair their repayment capacity. First-generation students have a particular vulnerability. Family resources have

been invested in them; their education is expected to uplift not just themselves but a whole family. Their parents may have vivid apartheid-era memories of the violent consequences of opposing authority.

Indebtedness does not only affect working-class families where first-generation students aspire to higher education as a way out of poverty, but also middle-class and second- or third-generation students (Williams 2006). However, unaffordable fees as an entry barrier, and unbearable debt as an unintended consequence of even an uncompleted degree, are not the whole story. Hueslman et al. (2015) point out that, internationally, although higher education has been viewed as an antidote to inequality, rising fees may mean that student debt actually contributes to inequality. We must focus on the varied forms of this inequality, not only debt-induced, to understand what happened in 2015.

ROOTS IN UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

Edward Webster, of the Society, Work and Development Institute at Wits, explained that the protests against outsourcing may be seen as a continuation of the political concern expressed by students at the treatment of workers under apartheid (personal communication, 19 November 2015). The Wages Commission was a branch of the National Union of South African Students, started on English-speaking South African campuses in the early 1970s (Moss 2014), concerned with workers in general, and focusing on sectoral wage hearings. The 2015 revolution was not about workers in general, or workers as a category, but expressed itself in an intensely personal concern with workers on South African university campuses. This can be related to the idea of a personal revolution, discussed in Chapter 5 in this volume.

Outsourcing at South African universities cannot be understood without insight into the deep changes in the public service around the world. For about the last thirty years (Laegreid 2016), from New Zealand to the United States (Moynihan 2006), the public service has increasingly taken on the characteristics of the private sector. This change has many different labels, from managerialism to the New Public Management. Colin Bundy, Wits vice-chancellor from 1997 to 2001, explained that the call in the private sector that organisations should concern themselves with core functions only, and delegate ‘non-core’ to specialists, appeared relevant to the public sector as well (personal communication, 14 December 2015). The New Public Management, although not a unified or even

easily categorised movement (Roberts 2016), favoured delegation and lower-level autonomy to achieve accountability.

Accountability is an important theme of the New Public Management. Noor Nieftagodien (personal communication, 10 November 2015) comments that the question 'who is the university accountable to?' is seldom asked. The answer that comes from the October 6 Movement is that the university should be accountable to students, workers, staff and perhaps parents – and not only to donors, Council, Executive Committee, Senate and Convocation.

Delegation, accountability and proper management of non-core (non-academic) functions were particularly attractive at Wits in 1997. Judge Edwin Cameron, chairperson of the Wits University Council 1998–2008 described Wits as being in an 'institutional crisis', with donors, A-rated researchers, senior black academics and students deserting it for other universities (Edwin Cameron, personal communication, 7 January 2016). The gardens and buildings were neglected, and even the toilets were not properly cleaned. 'We spend more than we earn,' a letter in the *Mail & Guardian* argued as a reason for outsourcing in order to cut costs (Kenny and Clarke 2000).

Managerialism had taken the academic world by storm, globally (Williams 2006) and locally (Bertelsen 1998). Four major South African universities, starting with UCT in 1998 (Kenny and Clarke 2000) had already introduced outsourcing (Colin Bundy, personal communication, 14 December 2015) and other aspects of New Public Management such as centralisation of departments into fewer faculties under more highly paid executive deans, so it is not surprising that it should have been introduced at Wits, as a small part of sweeping organisational reform (Barchiesi 2000).

In South Africa outsourcing offered two advantages to both public and private sector. With the arrival of democracy in 1994, calls for increased egalitarianism provoked the scrutiny of pay differentials within organisations, and a quick way of reducing these differentials was simply to slice off the bottom sector of the wage scale, excluding it from comparison with other salaried workers because they were now employed by someone else. The management of these workers was then delegated to an outside organisation, which also seemed to solve the problem of managing militant unionised workers (hiving bottom-level workers off in this fashion made union organising more difficult, around the world (Drahokoupil 2015)).

The New Public Management as a whole offered something of a panacea for a messy, uncooperative, expensive public sector. Vice-chancellors and university

councils with impeccable political credentials adopted outsourcing (Colin Bundy, personal communication, 14 December 2015). At Wits, outsourcing was part of a deep restructuring in which the university was to focus on its core business. In a time of low management morale (Colin Bundy, personal communication, 2015) and high worker militancy, what New Public Management offered was reform, control and, if not exactly order, then at least someone else to manage the disorder.

However, Anne McLennan of the Wits School of Governance (personal communication, 15 December 2015) has pointed out that a problem with delegation of control had already been noted by Henry Mintzberg in 1996, in pleading for 'a shift in emphasis to the normative model, where control is rooted in values and beliefs' (1996: 81). Mintzberg foresaw problems where the New Public Management was presented as a formula, the right way of doing things, without examining whether this formula embodied or developed institutional values. Eve Bertelsen (1998) took this argument further, claiming that the New Public Management was in fact an ideology rather than merely a value. She warned that by the turn of the century, managerialist values would be presented as common sense, thus not open to scrutiny of implementation or, most importantly, of values.

The introduction of New Public Management at university level is, explains Bertelsen (1998: 133), simply 'a localised instance of this larger cultural shift'. Bertelsen also describes the particular difficulties of South African universities, which must contend with a culture of global competition and profitability, 'even as they begin to repair the social and cultural rifts of apartheid through programmes of redress'.

Wits Council minutes (2013) in response to the Letsema Report of 2013 show that outsourcing was initially welcomed at Wits in the hope of efficiency, cost savings and focus on core business. The language of the Wits Review Committee Report of 1999, effectiveness and efficiency, best practice and service providers, is all New Public Management language or the language of managerialism, what Bertelsen (1998: 131) calls 'the language and logic of business'. There are two discourses around the introduction of New Public Management at Wits. One describes it as the means of taking a declining university and putting it on the right road: cutting costs, re-allocating responsibility, taking the management of service workers out of the hands of people incapable of doing it properly. Patrick FitzGerald, Wits deputy vice-chancellor (finance and operations) 2007–2012 (personal communication, 11 January 2016), has concluded that an

important part of this discourse was the need, post-apartheid, to move away from the expensive paternalism that paid black service workers a higher wage than the going rate in the industry. This discourse also emphasised the availability of career paths within outsourced industries, and the value of retrenchment packages to all workers, whether or not they were re-employed. Better-paid academics, well-kept grounds, well-managed workers, clean toilets, improving finances – all are described as outcomes of the overall business-like re-organisation of Wits (FitzGerald 2003).

There is another conversation, which focuses on consequences for outsourced workers. The dangers to outsourced workers, and their subsequent grievances, have been documented since 2000 (Adler et al. 2000; Bezuidenhout and Fakier 2006). The university management had hoped for someone else to manage the disruption. What they got was not only management but also policing, detailed in the Tokiso report (Orleyn et al. 2013). This exemplifies Bertelsen's observation (1998: 145) that when managerialism devolves control, what is most likely to be passed on is 'the unpleasant duty of surveillance'. Outsourced cleaners were prohibited from using staff or student toilets, allowed to enter the university by one gate only (no matter where on campus they worked), and barred from eating lunch in any space other than the small room allocated to them (Orleyn et al. 2013; Letsema 2013). These three provisions were overturned after a meeting with then vice-chancellor, Loyiso Nongxa, in 2013 (Deliwe Mzobe, personal communication, 3 December 2015). In addition to these restrictions on their working lives, outsourced workers 'earned a third less in wages and had no benefits' (Kenny and Clarke 2000: 28). To meet their living expenses, they immediately had to borrow money (Deliwe Mzobe, personal communication, 3 December 2015). Conveniently, Supercare, the labour broker employing them, was also a registered credit provider – which, they explained, was in order to protect employees from loan sharks (Orleyn et al. 2013; see also Chapter 4 in this volume).

How did these neo-apartheid conditions come to exist at Wits? Inherent in New Public Management is contestation around authority. This frequently shows up in a pseudo-autonomy, where responsibility is delegated without either fiscal or decision-making authority (Moynihan 2006; Shan Naidoo, personal communication, 14 April 2016). In outsourcing, the authority appears to be absolutely clear: the outsourcing company hires, fires, pays and disciplines – but as soon as any decision is contested, each party, the outsourcing company and the company where the work is done, lays the blame on the other. Both the

Tokiso and Letsema reports provide evidence of Supercare's insisting that the onerous conditions were set by Wits, and vice versa.

The university decisions are purely operational, so never held up to the scrutiny of council, senate, faculty or school meetings. From the perspective of senior university management, the outsourcing decision provides a cloak of invisibility for the outsourced workers. They are not employees, and the story ends there. In reality, workers interact all the time with staff and students. They are seen, and their stories are heard.

The university finally found the practices attributed to Supercare, the initial outsourcing company for cleaning staff, intolerable and terminated their contract in 2013. This would have automatically terminated the employment of all the outsourced cleaners on campus but the workers made themselves and their plight visible, by leaving little notes for all the people with whom they interacted on a daily basis. 'Did you know that we are leaving at the end of the year? Will the new person dust your books and put them back exactly, the way you taught me to?' (Deliwe Mzobe, personal communication, 3 December 2015). In the end, the university made the re-employment of existing workers a condition of the contract with the new outsourcing firm. It is perhaps not surprising that the form of power or agency exercised by the workers was relational. The threat implied in the notes was a disruption of a functional relationship.

The workers' cloak of invisibility could be disturbed by individual relationships. This invisibility also does not really exist for the world beyond the university. In 2013, the university commissioned two reports into outsourcing practices, the Tokiso and Letsema reports. One of the comments in the Tokiso report reads: 'It is the submission of the investigators that it does not hold in good stead that a leading university in Africa is paying the minimum wage ... indeed, it would better promote the local relevance of the university if the university sought to ensure that remuneration is not at a minimum but promoted fairness and efficiency' (Orleyn et al. 2013: 17). The Tokiso Dispute Settlement company was engaged to report on outsourcing. They were intimately acquainted with the outsourcing agreements and practices. Yet they could not help themselves – they saw the workers as Wits employees, capable of inflicting reputational damage on the institution that so fervently believed that it did not employ them.

Although outsourcing is an international practice it acquires particular meaning post-apartheid. The comparisons with black lives governed by pass laws are inescapable. According to Deliwe Mzobe (cleaner, member of the Workers' Solidarity Committee, October 6 and #WitsFeesMustFall movements, deputy

chairperson of Wits Insourcing Task Team and MoU signatory), some of the workers have been there for twenty years (Deliwe Mzobe, personal communication, 3 December 2015). These workers nevertheless do not have 'citizenship' of the university. They are subject to an authority external to, and ostensibly independent of, the university. Yet their aspirations are all focused on the university that disowns them.

An outsourced worker explained that she had originally sought employment in a university because it is an educational institution. 'Maybe there I can also get an education.' Aspirations for the future depend on the university's undertaking to waive the fees of the children of permanent staff who qualify for a university education. This aspiration is powerful. 'We followed our mothers as cleaners. But now we are insourced, our children will be educated and not cleaners' (Deliwe Mzobe, personal communication, 3 December 2015).

CONCLUSION

The protests are part of an ongoing battle to decide who has the power to shape the twenty-first-century South African university, and what the nature of that university should be.

Public and university opinion on student pass-rates, or throughput, has portrayed students as being in deficit. First-generation students, in particular, have been seen as inadequate students bringing problems (poor basic education, inadequate language skills, lack of books in the home, absence of computer skills) with them onto an adequate campus. The Fallist movement focuses attention on the problems, previously concealed, which are imbedded in systems and structures on campus. The #AccessMustFall campaign focused on students who are actually passing, but who drop out because of unpaid debts for the previous year or lack of funds for the next year. According to details provided in the Wits management/SRC agreement of 19 January 2016, more than 6 000 students were at risk of being excluded for financial (rather than academic) reasons in 2016 alone. Add to this 'the fundamental issue of the alienation of black students' (Habib 2016) and a narrative begins to take shape which is campus-as-a-problem, even society-as-a-problem, rather than simply student-as-a-problem (Steven Friedman, personal communication, 7 March 2016).

What are the campus problems beyond finance? Writing about inequality in higher education in the UK, Penny Burke identifies problems of structural

inequalities, and misrecognition which 'operates at symbolic, cultural and emotional levels, and produces subtle and insidious forms of inequality in higher education' (Burke 2015: 21).

Once they get to university, South African students face previously unimagined barriers. University is to some extent a foreign country for all new students – academic language, concepts, work demands and teaching are very different from high school, and often from the students' expectations. But for many black South African students, the country of academia is not only foreign but hostile. They find little that is familiar in the structures and content they are presented with. This is not unique to South Africa. A UK report on race, inequality and diversity in the academy describes 'how different, even alien, elite universities appear to ... students' (Reay 2015: 19). As they perch precariously in this strange and unwelcoming environment it is easy for students to make common cause with precarious workers. The managerialist university has reduced the human stature of both groups and they join forces to fight back. A university is not a factory or a bank or a tax office. People on a university campus, whether they are service workers or postgraduate students, enter the campus with hopes – hopes for what education can do for them, for their families, and for future generations. Hopes for change in their material lives. The current protests are about identifying the barriers to these hopes

NOTES

- 1 It is important to note that the Falls, or Fallist, collectives, across campuses and nationally, rejected idea of 'leaders', hence collectives and plenaries (see Appendix 2) are some of the organisational principles.
- 2 The students would like the name of the university to be changed. There is as yet, in 2016, no agreement on this. The students therefore refer to 'the university currently known as Rhodes'.

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INTERVIEWS (PRESENTED IN TEXT AS ‘PERSONAL COMMUNICATION’)

- Professor Colin Bundy, vice-chancellor, University of the Witwatersrand, 1997–2001.
- Judge Edwin Cameron, judge of the Constitutional Court of South Africa, chairman of the Council of the University of the Witwatersrand, 1998–2008.
- Professor Patrick FitzGerald, founder-director of the Wits School of Governance 1990–1994, deputy vice-chancellor (Finance and Operations), University of the Witwatersrand, 2007–2012.
- Professor Steven Friedman, director of the Centre for the Study of Democracy, Rhodes University and the University of Johannesburg.

- Ms Nqobile Malaza, lecturer, University of the Witwatersrand.
- Professor Anne McLennan, new public management specialist, Wits School of Governance.
- Ms Deliwe Mzobe, cleaner, member of the Workers’ Solidarity Committee, October 6 & WitsFeesMustFall movements, deputy chairman of Wits Insourcing Task Team, MOU signatory, University of the Witwatersrand.
- Professor Shan Naidoo, chief specialist and head of department in Public Health Medicine, Wits School of Medicine (Prof Naidoo’s PhD on the effects of PHM in state hospitals is under examination).
- Professor Noor Nieftagodien, chair of the History Workshop and active member of the October 6 movement, University of the Witwatersrand.
- Professor Edward Webster, Society, Work and Development Institute (SWOP), University of the Witwatersrand.

THE GAME'S THE SAME: 'MUSTFALL' MOVES TO EURO-AMERICA

Sizwe Mpofu-Walsh

INTRODUCTION

It is the 23rd of October 2015. About 350 people are gathered outside the South African High Commission in London. Familiar struggle songs ring out. This could be a protest at any South African university, but for the British accents, slight chill in the air and faces of smiling police officers in brilliant neon jackets. A collection of students and South Africans abroad under the banner of #FeesMustFall demand to see the high commissioner. A stand-off ensues: the high commissioner is in a meeting and cannot come out, according to a member of his staff. 'We're not leaving until he does,' cry hundreds of voices. The high commissioner eventually emerges, smiling at the crowd as if at a rally. The crowd erupts, out of relief, not reverence, then crouches in silence. A debate follows over whether the high commissioner should sit on the paved floor, or whether he should use a regal chair produced moments earlier by a subservient staffer. Jeers abound as the chair dances its way over the top of the front of the crowd. The protesters want him to sit on the floor *à la* Habib. He does. A memorandum is signed, the international media capturing the high commissioner's every facial twitch. Not since the anti-apartheid struggle has the South African High Commission seen an event like this.

As the London protest spreads on social media, #FeesMustFall in South Africa is preparing to march on the Union Buildings. Rhodes has already fallen at the University of Cape Town (UCT), and Oxford is battling to decide whether to remove its own Rhodes monument. Students at the most prestigious universities in the US also call for the removal of symbols linked to slavery. An old conversation is awaking in new ways.

One of the most neglected aspects of the 'Must Fall' movement is its spread to Euro-America. Oxford has seen sustained protest under the #RhodesMustFall banner since May 2015, centring on a statue of Cecil Rhodes located on its High Street. Under pressure from a campaign called 'Royall Must Fall', the Harvard Law School has abolished its official crest, an ode to the slave-owning Royall family. Significant debates have raged in both Britain and the US over the apparently unapologetic public attitude of universities towards the legacy of slavery and colonialism, spurred on – and in many cases directly inspired – by events in South Africa.

This chapter focuses on the Must Fall movement's advance to the epicentre of colonial nostalgia: elite Euro-American universities. It traces the genesis of the Must Fall moment from its inception at UCT to its culmination outside the Union Buildings. It also reflects on the theoretical importance of the movement's spread from the South to the North, before examining ambiguities that linger over #FeesMustFall's future.

I make these arguments through a series of personal reflections, having been deeply involved in the #RhodesMustFall movement in Oxford. Though I have not been directly involved in the South African student movement, I have followed it closely and maintain close ties with some individuals connected to it. In the spirit of the humility that has characterised these movements, I do not claim to speak on anyone else's behalf, but simply to offer my own views on their significance.

RHODES TO FEES

It is impossible to understand #FeesMustFall without examining #RhodesMustFall. In early March 2015, a group of students marked what they called 'Black Friday' by wearing black clothing and protesting against 'institutional racism' at the University of Cape Town (UCT), actions met mostly with derision and scepticism. On 9 March, students gathered around a statue of Rhodes on the Upper

Campus, holding placards, blowing whistles and sharing messages on social media. What looked like a fleeting moment of dissent was quickly transformed when Chumani Maxwele – then a fourth-year student at UCT – hurled faeces at the statue. A flurry of debate and student activism – unlike what had been seen in several decades at the formerly white universities – followed.

Maxwele's act was treated with disdain by the popular press. It was characterised as irrational, inappropriate and even immoral (Cardo 2015; Kane-Berman 2016). Supporters countered that the act was symbolic: the sight of colonial glorification was a permanent assault on the senses of many black students (Maxwele 2015). Maxwele wanted those who were inured to the Rhodes statue to have their senses assaulted, so that they could appreciate what it was like for him to see the statue on a daily basis. Smell became a token for sight. The protest also echoed previous demonstrations in Cape Town over the city's use of the bucket toilet system in townships – revolted by this demeaning attempt at solving the city's sanitation crisis, the Ses'khona People's Rights Movement had established faeces as a symbol for economic inequality in the politics of Cape Town (Conradie 2014; Nyawasha 2016).

In this context, Maxwele's act had at least five meanings. First, the statue itself became a totem of the persistence of white supremacy and black exclusion at UCT. Second, the faeces became symbolic of black pain, revulsion and disgust. Third, the statue also became a token for the failures of the higher education system to dismantle the remnants of apartheid and colonialism. Fourth, it represented Cape Town's own inequality: a way of bringing struggles happening at the periphery of the city into its centre. Finally, UCT became a symbol of South African society, where black people were forced to assimilate to succeed. In one act, Maxwele had stirred up a social hornet's nest.

#RhodesMustFall had begun as an idea but was not yet a concrete movement. A number of hash tags competed on social media, including #TheStatueMustFall and #RhodesMustGo. In the ensuing furore, a mass meeting was called for students to discuss their experiences of institutional racism. Radical activists, like Maxwele, then began a conversation with reformist elements in formal leadership structures. Feminist and trans-rights movements also played an active role in building what would become a new consensus among students who identified as black. Throughout March, speeches were disrupted, ceremonies halted and libraries disturbed as the #RhodesMustFall movement was officially born.

To their credit, the UCT administration took the issues raised by #RhodesMustFall seriously. In October 2014, the vice-chancellor, Max Price, had cast doubt over the prominence of the statue before Maxwele's protest (Maxwele 2015). And when the debate erupted, although Price's administration did not act immediately, they did begin a formalised campus debate that offered an opportunity for broader discussion and a potential vote. Yet, students pointed out that this approach assumed a fair debate could happen, and black students had already argued that the institution was rigged against them: 'putting this to a simple referendum misses the crux of the issue' (Chikane and Price 2015). The decision to remove the statue eventually reached the UCT Council on 8 April 2015. What followed was a moment of symbolism equal to Maxwele's first protest: the physical removal of the Rhodes statue, watched by crowds flowing onto UCT's main sports fields. A spray-painted Rhodes swung and swayed overhead as onlookers furiously photographed. Rhodes had fallen.

THE BURDEN OF FEES

Unlike #RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall confronted an issue that directly implicated both the university administrations and the state. The critique of university administrations stemmed from their decision to shift the burden of higher education funding onto students. Between 2006 and 2012, the state's contribution to the total funding of higher education remained roughly stagnant, at about 40 per cent – yet between 2010 and 2012 tuition fees increased by 27 per cent whereas student enrolment only increased by 7 per cent (PriceWaterhouseCoopers 2012). Vice-chancellors suggested that this shift was because of a falling per-capita state subsidy, but this is inaccurate: the per-capita subsidy fell relative to fees precisely because fees were rising so quickly. Indeed, while the subsidy did fall in some years, in other years it actually increased. In effect, between 2006 and 2012 the state subsidy remained stable, while the contribution of fees to total university revenue increased (PriceWaterhouseCoopers 2012). In years where the subsidy had increased (such as between 2010 and 2012) no concomitant fees relief took place. Since fees continued to rise at levels above inflation, the per-capita subsidy continued to fall in relative terms. A falling subsidy may have explained a portion of fees increases in some years, but it could not explain why fees had risen quite so dramatically at such a constant rate for so long.

Similarly, universities were unduly fiscally conservative. For instance, in the five years leading up to 2010, UCT had consistently overestimated the amount of revenue it would receive, to say nothing of a considerable budget surplus (UCT SRC 2010). This was for several reasons. First, the university relied on the myth that more students meant more costs, which was not necessarily true – since many university costs are fixed, more enrolments can often in reality simply mean more revenue (as the fact that fees outpaced student enrolments has already suggested). Second, the university's 'internal inflation' models were biased: finance departments concocted a basket of goods that always defied inflationary gravity and justified lavish fees increases. When internal inflation figures were found to have been overly conservative, students did not get a break in the following year. Finance departments often relied on economic rhetoric as a smokescreen behind which they could justify fiscal conservatism (UCT SRC 2010). For example, in 2015 the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) argued that the falling exchange rate forced fee increases in 2015 because of dollar-pegged library expenditures. This argument is spurious (in the several years that the exchange rate strengthened or remained constant against the dollar fees still rose) – and also neglects to mention that the university had doubled its private donations in the previous year. Indeed, as reported by the 2014 annual report of the Wits Council, in 2014 Wits made a profit of about R40 million from interest on net foreign exchange. Even if Wits lost all of its 2014 profits in 2015, this would have had a negligible impact on a budget in the order of billions.

Therefore, students took the fight to universities first, to foreground their complicity in the rising cost of education. Universities responded as they always had, by suggesting that the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) covered fees increases in any case. Until FeesMustFall, this argument continued to convince university elites. But students responded that this problem simply kicked the can down the road through indebtedness, which rose by a staggering 31 per cent between 2010 and 2012 (PriceWaterhouseCoopers 2012). Students who did not graduate were doomed to a life of growing debt and unemployment – the system's safety valve was itself faulty. The critique of governance more generally was clear: those in power, both state and university, were too prepared to transfer costs onto the most vulnerable in society.

When the state made its first concession, on 20 October 2015 – a cap on fees increases of 6 per cent – this was met with opposition from students. The problem was not simply that fees were outpacing inflation; it was that there were increases at all. But the picture was growing increasingly complex as the

movement grew larger. A minority in the student movement was content with the cap. Others wanted no increase at all. Yet others demanded a firm commitment to free higher education. Still others wanted it implemented immediately. The debate soon shifted to the question of free education and its feasibility, and involved a more direct confrontation with the state.

'Free education' can mean different things. It could mean free tuition. Or, it could mean free tuition, accommodation, meals, books, study materials and a stipend for living expenses. It could also mean something somewhere between these options. The financial differences between the choices are significant. FeesMustFall has not always been clear about the appropriate alternative. This is to be expected: it is not the students' job to envisage a new model, but that of publicly elected representatives and paid university administrators. In many ways, students have played their part in mobilising against the current model sufficiently to render it politically unfeasible.

The student criticism is also valid: at the very least, state-funded free tuition at universities is not only possible but actually rather inexpensive. Consider that the South African state already grants universities a subsidy of about R50 billion in 2012 prices (PriceWaterhouseCoopers 2012). What would therefore be needed is an amount in addition to the subsidy that would cover the revenue that universities receive in fees. How much is that? In 2012, the amount was about R15 billion (PriceWaterhouseCoopers 2012). In the same year, South Africa's budget was about R1 trillion. What would therefore be needed is the political will to find a proportion of 1.5 per cent of the current budget – which could be done by re-allocating funds from other parts of the budget, raising 1.5 per cent in additional tax or issuing a government bond. But this would be to fund free tuition for *all*. If we eliminated postgraduate fees from the equation, and also subtracted students in the top quintile of family incomes from the programme, it would drop to about R10 billion. A pilot project in the first year could focus on a full 10 per cent of needy students and would only cost government R1 billion. New models are possible, but they require the political bravery to try them.

INTERNATIONAL ECHOES

#RhodesMustFall's spread across South Africa, and its precursory role in #FeesMustFall, have received academic attention. Less focus has gone to the movement's spread to elite institutions in Euro-America. On 19 March 2015,

as the debate over the Rhodes statue at UCT raged, a group of Oxford students arranged a small protest outside Oriel College, home of a statue of Cecil Rhodes overlooking the High Street. Behind a large painted banner, their fists raised, they expressed official solidarity with #RhodesMustFall at UCT for the first time. Although the image spread across social media, no formal movement had actually yet begun in Oxford. A few weeks later, the philosopher Nathaniel Adam Tobias *Goleman* called a lunch for Oxford-based race activists at a restaurant opposite the Oxford Union. (*Goleman* intentionally spells his last name with a line through it, to signify its links with slavery.) The aim of the lunch was to share experiences and deepen the struggle against racial injustice at Oxford. The gathering began with *Goleman* quoting from Richard Symonds (1986):

No one has more memorials in Oxford than Cecil Rhodes ... There are two busts and a portrait in Rhodes House, a portrait in Oriel College, a plaque in the Examination Schools, and another on his lodgings in King Edward Street. In the High Street, on top of the building which Oriel erected with his money, his statue is poised above those of Edward VII and George V, Rhodes in his rumpled suit and the King-Emperors in their Coronation robes. He would have appreciated all this, for he was obsessed by a desire for posthumous fame, and liked to be told that his bust resembled that of a Roman Emperor.

As the discussion unfolded, it became clear that a new movement was necessary at Oxford. The university markets its 'diversity' in glossy brochures, but the facts tell a different story: in 2015, the university accepted just twenty-four black British undergraduates into the undergraduate system. A 2013 access to information request revealed that twenty-one of Oxford's colleges did not accept a *single* black student in 2012 (Young-Powell and Page 2013). All this is apart from the extreme idolisation of colonial symbols throughout the university, and the deeply Eurocentric curriculum. Thus, when the statue eventually fell at UCT, about fifteen students decided to formally establish RhodesMustFall in Oxford (RMFO). Secret meetings were held inside the Rhodes Building of Oriel College – a consciously ironic place from which to plan. For a month, RMFO met to plot its first public protest. The eventual idea was to protest at a debate on whether Britain owed reparations to her former colonies, to be held at the Oxford Union. Arriving at the Union Bar on 29 May 2015, RMFO organisers noticed a pre-debate cocktail flyer called 'the colonial comeback'. The accompanying image

was of black hands in shackles. Convinced this was a joke, they asked Union authorities whether this was, in fact, an official advert endorsed by the Union. It was.

The flyer was immediately shared on Twitter under the hashtag #RhodesMustFall and was re-tweeted enthusiastically. Soon, several national newspapers were interested in covering RMFO. The protest that evening, which consisted of holding up banners while the proposition (arguing that Britain did not owe colonial reparations) spoke, garnered further attention. The following weeks saw a flurry of media activity, as RMFO pressurised the Union to offer an apology. This came on the first of June, along with a public statement from the Union (unprecedented in its history) in which it admitted to being 'institutionally racist'. Just three days after it had officially launched, RMFO had sparked a charged debate over Oxford's implication in colonial glorification.

Simultaneously, large student protests over racism in the United States attracted global attention. Protests, at institutions like Yale, Georgetown, Amherst and Harvard drew directly from the ongoing South African struggle. The Royall Must Fall movement at Harvard Law School drew its name from a notoriously brutal Massachusetts slave-owning family whose seal formed part of the school's crest. The movement scored a significant victory when, on 15 March 2016 – after months of campaigning – it convinced the Harvard Law School to retire the crest.

Initially, the Oxford protest seemed to have borne fruit. Oriel College released a statement on 17 December saying it would review the statue and remove a plaque celebrating Rhodes. However, as a new vice-chancellor took office, Oriel was forced to backtrack, allegedly because donors had threatened to pull out. This created the impression that a dictatorship of donors controlled university policy, no matter how vociferously students protested.

RMFO then widened its campaign, while retaining its demand for the Rhodes statue to fall. Other demands related to colonial iconography at Rhodes House, All Souls College and Oriel were sent in a series of letters to various officials – all of whom refused not only to entertain the demands but even to engage with RMFO. In e-mails to RMFO, the vice-chancellor, Louise Richardson, called a demand for a panel of academics of colour to review the Oxford curriculum 'invidious', while the warden of All Souls, John Vickers, described the name of the Codrington Library as a 'fact of history like slavery'. The chancellor of Oxford, Lord Patten, compared RMFO to the Islamic State, and suggested that students who criticised colonial iconography should 'study elsewhere'

(Gayle and Khomami 2016). Oxford has resisted change to a greater extent than UCT or Harvard, but there remains no doubt that RMFO has brought the debate over colonial glorification onto its doorstep.

THEORY

To understand the Must Fall movement's spread to Euro-America through the lenses of Gramsci, Foucault or Marx is already to misunderstand it. Certainly, 'traditional' theory can illuminate certain aspects of the movement, but it cannot capture its anti-hegemonic and unmistakably Southern bent. 'Fallism' is a nascent, complicated and emerging viewpoint, combining aspects of decolonial thought, black consciousness, radical feminism and pan-Africanism. Some have criticised it for incoherence. But no protest movement as wide as 'Must Fall' can claim coherence. The Must Fall umbrella is not, nor does it aspire to be, a body of literary thought, or a full social theory. Rather, it is a programme of political action. Those who unfavourably compare it with student movements in South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s have forgotten just how ideologically disparate those movements were.

There is no doubt, however, that Fallism poses questions for theory, and its spread to other parts of the world should provoke us to search for explanatory lenses. One prism through which to consider this development is 'theory from the South', a viewpoint advanced by authors such as Hountondji (2002), Connell (2007) and Jean and John Comaroff (2012). They argue that a great inversion of the Eurocentric narrative actually explains phenomena in the global North. Far from events and theories originating in Euro-America and applying in the 'rest of the world', the reverse is actually true: Euro-America is evolving towards the global South in crucial respects:

What if we posit that, in the present moment, it is the so-called 'global South' that affords privileged insight into the workings of the world at large? That it is from here that our empirical grasp of its lineaments, and our theory-work in accounting for them, ought to be coming, at least in major part? That in working the contradictions inherent in the suspect North-South dualism we might be able to move beyond it, to the larger dialectic processes of which it is a product (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012: 114).

Such an inversion of the Eurocentric narrative also involves a direct critique of the global system of knowledge production. Patterns of economic exploitation map onto patterns of theory production and data collection, according to Connell (2007): 'the global division of labour in the production and circulation of knowledge' locates the North as the centre of theory. This leads Southern theorists to orient their writing towards external frames of reference. Hountondji (2009) describes this as a process of academic extraversion which must be reversed:

The study of Africa, as developed so far by a long intellectual tradition, is part of an overall project of knowledge accumulation initiated and controlled by the West ... It calls upon '*épistémologies du Sud*' ... It calls upon African scholars in African Studies and in all other disciplines to understand that they have been doing so far a kind of research that was massively extraverted, i.e. externally oriented, intended first and foremost to meet the theoretical and practical needs of Northern societies.

RMFO was the consequence of a plan consciously to implant a way of looking at the world into the North, from the South: to subvert the directionality of colonial logic as a theoretical strategy, but also as an ironic political gesture. Yet, if these theorists implore us to imagine *theory* from the South, the spread of RMFO calls us to embrace *practice* from the South; if there is anything original about the spread of the Fallist movements to the North, it is that they represent an important contemporary example of the importation of political strategy and practice from the South to the North.

In this light, the strategy of metaphorical campaigning is perhaps one of the central contributions of the Must Fall movement to the practice of activism and mobilisation. For years, students across South Africa had been protesting against a host of perceived injustices. But no one had understood how to unify these different actions under one banner in a way that could attract sufficient public attention. The thrust of the #RhodesMustFall campaign was a symbolic act. This would later be both emulated and rejected by the #FeesMustFall movement: emulated in the sense that #FeesMustFall latched on to #RMF's strategy of centring a complex campaign around one issue (in this case that of fees) but rejected in the sense that the issue chosen was more directly material. As #RhodesMustFall used the statue of Rhodes to reflect on colonial legacies, #FeesMustFall used fees to show that economic policy was failing the black and

poor. Movements around the world adopted this strategy to significant effect across Europe and the United States.

The deep focus on practice is itself a subversion of our traditional understanding of theory. Instead of a set of abstract tenets that emerge from the academy and apply to empirical cases, the MustFall movement reverses the process: practice gives birth to a disparate array of concepts, frames and theories, which compete to explain further practice. Students used whatever theories worked to achieve tangible goals; theory formed around their actions, chaotically and organically. For instance, the Must Fall movement abandoned the rhetoric of 'transformation' in favour of 'decolonisation'. These distinctions were largely rhetorical and tonal, but important nonetheless. Transformation as conceived by the Must Fall movement is largely rejected as a failed project, content with superficial and gradual change. Decolonisation in the context of the South African academy refers not only to a deeper commitment to eradicating the legacies of colonialism and apartheid, but also to eradicating them speedily. Fallism implies immediacy – it means abandoning the politics of gradualism and the primacy of the 'commission of inquiry', and embracing fast and wide-ranging immediate changes to landscapes, demographics, financial models and curricula. RMFO imported the language of 'decolonisation' but also inverted it by focusing on the metropole instead of the periphery.

AMBIGUITIES

Several residual tensions exist under the Fees Must Fall umbrella. First, differences exist over the appropriate attitude towards state power. On one hand, part of the movement insists on launching a radical critique of the state. As seen in protests outside Parliament and the Union Buildings, this strand of the movement is prepared to challenge the political elite directly. By contrast, another strand still owes ultimate allegiance to the ANC, and is therefore less critical of state complicity. This fault line deepened after President Zuma's announcement of the fees freeze, and the introduction of the outsourcing phase of the movement.

A second and related tension relates to #FeesMustFall's connection to formal politics. Some within #FeesMustFall argue that it should remain an independent political force. Other currents are comfortable with overt political party support. Political parties, too, see the movement as a vehicle to advance diverse agendas. As the movement grew to confront the state, it became clear that the ANC's

strategy was internal co-option of the Wits movement. Quite how the movement navigates the tenuous balance between confronting deeply political issues while remaining independent of political influence also remains unresolved.

A third ambiguity relates to the place of violence in #FeesMustFall. Some students are committed to the use of violence in extreme circumstances, as seen in protests at North West University's Mahikeng campus. Even at UCT and Wits, protesters have burned buses and damaged infrastructure. Other groups under the Must Fall umbrella are committed to peaceful and non-violent methods. How this tension resolves itself will largely depend on how universities and the state react to peaceful protest. Should universities continue with repressive action, this will spark increasingly violent responses.

The final fault line concerns intersectionality. While certain strands of the movement have prioritised race, or fees, others argue that oppression must be confronted in a multidimensional way. The Must Fall movement has been subjected to a powerful and sustained gender critique. Patriarchy has affected significant strands of the movement, and prompted crucial discussions about rape culture and the subjugation of persons gendered as women inside and outside student movements. New initiatives, such as #PatriarchyMustFall have actively challenged #Rhodes Must Fall. Feminist movements at Rhodes like 'RU Reference List', and at Wits like 'Mbokodo Lead', became a key political force at the beginning of 2016, protesting to foreground the marginalisation of women on university campuses. For Fees Must Fall, tackling financial exclusion while balancing its multidimensional effects on students remains an ongoing challenge.

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CHAPTER

4

#OUTSOURCINGMUSTFALL THROUGH THE EYES OF WORKERS

Omhle Ntshingila,¹ in conversation
with Richard Ndebele and Virginia Monageng

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Since the introduction of outsourcing in 2000 under the former vice-chancellor, Colin Bundy, insourcing/outourcing has been a huge debate at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). On 11 June 2016, after a prolonged worker and student struggle, the Wits Council (2016) released a statement announcing: '... insourcing will commence on 1 January 2017 or as contracts end' for 1 530 cleaning, catering, security, transport, waste, grounds and landscaping workers. The practice was highly divisive, and was contested both ideologically and in terms of the far-reaching and detrimental effect it had on the lives of workers (see Nkosi 2012).

Bundy had outsourced cleaning, catering and electrical and grounds maintenance to companies such as Supercare (established in 1959 and specialising in cleaning), MJL (an electrical maintenance service company, established in 1994) and Royal Mnandi (established in 1990, and working in the field of food services or catering) (see Table 4.1). The practice of outsourcing seeks to be a cost-effective solution for the institution requiring the services. At the time of the 2015 workers' sit-in, for example, Wits management argued that insourcing would

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THE REVOLT – 'RISING AGAINST THE LIBERATORS', SOUTH AFRICA IN AFRICA

STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS? SUCCESSIVE GENERATIONS OF YOUTH SACRIFICE IN SOUTH AFRICA

David Everatt¹

INTRODUCTION

The struggle to overthrow apartheid was generated and populated by youth. From the transformative power of the African National Congress Youth League in the 1940s to the 1976 Soweto uprising through successive waves of youth- and scholar/student-driven school boycotts, consumer boycotts and into the low intensity war that accompanied the 1990–1994 interregnum, young people placed their futures on hold and their lives on the line, to bring down apartheid. But what have these generational cohorts – many now well into late adulthood – received in return? And what lessons, if any, should the current wave of student protesters learn from this history?

This chapter uses a large sample survey ($n = 27\ 485$) of people of all races living in Gauteng, the economic and demographic heartland of South Africa, to identify successive (and current) cohorts of youth, so as to understand their situation after twenty-one years of democracy. It starts with the ‘1976 generation’, and includes those who were involved in the successive uprisings of the 1980s, the youth of the 1990–1994 interregnum, and the so-called ‘born frees’. The chapter looks at their demographic situation, and lingers on some psychosocial variables such as racial views, alienation, anomie, xenophobia and so on;

and it seeks to understand whether this generational struggle will achieve more lasting gains than those which preceded it.

YOUTH STRUGGLES

Young people – youth, ‘young lions’, ‘lost generation’, ‘marginalised youth’, ‘born frees’, students, Gen X or Y, millennials or whatever labels are appended – have consistently led progressive movements for change, whether in the struggle for democracy in South Africa, the different struggles that made up the ‘Arab Spring’, the Occupy movement, and so on (Rizvi 2012; Everatt 2013; Wyn and Cahill 2015). Successive surveys in South Africa and elsewhere have shown that young people support democratic values and principles in larger proportions and with greater fervour than their adult counterparts in the same surveys (Everatt 2013; Wallace and Kovatcheva 1998; Helve and Holm 2005). But youth are not an undifferentiated mass; ‘youth’ is a label that covers people in a specific age cohort, and while some characteristics are common (psychosocial and emotional development, experimental and risk-taking behaviours, for example), ‘youth’ as a cohort are as complex, nuanced and differentiated as any other age group in society.

Because of their precarious socioeconomic and cultural location, however, youth provide a lens that magnifies many challenges in society – they are commonly better educated yet suffer far higher unemployment than older people; are regarded as non-credit worthy, unreliable and risky recipients of investment, and despite truisms such as ‘youth are the future’ they are more commonly understood in terms of the latent threat they represent (see various contributions to Wyn and Cahill 2015; in South Africa, see *inter alia* Marais 1993; Everatt and Sisulu 1993; Van Zyl Slabbert et al. 1994; Marks 2001; Ward, Van der Merwe and Dawes 2012). They are most likely to suffer from the ills of a society, including higher than average unemployment and susceptibility to a range of diseases.

South Africa’s liberation history is punctuated by moments of youth-led resistance, ranging from the 1976 uprising led initially by schoolchildren and students, through to the school boycotts of the 1980s, the youth-enforced consumer boycotts of the 1980s, part of the response to the call to make the state ungovernable, to the primarily youth-populated self-defence and self-protection units that fought on opposing sides during the 1990–1994 low intensity war in the then Natal and Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging (PWV) regions.

Throughout the period, while a tiny number of young whites broke with apartheid, the overwhelming majority of young white men were conscripted to make up the apartheid regime's defence force. While the '1976 generation' rose up against the attempt to enforce Afrikaans education, and many more were inspired by black consciousness, many emerged in the 1980s and 1990s as champions of the nonracial vision espoused by the ANC and the internal United Democratic Front (UDF). A conscious political effort was made to avoid a racial essentialism and its seemingly unavoidable corollary, race war.

Young people are often brave, principled and fuelled by a sense of fairness and justice; but young people are also gang members, xenophobes and criminals – and make up the mobs that break the heads of opposition political parties or rival groups. Youth fought for liberation, and youth fought for the apartheid armed forces. In sum: there is no point engaging in a study of youth, or students, with a halo obscuring the cohort being studied. Youth, like adults, can be angel, demon or both, depending on circumstance and perspective.

For these reasons – and more, some good, some markedly less so – young people fascinate 'adult' society. This may be due to their fearlessness and risk-taking behaviour. Their opaque cultural rites, language, dress, music, art and speech are part of a general resistance to doing as they are 'meant to' or making themselves available for 'adult' scrutiny and judgement. Their codes make their world impenetrable, and deliberately so; their bold, often aggressive attacks – either for or against the status quo – are admired and feared. They are also preyed upon by predatory adults, whether for sex, violence, to act as foot soldiers, as abusers of addictive substances leading to entrapment in criminal gangs, sex work, trafficking, voyeurism and other morbid adult afflictions.

Above all, however, one fact holds true across different countries, contexts and time periods – that very few, if any, youth-led struggles for *youth-defined goals* are ever successful. This is true even when youth fight for their own goals nestled within a broader struggle. When young people storm the barricades or take up weapons as part of a broader struggle (such as against apartheid) they are lauded; but when the struggle moves out of the trenches and into the boardrooms young people are reminded that they are meant to be seen but not heard, and are shifted (more or less politely) aside for adults – usually older men – to take over.

The same is true of other sectors, most obviously women; but in the 1990s a global moral consensus had emerged around the notion of gender equality, and remarkable champions of women's rights and/or gender equality led the struggle

and ensured that their goals were (at least partially) enshrined in new constitutions, laws, programmes and so on. A politico-legal gender machinery was constructed, and substantial resources were invested in gender equality. For youth, however, no moral consensus has existed or does exist; and youth leaders may shine, briefly, as leaders of youth, but are rapidly absorbed into larger political, social or other formations, and shed their focus on youth – or they simply age, and grow beyond a point where they can legitimately claim to represent the sector.

Youth (as a sector) failed signally to gain traction in the post-apartheid governance or government machinery. This is worth remembering precisely because the 2015 student movement was the first youth-led struggle for (in this case) student-specific (as opposed to youth) demands that succeeded (Chapter 1 in this volume offers details). The apparent failure to claim a genuine victory by the student movement is somewhat perplexing.

Youth struggles at the onset of democracy

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the two large Christian church groupings, the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) and the South African Council of Churches (SACC), shared their concerns about what was happening to young people who were labelled 'the lost generation', having boycotted school, often been exposed to and/or participated in violence, and had limited future prospects. The church bodies formed the Joint Enrichment Project (JEP), and tasked it with understanding the then youth cohort (broadly defined as from eighteen to thirty years of age) and developing solutions to the challenges they faced. After February 1990, this took a policy turn: the challenge was accurately to capture the needs of all youth (all races, urban/rural, male/female, younger and older ends of the cohort, etc.) and develop policy proposals for inclusion in what eventually became the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), the election manifesto of the African National Congress (ANC)-led alliance.

After three years of youth mobilisation, political work across the party spectrum, a media charm campaign geared at developing public support for youth (in a deliberate attempt to shake off the pejorative 'lost generation' tag and replace it with an acceptance of youth agency) and the development and later publication in book form of policies for youth development approved at successive 'marginalised youth' conferences attended by the great and the good, youth got nothing of any substance.

It is a maxim of African political studies that women, children, the disabled and the insane are normally grouped together in the smallest and least resourced ministry (Straker 1992; Everatt and Sisulu 1993; Everatt 1994). Occasionally, sport or arts and culture are added to the mix. This is normally done by governments wanting to look representative but not wishing to be distracted from the real stuff of politics by too much concern with these socially marginal groups. This was exactly what the marginalised youth movement battled against, calling for youth-sensitive 'desk officers' to be located in every government ministry and department and thus ensure the mainstreaming of youth. In the event – not least because of ANC infighting over who would become minister of youth – even this was more than youth actually received. The RDP, which described itself as 'an integrated, coherent socio-economic policy framework [that] ... seeks to mobilise all our people and our country's resources toward the final eradication of apartheid and the building of a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist future' (ANC 1994), was 147 pages long when it appeared. It covered an enormous range of topics from education to policing to nutrition. 'Youth Development' appeared within the Human Resource Development section, given a total of six paragraphs, which covered a page and a half. It was offered as a sub-section of 'Arts and Culture', and came immediately after 'Sport and Recreation'. Youth had been put firmly in their place.

That there was a failure by youth and their leaders to read the signals should not have been surprising. The first speech Nelson Mandela made directly to young people boiled down to a simple message: go back to school. A noble and consistent theme of Mandela's, it nonetheless ignored the facts on the ground – where many young people were being armed and trained to fight in the Inkatha/ANC conflict (itself fuelled by apartheid agents and resources) – and it sounded suspiciously like 'the old men are home and will take over now', which is precisely what was happening. Youth have an instrumental value, but their agency is more commonly regarded with caution by those seeking to retain the status quo. Youth agency, history shows, is more feared than admired, and older leaders feel a constant need to guide and shape it. As soon as negotiation became more important than confrontation, the value and popularity of the 'young lions' declined – their demands found diminishing purchase and they were expected to resume their culturally allotted place, visible but silent.

In 1994, there were some 11 million young people aged between sixteen and thirty, the cohort treated as 'the youth' (with a higher-than-usual upper end to the cohort to include many of those who had lost out on educational and similar opportunities as part of the struggle against apartheid). They comprised roughly a quarter of the South African population. Despite this demographic weight, the RDP had little of substance to offer them. They were cited (along with women, farmworkers, the elderly and others) as a possible target of affirmative action programmes. It noted that they required economic and educational opportunities, scarcely a profound insight. The RDP made no mention of a youth ministry; rather, it proposed the formation of a national youth council with the task of 'coordinating youth activities, lobbying for the rights of young people, and representing South Africa internationally'. At government level, the RDP primly stated that 'appropriate government departments must more forcefully represent youth interests'. The call for 'desk officers' to mainstream youth concerns across all ministries was entirely ignored (Everatt 1993; Everatt and Orkin 1993; Truscott and Milner, 1994).

Black youth – particularly black, male, urban youth – played a key role in the popular mobilisation and uprisings of the mid-1980s, which were a turning point in the decades-long struggle against apartheid. With the onset of negotiations in the 1990s, however, the particular political contribution of black youth, as the 'foot soldiers' of the anti-apartheid struggle, was increasingly seen as unnecessary. Political organisations seemed unable or unwilling to develop creative means of enlisting the energy and commitment of youth in the new politics of the interregnum, beyond on the barricades. Youth were politically demobilised, but offered no alternate channels of expression or action. As Chapter 1 in this volume argues, the student uprising of 2015 has already had more success, in that it forced the state to abandon planned fee increases, and forced universities to make a whole series of concessions (over insourcing of workers, curriculum reform, language policy, upfront payments and so on). It won, where others lost out. But our recent history provides a cautionary tale for the medium-term (let alone longer-term) success of the student movement.

When youth were addressed as a sector, it was generally in the context of the potential threat they were seen to represent, rather than the complexities and needs of the generation. For example, when the funeral of assassinated Communist Party leader Chris Hani saw street battles between police and youth, within weeks more than fifteen proposals for organising youth had been produced by a range

of organisations, ranging from community service corps to enforced physical exercise to straightforward labour camps for black youth (Everatt 1995: 4). Despite many newspaper column inches, however, nothing concrete was done. A few weeks later, youth returned to the *status quo ante*. The struggles of youth in the pre-democracy period were aligned to those of the progressive movement, yet they failed to win any long-standing victories. The students of 2015, many of them children of former youth activists, took on the ANC-led state, and won important gains – a first – and now face the challenge to sustain momentum, broaden the struggle, and ensure that public sympathy is not lost.

THE 2015 STUDENT MOVEMENT

Again, history provides a warning. Students, like youth, are not universally admired – they attract similar morbid fascination, often combined with a negativity deriving from ‘student’ being in many eyes synonymous with ‘lazy’, ‘spoiled’, ‘privileged’ and so on. There is also a rump of conservative revisionism, which began to emerge even in the early 1990s, as the gains of the ‘marginalised youth’ movement ebbed. For example, on the eve of democracy, the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) produced a paper arguing that ‘the problem’ lay with 2 to 5 per cent of well-educated young black South Africans. Their social position was seen to be at odds with their relatively high education, and as a result their frustrated expectations would leave them ‘status-incongruent’ (De Kock and Schutte 1994).

The argument is similar to those made elsewhere about the upper middle class, highly educated members of the Baader Meinhof Gang (correctly, the Red Army Faction (RAF)), for example – and for obvious reasons. RAF members came from the radical student movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, were distinctly bourgeois, well educated, and fought against an establishment they saw as the Third Reich in mufti – the inclusion of former Nazi Party members in very senior positions of state was regarded as evidence of the need to topple the pro-capitalist, anti-Soviet and anti-left German establishment. The parallels between the RAF and the fears of apartheid apparatchiks, many guaranteed their jobs by the infamous ‘sunset clause’ but beset by fears of a black *oorstroming*, would have resonated widely. If a South African ‘youth revolution’ were to be avoided, the authors advised (De Kock and Schutte 1994: 27–28), affirmative action programmes had to absorb these ‘status-incongruents ... as speedily as

possible’ so that they did not organise other youth. The goal was clear: government was being told to act against well-educated black students, to ensure that ‘the possibility of a youth revolution is very slim.’

The narrative offered by the HSRC team was fundamentally wrong in its analysis of a highly educated minority of black students leading a youth revolution; but the ‘status incongruence’ rings true. The difference is that an entire generational cohort felt ‘status incongruent’: the children of liberation (many the children of struggle activists and leaders), two decades into democracy, found that for a great many black students, as for the non-student youth around them, little had changed. Emancipation was not accompanied by rupture: business as usual appeared to be the order of the day. Home life for many remained mired in poverty and debt, where apartheid spatial planning ensured that home was miles away from university; incessantly rising fees were the norm, often followed by financial exclusion for the poor; and the university itself remained a very white, middle-class, Eurocentric institution, even as the demographics of the student body changed quite dramatically (albeit unevenly across different universities).

As the #FeesMustFall movement ratcheted up its protests, students of all races and classes joined in: the gross inequalities of post-apartheid South Africa may not be lived by all, but were visible to all. The legitimacy and logic of demanding an end to fee increases, which most damaged the poorest, was shared across students of all classes and races, and increasingly by the public beyond universities. Students were ‘status incongruent’ (as were their parents) with the entire post-liberation, unequal capitalist society, where skin colour delineates life chances. Many white students could appreciate the argument, even if for them the privileged life was largely unchanged. The student movement won broad-based student, academic and public support for opposing a system that consistently worked against those most in need.

By late 2015, when the state conceded a zero per cent fee increase for 2016, the student movement presumably had few illusions about who might be its allies, and its enemies. That students may in their turn be demonised is self-evident. As argued in several chapters in this book, the substantive danger remains party politics, and the ways in which it permeates and plays out its own fights using the student movement and campus-based struggles as a proxy. Organised behind a supra-political demand such as a zero per cent fee increase, students united their own constituency and won considerable public support. However, party politics was never far away, and soon formations aligned with the ANC, or the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), and former EFF leaders, all began fighting to

be 'the most radical' voice, take the most extreme position, and dominate media coverage. Elected student representative councils (SRCs) were drawn into the one-up game, facing the danger of being seen as 'sell-outs' if they negotiated (let alone settled) with management, on anything. The unifying demand regarding fees, which was self-evidently socially just, was soon lost in the mire of political mud-slinging, the fragmentation of demands and groups, and increasingly violent and racist tactics and slogans.

Allies and alliances are important in any struggle, as is strategy: by early 2016 it was apparent that an Africanist narrative was dominating an increasingly fractured student movement, with 'fuck whites' painted on university walls and T-shirts – shirts worn by white as well as black students. Although the protests began in unity they broke up in racial and class antagonism, in part reflecting the party politics at play within the movement, as well as the inevitable internal contradictions of a student movement in such an unequal society. The failure of #FeesMustFall to confront class within its ranks is an indicator of the fragility of the alliance, as was said in an interview on 26 April 2016 by a #RhodesMustFall leader.

In most student and youth uprisings under apartheid, political leadership had been provided by 'charterist' leaders (from the UDF and ANC-aligned grouping). They emphasised nonracial unity rather than Africanist exclusivity. The 1976 generation rose up in the absence of any substantive leadership, as black consciousness leaders increasingly faced the repressive apparatus of the state, which had already decimated the ANC. When young people left the country to seek support, weapons training and the like, the ANC was the primary exiled movement to absorb these Africanist students in numbers – and steadily turn them towards an acceptance of the Freedom Charter, including the clause that had led to the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) breaking away from the ANC in the late 1950s, namely that 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white'.

The contrast with 2015 was dramatic. The ANC, entirely implicated in the post-liberation project and, as government, the target of unified student hostility, was incapable of playing any substantive role. It was the problem and could not be part of the solution. It had effectively dismantled the mass democratic movement, and no 'receiving' structures existed to assist, nurture and provide strategic political education or guidance to student leaders. Foundations (in the names of ANC stalwarts) and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) in support of racial unity against a common enemy were allowed to applaud from the sidelines

but not to provide steer. The churches and other religious bodies were also able to provide support, but no more.

The student movement – or the #FeesMustFall movement – was a 'movement' for about two to three weeks. During that time, students united across class and colour, and won massive public sympathy and support behind a single, clearly articulated goal. The combined pressure of protest and public opinion saw government blink – and concede. At that point of victory, the movement lost unity, stopped pursuing a single clear, publicly supported goal, and class differences within the student body were clear as, for example, buses taking students back to the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) had bricks thrown at them by other students who felt that Wits students had hijacked their own long struggle against fees at other less prestigious institutions. The movement, having won a zero per cent increase, fragmented into various Fallist factions – some calling for patriarchy to fall, others for white supremacy to fall, others focusing on their particular institution (be it colonial heritage or language and so on), and the brief moment of unity was over.

Having won the zero per cent fee increase concession from government, the movement soon began focusing on multiple demands – for decolonising the academy, for dismantling 'whiteness', for insourcing workers, and more. Senate meetings were invaded by students, universities shut down, study and examination timetables substantially disrupted, and sporadic violence broke out across the campuses. Universities responded in a range of ways, but many led with their own security (rather than dialogue, or as a threatening presence looming behind negotiation) which enflamed passions. In the midst of the ferment, the nonracial and multi-class unity of the early phase vanished, replaced with an essentialist African discourse that repeated selective Frantz Fanon and Steve Biko quotes, alongside selected elements of American critical race theory, such as the notion that 'blacks can't be racist' – but not others, such as the recognition of intersectionality of struggles across multiple planes, not race alone. As some elements within the Fallist movement began demanding that 'white bodies' need to be removed from committing further harm to 'the African child', a discourse of victimhood and racist essentialism began to emerge.

By early 2016, as the academic year began, the movement faced the danger of replacing agency with a self-reinforcing victimhood in which 'the African child' was the hapless victim of whiteness, white monopoly capital, and white 'colonisation'. The 'enemy' had shifted from an exploitative capitalist state, managed by the ANC, that transferred the costs of education onto students, to 'whiteness'

in all forms, even where those forms were only visible to the *African* child – not the Indian or coloured child. Some began discussing anti-white genocide as ‘a rational choice’, as did a student leader at a Wits School of Governance public event on 26 March 2016. The movement, which had enjoyed substantial public sympathy and united students, increasingly offered racist tropes as it fragmented and shed the broad-based support it had formerly enjoyed.

Many banners waved during the 2015 #FeesMustFall protests cited the 1976 uprising, deliberately echoing the most prominent student protest in South African history. Many parents of 2015 protesters had been in the class of ’76, or later school boycotts (which came in successive waves starting in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s), and came out to show their support. The remainder of this chapter asks the question: what happened to the youth protesters of previous decades, and how do they compare to the born frees and millennial youth of today? What, in short, has democracy provided to those successive generations of brave young people who took on apartheid with sticks and stones?

Methodology

Official data are of limited help in this specific endeavour, not least because most Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) data are derived from head of household interviews, and very few pose attitudinal or psychosocial questions. This chapter therefore makes use of the 2013 Quality of Life survey commissioned by the Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO).² The full realised sample comprised 27 485 respondents, interviewed across the whole of Gauteng province. The remainder of the chapter is a snapshot of the situation in Gauteng only, not South Africa generally, an important point to bear in mind: Gauteng has the largest population share in South Africa, is also the smallest province spatially, contributes well over a third of gross domestic product, and is home to three major metropolitan municipalities. Gauteng has virtually no rural areas – it is too small, densely populated and networked for that. Unlike other provinces with a major metropolitan municipality – such as Cape Town in the Western Cape – Gauteng has no large rural hinterland, but rather comprises a continuous urban extent, tailing into peri-urban areas at some of its border points with nearby, more heavily rural provinces.

In order to understand the contemporary status of youth from past decades, the sample was recoded into age cohorts that mirrored (roughly) key moments

of the anti-apartheid struggle – the ‘1976’ generation, the 1980s generation called on to make the apartheid state ‘ungovernable’, those who were youth in the 1990–1994 interregnum, when many youth were involved in violent struggle; the ‘children of democracy’ who were children/teenagers during the transition from apartheid to democracy, and finally the ‘born frees’, in essence all respondents under the age of twenty at the time of the survey fieldwork (and thus born from 1994 onwards). Those older than the 1976 cohort (those aged between sixteen and twenty-four in 1976) were classified as ‘older’ – the focus of the chapter is on waves of struggle that were led by, or significantly populated by youth, which really begins in 1976.

Each cohort was recoded into a single variable. A simple technique was used, taking actual age (as given by respondents) and working backwards to define who belonged to youth cohorts in previous years.

Table 6.1: Contemporary status of youth cohorts mirroring key moments of the anti-apartheid struggle.

YOUTH COHORT	AGE
Born frees	14 to 19, born after 1994
Democracy’s children	20 to 34, therefore aged 1 to 15 in 1994
Youth of 1994	35 to 42, therefore aged 16 to 23 in 1994
Youth of 1986	43 to 51, therefore aged 16 to 24 in 1986
Youth of 1976	52 to 61, therefore aged 15 to 24 in 1976
Older cohort	62+

For pre-1994 cohorts, the full age span – sixteen (sometimes fifteen) to twenty-four years of age – was recoded into a single variable; the mid-point was taken to be the key year, so for the ‘1976 generation’, fairly obviously, 1976 is the mid-point – the youngest respondent in this cohort was fifty-three years of age in 2013, but would have been sixteen in 1976, where the oldest would have been twenty-four in 1976 and would have been sixty-one in 2013. The mid-point for the 1980s ‘ungovernability’ cohort is taken to be 1986 (reflecting the intensity of protest and viciousness of state repression, rather than ANC leader Oliver Tambo’s call for ungovernability, which occurred in 1984). One large cohort

is inserted, 'democracy's children', denoting anyone who grew up during the transition (this deliberately includes those who were children at the time). The youngest respondent in this group was twenty in 2013, having been born in 1993. These are distinct from the 'youth of 1994' – more precisely, anyone from sixteen to twenty-four during the 1990–1994 interregnum. More recent cohorts are of necessity smaller – the 'born frees' included respondents who were nineteen, eighteen and a few seventeen and sixteen year-olds (in 2013), but with a 1994+ cut-off point.

Life circumstances

Some factors do not require explanation or analysis, but remind us that young men outnumber young women, a situation that is reversed over time: men made up 53 per cent of born frees, but 45 per cent of the oldest cohort – a reminder of women's longevity, which sees them in the majority nationally, though not in Gauteng (what is true in Gauteng is not always true for South Africa).

Table 6.2: Youth cohorts drawn from sample.

COHORT	% OF TOTAL SAMPLE	FREQUENCY
The 'born frees': respondents under the age of 20 at the time of the survey	4.1	1 129
'Democracy's children': respondents who were children during the transition from apartheid	39.3	10 807
'1994': respondents who were youth during the transition	17.8	4 882
'1980s': respondents who were youth during state of emergency	15.1	4 156
'1970s': respondents who were youth during the 1976 uprising	12.1	3 314
Older	11.6	3 197

Youth provide a lens that magnifies challenges in society more generally. In many instances, conditions – objectively measurable external conditions, at least –

improve over time, as youth age. If we look at housing, for example, we find that in Gauteng, just 5 per cent of the oldest cohort lives in informal dwellings (95 per cent live in formal dwellings) but this rises to 8 per cent of the 1976 generation, 11 per cent for the youth of 1986 and 17 per cent for the youth of 1994, peaking at 20 per cent for the children of 1994, before dropping to 12 per cent among the smallest cohort, the born frees. In part, the explanation lies in the fact that apartheid locked generations within tiny township houses whereas democracy has allowed young people to set up their own households elsewhere. However, their options are severely limited as delivery of 'RDP houses' (yet more matchbox houses in new townships) cannot keep pace with demand, and rumours abound of corruption in allocations. That leaves younger people, notably those lacking the financial resources required to buy their way out of poverty into suburbia, with few possibilities beyond informal shacks.

On this single, simple item, therefore, the reader can see how young people, including students, may see a world around them that is deeply discriminatory – and racialised – and, perhaps most striking, unchanged from the world their parents inhabited. Speaking about housing in Gauteng, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) noted:

Low-income black Africans disproportionately live in deprived neighbourhoods compared to low-income residents of other population groups in the Gauteng city-region, which infringes upon the ability of black Africans to take advantage of economic opportunities and social networks of less disadvantaged areas. Within a typical high poverty neighbourhood in Gauteng, 98.3 per cent of the population is black African, followed by whites (1.26 per cent), coloured (0.27 per cent), and Asians (0.09 per cent) ... black Africans are overrepresented in high poverty zones by 25 per cent while whites, coloured, and Asians together are underrepresented by -18.1 per cent (OECD 2011: 28).

And lest we consider affordability a relatively easy hurdle for a province with a burgeoning black middle class, the OECD had a salutary warning to offer:

Compared to other large cities in the OECD, indicators suggest that Gauteng's homeowners pay an extremely high cost for housing relative to their income ... Typically those economies where individuals need over five times their annual salary to buy a home are ranked 'severely

unaffordable', which is followed by 'seriously unaffordable' (4.1 – 5.0), 'moderately unaffordable' (3.1 – 4.0), and 'affordable' (3.0 or less). Using this methodology, the area could be characterised as 'severely unaffordable' with high rates in Gauteng (23.1). The rate for townships in Gauteng (4.9) is characterised as 'seriously unaffordable' (OECD 2011: 28).

So whether young black Gautengers want to buy a house in a suburb ('severely unaffordable'), which students may reasonably presume to be part of their life course, or they want to do so in a township ('seriously unaffordable'), they face the fact of racialised and unequal distribution of existing stock, and severe cost barriers in either case. Given that students are groomed to be future societal leaders, prospects are gloomy indeed.

No wonder we find that 55 per cent of the oldest cohort live in dwellings they own and have fully paid off, true of 37 per cent of the 1976 generation and 28 per cent of the youth of the 1980s, and (reflecting the class contradictions within the student movement) true also of 21 per cent of the youth of 1994, 20 per cent of democracy's children and 28 per cent of born frees. But where almost no older respondents (from the youth of the 1980s and older) are in the private rental market, this is where significant proportions of born frees (12 per cent), democracy's children (18 per cent) and the youth of 1994 (14 per cent) can be found – and often renting informal shacks, not smart apartments. Looking only at these three youngest cohorts, we find that they comprise 84 per cent of all respondents living in shacks and paying rent for the privilege; and they comprise 74 per cent of those living in their own shack, not paying rent.

This triggers a series of negative life circumstances – informal dwellings are likely to be at considerable distances from universities based in city centres, requiring transport costs; are least likely to have piped water into the dwelling – 21 per cent of born frees and 30 per cent of the children of 'democracy's children' access water from stand pipes more than 200 metres from their dwellings, for example – or decent sanitation and the basic needs that populated the 1994 RDP. Meeting those needs, the RDP argued, would 'open up previously suppressed economic and human potential [which is] ... essential if we are to achieve peace and security for all' (ANC 1994: 6–7). For the students of 2015, there seemed little evidence of or promise for the realisation of their potential. With Gauteng households spending an average of 20 per cent of income on transport (OECD 2011)

it is unsurprising that students have been known to sleep in toilets and lecture theatres in order to avoid finding transport money.

Twenty-two years into democracy, large numbers of young black South Africans see little or no change in their life circumstances, and face enormous barriers to the 'better life for all' promised by the ANC in 1994. Across the different age cohorts, for example, is a consistent complaint that unemployment, crime and lack of basic services are key problems facing their communities. Cost is an issue; but the racialised patterns of spatial configuration in combination with cost – making a suburban home a dream way, way beyond the realistic hopes of most Gauteng residents (and a life of debt for so many who 'make it') – have created a toxic mix that feeds easily into narratives of the damage done to the African child. Whether that damage, in 2015–2016, is being done by an undefined but easily sloganeered 'white supremacy', or an ANC government after two decades in power, is open to question.

In a context of widespread unemployment and an unequal and racialised distribution of goods and services, it is notable that while a small proportion of born frees (5 per cent) have run up personal debt, this rises to 28 per cent among democracy's children, 41 per cent of the youth of 1994, 39 per cent of the 1986 cohort and 31 per cent among the 1976 cohort. Debt may drop slowly over time, but it remains high – 30 per cent of the older cohort are in debt – and for the younger cohorts, is primarily credit card, loan shark or personal loan based (for older cohorts, including the youth of 1976 and 1986, debt is more commonly incurred by paying home loans, car purchases, and so on). Taken with slow economic growth and mass unemployment, this debt trap is of substantial concern – not least because in every cohort (bar the born frees, where debt is lowest) a fifth of respondents who have debt say they cannot pay it back. Debt is real: 14 per cent of respondents in debt had had to skip a meal owing to lack of funds in the year before being interviewed, and a similar proportion had been unable to feed their children (among those with children) in the same period. Very real damage is being done to these children born two decades into democracy.

'Headspace'

If socioeconomic status is a concern, so is mood. On the one hand, Gautengers are active citizens. Measuring participation across all types of meetings people might attend – formal government-created structures (such as Integrated Development

Plan (IDP) meetings), to ward councillor-called meetings, to school governing body, block and street committees and so on – we find that while 46 per cent of the older cohort had taken part in any meeting in the year before being interviewed, this was true of 45 per cent of the born frees, 43 per cent of the children of democracy, 50 per cent of the youth of 1994, 54 per cent of the 1986 cohort and 51 per cent of the 1976 cohort. Moreover, most planned to vote in the then imminent 2014 provincial and national elections, ranging from 97 per cent of the born frees to 95 per cent of the 1976 generation. It is worth remembering that the 2014 election saw the ANC's worst-ever performance at the polls.

That students would protest against government, and that they would win widespread support in so doing, should not have come as any surprise. Dissatisfaction with government – all spheres, national, provincial and especially local – is running at record levels in Gauteng, and has grown steadily over time. In Figure 6.1, the levels of dissatisfaction for all age cohorts show that between four and five in every ten respondents had a negative rating for all spheres of government. This has found an outlet in service delivery protests, of which Gauteng has the highest number in the country; but it is a smouldering frustration, which partly explains the support won by the #FeesMustFall movement, which reflected a widely-shared frustration with government. Asked which sphere of government had done most to improve the quality of life of respondents, a common response was 'none of them' – true of 44 per cent of born frees, rising slightly among older cohort, and returning to 44 per cent among the 1976 cohort.

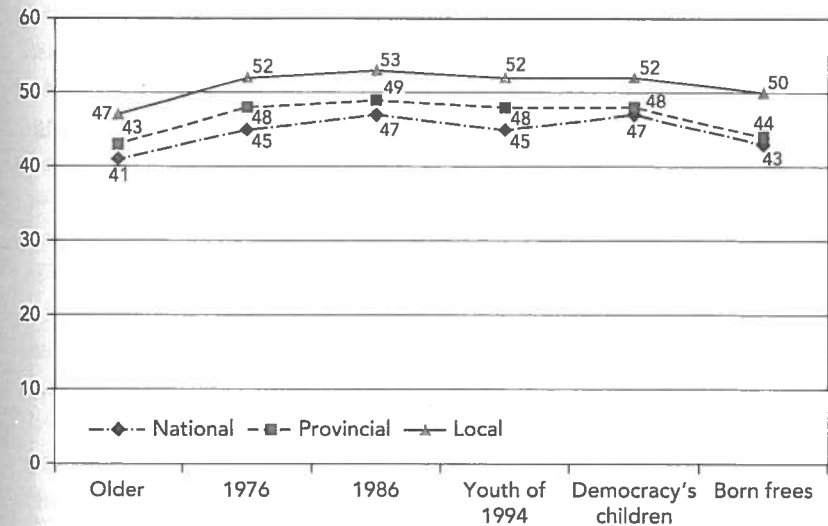
Young people are commonly seen as apathetic, or apolitical, not least because they often prefer their own methods and forms of engagement and are rarely satisfied with the formalities of voting every five years or sitting in long, dull if worthy meetings (Everatt, Marais and Dube 2010; Wyn and Cahill 2015). Gauteng youth and older cohorts, however, still regard politics as important – we saw above that intention to vote was high, and the notion that 'politics is a waste of time' (a Likert item in the survey)³ was rejected by 54 per cent of the born frees, 46 per cent of the children of democracy, 47 per cent of the youth of 1994 and the 1986 cohort, rising slightly to 48 per cent among the 1976 cohort.

While politics is seen by the various youth cohorts as an efficacious mechanism to effect change, pessimism runs high. In response to the statement 'the country is heading in the wrong direction', agreement with the sentiment rose from 58 per cent among born frees to 61 per cent among the 1976 cohort. If dissatisfaction with government was a key challenge, a specific item of massive concern was corruption. The Likert item stated that: 'corruption is the main threat facing our

democracy', which is not specific to governmental corruption – but the question was asked at a time when allegations of corruption against senior politicians from the president downwards were rife. In response, between 89 per cent and 91 per cent of all cohorts agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

Racial issues, unsurprisingly, were evident among the different cohorts. The most obvious are levels of agreement with the proposition that 'blacks and whites

Figure 6.1: Dissatisfaction with the three spheres of government (by cohort).

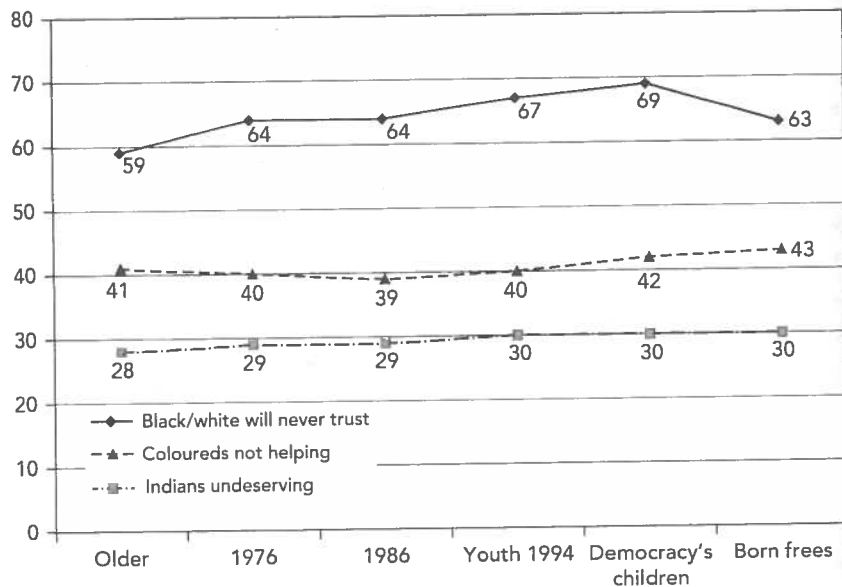


will never trust each other', ranging from 63 per cent among the born frees to 59 per cent among older respondents. But black/white was only part of the issue, as the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) leader Steve Biko stated in the 1970s:

The importance of black solidarity to the various segments of the black community must not be understated. There have been in the past a lot of suggestions that there can be no viable unity amongst blacks because they hold each other in contempt. Coloureds despise Africans because they (the former), by their proximity to the Africans, may lose the chances of assimilation into the white world. Africans despise the Coloureds and Indians for a variety of reasons. Indians not only despise Africans but in many instances also exploit the Africans in job and shop situations (Biko 1971).

As Biko concluded, the racial divide and rule of apartheid had created 'mountainous inter-group suspicions among the blacks'. Posed with a second Likert item that stated that 'coloured people are playing an important role in building the new South Africa', between 41 per cent and 43 per cent of respondents rejected it. Posed with a third, that 'Indians do not deserve to benefit from affirmative action', between 28 per cent and 30 per cent of the sample agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Racial suspicion continued to abound, and beyond the obvious black/white divide; anti-white sentiment is certainly strong but, more importantly, makes for easy slogans.

Figure 6.2: Racial attitudes by cohort: Percentage agreeing per statement.



The notion of unity among the formerly oppressed seems to have suffered, while mistrust between blacks and whites is very high. This prefigured the late 2015/early 2016 racialisation of the Fallist splinter groups, and the adoption of a discourse of black – that is, African-only – victimhood.

Material conditions and psychosocial attitudes created a toxic mix. This included anger at government, fuelled by the slow pace of delivery (especially for younger people), the fiscal debt net that surrounds them, and the

desire to engage politically – but in *opposition*, not in support of an ANC government increasingly seen as corrupt and leading the country in the wrong direction. This in turn fed into and was informed by a mixed bag of racial hostilities, disconnect from the state, and a sense of powerlessness. Asked about anomie – 'people like me cannot influence developments in my community' – between 33 per cent (born frees) and 31 per cent (other cohorts) agreed or strongly agreed, suggesting that while people participate widely, as we have seen, they do not see a link between that participation and any resultant change. Thankfully, in every instance the proportion who 'agree' comprise the vast bulk; approximately 3 per cent in each cohort strongly agreed with the statement. It is these outliers that are real cause for concern. The ANC as government had failed signally where it had succeeded as liberation movement, in empowering the powerless, and linking their actions to outcomes – including the ultimate victory over apartheid.

Respondents were also asked about alienation, the notion that 'no-one cares about people like me'. Here the outliers were larger, comprising 8–9 per cent of every cohort. The born frees were least likely to agree and/or strongly agree (33 per cent did so), but this rose sharply to comprise 40 per cent of the children of democracy, 41 per cent of the youth of 1994, dropping back slightly to 38 per cent among the 1986 and 1976 cohort respectively.

The survey data indicate why a combination of socioeconomic circumstances and attitudes created conditions in which the student movement could break through to reach the broader public, since #FeesMustFall echoed other struggles against ever-increasing user fees, taxes, tariffs and the like; in a context where perceptions of corruption threatening democracy were ubiquitous. But those same data (and other data not analysed here, including widespread misogynist, homophobic and xenophobic attitudes) also indicate the fault lines that were to split the movement after its moment of victory.

CONCLUSION

The #FeesMustFall movement is remarkable in that it bucked the trend of youth and/or student struggles failing to achieve their sectoral gains even when embedded in a broader struggle. This struggle stood on its own feet – and won. The inequalities students face – how they live, where they live, their levels of debt, combined with a slow (or absent) transformation at universities playing off

underlying racist views within society – were all understandable to the broader public. Moreover, unlike localised service delivery protesters, the students were articulate, disciplined in the face of state hostility, and presented a clear, understandable and legitimate message: we simply cannot afford to study and live.

But precisely because it was not embedded in a broader struggle, the movement had no broader, society-wide strategy for change, and ‘give us our land’ and ‘kill whites’ became the dominant if hollow slogans of 2016. The ANC as government is directly culpable, having dismantled civil society and ensured that no robust structures existed to act as ally or partner in developing strategy or goals or principles. That students in 2016 can be applauded for understanding that decolonisation means ‘burn down the university’ (Andile Mngxitama, speaking at the 2016 Strini Moodley memorial) – literally – is indicative of the paucity of ideas that afflicts what was once a movement.

The challenge facing the student groupings – into which they have now fractured – is either to develop a strategic approach to alliances and set goals that can be attained or to embrace the diversity of movements that have emerged and continue to do so, including feminists, queer movements, ecological and ‘green’ activism, LGBTIAQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, asexual and queer) movements and so on. It may well be that #FeesMustFall reversed the long-bemoaned ‘death of civil society’ and heralded its birth instead among a new generation born free but seeing itself everywhere chained to an unequal, racist and violent society. That in turn may be misplaced optimism, and we may yet descend further into racial essentialism and victimhood. All societies demand youth acquiescence – but it is theirs to change, for the better of all.

NOTES

- 1 Thanks to Cathi Albertyn for long argumentative discussions while walking the dogs and whatever good points there might be in this chapter.
- 2 The author was the executive director of GCRO at the time, and he cautions that readers should be aware of potential bias that may result from this fact.
- 3 A scale for responses, in survey research, on individual preferences or attitudes, towards the given subject.

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